

Northern Ireland, Belfast / Belfast Murals

AUDIE
NCESE
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NETWORK

Summary of project intent

Belfast's murals have become international symbols of the city, and are a common feature across many interface and peace wall areas in the most deprived areas of Belfast. The tour case study of Belfast's murals, their themes, and history and installation process explored how art can be used for political commentary, propaganda and to highlight social issues.

DIFFICULTIES MET

- ▶ Remaging murals in deprived close knit areas with limited access to "outsiders"
- ▶ Removing paramilitary murals while respecting the area's culture and families/victims
- ▶ Inclusion of the marginalised e.g. people/groups who don't normally have a say in community matters such as children, ethnic minorities, disabled, disaffected youth, and elderly

RESULTS

- ▶ The experience of involvement in re-imagining was in many cases the participants first such local involvement, and they had later become involved in activities, such as general environmental tidy-ups and the planting of trees and scrubs
- ▶ Involvement in project lead to further regeneration funding for communities
- ▶ Communities were empowered to tackle signs of sectarianism and racism and positively express and represent themselves through over 80 public art reimagining projects
- ▶ High level of publicity and 'good new stories' generated by the programme, and this seemed to create a snowball effect, both in encouraging continuing developments within the community, as well as encouraging other communities to become involved
- ▶ Involvement in project lead to further regeneration funding for communities
- ▶ Promoted a public sense that Northern Ireland was changing and moving forward. An estimated 6893 participants were involved
- ▶ Employment for 152 artists

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“Murals provide income and expression for artists from deprived areas with no means of continuing their education”.

Lesley Cherry, Re-Imaging Coordinator



LEARNINGS

- ▶ Involvement of artists and consultants meant that importance and worth of artistic experience and activity have been encouraged and developed. Art is a means to represent identities in non-contentious way
- ▶ Increased confidence in communities and individuals lead to the realisation there is nothing to fear in moving forward
- ▶ Consensus that involvement of children increased adult and community enthusiasm and support increased, e.g. children's parents, relatives, schools. Involvement of children softened opposition to replacement murals or public art

FUTURE / TIPS

- ▶ Clarify land ownership in advance of community engagement as this process delayed many projects
- ▶ Some technical approval was required and this was not anticipated and lead to extra costs. Permission for planning and technical aspects of projects should have been established prior to submission of applications