



# Communities in Transition

Area Research  
Report 2023

# Lurgan

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Northern Ireland  
Executive



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Authors would like to thank all the individuals who participated in the different strands of our fieldwork. In addition, we wish to pass on our gratitude to the range of Delivery Partners working on the *Communities in Transition* (CIT) programme, who helped organise the interviews and focus groups that supported the development of this Report.

We would like to thank those who contributed to the research fieldwork: Dr Lisa Faulkner-Byrne; Dr John Bell; Dr Philip McCready; Lucy Geddes; Dr Dàire McGill and Claire Heaney-McKee. Also, Dr Jonny Huck for GPIS services and Danny Treacy and the team at Perceptive Insight for undertaking the Household Survey.

Special thanks go to Co-operation Ireland and the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute For Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen's University Belfast for their continued support, to The Executive Office NI (TEO) and key staff working on the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) for their advice and observations during the production of this document.

The Authors hope that the content of this Report offers a valuable insight into how people residing in Lurgan feel about a variety of issues associated with their local area.

## INTRODUCTION

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The Research Team involved in the development of this Report were tasked with developing Area Reports for each of the sites where the Communities in Transition programme is currently active. Communities in Transition is one strand of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime. The Executive Office NI leads the policy development of Communities in Transition, in partnership with Co-operation Ireland and Queen's University Belfast.

The programme aims to support areas where there has been a history of paramilitary activity and coercive control. The primary objective is to support the transition of these sites to a point where paramilitary groups no longer exercise influence, and their activity is no longer as prevalent. To achieve this ambition, Communities in Transition funds a range of over 30 innovative and community focused projects. These projects are designed to increase the capacity of each area and are categorised under the following headings: Area Regeneration; Capacity Building; Community Safety and Policing; Environment and Culture; Health and Wellbeing; Personal Transition; Restorative Practice; and Young People. The Area Reports will identify the on-going challenges that exist throughout each Communities in Transition site. We will also point to the key work that is aimed at stimulating sustained change in the areas.

### LURGAN

Communities in Transition activity in Lurgan focuses on Kilwilke and Drumgask. Previous research has indicated that Lurgan is an area that is impacted by a number of complicated legacy issues. Site specific Communities in Transition research in 2018, explained that the degree of political and social division between Drumgask and Kilwilkie means that any attempts to create a shared vision for the area remains 'aspirational' (Co-operation Ireland, 2018). Moreover, residents were worried by the scale of criminality that was happening across the site and there was widespread concern about the failings of the justice system to deal with this activity. When trying to form a clear understanding of how to support transition in the area, it was clear that there was widespread dislike of terms such as 'paramilitarism', 'culture of lawfulness' and 'transition' (Co-operation Ireland).

## METHODOLOGY

The focus of this Report is on presenting a 'bottom up' assessment of the key issues relevant to the residents of Lurgan. The focus is not on re-presenting the many very valuable pre-existing data sets that exist elsewhere. Such data sets provide important indications of the overall capacity of the area, but often fail to tease out the correlating lived experiences. In this Report, we wish to address this gap in our understanding of the Communities in Transition sites.

To appropriately engage with participants we designed a methodology that ensured their opinion was positioned at the centre of our work. We took a mixed methods approach that utilised PGIS Mapping Software, Qualitative Interviews and a Household Survey.

Participants were invited to identify and mark specific categories of place, such as where things are getting better, where things are getting worse, where they feel safe or unsafe using a 'spraycan' tool on a computerised map of the local area. The individual marked maps were then aggregated to generate a collective view of the site.

Recorded Qualitative Interviews were conducted in conjunction with the completion of the Spraycan exercise, allowing the Research Team to tease out the overall capacity of the area alongside correlating lived experiences, both positive and negative.

Participants in this qualitative element of our research were recruited with the assistance of Communities in Transition Delivery Partners. Interviews took place in local community settings in Spring 2022.

In this area, 17 people participated in our PGIS mapping exercise and accompanying qualitative interview – 15 of these individuals identified as Nationalist and 2 as Other (neither Nationalist nor Unionist).

### Household Survey – Overview

- 150 people from Kilwilke, Drumgask and surrounding areas took part in the Household Survey survey, carried out by market research company, Perceptive Insight in Spring 2022.
- 130 identified themselves as Catholic, 16 were Protestant and 4 identified as neither.
- 76 Participants were male and 74 participants were female.
- 128 participants were Nationalist, 12 were Unionist and 10 identified as 'other'.
- The participants were aged between 17 and 79.

# Research Findings

## COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

In this section, we assess the ways in which participants feel attached to their local area.

### Household Survey

Two key findings emerged from the Survey findings, which indicated that there was a strong sense of community attachment in this area.

- **49% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong sense of community in their local area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 66%.
- **56% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected to their local area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 68%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **17 participants completed the Spraycan Mapping Tool.**
- **15 identified themselves as 'Nationalist' and 2 as 'Other'.**
- **Figure 1 demonstrates the extent to which community space is interpreted in Lurgan, on the basis of community identity.**

"Please spray the area on this map that you consider to be your community"

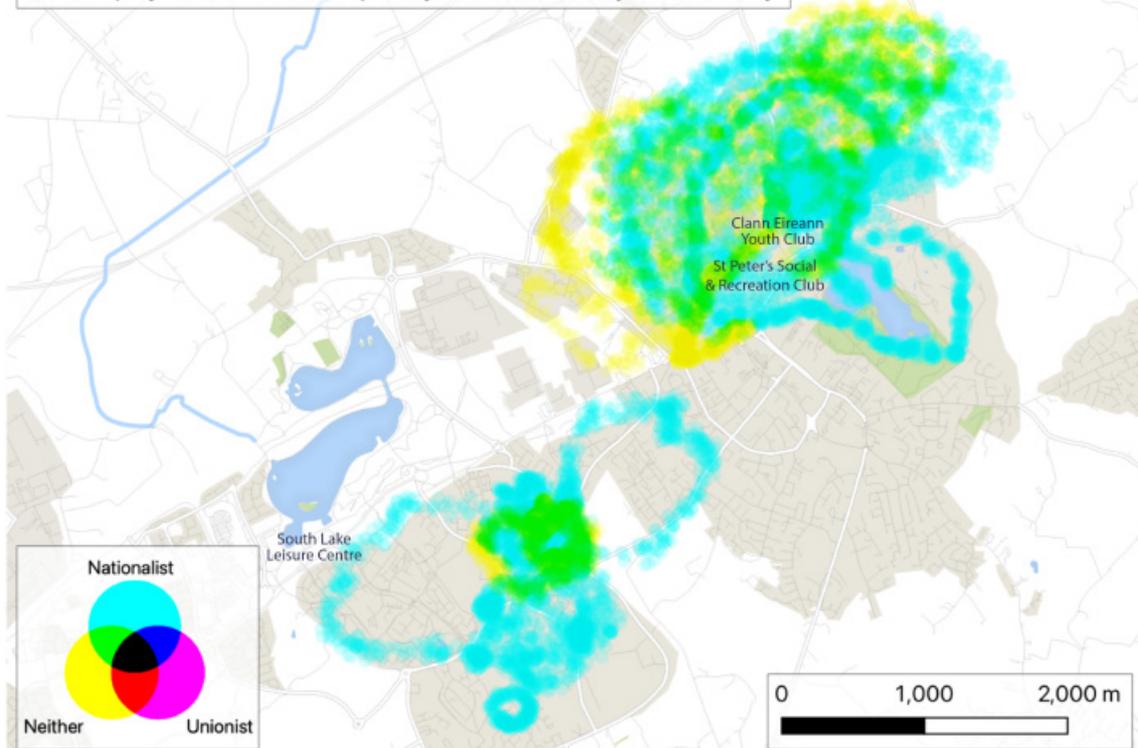


Figure 1: Community Attachment in Lurgan.

## Qualitative Interviews

Despite identifying various types of locally specific problems, discussed elsewhere in this Report, participants felt that there were strong levels of community spirit in their respective areas.

A number of participants explained that they had strong social networks in the area – they lived in close proximity to most of their friends and family, while many also worked close by.

*'My mum and dad live just round the corner... my brother and sister live close by and I think I would describe most of my neighbours as friends... so yeah... I feel like I've very strong connections in the area... and I don't think I'd ever want to leave.'*

*'Yeah, I think most people stay close to their families... you know, it's common for someone to take over a house that belonged to their family... most families have been in the area for a long time.'*

Many participants did however indicate that the traditionally high levels of community cooperation, are being undermined by the scale of criminality across the site – particularly associated with drugs.

Almost every participant referenced the scale of the problem of drugs throughout their local area. It was noted that drugs had caused loss of life, various forms of individual and family stress and huge financial debts that had seen people become under threat from local crime gangs/paramilitary groups.

*'Drugs have completely ruined this area... they've ruined lives... they've ruined families and they've completely destroyed the feel of the area. This used to be very close-knit... everyone together, but I think drugs have really destroyed that.'*

*'We would have had drugs before 98 (1998 Belfast Agreement)... like there would have been cannabis about the estate, but now you're talking about very serious stuff being consumed in very large quantities. I think the paramilitary groups that were active then... they were kind of holding it back. It would be very common to see cocaine and heroin now in our estate.'*

*'Drugs are everywhere (in this community)... the impact of them is shocking. You walk out now on a Sunday morning and there are drug baggies, blister packs and prescription packets scattered across the estate. It's terrible... you really worry about the local kids getting involved or even just playing about with the empty packets.'*

*'We've sort of ended up in a no man's land... between the paramilitaries going away... and people not being really up for contacting the police... because they don't have the necessary confidence... and I think in that space... where nobody is taking actions... lots of awful stuff has been allowed to happen and the scale at which drugs has exploded is crazy.'*

## KEY FACILITIES

In this section we identify the key facilities that are important to participants. We probe how these spaces are utilised and ask whether there are places that people would like to use; but chose not to.

### Household Survey

- **27% of our participants indicated they were involved with a Local Church.**
- **18% were associated with a Sports Club.**
- **16% were involved in a Local School.**
- **8% participated in Neighbourhood Associations.**

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **Although a small number of participants indicated that there were 'no facilities' in Lurgan, the majority of participants marked a number of retail spaces, including: Tesco and Lidl.**
- **Participants also marked some key community/sport facilities, including: the MUGA in North Lurgan, Clann Eireann Youth Club and St Peters GAC.**

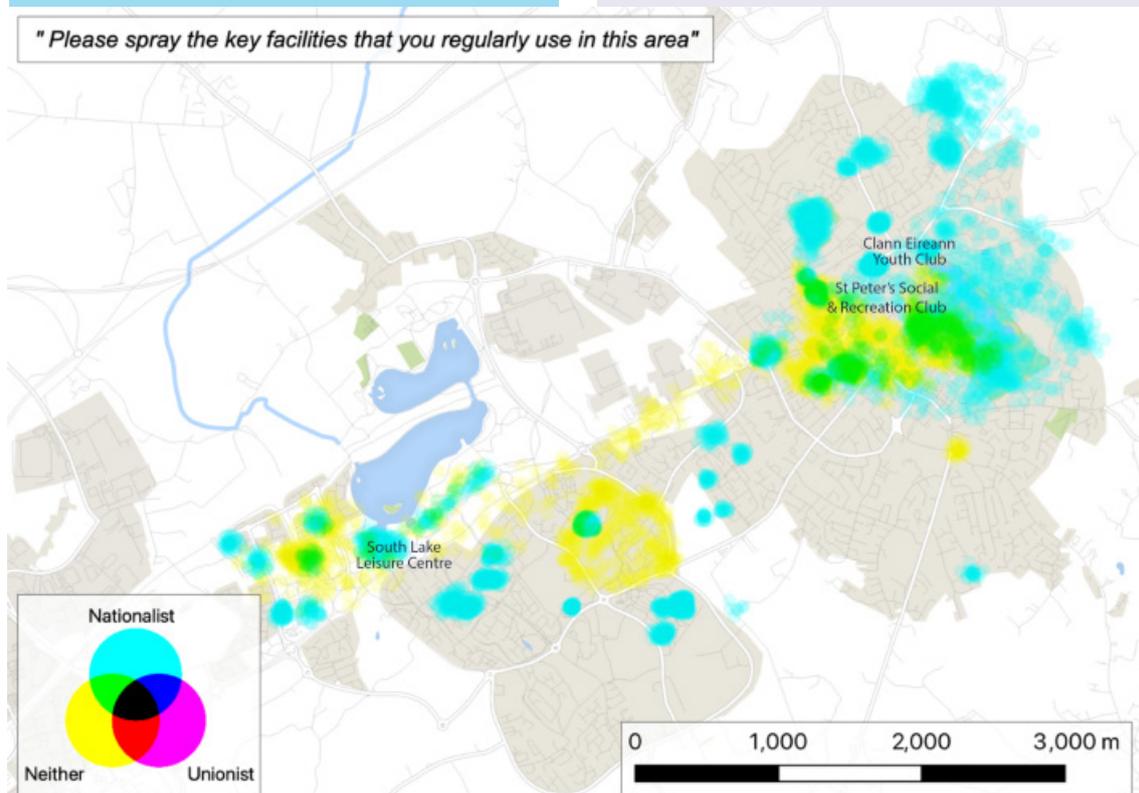


Figure 2: Key Facilities in Lurgan.

## Qualitative Interviews

As stated in the Spraycan Mapping Tool, some participants felt there were or little or no facilities in Lurgan.

*'There really isn't anything... honestly... we don't have anything. We've been waiting on a community centre for years, but we've yet to get one... it's a disgrace.'*

A number of participants were also frustrated by the lack of high-quality community spaces throughout the area, specifically in Drumgask.

*'We've (Drumgask resident) been told on a load of different occasions that it's close... you're going to get your community centre... you're next, but then it goes nowhere. Why has nothing happened? I think it's been blocked... blocked by Unionist politicians. I was always told if we're getting one here... they want the same amount of money put into their area.'*

*'(Be)cause we can't get anywhere with getting an actual (community) centre... we're currently meeting in a bar.'*

Participants in North Lurgan indicated that traditionally the local church and its relevant structures would have had a significant role in how the community was organised, but many felt that key sports clubs were now more influential.

*'I think the Church was definitely more significant when I was growing up... it probably still would be for my parents, they're in their seventies... for that generation, but I think if you look at where most people go at the weekends... and*

*during the week... it's the sports clubs in the area... especially places like St Peters (GAC).'*

*'I think we (the local community) were all looking to them (local GAA club) during the pandemic... I think that's where you were most likely to get information about what was happening... what happening with the schools and the local shops. How was that? Oh... via the Whatsapp group and the Facebook page... everything you need to know was there. Also, if people couldn't get out (of their house)... they could just get in touch with them... and they'd sort that out.'*

Participants stressed that in addition to the community having a long-term request for a suitable community centre, it was extremely difficult to get any type of investment in the local area.

*'We got a MUGA eventually... I mean we had been asking for that for years... we really had. The amount of time and effort that went into getting that was extraordinary... it really was. Now we have it... it's great, but it was such a battle... you really have less confidence that more things of that type will come.'*

## COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING BETTER

In this section, we identify the current community capacity that exists in Lurgan, with a specific focus on identifying things that have improved within the area.

### Household Survey

- **82% of respondents indicated that they would know who to contact if they had a problem associated with their community.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 84%.
- **34% agreed or strongly agreed that they had the skills to help change their area for the better.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 50%.
- **3% of respondents felt the area would be in better condition in five years time.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 29%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **In line with what has been indicated elsewhere in this Report, participants marked the importance of key community/ sports facilities, including: Clann Eireann Youth Club and St Peters GAC.**
- **In this section, participants were also keen to stress the important work that Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) had been involved in throughout the area.**

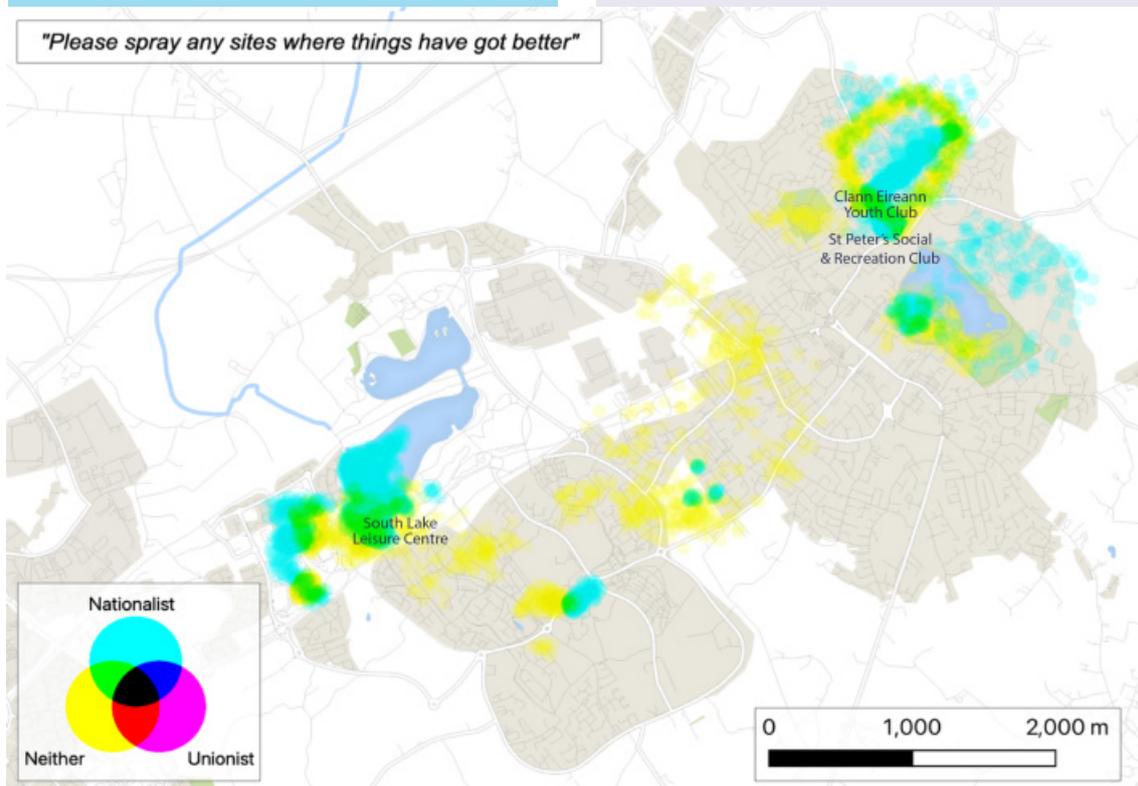


Figure 3: Locations in Lurgan where things have got better.

## Qualitative Interviews

Almost every participant indicated that CRJI had made a significant impact in the area.

It was explained that they were dealing with a number of complicated community issues that had either gone unchecked or where there had been little progress in the past.

*'CRJI have made a massive, massive difference. They've arrived in a moment when they probably couldn't be more needed.'*

*'They've been excellent. I think at the beginning they were very subtle... to a point where I probably wanted them to be a little more visible, but I think in fairness... in retrospect... they did the right thing... they were sussing everything out... being calm... taking everything in... before taking action. I think that was definitely the right call.'*

*'I think they know how to engage in things like that (drug related crime)... they have people who are trained. I think too often in the past... we seen the problem and flew into trying to resolve it, but we don't have the capacity to really cope with the problem, but they are very logical and have the depth of thought and trained personnel to deal with really complicated issues.'*

*'I think with CRJI now firmly involved in the area... there's a different feeling, a different vibe. I think now we have a structure to respond to complicated problems in an organised way.'*

Participants explained that an organised crime gang, locally referred to as 'The firm', has been an enormous problem in Lurgan for some time – especially in regards to the sale of drugs in the area. It was explained that although CRJI had not been able completely to remove the threat of the group from the local area, they had made significant progress in supporting those impacted by their activity.

*'I think they've (CRJI) definitely given people more confidence. They're giving people somewhere to go... I think we'd also sort of gave up... we'd lost confidence in the police... and the other authorities. I think CRJI have not only helped with giving residents somewhere to go... I think they've also reintegrated some of the stats (statutory bodies) back into the conversation.'*

Participants indicated there had been a small number of changes to the local symbolic landscape that were significant achievements (even if they appeared like relatively small-scale changes to outsiders).

*'We've had a paramilitary mural in the area (North Lurgan) reimaged and that's been a really big deal. Not only was it changed, but it was changed to an anti-drugs mural. I think given the scale of the problem in this area, that's a really big deal. There's also contact numbers on the mural for anyone who needs help.'*

## COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING WORSE

In this section we identify some key problems that have emerged which undermine the community capacity of the site

### Household Survey

- **Only 43% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had an influence over decisions that are made about their area.**

The average response across all the CIT sites was 27%.

- **97% of participants indicated that in five years time, the area would be either in the same condition or worse.**

The average response across all the CIT sites was 71%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **Participants identified a number of locations where they felt things had got worse in their local area, these included: a series of underpasses in North Lurgan where young people congregated and the MUGA in North Lurgan, as participants felt there was a lot of drug dealing happening nearby.**
- **Every participant also referenced non-specific site problems including the presence of the organised crime gang, 'The Firm' and the scale of drug abuse and addiction across the site.**

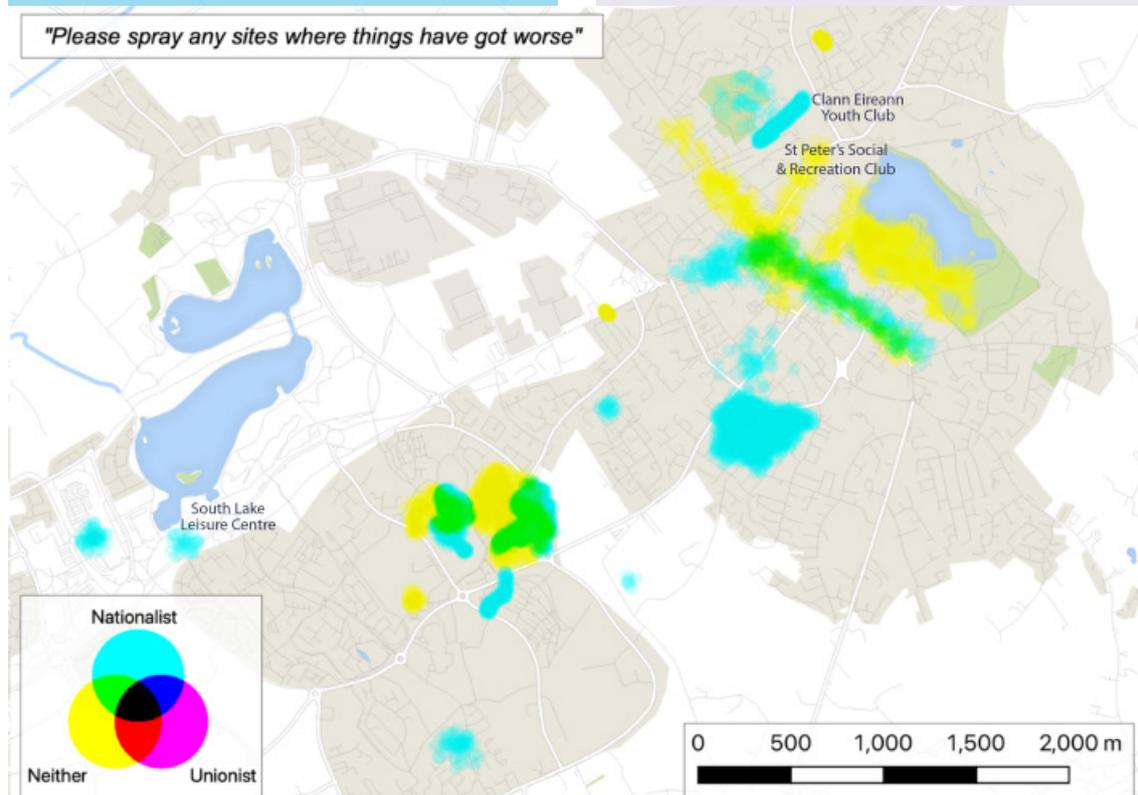


Figure 4: Locations in Lurgan where things have got worse.

## Qualitative Interviews

Every participant referenced the significant damage a locally based organised crime organisation, locally known as 'The Firm', had inflicted across the area.

It was noted that their main activities include: drug dealing, money lending and the extortion of local businesses.

*'I think you could say... or people have said... they (organised crime gang) have a grip on this area. I think it would be fairer to say that they have their boot on our throat. The level to which they've ruined this area... I think you would find it hard to match. One group... one collection of people have completely destroyed lives... they've destroyed families.'*

*'Some of the stuff... some of the stuff... I'm not even sure I can repeat in this setting. Some of it... you wouldn't believe happens in Northern Ireland. There was a lad round this way... he owed them money... and they'd established he couldn't pay... they'd roughed him up and destroyed his flat. So, they stopped going to him and they went to the house of his parents and told them what he did... and if they didn't pay what he owed... they knew who his sister was and they were going to grab her and take out what was owed on her.'*

*'They (organised crime gang) have ripped the heart out of this community. They've ruined every network... every positive means of engagement. And they just peddle and peddle drugs. The whole area now... people are like zombies... they're completely checked out. They're either so far of their heads*

*on drugs that they don't know what's happening or they're so afraid of getting trouble from them... they just really want to keep their heads down.'*

In addition to suffering from the varying impact of the organised crime gang that is active in the local area, participants noted there were a number of issues that concerned them about the current condition and capacity of their local area. These included poor relationships with local statutory bodies (specifically the police – see page 14 for more details), a lack of activities/support for young people and the poor scale of the areas' education/health/employment outcomes.

*'I think everyone will talk about the police... rightly so... the relationship has been horrendous at times, but I think it's all of them. What do I mean by that? Well, the (Northern Ireland) Housing Executive, the Council... they do absolutely nothing.'*

*'We just have nothing for the young ones... they just hang about. I think sometimes they're not actually doing that much wrong, but it can be quite intimidating. I think we need for them... more targeted support.'*

*'We're struggling in every way... if you look at what's happening at school level... in terms of unemployment and then the related problems we're having in health. I think beyond that... we really don't have the leadership to take these issues on. So, it is concerning... very concerning.'*

## COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF BELONGING

In this section, we identify how people feel about the issue of community safety in their area, with a specific focus on locations where people feel safe.

### Household Survey

- **58% of respondents felt that local residents abided by the rule of law.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 61%.
- **45% felt that improved lighting and alleygating would make them feel safer, while 48% said improved relationships with the PSNI would also help.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 60% & 59%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **Participants indicated that they felt safe when in close proximity to their home or when they were in areas that they associated with 'their' community.**

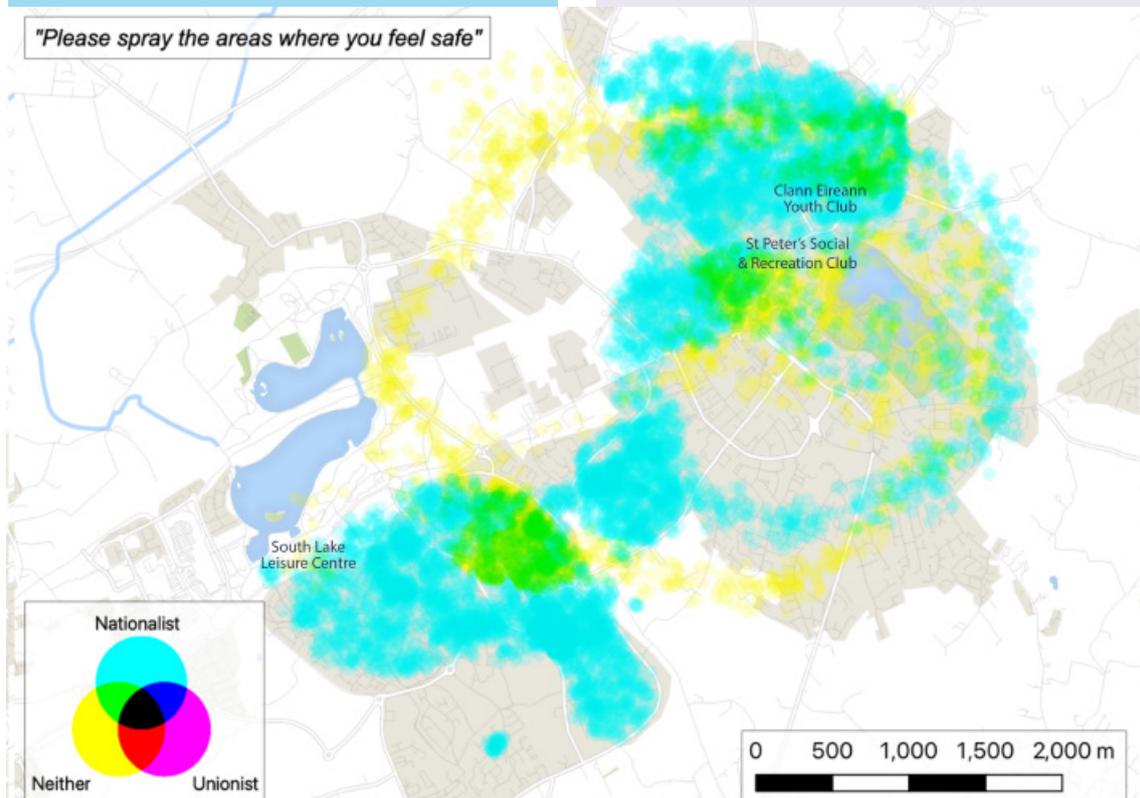


Figure 5: Locations in Lurgan where people feel safe.

## Qualitative Interviews

Participants based their sense of safety on two key aspects that can be associated with their familiarity with the area:

- (1) Many explained that they 'knew how to keep themselves safe' (i.e. they knew how to avoid particular locations, where they considered there might be some degree of threat) and
- (2) They felt as though their strong social networks throughout the site 'kept them safe' and would offer 'support if something went wrong' (this was especially common with long-term residents).

*'I've been here for a long time... the whole family has... so, yes... I think I'd be well known.'*

*'Knowing people... knowing your neighbours and trusting them that really does make you feel safe... do you know what I mean? I think when people from the outside come into the area... there is a bit of fear... you kind of think well who are they? I think that can seem... well impolite, but maybe even racist or sectarian... depending on the situation, but most people round this way wouldn't be like that... it's more about wanting to keep yourself and your family safe. That's probably not very nice for the family, but... I think sometimes you put yourself first. Do you know? I've kids in the area... I suppose their safety is my priority.'*

The majority of participants indicated that CRJI had made a significant contribution to the area and while they alone could not deal with every

local problem, they were bringing 'more depth' to the community response.

*'They've been excellent... they really have. I know... cause... I've been involved that they've really integrated themselves into the area. They've dealt with all sorts of problems... everything from a dispute between two families in the area to a 15 year old who'd got hooked on Lyrica.'*

Participants indicated that although current relationships with relevant statutory bodies and local political representatives remain poor, they are still in a better condition than they once were.

*'I think someone could call the police now or hang a Sinn Féin election poster on a lamppost. (If you) go back 10 years that wasn't possible. Someone would have had the poster down as quick as it went up and if you'd rang the police... someone would have been straight over... after they left to find out what you told them.'*

*'I think the relationship with the police is better... I'd probably describe it as neutral. I don't think there's been a seismic change, but they can do their job. I would say there's more raids or arrests to do with drugs now... rather than anything sectarian.'*

*'I don't think there's quite as much anger toward them (Sinn Féin). If you go back a few years... if you'd done a survey then... they'd have been hated more than the police or any Unionist.'*

## COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF THREAT

In this section, we identify the feelings participants had about the issue of community safety in Lurgan, with a specific focus on locations that made them feel unsafe.

### Household Survey

While the respondents to the Survey indicated a number of concerns about their local area throughout their responses, there were two significant issues identified by a significant number of respondents:

- **74% felt ASB was a problem in the area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 55%.
- **75% believed that drug related crime was also a problem in the area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 57%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **Like the previous section, participants understanding of threat appears to be largely linked to community identity, with respondents often stating they would be 'unsafe' in the territory of the 'other' community.**

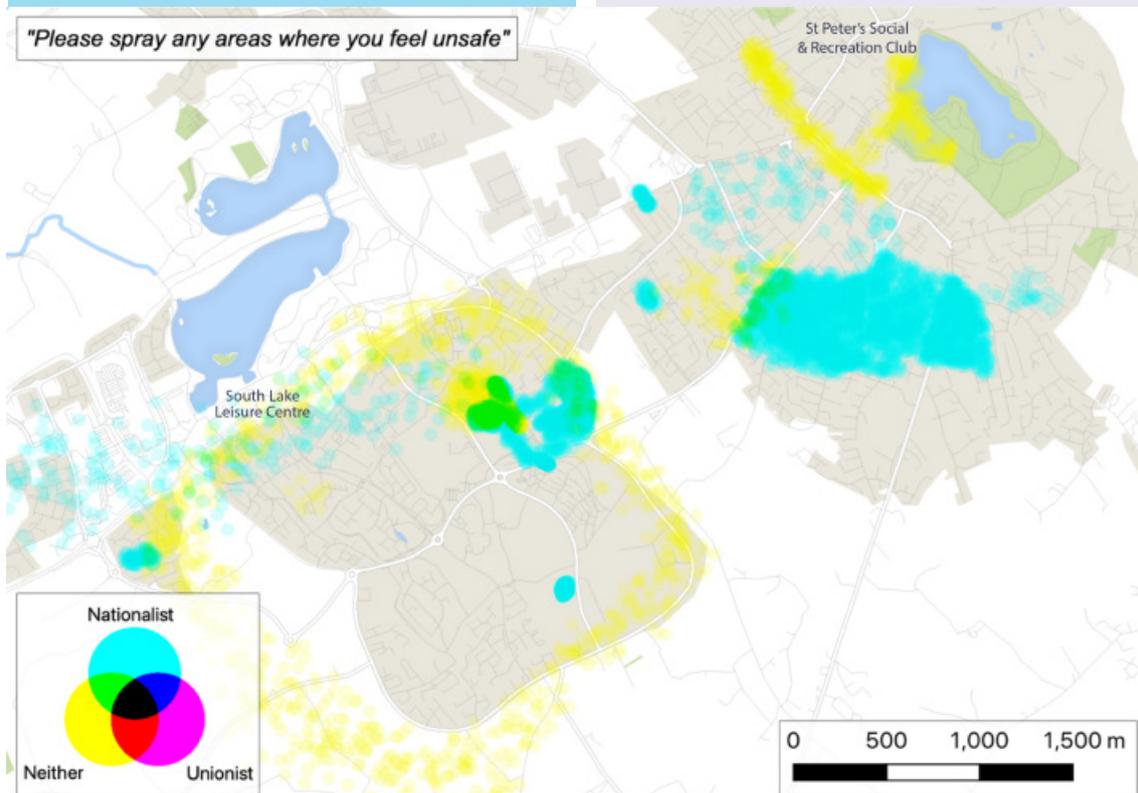


Figure 6: Locations in Lurgan where people feel unsafe.

## Qualitative Interviews

Many participants felt safe moving throughout 'their' community, but when discussing interface areas and spaces associated with the 'other' community, they were much less confident.

*'I was supposed to go to (location in South Lurgan) for a meeting... a standard community meeting, but I got a call the day before. They said: 'look we still want to work with you and everything's going well, but if you come down here... we can't guarantee your safety... so can we meet somewhere neutral in the middle.'* (From North Lurgan)

*'No... no, I wouldn't feel comfortable going there (location in South Lurgan)... I mean... no... I've driven or would drive through the edges of it, but sure I'd have no need to go in... why would I? Do you know what I mean?'* (From North Lurgan)

While participants referenced a considerable amount of concern about cross-community threat, they also stated a number of issues within 'their' own areas that made them feel unsafe – most of these concerns could be traced back to the scale of drug use/addiction throughout the site.

*'I've two boys (names given), they're 12 and 10... I suppose I'm just always worrying about them. You're always just trying to manage the risks around you, but when it comes to drugs... it seems such a big thing that it's hard to know how we protect them.'*

*'They're just selling drugs now completely out in the open... without a fear in the world. They'll stand out in the middle of the estate and no one does anything. Why don't they do something? Who would? The local politicians don't want to get their hands dirty... the police... the police don't want to touch it. If you speak to the police... they'll tell you that they're building a case or something. Unbelievable. They could be ramping up the biggest drugs bust in history, but it won't matter... the area is already destroyed. They're playing a long game against a bunch of criminals who don't care about the future. If they were ever caught... and they won't be... there'll be nothing left anyway.'*

*'People talk about cross-community... cross-community togetherness. The most 'cross-community' thing happening in this area is drug dealing. Honestly. They're all in it together. You're not dealing with a paramilitary group with a big political vision here... you're dealing with criminal gangs who are trying to make money. They'd work with anyone or do anything to make money.'*

*'I think it's just so easy for our young people to get pulled in. One day they'll just be buying drugs... the next time: 'here's the drugs, but don't worry about the money. Sure... we'll get you next time... or sure deliver this wee bag for us... suddenly... without knowing it... they're in their hands. They've probably made the biggest mistake of their life without even knowing they were making a decision.'*

## INFLUENCE OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS AND/OR ORGANISED CRIME GANGS

In this section, we present the ways in which participants felt that paramilitary groups and/or Organised Crime Gangs have an influence in their local area.

### Household Survey

- **20% of respondents felt that young people living in the local area were under too much influence from paramilitary groups.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 32%.
- **12% felt that paramilitary groups create fear and intimidation in the area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 34%.
- **13% felt that paramilitary groups had a controlling influence in their area.** The average response across all the CIT sites was 27%.

### Spraycan Mapping Tool

- **Participants indicated that paramilitary groups had an influence throughout much of Lurgan. There was though significant discussion about what was meant by the term 'paramilitary group' and debate if they were in-fact better described as organised crime gangs – see the Qualitative Interviews section for more detail.**

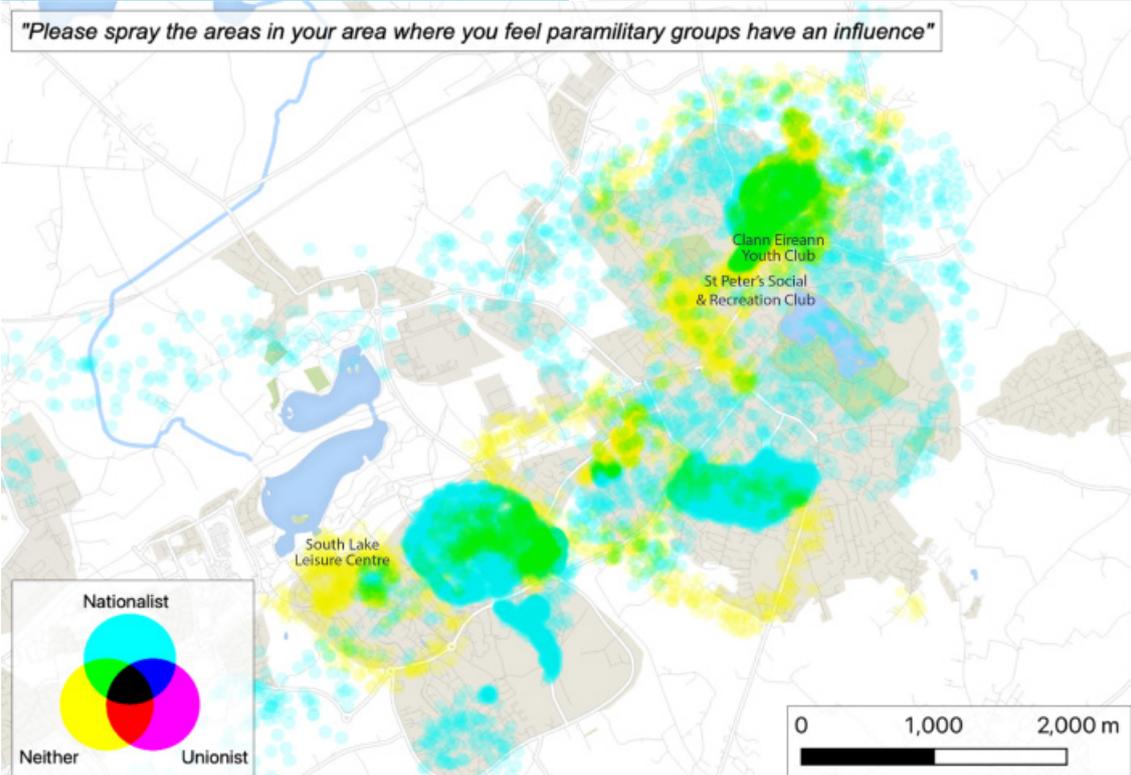


Figure 7: Influence of Paramilitary Groups and/or Organised Crime Gangs in and around Kilwilke and Drumgask

## Qualitative Interviews

Almost every participant was reluctant to speak about paramilitary groups as anything other than organised crime gangs. Participants generally indicated that 'there is no difference between the two' or 'paramilitary groups have been replaced by organised crime gangs, with no political/ideological motivation'.

*'I think you (directed to the researcher) are looking at it the wrong way round... I think by saying paramilitary you're invoking some sense of history or giving them (those currently involved in crime throughout the area) more... credibility or legitimacy than they actually have.'*

*'I don't think... mmm... I don't think people will be comfortable answering that. You're saying paramilitary and... or organised crime gang. What do you mean by that? What's the difference? Are they not the same thing?'*

*'But we don't have paramilitaries in this area... not now. We do have crime and we have criminal gangs, but that's something else.'*

It was indicated that one of the reasons participants had particular problems with the language used in this section was due to the presence of the previously referenced organised crime gang, 'The Firm'. Most participants indicated that the group was largely responsible for the majority of crime that happens in the area. It was suggested that discussing their behaviour in the same context as paramilitary groups could be misleading. Although a number of participants stated that they did not

support the presence of paramilitary groups that had been active in the area in the past, they indicated that they could identify that the groups were representing some type of ideology (even if they did not agree with it). In the current context, every participant stated there was no political/ideological motivation to the crime being conducted by 'The Firm'.

*'They're animals... I couldn't repeat some of the things I've heard. I'd be afraid of saying some of it, but you're talking about some really brutal and horrible stuff.'*

*'The way in which they (The Firm) have pushed drugs in this area is staggering. If you were to think back to around 1998... we (local community) weren't having huge problems with drugs... they were there, but it was all very soft stuff. It's moved to a point now where hard drugs are being sold in broad daylight. They (The Firm) have done that. You could do a whole study on that domino impact... the role that has had on health, unemployment and poor education. All those issues are interlinked in this area... that's a huge problem. Even if we got one brilliant programme to deal with one of them, it's unlikely to succeed in the long-term... unless you were magically able to stumble across a remedy for the other things at the same time.'*

*'They are just organised crime gangs... 100% organised crime gangs.'*

## ENDNOTE 1: Household Survey

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### COMMUNITY ATTACHMENT

1. 66% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that there was a strong sense of community throughout their area.
2. 68% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt connected to their local area.

### KEY FACILITIES

3. 13% indicated they were involved with a local church.
4. 14% were involved in a local sports club.
5. 9% were involved in a local school.
6. 5% were involved in a neighbourhood association.

### COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING BETTER

7. 84% indicated that that they would know who to contact if they had a problem associated with their community.
8. 50% felt that they had the skills to help change their area for the better.
9. 29% felt that their area would be in a better condition in five years time.

### COMMUNITY CAPACITY – GETTING WORSE

10. 27% agreed or strongly agreed that they had an influence over decisions that are made about their area.
11. 71% indicated that their area would either be in the same condition or worse off, in five years time.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF BELONGING

12. 61% of respondents felt that local residents in their area abided by the rule of law.
13. 60% indicated that changes to the local environment (including alley gating and/or extra street lighting) would help make people feel safer in their area.
14. 59% suggested that improved relationships with the PSNI would also help.

### COMMUNITY SAFETY – POINTS OF THREAT

15. 55% indicated that anti-social behaviour was a problem in their area.
16. 57% indicated that drug related crime was also a problem in the area.

### INFLUENCE OF PARAMILITARY GROUPS AND/OR ORGANISED CRIME GANGS

17. 32% felt that locally based paramilitary groups had too much influence on young people living throughout their area.
18. 34% indicated that paramilitary groups create fear and intimidation in their area.
19. 27% noted that paramilitary groups had a controlling influence on their area.

## ENDNOTE 2: SPRAYCAN MAPPING TOOL/PGIS SOFTWARE

The 'Spraycan' software constitutes a Participatory GIS (PGIS) interface that permits participants to answer spatial questions by drawing onto a Google map (or satellite image) using a 'spray can' (or 'airbrush') tool, as opposed to using traditional map-based drawing tools such as points and polygons.

The significance of this approach to participatory mapping relates to the way in which members of the public typically think about the world around them, and how this contrasts with the way in which we typically store these places in GIS software. People tend to think about the world in terms of places, which are typically vaguely defined, in that universally accepted and unequivocal boundaries cannot be determined for them. This is because places are defined by the individual perceptions, experiences and cognition of the participants, and so the extent of an area will necessarily vary between them.

Place-based models contrast with the space-based approaches that are used in typical GIS software, which require precision in the location and boundaries of these places. The use of such space-based representations for vague places enforces an 'artificial precision' (after Montello et al., 2003) onto them, resulting in a poor representation of the place in question – which will impact upon any subsequent interpretation and analysis. It has also been shown that people find it difficult to convert their place-based thoughts and feelings into spatial representations in this way, meaning that the imposition of

this 'artificial precision' also acts to reduce the quality of the data.

In order to avoid these negative effects, and the resulting challenges from incorporating findings into policy, we can use alternative map interfaces that are designed 'for purpose', of which the 'Spraycan' is a prominent example. In this case, participants can add data to the map without consideration of precise boundaries, as well as allowing them to change the density of the 'paint' (denoting variation in strength of feeling, for example). This approach facilitates either qualitative (e.g. Huck et al., 2019) or quantitative (e.g. Huck et al., 2014) interpretation, and has been applied to a range of environmental and socio-cultural problems worldwide, by a variety of organisations, governments and universities.

## FURTHER READING

More information about the software and its motivations can be found in the following publications:

Huck, J.J., Whyatt, J.D. Sturgeon, B., Hocking, B., Davies, G., Dixon, J., Jarman, N. and Bryan, D. (2018). Exploring Segregation and Sharing in a Divided City: a PGIS approach. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 109:1, 223-241

Huck, J.J., Whyatt, D. & Coulton, P. (2014). Spraycan: a PPGIS for capturing imprecise notions of place. *Applied Geography*. 55, p. 229-237

Evans, A. J., & Waters, T. (2007). Mapping vernacular geography: web-based GIS tools for capturing “fuzzy” or “vague” entities. *International Journal of Technology, Policy and Management*, 7(2), 134-150.

Montello, D. R., Goodchild, M. F., Gottsegen, J., & Fohl, P. (2003). Where's downtown?: Behavioral methods for determining referents of vague spatial queries. In *Spatial cognition and computation* (pp. 185-204). Psychology Press.

## REFERENCES

Co-operation Ireland. 2018. *Building Capacity to Support Transition in Kilwilke and Drumgask* (Belfast: Co-operation Ireland).





# Communities in Transition

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