
*“Conferences should mark
the start of the debate
not the conclusion”*

Ranko Radovic, Helsinki University of Technology

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Foreword



Housing, like education, is a vital cornerstone of a healthy and happy society. It is important that links are continually made between the two and it was entirely appropriate that, as part of the 1995 International Federation for Housing and Planning Congress, a parallel Schools Conference should be held. This report summarises the papers presented at the conference together with the views of the young people who form the future of our society.

The Schools Conference proved to be very successful and this publication is a continuation of the debate started that day. I would like to thank sponsors, speakers, teachers and the students who took part in the event. Their enthusiasm and participation was refreshing and augers well for the future of our country.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Seán MacAonáin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Chairman
Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Introduction

Maurice Blease, Lecturer in Education, Stranmillis College

- The International Federation for Housing and Planning (I.F.H.P.) is the world's oldest and largest housing organisation. Established in 1913, it has members in over 60 countries world-wide. Each year the I.F.H.P. holds its Congress in a different country. In 1994 it travelled to Canada, while in 1996 it will be held in Japan.
- The 1995 congress was hosted by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in Belfast between the 10-14th September. The theme chosen by the Executive was 'Accommodating Differences' and over 800 delegates from throughout the world travelled to Northern Ireland to take part.
- In their endeavour to broaden the debate beyond those with a professional interest in housing, the Executive organised a School's Conference to run parallel to the congress sessions. If the debate was relevant to "the housing planners" then it must be especially relevant to today's pupils tomorrow's decision makers. In order to focus pupil attention and to prepare them for the conference, a school's competition was launched, prior to the congress date. The competition and School's conference adopted the congress theme of 'Accommodating Differences'.
- This initiative was unique in a number of ways;
- 1. The IFHP had never before held a School's competition or conference as part of their congress. It has subsequently led to the call by the former President of IFHP, Ranko Radovic, for the establishment of a Youth Forum as part of IFHP activity and the inclusion of a youth session in future congresses.
- 2. The competition and conference drew together the efforts and financial support of a wide range of sponsors from public, private, commercial and voluntary sectors. Along with the Executive and the Northern Ireland Department of Education, support was given by The Post Office, Daewoo Electronics, Homeless International, The F.B. Thompson Trust and Stranmillis College,
- 3. The occasion provided the Executive with an opportunity to renew its partnership with the Northern Ireland Department of Education in highlighting for teachers the theme of housing in the curriculum, and the importance of raising pupil awareness of housing and community living issues. The Chief Inspector for Schools, Mr. Tom Shaw, made reference to this partnership in his opening remarks at the start of the conference,
"I acknowledge Northern Ireland Housing Executive's long standing interest and support of the work in schools and in social and environmental education. The Executive promoted an initiative in the 1980's called 'Housing and the Curriculum', which set the standard for others to aim for. The conference is a further step in that tradition and commitment."
- This publication of the conference report along with two of the papers is a further development of that commitment. The publication is an acknowledgement that something more permanent should emerge from the IFHP conference. As the former President of IFHP, Ranko Radovic, stated at the conclusion of his address to teachers, "Conferences should mark the start of the debate not the conclusion."

· **The Northern Ireland Context**

· The theme, 'Accommodating Differences', has clear
· relevance to Northern Ireland. It was fortuitous that
· the conference coincided with a new climate of
· optimism in the province. This optimism was due to
· the declaration, by those who had formerly advocated
· violence, to engage in dialogue in order to reach "an
· accommodation." The call for peace through "parity
· of esteem" was not just local to Northern Ireland it
· was evident in global peace initiatives in such areas of
· conflict as South Africa and the Middle East.

· The historical roots for establishing the Executive
· was the call in the late 60's for civil rights and for
· equality of opportunity in housing. The subsequent
· development of the Executive has therefore taken
· place against a backdrop of twenty-five years of "the
· troubles." It is not surprising that the Executive
· recognises that the consequence of "perceived
· differences" or "real differences", is segregated
· housing. Whilst economic factors are important in
· home choice, individuals will seek to 'live with their
· own' for reasons of identity and for security. Where
· differences lead to community violence and social
· unrest, we are all too aware that segregation can bring
· about the establishment of ghettos where contact
· between neighbourhoods and communities is limited.
· Such a situation exists not only in Northern Ireland
· and in other strife torn countries but also in
· countries considered to be at peace.

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· Worsley (1981) has indicated that, "contemporary
· sociologists have written about urban 'ghettos' and
· 'disaster areas' - the cultural neighbourhoods in cities
· which attract negative images and bad reputations.
· Every city has such neighbourhoods, which have been
· called 'dreadful enclosures'."

· Walter (1977) discusses how certain kinds of urban
· neighbourhood come to be the target of other city
· dwellers' fantasies; how their inhabitants have ascribed
· to them all sorts of bizarre and negative attributes;
· and the processes by which inhabitants of these
· stigmatised neighbourhoods come to collect such a
· reputation, a process he calls 'blaming the victim'.
· However, Walter's own research into such 'dreadful
· enclosures' in Boston, Massachusetts did not support
· any of these stereotypes .

· The problem in Northern Ireland has been that the
· 'dreadful enclosures' are not merely in peoples' minds
· they have become part of the landscape of urban
· neighbourhoods in the shape of the erroneously named
· 'peace lines'. As the conference report (p14) indicates
· "there are around 15 peace lines in Belfast, stretching
· about 5 miles in total and affecting around 2,000 homes.
· The most daunting of all is the Cupar Street wall in
· West Belfast. Around 40ft high, it runs for more than a
· quarter of a mile and is the most visible sign of a city
· divided. Many other peace lines tend to hide their
· significance through bushes and shrubbery mixing with
· railings and bricks. Architecturally designed security
· devices giving peace of mind to neighbourhoods."

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· initiatives” and against a backdrop of wider
· international issues. As the conference report
· indicates pupils interpreted the theme in many
· ways other than the usual sectarian division. These
· included, disability, the environment, education,
· poverty, sexism and racism. One aspect of N. Ireland
· life that has been given a higher profile since the
· declarations of peace is that of ethnic/religious
· minorities. In view of this we have included a paper by
· Maurice Ryan on inter-faith relations in Northern
· Ireland.(p34)

· The pupil workshop reports showed that they were
· more than willing to discuss controversial matters.They
· felt that change would only come about through
· communities working together. They realised that
· “solutions have to come from individual community
· levels. Communities have to take active and creative
· responsibility for their own development. Some saw
· hope through “paramilitaries breaking the traditional
· mould and the message that people can help them-
· selves.” There is little doubt that the visit to the West
· Belfast community centre and the contribution of the
· community workers Liam Maskey and Billy Mitchell
· had a major impact on the pupils at the conference.
· Subsequent to the conference they have been invited
· to speak at a number of schools about their work
· towards accommodating differences. We therefore
· include a paper by Billy Mitchell which gives some
· insight to teachers and pupils into the work of
· community groups seeking in their own way to
· accommodate differences between neighbourhoods.
· (p31)

· The ‘peace initiative’ encouraged a climate that allowed
· us, to look “outside our own troubles”. One of the
· intentions of the Accommodating Differences
· School’s Competition and Conference was to provide
· an opportunity for teachers and pupils to examine how
· others outside Northern Ireland deal with differences.

· **The Global Context**

· Pupils and teachers felt that as a result of conference
· they saw issues relevant to Northern Ireland in the
· broader context and that other counties faced similar
· problems. Many pupils felt it was useful to talk to
· others from the Third World.

· *“it helped widen our views of the problems of our
· society and possible solutions.”*

· *“presented positive examples of where differences
· were being accommodated.”*

· *“made me aware that problems were not peculiar
· to Northern Ireland are in fact a global
· phenomena.”*

· In view of this response we have included a paper by
· Ruth McLeod, director of Homeless International,
· (p38) which we feel will be of value to teachers.

· The Report of the Commission on Global
· Governance “Our Global Neighbourhood” has
· highlighted the fact that ‘Never before has change
· come so rapidly on such a global scale and with such
· global violence.’

· Two major changes that we in Northern Ireland are
· increasingly aware of are:

· (a) **European Community and Changes
· within Eastern Europe**

· (b) **The introduction of global technology
· and the development of global media**

· The Commission Report emphasises that, "A time of
· change when future patterns cannot be clearly
· discerned is inevitably a time of uncertainty. There is
· need for balance and caution and also for vision and
· leadership. Our common future will depend on the
· extent to which people and leaders around the
· world develop the vision of a better world and the
· strategies, the institutions and the will to achieve it."

· The development of such leadership puts responsibil-
· ity not just upon politicians and industrialists but
· also upon educationalists. There have been a number
· of curriculum projects implicitly aimed at leadership
· development e.g. The European Studies Project
· (Austin R., 1992) and Education for Peace (Rodgers
· P., 1991). However, when Richardson indicates that
· Education for Mutual Understanding should be seen
· as "part of a much broader whole" it may well be that
· it has a central role to play in *helping* schools not only
· to achieve a vision and leadership but also in
· *producing* pupils with vision and leadership.

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· Ruth McLeod concluded her report of the pupil
· discussions by saying that "there is a lot of laughter
· and spirit in this society - you should maintain that,
· that kind of energy is very important."

· Beloff in her summation of papers in Harbison and
· Harbison's book, "A Society Under Stress." (1980)
· made an almost similar comment "Even under
· conditions of deprivation, disorder and stress where
· options may be narrowed, young people are still out
· there making rational strategies, having flexible ideas
· and setting themselves goals which are as idealistic
· as those of other young people."

· It was refreshing for those of us who shared the day
· at the I.F.H.P. Congress with the pupils from schools
· throughout N. Ireland. To be in the presence of their
· energy, their idealism and their flexibility of approach
· gave one hope for the future. It is intended that this
· record of that day and related papers will help
· teachers to facilitate other pupils in their discussion
· of important issues relating to Accommodating
· Differences and dealing with diversity. It will be through
· such discussion that the young people will develop
· their vision and leadership which will help them make
· rational strategies for the future.

· Events in Northern Ireland since the congress
· including the breakdown of the I.R.A. ceasefire and
· the conflict over marches underline the importance
· of addressing the issues "Accommodating Differences".

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· Since last September we have had a breathing space. It's
· up to us to ensure that that breathing space is not
· squandered. Paul Muldoon's poem 'Truce' contains a
· very relevant metaphor for all of us in this regard. He
· describes the opposing warriors, little people, leaving
· the First World War trenches at Christmas 1914 to
· discover signs of a common humanity and so express-
· ing a desire not to be caught up in somebody else's war;

· *It begins with one or two soldiers,*
· *and one or two following,*
· *With hampers over their shoulders,*
· *They might be off wildfowling*

· *As they would another Christmas Day.*
· *So gingerly they pick their steps.*
· *No-one seems sure of what to do.*
· *All stop when one stops.*

· *A fire gets lit. Some spread*
· *Their greatcoats on the frozen ground.*
· *Polish vodka, fruit and bread,*
· *Are broken out and passed round.*

· *The air of an old German song.*
· *The rules of Patience, are the secrets,*
· *They'll share before long.*

· The sad thing is that they were whipped back into the
· trenches by the officers and generals, where millions
· of them were to die, pointlessly and fruitlessly. We must
· not allow that to happen to us. I particularly like the
· quiet optimism of the Ulster poet, John Hewitt;

· *This is our history then, eight hundred years*
· *disaster*

· *Crazily tangled as the Book of Kells*

· *The dream's distortion and the land's division*

· *The midnight raiders and the prison cells*

· *Yet like Lir's children, banished to the waters,*

· *Out hearts still listen for the landward bells.*

· Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you hear the sound of
· the landward bells during today's conference.

Accommodating Differences Conference: An Overview.

Philip Maguire and Jonathan Blease

The Schools' Conference, held at Stranmillis College, was attended by 120 pupils representing thirty secondary schools from the voluntary, maintained, controlled and integrated sectors within Northern Ireland. It consisted of two parallel sessions, one for pupils and the other for their teachers.

The occasion provided the pupils with an international stage for expressing their views, not only upon community division within Northern Ireland, but also upon other interpretations of the Accommodating Differences theme. Topics touched upon by the pupils both in the Competition and at the conference included the following:

- disability
- living conditions
- security
- education
- racism
- welfare
- sectarianism
- the environment
- leisure
- poverty
- unemployment
- sexism

The day was divided into four sessions:

- Visiting Speakers; A Tour of Belfast;
- Workshops; Report back by the workshop facilitators and distribution of prizes.

Visiting Speakers

Pupils heard from Homeless International representatives. Joel Bolnick, Director of the Peoples' Dialogue on Land and Shelter and Patric Hunsley from the townships of South Africa. In addition Celine De Cruz and Jocin Arputham represented the homeless from the slums of Bombay. Whilst these speakers shared their experience of hardship with the pupils they delivered a hopeful message: that people can get together to solve their own problems

Belfast Tour

This tour included a visit to one of the city's peace lines to see at first hand the physical divisions between communities. Pupils also visited local community groups and discussed with those who are attempting to work across this divide. The tour concluded with a visit to the City Hall and a discussion with the Lord Mayor at the City Hall.



Council Chamber Belfast City Hall

Workshops

In the third session the pupils heard speakers from the local community groups, Billy Mitchell a former Loyalist paramilitary and Liam Maskey a former Republican internee. These two men are working together in North Belfast to encourage community development in an area which has suffered more than

any other in the recent conflict. The afternoon workshops gave the students the opportunity to mix with peers of differing religions, geographical and economic backgrounds to discuss the various issues.

Teachers' Conference

The IFHP Teachers' Conference gave teachers the opportunity to meet academics from around the world. These included Professor Ranko Radovic, Helsinki University, who looked at the complexity of a plural urban environment. Professor Hans Van Der Heijde from Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, examined educational strategies for combating prejudice whilst Professor Dithelm Knauf, University of Bremen presented a paper on concepts of Inter-cultural Learning in Germany.

The afternoon session saw a comprehensive presentation by a team of presenters lead by Dr Carol Cowan, from Lowell Massachusetts, USA. This session examined the way a local education system responded to differences. Billy Mitchell and Liam Maskey representing community groups from across the divide in Northern Ireland examined the role of education in the peace process, and the teachers' seminar was closed by Fr. Joseph McCann from St. Patrick's College, Dublin who examined the meaning of 'community'.

Evaluation gave very positive feedback from both pupils and teachers. In fact they expressed the wish that the conference should have extended beyond a one day event! Both pupils and teachers felt that as a result of their attendance they saw issues relevant to

Northern Ireland in the broader context of similar problems in other countries.

Summary of Delegates' Addresses

Tom Shaw, Chief Inspector Northern Ireland Department of Education, set the context for the conference by indicating that it presented an opportunity for pupils to see aspects of their own community at first hand. He also hoped that the speakers from India and South Africa and that they would have a profound influence on pupil attitudes and values. Mr Shaw expressed the hope that pupils would come to the conclusion that in order to establish a peaceful and prosperous community all traditions should "perceive their distinctiveness as something to be understood, respected, even celebrated, rather than to remain a focus of division and prejudice." The theme 'Accommodating Differences', he saw to be highly relevant to the Northern Ireland curriculum, especially in relationship to the cross curricula theme, Education for Mutual Understanding.

Delegates from South Africa and India highlighted the specific problems that individuals in those countries faced and outlined the individual responses of their organisations.



Clinton Cameron, Homeless International.

· Patric, from the Homeless People's Federation from
· South Africa, underlined his message to the
· conference that difference should be accommodated
· rather than entertained with the use of the
· following poem:

· A Chance to Live Again.
·
· *I thought it was impossible in my time,*
· *I thought we were different,*
· *Because we black, white, yellow brown and pink,*
· *I was wrong, we lived again.*
· *He rose after the 3rd day,*
· *We rose after 27th August 1994,*
· *He forgave them for nailing Him to the cross,*
· *We forgave them for torture, murder and*
· *discrimination.*
· *A nation rose above hate,*
· *A nation rose above pride,*
· *Hatred gazes at the right-hand side of God,*
· *De Clerk sits at the left-hand side of Mandela.*
· *We have to continue to paradise,*
· *They killed my grandfather and raped my*
· *grandmother,*
· *My father was obedient,*
· *He was afraid he would lose distinction.*
· *I sacrificed my life and childhood for the struggle,*
· *But I can never bear to see,*
· *My children going through the same thing,*
· *Yes, it is painful.*
· *But mankind is above pride, above hate, above*
· *religion,*

· *Let us accommodate differences and not entertain*
· *them,*
· *The youth of the Country will help,*
· *In building this country again.*
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· Celine De Cruz from the Society for the Promotion
· of Area Resource Centre (SPARC), Bombay, told of
· how her organisation started up in 1984 after her
· community were "sad and fed up of the things we
· were doing because they never seemed to change
· people's lives."

· In Bombay out of a population of 11 million people
· half live in slums or shanty towns. Seline explained
· that there are two categories of poor people. Firstly,
· there are pavement dwellers who live around the
· footpaths of the city and number some 32,000
· families. Secondly there are those who live in slums
· and squat on what ever land is available. Amongst
· these are the Street Children who do not live with
· their families, but instead live under bridges and in bus
· and train stations.

· SPARC identified the pavement dwellers as the most
· needy of the two groups because they were completely
· isolated from society. They had no access to any
· facilities, having to pay for the water to use a public
· toilet. For example a family of 6 to 8 people would
· have to pay 8-10 rupees a day for two buckets of
· water, a fee they could not afford.

· It was also identified by SPARC that their best
· resource was its people, especially the women of the
· community. They were the backbone of the organisa-

. tion and its main dynamic. In addition they became
. the community's architects, engineers and builders.

. It was a very important lesson for everyone working
. in SPARC, according to Seline, that poor people could
. be independent of professionals and stand on their
. own two feet. Just as much as anyone else "poor peo-
. ple have the intelligence and the capability to know
. what they want but they need a system to provide
. them with enough space and freedom to accommo-
. date the development of this philosophy".

. In relating her experience to her visit to Northern
. Ireland, Celine observed that there was a lot of
. hope and energy about - "people need an outlet for
. this energy, an outlet through which they can
. accommodate their differences."

. Jockim from The National Slum Dwellers of India had
. a similar story. He was in a part of Bombay where
. 80,000 people lived within a confined area.
. Continuing appalling conditions and the National
. Slum Dwellers attempts to get government help,
. brought them to the conclusion that they would
. have to use their own skills to put forward a feasible
. plan for better living conditions and to persuade the
. government for backing.

. They identified all the vacant land around, which
. amounted to 70,000 acres, and confronted the
. government with these figures. They set up a network
. amongst all the slum and pavement dwellers to spread
. relevant information about any developments. They
. gathered a sizable amount of money by organising each
. woman to save one rupee a week, and they designed

. and cost the building of new houses. This was done
. not with the technical know-how of planners.

. Like Celine, Jockim argued that women were the main
. dynamic behind the organisation. They added to their
. roles of the "human money purses" and the "best
. communication centres" by becoming planners,
. designers and builders.

. Over a ten year period they approached the govern-
. ment with the claim that they could build houses for
. only £400 (a lot cheaper than it cost the government
. to build a house) - and it took the ten years before
. the government would accept that they were capable
. of such things.

. Jockim finished his talk by applying The National Slum
. Dwellers experience to Northern Ireland: "you can
. take the ideas you have heard here today and use
. them in your own situation and ask yourselves the
. question, 'How can we help ourselves?'"

. **City Tour of Belfast**

. On the city tour many of the pupils saw for the first
. time, face to face, the city's divisions embodied by the
. so called "Peace Lines." They met people from within
. these groups who were attempting through their
. respective community groups to help themselves break
. through the divisions.

. For the first time, even for those from Belfast, pupils
. visited some of the peace lines in North and West
. Belfast, and started to realise the meaning of the
. physical manifestations of the so called divide between
. Catholics and Protestants in the city.

Now there are around 15 peace lines in Belfast, stretching about 5 miles in total and affecting around 2,000 homes. The most daunting is the Cupar Street wall in West Belfast. Just as stark as the acute divisions between the communities on either side of the walls, are the similarities. Despite the differing political symbols and beliefs of the communities, they share identical economic conditions. Unemployment, for example, is a problem shared by both traditions.



Billy Mitchell and Liam Maskey looking over Belfast.

The pupils had the opportunity to meet with Billy Mitchell, Linc Resource Centre and Liam Maskey, Newington Cavehill Community Services Association, in North Belfast. These two community leaders, from opposite sides of the sectarian divide, came together in order to tackle the social problems that the people of their communities faced. The source of these problems, they argued, were the divisions in society and the inability of the communities to come together. In order to survive and in order to get what you want,



Cupar Street wall.

they argued that you must get involved in dialogue. Or as Billy called it “dialogic democracy.”

Unfortunately, Billy said, that it took the people from both communities from North Belfast a spell in prison to get to know each other. Their aim as community leaders was to bring about peace through reconciliation and the development of a pluralistic society in North Belfast. Liam spoke of the need to accept each communities constitutional aspirations, and through this come together to help each other:

“Although I am a nationalist I now respect the unionist position. Politicians are too far apart, they are afraid of constitutional issues and party politics. It is important to start building communities on the ground level. We need to go forward, our communities have suffered far too long. By helping people recognise the



Malawi - New one bedroom houses



National Slum Dwellers help themselves

· to be a difficulty but also a strong desire. Differences
· not just religious or cultural were not the only
· differences touched upon but also those of gender,
· class and economic disadvantage. There was a general
· feeling that “we don’t want to force anybody to do
· anything against their will, we want to develop a
· respect for difference but maintain the opportunity
· to make choices for our own lives.”

· Pupils indicated that they want to have “flags of hope”
· and “flags of example.” Again and again, Education Empty
· optimism is of no use, pragmatic optimism is a huge
· advantage and the Northern Ireland Housing
· Executive was congratulated on including Liam and
· Billy at the conference, their contribution having
· touched a lot of people. A lot of verbs seem to be
· coming out of this event, verbs like listen, understand
· and accommodate, all equally important.

· **Student Written Reports**

· Not even the most hardened conference-goer would
· deny feeling skeptical before arriving at a new set of
· lectures or workshops. This was certainly true of the
· pupils, who all expressed apprehension and
· nervousness before the Schools’ Conference. They
· were there, of course, to discuss issues relating to
· Northern Ireland with other pupils of different reli-
· gion, sex and background. It can, however, be clearly
· seen from their reports and from the workshop re-
· ports, that the conference helped the children realise
· that they were Northern Ireland’s decision-makers of
· the future.

· On the City Tour the pupils enjoyed “reading the city”
· - “the reality of division.... why it took this form and
· why it maintains this form....” All the pupils found the
· tour interesting and beneficial especially the visit
· to North Belfast, because, according to pupils from
· Belfast Model School for Girls it “gave us a wider
· perspective of life outside our own particular
· community.” Many pupils even some from Belfast, had
· heard of but never had seen peace lines. Pupils from
· Our Lady and St. Patrick’s College, Knock were
· impressed by the community groups in North Belfast
· who overcame political differences. They were the ‘best
· advertisement’ for Accommodating Differences.

· Many pupils felt it was a privilege to talk to others
· from the Third World:

· “ it helped widen our views of the problems of our
· society and possible solutions”

· “gave cultural insight into under developed societies.”

· “presented positive examples of where differences
· were being accommodated.”

· “we are obsessed by our own troubles.”

· “made me aware that problems were not peculiar to
· Northern Ireland are in fact a global phenomena.”

· Some saw hope through “paramilitaries breaking the
· traditional mould and the message that people can
· help themselves.”

· Overall the reports from pupils were very positive.
· Interestingly though one pupil made the comment that
· E.M.U. should not just be about pupils from different
· schools getting together .. “teachers must teach in
· other schools.”

Reading The City:

Ranko Radovick

*Cities, like continents,
are simply huge facts of nature...*

Kevin Lynch

Cities are an incredible product of times and of society. Our everyday contact with the city makes us insensitive and unaware of their complexity and of how cities are relevant and important, not just for so many people at one time, but also over generations. Cities are incredible books - their reading an exciting experience - if we are prepared to develop our knowledge of the urban essentials around us.

Kevin Lynch's statement "The city may be looked on as a story, a pattern of relations between human groups, a production and distribution space, a field of physical force, a set of linked decisions, or an arena of conflict" seems to me to be both full and brilliant when considering what the "good city form" is.

City is a product, an artefact, a physical reality, linking natural sites with human interests and activities. The urban fabric and the whole urban environment is the result of processes, interests and forces shaping every building, street, central area and industrial premises. As in Nature - in cities nothing is at all accidental. Everything in cities has some meaning and importance, messages flow coming and going. Can we develop our sensitivity and those of our children to read the city with its rich urban images and urban realities?

To say that nature and cities are fully interrelated can be a mere platitude. In the last fifty years we have been in the presence of ecological and environmental conflicts between man-made values and structures and natural resources and their values. Sites with their plants, topography and rivers, climate and seasons, have to be articulated in urban forms. Those natural inputs have to shape the townscapes, and if not - we have 'to read' and know why each society and their social groups are polluting, destroying or misusing the natural "goods" natural "goods" that need to remain here for each generation. The now famous notion of "sustainable development" has one main principle to take care of natural values so as they may be kept for the future.

The whole body of culture, linked to working, technologies and producing systems, in short our "Way of life", is one of the main narratives of the 'Book of the City'. Where are religious buildings located and why? How do these function as "social centres"? What is their relationship to the location of "shopping malls"? The mode of transportation in the city "talk" to us of public-private interests. Is it natural for the city to accept all forms of locomotion, from the car to the bike, buses or the underground systems and indeed the horse.

.....

.....

Belfast Northern Ireland's capital city.

· Complexity and respect for differences is, and
· perhaps for centuries has been, the most important
· image of the city. One-sided urban concepts have from
· time to time been voiced by some urban experts or
· pressure groups..... "Only pre-fabricated houses are
· good and rational", or "only low density dwellings in
· the city are human", or, "nothing is better than a
· public transportation system....." These are against
· the nature of the rich urban possibilities and
· variations. The City is here to promote and to
· welcome different options and solutions and to
· develop, the "unity in diversity"

· The same can be said about buildings and their urban
· context, the "private" use and functions of buildings,
· in comparison with the "public spaces" and public role
· of the city. This may be an over simplification, but I still
· remember one of my professors of Urban Planning
· saying "one building Architecture, two buildings
· Urbanism". Through time I learned to add to two
· buildings "winds, children, economy, colours, time
· and history, functions, particular interests, building
· technologies, taste, prejudices, land values and noise".
· One main message is definite... we have to read
· buildings in relation to other buildings and in relation
· to open and free spaces. We must also attempt to
· interpret how all of this is working together. For
· example in traditional urban environments the
· buildings are very simple, but they are creating, by their
· relationships, a very complex and inspiring milieu.
· This seems to me to be "l'art urbain", a discipline we
· all have to discover and to recreate again and again.
· A discipline that must come to be known by each
· generation.

· Urban landscapes are the product of time and history.
· It is unfortunate that after World War II, the urban
· professionals, pushed by market forces and develop-
· ers, demolished some of the best urban areas in
· Europe. Historical urban spaces are not "the essential
· cultural archeology."! From historical urban artefacts
· we can understand much better the urban energies
· and social movements, and thus we can learn to
· recognise some "urban eternal presence" in the
· planning of our modern urban areas. Nothing can
· substantially change the role of "the street" as a social
· place for events, movements, gatherings and festivals.
· The "street facade", the ordered row of "different
· buildings" of different height, styles, functions,
· materials and articulation are there for every citizen -
· a theme of thinking and a field of feelings, with
· memories in need of identification.

· Constancy and change can be read in any city. It is
· really incredible how cities are able to integrate and
· keep together distant times, view technologies, needs
· and economies. Even today the biggest cities of the
· world are historical ones (Paris, Rome or Tokyo) and
· precisely because of the "talent of the city" to both
· change and yet remain the same. Seine, Tevere and
· Sumida - three rivers of those three cities are still at
· their "core." We are surprised by the fact that we are
· looking to the rivers' flow, as those who over
· hundreds of years stood on the same place.

Education for Accommodating Differences:

Norman Richardson

- Norman Richardson is a Research Associate at the
- School of Education in the Queen's University of
- Belfast where he is currently developing teacher
- education materials in relation to Education for Mutual
- Understanding and Cultural Heritage. A former
- teacher, he worked for many years for a voluntary EMU
- supporting organisation and is the author of several
- books and curriculum programmes.



· *Community Art or offensive Graffiti*

- A society in which children are divided into separate
- schools at the most impressionable age has inevitably
- come in for scrutiny and criticism from within and
- from without. Northern Ireland's education system has
- generally been reckoned to have many commendable
- aspects in terms of academic achievement, but its
- social effects have been accused of being a major
- factor in the inter-community conflict. Some have
- argued that education is only a symptom of a much
- wider social division, rather than a direct cause, while
- others would suggest that cause and symptom have
- become inextricably linked.

- Education, religion and community identity are closely
- intertwined in Northern Ireland. In a society where
- gaining knowledge of the religious/cultural/political
- identity of other people has become an instinctive
- and practical skill, awareness of the school which some-
- one attended remains the most effective way of es-
- tablishing whether someone is from a Protestant or a
- Catholic background. For historical, social and political
- reasons the four longest Christian denominations
- (Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican and Method-
- ist) have been significantly involved in the educational
- process, and all but a few of the Provinces's schools
- are thereby identified by most people as either Prot-
- estant or Catholic. The prevailing reality is that chil-
- dren from Protestant backgrounds attend the state
- controlled (de facto Protestant) schools, and those
- from the Catholic community attend the Catholic
- schools with very little cross-over. This is separation
- rather than segregation - for most parents the idea of
- sending their children to the schools of "the other
- community" would be quite out of the question, es-

pecially in the context of continuing inter-community interest and fear. A small but growing integrated schools sector, in which Catholics, Protestants and others are educated together, caters as yet for only about 2% of the school-going population, although its significance is undoubtedly gaining ground.

In the mid-1970s a prominent Northern Ireland-based educationist of the time, Professor Malcolm Skilbeck, described the Province's teachers as "naive bearers of (sectarian) culture"! (Skilbeck, 1976 [the word "sectarian" is not included in printed versions of his text, but it was used orally!]) Such remarks may not have endeared him to some in the teaching profession, but they did highlight an important dimension of education in a controversial society. At that time the predominant view was that it was neither appropriate nor helpful for schools to attempt to deal with issues relating to the Province's divisions and conflicts. Despite some excellent and courageous work on the part of a few individual teachers and schools, most steered clear of the sensitive aspects of History, Literature, Religious Education and other subjects, and there was very little contact between pupils from the separate systems (apart from occasional competitive sports, which almost certainly did little to help). Skilbeck's point was that teachers could not afford the luxury of wishing to stand aside from these issues, as this only reinforced the status quo. Not to deal with important divisive social issues in schools has its own messages for pupils. Skilbeck and a few others urged schools to be interventionist - as authentic educational practice demanded - and to take a reconstructionist approach.



Separate sports for separate schools

More than twenty years on, Northern Ireland still has its separate parallel school systems, but the willingness of educators to deal seriously with social division has changed significantly. The period since the early 1970s has seen a developing range of curriculum experiments - some of them, indeed, prompted by Skilbeck's remarks - and increased opportunities for inter-school cross-community contact. These programmes sought to encourage teachers' confidence and skills in dealing with controversial issues, to develop educational strategies for approaching conflict and prejudice, and to provide curriculum materials for the exploration of cultural and religious diversity. Much of this work was led by the Universities, teacher education institutions and a number of voluntary organisations influenced at



· certain points by research and creative practice
· emanating from North America, especially in relation
· to the development of peace, education and creative
· approaches to conflict, and also from the promotion
· of intercultural and human rights education by
· international bodies such as the Council of Europe
· and UNESCO (Council of Europe, 1985; UNESCO,
· 1974). However, for many years these were viewed as
· optional activities for a few enthusiasts, and they did
· not engage a large number of teachers.

· In the early 1980s government started to take a much
· more proactive role in the development of policies
· which encouraged all involved in education to
· recognise their “responsibility for helping children to
· learn to understand and respect each other, and their
· differing customs and traditions, and of preparing them
· to live together in harmony in adult life” (DENI, 1982).
· Representatives from the various existing active groups
· were drawn together under official auspices for the
· first time in order to put more corporate shape to
· the activities and processes emanating from their work,
· and the term Education for Mutual Understanding
· (EMU) was coined as an agreed title. In 1987 funding
· was made available for schools to facilitate inter-school
· contact programmes providing they met certain
· criteria (relating to long-term continuity and genuinely
· collaborative practice). This voluntary programme
· continues to the present time, and it has enabled a
· significantly greater number of schools to establish and
· maintain cross-community contact, although the
· quality of such work inevitably ranges between the
· extremely good and the somewhat token. Most
· significant of all, however, was the establishment in 1989

· of a Common Curriculum for Northern Ireland which
· gave considerable emphasis to the community
· relations dimensions of education in the Province.
· Common programmes were established for all
· subjects, including the sensitive and potentially
· divisive ones like History and Religion, and a number
· of Educational Themes (inter-disciplinary and whole-
· school) were introduced into the Curriculum by
· statute, including Education for Mutual Understanding
· and Cultural Heritage (HMSO, 1989). These require
· teachers of all subjects at all stages to take account of
· “self-respect, respect for others and the improvement
· of relationships between people of differing cultural
· traditions” (DENI, 1992). At their heart “both themes
· are concerned with affirming the richness of diversity
· and helping people to live with differences in a
· spirit of acceptance, fairness and mutual respect”
· (Richardson, 1996a).

· Teachers have been issued with a range of
· documentation in relation to these two themes,
· although some of this has been sparse and even, on
· occasion, confusing. However, the official Objectives
· of EMU and Cultural Heritage can be summarised
· (unofficially) into four main areas:

- Respect for self and others, and the building of
· relationships;
- Understanding and dealing creatively with conflict;
- Awareness of human interdependence (local and
· global); and
- Awareness of, and respect for, shared and diverse
· cultural traditions.

(Richardson, 1996a)

• Schools are being encouraged to implement these objectives through various approaches:

- 1. Through the school curriculum (in which some subjects, such as History, Religion, Language, etc., clearly have particular significance);
- 2. Through the teaching and learning methods employed in the school;
- 3. Through the pastoral life of the school (e.g., in regard to counselling, positive behaviour policies, discipline and issues such as bullying);
- 4. Through the development of a positive whole-school ethos;
- and
- 5. Through creative and meaningful application of the voluntary strategy of inter-school cross-community contact.

(Richardson, 1996b)

• Practice in this field has, inevitably, been varied, and the implementation of EMU and Cultural Heritage on the ground in Northern Ireland will require long-term continuity and commitment. Some excellent work has been undertaken in individual schools and also between schools which have formed creative curriculum and social links "across the divide". Teachers in some schools have developed sufficient trust to begin discussion on sensitive and controversial issues, but elsewhere teachers have felt vulnerable and inadequately trained for such front-line work. Some excellent curriculum materials have been produced for various age-groups, sometimes to help children explore their cultural similarities and sometimes

• dealing with contentious issues. Particularly innovative programmes have been developed to help teachers and pupils build skills in handling conflicts, and a few schools have gained experience in prejudice reduction techniques and peer-mediation skills (Tyrrell, 1995; Tyrrell & Farrell, 1995). Undoubtedly one of the major difficulties, however, has been the way in which some schools have regarded the voluntary strategy of inter-school contact to be the totality of EMU and Cultural Heritage rather than as a part of a much broader whole. At its worst this has led to tokenism and superficiality which has sometimes unfairly implied that all practice in this work is shallow and ineffective.

• The key to any development of this kind is with the teachers themselves. A growing number of teachers have come to recognise that EMU is not primarily something that they can teach to pupils at a particular time or in a particular class. Rather, they are recognising that this is a process in which all - teachers and learners alike - must participate. Teacher development - professionally and personally - is crucial. Teachers need to be better equipped to deal with the issues which inevitably arise from cross-community educational processes and for the skills in personal and group relationships which are necessary in such situations. Gradually the facilities and opportunities for teacher training in this area are improving, and EMU and Cultural Heritage now form at least some part of all initial training programmes, as well as featuring in in-service teacher education provision. The present writer is currently engaged in developing

· appropriate resources and materials for teacher
· education in these themes, and in organising and teach
· ing several courses in the Queen's University of
· Belfast and other centres.

· While these curriculum innovations have not provided
· quick or easy solutions to the problem of educational
· separation, they have certainly changed the atmosphere
· and established inter-community relationships as an
· educational priority. In a cautiously improving political
· climate there is great potential for giving greater
· priority to improved relationships built on a basis of
· awareness, knowledge, openness and acceptance as
· opposed to the lack of contact, the uninformed myths
· and the defensiveness of the past. But as with all
· educational work, this must be viewed as a long-
· term strategy without expectation of dramatic and
· swift results. Education can only be one strand in the
· broadly-based process of community reconstruction
· in Northern Ireland. (EMU is, as someone has
· expressed it, at best no more than a slow fix.)

· Those who have worked hard over the same period
· to create shared or integrated schools have not
· always expressed enthusiasm for Education for
· Mutual Understanding and similar processes, which
· may seem to them as nothing more than a superficial
· tinkering around the edges of the real problem of
· separate systems. The establishment of almost 30
· integrated schools in only 15 years is certainly a great
· achievement, and there would seem to be a growing
· belief in the Province that the ultimate future of
· education in Northern Ireland could involve the

· merging of the creative developments in the practice
· of educational community relations into a fully shared
· system in which all communities have confidence and
· parity of esteem. But there is as yet a long way to go
· before this will be possible and in the meantime there
· is still a great deal to be done in all kinds of existing
· schools to firm up the efforts of the past 25 years in
· order to build up an approach to education which
· enables us to live confidently with our differences in a
· plural society.



· *Liam Maskey, Billy Mitchell and Lady Mayhew with*
· *'A' level students at a cross community conference in*
· *Derry.*

Peace, Reconciliation & the Pluralist Society

Billy Mitchell (LINC Resource Centre)

LINC. (Local Initiatives for Needy Communities) was conceived by Loyalist prisoners in Northern Ireland in the late 1980's. By 1991 a committee was formed to manage the project and sufficient funding was received to employ Billy Mitchell to run it on a daily basis. In September 1992 premises had been secured in the Argyle Business Centre.

The main objective of LINC is to establish a Resource Centre as a recognised and credible centre for the reintegration of prisoners, other former activists and long term unemployed persons back into the mainstream of community life and for the development of conflict mediation initiatives and creative alternatives to violence. Ultimately it aims to engage released prisoners and other former activists in the community development process and in initiatives that will help to underpin the process towards a lasting peace.



Both communities unite to welcome President Bill Clinton, Belfast December 1995.

I have been asked to speak this afternoon on the subject of Peace, Reconciliation and Pluralism.

Peace is the goal towards which those of us engaged in the "peace process" are all striving. Reconciliation is the means by which we believe that we will achieve that goal, and Pluralism is the foundation upon which some of us are building our strategy for peace.

Negatively, peace is the absence of conflict, and it is true that the ceasefire(s) have brought relative peace to streets that once echoed to the sound of gunfire and explosions. However, notwithstanding the welcome cessation of violence on our streets, the conflict is far from over and peace is as far away as it was twenty-five years ago. The peace for which we ought to be striving is a peace that is characterised by wholeness, by completeness and by total well-being. It is a peace that is holistic - i.e., a peace that brings harmony and wholeness to our physical, mental and spiritual faculties and which goes far beyond individual wholeness to bring material, social and cultural harmony to the wider community.

The declaration of the ceasefire(s) almost a year ago has merely transformed the conflict from one of violence to one of political confrontation but the conflict still remains. Indeed the fears, suspicions and distrust which each of the two major communities in Northern Ireland have for each other is probably more intense than it has been for generations.

Peace, if it is to have any real meaning and lasting effect must impact upon both individuals and upon the communities in which they live. The peace of the

- Province is dependent upon the peace of those
- communities which make up the Province and the
- peace of each individual community is dependent upon
- the peace of the individual people who live within them
- and who give them their distinctive social and cultural
- identities. It is my submission that both individuals and
- communities in Northern Ireland are a long way from
- enjoying the wholeness, completeness and total well-
- being which is integral to a genuine and lasting peace.
-
- Before there can be any degree of the kind of peace
- which I have just described there must be some
- degree of reconciliation. As with peace, Reconciliation
- has both negative and positive aspects. Negatively,
- reconciliation means nothing more than mere “good
- relations”, “respect for diversity” and “mutual under-
- standing”. This is what the so-called “community
- relations” initiatives have been trying to offer for
- years. These initiatives are simply not good enough.
- Reconciliation in its negative form will never lead to a
- genuine and lasting peace.
-
- Positive reconciliation means “doing away with enmity”.
- It is the process of restoring unity after enmity and of
- building bridges over quarrels and conflicts rather than
- simply papering over them. It is a process that
- compels people to forego enmity and revenge and
- encourages them to actively work for the good and
- well-being of one’s perceived enemy. Reconciliation is
- not just about the “victim” persuading the so-called
- “offender” to change his or her ways. It means also
- that the “victim” has agreed to forego his or her
- enmity and to set aside his or her desire for
- retribution. Genuine reconciliation will lead us to
-
- admit that no one section of society has the sole right
- to claim the title “victim” and that no one section of
- society ought to be branded forever as the sole
- perpetrators of wrongdoing and injustice. Those of us
- who have embraced this spirit of reconciliation will
- readily acknowledge that people have a right to change
- and that we are ready and willing to accept the reality
- and the validity of that change.
-
- Reconciliation, like peace, is still a long way off. So long
- as the social and political structures of Northern
- Ireland are grid-locked against the development of a
- just, equitable and pluralist society it will be nigh
- impossible for genuine reconciliation to take place.
- Pluralism as the foundation upon which we must build
- our strategy for peace, ought to be applied to every
- area of human life - to religion, to politics, to social
- structures, to culture, to education, even to sexuality.
- To concentrate on religious pluralism alone is to blame
- religion for all of the ills that we have suffered and to
- ignore those other areas of life from which the vast
- majority of human conflicts and seeds of discord have
- arisen.
-
- Pluralism means adopting new attitudes and new ways
- of relating to people as people. It means embracing
- new concepts about human relationships and about
- developing new interpretations of our obligations
- within those relationships. It calls upon us to tolerate
- both the tolerable and the intolerable. It does not
- mean a reduction of plurality to unity. On the
- contrary it strengthens the “one” among “the many.”
- Consequently pluralism is not ecumenism. It is not
- saying that all beliefs and opinions are equal in

Northern Ireland's Ethnic/Religious minority communities and Inter-Faith Relations

Rev. Maurice Ryan, Stranmillis College

In the urgent and very proper concern for the development of better understanding across the historical Christian denominational boundaries in Northern Ireland, it would be all too easy to lose sight of the fact that a serious commitment to the progress in community relations should also take account of the growing numbers of people of "other" religious traditions and cultures now present within our community. These groups, though as yet relatively small, are collectively now beginning to represent a significant integral part of Northern Ireland society, with distinctive claims and contributions in relation to the cultural, economic, political, religious and educational life of the province.

The oldest established religious minority community in Northern Ireland is the Jewish, with their present synagogue at Somerton Road, Belfast. Jews first came here in the seventeenth century, and the first synagogue was established in the late nineteenth century, when Belfast saw quite an influx of Jewish refugees fleeing from a wave of persecution in Tsarist Russia. Over the years, Jewish groups have existed in various parts of Northern Ireland - Londonderry, Downpatrick, Newcastle. Now the Jewish population is located almost wholly in Belfast. There are presently about 1,000 people with Jewish application in Northern Ireland, approximately 300 of whom, with their children, are "paid-up" members of the "orthodox" Belfast congregation.

In contrast to the Jewish community there is the very different tradition of the Hindus - some 250 extended families, representing perhaps 800 people, residing mainly within the greater Belfast area and in parts of

mid-Ulster and Londonderry, with their Cultural Centre and Temple in the former Methodist Church premises at Clifton Street, close to Carlisle Circus. Many of the immigrant Hindus have risen from small beginnings to become successful business people who, as members of the local Indian Business Forum, have made a significant contribution to the community economically in the creation of some 3,000 jobs, in which many native Ulster people, as well as Hindus, are employed.



A Hare Krishna wedding in Dunmurray, Belfast

As well as the mainstream Hindu tradition, there is also the well maintained and respected "branch-line" of the Hare Krishna movement with Centres in Dunmurry near Belfast and Innis Rath (or "Hare Krishna Island"), a rural ashram in Upper Lough Erne, together comprising about 100 congregational members.

Another well established community in Northern Ireland are the followers of Islam. Twenty-five years ago

· there might have been 60 or 70 Muslims here. Today
 · the Northern Ireland community numbers around
 · 1,500, belonging mainly to the majority Sunni
 · tradition, and residing for the most part in Belfast in
 · the vicinity of the Mosque and Community Centre in
 · Wellington Park - though there are also quite a few in
 · Antrim, Craigavon, Londonderry and Coleraine.
 · Apart from the main religious tradition already
 · mentioned, Northern Ireland has a small Theravada
 · Buddhist Community of around 50 members which
 · was first established in 1979, and also a Tibetan
 · Buddhist "cell" of a single family and their friends in
 · County Down. But there is a resident Lama in County
 · Cavan serving as a focal point for Irish Buddhists, and,
 · indeed, the proliferation of Buddhist groups in the
 · Republic stands in sharp contrast to the more
 · modest presence of Buddhists in the North.
 · There has also been a thriving community of Baha'is
 · here since about 1930, mostly indigenous to the
 · region but with a sizeable minority of Iranian believers
 · approximately 20% of the 300 strong community. The
 · Baha'i community here organises itself according to
 · the local government district boundaries, and there are
 · presently active "Spiritual Assemblies" in 13 out of 26
 · districts. One official monitoring process has
 · mistakenly classified Baha'is as Protestants, which, of
 · course, is to obscure completely the distinctive Baha'i
 · identity as maintaining the ultimate unity of all
 · religions and the essential oneness of humankind,
 · "protesting" only at religious divisiveness!
 · There have been Sikhs in Ireland since the 1920's
 · but the community in the North did not become
 · formally established until 1990, with the opening of the

· Northern Ireland Sikh Association and Gurdwara in
 · Londonderry, where most of the present membership
 · of around 50 people are resident.
 · One final group that should be mentioned is the
 · Chinese - between 7,000 and 8,000 of them,
 · constituting the biggest ethnic minority in the
 · Province, of whom 80% live in Belfast or within a 20
 · miles radius of Belfast. Older generation Chinese
 · observed a conglomeration of Confucianism, Buddhism,
 · Taoism and other folk traditions, and many homes have
 · a small shrine honouring particular deities such as the
 · gods of longevity or prosperity. But only a minority
 · still practice any faith, and there are no temples or
 · other places of worship in Northern Ireland, nor
 · anyone with the expertise to head these faiths. A very
 · small number of Chinese (below 5%) are attached to
 · Christian Churches here, and there is a Chinese
 · Christian Fellowship in Belfast with about 50
 · members. Since the language barrier is the biggest



A Chinese street party in South Belfast

· practical problem facing the Chinese here, church
· services can have little meaning for most of our
· Chinese neighbours. Some excellent work is being done
· through a very well run Chinese Welfare Association
· in Eblana Street, near The Queen's University, in the
· provision of English classes for young and old, as well
· as a whole range of counselling and social activities,
· but the community remains somewhat isolated and very
· much in need of an increased public awareness of their
· problems and of the development of statutory and
· institutional measures to deal with them.

· As far as relations with the host community are
· concerned, most of these groups report very happy
· relations generally with the indigenous population.
· There are problems, of course, relating to language;
· ignorance and misconceptions about "foreign faiths"
· and "strange sects"; how to achieve the right balance
· between one's traditional heritage and the Irish way
· of life; the felt need for fuller recognition of the civil
· and political rights of minorities; and clear instances,
· from time to time, of racist prejudice and abuse. A
· particular cause of grief on the part of the ethnic/
· religious minority communities recently has been the
· fact that the new statutory core syllabus for Religious
· Education in Northern Ireland schools, for all its
· undoubted benefits in encouraging greater understand-
· ing across the Catholic/Protestant traditions, has given
· no place whatever to the study of major religious
· traditions other than Christianity, in our classrooms.

· But, in spite of some real problems, and for all our
· failings in community relations in this country, it seems
· that we are not greatly bent on harassing our
· neighbours in the minority faiths and cultures.

· A new awareness of multicultural issues in Northern
· Ireland has resulted in the recent establishment of a
· number of organisations concerned with cultural and
· religious diversity, including the Bryson House
· Multicultural Resources Centre in Belfast; the
· Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities and the
· Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Equality, with a
· common aim of campaigning for anti-racist legislation
· for Northern Ireland, comparable to that in force on
· the mainland; and, on the specifically religious front, a
· Belfast Branch of the Council of Christians and Jews.

· In celebration of the first World's Parliament of
· Religions in Chicago in 1893 - an event which is
· generally recognised as the beginning of the modern
· inter-faith movement - the year 1993 was designated
· "a year of inter-religious understanding and co-
· operation" coinciding with this centenary, and after
· extensive discussion with interested parties, including
· the minority communities and the Irish Council of
· Churches, the Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum
· was formed in May 1993 with the essential purpose of
· promoting friendship and mutual understanding across
· the spectrum of the religious life of the Province.
· Drawing its membership from the Jewish, Hindu,
· Muslim, Chinese, Buddhist and Baha'i communities as
· well as the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches,
· the Forum has enjoyed remarkable success as a
· pioneering inter-faith association, with a present
· membership of around 50 people, many of whom
· occupy positions of leadership within their own
· traditions. While Forum members are not official
· delegates of their respective communities, they
· represent that body of opinion within their

· communities which is supportive of the Association's
· constitutional aims, viz:

· To provide a Forum where:-

- 1 adherents of different faiths can meet to share
· and foster mutual understanding of each others
· beliefs and practices;
- 2 the special problems of religious and ethnic
· minorities can be articulated, and solutions
· recommended.

· Activities to date have included corporate visits to
· places of worship and cultural centres represented
· within the Forum, as well as lectures, presentations and
· discussions at the organisation's present base in
· Stranmillis College, where the College authorities
· have been most generous and supportive in accom-
· modating many of the quarterly meetings.

· A particularly justifying development in recent months
· has been the Forum's formal affiliation with the Inter-
· Faith Network for the United Kingdom, which links
· together some 70 inter-faith organisations on the
· British mainland.

· Experience in England would indicate that setting up
· and maintaining inter-faith organisations can be
· extremely hard work and carries tensions and
· potential pitfalls which can be daunting. While some
· relationships are deep and lasting, others seem
· precarious and have to be nurtured. Committed
· inter-faith supporters often have leadership roles in
· their own communities which can mean divided
· loyalties. Many suffer too from being a minority within
· their own faith community and can find it difficult to

· persuade their own people to see the importance of
· their work. Some factions may actively oppose efforts
· to establish dialogue.

· One fear that is sometimes expressed is that
· inter-faith organisations are reconstructionist and
· ecumenical in their aims. But the adjective
· "ecumenical" is one which has to be looked at
· carefully in this context. According to Michael Hurley
· ("Ecumenism Ecumenical Theology and Ecumenics"-
· 1978), an Ecumenist is a person who is opposed to a
· plurality of churches, who wants to see many churches
· become one church, and whose definition of
· "ecumenical theology in the strict sense" is
· constituted by reflection on "the experience of shared
· faith."

· Most inter-faith associations are not ecumenical in
· Hurley's sense. The main emphasis in most established
· groups is on mutual understanding, and, while it is hoped
· that people of faith, from whatever background, will be
· drawn closer together through such encounters, it is
· taken for granted that it is possible for a person to
· understand and respect another person of a different
· faith tradition while disagreeing somewhat or even
· profoundly with that person's views.

· The Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum is, in this
· sense, essentially educational in outlook, and with such
· a prescription in mind, it is to be hoped that, as
· inter-faith experience on the mainland would suggest,
· moderately mighty sales from little acorns can grow,
· and that the Northern Ireland initiative will prove
· increasingly valuable and worthwhile.

. When people are homeless or live in inadequate
. shelter they face many problems. If you have no
. address it can be difficult to get a job or to obtain a
. school place for your children. Many homeless people
. are unable to register as voters and in effect, are not
. recognised as citizens with identities and rights within
. the countries where they live.

. Poor housing invariably means poor sanitation. Water
. supplies are often non-existent and there may be no
. toilets or only toilets that have to be shared by many
. many people. It is estimated that globally 1.7 billion
. people have no access to toilets. Without proper
. sanitation it is not surprising that they get sick, or
. that their babies die more often than those born to
. families with decent housing. The World Health
. Organisation estimates that 80% of the deaths of
. infants, 12 million per year, are related to insufficient
. water and sanitation.

. Many of the people who live in housing built of
. temporary materials are extremely vulnerable to
. natural hazards such as flooding, hurricanes, land-
. slides and earthquakes. It is ironic that because their
. housing is so poor they must often spend a high
. proportion of their income on repairing and replacing
. their housing. If they had decent housing they would
. be able to save this money or use it for extra food or
. education for their children.

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. **What causes the problems in the**
. **developing countries?**

. **Poverty**

- . • Governments cannot afford to provide the housing people need and often spend the little money they do have on expensive solutions that only benefit a few people.
- . • People themselves cannot afford the most basic housing because of unemployment or under-employment.
- . • Because of international debt, many governments are forced to use the money they obtain from taxation to pay off debts to foreign banks rather than to help people to house themselves.

. **Poor Government Policies**

- . • Governments often impose building standards and regulations that make housing too expensive for people to afford. Prohibiting the use of traditional building materials in urban centres for instance restricts the ways in which people themselves can create housing solutions.
- . • Governments often fail to protect land for housing development in growing urban areas. As land prices increase with urban growth poor people are forced to live further and further away from the places where they earn their living and they have even less to spend on housing because their transportation bill becomes so high.

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- Some Governments are corrupt and money meant to help in the development of poor settlements is siphoned off into the pockets of powerful people.
- Some governments have not thought through the impact of rapid urbanisation and have not given enough attention to the importance of housing in helping a national economy to grow.

Urbanisation

In the mid 1990's 43% (2.3 billion) of the World's population lived in urban areas. The United Nations believes that the World's urban population will be over 50% by the year 2005 and over 60% by 2025 when 5.2 billion people will live in urban areas. Of these 77% will be living in developing countries compared to less than 50% in 1976. By 2010, 21 of the 26 mega - cities (cities with more than 10 million people) will be in developing countries.

People having unequal access to resources

There is no question that poor people suffer from homelessness and inadequate housing because of a lack of money. However, the problem of homelessness is not just about money. Homelessness is a problem of lack of access.

Access to land

People cannot build decent permanent housing if they cannot have secure access to land. Most poor people cannot afford to buy land, particularly in urban areas. This is an area that Governments must help with. Sometimes people have secure access - in other words they know that they have the right to stay on the land - but they have no title deeds to prove their right. Registering land is an expensive and complicated process which most poor people cannot afford.

When people have insecure access to land they often build with temporary building materials and without foundations so that they can move the houses if they are evicted. These houses are, as a result, particularly vulnerable to natural hazards.

Access to finance

People need money to build. Most poor people are unable to obtain loans for building homes because they are not formally employed. Their families may earn enough money to repay a housing loan by working in the so-called 'informal economy' and they may earn money from many different sources - farm labouring, craft work, small-scale businesses, and food-processing for instance. However, most banks will not provide loans unless people have a formal job and can produce a formal letter from an employer to prove this. Banks usually also require that borrowers can prove that they own the land on which they wish to build.

· **Access to publicly financed services**

· Poor people are often forced to live on marginal land
· at the edges of cities or in areas that are particularly
· vulnerable to natural hazards these are the areas that
· are least likely to be provided with basic services such
· as water, sewerage, electricity, garbage disposal, health
· care, schools and public transportation. As a result,
· poor families have to buy these services at expensive
· rates, putting even greater pressure on the family's
· economic survival. In rural areas the lack of services
· can be particularly severe.

· **Access to information**

· Many poor people are not informed and consulted
· about major plans that affect them. Sometimes
· outsiders who may have very good intentions but who
· do not come from the areas where poor people live,
· develop plans that prove to be totally irrelevant and
· inappropriate for local people. When people are not
· informed or consulted about the developments that
· are planned for their areas the resulting schemes
· usually don't work out very well. Some people say that
· if development is to be sustainable on a long term
· basis within poor communities then poor people
· themselves must be central to the whole design,
· development, implementation and management
· process.

· **Passivity**

· Poor communities and the people who live in those
· communities are often not organised. They don't nec-
· essarily have associations or groups that can speak for
· them and who can participate actively in the develop-
· ment of ideas about how their communities should

· be designed and planned. This means that they are not
· able to negotiate solutions that make sense to them
· with organisations from outside the community such
· as local authorities or building contractors.

· **Are developing countries problems the same as those in Europe?**

· You may be surprised to know that despite the
· affluence of the so-called industrialised west, home-
· lessness has become one of Europe's most serious
· social problems. The Organisation of Economic
· Co-operation and Development (OECD) whose
· members are 24 of the World's wealthiest nations
· warns, in an upcoming report - "The most extreme
· manifestation of the marginality and social
· exclusion amidst affluence and economic growth is
· the phenomena of homelessness, which is found to
· exist in different degrees in all developed countries
· and which is growing at worrying rates".

· Among the 12 member states of the European Union
· at least 2.5 million people are homeless and the total
· probably exceeds 5 million according to reports from
· the European Federation of National Organisations
· Working with the Homeless. Germany, often seen as
· the most wealthy member of the European Union, has
· over one million homeless. Britain has 700,000 and
· France 600,000. As many as 70% of these people are
· younger than 20. Many people say that there is now a
· new poverty represented by this homelessness. The
· situation is exacerbated by the complex changes that
· are taking place in family structures and the break-
· down of traditional social institutions. Ironically, at the
· same time as homelessness in Europe is growing,

. the number of vacant housing is increasing. Perhaps
. the saddest factor about homelessness in the
. industrialised West is that the resources exist to solve
. the problem. Unfortunately however, housing policy
. does not often benefit the poor. In response to major
. economic shifts European governments are cutting the
. funding made available to develop affordable housing
. for poor families and individuals. Many young people
. who are homeless are not considered eligible for
. government housing assistance and find themselves
. living on the streets.

. Many of Europe's inadequately housed are forced to
. rely on state benefits which costs Governments a huge
. amount of money and which trap families in a
. 'dependency' situation. If a member of the family finds
. a job they may lose housing benefit and therefore not
. be able to afford housing because their income is
. inadequate. If they remain dependent on housing
. benefit they get caught in a poverty cycle which it is
. difficult to get out of.

. **How do people deal with these problems?**

. **Partnerships**

. Since the International Year of Shelter for the Home-
. less in 1987 the United Nations have adopted a global
. strategy called the enabling strategy. This strategy
. assumes that there are a number of different actors
. who need to participate in the development of
. national housing strategies. In order to work together
. they need to develop partnerships with each other.

. Governments must provide the infrastructure that is
. necessary so that people can get things done. They

. need to ensure that a legal framework is in place
. so that people can have access to land and credit.
. Governments also need to make sure that the basic
. physical infrastructure is in place such a sewerage,
. road and water systems. One of the major ways
. in which they can help is by being flexible about
. regulations for building standards so that houses
. can be upgraded gradually over time as money
. becomes available. This is sometimes referred to as an
. "incremental" process.

. Perhaps most importantly, Governments need to
. realise that urbanisation is here to stay and will have a
. high impact on all of our lives. Urban policies need to
. be developed that will focus on the opportunities that
. urban life offers for development and an improvement
. in the standard of living for all people.

. Private sector participants can help by providing
. financial loans for housing construction. They can make
. sure affordable building materials are available and that
. these are appropriate to local conditions and they may
. also provide professional assistance to communities.
. Non-governmental organisations often provide this
. kind of assistance.

. The people facing the problem are perhaps the most
. important participants. They are the ones who need
. to decide what it is they want, what they can afford
. and how they want to see their housing developed
. and managed. They need to plan beyond their
. individual housing needs and consider the
. developments of the communities where they live -
. the settlement as a whole. This means they need
. support in organising together. They may form a
. community organisation or association.

• Organising together is a way of making sure that all of the people who are needed to create a sustainable housing scenario are able to contribute. In some places this has proceeded further than others. There is a huge amount of work that still remains to be done and it is important that people from different countries and settlements have the chance to learn from each other. Some examples of partnerships that have proved constructive are as follows:

• **Planned Squatting**

• In some Latin American cities the local authority predicts when land is going to be invaded and negotiates with the private landowner to buy the land at a fair price so that plots can be properly laid out with enough space being left for roads, schools and open areas. People develop their own housing incrementally using materials that they can afford. The local authority is then able to assist in upgrading services and regularising land tenure situation over time and as resources become available.

• **Land Sharing**

• In Bangkok, Thailand, local authorities, community organisations and owners of land which has been squatted on by poor families have worked together on land-sharing schemes. The land-owners install sanitation and other facilities on part of the land. In exchange the families who are squatting move off some of the land so that it can be developed for commercial use by the land owner. The local authority acts as a mediator in the negotiations that take place.

• **Informal Saving and Loan Groups**

• In India, women's savings groups pool resources and lend money to each other at low interest rates for the development of housing. Sometimes they have been able to use their savings to negotiate housing loans from banks. Their ability to negotiate with the bank depends very much on the strength of their own organisation.

• **Foyer Schemes**

• In France, England and other European countries, housing associations have developed schemes where young people are provided with secure shelter at the same time as they receive training in vocational skills. Helping people to solve employment problems as well as housing need is an important part of integrated community development.

• **Sharing Ideas**

• Housing savings and loan groups in India, are providing a model that can be used by people living on estates in towns like Cambridge in England where poor families may be paying between 100% and 400% interest a year on short term loans they take from informal lenders because they cannot get loans from banks. The Indian women have also shared their experience with people living in informal settlements in South Africa and many hundreds of savings and loan groups have been set up as a result. When people control their own savings they can decide on the interest rates that make sense to them.

- **Participation**

- Homeless people invariably have to develop their own solutions. In Britain we might call this “do-it-yourself.”
- In other situations it’s called self-help or informal settlement development. People occupy land and develop housing as best they can and often from recycled materials. Many times when they do this they find that they are treated with great antagonism by officials and others who are hostile to their attempts to house themselves.

- Even when people do have legal access to land and can get credit it often helps to put in a great deal of what is sometimes called “sweat equity”. Providing labour to build a house for yourself can reduce costs significantly and make housing affordable for people who would not be able to pay for housing built by contractors.

- **Front Line**

- Even in Britain there are examples of self-help housing. In Leeds, for instance there is an organisation called Front line. A group of enemployed black youth have received training in construction skills and have built their own houses. A local housing association will share the ownership of the houses so that Front-line members will be able to afford to live in them and gradually buy the share owned by the housing association over time and as their economic situation improves.

- For many homeless people, particularly in Europe, building your own house is not a practical option. However there are other examples of people organising together.

- **Big Issue**

- Big Issue is a weekly newspaper produced in several of the UK’s major cities by Homeless people with the help of professionals. The paper is sold on the streets by vendors who are homeless. The cost of producing the paper is 40p but the paper is sold at 60p with the extra 20p being kept by the vendor themselves.

- **Persistence**

- Increasingly it has been recognised that the answer to the growing problem of homelessness lies with people taking power over their own lives and being supported as they create housing solutions. Many institutions and individuals are still hostile to this idea and there are many problems involved in developing ways in which homeless people can work constructively with the private sector and local authorities. However people are trying and we need to recognise that change and sustainable development take time and require persistence.

- We also need to realise that Homelessness is not a problem “out there”. It is not someone else’s problem. It’s your problem and it’s my problem. I hope, as young people with energy, commitment and new ideas you will be prepared to take up the challenge of facing it.

Accommodating Differences Between the Formal and Informal Sectors in the New South Africa.

Joel Bolnick,

• **People's Dialogue and the South African Homeless People's Federation**

• The term People's Dialogue was borrowed from a meeting by that name which had been held in Seoul in the late 1980's. It was adopted, however, by South Africa's homeless because it explained perfectly what they were about.

• People's Dialogue emerged in early 1991 to assist in the creation of situations that would enable a movement of the homeless poor to crystallise.

• Homeless and landless people needed to help themselves rather than having their problems addressed by other social groups.

• There was a need for this development to be discreet and diplomatic. The old South African state was violently opposed to the emergence of such a social force.

• In addition, the liberation movements were hostile to the notion of a squatters movement - they felt that social and economic emancipation would logically follow political liberation.

• **The Growth of the Homeless Movement**

• Homeless people responded to the idea of organising nationally with enthusiasm and vigour. After an initial national conference of the homeless poor, a group of 35 squatters from as many settlements throughout the country began to take advantage of resources provided by church organisations to network extensively. Common priorities were identified.

• These were:

- 1. Poor families needed land
- 2. A more accommodating legal framework
- 3. Access to finance
- 4. Capacity to organise in order to secure affordable housing.

• **Linking In With India**

• Once priorities had emerged it was necessary to act upon them. The need for exposure to international experience was acute, but it was a need for an experience of a specific kind - the experience of poor homeless people devising and controlling their own systems and institutions. What emerged was a partnership between two Indian organisations, National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milas and people who worked with South Africa's homeless poor in the People's Dialogue network to develop grassroots participatory methods geared towards decent and affordable shelter.

• **The Result?**

• By early 1994, in time for the election of a democratic government, many innovative systems had been developed and were in place in hundreds of communities. The methods used in South Africa had also developed an identity of their own quite distinct from the Indian processes from which they were adapted.

· **South African Homeless People's Federation**

· There are currently over 350 communities linked together by means of the South African Homeless People's Federation. The Federation has a National Executive Council. It comprises a President, two National Chairpersons, four regional secretaries and seven executive members. The executive members are in charge of the seven major programs within the Federation.

· These are:

- • networking
- • housing savings
- • loan repayments
- • enumeration
- • surveys

· **Links With Government.**

· The Federation was established around the same time that a new Government in South Africa was elected. A process of dialogue was launched with Government. The Federation was the only national organisation of the homeless poor in South Africa with the kind of institutional depth to make the Housing Ministry's promise of houses for the poor into a reality.

· At national level the Federation enjoys a special relationship with the Ministry of Land Affairs and had an exceptional rapport with the late Housing Minister, Mr. Joe Slovo. At regional level the Federation has secured the support of the Natal, Western Cape and the Orange Free State Provincial Ministers of Housing.

· **Results**

· The National Housing Ministry has pledged £10 million to the Utshani Fund, the housing loan fund that is managed by and for the Federation.

· The Federation sits on the National Housing Board, representing the Homeless Sector, and on the National Housing Finance Corporation.

· The Federation drafted the Homeless Pledge that was signed at the National Housing Summit by the late Minister in October 1994.

· People's Dialogue and the Federation sit on the Housing Task Team of the National Department of Housing.

· Federation Land Policy incorporated into the National Green Paper on Land Affairs.

· Federation and five Provincial Housing Boards have set up joint steering committees to oversee People's Housing Processes in those provinces.

· **Building Information and Training (BIT)**

· **Facilities**

· There are eight BIT facilities in operation at present. Each one is located in an informal settlement where Federation members have begun to build houses. They are managed by elected teams of community people, whose responsibility is to provide support to members of the R.S.L. in the course of the house construction process, and to assist the Federation convenors with loans and repayments.

• **Results**

• The BIT facilities have become a conduit for the delivery of finance and technical support to families that have joined the Federation.

• They are nodal points for development in their region, now being recognised as such by Government.

• A database of people's building practices is just starting to emerge, with the managers of the BIT facilities learning from innovative building practices of individual families as much as they are teaching those families who feel ill equipped to build without information and training.

• By March 1996 loans had been granted to HSL and by HSL to members in twelve settlements with BIT facilities. House construction has started. Seventy houses have been completed. A further 160 are under construction.

• **The Utshani Fund**

• This is a housing loan fund, run by a governing body from the communities in the Federation. It is designed to deliver housing loans to the HSL. These loans are not available to non-federation members. The Fund is able to provide loans of a much smaller size and at lower interest rates than formal lending institutions, primarily by relying on the organisation, capacity and relational security of homeless communities.

• The base of Utshani Fund's operations is the network of HSL affiliated to the Federation. Utshani Fund makes loan finance available to these HSL directly, on the basis of affordability assessments and building plans undertaken by their members in accordance with the Federation's methods. The HSL then distributes these funds to members who wish to build, are able to do so, and who undertake to make regular payments.

• By March 1996 the Fund had released 230 housing loans to 230 families in 12 different HSL. Average loan size is just above R7,500. Repayment rates are over 95%.

• **Lessons to be learnt from the South African Experience.**

- People have got to help themselves.
- People who are homeless will know, from experience, what are the best solutions to their problems.
- Solutions cannot be found in isolation. People have to accommodate their differences and pool resources such as finance, skills, labour and knowledge to better their lot.
- Waiting for Government to help you is not a solution.

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