One Man, One Vote – One Family, One House

An examination of social housing in Londonderry, 1945-1975

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By

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Map 1. Outline Map of Northern Ireland: District Council Areas

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Introduction: A City (and Province) Divided

Within the CR movement we opposed the old, unqualified demand for “fair distribution of jobs and houses,” pointing out that this was to demand more houses and jobs for Catholics and less jobs and houses for Protestants. Instead we wanted the movement to demand more jobs and houses for everyone – one man – one job, one family – one house, and to put forward policies which would get us this.³

Though housing is often cited as a core cause of the grievances that sparked the Civil Rights movement in Londonderry, very few – if any – studies focus on housing at length as a catalyst to the eventual Troubles in Northern Ireland. Upon close examination, however, the tensions surrounding allocation of housing were an amalgamation of all other grievances expressed by the lower classes and the underrepresented Catholic majority. Housing, and the allocation and regulation thereof, therefore became a focal point of both the Civil Rights Movement and eventually the Troubles. No city better exemplified the importance of housing allocation to the Troubles than Derry-Londonderry, a city so divided that even its name remains a point of contention.⁴ The first Civil Rights march in Derry on October 5, 1968 was itself organized by the Derry Housing Action Committee (DHAC), an organization dedicated to the betterment of housing conditions for citizens. Therefore, this paper aims to remedy the gap in historical analysis by providing an in-depth discussion of housing experiences in Derry-Londonderry and how these grievances coalesced into a political movement.

The city of Derry-Londonderry has been a consistent hotbed of political and religious strife from the early days of its establishment. The current city was first constructed in the mid-

³ Labour and Civil Rights pamphlet distributed by the Democratic Labour Party, October 5, 1968, P1618, Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library.
⁴ Tradition within the city dictates that Nationalists reject the “London” part of the name “Londonderry, “and so officially call the city “Derry.” These contenders have historical precedence, as the original city was chartered as Derry. However, Unionists stand behind the most recent christening of the city. Therefore, on official nonsectarian city events, the city is known as Derry-Londonderry; for the purpose of maintaining balance and objectivity, I will alternate between these names.
17th century by four representatives of the medieval London Guilds (for whom the city Guildhall stands in tribute) under the direction of James I. Derry served as a monument to the Protestant English forces that built it. While all other European churches were originally Catholic, St. Columb’s Cathedral, built directly on the city walls from 1628-1633, was the first post-reformation building in Europe dedicated solely to Protestantism.5

Beyond its Anglicized origins, the unique social geography of Derry distinguishes it from other Northern Irish cities. While many towns have a history of religious homogeneity – the majority of the population belonging either to Catholicism or Protestantism, indisputably – Derry’s population has long been split, nearly evenly, between the two denominations. This dichotomy manifests not only socio-politically but also physically in the present layout of the city. The perilous River Foyle, which slices its way through the city boundaries, acted as a natural wall between Catholic and Protestant residential areas. The Bogside surrounds the old city walls to the North and West and exists as a longstanding working-class Catholic territory; meanwhile, the dwellings of most of the city’s Protestant population hug the east bank of the river – a condition exacerbated by the violence of the mid-20th century. This unique geographic feature was not only a symptom of decisions made by the Londonderry Corporation in building and allocation, but was also a response by the housing committee and later the Housing Executive to an existing housing paradigm.

The responsibility for housing allocation in Derry rested with the Derry Corporation, a local government authority elected by citizens eligible to vote. Each locality within Northern Ireland housed a similar government body. The composition of this body varied widely between cities: some elected a Nationalist majority (an affiliation often synonymous and interchangeable with Catholic), others elected a Loyalist majority (largely composed of Protestants). In towns

where the population was largely homogenous, this election process posed few problems. It was instead larger, intermixed cities like Belfast and Londonderry where the Corporation and its closed-door practices became a source of extreme inter-class, inter-religious tension.

The specific origins of the Londonderry Corporation are at best elusive and at worst completely lost. Like much of the history of the settlement of Ulster, the history of the Corporation is muddled and unclear, assigned vague values as a body that “governed the affairs of the city.” The Corporation held responsibility for the internal functioning of its city. In Derry, this included structural aspects, including health, infrastructural development, and most important, housing. The housing sub-committee held monthly meetings that were largely ceremonial, as the powers of housing allocation fell largely upon the mayor. However, a complete history of this entity remains unwritten; a discussion of the Londonderry Corporation merits a thesis of its own.

While Londonderry has a long history of overcrowding and poor living conditions, this issue does not become entirely prominent until the mid-20th century, when, at the same time, Derry experienced a post-war economic slump. It is therefore at this point that the discussion begins. Though Londonderry was a city characterized by consistent economic trouble, the area flourished during World War II. As Great Britain’s westernmost port, Derry was absolutely essential to maritime communication between the Allied forces. The city also played host to a number of American and Canadian forces, whose encampments eventually became temporary or long-term residences for Derry’s citizens. The city stabilized during the war; in the years following, it did not fare as well, to the detriment of its citizens. With economic decline, habitual

mass unemployment once again plagued Derry, and without the income necessary to purchase their own houses, more and more families applied for overcrowded social housing. Rising unemployment rendered government attempts at mitigation ineffective as well, specifically work by the Northern Ireland Housing Trust. Meanwhile, electoral boundary changes precipitated by the Derry Corporation added pressure to the housing problem; gerrymandering by local authority leaders produced a Protestant-majority Corporation, one hesitant to house Catholics outside of the Bogside for fear of losing their coveted position of power, or so many claimed. These factors, when combined with ideological and political activism characteristic of the West in the 1960s, created an atmosphere ripe for unrest.

Unrest began in earnest during the 1960s, when disgruntled locals began to organize into political action groups. Dr. Conn McCluskey and his wife Patricia began the Campaign for Social Justice in January 1964, “for the purpose of bringing the light of publicity to bear on the discrimination which exists in our community against the Catholic section of that community representing more than one-third of the total population.” The Derry Housing Action Committee began in February 1968 under the leadership of men and women frustrated by their inability to secure housing from the Corporation. The organization of these committees inaugurated the first phase of conflict in Northern Ireland. Local historian Fionbarra O’Dochartaigh theorizes that the Troubles can in reality be broken into three separate conflicts, each leading to the next: first, the Civil Rights Movement, which bled into the protests against internment, which began in 1968 and carried on through the 1970s, and finally into the violent backlash after the death of Bobby Sands and other hunger strikers in the late 1980s. Sectarian violence permeated these movements and added an uncertain and deadly backdrop to political action. One must be

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10 O'Dochartaigh, Ulster's White Negroes, 39.
cautious to distinguish between the Civil Rights movement and the violent, sectarian-fueled “Troubles.” While hate crimes precipitated by extremist groups like the IRA and the UVF did increase during the 1960s and 70s and the events of the Civil Rights Movement increased membership of both of these organizations, the original goals of the Civil Rights Movement established by the Derry Citizen’s Action Committee (DCAC) and the DHAC were nonsectarian; in fact, they exposed the plight of the working class at the hands of a mismanaged government Corporation – a corporation which happened to consist entirely of middle or upper-class Protestants. To the DHAC, the problems that plagued Derry were not sectarian, but class-based in nature.

Scholarship, both primary and secondary, on the Civil Rights Movement and subsequent Troubles in Derry contains some unique characteristics, a potential result of the highly turbulent, self-aware period in which these events occurred. Perhaps most noticeable is the overt attempt by actors in the original Civil Rights Movement, individuals like Eamonn McCann, Bernadette Devlin, Fionbarra O’Dochartaigh, and even contesters like Ian Paisley to make autobiographical efforts to shape historical memory. Activists drew on statistical data and global trends, patterns, and movements to form a link between their own movement and broader intellectual and social movements. This tendency is particularly noticeable in repeated connections between the Derry Civil Rights Movement and the American Civil Rights movement, a thread that a number of academics have taken up, specifically those concerned with international security and civil liberties, and historians of the 1960s.¹¹ This particular tendency must be treated with caution; such emphasis on the history of living memory no doubt causes distortion of the memory. As

Maurice Halbwachs reveals in his landmark work on collective memory, “Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events from their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess.”¹² This essay will work consciously to identify such potential distortions in collective memory.

Another recurring theme in historical scholarship in this area is the blunt acceptance that the Protestant leadership consistently oppressed the Catholic population; but such assumptions must be taken carefully, as they place the conflict immediately within sectarian limits – when in reality, sectarianism did not enter the conflict in earnest until the mid-1970s.¹³ As Fionbarra O’Dochartaigh and many others were keen to point out, the Civil Rights Movement included a fair number of Protestant activists in the beginning, before the escalation of violence between paramilitaries and the police. In fact, several attempts have been made – most notably by Eamonn McCann in his semi-autobiographical War and an Irish Town - to place the origins of the conflict instead within the realm of class struggle. This argument denounced the company vote and gerrymandering as the main culprits of social strife, not necessarily sectarian divide. Proponents of this viewpoint claim the real issue was the subjugation of the working-class population to conditions of absolute squalor, regardless of religious denomination.

Despite the class-based inclinations many historians assign to the conflict, I hesitate to surrender the Civil Rights Movement entirely to the Marxist ideologies of the time period. Too often the history of the Troubles is analyzed through a wider theoretical lens that attributes eruptions of discontent in Northern Ireland to the “Red” ideologies sweeping Europe at the time.

While there is little doubt that socialist and communist ideologies had their place in the Civil Rights Movements of the late sixties (Bernadette Devlin and many other leaders were outspoken socialists), it is not my intention to add to this discussion. I wish to direct this analysis towards the everyday experience of the working class man, woman, or child living in social housing in Derry in the years following World War II and to clarify the extent to which their living situation influenced social unrest in the city; in other words, this will not be a discussion of abstract political theory. After all, it was the ordinary man, woman, or child who eventually joined the paramilitary organizations responsible for sectarian violence and religious polarization. It is my opinion that the conditions of housing for the average person are an area of acute concern, but often examined less than the political ideologies that influenced the direction of the Civil Rights Movement. I aim to capture the lived experience of Derry’s citizens in the years before and during the Civil Rights Movement and in doing so connect the state of housing to both the political and social polarization that characterizes Derry in the modern era.

Chapter 1: Origins of Housing Action - Post-War Housing Shortages, Sub-Standard Conditions and the Londonderry Corporation

It is impossible to enter into a discussion of Derry city’s housing conditions without first addressing the electoral developments of the 20th century. The Government of Ireland Act, 1920, established proportional representation in the six counties on the condition that The Northern Parliament’s abolition of Proportional Representation through the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1922 reset Derry’s boundaries using the ominously vague language, “the provision whereby fixing electoral wards or boundaries regard is to be had not only to the
number of persons rated but to the aggregate value."\textsuperscript{14} Many Catholics regard this particular alteration as a return to boundaries gerrymandered to elect a Protestant majority. As a result, Derry City was spliced once again into three wards, each of which received eight electoral votes, regardless of population size, and two of which housed Protestant majorities in an otherwise Catholic-majority city. This distribution of population allowed for the election of a Protestant-led Derry Corporation. While patterns of population growth within Derry, particularly among Catholics, persisted in the post-war years, this electoral trend saw no significant change.

Meanwhile, a citywide housing crisis proceeded to grow more acute across all three electoral districts, peaking in the 1950s. While this crisis was intense for much of the city’s population, it was exceedingly so for Catholics, whose population within the South Ward was twice that of either of the other two districts. Records also show a distinct disparity in the amount of time Catholics and Protestants waited on the housing list. While some of this disparity was self-imposed by Catholics who refused to live in Protestant majority areas, instances of discriminatory allocation on the basis of religious and political identity by the mayor were perhaps more prominent. When the South Ward could no longer accommodate the population, therefore, Catholic families were the first and largest population to seek alternative accommodation. It was therefore mostly Catholic families who resorted to extreme measures to find accommodations, from living in converted military huts to caravans; and it was in working-class, overcrowded communities that the ideas of the turbulent 1960s made their home. The mechanics of these conditions – and the population’s response to conditions – will be examined in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{14} Electoral Boundaries (Local Government). August 1968, PRONI, CAB/9B/205/7.

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Great Britain embarked on a trend of housing improvement following the First World War, a program as disorganized as it was idealistic. A primary focus of this project was the clearance of slums, which were usually comprised of old, overcrowded and condensed urban areas – areas, in other words, similar to the Bogside.\(^{15}\) Local authorities were tasked with the clearance of these areas, usually under the pretext of public health rather than housing.\(^{16}\) Under the Housing Act of 1919, local authorities were able to condemn entire areas with a single word – “unsanitary.”\(^{17}\) For every house condemned, however, there was at least one if not more families requiring rehousing; and in this, the authorities were not as well practiced. Tenants of condemned houses were offered council housing - if available – or faced with the choice of whether to leave the city.

This conundrum affected Londonderry particularly, as citywide crowding prohibited the council from offering new housing to families existing in condemned houses. By the mid-1940s, families disadvantaged by extreme overcrowding, deteriorating houses, or loss of income turned to extreme measures to ensure their security and survival. Squatting became standard practice for families waiting on the Londonderry Corporation’s Housing waitlist, though it was not always possible to find a traditional house in which to live: in fact, hundreds of families resorted to living in caravans, or, after the war, occupying the tin army huts now unused by the United States military. Perhaps the most notable example of this means of survival was the occupation of the former army huts at Bligh’s Lane, Cleoney, and Springtown Camps by Derry families, discovered in 1946. These huts lacked the most basic of domestic technologies – no heat,

\(^{16}\) Ibid.  
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
cooking appliances, or bathroom facilities were present in the early years of habitation. Historian and civil rights activist Fionbarra O’Dochartaigh describes the obvious dangers of these narrow tin huts, even after the Corporation intervened to make the huts more habitable: “As there were no back doors in any of the huts, such created very obvious dangers if fire was to catch hold at any time. Such did in fact occur in several huts, with the wooden structures burning like a bale of hay in a matter of mere minutes.”  

Housing within the city remained so deplorable that the main discussion within the Corporation concerned how to provide electricity, water, and heat to the huts so families could remain there; the Corporation went as far as to draw up housing contracts for the converted huts. Though these families saw a significant improvement in their living conditions as a result of squatting in the camps, conditions were such that the mayor in 1946 suggested families in Springtown live

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19 Photograph courtesy of Springtowncamp.com.
two to a hut “until further arrangements can be made.”\(^{21}\) Though the Corporation referred to the huts as “temporary” accommodation, families continued to live on the three army bases through 1967.\(^{22}\)

Conditions for those who managed to secure housing within the city proved to be no better; Catholics and Protestants across all three wards experienced substandard housing. An analysis of population density conducted by the DHAC in 1961 indicated that Derry’s population density per acre was nearly three times the density of other towns in County Londonderry, at 25 people per acre. One source indicates that this density was much worse in the South Ward, at 125 people per acre.\(^{23}\) While the largest proportion of the population lived in the South Ward, overcrowding was the norm across the city. The Corporation attempted to mitigate the issues of rising population density and deteriorating housing stock with two architectural methods that became extremely popular in Britain in the post-war years: the prefabricated house, or “Pre-fab,” and the high-rise flat. Each new type of dwelling presented its own complications, which, over time, compounded Derry’s existing housing troubles instead of ameliorating them.

The prefabricated house was an innovative concept of the 20\(^{th}\) century, meant to align with growing ideals of utilitarianism, consumption, and modernism characteristic of the western world.\(^{24}\) The prefabricated house, with its simple design and somewhat flimsy structure, could be churned out of old aircraft factories at a rapid speed, and was ideal for accommodating families in emergency situations while they awaited more permanent housing.\(^{25}\) Prefabs were therefore seen as a convenient solution to family displacement in London during the Blitz, and a model

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
\(^{23}\) O’Dochartaigh, Ulster’s White Negroes, 11.
\(^{24}\) Ravetz and Turkington, The Place of Home, 96.
\(^{25}\) Ibid.
prefab was approved by parliament in 1944. The prefab was not only effective in housing displaced families in London, however; it was also seen as a rapid solution to the intense overcrowding of Londonderry at the end of World War II. The prefabs were by no means built for permanent use. The most common prefab in Derry took only forty man-hours to assemble. Built in the bungalow-style and often made of aluminum, each prefab had two bedrooms and was set in its own garden, and often came with full kitchens and bathrooms and running hot water. Despite these added luxuries, the general thinness of the aluminum walls and the architectural difficulties of flat roofs often contributed to condensation and dampness; however, the benefits of prefabricated housing seemed to outweigh the consequences in the eyes of the Derry Corporation; entire neighborhoods of prefabricated houses materialized within the city over the next decade, housing families like Marie Ryan’s in Swilly Gardens, Creggan. Marie describes the prefabricated house from her childhood:

It wasn’t that it was a run down, it was just as I say we called them tin huts, it was just a pre-fab house, that’s all it was, there was nothing outstanding about it or you couldn’t say oh that house is lovely or anything, they just looked all the same really. You had a big backyard out the back, we called it the humps then. It was like a big garden, but it was all humps and bumps and we used to hide and play there as we were growing up, all the wee boys and wee girls we all played together like.

The concept of high-rise flats gained popularity across Great Britain in the post-World War II years, seen as an efficient and innovative way to accommodate expanding populations in cities. The first flats to reach beyond six stories were found in London, quickly followed by other cities and culminating in Glasgow’s Red Road Flats, which reached 31 stories. Derry was no exception to this trend. Plans for the Rossville Street Flats were in motion by 1966; problems

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26 Ibid.
27 Ibid, 97.
28 Ibid.
29 Marie Ryan, in discussion with the author, Derry-Londonderry, July 26, 2014.
30 Ravetz and Turkington, The Place of Home, 51.
arose almost immediately. Alison Ravetz explains hesitancy for English tenants to move into the flats, a tendency echoed by the Northern Irish as well, namely, “The essence of the problem of council flats was that, unlike the English house, their use by families was not rooted in a long, evolutionary process.” The people of Northern Ireland, like those of England had become so accustomed to living in the traditional detached house that the idea of living in a flat seemed absolutely substandard. Beyond this hesitancy, the flats themselves were a source of discomfort to people, particularly in the case of noise levels. In addition to the adjacent walls shared between residents, Ravetz points out that residents endured the constant noise of plumbing, elevators, doors opening and closing, and in several cases deck access that ran directly above neighbors’ bedrooms. Also pertinent was the issue of dampness; because the flats were constructed in the prefab style and with similar materials, the condensation that plagued prefabricated bungalows also affected flats. With their structural flaws and their break from traditional housing, the Rossville flats became a symbol of the frustration of the overcrowded, under-housed people of Derry, resulting in acute repercussions that will be discussed in a later chapter.

The damp, crowded conditions of social housing in Derry like those described in prefabricated and high-rise accommodation left many residents vulnerable to sanitation-related diseases. The years following World War II saw a rise in reported cases of tuberculosis and diphtheria. Londonderry suffered the highest reported rates of tuberculosis in Northern Ireland, a disease that commonly plagued overcrowded environments. Pre-fabs, with their somewhat

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31 Ibid, 57.
32 Ibid, 56.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid, 57.
short-lived structural value and their population density, were particularly infamous for such ailments. As early as 1946, a Protestant clergyman, Rev. Mr. Cave, warned of the health problems festering in these tightly-packed, pre-fab neighborhoods. He referred to pre-fab neighborhoods as “slums…which were being built so close together that when the families now occupying them increased the houses would become hotbeds for tuberculosis.” As housing conditions remained dire in the years that followed, frustration with the high levels of disease bled into the protests of the general public. In 1948, an opinion writer in the Journal linked the housing shortage, disease, and discrimination in a piece that asserted: “[T]he truth is that the man and woman with a large family are to get no house. Condemnation to eke out their lives in T.B. – breeding rooms and cellars is the penalty that the Ministry inflicts on those – and they are practically all Catholics – who dare to have large families, who refuse to practice the abomination called ‘family limitations’, [and] who are obedient to the Commandments of the Almighty.” Disease was not the only health hazard of concern in Derry’s cramped housing conditions; psychological tolls related to stress and overcrowding also ran rampant. Alderman James Heggarty brought forth a case before the Londonderry Corporation in November 1962 in which a mother suffered two nervous breakdowns from the stress of her nine family members living in a 12x10 foot flat.

Despite the widespread exposure of these conditions in Derry through newspapers and demonstrations, these conditions were not ameliorated over time. In a 1959 meeting of the Derry

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Corporation, the Executive Sanitary Officer and Housing Architect submitted a report on conditions of mold and condensation in houses on the Creggan Estate – over a decade after concerns about the link between tuberculosis and housing conditions peaked.40

**Experiences in Housing**

Many historical theories examine the particularities of oral history practice in post-war Britain; two such analyses will prove useful to this discussion of housing in Londonderry. The first and most fundamental of works on collective memory utilized in this examination stems from Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory. Halbwachs argues that “collective memory” (frequently termed cultural memory by contemporary historians and sociologists) consists of social memories formed from the influence of religion, class, and family, three groups that contain in themselves some form of memory. Therefore, the ideas formed by the individual are influenced by these structures within the individual’s life. Halbwachs emphasizes, “One cannot in fact think about the events of one’s past without discoursing upon them.”41 Each memory presented in this analysis, therefore, must be understood not as a pure memory, but a memory reconstructed over time and numerous tellings.

A second treatise on oral history utilized in this section concerns patterns in Northern Ireland itself. In his work concerning social memory and violence in Belfast, Sean O’Connell discusses the theories of Joanna Bourke, who found that “sentimental nostalgia punctuates working class autobiographies, recalling social relations ‘through a golden haze.’”42 O’Connell emphasizes Bourke’s consideration that Northern Irish residents tend to supplant memories of

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40 City of Londonderry Housing Sub-Committee Minutes and Reports, March 5, 1959, PRONI, LA79/12A/1.
41 Halbwachs. *Collective Memory*, 53.
violence and poor conditions with fond memories of strong community.\(^43\) He also draws upon the writings of Ben Jones, who emphasizes that nostalgia may depend on several factors that must be taken under consideration, including “a narrator’s gender, age, and life trajectory.”\(^44\) Both the possibility of nostalgia and the conditions that may contribute to such biases in individuals’ personal histories will be taken into consideration as this section attempts to reconstruct past experiences in the city.

Difficulties in overcrowding and sanitation are especially poignant in social memory of housing during this time.\(^45\) However, for as many stories as there are of long housing waitlists, illness, and whole families crammed into one room, there are just as many of strong communities and friendly neighbors – in fact, these two stories are often interwoven. Individual tales reveal a sense of poor housing for both Catholics and Protestants; intriguingly, individuals from both sides freely admit to the existence of Catholic ghettos and gerrymandering – but with an understanding that the situation was poor throughout the city, regardless of religious denomination. Discussions with individuals from diverse backgrounds reveal that the greatest difficulties may have existed for those unable to buy their own houses – those who relied on the Corporation and the Housing Trust to provide dwellings at a monthly rent. As the architectural plans put forth by the Corporation and the Trust give very little information pertaining to the structural characteristics like wall thickness, density, and how the limited space given to each family was used, these accounts are invaluable in reconstructing the lived experience of Derry’s residents, and therefore forming a stronger understanding of the conditions under which the Civil Rights Movement originated. In fact, the strong emphasis on community and closeness conveyed

\(^{43}\) O’Connell, “Voilence and Social Memory,” 735-736.
\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Methodology in approaching oral histories taken with consideration to the philosophies of Maurice Halbwachs. For examples of questions posed by the author to interviewees, please see Appendix.
by interviewees indicates a condition favorable to the development of mass civil unrest: widespread frustration with living conditions combined with proximity that allows for movement of ideas and mass organization. These ideas will be further explored in this section.

Current Belfast resident Don Walsh grew up on the Creggan Estate in the 1960s-1970s; his family of ten moved into a three-bedroom house shortly after the Estate opened. Plans for Creggan were introduced in the Londonderry Corporation in 1948 as a solution for alleviating some of the massive overcrowding in the city.\textsuperscript{46} Whether by intention or otherwise, the majority of those housed in Creggan Estate were Catholic residents. Don described the layout of the neighborhood as a state of industrial efficiency, designed to accommodate rows of residents:

Now, the Creggan was a relatively new development in Derry and that basically sort of was to provide social housing for a growing Catholic population. I lived in a street as part of this, you basically had a main thoroughfare and then you had houses or streets running off from the main thoroughfare. There were blocks of if I can recount this properly \textit{[counts]} approximately about ten house blocks they were red brick houses, they were three bedroom houses you had a garden front and a garden back.\textsuperscript{47}

Interestingly, Don immediately indicated that the Creggan Estate was built to accommodate an increasing Catholic population. As he was young when the Estate was built and therefore unlikely to have access to the exact reasoning of the Corporation, this commentary may be an indication of the political dynamic that permeated social memory during the post-war years, as Jones claims.\textsuperscript{48} However, Don also provides a fairly factual assessment of his family’s living conditions in Creggan:

\textsuperscript{46} City of Londonderry Housing Sub-Committee Minutes and Reports, March 5, 1959, PRONI, LA79/12A/1, and “‘Open the Door and Put Those Men Out’: Mayor ejects squatters’ deputation from Corporation,” \textit{Derry Journal}, Sept 18, 1946.
\textsuperscript{47} Don Walsh, in discussion with the author, Belfast, July 9, 2014.
\textsuperscript{48} O’Connell, “Violence and Social Memory,” 736.
You’d go into a main entrance area, that led into a living room dining room area, basically a sort of walkthrough area, you had a kitchen, then what we called…it would be, a back hall we called it essentially which led through to the back of the house. Upstairs you had a bathroom, a separate WC and bathroom area and three bedrooms and a hot press. It was a two-story house; each house backed one onto the other so we had common chimney stacks, for want of a better word. You could’ve sat in your bedroom and heard what was going on in the bedroom next door basically. We got to know people very well, very well.49

Don’s assessment of his housing situation touches on one of the fundamental factors of civil unrest: a tightly-knit community living in close quarters, a community which enables the proliferation of ideas and sentiments. This point becomes increasingly clear in his discussion of neighborhood life:

But to give you some idea of the context, my younger sister’s godmother was a lady who lived two doors away from us, okay, she had fifteen children. They all grew up in exactly the same house as I grew up in…. We were very very close. Everybody – the people in the area – everybody knew everybody else. As I say the lady who lived two doors down was my mum’s best friend. She was the godmother to my younger sister and her children were like an extension to our family.50

Don also shows signs of potential nostalgia, however, in his discussion of life as one of ten people living in a three-bedroom house. He describes a small house in which the girls had one bedroom, the boys another, and the parents the third. In his discussion, there are obvious signs of extreme crowding:

Beds everywhere, and an interesting aspect of it was the room that I shared with my brothers we had a walk in wardrobe in it, but my father was a watchmaker so he had converted the walk-in wardrobe to a bench for his watch-making. So when you were getting a sort-of lie-in in bed, or whatever, my dad would have been working up early in the morning beside you in the wardrobe fixing watches.51

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
Upon reflection, Don did not see this as an inconvenience, however. In his description of these circumstances, he added, “As I said we were very close. We were very comfortable – never felt cramped! Never felt cramped.”

Current Derry resident Marie Ryan shows a similar family density in her early life, and in adulthood, she is the picture of a more turbulent aspect of life seeking housing in Derry. Marie gives a description of her early life growing up in a pre-fab in the Creggan Estate, and a description of the structure of this early house. Much like Don, Marie places strong emphasis in her memory on the community in which she lived:

Well there was five girls three boys me mum and dad and we lived in a three bedroom house. That was up in Swilly gardens in Creggan. When I was younger as I said when I lived in East Wall – I wouldn’t really mind, that’s too long back. But in Creggan, we lived in a three bedroom house, and it was like a pre-fab, that’s what it was. We called it tin huts then but it was a prefab. There was no stairs in the house, when you opened your front door you had a big long hall, three bedrooms, and then a big sitting room, then a kitchen, a bathroom. I can’t even mind where the toilet was then. It must have been up by the bedrooms I can’t even mind, it’s had a long go. But I enjoyed Creggan now as a child we were happy like, so we were when we lived up there.

After leaving school, Marie married at eighteen. She joked,

I was like the gypsies, I moved around a lot. My first house…was up by Bishop’s street….We lived there and we had the first son, Daniel. When I had the wee boy then we left, the room was too small, there was only one room we lived in really. After we left there I moved – Where did I live then? – Was it Market Flats? Aye the Market Flats. Which is just an awful street at the minute. There’s a center there called Pilot’s Row. Well we lived there…we lived there in the flats for oh, I don’t know how many years. We had two or three children there. I left there in 1971. No, 1973 I think it was. We left there. That was the time of the bother and all was starting then, the army and the police and the rioting things was going on so we left the flats and moved away down to a place called Ballymagorty.

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52 Ibid.
53 Marie Ryan, in interview with the author, July 26, 2014.
54 Ibid.
Though Marie and her family moved out of the Bogside to escape the blooming violence, she found that her attachment to the city was stronger than her fear of the violence. Much like Don, Marie remembers most easily the friendliness of neighbors and tightness of the communities in which she lived – once again, an exhibition of characteristics described by O’Connell. Within 9 months, she and her husband applied for housing back in the city. A similar yearning for the city is expressed in Nell McCafferty’s biography of the Deery family. Though several of Peggy Deery’s fourteen children escaped to Donegal as a result of violence or arrest warrants for their involvement in IRA activity, they returned to the city by bus on a nearly daily basis to visit their mother or to shop.\textsuperscript{55} Marie’s own eagerness to return to Derry made her time on the housing waitlist – a year and a half – seem exorbitantly long “because we couldn’t settle down there in the other house. And it was a new house I got down in Ballymagorty, beautiful estate, lovely, but I just couldn’t settle. I think it was just that I was used to in the town from when I was young myself, then I went to Creggan, and then I came back as I said to the flats.”\textsuperscript{56}

Marie here points to one of the complications of housing Derry residents – very few were willing to go outside the city boundaries to find housing. There was no indication, though, that movement outside of the city would have alleviated a family’s condition; in fact, families may have suffered more in their quality of living from such a transition. Records indicate that Derry’s rural electorate resided in worse conditions than their urban counterparts, many living without working water closets or hot water until well into the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{57}

Despite accusations otherwise, conditions from the other portion of the population – namely those who lived in the Waterside during the 1960s or 1970s – were not significantly better. Frank Carey, who currently works in community development at the Irish Street

\textsuperscript{55} Nell McCafferty, \textit{Peggy Deery: A Derry Family at War} (London: Virago Press, 1988), 70.  
\textsuperscript{56} Marie Ryan, interview, July 26, 2014.  
Community Centre on the Waterside, remembers a fair number of difficulties in housing experienced by his family, as well:

My own experience was my father served in the second world war, and after the war, we had difficulty getting a house, there was a housing shortage, and we lived in a private house in a place called Garden City north of the city and that was the mayor of the city, at the time, Sir Basil McFarland, he was a bit of an entrepreneur and he bought up a lot of property. The condition of the house was pretty grim, it had been built in the 30s for the shipyard workers, we had water running down the walls it was very damp, it was quite – quite horrible. Cold. It wasn’t good for the lungs at all. Then we moved whenever they built a new estate called Belmont, we moved to a house there that was quite modern in the 1960s.\(^\text{58}\)

It must be noted that Frank’s family experience prior to the 1960s was perceived to be as dismal as those in the Bogside or any other situation in the city – however, his family was able to be rehoused somewhere more salubrious and pleasant. The comparison between Marie Ryan’s Pre-Fab in the 1960s in the Bogside and Frank Carey’s description of his own situation diverges more dramatically:

I always remember the thing in the kitchen was that we had a fluorescent light which was quite new because everything else was just bulbs around. Instead of a mangle we had a washing machine, a tumble dryer – we were getting quite modern – we had quite a large garden. There was still I suppose a tradition in the sixties that people weren’t far removed from the land, this idea that you give the people their bit of field, you know?\(^\text{59}\)

Frank’s experience is furthermore unique in his description of “the movement,” during which many Protestants migrated from the West Bank to the Waterside, a side effect of the violence. His own family had slightly different reasons for moving, he remembers, “We moved house not because of the troubles but because there was a lot of building going on here and my father bought a house that was reasonably priced.”\(^\text{60}\)

\(^{58}\) William F Carey, in discussion with the author, July 30, 2014.

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.
Housing varied not only between the two sides of the River Foyle, but among social classes, as well. Fionbarra O’Dochartaigh grew up in a middle-class family; his father was a master butcher. He, like so many young men in Derry, spent his early adulthood facing unemployment, and this condition elevated his awareness of the plight of his fellow Derrymen. In 1967, he co-founded the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), and in the following year also became involved in the DHAC and the DCAC.\(^{61}\) Though his own condition was not dramatic, O’Dochartaigh explained that he was drawn to civil rights by the squalid conditions of the nearly 1,650 homeless families in Derry:

> I went out and actually applied to the Executive of the Northern Civil Rights Association mainly to highlight the homelessness, the homelessness and figures like that in Derry because sometimes you had nine families living in one tenement. It was hard to believe, you know? And one bath and one toilet between them. And they weren’t like a modern – like all these houses converted into flats, they would just kind of put in a room, a family in a room like this, with a blanket across the room…\(^{62}\)

These memories, consistent with numerical data from the time period, indicate that the tensions in housing may have arisen from a disparity in housing improvement: in the early post-war years, many of Derry’s residents lived in difficult or unhealthful environments; but as the city emerged from wartime, steady improvements affected the lives of Protestant middle and upper-class members of society more so than working class Catholics. The emergence of this disparity in condition, and government attempts to mitigate such disparities, will be explored in the following section.

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61 O’Dochartaigh, *Ulster’s White Negroses*, 30-34, 58.
The conclusion of World War II brought a series of reforms to the domestic policy of Northern Ireland, which, despite its engagement in a bloody war that left thousands of Irishmen dead, still faced an overcrowding crisis. The (Northern) Ireland Act of 1945 established the Northern Ireland Housing Trust, an independent body designed to work in conjunction with local authorities to administer and build housing specifically for workers. More often than not, the Trust found itself at odds with or even suppressed by the will of the local authority.

For many Derry men and women, the possibility of housing reform signaled an opportunity for change in their otherwise difficult living situations. Overcrowding was not a new issue in the city at the conclusion of World War II; rather, the period between the conclusion of World War II and commencement of the Civil Rights Movement in 1968 was the apex of housing shortage and deterioration. According to a 1945 report published by the Government of Northern Ireland, of the approximately 8,500 dwellings within the urban area of 2100 acres, 35.7 percent were classified either as overcrowded or completely unfit for habitation. What is more, the report estimated that 20,713 of the 48,000 residents of Derry lived in such houses.

Meanwhile, plans to alleviate these conditions were proceeding sluggishly in the Corporation. Meeting records from the time display a myriad of ambiguity, delays in decision-making and votes continuously struck down when the issue of housing arose.

While the Housing Trust bore responsibility for the vast majority of house building in Derry from its foundation through its replacement by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in 1971, it failed to strike at the central issue of lower-class housing. In his comprehensive analysis of Housing in Derry through 1971, Housing a Divided Community, Brett identified some of the

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65 Housing Sub-Committee Minutes, March 5, 1959, PRONI, LA79/12A/1.
central policies of the Housing Trust, which, he claimed, unwittingly catered to advantaged Protestant working-class citizens.\textsuperscript{66} This tendency was in part a reflection of the Trust’s financial structure and how it chose to maintain financial stability. As an entity funded in its entirety by Stormont and therefore subject to its tight regulations, the Trust had little flexibility. Therefore, Brett argued, when post-war wages and building costs skyrocketed, the only options left to the Trust were to reduce housing stock, reduce the quality of housing, or greatly increase rent.\textsuperscript{67} As a result of these constraints, “at no time in its history was the Trust able to charge rents low enough to meet the needs of the worst-housed and lowest-paid; and, at no time was it able to bring the standards of its new houses up to the standards adopted in Great Britain.”\textsuperscript{68}

Despite its shortcomings in operation, the Northern Ireland Housing Trust did have a significant impact on housing stock during its years of operation in Derry. In fact, despite the “obstructiveness” of the Londonderry Corporation to the Trust’s building execution, the Trust was able to construct a notable number of houses.\textsuperscript{69} From 1944 – 1957, the Housing Trust built 745 houses while the Local Authority built 1,470.\textsuperscript{70} This additional productivity allowed the housing stock to keep pace with growing population demands throughout the 1950s, not necessarily ameliorating existing conditions of overcrowding but at least preventing their further deterioration. By 1961, density per house within the North and Waterside Wards decreased by nearly one person per household.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{66} C.E.B. Brett, \textit{Housing A Divided Community} (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1986), 28.
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ibid}, 28.
\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ibid}.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Ibid}, 30.
Indications of improving conditions in housing must be approached with caution; while the total number of individuals per household decreased as the Housing Trust and Corporation underwent building projects, these numbers are relatively deceptive. In 1961, the census definition of housing expanded to include huts, tents, and caravans among its count of “buildings for habitation.” Furthermore, the census reveals massive disparities in population per ward, if not in population per dwelling. In 1951, the population of the South Ward was nearly twice the population of the other two city wards, at 24,765 people in a total population of 50,092. By 1961, the South Ward experienced a population increase of nearly 20 percent, while the North Ward saw a decrease in its total population and the Waterside Ward only a marginal increase of 2 percent.

The total state of housing by 1962 was captured in a cross-examination of Mr. Drayson of the Derry Corporation by a member of the public during Housing Committee proceedings:

At the present rate of building by the Corporation have you any idea how long it will be before the people on the waiting list are housed?

– No.

It would be safe to assume that it will be a very long time?

– Yes.  

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74 Northern Ireland Census Office “Census 1961,” 40.
Chapter 2: Growing Unrest – NICRA, The DHA, DCAC, CSJ, and Public Housing as a Flashpoint for Civil Rights

*Development, Economy, and Unrest*

By the mid-1960s, tensions surrounding the poor standard of living in working-class Derry neighborhoods began to accumulate. Frustrations were compounded by a series of economic plans that ignored or actively hindered the city’s postwar economic development. The Cameron Report on Disturbances in Northern Ireland, published in 1969 to explain outbreaks of extreme conflict and violence in Northern Ireland, cited these issues as significant factors in the establishment of the Civil Rights March in Derry on October 5, 1968, the event that is widely considered to be the commencement of wide-scale civil unrest in Northern Ireland. First came the removal of the only railway line to serve county Londonderry, an action that effectively isolated Tyrone, Fermanagh, and County Londonderry from the East. The loss of this major rail line dramatically cut the volume of goods coming through Derry – nearly in half – which created a significant economic abatement. The biggest economic blunder made by the government, however, in the eyes of Derry’s citizens, was the selection of Coleraine, a religiously homogenous, Protestant town as the site of a new provincial University instead of Londonderry. According to the Cameron Report, “This last grievance caused a degree of unity in resentment and protest which was probably unique, at least in the recent history of the city, and united local opinion in a suspicion that the central government was deliberately discriminating against the city and its interests for political reasons.” In fact, the first organizations to form in the months

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78 The Cameron Report, 37, and Simon Prince, *Northern Ireland’s ’68: 129-130*
following the university debacle grappled with unfair employment and housings standards for working class citizens, and eventually organized the civil rights march of October 8, 1968. This chapter will explore the early stages of organization of Derry residents present in the University of Ulster outcry and subsequent organizations of Derry residents into action committees.

In late 1964, the Northern Irish Minister of Education assembled a “distinguished body, consisting of four educationists of the very highest standing from Great Britain and four local members, two at least of whom had substantial influence on the community,” modeled after Britain’s own Robbins report to create “parity in higher education.”79 Charged with the task of recommending a site within the six counties to establish a second large university, this committee sought “an area of reasonable tranquility, with a sufficient surrounding population, with local authorities willing to help…and with existing accommodation available for students and others.”80 As Northern Ireland’s second largest city and the site of functional Magee College, which could serve as the infrastructural basis for a new university, Derry seemed the obvious choice for such an endeavor. It was not long, however, before the Lockwood Committee expressed their misgivings about the economically troubled western city as an investment site.81

Rumors that Derry did not stand firmly in the running as the chosen site for the establishment of Ulster’s second university sparked outrage within the city. A multidenominational and economically diverse organization formed in late 1964 to act as a persuasive force in the decision of the Lockwood Report; the University for Derry Committee, led by activist and later MP, John Hume, attempted to unite Derry’s citizens in hopes of swaying the Lockwood Committee by its enthusiasm. In February 1965, nearly 1,500 city residents of all

80 Lockwood Report, 3.
81 Ibid, 2.
denominations and economic backgrounds gathered at the Guildhall to hear the Mayor’s stance on the matter. The speeches given by Corporation members, and the Derry Journal’s commentary thereon, demonstrated the strong sense of economic victimization felt by the city’s residents. The Journal describes the perceived gravity of the situation for Derry’s educational well-being; residents mounted serious concerns that indicated the longevity of the city’s local college seemed to hang in the balance: “Magee, despite the efforts to strangle it by limited financial resources and by restricting its field of academic jurisdiction, had continued to expand. If a university was established anywhere else than in Derry then Magee would have to all intents and purposes have to close.”

Rage threatened to boil over in the city of Londonderry when, a matter of weeks later, the Lockwood Report was released, recommending Coleraine as the site for the new university; in addition to the sting of rejection, citizens of Derry were faced with a statement within the report, in which the Committee firmly conveyed their belief that Magee College “was not an institution of university status.” Uproar immediately resulted from these statements, including a reactionary memorandum from the Derry Corporation which throws the decision-making capabilities and responsibilities of the Lockwood Report into question, and thus demands, “And is there not only one location which satisfies all these requirements as well as the criteria of the University Grants Committee – Londonderry, which in Magee University College already possesses all the accommodation, teaching, administrative, and lodging necessary to serve as a ready-made spring-board to the new university?” However, the Stormont Cabinet seemed quite content to “allow it to die of natural causes,” offering only the potential of Magee’s use as an annex to the

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82 “Resolution Will be Presented to Prime Minister: ’We Must Fight For Derry’ Call” Derry Journal, 9 February 1965. Also cited in Prince, Northern Ireland’s ’68: 129-130.
83 Londonderry Corporation, An Open Memorandum to Every Member of the Senate and the House of Commons of Northern Ireland, 26 February 1965, PRONI Public Records CAB/9/D/31/2.
greater University at Coleraine.\textsuperscript{84} Citizens of Derry expressed their collective fury in organized protests, including a planned motorcade from Derry to Stormont to challenge the Lockwood report’s decision; but these demonstrations proved to be of little avail.

The jilting of Derry was so much engrained in the public memory that Don, who was only a child of maybe three or four years old, even remembers hearing talk of it throughout his childhood:

I remember people talking about the University of Ulster as a bone of contention and that they wanted it built in Derry and eventually they went to Coleraine with it. That was the problem with it, and then you had the one-man-one-vote thing, and the whole issue was about the Derry City Council and the Catholic majority…wasn’t reflected in the city council - I think it was still a Protestant majority in the City Council and when they cast the vote at the time.\textsuperscript{85}

The unification of Derry residents behind this cause signaled a stronger underlying resentment for their condition. A significant portion of the population had poor access to education, housing, and proper employment, even without consideration for religious preference. The nearest university, for example, was Queen’s University Belfast, which resided nearly 100 miles from Londonderry. Stormont’s decision to take the university, a potential creator of jobs and economic development for a struggling working-class city, to a town closer to Belfast and with a homogenous population base was yet another blow to a thoroughly neglected city. This sentiment was best expressed by the Derry Labour Party in their publication, \textit{Labour and Civil Rights}:

What the people of the Bogside and the Fountain have in common is that they are the people who get least out of life in this city. They live in the worst houses. They earn low wages. They get the worst education, wear the cheapest clothes, drive the oldest cars. No-one asks them about how they would like things to be. Workers, as a general rule, have no choice. But they are the only people in this or any other city who will ever be asked to

\textsuperscript{84} The Lockwood Report, 4.
\textsuperscript{85} Don Walsh, in interview with author, July 7, 2014.
sweat in the course of a day, who will ever have to get dirt under their fingernails to keep their families. In all the things that matter, in all the things that make people comfortable or uncomfortable, happy or unhappy, we, the working class from Bogside or Fountain, Creggan or Irish Street, always come off worst. That is a unifying factor.\textsuperscript{86}

The social turbulence set off by the Lockwood Report continued in the following months, feeding the flames of frustration already present from years of stagnant housing and employment policy in Derry. In 1965, the first of many activist organizations took an interest in Derry housing and unemployment problems. Hailing from Dungannon, the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ), headed by Patricia McCluskey and her husband, Dr. Conn McCluskey, attempted to use legal action to facilitate change in housing policy at the government level. The CSJ also accumulated extensive records of housing situations throughout Derry as they gathered legal evidence.\textsuperscript{87} The extreme state of dilapidation in housing that carried into the 1960s is clear in the cool, factual documenting of conditions by Bridget Bond, the secretary of the CSJ, throughout her time in the organization.\textsuperscript{88} Bond recorded entire notebooks of housing grievances spread throughout Derry, often documenting instances of government-sponsored contractors that failed to finish repair jobs, leaving exposed plumbing and, in some instances, conditions worse than they began.

On 13\textsuperscript{th} April, 1964, the Secretary of the CSJ wrote to the Prime Minister to inform him that the organization planned to sue the British government on grounds of discrimination against Catholics. These acts of discrimination, they claimed, violated the Government of Ireland Act, \textsuperscript{86} "Labour and Civil Rights: An outline survey of the progress of the civil rights movement in Derry since October 5, 1968," Derry Labour Party, 1969, P1618 Northern Ireland Political Collection, Linen Hall Library, Belfast, 1. \textsuperscript{87} Derry City Council, Notes Made By Bridget Bond Concerning the Various State of Housing in Derry, Bridget Bond Collection, Folder 4, Foyle Valley Railway Museum. \textsuperscript{88} Ibid. 

34 | One Man, One Vote – One Family, One House
1920. As the extensive publication of pamphlets and Bond’s meticulous notes indicate, housing served as one of the most prominent dimensions by which the McCluskeys and the CSJ measured this discrimination. However, the legal action of the CSJ did not come to fruition; the group was denied legal aid by the Law Society of Northern Ireland, and did not have the means to hire a private lawyer independently. While the legacy of the CSJ did not live in their ability to facilitate reform, the creation and actions of this organization inspired the growth of several other organizations, which began to realize their own capability to organize grievances.

The Birth of Civil Rights Groups and Organized Unrest, 1967-1968

The year 1967 saw the birth of several such civil rights groups – those that would later go on to facilitate the first protest movements and ultimately the first civil rights march in Derry. On 1 February 1967, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) began, mounting the motto “One man, One vote – One family, One house.” Nine months later, the Derry Housing Action Committee (DHAC) was born from the anger of four Derry housewives who spent years on the housing list to no avail. The first to focus solely on the subject of housing for all working class peoples, this organization was also responsible for the civil rights march that sparked tensions between the British police and Derry’s citizens – and eventually escalated into full-scale conflict. Housing was not only one point among the many grievances of the people of Derry to these activists – it was the main issue worthy of concentrated protest.

These groups, much like the CSJ, used a number of strategies to bring attention to the issues they represented. On several instances, the DHAC organized groups of homeless and civil

90 Prince, Northern Ireland’s ’68, 79.
rights activists to disrupt Derry Corporation meetings.\textsuperscript{92} For example, on 25 March 1968, masses of unhappy caravan residents, residents of Springtown, and organization members flooded the Guildhall, creating such a disruption that the Corporation cut short its meeting.\textsuperscript{93} Such events occurred regularly throughout 1967 and early 1968, all the while growing in severity.

Frustration with the social and economic state of the city began to boil over in the summer of 1968, as the civil rights groups began to coordinate their movement and gain notice in parliament. The first large-scale instance of protest against housing allocation to gain national attention occurred outside Derry, sparking a show of outrage and solidarity within the city that eventually escalated to full-scale conflict with the authorities. On the 20\textsuperscript{th} June, 1968, Nationalist MP Austin Currie and a number of dissidents staged what would later be known as “the Caledon Protest,” in which they occupied a government-allocated three-bedroom house at No.13 Kinnaird Park, Caledon, County Tyrone, after the local authorities assigned it to Emily Beattie, a single, 19-year-old Protestant girl who served as secretary to a Unionist MP.\textsuperscript{94} Though this description is the most common summary of the Caledon Protest, it was not Ms. Beatty’s house that was, in fact, the original object of indignation: the real issue stemmed from next door.

The Gildernews family, a Catholic family of five, was squatting in No. 11 Kinnaird Place when it was allocated to a single Catholic gentleman. On the 18\textsuperscript{th} June, the Gildernews were forcibly evicted from their illegal residence, and the eviction broadcasted on public television. Anger over the ejection of a family from a home of which they clearly had greater need than its legal resident thus incited the protest more directly than religious discrimination; or, at least, this is the viewpoint provided by C.E.B. Brett, one of the original Board Members of the Northern

\textsuperscript{94} Melaugh “The Civil Rights Campaign.”
Ireland Housing Executive and the author of *Housing a Divided Community*. Protesters, however, occupied Emily Beattie’s residence next door, thus bringing about discussion of religious elements in addition to the original issue: that, simply, the houses allocated by the Local Council were not allocated on the basis of need. The eviction of protesters by the RUC set off a series of protests throughout the province, including the first acknowledged civil rights march, organized by the CSJ and NICRA, from Coalisland to Dungannon. Many of these protests assumed the religious undertones of the protest, and thus themselves protested the unfair treatment towards working-class Catholics. Loyalist counterdemonstrations only served to heighten tensions. Often, the potential for conflict between these two groups led local authorities to ban marches, a tactic, historians suggest, mounted by the Loyalists to combat the increasing frequency of civil rights protest.

Civil unrest came in a large scale to Derry during October 1968. August and September passed in frustration to the members of the DHAC in Derry, whose plans to organize a civil rights march in the city were thwarted by the Derry Corporation, who banned the march after the Derry Apprentice Boys expressed their intention to hold their own annual march at the same time, using the same route as the civil rights marchers. When, according to Eamonn McCann, roughly 400 marchers and 200 spectators, including nationalist MP’s and a slew of television crews, organized on Duke Street regardless of the ban, the world watched through their television screens as the RUC dispersed the marchers with force. Derry resident’s discontent with housing therefore led to the formation of the organization that would, along with the help of

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95 *Housing a Divided Community*, 7-9.
96 For examples, see Prince, *Northern Ireland’s ’68*, 31-33, and O’Dochartaigh, *Ulster’s White Negroes*, 60-63.
97 Melaugh, “The Civil Rights Movement.”
NICRA, DCAC, and weeks later, the People’s Democracy, catalyze widespread reform and conflict that would eventually spiral into the violence of the Troubles.

Chapter 3: The Early Days of Protest – And Why They Occurred in Derry

Considering that economic grievances and housing discrimination were common features of many western towns, one is soon inclined to ask, why Derry? Of all the places suffering housing disparities – Dungannon, Belfast, even the outlying towns of County Derry – why was it that citizens took to the streets in Derry in protest, and why was it here that the severity of the situation led to intervention by the British Special Forces? How did Derry become the iconic city of the Troubles, the home of what became known as the “Bloody Sunday Massacre”?

Close Quarters: The Economics and Geography of Social Dissidence

To answer this question properly, one must look closely at the geographic factors and direct economic irritants present in the city at the time, and what the direct results of these conditions were on the people of Londonderry. The result is closeness, both spatially and emotionally. As a result of segregation, people of similar ideologies lived in the same buildings, shared walls, outdoor toilets, public play parks. This not only reinforced a sense of community between people of the same economic (and often religious) background, but also gave these populations a shared space in which to discuss ideas and organize collectively. Evidence of this closeness can be seen in the erection of the barricades that created “Free Derry” in August 1969. It was not the entire Catholic population of the city that acted together to assert their disdain at the city, but the residents of the Creggan Estate. Furthermore, during the housing raids typical of
the late 1960s through the 1970s, communities worked together to protect their own. Don Walsh recalls, living on the Creggan Estate, a heavy sense of duty in protecting one’s own “area”:

What happened is the soldiers came in to search – basically someone would come in to say ‘right the soldiers are coming in to search your houses,’ and you would look and there would be maybe ten or fifteen army vehicles coming up the street. People used to run out with bin lids, and it was an alarm – and that was day or night. If you can imagine all the street lights were knocked out so the area wasn’t lit up, and you had vigilantes, groups of guys who used to sit up at night and watch for soldiers, and if they sort of were coming they would sort of raise the alarm, and people would just appear out of nowhere got out of their beds. They used to have stocks of milk bottles and stones to protect – they basically sort of stoned the soldiers and their vehicles or whatever to try to keep them out of the areas.99

Therefore, if one does not consider religion as the determining factor in community organization but instead, their economic circumstances, Derry’s high unemployment rate played an important part in their housing condition, which itself led to protest. From the 1940s through the beginning of the civil rights movement, Londonderry was home to the highest unemployment rate in the entire province of Northern Ireland.100 The 1951 census, for example, reveals an unemployment rate (including those unemployed and those retired) of 36 percent for Derry County Borough residents over the age of 14.101 By 1961, this number changed little, the number of economically inactive who were potentially seeking work reaching 30 percent, while the closing of important railway lines removed business from the city.102 The passing over of Derry as the site of the new university therefore was not only a blow to the pride of the city’s citizens, it also represented the loss of yet another potential industry that could bring money into the city.

99 Don Walsh, in discussion with the author, Belfast, July 7, 2014.
102 Northern Ireland Census Office, “Census 1961,” 78-79. Calculated on percentage of “other” and “student” categories of those economically inactive within county borough.
Economic hardship did not only bring social tension and frustration to the idle population of Derry; it also drove a high percentage of the population into government-subsidized housing. From 1951-1971, housing density in specifically Catholic areas stagnated or worsened, while other economically stronger, Protestant neighborhoods saw a decrease in their housing density.

Table 1. Persons Per 1000 Living at Population Density of Over 2 Persons Per Room in Londonderry County Borough, 1951-1961, Private Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
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<tr>
<td>North Side</td>
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<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Side</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>211</td>
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</table>

Numbers Derived from 1951 and 1961 Londonderry County Census

Table 2. Persons per 1000 Living at Population Density of Over 1.5 Persons Per Room in Londonderry County Borough, 1971.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>1971</th>
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<tr>
<td>North Side</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waterside</td>
<td>159</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Side</td>
<td>364</td>
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Numbers Derived from 1971 Londonderry County Census
Structural Aspects

In addition to the geographic closeness facilitated by ward gerrymandering and the very structure of the houses in which they lived facilitated their conversation. Through the thin walls of prefabricated houses, row housing and large apartment buildings, neighbors could hear one another’s conversations. What the western world widely considered to be private space, in Derry, became shared space. Several oral histories recount the extermination of privacy facilitated by living conditions in the city. Bishop Edward Daly, who had perhaps the most widespread knowledge of general housing condition among the Catholic community as a priest at the time who roamed the streets of the Bogside, described the acute thinness of the walls in the Rossville Street Flats. He recalled, “you could sit in the flat talking to family and you could hear the conversation of the family next door quite clearly, without stressing or without any effort. And there was really no privacy really at all.” At times, this lack of privacy could be humorous, when not downright annoying. For example, in a time in which priests were called to settle disputes in the city due to a general shortage of policemen, Daly remembered “getting a call at 2 o’clock in the morning, there was some guy practicing a trumpet in the room and everybody around him, everybody could hear. Kept all the children awake.” As mentioned earlier, Don Walsh recalled a similar experience in his house at the Creggan estate: “You could’ve sat in your bedroom and heard what was going on in the bedroom next door basically.”

Though civil rights groups claimed religious impartiality, it cannot be denied that deep difference in situation often existed between the conditions of housing in Catholic and Protestant communities. Evidence of this disparity is visible in photographs of the respective communities.

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103 Dr. Edward Daly, in interview with the author, July 23, 2014.
104 Ibid.
105 Don Walsh, interview with author.
from the 1960s, in which several neighborhoods in Bogside communities are scheduled for demolition or in a state of severe dilapidation, while the row houses of Protestant communities depict a neater, more maintained neighborhood:

These disparities, when combined with the historically grounded religious undertones of the city meant that, regardless of original intent, religion soon became an integral part of the conflict in Londonderry. While many civil rights groups began as multidenominational entities, as violence from the all-Protestant B-Special force began, and backlash against the officers came at the hands of radicalized sectarian groups like the provisional IRA, or organized groups from the overwhelmingly Catholic Bogside and Creggan estate, Protestants uncomfortable with their position as minorities and potential targets of violence began to shift out of the movement, and out of the neighborhoods.
Despite the later overshadowing of the civil rights movement by violence, the civil rights movement that began in Londonderry did revolutionize housing for the entirety of Northern Ireland. On 22 November, 1968, Prime Minister Terrence O’Neill announced a plan to reform social housing throughout Northern Ireland that included first and foremost, the abolition of the Londonderry Corporation and its replacement with a Development Commission; the reform package also called for the establishment of an ombudsman to investigate government entities, the abolishment of the Special Powers Act, and, significantly, the need-based allocation of social housing by local authorities. Later that week, Stormont passed the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland), and thus took its first steps in overhauling gerrymandered wards and the province’s corrupt electoral system. Thus, the goals established by the DHAC, by NICRA, by the DCAC, all began to take steps towards realization. Yet protesters still marched on.

This distinction between the violence that followed initial civil rights advances and the movements themselves is often blurred in the study of Londonderry. Academics and enthusiasts alike will attribute the violence of Bloody Sunday and beyond to the failure of Stormont to recognize civil rights activists, or to the continued mistreatment of Catholics. Daly, however, made sure to point out this distinction in his discussion of events: “Most of the reforms were made before the violence started, after the civil rights. And most writers and commentators fail to grasp that. That the real gains in Northern Ireland that changed society were made before the violence started. It was after the violence started that we started going backwards.” O’Dochartaigh, as a member and leader in several groups, made the same distinction.
The Civil Rights was totally opposed to violence... We got major reforms, including the abolition of the corporation, replaced by a commission, the housing executive on a point system, which was unheard of. We got proportional representation and the disbandment of the B-Specials. A lot of the things we set out to achieve we did achieve. So anyone who argues that the violence was for Civil Rights, it’s a total contradiction.  

A contradiction though it may be, the civil rights movement and the eruption of sectarian violence began in close enough quarters, both geographically and temporally, that they must be examined together. At what point did the proliferation of Martin Luther King’s and Mahatma Gandhi’s ideals throughout the working class population in the city dissolve enough to be overshadowed by a much more violent agenda? Were demonstrations truly as nonviolent as their leaders would like to believe? The movement of Derry’s working class from civil rights to sectarianism will be the subject of this final chapter.

**Chapter 4: From Communism to Sectarianism – the transformation of the civil rights movement into sectarian conflict**

The Londonderry Corporation was officially abolished in 1969, replaced by the Londonderry Development Commission, established by the Londonderry Development Commission Order (Northern Ireland), on February 5. A direct response to the Cameron Report, which outlined housing as “one of Londonderry’s most urgent and pressing needs,” the Development Commission immediately began to coordinate with the NIHT to institute a “crash building program” under which they aimed to provide 3,500 new homes over the following four years.

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108 Fionbarra O’Dochartaigh, in interview.
109 Melaugh, “The Civil Rights Movement.”
years.\textsuperscript{110} However, the state of housing in the entire province was on a much larger trajectory than the reconfiguration of one local Corporation; on 25 February, 1971, the Housing Executive Act (Northern Ireland) became law, gradually placing all public housing throughout the province under one centralized, non-partisan organization.\textsuperscript{111} The Housing Executive began its work with earlier allegations of discrimination in mind: its original Board members comprised five Protestants, three Roman Catholics, and one self-proclaimed agnostic. Within less than a decade of its inception, the NIHE made considerable progress in housing across Northern Ireland, and specifically in Derry. One of the first actions discussed by the Executive was the destruction of high-rise flats as housing options in Derry and Belfast, given their lack of popularity and the inherent safety risks demonstrated in the Battle of the Bogside on August 12, 1969, when dissidents used the Rossville Flats to target the Royal Ulster Constabulary as they tried to control rioting.\textsuperscript{112} In 1974, the Executive circulated a Housing Condition Survey to each county to measure the number of dwellings in usable condition, versus those in disrepair.\textsuperscript{113} From 1974-1978, housing stock underwent a 7.3 percent increase in total housing stock, from 20370 – 21867 houses. During the same time, housing placement rates accelerated, however, with a 0.4% decrease in vacant dwellings.\textsuperscript{114} The quality of housing also improved drastically within the decade in Derry. In a report of the number of unfit dwellings by district and region, 1974 – 1979, Derry’s number of unfit dwellings decreased by 605 houses, or 22.9 percent.\textsuperscript{115} A standard size and style of house came into being structurally between 1968-1969, with floor plans drawn by

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{111} Melaugh, “The Civil Rights Movement.”
\textsuperscript{112} Housing a Divided Community, pg. 38-39.
\textsuperscript{114} Housing Stock in Northern Ireland, 1974-1979.
\end{flushleft}
the Londonderry Housing Sub Committee just before the dissolution of the corporation. The
Northern Ireland Housing Executive would standardize building, along with rent rates, during
their first two years as a functional entity.116

These changes did not, however, stem the increasingly violent outbursts rising throughout the
city.117 Most activists, when speaking or writing retrospectively about the civil rights movement,
exhibit a common understanding that the core value of original protests was not, in fact, sectarian
in nature. Rather, the ideologies exhumed were much more concerned with class. “We wanted to
unite the Catholic and Protestant workers. There was a lot of dispute about this in the past year.
Some people seemed to think it was a subversive idea. But in our minds it is very simple and
very obvious. We think the workers should unite because they have more in common with each
other than with anyone of a different class.”118

While nonviolent, nonsectarian violence began as the main tenant of the civil rights
movement, by mid-1969, all semblance of anti-violent ideal had disappeared from the streets of
Derry, followed soon after by dwindling ideals of nonsectarian protest. Shortly after the mayhem
of the 1968 march, residents of Catholic neighborhoods within the city began to feel targeted by
the fully Protestant led police force; nightly raids conducted on families in the Bogside and on
the Creggan estate led to an even further consolidation of community spirit. The specific
targeting of the RUC built an awareness of religious differentiation of the kind formerly latent in
the activist movement. As a result, an atmosphere of anti-British sentiment rose – an atmosphere
ripe for IRA re-emergence. In response to the aggressive tactics of the Royal Ulster Constabulary
(RUC), provisional IRA activity began to increase within working-class neighborhoods in Derry,

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116 CEB Brett, 43.
117 Brett, 64-65.
specifically and most frequently in the Creggan Estate and the Bogside. Eugene Martin, who was a young resident of the Creggan Estate when violence broke out, remembered seeing provisional IRA members and B-Specials fighting on a regular basis:

[W]here we sat, our house, our back…sitting in the downstairs, where we would have our dinner basically, you’d look out the back window backing onto our garden was a row of pensioners houses, they were set aside for pensioners, older people, and so there was a row of pensioners houses, and then a lane, and then hedges. So like imagine that you were sat having your tea, and you saw members of the IRA running down that lane to shoot at the army, who were around the corner. There was a big factory called the BSR, and the army was sort of, their residences were in there, so imagine, you’d have sat and had your tea and you would see them running down the street and the would be shooting then running up again. Just taking pot-shots at them.

Don, who also lived on the Creggan Estate, had similar memories of consistent violence between sectarian forces and British B-Specials:

Things got decidedly nasty after that. You have a honeymoon period, we were all really intrigued, none of us had really seen soldiers before and you had instead of the normal police force patrolling the streets you had military police, the redcaps as we called them they walked the streets, and the soldiers were welcomed…but then, it changed. Obviously because the official IRA, they wouldn’t have even been the provisional IRA at the time, started to become more active and then the soldiers started to search…there was a lot of tension between the army and local people because the soldiers were arriving in the middle of the night and knocking at your door – some cases they knocked and some cases they kicked them in – then basically they gathered your family in the living room and they searched your house went upstairs through your drawers lifted the floor boards in your house went into the attic, basically just ransacked the house for want of a better word, basically just looking for weapons and things like that. People were arrested, neighbors were lifted and arrested for questioning and taken away…And it deteriorated very quickly and then paramilitary groups got stronger and recruited, and after that the whole complex changed, the whole face of it changed it became a war after that.

… I remember coming home from school, and I remember as I probably would have been primary 7 primary 8 or whatever, probably about 11 or 12, and somebody just shouting “get down!” and everybody lay down on the ground and these guys just pulled up in a car and started shooting at an army vehicle that was coming up the street, and that used to happen all the time, you know. Basically you heard a shot and you just lay down on the

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119 See Image 7.
120 Eugene Martin, Interview with the author, July 31, 2014.
ground until it was over. You went to your bed at night, and in the middle of the night, a gun battle would start. We used to get up and put our beds up against the window. And then in the center spine of our house there was only one window, so everybody went there, and laid there until it was over. And these gun battles went on for hours. That was common. Particularly early seventies, ‘71, ‘72 through ‘til ‘74, ‘75. Another memory I have is as a kid going to mass Sunday morning, and there was a massive explosion and we were walking up the street going to mass, and there had been a booby trapped bomb was in a garden, which somebody had left for an army patrol to find, and some kid had been out playing football, and his leg was hanging from the telegraph wires. As I say, there was that side of it too, like…but as I say, you got used to it.

The Londonderry Development Commission and the Northern Ireland Housing Trust, in the years before it was supplanted by the NIHE, had its resources “stretched to the utmost in the late summer and autumn of 1971 by the need to make emergency provision for the suddenly homeless; to repair constant bomb and fire damage to private houses as well as to the publicly-owned stock; to grapple with the problems posed by intimidation and squatting…constant street fighting, and the intervention of paramilitary bodies on both sides…and a rent and rates strike affecting a third of the public sector.” As Brett described, the executive was “powerless” at the time, lacking both the funds and the bureaucratic foundations necessary to combat these issues. Meanwhile, continued violence by paramilitary groups and reactions by British Special Forces and the RUC increasingly polarized the population of Derry, as Protestants migrated to the Waterside.

Increased IRA activity in retaliation to police action meant many Protestants living near Catholic enclaves within the city began to feel acutely threatened. These feelings of insecurity became prominent enough to work their way into the oral history of the event. Marie Smyth and Mary Therese Fay include such a tale in their compilation of stories. William Temple, a Protestant pharmacist in Derry, spoke of his incentive to give up his business on Abercorn Road

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121 Don Walsh, in interview.
122 CEB Brett, 40.
123 ibid.

48 One Man, One Vote – One Family, One House
to move to the Waterside. He explained, “I wasn’t physically or mentally forced out. It was more a foreboding that the family could be harmed. Out of thousands, four or five bigots is all that is needed to cause immeasurable suffering.”\textsuperscript{124} This same fear of “bigots” began what Temple refers to as “the Protestant exodus from the west bank of the Foyle” in the years surrounding internment policy.\textsuperscript{125} A numerical representation of these migrations is presented below\textsuperscript{126}.

Table. Distribution of Catholics and Protestants by Ward, 1951 - 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>North Ward</th>
<th>South Ward</th>
<th>Waterside Ward</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1951</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic (%)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant (%)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated or Other (%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1961</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic (%)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant (%)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated or Other (%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{126} Northern Ireland Census, 1951; Census, 1961; Census, 1971.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic (%)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant (%)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Stated or Other (%)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By the late 20th century, the Western half of the city (in old city line terms, the North Side and the South Side) housed a 90-100 percent Catholic population, while several Waterside districts housed predominantly Protestants (more than 50 percent of the population). Violent areas saw an increasing homogenization of their populations; areas that housed working-class families with young, unemployed men found themselves most often the subjects of violence, as paramilitary activity increased with the presence of British forces, which then increased with paramilitary activity, creating a vicious cycle of ever-increasing attacks. Such maps can also provide insight into the degree to which British Special Forces concentrated their power on Catholic areas. Despite the common religious denominations of those living in highly concentrated Catholic areas, more Catholic residents found themselves as victims of violence from both paramilitary activists and British forces. For example, consider the maps below:
Map 3. Number of People Killed per 1000 in Derry Due to the Conflict by British Security Forces, 1969-2001.

Image courtesy of cain.ulst.uk’s “visualizing the Conflict” run by Martin Melaugh. (Note that the Deprivation Score is outdated and therefore not part of the current conversation).
Map 4. Number of People Killed (per 1000) Due to the Conflict in Derry by Republican Paramilitaries, 1969-2001.

Image courtesy of cain.ulst.uk’s “visualizing the Conflict” run by Martin Melaugh. (Note that the Deprivation Score is outdated and therefore not part of the current conversation).

Areas with highest mortality rates are not only the four most predominantly Catholic areas, but also, if data from the 1951, 1961, and 1971 census is to be believed, they are the areas with the poorest sections of the urban population. In fact, when one considers the total death rates within the population from 1969-2001, the highest death rates exist in the areas not only with the largest provisional IRA activity on the South Side, but also in the areas with the largest working class, government-housed sections of the population.
One must consider that if the number of deaths was directly proportionate to the size of the population, there should be a fairly proportionate distribution of deaths and killings by the Loyalist Paramilitaries, Republican Paramilitaries, and the British Special Forces in relation to the size of the population. However, analysis of the demographic distribution combined with the quality of housing in each area in addition to the population density shows that this is not so. In fact, the majority of killings during the conflict happen, as is commonly known, in areas of high working-class population density (hence, the Waterside regions who also experienced higher death rates, eg. Victoria and Clondemot). It must also be noted that the largest number of killings did not happen in mixed-religion communities, but in the homogenous Creggan estate and Strand ward. Therefore, an understanding of these dimensions of the conflict lead one to believe that it
was working class conditions, like unemployment and poor housing, which initiated the conflict, rather than religious differences; and a high number of Catholic deaths, at the hand of the British Special Forces and the IRA may have acted as a catalyzing agent in polarizing the two religious sects within the city more than a conception of privilege versus deprivation between the two sects did alone.

Within several months of the October 5 march, the main complaints of the Civil Rights Movement – namely discrimination in housing, both for families in size and denomination, and in gerrymandering – were in the process of resolution. Violent outbursts and increasing polarization of religious sects, however, continued to grow in frequency and severity after this time, particularly following British implementation of internment without trial. Therefore, one must consider that there existed an inherent discord between the Civil Rights Movement and the Troubles; that, although the two events seem to blend seamlessly (if messily) into one another, that there was a substantial shift in ideology that altered the very nature of the conflict. It seems possible that the reason that housing did not intermix after the dissolution of the Derry Corporation was because violence, which began soon after first civil rights marches in Derry, continued after legislative resolution. As previously mentioned, violence became such an obstacle for housing entities that, once the NIHE was fully established, it took into serious consideration whether or not to reinforce sectarian divides when placing families in need. As Brett acknowledges, however, it would be impossible to place families in neighborhoods in which they felt their safety was in danger, especially when many families had fled from their neighborhoods within the previous four years; neighborhoods that were divided would have to
stay divided.\textsuperscript{127} So, while the Civil Rights movement succeeded in its goals in a sense, it failed in the overall true equality of Catholics and Protestants.

It must be considered, therefore, that housing discord and the Civil Rights Movement were not the direct cause of Troubles-related violence and paramilitary action, but rather the catalyst for the violence that escalated into the Troubles. The dense urban space in which Derry’s working class lived provided for the dissemination of discontent and the original organization of activist groups; but, as the Cameron Report noted, there were a wide number of factors that led to the eruption of violence, factors in which organization around housing and gerrymandering played only a part. The Commission noted, “The fact that these explosions have occurred is perhaps itself a sufficient criticism of the failures in leadership and foresight among political leaders of all sides.”\textsuperscript{128} The inherent political favoritism noted by most scholars and outlined above, therefore, had a hand in solidifying the existing sectarian lines that otherwise may have broken down as the housing point system and the establishment of the Housing Association gained ground.

Though the events of Bloody Sunday have been documented and analyzed time and time again, it is necessary to include a brief discussion of the event within this section, if only to highlight the extent to which that day drew a line between the Civil Rights Movement and the Troubles. Many often characterize the Battle of the Bogside on August 12, 1969 as the starting point of the Troubles, as it is one of the first days in which the Protestant and Catholic parts of the community clashed over their ideology, and the indignation over the RUC’s handling of the event incited rioting throughout Northern Ireland.\textsuperscript{129} Though it is true that the provisional IRA

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\textsuperscript{127} CEB Brett, 43.  \\
\textsuperscript{128} The Cameron Report, paragraph 8.  \\
\end{flushleft}
and the official IRA began their “campaign of armed violence” following the events of the 12-14 August, it was not this day that social unrest in Derry shifted away from housing, gerrymandering, and other nonpartisan concerns. This analysis does not give consideration to the underlying purpose of the march that led to Bloody Sunday. Residents of the Bogside and the Creggan Estate left their homes that day under the guidance of NICRA to protest internment without trial, a nonpartisan ideal (though its bias against Catholics is often cited).\textsuperscript{130} The protest occurred in the midst of a rent strike, as well, an event signifying the population’s continuing discontent with the housing situation.\textsuperscript{131} This is further supported by Brett, who illuminated the clear lag in legislation and physical result in his discussion of the establishment of the NIHE.\textsuperscript{132}

At the time of the civil rights march that eventually led to Bloody Sunday, the leaders of NICRA believed that they were still the leaders of a nonviolent civil rights movement. In the Civil Rights Movement publication \textit{Massacre at Derry}, the authors quote the sections within the \textit{Irish News} published two days before the movement, in which NICRA’s intents are clearly stated: “The twin major aims for Derry is a demonstration that is both huge in numbers and perfectly peaceful and incident free. It is pointed out that any violence can only set back the civil rights cause and play straight into the hands of the Tory-Unionists by providing a justification not only for any violence they might contemplate against the demonstration itself but also for the daily violence of the security forces.”\textsuperscript{133} The people of the city who congregated under the leadership of NICRA still believed that they did so in a peaceful manner, for the cause of human rights, not the cause of freedom from the British. Descriptions of the march time and time again speak of a “carnival atmosphere”; the growing presence of sectarian actors among the political

\textsuperscript{131} Peggy Deery: A Derry Family at War, 8-11.
\textsuperscript{132} Brett, 40-43.
\textsuperscript{133} The Civil Rights Movement, \textit{Massacre at Derry}, retrieved from Cain.ulst.ac.uk February 22, 2015.
protesters, however, while still among the minority, led to a far more ominous backdrop. The Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, only released in 2010, suggests Official IRA snipers were positioned at the Presbyterian Church between Great James Street and Williams Street, waiting to fire on British Army troops sent in to control the protest. It was, however, only after British Army soldiers began firing on civilians that the OIRA members began to fire back.\footnote{Report on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, 3.10-3.13} In addition, the report concluded that no members of the protest or the IRA prepared to throw nail bombs at the time of the outbreak of firing from the soldiers.\footnote{Report on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, volume VIII 154.1}

As Bishop Edward Daly alluded in his account of Bloody Sunday, the events of that day left many young Derry men susceptible to the pedagogy of the IRA. “Countless young people were motivated by the events of that day to become actively involved in armed struggle and, as a direct result, joined the Provisional IRA,” he describes. Daly further indicated that, “Many former paramilitary members have gone on record stating that they first became actively involved in the wake of that Sunday.”\footnote{Mister, Are You A Priest? Edward Daly, 2000. Accessed at http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/bsunday/daly/daly00.htm#ch14 on 2/22/15.} The 30th of January 1972 began with the intentions of nonviolent, civil rights-based protest to change the condition of the unfairly treated in Northern Ireland. Within two months, the British government placed Northern Ireland under direct rule, shifting the conflict firmly and permanently from its multi-denominational, class-based roots to a sectarian conflict that would plague Northern Ireland for the remainder of the Twentieth Century, and which would affect the geography of Londonderry to present day.
Conclusion: Evolution of Civil Rights to Violence – a Complex Geographic Problem

The dimensions of conflict that ultimately led to the civil rights movement in Derry are complex and often difficult to distinguish. More often they are a tangled mass of connected string; pulling on one leads inevitably to the further tangling of other knots further down the line. These factors become all the more perplexing when one attempts to define the line between the ideals of the civil rights movement itself and the thirty years of violence that succeeded it. Regardless of its evolution from peace to violence, however, it is undeniable that the grievances that led to the formation of the Civil Rights Movement all have their roots in the geography of Derry as a city. These geographic differences resulted from the larger concerns of the city itself: religious polarization, driven by gerrymandering and contest for power within the Derry Corporation; overcrowding, a direct result of gerrymandering, postwar economic difficulties, population growth and inadequate governance; and housing deterioration, as the culmination of these issues of economy, politics, and an ultimately apathetic and inefficient council. Finally one must not discount the geography of the landscape itself, the River Foyle providing a barrier between the two rapidly polarizing communities and thus strengthening the homogenization of each borough.

In discussion of Derry, it must also be considered that the problem of housing was deeper than its geographic distribution alone. The structures themselves were often sub-par, dangerous “hotbeds” for tuberculosis and other sanitation-related diseases eradicated from the majority of Great Britain by the late 19th century. Descriptions of housing from The Derry Journal and the reports of the CSJ and DHAC, even the reports of the bi-monthly meetings of the Housing Sub-Committee of the Londonderry Corporation place the city out of its time. Such conditions seem much more at home in Engel’s descriptions of working-class 19th-century England than in an era
where the rising middle class of England began to adopt a highly mechanized domestic lifestyle.\textsuperscript{137}

Though Derry sported some of the worst urban conditions of any city in Northern Ireland, these concerns of housing quality among the working class were not unique to the city. Similar complaints, if slightly less severe, can be found in Belfast and other cities of size within the province.\textsuperscript{138} Thus, the question becomes, precisely which characteristics are those that distinguished Derry from any of its neighboring cities so much so that they would become the center of civil unrest? It was these characteristics that I set out to examine in my own pursuit of the question “Why Derry?” as the nucleus of civil unrest in the region. As this piece seeks to demonstrate, there is undeniable evidence that the quality and geography of the built environment of Derry and its social repercussions played a crucial role in the initial organization and eruption of protest activity in the region, and furthermore, that the very characteristics that fueled a nonviolent, nonsectarian movement are the qualities of the city that pushed the movement towards its sectarian aftermath.

While the regional government remained apathetic to the plight of Derry’s residents until dismantled in 1969, it could not be said that the provincial government fell victim to the same fault. In fact, following the violent uprisings of late 1968 and early 1969, Stormont passed a series of reforms to alleviate the housing concerns of the city and of other protesting regions – an indication that housing was in fact believed to be the central issue of conflict.\textsuperscript{139} However, these reforms did little to stem the flow of violence that escalated within the city, which further exacerbated the existing problems within the city. As Martin Melaugh put simply in his analysis


\textsuperscript{139} Brett, 37.
of the increasing sectarianism within Derry, “The civil unrest that began in 1969 was to lead to periods of intimidation and subsequent population movement from what had been mixed housing areas. This in turn increased the level of segregation in housing in Northern Ireland, itself the cause of additional problems.”

Though the goals of the movement were addressed, the movement itself continued to intensify, fueled by a continuing cycle of protest resulting in severe police reaction, resulting in further protest. It could be argued that it outran the ability of the government to institute reforms; or furthermore, that the legal actions of Stormont were not consistent with the social responses of the police force – a thread supported by the infamous outbreak of violence by British forces on Bloody Sunday, nearly three years after the first victories of the movement. Regardless of the underlying psychological and atmospheric fuel of social unrest, its continued growth no doubt made it susceptible to the growing sectarian mood of the city’s Catholic population. This feeling was, once again, facilitated and nurtured by the geographic isolation of the two religious populations of the city; the presence of all-Catholic neighborhoods eased organization by IRA members against police, and created easy targets for both the IRA and the RUC to strike at each other. The extent to which this geography led to such activity is visible in the maps examined in Chapter 3.

The religious polarization of the civil rights movement became absolute in the continuous protests against internment throughout the early 1970s. It was clear, at this point, that Catholics were the victims of internment without trial, and the IRA gained more widespread support throughout the tight-knit Catholic communities as they saw their own imprisoned for years on end. In her memoir of Peggy Deery, Nell McCafferty points to the events of an internment

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protest march in Derry as one of the primary forces that fueled Peggy’s son to join the IRA.\textsuperscript{141} Furthermore, as the motive behind civil unrest began to change, the social geography of the city itself began to change. Neighborhoods traditionally inhabited by mixed communities, specifically commercial areas like the City Centre, began to lose Protestant business as the minority community fled to the Waterside. This, as Melaugh mentions, created an entirely new set of challenges for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, who not only had to implement a system of building to negate years of neglect by the Londonderry Corporation, but had to do so in a way that expressed sensitivity to community concerns. Brett indicates, in his detailing of the activities of the Housing Executive, the acute difficulty of this position, and their persistence to the present.

The geography of housing to this day remains an indicator of the past and present sectarian tensions facilitated by the Civil Rights Movement. The Bogside area of Derry remains a predominantly, if not exclusively, working-class Catholic neighborhood, as does the Creggan Estate.\textsuperscript{142} The Waterside, while in the process of slowly integrating, is still home to predominantly middle-class Protestant families. Integration efforts by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and other social groups advocate spatial integration as the primary method of resolving issues of sectarianism.\textsuperscript{143} While these programs are met with significant success, the underlying tensions of religious sectarianism still remain. In consideration of Derry’s social housing structure and its consequences, it may be of significant importance to communities in Northern Ireland, and other areas that experience similar issues of impending sectarianism, to

\textsuperscript{141} McCafferty, 25-27.
\textsuperscript{143} Brett, 26-31.
consider their distribution and quality of social housing to mitigate such grievances at present and in the future.

Afterword: Author’s Perspective

Walking through the streets of Derry today, one would not see the chaotic public housing structures that plagued the city at the start of the Civil Rights Movement; there is no longer a high-rise flat blighting Rossville Street, nor caravans set up in the Guildhall Square. The main roads have been reconstructed with brick row houses, with gardens, hanging planters, and iron gates. On the Waterside, mixed communities are becoming more and more prevalent, while community centers throughout the city play their role in integrating the two communities more fully. The people are kind and conversational, with no trace of real tension in their interactions. They make eye contact and strike up conversation in the street and at the Tesco. Unlike Belfast, there is no Twelfth of July parade annually to remind the people of their differences. Day to day life does not strongly reflect the city’s recent history. As residents of the city told me of their experiences growing up, they did not focus on the violence, nor on the conflict. They remembered growing up in communities of people who cared for one another; close-knit neighborhoods, and most remembered being generally happy.

That is not to say, however, that all semblances of violence and tension are gone. If one walks far enough down any street in the Bogside, IRA spray paint can still be found. The Free Derry monument still stands, as do the looming murals of Bloody Sunday and the civil rights movement. Standing on the city walls and gazing directly south, one can clearly read the placard in the Fountain that reads: Londonderry West Bank Loyalists Still Under Siege, No Surrender. In the summer of 2014, while I stayed in Derry, a Catholic boy was shot on the Waterside.
Neighborhoods are still quite largely homogenous. Then again, the city has also homogenized: as of 2011, the population measured as raised 74.83 percent Catholic and 22.34 percent Protestant. But economic and cultural growth give hope to the reviving city: in 2013, Derry-Londonderry (as the city is now officially named), was named the United Kingdom City of Culture. Groups intending to integrate the Catholic and Protestant children of the community sprang up over the last few years. As the population begins to integrate more fully, so do the neighborhoods. The urban landscape of Londonderry was a shifting, changing area, both demographically and geographically, throughout the 20th century; and upon seeing the city in its 21st century context, I have little doubt that more such drastic changes are on the horizon.

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Appendix A. Interview Recruitment Script

Hello (Potential Research Participant’s Name),

My name is Emily Webster, I am an undergraduate student at the Ohio State University in the United States. I am here in Londonderry conducting research for my undergraduate degree on public housing in the city from 1945-1975, and how people who lived in public housing remember their experience there during this time. (Insert lead) gave me your contact information, because he/she said you may be able to speak with me on this topic. Would you be interested in meeting with me for an interview?

If Yes: Wonderful! Do you know when you may be available and where you would like to meet?

If not, I can give you my contact information and we can set up a time later.

If No: Thank you for speaking with me, sorry to take up your time! Have a nice day.
Appendix B. Potential Research Questions

1. For how many years did you live in the city of Londonderry’s public housing?
2. What was your house like while growing up?
3. During which years did this time frame occur?
4. With whom did you live?
5. What was the condition of your residence in space, quality, etc?
6. Where in the city did you live?
7. Did you consider yourself close with your neighbors (“close” specified as “in regular interaction with, carrying vested emotional interest in”)?
8. Were you often aware of the opinions and interests of those neighbors?
9. Did your neighborhood identify as aligned with nationalists or loyalists?
10. Do you identify as being aligned with either of these groups?
11. Do you consider yourself to be aligned with Protestantism or Catholicism?
12. In your memory, did you ever apply for a change in housing (whether size, location, or for other reasons? Were these concerns met?
13. While in Public Housing, did you ever feel as though you were unfairly treated, in either the positive or the negative, compared to others in similar situations to yours?
14. If so, did you consider your political or religious alignment to be at all related to this subject?
15. Is there anything else you may be interested in sharing with me?

Note that not all questions were posed to all participants. Interviews began with open-ended questions and became narrower as time and participant willingness allowed. All participants were posed the first three questions.
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