

## SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES RESEARCH PROJECT SUMMARY

APD Framework for Diversity Planning		
Analytical Skills	Planning Skills	Delivery Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the ethno-religious drivers of spatial change;</li> <li>Identifying the locus of power and how power is put to work by economic, paramilitary, political community and state actors;</li> <li>Identifying strife pressure points;</li> <li>Mapping the landscapes of stakeholder power;</li> <li>Territorial mapping including hard and soft boundaries;</li> <li>Understanding demographic structure, housing markets, labour markets and the interplay between them;</li> <li>Participatory processes; giving access to polyphony of voices</li> <li>Structures and networks; what is possible and where are the gaps?</li> <li>Identifying success – building of 'little things' and valuing micro-gains;</li> <li>Mapping disconnections from labour markets and housing markets;</li> <li>Risk analysis and contingency planning;</li> <li>Authenticating and validating claims and the strategies, structures and systems for establishing stakeholder legitimacy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scenario planning and cost benefit analysis of segregated and integrated outcomes;</li> <li>Debating options via participatory practices;</li> <li>Visioning and creative thinking; being prepared to take risks;</li> <li>Setting objectives that are SMART;</li> <li>Establishing priorities, trading off action and being explicit about what projects and programmes are not proceeding and why;</li> <li>Developing programmes to achieve change;</li> <li>Building leadership capacity, especially where structures are weak or dysfunctional;</li> <li>Understanding and appreciating the position of others in the planning making process;</li> <li>Developing partnerships, networks and durable governance relationships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial management;</li> <li>Project planning and execution;</li> <li>Running organisations effectively and efficiently;</li> <li>Negotiation, dispute resolution and bargaining;</li> <li>Human resource management;</li> <li>Communicating effectively to multiple interests;</li> <li>Social economics, sustainability and leaking economies;</li> <li>Conducting meaningful Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA);</li> <li>Managing governance structures;</li> <li>Monitoring and evaluating change.</li> </ul>

### Skills for Managing Spatial Diversity

Dr Brendan Murtagh

Dr Geraint Ellis

School of Planning,  
Architecture & Civil Engineering  
Queens University, Belfast



Short Strand, East Belfast

### Listening, understanding, translating

#### Key Policy Implications

- A lack of connections/understanding across professions and between professions and community may be as important as skills deficits as a barrier to achieving sustainable communities.
- A learning culture in professions (and/or community) is vital for lessons to be shared between practitioners and across disciplines
- Diversity Planning requires Analytical, Planning and Delivery (APD) skills
- 'Knowledge brokers' may be useful in translating between the many perspectives in communities.
- A centre comparable with the Regional Skills Centres dedicated to ethno-religious diversity would help to capitalise the experiences of Northern Ireland on a more global scale.

Full reports/results on this project can be found at [www.qub.ac.uk/ep/research/level1/index.htm](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ep/research/level1/index.htm)

#### Key Words

■ Cohesion ■ Community ■ Empowerment ■ Planning ■ Learning ■ Leadership ■ Skills

This research is one of 11 research projects commissioned from Universities across the UK, under the ESRC/HCA Academy Joint Targeted Initiative on Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities.

To see how the HCA Academy is taking forward lessons from the research, visit:

<http://www.HCAAcademy.co.uk/>

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Further details of projects, contacts and associated briefing papers can be found at:

<http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms>



## Background

Professionals in regeneration, planning and the built environment are working in complex, uneven and changing environments. In order to achieve the goal of creating sustainable communities - places where people want to live and work and which are safe and inclusive - planners and other professionals need to understand how people use space to support or undermine social cohesion.

The interplay between knowledge, learning and skills is at the heart of the development of sustainable communities, but it is less clear how these would help to manage the development of social cohesion. This research draws on the experience from case studies in divided communities within Northern Ireland to increase knowledge and understanding of the skills and learning required to support diversity planning and the development of cohesive and sustainable communities.



Peace Wall, Cupar Street, Belfast

## Approach

Drawing on *interviews* with representatives from the public, professionals, and the private and public sectors in Northern Ireland, as well as government bodies and skills centres in the rest of the UK, the researchers explore the role and functions of those engaged in the built environment, their views on skills availability, excellence and strategies.

The researchers presented *ten case studies* exploring the development of technical skills in a range of interventions in communities dealing with conflicts. A further *four case studies* focus on the development of generic skills in the context of project management or the policy process.

Demand for skills was ascertained through an *e-survey* of people leading or actively involved in regeneration policies or practices across the public, private and voluntary sectors in Northern Ireland. The market supply was mapped against the National Qualifications Framework, provision in the community, college and university courses relevant to community development, social entrepreneurship, sustainable communities and spatial regeneration.

The research covers a review of policy and academic literature on 5 key areas:

- *How multiple perspectives, context, communication and argument need to be respected in spatial planning*
- *The need for a cross-disciplinary approach in order to handle the complexity of the economic, social, environmental and spatial challenges facing the built environment and the potential requirement for intermediaries who can translate across different traditions*
- *'Social learning' where the value of people coming together is more than their increased knowledge as individuals. It is suggested that one or more essential social learning components may be compromised in divided communities, leading to weak social learning*
- *A learner centred perspective focuses on understanding how learning and change take place, whereas the focus on terms such as 'skills', 'capacity', 'competences' and 'attributes' has emphasised 'deficit'.*

- *Cohesion building skills – there are good examples of principles, skills and good practice working in areas of ethnic diversity which reveal tensions between working to a race equality agenda or a social cohesion/inclusion agenda.*

The research concludes that three categories of skills are particularly important in social learning in divided communities. **Analytical skills** can assist in mapping power relations and the dynamics of community changes; **Planning skills** can integrate evaluative techniques to weigh up the costs/benefits associated with conflict resolution and ethnic mediation strategies; and **Delivery skills** can attract cross-community support and establish durable governance structures.

## Findings

The research found both skills gaps and examples of good practice. The skills gaps included strategic management and development skills as well as in operational aspects of intervening in ethno-religious conflict. However, the research also identified good practice where regeneration and local planning integrated with community mediation processes. Problems such as territoriality, interface between communities and enclaves within communities were seen to be addressed and progress made through 'agonistic' collaborative planning, albeit at times onto alternative or unanticipated development routes.

The achievement of more cohesive and sustainable communities may be overly optimistic using conflict resolution, consensus and collaborative planning approaches in contested communities. The introduction of 'agonism' to collaborative planning allows the parties to recognise the many voices that need to be heard and allows for passionate and irreconcilable difference. An agonistic approach to collaborative planning involves a more equal exchange of knowledge and an appreciation of the need to live with differences that persist within communities. The approach calls for yet higher skills levels among planners, but suggests that it provides a pragmatic way forward with benefits for both individuals and communities.

A weak culture of sharing knowledge, networking and social learning has limited the spread of good practice in Northern Ireland. A more active learning culture is needed, in which knowledge and skills are not seen as 'fixed' but respond to the needs and realities of situations and are supported by structures and systems.

The research highlighted the narrowness of the skills agenda, its concern for technical and transferable skills, the priority attached to supply and crucially the lack of a clear connection between skills, knowledge and learning.

The research proposes a skills framework for diversity planning (see overleaf) around which a more active learning culture could develop, building the capacity to share skills, experience and learning both within Northern Ireland and beyond.