
'MORE CONSTRUCTION THAN DESTRUCTION': THE AMBIGUOUS PLACE OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN A RECONSTRUCTING BELFAST CIRCA 1972-89

Andrew G. McClelland

Independent scholar

The urban landscape of the city of Belfast was radically transformed from the late 1960s by a combination of state-sponsored reconstruction and civil unrest, including paramilitary activity associated with the period in Northern Ireland euphemistically known as the Troubles. This paper explores the sometimes competing and contradictory interpretations of destruction in the built environment as the UK government sought to promulgate a narrative of progressive change in the fortunes of Belfast in the face of a prolonged terrorist campaign, with the discussion partially framed using Vale's ideas on the social construction of urban resilience. The narrative is illuminated by the case of the Castlecourt development in the heart of the city in the 1980s, which was controversial for its demolition of prominent Victorian-era buildings. The paper addresses the political questions of the ambiguous place of architectural heritage in Belfast circa 1972-89, who dominated power relations in the city, and who benefited from key redevelopment decisions. It provides insights with contemporary resonance into the critical importance of institutional architecture and governance to the setting of government priorities and the application of power in conflicted places.

Keywords

Belfast, destruction, architectural heritage, Castlecourt, resilience

How to Cite

McClelland, Andrew G. "More construction than destruction': the ambiguous place of architectural heritage in a reconstructing Belfast circa 1972-89". In Carola Hein (ed.) *International Planning History Society Proceedings, 17th IPHS Conference, History-Urbanism-Resilience, TU Delft 17-21 July 2016, V.04* p.375, TU Delft Open, 2016.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7480/iphs.2016.4.1303>

INTRODUCTION

An exhibition in 1976 at the Ulster Office in London, organised by the Northern Ireland Department of Finance, sought to convey the ‘facts of life in the Province’ to investors and property developers.¹ The Ulster is Building Exhibition depicted a series of recently completed office blocks in the centre of Belfast and optimistically declared that ‘there is now considerably more construction than destruction’ in Troubles-era Northern Ireland.² This represented an early attempt by the government to project a positive image of the city through its changing built environment to counteract the negative perceptions that routinely bracketed Belfast with the most ‘troubled’ cities of the late twentieth century.³ Such a conflict-ravaged reputation was deserved. For example, approximately 1,800 explosions were recorded in the city between 1970 and 1975,⁴ particularly caused by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (henceforth IRA), with the escalating violence resulting in ‘economic and physical decay’ and the ‘outward movement of business, retailing, population and housing’.⁵ The government’s response to bomb and incendiary attacks involved radical security measures and the construction of a ‘ring of steel’ in the city centre to control vehicular and pedestrian access. However, whereas public policy towards Belfast in the 1970s was defensive in nature, interventions subsequently shifted towards the encouragement of tentative recovery in the period 1980-84, followed by a process of active promotion from 1985.⁶ In particular, policy-makers and UK politicians were interested in the role of economic development and planning in managing the political process, and determined that the ‘neutral’ city centre could be ‘harnessed as a symbol for a normal Northern Ireland’.⁷ It was in this multi-layered context that the ambiguous place of architectural heritage was exposed, revealing the highly contingent interpretations of destruction in the built environment, and the priority initially afforded to the new and the ‘modern’ in the symbolic landscape under construction.

In considering ‘resilience-seeking’ behaviour in Belfast during the Troubles this paper focuses on three dimensions of resilience which, according to Vale⁸, are frequently ignored by researchers outside of the social sciences: ‘the centrality of narrative voice...architectural symbolism and political favouritism’. More specifically, the critical importance of examining *who* makes decisions impacting on the resilience of places and ‘how dominant storylines get constructed, which powerful symbols are used to gauge progress, and how political power sets priorities for investment’, is foregrounded in the discussion.⁹ These issues are explored through the case of Castlecourt, a shopping centre, multi-storey car park and office complex opened in Belfast city centre in 1990. This development was symbolically laden in the midst of a continuing and seemingly intractable conflict, representing the largest commercial development then undertaken in Northern Ireland, and argued to have laid the foundation for two further city centre regeneration initiatives.¹⁰ Furthermore, developments such as Castlecourt offered ‘symbolism around state control...state triumph over the bombers, and...high levels of subsidy that created a new service class unbounded by sectarian labour markets’.¹¹ Nonetheless, as predicted in an *Ulster Architect* editorial in June 1990, Castlecourt would be remembered ‘not just for what it has contributed to the city but for what it has taken away’. The demolition of prominent older buildings on the site and the building over of several streets provoked the ire of conservationists, with one exclaiming in the aftermath that the city had lost ‘a part of our Victorian birthright’.¹² The case was inevitably implicated in wider discussions over the position of architectural heritage within the Department of the Environment (DOE) and the conflicted governance of change in the built environment.

The paper firstly introduces the historical context to the creation of Northern Ireland, the start of the period euphemistically known as the Troubles, and the changing governance landscape in response to civil unrest. Vale’s thinking on the social construction of urban resilience is then briefly relayed, with his framework employed to guide the discussion on the Castlecourt case, centred on recovery narrative, symbolic milestones and the politics of redevelopment. The paper concludes with thoughts on the competing interpretations of destruction in the built environment and the significance of the Northern Ireland Troubles for the contemporary study of resilience.



FIGURE 1 Castlecourt's Royal Avenue façade in 2013.

NORTHERN IRELAND, THE TROUBLES AND SHIFTING GOVERNANCE

Northern Ireland was established in the aftermath of the Irish Home Rule crisis when the predominantly Protestant unionists opposed the creation of an independent Irish Parliament, culminating in a period of sustained violence including the 1916 'Easter Rising' by Irish republicans against British rule. The Government of Ireland Act 1920 subsequently provided for an independent 26 counties in the south of Ireland, while six northern counties containing a Protestant majority formed a devolved constitutional entity within the United Kingdom. Thus, the Partition of Ireland was confirmed in the early 1920s with the establishment of an Irish Free State, retaining Dublin as the seat of a new parliament, with a separate Northern Ireland parliament and other institutions located in the devolved 'capital city' of Belfast. However, the sectarian nature of much of the conflict did not dissipate once Partition became operative, and tensions continued to exist between authorities on either side of the Irish border, as well as between the majority unionist and minority Irish nationalist (predominantly Catholic) communities in Northern Ireland. For instance, between 1920 and 1922, the 'original' Troubles in Northern Ireland claimed almost 500 lives in Belfast alone.¹³ The subsequent hegemony of the Ulster Unionist party over Northern Ireland affairs in the period 1921-72, including discrimination against Catholics in the allocation of housing and jobs, contributed greatly to the sense of grievance that fuelled civil unrest from the late 1960s. For Prince¹⁴, the Troubles essentially began on 5 October 1968 when the police violently broke up a civil rights march to (London)Derry, leading to several nights of rioting in the Catholic-majority city and a downwards spiral in intra-communal relations.

The impact of the Troubles on life and property is well documented elsewhere. However, the period also had profound consequences for local governance and decision-making arrangements. Most significantly, the half-century of devolution in Northern Ireland was suspended by the British government in 1972 and replaced by a system of Direct Rule from Westminster. Neither the Secretary of State, nor any of the British government Ministers subsequently appointed to run departments in Northern Ireland, represented local electoral constituencies, and the main British political parties, with the exception of 'half-hearted forays by the Conservatives', did not run candidates at local or general elections.¹⁵ Although initially intended as a temporary arrangement, Direct Rule resulted in a democratic deficit that was further exacerbated by the weakness of local government following its reorganisation under the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972. From October 1973, a single tier of twenty-six district councils came into operation, devoid of a range of major functions, such as housing, education and planning, due to sustained calls for reform. This new dispensation effectively divested local government 'of any substantive role in Northern Ireland',¹⁶ with councils largely restricted to consultation responses, and their functional responsibilities reduced to the management of 'bogs, bins and bodies'.¹⁷

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF URBAN RESILIENCE

Definitions of resilience are not addressed in this paper, which is recognised as a rather malleable concept that can be interpreted in multiple ways and from differing perspectives. Rather, the paper embraces Vale's discussion of the politics of resilient cities and deploys this thinking to a prominent example from Troubles-era Belfast.¹⁸ In particular, three dimensions of resilience viewed through the lens of the planner provide a structuring framework for the narrative. The first dimension concerns 'efforts to promulgate and manage a dominant narrative about the state of recovery' of a city following a disaster or traumatic event. In essence, this category relates to the efforts of political leaders and government officials to regain public legitimacy and trust centred on conveying a sense of progress. Secondly, the social construction of resilience depends upon strategies to highlight symbolic recovery milestones, typically through highly visible construction projects or culturally significant events that demonstrably evidenced 'bounceback'. Finally, the politics of recovery matters as governments actively negotiate the policies and priorities of redevelopment with citizens, with the potential for electoral challenge or civil unrest dependent on the quality and reception of the ensuing response. In the context of these categories the critical importance of examining who makes decisions about resilience comes into sharper focus.

TOWARDS CASTLECOURT - A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SITE

Castlecourt occupies a 3.5-hectare site in the commercial centre of Belfast fronting Royal Avenue and extending backwards over the former Smithfield Market (see Figures 2 and 3). Royal Avenue was once the finest thoroughfare in the city and a 'notable piece of town planning' created by Belfast Corporation (see Figure 4).¹⁹ Its development from the 1880s cut a swathe through the old butchers' quarter around Hercules Street, linking up what were once the residences of wealthier citizens in Donegall Place with the planned industrial area of York Street, in the process shifting the centre of the town away from High Street and towards the White Linen Hall.²⁰ The Corporation strictly controlled the height and cornice line of new buildings on Royal Avenue resulting in a 'disciplined and congruous but highly varied streetscape'.²¹ As a 'secular development', Royal Avenue initially contained government offices and institutions, including the Head Post Office, Belfast Public Library and the Water Commissioners' Office.²² In addition, as the principal commercial hub of late Victorian Belfast, it housed shops, offices and several hotels, with the Royal Avenue Hotel and the Grand Central providing high-end accommodation in the heart of the city.



FIGURE 2 Royal Avenue/Smithfield in 1972.

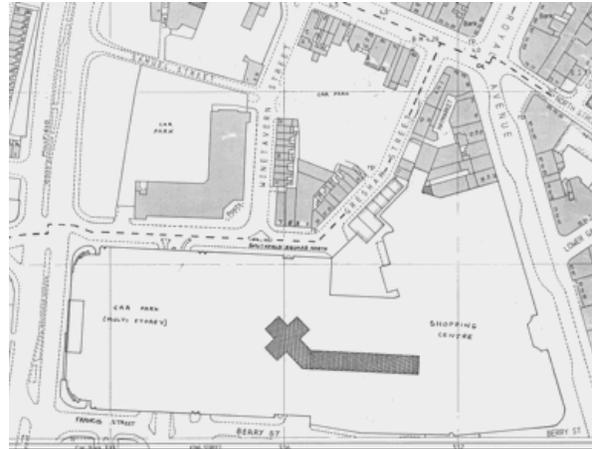


FIGURE 3 Royal Avenue/Smithfield in 1989, indicating the extent of change caused by the Castlecourt development then under construction.

The redevelopment of part of what was to become the Castlecourt site was imagined several times in the twentieth century. It was partially earmarked for a bus station in the mid-1940s under reconstruction proposals by the Planning Advisory Commission. Although not progressed, this idea re-emerged in the late 1960s with the publication of Building Design Partnership's (BDP) *Belfast Central Area* plan. In the contrast to the former, the BDP proposals embraced the Smithfield Market site and the more prestigious buildings fronting Royal Avenue. Smithfield Market was low rise, low-rent, and its ownership by Belfast Corporation, together with other publicly-owned landholdings nearby, undoubtedly made the area attractive for comprehensive redevelopment, supported by its central location and relative ease with which land assembly could be achieved. Moreover, few of the buildings were yet ascribed with heritage values by the nascent conservation movement in the city in the late 1960s. The outbreak of civil unrest inevitably impacted unfavourably on these plans, postponing for a decade attempts at redevelopment. The Grand Central and Midland hotels were both positioned within the ring of steel and closed in the early 1970s, with the former inhabited by the British Army until 1980. Smithfield Market was destroyed by an incendiary device in 1974, while many of the nineteenth century buildings fronting Smithfield Square had already been 'bombed into dereliction or out of existence' by the time that the Castlecourt proposals emerged.²³ Nonetheless, in spite of this and other 'modern incursions...the general texture' of Royal Avenue was not radically different from its original appearance.²⁴ However, with Smithfield resembling a 'big hole', and vacancy and dereliction particularly acute on the northern fringes of the city centre, the government was determined to kick-start a recovery in the area.²⁵



FIGURE 4 Royal Avenue circa 1888 before the construction of the Grand Central Hotel.



FIGURE 5 The Head Post Office in the mid-1980s prior to demolition.

RECOVERY NARRATIVE

The negative image portrayed by violence and the counteracting security measures was seriously damaging to Belfast in the eyes of investors and property developers.²⁶ In response, planners and other policy-makers increasingly pressed for action in the late 1970s to turn around the fortunes of the city centre,²⁷ particularly as it was viewed as ‘ethnically neutral space’ with the capacity to provide ‘employment opportunities for Catholics and Protestants alike’.²⁸ The 1978 announcement by the Secretary of State, Roy Mason, of a nine-point package to secure ‘the rebirth of Belfast’, provided the initial impetus for the Castlecourt development.²⁹ The package included the setting up of a working party to examine how the city centre could become ‘a lively focus of social entertainment for citizens and visitors’, in addition to exploring the possibility of partnering with private developers in future regeneration initiatives, with Royal Avenue/Smithfield identified as a key site.³⁰ However, with the exception of several background reports endorsing development, progress was limited until a consortium of two London-based developers, John Laing and Ellison Harte, successfully applied for outline planning approval for a retail-led scheme on the site in February 1984. The DOE Minister, Chris Patten, who personally met with the developers the week prior to their planning submission, swiftly welcomed the development in an article in the *News Letter* on 4 February, stating that it would “breathe new life” into Belfast city centre. An ‘upbeat boosterist’ endorsement such as this commonly accompanied development announcements in the 1980s, and was clearly aimed at asserting a dominant recovery narrative in the public mind.³¹ Indeed, according to Brown³², Castlecourt enjoyed ‘the vociferous support of the media, city council, central government, property industry and trading organisations’, and had already acquired a ‘semi-mystical status’ before its design was even finalised. Although conservationists within civil society – chiefly the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society (UAHS) – garnered critical media attention, a series of articles in the *Belfast Telegraph* in May 1985 under the banner ‘Belfast – the great revival’ exemplified the largely positive coverage.

The Castlecourt developers employed public relations consultants to ensure positive media coverage and a proactive approach to controlling the narrative. Although opposition to the scheme emanated from existing small traders in the area and some long-term residents threatened with losing their homes, the most sustained and effective critiques came from conservationists’ opposition to the demolition of Victorian-era buildings. Initially, in early 1984, a senior DOE official did not believe that the ‘conservationist lobby’ would present a blockage to the scheme progressing.³³ This proved wishful thinking and the UAHS successfully dramatised the issue and mobilised support from notable conservationists from Great Britain. For instance, the critical viewpoints expressed in October 1984 at the UAHS’s ‘No Mean City?’ conference against the demolition of the Head Post Office resonated beyond those in attendance, and the strongly worded resolution passed by delegates fulfilled many of the criteria for the successful construction of environmental problems.³⁴ By early 1985, therefore, the threatened demolition of the Post Office was a sufficiently

'major local issue' for the DOE Minister to express his concern that it might become an embarrassment for the Department.³⁵ What was needed, insofar as the DOE was concerned, was the 'early construction' of a 'new building of architectural merit', which would 'go a long way towards deflating the opposition of the conservation lobby'.³⁶ Four months later, and with the conservationists kept 'at bay', demolition began, ensuring that 'obituaries' for the older buildings were the only things that remained to be written by conservationists. Castlecourt faced little further sustained opposition from that point forward, and the four IRA bomb attacks targetting the development ironically boosted the government's narrative, with its opening in 1990 acclaimed by the local and international media for its contribution towards peace-building.³⁷

SYMBOLIC MILESTONES

The environment in Belfast city centre in the early 1980s was more conducive to investment, partly due to a shift in emphasis in the IRA's bombing campaign and a concomitant loosening of security arrangements.³⁸ A range of organisations and local businesses used the relative respite to invest in marketing the city centre, organising special events to animate the city and encourage visitors, while seeking to further build on the successful introduction of weekly late night shopping from August 1982. Although these activities contributed towards providing cumulatively important milestones, the pursuit of investment for Belfast in the 1980s ultimately reached its 'zenith' in the Castlecourt scheme.³⁹ Indeed, Castlecourt was laden with symbolism for local and international audiences, with the government eager to attract institutional investment, the surfeit of which had placed a 'constraint on retail development', while being responsible for an under-representation of multiple stores, and the absence of a covered shopping mall in the city centre.⁴⁰ The promise of variety and choice for local consumers from well-known high-street retailers was clearly one thing, but securing investment in high risk Belfast represented a more significant milestone that might help 'set a precedent for more such funding'.⁴¹ However, arguably the most successful economic narrative propagated concerned job creation, with Castlecourt's close proximity to working-class communities in west Belfast critical from a public policy perspective. The prospect of new service-sector jobs for a part of the city most impacted by the conflict was further bolstered by the policy of relocating government office staff to the city centre, thereby enhancing the perceived neutrality of the site through a desegregated public sector workforce while ensuring 'equal opportunity of employment' for Catholics and Protestants alike.⁴² In stark contrast, as noted by David McKittrick in an article in *The Independent* on 7 June 1989, bomb damage caused to the complex months prior to its opening, allowed the Secretary of State, Tom King, to characterise the IRA as 'the godfathers of unemployment'.

Much of the Castlecourt debate was dominated by the proposed appearance of its main façade.⁴³ It was clear that the development consortium had no intention to reuse the existing buildings on the site, with the structural integrity of the Grand Central Hotel known to be suspect, and the developers in any case seeking a cleared site for a more straightforward (and profitable) scheme. Indeed, the UAHS recognised that conservation of the Grand Central would be expensive, but suggested that the site would 'provide an opportunity for a really "prestige" new building', while integrating the Head Post Office into the development (see Figure 5).⁴⁴ However, the initial design was considered 'clumsy and boring', with Patton⁴⁵ observing that Belfast faced the prospect of replacing a 'fine Victorian townscape for a building that will have all the charm of a tower block laid on its side'. Even the new Environment Minister, Richard Needham⁴⁶ was alarmed 'at the prospect of a 300-metre unadorned brick frontage', demanding that the building should instead be 'faced in glass'. The Minister ultimately had his way, and the final design by BDP was 'uncompromisingly modern', consisting of a tainted glass façade broken into sections by white-clad staircases,⁴⁷ which respected the 'traditional cornice height' of the remaining Royal Avenue buildings.⁴⁸ This was partly a fiction, of course, as the main façade was non-transparent and backed by block-work so as protect against bomb blasts, and the general public attitude towards the design was 'ambivalent'.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, the 'international high-tech style' fulfilled its symbolic purpose in communicating that Belfast had 'a role to play in the international world'.⁵⁰ Images of the complex subsequently adorned official and other place-marketing publications promoting the transformation of the city.

POLITICS OF REDEVELOPMENT

The abnormal governance arrangements in Northern Ireland ensured that the politics of redevelopment over Castlecourt was very different to elsewhere and the case largely represented a negotiation between the government and developers rather than with the citizenry. The politicians involved in the decision-making processes were not accountable to a local electorate and the public administration machinery was also markedly different from elsewhere in the UK. The Belfast Development Office (BDO), a branch of the DOE, was a particularly pivotal agency within the city, and it held primary responsibility for progressing the Castlecourt proposals, although other branches were intimately involved. For Murtagh⁵¹, the BDO was ‘a highly segregated, centralised and unaccountable organisation’, which Neill⁵² suggests gave ‘privileged power access to property interests in the development of the city’. This included the Large Stores Association which used its access ‘to propel the city towards...accommodating national retail investment as an integral part of city centre regeneration’. Such treatment occurred against the backdrop of ‘Thatcher era’ economic policies, with emphasis placed on such things as ‘prestige area-based development initiatives’ and ‘private investment levered by public subsidy’.⁵³ Thus, the DOE’s role in Northern Ireland was redefined in the 1980s ‘from that of an agent to that of a facilitator of economic, social and political adjustment’,⁵⁴ and the department was ‘understandably willing to accommodate anyone who was prepared to take the risk of investing’.⁵⁵ In the case of Castlecourt, the DOE not only offered privileged access to the development consortium, but also actively deployed an array of planning, financial and other supports to ensure the scheme came to fruition – these are summarised in Figure 6 – rendering it, in the words of Mooney and Gaffikin⁵⁶, as more of a ‘public sector development dressed in the clothes of private initiative’.

The DOE’s involvement extended beyond the active use of powers at its disposal, however, and embraced inactivity insofar as conservation was concerned. Archival files indicate that the DOE at the highest level ensured that no conservation designations were applied to Royal Avenue in spite of ‘listing’ and conservation area recommendations emanating from the Historic Buildings Council and others on several occasions.⁵⁷ Indeed, the department were so keen that no such impediments might be placed on the future redevelopment of the site that they assured the developer in writing that the Head Post Office, as the primary target of contestation, would not be listed ‘for a period of at least 5 years’.⁵⁸ Thus, for conservationists, Castlecourt affirmed the low priority afforded to conservation within the DOE, the range of other departmental priorities that took precedence over architectural heritage, and the concentration of power in the upper echelons of the department, with little meaningful scope for critical interventions from local government or internal criticism.⁵⁹ In essence, the department’s range of responsibilities were extremely diverse, and inherently conflictual, ranging from housing policy, to roads and planning, with conservation often taking ‘second if not lower place to other priorities’.⁶⁰ The views of conservationists concerning the protection of the Head Post Office, therefore, could be ‘quietly ignored’,⁶¹ while the economic imperatives driving government policy meant that ‘when a major building...comes under threat, the arguments of the property speculator still tend to prevail’.⁶² The symbolism of Castlecourt extended for beyond the government’s preferred narrative, exposing significant issues in the relatively immature system for historic environment conservation in Northern Ireland, and propelling the governance and policy critiques of civil society higher up the political agenda, leading to several positive changes within a few years.⁶³

PLANNING	FINANCIAL
Outline planning application for Castlecourt approved within two-month period	£10 million Urban Development Grant (initially interest free loan later increased and commuted to grant)
Compulsory acquisition powers used to assemble land under Comprehensive Development Area 101	£5 million environmental improvement scheme in vicinity
New large store development restrained outside city centre under Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001	Office accommodation in Castlecourt pre-let to DOE for £11 million
Office developments, and government office relocations, concentrated in Belfast city centre	Claw back period reduced to 2 years ⁶⁴

TABLE 1 Summary of the direct (and indirect) planning and financial assistance provided by the DOE to the Castlecourt development consortium.

CONCLUSIONS

Castlecourt represents an unusual instance of a ‘clash of values’ between conservation and redevelopment in a UK city centre in the 1980s. Whereas competitive redevelopment pressures elsewhere were driven by rising property values seeking greater intensification of site usage in Belfast the government sought to promote city centre development in order to stabilise property values and attract outside investment. However, the narrative of recovery initially promulgated by the authorities was highly problematic for conservationists, who noted with irony that ‘throughout the last decade the world’s press has been able to use photographs of it [demolition] to illustrate the “blitzed” city of Belfast, often apparently...unaware that their photographs showed the result of demolition for new housing and roads.’⁶⁶ Although the city was synonymous with violence and destruction because of the Troubles, its depiction arguably gave a misleading impression of the principal causes of change in the urban landscape, which emanated from ‘civil violence and state planning’.⁶⁷ The phraseology used in the 1976 Ulster is Building Exhibition to frame the recovery process – ‘more construction than destruction’ – therefore, can readily be subject to contestation, with the demarcation line between what Gamboni⁶⁸ characterises as the “creative” eliminations undertaken by “embellishers” and the ‘aggressive ones by “vandals”’, open to a wide range of interpretations. The government of the day in Northern Ireland undoubtedly sought to claim the former characterisation.

The term resilience was not in common usage in the lexicon of planners and others at the time of the Castlecourt case. However, it represents an example of ‘resilience-seeking behaviour’ offering pertinent lessons for contemporary cities dealing with terrorism, particularly as the Northern Ireland Troubles were a prolonged conflict resonant with the apparently open-ended, present-day ‘War on Terror’. Indeed, Castlecourt progressed at a time when the Peace Process was at a relatively undeveloped stage and the eventual conclusion of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998 was then entirely unforeseeable. As such, in terms of thinking about interpretations of urban resilience, Castlecourt does not reflect attempts at recovery from sudden traumatic events like the Christchurch earthquake, or even single terrorist atrocities such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing. Instead, it offers insights into the impact of the governance landscape and the complex delicacies involved in negotiating recovery processes in response to violence and competing visions for change in the built environment. Given the consequences of state-sponsored redevelopment presents significant contemporary challenges for Belfast,⁶⁹ including in relation to Castlecourt,⁷⁰ thinking about resilience in historical contexts is critical to understanding the present. Just as the issues of ‘whose heritage to conserve’ will remain a recurring theme for scholarly attention, so too will the political questions raised by Vale concerning ‘whose resilience and whose city’.

Acknowledgements

The author reiterates appreciation to his PhD supervisors and examiners for their support and encouragement, in addition to the former Northern Ireland Department for Employment and Learning for the Studentship funding upon which the research for this paper is based.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor(s)

Andrew McClelland is an independent scholar currently based in Northern Ireland. His PhD research, which he completed at Ulster University in 2014, was focused on the contested destruction of architectural heritage in Belfast in the period 1960-89. Andrew will be taking up a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowship at Maynooth University in September 2016.

Bibliography

- Balfour, Jean. *A New Look at the Northern Ireland Countryside*. Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1984.
- Bardon, Jonathan. "Governing the City." In *Enduring City: Belfast in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Frederick W. Boal and Stephen A. Royle, 124-140. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2006.
- Berry, Jim, and McGreal, Stanley. "Public sector initiatives in the regeneration of Belfast," In *Urban Regeneration: Property Investment and Development*, edited by Jim Berry, Stanley McCrea, and Bill Deddis, 193-214. London: E & F N Spon, 1993.
- Birrell, Derek. *Direct Rule and Governance of Northern Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009.
- Brown, Stephen. "Retail location and retail change in Belfast city centre." PhD Diss., Queen's University Belfast, 1984.
- Brown, Stephen. "Smithfield Shopping Centre, Belfast." *Irish Geography* 18 (1985a): 67-69.
- Brown, Stephen. "Central Belfast's security segment: an urban phenomenon." *Area* 17 (1985b): 1-9.
- Brown, Stephen. "Twenty years of change: retailing in the Belfast region 1969-1989." In *Geographical Perspectives on the Belfast Region*, edited by Paul Doherty, 54-67. Newtownabbey: Geographical Society of Ireland, 1990.
- Brett, Charles E.B. *Buildings of Belfast, 1700-1914*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967.
- Brett, Charles E.B. *Buildings of Belfast, 1700-1914*. Revised Edition, Belfast: Friar's Bush Press, 1985.
- Building Design Partnership. *Belfast Central Area: a report to Belfast Corporation on planning policy in the city centre*. Belfast: Building Design Partnership, 1969.
- Calame, Jon and Charlesworth, Esther. *Divided Cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.
- Carmichael, Paul. "The Northern Ireland Civil Service: Characteristics and Trends Since 1970." *Public Administration* 80 (2002): 23-49.
- Cebulla, Andreas. "Urban Policy and Local Economic Interests in Northern Ireland: A City Comparison." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 20 (1996): 466-479.
- Coopers & Lybrand Associates. *Retail Study: the Belfast Urban Area Plan 1986-2001*. Belfast: Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, 1986.
- Cowan, Rob. "Big in Belfast." *Architects' Journal* 190 (1989): 26-31.
- Cunningham, Niall. "'The doctrine of vicarious punishment': space, religion and the Belfast Troubles of 1920-22." *Journal of Historical Geography* 40 (2013): 52-66.
- Curtis, Jennifer. "'Community' and the Re-Making of 1970s Belfast." *Ethnos* 73 (2008): 399-426.
- Deddis, William G. and McGreal, Stanley. "Urban regeneration: a comparative assessment - Great Britain and Northern Ireland." In *Land and Property Development - New Directions*, edited by Richard Grover, 199-207. London: E & F N Spon, 1989.
- Gamboni, Dario. *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*. London: Reaktion Books, 1997.
- Hannigan, John A. *Environmental Sociology*. 2nd Edition, London: Routledge, 2006.
- Hendry, John, McEldowney, Malachy and Gilbert, Sarah. "Urban development grant: A trigger for economic and environmental regeneration." *Planning Practice and Research* 7 (1992): 13-20.
- McClelland, Andrew G. "Contesting destruction, construction heritage: the social construction of architectural heritage values in Belfast, circa 1960-1989." PhD Diss., Ulster University, 2014.
- McEldowney, Malachy, Sterrett, Ken W., and Gaffikin, Frank. "Architectural Ambivalence: the built environment and identity in Belfast." In *Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion: Lessons from Belfast and Berlin*, edited by William J.V. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler, 100-117. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.
- Mooney, Sam and Gaffikin, Frank. *Reshaping Space and Society: A Critical Review of the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001*. Belfast: Belfast Centre for the Unemployed, 1988.
- Morrison, Bill. "Making Belfast Work." *The Planner* 76 (199): 32-35.
- Murray, Russell. "Political violence in Northern Ireland 1969-1977." In *Integration and Division: geographical perspectives on the Northern Ireland problem*, edited by Frederick W. Boal and J. Neville H. Douglas, 309-331. London: Academic Press, 1982.
- Murtagh, Brendan. "A comparison of two land use planning organisations in Belfast." PhD Diss., Queen's University Belfast, 1992.
- Murtagh, Brendan, and Shirlow, Peter. "Devolution and the politics of development in Northern Ireland." *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 30 (2012): 46-61.
- Needham, Richard. *Battling for Peace*. Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1998.
- Neill, William J.V. "Physical Planning and Image Enhancement: Recent Developments in Belfast." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 17 (1993): 595-609.
- Patton, Marcus. "Looking Back in Anger." *Ulster Architect* (June 1985): 2-5.
- Patton, Marcus. *Central Belfast: An Historical Gazetteer*. Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1993.

- Prince, Simon P. "5 October 1968 and the Beginning of the Troubles: Flashpoints, Riots and Memory." *Irish Political Studies* 27 (2012): 394-410.
- Royle, Stephen A. *Belfast Part II, 1840-1901*, Irish Historic Towns Atlas No 17. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007.
- Sterrett, Ken, Hackett, Mark and Hill, Declan. "The social consequences of broken urban structures: a case study of Belfast." *Journal of Transport Geography* 21 (2012): 49-61.
- Ulster Architectural Heritage Society. *Heritage Newsletter*. Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1984.
- Ulster Architectural Heritage Society. *Heritage Newsletter*. Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1985.
- Vale, Lawrence J. "The politics of resilient cities: whose resilience and whose city?." *Building Research & Information* 42 (2014): 191-201.

Image sources

- Figure 1: Author's collection.
- Figure 2: © Crown Copyright 2016. Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland.
- Figure 3: © Crown Copyright 2016. Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland.
- Figure 4: Public Record Office of Northern Ireland [D1403/1/3A].
- Figure 5: © Crown NIEA. Monuments and Buildings Record.

Endnotes

- 1 Ulster Commentary, "This is the other Ulster," *Ulster Commentary* 357, 1976, 1.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 See, for example, Jon Calame and Esther Charlesworth, *Divided Cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).
- 4 Russell Murray, "Political violence in Northern Ireland 1969-1977," in *Integration and Division: geographical perspectives on the Northern Ireland problem*, ed. Frederick W. Boal and J. Neville H. Douglas (London: Academic Press, 1982).
- 5 Jim Berry and Stanley McGreal, "Public sector initiatives in the regeneration of Belfast," in *Urban Regeneration: Property Investment and Development*, ed. Jim Berry et al. (London: E & F N Spon, 1993), 194.
- 6 William J.V. Neill, "Physical Planning and Image Enhancement: Recent Developments in Belfast," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 17 (1993): 595-609.
- 7 Ibid. 599.
- 8 Lawrence J. Vale, "The politics of resilient cities: whose resilience and whose city?," *Building Research & Information* 42 (2014): 197.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Stephen Brown, "Twenty years of change: retailing in the Belfast region 1969-1989," in *Geographical Perspectives on the Belfast Region*, ed. Paul Doherty (Newtownabbey: Geographical Society of Ireland, 1990), 54-67.
- 11 Brendan Murtagh and Peter Shirlow, "Devolution and the politics of development in Northern Ireland," *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 30 (2012): 49.
- 12 Marcus Patton, "Looking Back in Anger," *Ulster Architect*, June 1985, 5.
- 13 Niall Cunningham, "The doctrine of vicarious punishment: space, religion and the Belfast Troubles of 1920-22," *Journal of Historical Geography* 40 (2013): 52-66.
- 14 Simon P. Prince, "5 October 1968 and the Beginning of the Troubles: Flashpoints, Riots and Memory," *Irish Political Studies* 27 (2012): 394-410.
- 15 Paul Carmichael, "The Northern Ireland Civil Service: Characteristics and Trends Since 1970," *Public Administration* 80 (2002): 28.
- 16 Derek Birrell, *Direct Rule and Governance of Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 122.
- 17 Jonathan Bardon, "Governing the City," in *Enduring City: Belfast in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Frederick W. Boal and Stephen A. Royle (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2006), 137. Note that 'bogs' is a local colloquialism for toilets.
- 18 Vale, "The politics of resilient cities," 196-197.
- 19 Charles E.B. Brett, *Buildings of Belfast, 1700-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 51.
- 20 Belfast was given city status in 1888. The White Linen Hall was demolished the following decade to facilitate construction of the present-day City Hall.
- 21 Marcus Patton, *Central Belfast: An Historical Gazetteer* (Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1993), 282. The choice of architectural styling and building materials was left at the discretion of individual developers and their architects.
- 22 Stephen A. Royle, *Belfast Part II, 1840-1901*, Irish Historic Towns Atlas No 17 (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2007), 1.
- 23 Charles E.B. Brett, *Buildings of Belfast, 1700-1914*, Revised edition (Belfast: Friar's Bush Press, 1985), 33.
- 24 Patton, "Looking Back in Anger," 3.
- 25 Richard Needham, *Battling for Peace* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1998), 169.
- 26 William G. Deddis and Stanley McGreal, "Urban regeneration: a comparative assessment - Great Britain and Northern Ireland," in *Land and Property Development - New Directions*, ed. Richard Grover (London: E & F N Spon, 1989), 199-207.
- 27 Bill Morrison, "Making Belfast Work," *The Planner* 76 (1999): 32-35.
- 28 Andreas Cebulla, "Urban Policy and Local Economic Interests in Northern Ireland: A City Comparison," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 20 (1996): 468.
- 29 Neill, "Physical Planning."
- 30 Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (henceforth PRONI) COM/63/1/806, Speech by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 29 August 1978.
- 31 Neill, "Physical Planning," 603.
- 32 Stephen Brown, "Smithfield Shopping Centre, Belfast," *Irish Geography* 18 (1985a): 68-69.
- 33 PRONI, ENV/32/1/3A, Clement to Patten, 29 March 1984.

- 34 John A. Hannigan, *Environmental Sociology* (London: Routledge, 2006), 88-89. See also Andrew G. McClelland, "Contesting destruction, construction heritage: the social construction of architectural heritage values in Belfast, circa 1960-1989" (PhD diss., Ulster University, 2014): 279-280.
- 35 PRONI, ENV/32/1/3A, Meeting Minutes, 6 February 1985.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 For instance, Hope reported on 16 September 1991 in an article in the *Calgary Herald* that the Castlecourt complex was "a 'proven experiment' in bringing Catholics and Protestants together'.
- 38 Brown, "Smithfield Shopping."
- 39 Malachy McEldowney, Ken W. Sterrett and Frank Gaffikin, "Architectural Ambivalence: the built environment and identity in Belfast," in *Urban Planning and Cultural Inclusion: Lessons from Belfast and Berlin*, ed. by William J.V. Neill and Hanns-Uve Schwedler (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 107.
- 40 Coopers & Lybrand Associates, *Retail Study: the Belfast Urban Area Plan 1986-2001* (Belfast: Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, 1986).
- 41 Sam Mooney and Frank Gaffikin, *Reshaping Space and Society: A Critical Review of the Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001* (Belfast: Belfast Centre for the Unemployed, 1988), 22.
- 42 Allowing the government to further argue that sectarian employment practices were a thing of the past in Northern Ireland.
- 43 Neill, "Physical Planning," 599.
- 44 Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Heritage Newsletter* (Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1985), 12.
- 45 Patton, "Looking Back in Anger," 4.
- 46 Needham, *Battling*, 171.
- 47 Rob Cowan, "Big in Belfast," *Architects' Journal* 190 (1989): 26-31.
- 48 Patton, *Central Belfast*, 287.
- 49 McEldowney et al., "Architectural Ambivalence".
- 50 Mooney and Gaffikin, *Reshaping Space*, 58.
- 51 Brendan Murtagh, "A comparison of two land use planning organisations in Belfast" (PhD diss., Queen's University Belfast, 1992): 102.
- 52 Neill, "Physical Planning," 602.
- 53 John Hendry, Malachy McEldowney and Sarah Gilbert, "Urban development grant: A trigger for economic and environmental regeneration," *Planning Practice and Research* 7 (1992): 13.
- 54 Cebulla, "Urban Policy," 468.
- 55 Stephen Brown, "Retail location and retail change in Belfast city centre" (PhD diss., Queen's University Belfast, 1984): 400.
- 56 Mooney and Gaffikin, *Reshaping Space*, 13.
- 57 McClelland, "Contesting destruction," 269-270, 288-289.
- 58 PRONI, ENV/32/1/3A, Meeting Minutes, 6 February 1985.
- 59 McClelland, "Contesting destruction," 232-237, 289-291.
- 60 Jean Balfour, *A New Look at the Northern Ireland Countryside* (Belfast: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1984), 3.
- 61 Patton, "Looking Back in Anger," 3.
- 62 Brett, Revised edition, xv.
- 63 These changes included reports on the functioning of the main conservation agency within government, the progression of conservation area designation within Belfast, and the marshalling of heritage within broader attempts at 're-imagining' the city.
- 64 The Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons subsequently criticised the DOE's failure to conclude an adequate claw back arrangement, meaning that when Castlecourt was sold in 1994, the profit-level for the developer (£16.2 million) was considered extremely high given the level of public subsidy.
- 65 See McClelland, "Contesting destruction," 246-292.
- 66 Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, *Heritage Newsletter* (Belfast: Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, 1984), 8.
- 67 Jennifer Curtis, "'Community' and the Re-Making of 1970s Belfast," *Ethnos* 73 (2008): 402.
- 68 Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 212.
- 69 Ken Sterrett, Mark Hackett and Declan Hill, "The social consequences of broken urban structures: a case study of Belfast," *Journal of Transport Geography* 21 (2012): 49-61.
- 70 For instance, a report published by the Northern Ireland Department for Social Development in 2005 highlighted the 'blocking' effect that Castlecourt had on connectivity and implementing urban regeneration to its rear.