

Notions on Community, Locality and Changing Space in the Dublin Docklands

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Dublin's Docklands have undergone significant changes since the beginning of regeneration in the late 1980s. New apartments and offices have taken the place of former warehouses, dock-related industrial sites, coal and timber yards. Today, the renovated "campshires" (the land between the river and the road), characterised by thriving dock activities in the past, invite tourists, office workers and local residents for walks and coffee breaks. The population of the area has increased by 11.8%, from 17,425 residents in 1996 to 19,467 in 2002 (DDDA Master Plan 2003:14).¹

However, not everybody considers the rejuvenation of the docklands in all aspects as positive as promoted in the brochures. Although the local communities living in the area for generations are explicitly considered in the regeneration plans, the fundamental changes in what they perceive as their traditional territory, have caused a number of conflicts with city planners and investors. Surrounded by new wealth, modern apartments and large numbers of new residents, the residents of the old-established neighbourhoods feel excluded and fight for their share in this

1 The figures are somewhat contradictory, as the ESRI (1996: 10) speaks of 16,713 residents in their study of 1996, which served to prepare the rejuvenation plan of the docklands. In their Master Plan Monitoring Report 2004, the DDDA finds 19,704 people living in the dockland area, which would mean an increase of 13% since 1996. In the meantime, the numbers of residents have further increased by thousands of people, particularly since the opening of the huge new apartment complexes around the Grand Canal Basin, the Gasworks/Barrow Street and a few other areas in 2005 and 2006 (see also DDDA News, 09/01/2007). Updated statistics have not been published yet.

redevelopment process and against plans which they perceive as harmful to their community structure.

The future of a “dockland culture”, dockland identities and functioning communities are at the centre of this debate. Today as in the past, the dockland neighbourhoods are characterised by a very close social structure, which is based on kinship ties, friendship, face-to-face interaction on a daily basis, communal events and meeting points. Particularly important is a strong sense of territory and communal boundaries. The physical urban space, however, is now undergoing dramatic changes on a variety of levels. High-rise apartment blocks overshadow the traditional cottage-style housing of working-class residents, old dock-related buildings and landmarks are demolished or renovated and attached with new meanings, public space is privatised and new roads or bridges cross old boundaries or create new borders.

This article analyses specific examples of urban transformation in the Dublin docklands and explores the consequences of physical change in urban places and spaces on the structure of the dockland communities. While some of these effects are welcomed, if they benefit the entire community or parts of it, others are strongly opposed, particularly if the residents see their close-knit and functioning community structure threatened. New administrative boundaries for instance, exclude some residents from certain financial benefits. New bridges and roads create new gaps within communities. The demolition of old-port-related industries, often with memories attached, is perceived as the destruction of markers for local identity in dockland communities. The new style of architecture shares no resemblance with what local residents regard as their cultural heritage. In some cases it even changes cultural behaviour, as the examples of the old-style communal balconies and new gated common space will demonstrate.

The following examples show that the dockland regeneration in Dublin is not just a dramatic change of the urban environment. The transformation of the physical landscape also has a significant impact on dockland culture, community structure, identities and residents’ every day lives.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Dublin between 2002 and 2007, this case study analyses the complex interrelation between urban space and place, community structure and identity formation in the context of dockland transformation. The results presented in this article are part of a long-term social anthropological research project, which analyses the consequences of dockland regeneration on the micro-level. More than 100 residents, community leaders and experts were interviewed in the

course of this research. To protect their anonymity, they will be referred to by numbers in this article.

Changing space

Concepts of space, place and territory have been heavily debated in social sciences in the recent past. In Social Anthropology, the close connection between a specific territory and a specific culture has been taken for granted for a long time. Facing transnationalism and globalisation, however, this position had to be reconsidered. Studies of diasporic communities, transnational identity formation and networks show that the assumed one-to-one relation between territory, culture, community and identity is not a naturally given fact. The concept of space is more and more distinguished from a physical territory and rather perceived as an abstract term.²

Some anthropologists have shifted away from territory-based fieldwork and rather focus on social networks (e.g. Gupta/Ferguson 1997; Hastrup/Fog Olwig 1997), others reconsider the old notions of space and culture, which receive new meanings in the context of new nationalisms, and call for studies on global processes and their impact on the local level (e.g. Hannerz 1996). It has become obvious that space, specific places and people's relationship with their physical environment are important aspects for behaviour.

Despite many debates, the terms "territory", "space" and "place" have not been unanimously defined yet. In order to avoid ambiguous meanings, I will use the terms in the following sense, fully aware that this does not mean an end of the general debate.

By "place" I refer to a specific (urban) physical location. This might be a public house, a building, a park or street etc. "Space" in contrast is more abstract. It is multi-dimensional and can be socially or culturally defined. Specific places can thus be part of various spaces. The "urban landscape" consists of physical features of land, including buildings, roads, bridges, waterways, but also fauna and flora. Finally, I use "territory" as an area that a group – in this context dockland communities – perceive as their own, not necessarily on a legal basis, but in the sense that they have inhabited and used this area for generations and therefore regard it as part of their culture.³

2 On the discussion of space and place see in detail Hauser-Schäublin/Dickhardt 2003; Rolshoven 2003; Tomforde 2006; Appadurai 1991.

3 See for instance Rolshoven 2003: 208-210 and Haller 1994 for similar definitions.

The Dublin Docklands, as an urban area in the centre of global transformation processes, are a good case to study this problem. Since the beginning of the port activities, the dockland area has never been only an industrial site. About six port-related communities⁴ have lived and worked in the area for generations and developed a specific relationship with the urban space around them. However, this space has been changing dramatically since the 1960s.

The worldwide introduction of containerisation and new technologies have shifted the working port away from the inner city of Dublin and moved it to the seafront east of East Wall.⁵ Vast areas along the former port site, including warehouses, cranes, the quays, moorings and berthing docks, were no longer needed and fell into dereliction. Manual forms of labour became obsolete. The communities, who had been dependent on labour intensive work on the docks, experienced widespread unemployment and became increasingly dependent on social welfare. Due to rising crime rates and the introduction of drugs in Dublin's inner city communities in the 1980s, the docklands, particularly the areas around Pearse Street and Sheriff Street, developed a reputation as two of Dublin's most notorious "no go" areas.⁶

Facing the decline of the dockland area, unemployment, deprivation and instability, the regeneration of the docklands began in 1986 with the foundation of the Custom House Docks Development Authority (CHDDA). Under the Urban Renewal Act of 1987, the project aimed at redeveloping a small area of eleven hectares east of the Old Custom House, which was turned into a modern International Financial Services Centre (IFSC). This centre attracted Irish and foreign banks and other finance companies. 75,000 m² of the former coal yard were rebuilt as office space, retail and leisure facilities, such as restaurants and bars, hotels and luxury apartments around the derelict George's Dock and the Inner Dock (Malone 1993, 1996; Buchel/Hogersvorst 1997: 58-65).

However, the development of the Custom House Docks site was only the beginning of the redevelopment of the entire dockland area. In 1997 the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) was set up to secure "the social and economic regeneration of the Dublin Docklands Area on a sustainable basis" and to improve "the physical environment" (DDDA Master Plan 1997: 2) of the 1,300 acre site that cov-

4 On the definition of community in general and "dockland community" in particular see section "Community and territory".

5 For a detailed history of the port of Dublin see Gilligan 1989.

6 See for instance DDDA Master Plan 1997: 32 and statements by dockland residents, e.g. C3, C44, C66, C35, C36, C19, C52, or port workers and historians (C34, C72, C28).

ers almost the entire former port area including five of the former dock communities. The development period was projected from 1997 to 2012. Along with the physical regeneration an image change is intended (Wonneberger 2005), from the old working-class, and later run-down image of the area, to a new “world-class city quarter” (DDDA Master Plan 2003: 3).

Due to this plan, the entire area is currently under construction. Apart from a few listed buildings, the old warehouses, flats, docks buildings, factories and industrial features have been or are being demolished to give way to new housing (20% of which has to be social and affordable), to hotels, retail outlets, offices, amenities (campshires, parks), tourist attractions and new transport infrastructure. The plans also include the local residents. In order to tackle the most urgent problems of the area, the DDDA offers and supports training and education programmes, work schemes, social and affordable housing and other initiatives for the local communities (DDDA Master Plan 1997: 23-40; DDDA 2003, 2005). In order to guarantee a high level of participation from the local communities, five representatives were taken on board in the so-called Community Liaison Committee (DDDA Master Plan 1997: 3).

The fundamental changes of the physical and social space of the docklands have caused debates within the dockland communities. Experiencing the consequences of long-term unemployment, deprivation, stigmatisation and feeling neglected by the state, the regeneration of their living quarter is generally welcomed by the residents of the local communities. However, surrounded by building sites that seem to change the area almost over night, dozens of new apartment blocks, offices, banks and obvious wealth, the communities feel at the same time excluded from many of these new developments and look very sceptically at some of the plans. After a series of protest marches and demonstrations, and due to the initiative of local politicians and community leaders, some of the high rise plans were sent back to the planning board to be revised.⁷

7 The protest by the dockland communities, particularly in North Wall, against the proposed 17-storey National Conference Centre in Spencer Dock was a permanent topic in the Dublin newspapers between 1998 and 2000. The Irish Times alone published over 150 articles on that issue until July 2000, when Bord Pleanála, the Irish planning board, rejected the original high-rise plan (Haughey 14/07/2004). The case triggered a huge debate about Dublin’s future as a high-rise city in general, which is still not completed. See a summary of the entire topic in McDonald 2000a.

Despite this success, the area is still transformed drastically including more high-rise buildings than ever before. Facing all these physical changes, people fear severe consequences for the area, their culture and particularly the functioning community structures. In order to fully understand the residents' relationship with their urban environment, a closer look at the history and present situation of the dockland area will be taken in the next section.

Community and territory

Apart from the fishing villages of Ringsend and Irishtown, which have been inhabited since the Middle Ages (DeCourcy 1996: 202, 325), the area now defined as the "docklands" was populated in the 18th century, when the first dock workers followed the port downriver and moved into the newly developed residential areas around North Wall, East Wall and Pearse Street (Gilligan 1989²: 62-63; Byrne 2001: 12-25; DeCourcy 1996: 268-270). Originally based on the new parish boundaries, several communities developed over the centuries, each of which formed a specific communal identity and boundaries that persist until today.

Before introducing more ethnographic details, the term "community" has to be elucidated in this context.⁸ Over the years, anthropological approaches identified a number of features that characterise community as a specific type of social group. Among these features are a "relatively small population with close social ties, enduring over several generations", distinct boundaries, cultural homogeneity, common interests, and a certain self-sufficiency (Winthrop 1991: 41). Later approaches focused their attention on boundaries and identity formation (Barth 1969) or the symbolic dimension of community formation (Cohen 1985). The debate about the role of localities, territories, space

8 As Nigel Rapport points out, "the concept of community has been one of the widest and most frequently used in social sciences" (Rapport 1998³ [1996]: 116), and yet there is still no precise definition of the term. As early as 1955, Hillery identified over 90 different definitions (Rapport 1998³ [1996]: 114-117), the broadest of which refers to any group or persons united by common interests. In this meaning of the term, a professional group, a village or a club may be referred to as a community as well as an association or an urban neighbourhood (Seymour-Smith 1986: 46, Winthrop 1991: 41). Attempts to narrow this definition down have been numerous. A more detailed presentation of this debate would lead too far in this context. What is important here is to take a more detailed look at the situation in Dublin.

and place in this context, which has been mentioned before, was a further extension of this concept.

Up to today, the term community is widely used in the Dublin context. The connotations of the term vary within different situations and range from very generalised meanings, which describe the entire population of Dublin as “the community”⁹, to more narrow ones which only include the residents of one particular street or social housing complex. Nevertheless, the most common usage of the term refers to the residents of a certain city quarter, such as “Pearse Street community” or “the community of Ballymun” with specific features, which parallel anthropological notions of the term. Life in the dockland communities is characterised by a very close social structure based on kinship and friendship. Neighbours know each other well and often over generations. People greet each other on the street; local pubs serve as regular meeting points, where every stranger is noticed immediately. Community festivals, community centres, local newspapers and – less than in the past but still to a certain extent – the parish church play significant roles in maintaining the close social structure. “Community spirit”, a sense of community and functioning communal networks are viewed as political goals for the future. Their history as dockland communities, whose life depended on the dock economies, serves as a common marker of identification today.

Members of these communities also often speak of their “culture” in this context. While their usage of this term remains mostly vague, it can be specified from an anthropological perspective. Dockland culture includes a specific form of economy, which in the past can be called “urban subsistence” (Wonneberger 2006), values and belief systems, such as the importance of a close social structure and a common sense of history, which is based predominantly on the dock activities and thus distinguishes this area from every other Dublin neighbourhood. Further features include common patterns of behaviour and a shared relationship with the urban environment they live in, as we will see later. In this sense, I will use the term “dockland culture” in this article.

Since the 1980s, a new element was added to the concept of community: political action in order to gain power, resources and a voice in local politics, and to improve the economic and social situation of the residents. A newly formed unity of the residents of inner city communities directed against the drug problems of the 1980s strengthened the internal structure of these neighbourhoods. Since then, community lead-

9 See for instance the slogan “serving the entire community”, which can be found on vehicles of Dublin Bus company.

ers, organisations and local politicians have increasingly worked together and established quarter-based communities as important actors within Dublin politics. In this context, a community can also act as a corporate actor, in the sense that its members are represented by few community leaders in political action. The dockland communities, with their representatives on board the DDDA and their general characteristics, are a prototypical example for Dublin urban communities.

The physical space, the urban quarter where today's residents and their ancestors have been living for generations, plays a key role in this context. In the past, old industrial landmarks such as the gasometer on Sir John Rogerson's Quay or the Hammond Lane Foundry, gained significance through their economic meaning for the people who worked there. Even after these structures have been demolished – some of them as early as the late 1980s or early 1990s – they are remembered well. Local people, even young people who were little children when these buildings were demolished, still talk about them or use them to describe the area. When old places are renamed, such as the Grand Canal Dock site or Longboat Quay, as they are called by the DDDA today, long-term residents of the neighbourhood still remember them as “the Gas company site” or “Hanover Quay” and refuse to use the new names:

“I know that they want to promote the Viking heritage in Dublin, but why rename the streets here [in the dockland area]? Because the new posh apartments won't sell if they are still called Hanover Quay? They should keep the old name, particularly because the quays here were never the area the Vikings settled in. They lived further west. At that time in fact this area was still part of the sea.” (C44, similar statements by C85c)

After the transfer of the docks and their industries, derelict sites were in some cases still used by the local residents. Examples include the dock basins, such as George's Dock on the north side or the Grand Canal Dock on the south side. Though illegally, the basins were (and sometimes still are) frequently used by children for swimming and therefore considered their territory and playground. When strangers moved in, in this case the Viking Splash Tours¹⁰, they felt intruded, disregarded and threatened. They “welcomed” the vehicles by throwing stones, and vandalism became frequent. Community leaders solved the problem by making a deal with the company:

10 The Viking Splash is a Dublin sightseeing tour with aquatic vehicles. Their route includes the Grand Canal Basin.

“[The owners of the company] came and spoke to us and said, ‘What can we do?’ So we advised them, ‘You are invading their territory, our territory. We are not interfering with you, you are interfering with us. Now do something about this. Get to know us, get us to know you and get us to like you and we will like you if you take part in what’s going on here.’ And it worked. [They got regularly involved in the annual South Dock (Community) Festival]. I am not saying that they never get someone throwing stones at them, but there is an acceptance of them.” (C3)

Today, children can still be seen in the summer swimming in the Grand Canal Dock Basin, a section of which is also officially used for other water sports activities. On the north side, the construction of the IFSC has put an end to the swimming activities in George’s Dock. Security guards chased local kids away, until the entire basin was finally filled in to 750mm below the former water level. This low water level does not allow further activities.¹¹

All these examples show how much the local communities feel connected to the urban quarter they live in. The local dockland landscape is perceived as part of their history and culture, and they feel rooted in this space, which they perceive as their own territory. This also means that they consider themselves entitled to access and to use the resources that are there.

As the following statements illustrate, many residents are very concerned about the demolition of many of the old buildings that they regard as reminiscences of their past and culture. They would like to see them preserved, rather than replaced by a new “concrete jungle” (C5b):

“I liked the old buildings. I don’t like the glass buildings. They are very futuristic and I don’t think they resonate so much with the community, with the past and the heritage. [...] I would have preferred if it was kept. Some, not all, but some sense of the history there, even the old building on the bottom and something else on the top. Just that there is a sense of it. I think you lose the sense of the docks with it. [The new glass buildings] seem out of place.” (C69)

“The prospectors and developers don’t give a damn about nostalgia or anything concerning the past. They pull down a house that had maybe the greatest

11 C44, C30b, C35 and own observations 2002. While local residents are convinced that the basin was only filled in because the DDDA does not want local children to play or hang around in the IFSC (C30b, C35, C44), the official reason to fill in the basin was for safety reasons (oral statement by DDDA employee, August 2003). An additional concrete base was constructed to enable staging to facilitate events in the centre of the dock (DDDA June 2003: 5).

bit of history attached to it and they wouldn't think twice of it. And it is gone.” (C81c)

“In Princess Street, for instance, there is this big glass thing. It has no meaning whatsoever. No resemblance of the community, no resemblance of businesses that used to be here. It is just a big cold glass place. And it was a lovely place down there. They should have kept some facades so that we kept a bit of our heritage. We are losing our heritage more and more. The gasometer in Ringsend¹² is absolutely brilliant. It is brilliant the way they did that. But everything else is getting thrown out.” (C87)¹³



Fig. 1: Old and new architecture (Sir John Rogerson's Quay) (photo: Astrid Wonneberger)

The concern of the residents about losing their past, culture and identity with the demolition of old dock-related buildings and structures, and their attempts to preserve as much as possible, have been the topic of another article (Wonneberger 2005) and will not be analysed further here. However, apart from the symbolic meanings of the old landscape for a communal identity, the physical changes have a fundamental im-

12 The gasometer in the former gas company in Barrow Street was converted into apartments. The old iron structure was thus preserved.

13 These statements were no exceptions but express a very common attitude towards the new style of architecture in the docklands among community members. Other examples are C5b, C52, C44, C80a, C80b, C85d, C85c, C30b, C114, C79e.

pact on life and culture in the dockland area. The following examples will illustrate how transformations of the physical space influence people's daily lives and, even more importantly, the community structure and identities of the indigenous dockland communities.

New administrative and physical boundaries

One consequence of the transformation of the docklands is the creation of new boundaries, both on a physical/traffic-related, and on an administrative level. While the former is directly connected to the construction of new bridges and roads in the area as part of the Master Plan, the latter is based on the foundation of the DDDA itself, and on the designation of a specific area as “the docklands”.

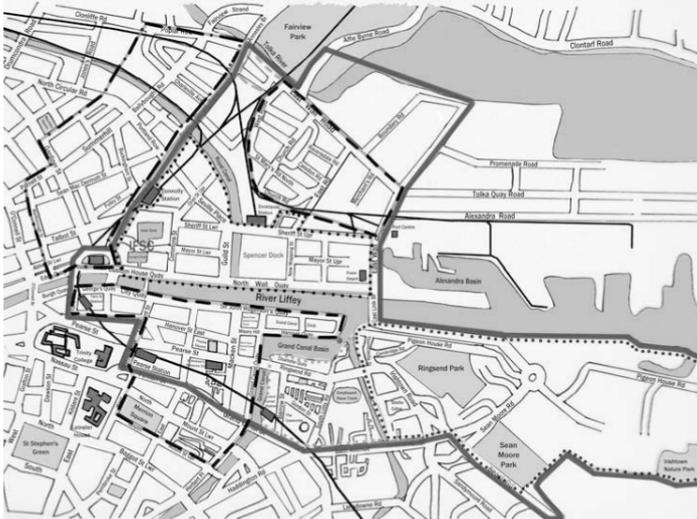


Fig. 2: Map of the dockland area and boundaries: DDDA (solid line), Westland Row/City Quay (Pearse St area) (dashed line, south side of the Liffey), Ringsend/Irishtown (dotted line, south side), East Wall (dashed line, north side), North Wall (dotted line, north side), North Inner City communities (combined Lourdes parish/Sean Mac Dermott St, North William St/Ballybough) (mixed line, north side) (Astrid Wonneberger)

Based on three preparatory studies, the Ministry for the Environment and Local Government established the DDDA in 1997. The subsequent Master Plan, which was adopted half a year later, comprises an area of

526 hectares (DDDA Master Plan 1997: 2, 14-15), which “is broadly made up of five residential communities” (DDDA Master Plan 1997: 2), who used to be dependent on dock work in the past. However, the new boundary marked on the drawing-board does not include all port-related communities. Parts of the north inner city (NIC) are left out, even though a good number of their residents also worked on the docks and identify themselves with a dock-related past and heritage.¹⁴ Also, social networks have always connected all parts of the north inner city, so excluding this area does not make any sense on a cultural and social level.

Even if on the south side the dockland boundary does not leave out a specific port-related community, it does not correspond with the perceived community boundary of the Pearse Street area. It rather cuts right through the community. The dockland boundary is therefore an artificial boundary that includes most dock-related areas, but is not based on the historical dockside and perceived community territories.

If the marking of this new boundary on the city map, along with other administrative borders such as wards, city administration, parishes etc., had no practical consequences for the communities, it would probably have remained unnoticed by the residents and it would not have caused any problems or protest. As it is however, belonging or not belonging to the dockland area does make a difference on several levels.

One essential ingredient of the Master Plan is “the social and economic regeneration of local communities” and the “need for regeneration to include community participation in local development in order to counteract social exclusion” (DDDA Master Plan 1997: 27). Other issues concerning the communities are housing, play areas, traffic and public transport, employment and education, childcare, drugs and crime, all of which are to be dealt with as part of the dockland renewal and regeneration (DDDA Master Plan 1997: 28-29). In other words: there is a lot of money to be provided for the communities within the dockland area – but not beyond.

This caused much resentment and protest among community organisations and leaders in the north inner city. Watching the neighbouring communities, who were struggling with the same problems, receiving funds for community centres, job initiatives or playgrounds, the north inner city community demanded their equal share. Finally they were

14 See for instance the heritage publications by the North Inner City Folklore Project, Terry Fagan and Ben Savage, who do not draw a clear boundary between the North Wall and adjacent areas in their publications. The close ties between the North Wall and neighbouring areas also become obvious in the life stories that are told in these publications.

recognised as the so-called “hinterland” and are now also eligible for schemes provided by the DDD (C19 [community leader NIC]).

On the other side of the river Liffey, similar cases happened with residents living on the south side of Hogan Place/Grand Canal Street, which is the south boundary of the dockland area. The houses on the south side are therefore outside the dockland boundaries, and the residents were originally not eligible for dockland funding and schemes. In one particular case, a young woman from Hogan Place applied for a student grant and was refused on the grounds that she lived outside the dockland area. She went to her local representative and they both protested against the decision. In the end her case was reconsidered and she received the grant (C69, C87).

These two examples show that the designation of new boundaries, even though they only exist on a map, can have huge impact on the daily lives of communities and individuals. They can also cause resentment and envy between communities, rather than bringing them closer together. However, in both cases the DDDA had to acknowledge the fact that a clear cut boundary does not help to overcome social exclusion but causes new problems. For this reason, they reconsidered the plans and finally included all dock-related communities and individuals in their schemes.

However, not all consequences of physical regeneration can be handled that easily. Whereas the DDDA boundary only exists on the maps and can therefore be revised without difficulty, the regeneration process also includes massive physical transformations of the area. The improvement of the infrastructure is one of the issues dealt with in the Master Plan (DDDA Master Plan 1997: Part 5 Transportation and Infrastructural Framework; DDDA Master Plan 2003: 61-70).

Traffic has been an important issue in the entire inner city of Dublin for a long time. Traffic jams and congested roads are normal. Cycle paths were almost unheard of. The heavy traffic from the port goes directly along the north side of the river Liffey, right through the city centre.

All these issues have to be tackled by the DDDA. The development of the quays and campshires as public amenities also includes cycle paths and wide walkways. The controversially discussed port tunnel might not be the perfect solution, but will eventually take away a good part of the heavy port traffic from the city centre and the north docklands (DDDA Master Plan 1997: 74; DDDA Master Plan 2003: 61-

70).¹⁵ The expansion and construction of new roads and bridges over the Liffey are supposed to remove vehicle traffic from the inner city (McDonald 02/08/2000, 10/05/2001, McNally 24/08/2001).

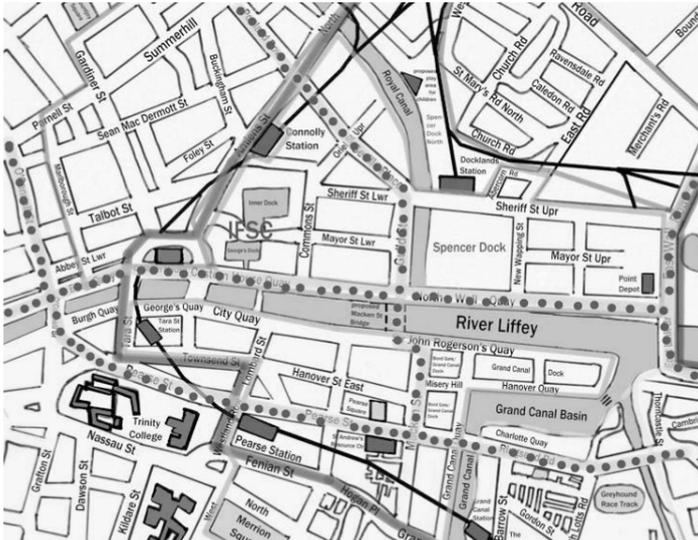


Fig. 3: Spencer Dock, proposed playground and Macken St Bridge and highly congested traffic routes (dotted lines) (Astrid Wonneberger)

One of these plans includes the construction of a new bridge at Macken Street/Guild Street. The idea is to divert traffic from O’Connell Street, Dublin’s main street, and the north inner city, down Seville Place, towards the new bridge and the south side of the river. This bridge was heavily opposed by the local communities on both sides of the river. An environmental impact study for the bridge predicts the decline of traffic on O’Connell Street, but at least a 20% rise of traffic pollution in the communities of Pearse Street and the North Wall. Already suffering from heavy traffic along Pearse Street and Seville Place, accompanied by rising levels of asthma and chest infection of inner city children, the residents opposed the plans (e.g. C3, C35, C30b, C44, C92, C69).¹⁶

¹⁵ Due to misplanning – the tunnel is too low for the new European super trucks (cf. Sheehy 19/08/2004: 9; C35) –, delays and failures, the tunnel project has been highly controversial and a regular topic in Dublin newspapers since 2000. See for instance Fetherston 02/10/2002: 10; Hogan 11/08/2005: 5; O’Rourke 22/02/2006: 16.

¹⁶ Some residents published their anger in form of letters to editors of newspapers, for instance Devlin 21/03/2001.

Eventually, however, the bridge got planning approval in 2001 (McNally 24/08/2001), but its construction only started in 2007 and has not been completed yet.

On the north side, the people feel particularly affected by the bridge. The reason becomes obvious with a look at the map (Fig. 3).

Seville Place is already a strong traffic-dependent boundary within the community. Children who live on the north side of the road have difficulties crossing over to the school and playground on the south side. Several petitions to the City Council and public protest marches were necessary to get a set of traffic lights (C35). With the establishment of the new bridge, residents fear that the community will be completely cut into two halves, as it will be increasingly difficult to cross the street. A new playground, which is badly needed in the area, is planned for the new development in Spencer Dock. However, separated from the community by both canal and Guild Street/Seville Place, it will be very difficult and dangerous for children to cross over to the new amenity (C35, C30b, North Wall News August 2004).¹⁷

“The traffic will be worse if Macken Street opens. Children won’t have any access to the playground at Linear Park, because they won’t be able to cross Seville Place. The community is already parted in two by the traffic in Seville Place. [...] If the traffic does not kill us, then the fumes will.” (C35)

“They know that [the bridge] is not going to do any good for the people that live here. These are residential areas. [...] It’s our children that will have asthma, bronchitis and diseases. [...] All those tourist attractions around O’Connell Street – they are not the heart of what Dublin is. The heart of what Dublin is is the people. Without the Dublin people there is no community. [...] It doesn’t seem to matter that they are killing people for it [the new bridge and traffic relief in O’Connell Street].” (C44)

The Macken Street Bridge has not been finished yet. Therefore it remains to be seen how much impact it will really have on the communities and their boundaries. However, this example shows that undivided territories are of utmost importance in maintaining functioning social structures. In this sense, physical transformations can change the community structure significantly.

17 The bridge and its impact on the community was also an important issue at the public monthly meetings between the developers at Spencer Dock North, John Thompson & Partners, working on behalf of Treasury Holdings and the Spencer Dock Development Company, and the North Wall community (2003).

Privatised spaces: the “Berlin Wall”

The creation of new administrative boundaries and physical borders is only one aspect of changing urban space and their impact on everyday life in the docklands. Another fundamental transformation of the dockland communities and culture is marked by the increasing privatisation of places that used to be public or at least publicly accessible. A few examples, such as the dock basins, have already been mentioned. People also complain about the fact that green spaces they used to play in as kids are turned into building sites and therefore lost as amenities (e.g. C81a). The most dramatic changes however, are caused by the new apartment complexes that formed one of the key elements of the early phase of redevelopment. Approximately 1,500 residential dwellings were constructed in Phase 1 of the Master Plan between 1996 and 2002. A further 6,500 to 9,500 residential units have been planned to attract 23,000 new residents to the area by 2012 (DDDA Master Plan 2003: 40-45).

These new apartments are not considered a threat to the communities per se. After decades of decline and decreasing numbers of residents, community members are generally delighted to see new life in the streets around the former derelict areas. Contrary to new office space which only enlivens the area during the day, residential areas are always alive. Statements by community members illustrate this attitude:

“At least the area will not be dead at the weekend, because it is all apartments down there [Pearse Street area] now. It is being revitalised with people, whether it is families or not.” (C81b, similar statements by C86d, C83b)

The erection of new apartment complexes however, also creates privatised residential spaces which have never existed before to such a large extent. They also mark a new internal boundary between two populations in the docklands – the old communities on the one hand and the new residents on the other. One interviewee explains:

“Today I would think the most dramatic changes would be the new developments, and I think they are good for the people and they are good for the area. I see them as very positive and very good. But the interaction with the people going into the new apartments is not very good. I would have liked to see that these people buying all these new apartments would become more involved with the community. But maybe they will integrate better later.” (C87)

In some cases, this division is even expressed in the architecture, in the form of physical boundaries and walls between the two populations.



Fig. 4: Berlin Wall (photo: Astrid Wonneberger)

The most vivid example is the so-called “Berlin Wall” which divides the North Wall community from the inhabitants of the IFSC. When the first part of the docklands was redeveloped, the only structure that was left on the Custom House Docks site was – apart from the basins – an approximately five metre high wall surrounding the former coal yard and docks. Separating the old public housing complexes in and around Sheriff Street from the new residential areas in the IFSC, the “Berlin Wall”, as it became locally known, was and is perceived as a clear and intended boundary between old and new residents:

“The wall was here originally, but the poles on top and the wire, they weren’t. The apartments separate themselves from the community. If the wall was a metre or two metres high, I’d understand it, but a wall that high – they could have taken it down. And then they added this barbed wire. [...] When I saw it first it reminded me of a concentration camp with electric wire on top of it. [...] I mean, they don’t make themselves welcome.” (C44)

This example of a physical boundary between residential groups became so famous that even newspapers started to report about it. The “Berlin Wall” became a symbol of exclusion and stigmatisation:

“The wall has been there as long as anyone can remember, but it is now arousing very strong feelings in those who live on the other side of it. ‘It is to keep us apart from the yuppies,’ one of the women in the North Wall Centre says with disgust. ‘They’ve made their own ghetto in there,’ says another. ‘But they need it,’ someone else argues. ‘If the wall wasn’t there, those nice flats would be wrecked once the gurrriers¹⁸ got at them.’ They all collapse with laughter when someone remarks, ‘I know a postman who goes in there. And he says they’re all weirdies.’ [...] But the wall that’s run unnoticed along Sheriff Street for decades now seems to stand for something new: a tangible symbol of a divided community.” (What’s In A Wall? 30/09/1997)

The “Berlin Wall” is certainly an extreme example for an artificial physical boundary in Dublin. Nevertheless, almost all new apartment complexes that were built prior to 1997 – and a few even after that – have one feature in common: they are all gated, i.e. surrounded by gates that allow access only to residents.

Gated residential areas are not an invention of Dublin planners. Residential developments surrounded by walls or other means of barriers go back as far as the 1850s in the USA, when the elite barred themselves and their wealth off from the poorer classes. The first middle-class so-called “gated communities” began to emerge in the 1960s. This development was accelerated in the 1980s, and by the 1990s it was common all over the United States. Transformations in the political economy of late twentieth century urban America with weakening social ties and lack of local control, racism, fear of crime and developers’ interests to maximise profit have been analysed as driving factors for this development (Low 2006). The reasons leading to a parallel development in Dublin in the late 1980s and early 1990s show some similarities with the American case, but there are also regional differences. In order to fully understand the complex consequences, a closer look at the dockland communities, the new residents and the housing situation in Dublin in general will be necessary.

With the “Celtic Tiger” boom¹⁹, property prices have increased enormously, up to 299% over the last decade (Permanent TSB House Price

18 Dublin slang for “street urchins”, kids hanging out on the streets (cf. Share 1997).

19 Derived from the East Asian Tiger economies, the name “Celtic Tiger” refers to a period of rapid economic growth in the Republic of Ireland between the early 1990s and early 2000s. Triggered by low corporate taxation, EU funding, low-cost labour market and a policy of restraint in government spending, which are seen as the most commonly named causes for this boom, the Celtic Tiger has on the one hand been responsible for Ireland’s modernisation, low unemployment rates and economic growth

Index, quoted in “Decade of Growth for Dublin Market” 26/07/2006: 21). Apartments in prime areas such as the docklands adjacent to the city centre are extremely valuable, while the reputation of indigenous dockland communities is still not the best. For this reason and general safety issues all over Dublin, gates were introduced in the new residential developments in order to decrease the (assumed) risk of burglaries. This physical gap between the two populations of new and old residents is further enhanced by cultural and social gaps. The indigenous communities and the new residents – often referred to as the “gated communities”²⁰ – have completely different social and cultural backgrounds. Although the demographics are changing, the indigenous dockland residents are still characterised by relatively large families. Third-level education is an exception, low-skilled jobs and unemployment are frequent (ESRI 1996).²¹ Many families have lived in the area over generations. Grandparents, children and grandchildren often live side by side in the same public housing complexes. Each community is characterised by close networks within the area.

Instead of large families, the vast majority of the new residents live as childless singles or couples in these city apartments. They are mostly young, i.e. between 20 and 35 years of age, and have received some form of third-level education. They often work in the financial or IT-sector and they are very mobile. The city apartments are usually left after a few years.²² If a family is planned, they look for a house in the sub-

and wealth that led Ireland from a “backward” country right into modern Europe. On the other hand, critical voices see the downside in a widening gap between the rich and the poor, rising house prices which favour developers and investors but make it very hard for people with lower and middle incomes to buy or even rent their own house or apartment. See in detail Coulter/Coleman 2003.

- 20 The term “gated communities” is often used by the old-established communities to describe the new residents, particularly the ones living in the gated complexes. However, I prefer the term “new residents”, as they lack any features of a “community”, as will be explained later. Another reason is that not all new residents live in gated apartments.
- 21 Although the economic and educational profile has already been improved since the beginning of the DDDA scheme, it is still under Dublin average in 2002, as the DDDA Master Plan Monitoring Report 2004 revealed.
- 22 In order to increase the rates of owner-occupiers in the new apartments, the government increased the threshold for stamp duty relief from €190,500 to €317,500 in 2004. To keep this first-time buyer exemption the buyer must reside or have somebody occupy the dwelling on his/her behalf for the first five years (Revenue Office, private e-mail). As a direct result the latest developments have a much higher owner-occupation (up to 80% in the Gasworks for instance) than the previous complexes where, in one example, as few as six investors own 170 apartments (C78, C88). In

urbs. Their social networks are not connected to the area, but reach out all over Dublin and beyond. For this reason they have a completely different view on the local environment. They barely know about the history and tend to use new bars, cafes and shops rather than the old community venues, if they use them at all and do not prefer to meet friends outside the area.²³

For all these reasons, the two populations have barely any contact. Facing the growing numbers of new residents who are only perceived as anonymous masses, many community members feel threatened. On the one hand, they are afraid that they will be outnumbered by the new residents soon. Moreover, some people expressed concerns that the new inhabitants with their good education will distort the statistics, so in future financial support for the area will be cut short. On the other hand, they fear they may be expelled indirectly by increasing property prices and decreasing numbers of social and affordable housing, particularly since many former dock workers do not see themselves as part of the new image the DDDA is creating for the area (e.g. C84a, C84b, C44, C3).

The few attempts to get in touch with the new residents have not been very successful so far, but this issue of integration has been acknowledged as one of the most urgent problems to be solved in the future by community leaders. The aim is to create a new and growing, but still functioning community in the area, which means getting in touch with the new residents, informing them about existing community structures and establishing new social networks. Whether these attempts, such as a meeting between community members, new residents and local enterprises in April 2006, will be successful, remains to be seen.

In general, the local communities are not happy with segregated neighbourhoods, and the gated apartments and the “Berlin Wall” are the most visible barriers for this development. These new boundaries manifested in the new architecture of the docklands are perceived as gaps that

June 2007, the government announced another stamp duty reform, which will now include the complete abolition of stamp duty for first-time buyers (Cabinet expected..., 20/06/2007).

- 23 There are no statistics available on the new residents. My findings are based on interviews, observations and mental maps. According to these data, the new residents are very homogenous in the characteristics mentioned. For example, in the Gasworks, a new development with over 400 units, my interviewees mentioned having seen only three families with a child in the entire complex. Nobody remembered seeing any resident over 40 or 45 years of age living in the complex. All my interviewees had some kind of third-level education and all their social networks reached far beyond the area. Their consensus on the other aspects mentioned is equally high.

make it even more difficult to overcome the already existing cultural and social differences. The gates, for instance, hinder the delivery of the local magazine to the new residents, which is distributed personally to every household in the community in Pearse Street. An important means of communication thus fails.



Fig. 5: Gated apartments (IFSC) (photo: Astrid Wonneberger)

Gates and separated spaces are considered “untypical” for the culture of the indigenous residents. In a community where everybody knows everybody, neighbours visit each other regularly and greet each other on the street, many people regret the fact that the doors that used to be open all the time in the past are now locked. The new gates are considered by many residents to be responsible for the decline of the close-knit sense of neighbourhood in the area, preventing the delivery of local publications and creating an atmosphere of anonymity. Gates and walls as part of the redevelopment of the docklands are therefore considered a threat to the functioning communal structure.

“We want to stop all that, the gated apartments, where they are cut off from the community. [...] It looks to us like a fortress. It cuts off this whole development away from us. [...] I mean they can’t create these clinical communities where weird people don’t exist. Faceless people. It is not in our interest to create separate communities.” (C3)

“Developers coming in destroy the community piece by piece. [...] Just up the road there, there are a couple of houses that have been derelict for years and they are being torn down at the moment and converted into apartments. [...] They are gated. They are not part of the community. And there used to be families that knew each other. So the communities are being torn apart bit by bit.” (C44)

These arguments are not just wide-spread among dockland residents. The debate about the pros and cons of gated developments, the necessity for a safer urban living on the one hand, and the negative effects on community formation and integration in urban neighbourhoods on the other, started in Dublin as early as the construction of the first gated residential units in the 1980s. Finally, in the mid-1990s, the latter arguments became more popular and a general shift in the development of urban quarters could be observed. Further pushed by community representatives who were involved in the planning process of the DDDA Master Plan, the DDDA abandoned gates from their plans altogether. While the very first development of Clarion Quay still has gates, the majority of the new residential quarters along Hanover Quay, Gallery Quay or The Gasworks are all open, which means pedestrians can walk through the premises and have access to the front doors. A few exceptions can be explained by the fact that the planning process is not only in the hands of the DDDA, but can be overruled by Dublin City Council.



Fig. 6: Balconies (old social housing: Pearse House) (photo: Astrid Wonneberger)

Nevertheless, the problems and consequences for the area remain the same. The privatisation of public spaces continues. Even if gates are missing, the new apartment complexes are separated, more than any residential area in the past. This becomes particularly obvious for children, who used to be able to visit any of their friends in houses or social housing complexes by just knocking at their doors or looking through the windows. In the new apartments, pass codes and bells make it much more complicated to get into the complex, as a 12 year-old boy explains:

“In the new apartments you need a pass code to get in. And that is not fair because sometimes my friends are not at home and I just want to go in and see if there is anyone there. But I can’t. There is glass doors you can see through, but there are always buildings in the way to see who is there. In the flats you just look out over the balcony and see who is down in the flats or just knock at a door. In the new apartments you have to go in to see who is there. In the flats it is no hassle to walk in and out, in the apartments you need the swiper thing.” (C88b)



Fig. 7: New apartments (photo: Astrid Wonneberger)

The lack of the old-style balconies, which are mentioned in the quotation above, brings another change to the old ways of living. In the old social housing complexes, the entrance doors to each flat lead out to a balcony which faces out to the main yard. The balconies are part of the daily life: Neighbours meet each other for a chat on the balcony, and they are a perfect viewing point for what is going on in the yard. Private life is

much more communal than in the new style apartments, where balconies are entirely private, stairwells are not very inviting for a chat, and the general layout makes it impossible to know who is at home. While some people prefer this new more private atmosphere, others miss the closeness and regular chat with the next door neighbour.

Thus, the new residential architecture is again more than a new design for the dockland area. It also has an impact on long-established patterns of behaviour.

Conclusion

The regeneration of the Dublin docklands is only on the surface an exclusively physical transformation of an urban environment. Naturally, physical changes are the most visible ones – so visible that some long-term dockland residents barely find their way through their new environment.

On the micro-level however, more dramatic changes become obvious. New boundaries – visible and invisible ones – create new forms of exclusion, be it from education or training schemes for individuals, or from financial benefits for a community. New problems arise with the construction of new roads, bridges and consequent traffic, not only causing health problems, but also separating communal entities.

On the symbolic level, old communities seem to be losing their sense of place and their feeling of connectedness to an environment that the residents still perceive as their own territory. Most old port-related buildings have been demolished, and the new glass facades do not substitute the old meanings of heritage and identity. The physical space as a means for the formation of community identity is losing its importance.

Moreover, community members are more and more afraid of losing their community spirit, which used to be one important marker for a dockland culture in the past.

Growing numbers of new residents in the area remain distant from the old-established communities. Different life-styles and different cultures, as well as the new architecture, make it difficult to bring the two groups together: Gates and privatised spaces leave other residents out and inhibit direct and personal communication. Even in the new social blocks, which are predominantly inhabited by members of the old-established communities, the old-style personal communication seems to decrease, as the new apartment blocks lack the balconies offering space for a chat with the neighbours or for watching the courtyard below.

However, despite many fears of disadvantages on both individual and communal level, and a general feeling that the indigenous dockland communities should have a greater share of the new wealth and profits around them, many aspects of the rejuvenation process are considered positive: Community members are represented on the board of the DDDA. The campshires are still publicly accessible. New social housing schemes, education and training programmes were developed and derelict areas are now revived. All this is generally acknowledged and regarded as a new chance for the old communities and their members.

The transformation of the Dublin docklands is an ongoing process, which will not be finished until 2012 at the earliest. Therefore, many changes have still to take place. It remains to be seen which of the anticipated consequences will actually happen, and which will not occur. The long-term effects of dockland regeneration in all its facets and on all levels, have to be the object of further research. Only the future will tell whether the old dockland communities will be able to survive, or whether some new form of communal identity will arise among old and new dwellers in the area. This article has shown how communities and identities, specific local places and spaces are intertwined. It remains to be seen whether this close sense of locality will survive, or if it is substituted by new forms of territorial references.

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