

<b>Institution: Queen's University Belfast</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: UoA 13</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) and Local Development</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2020</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Brendan Murtagh	Professor	01/10/2000 - current
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>  <p>Our research on the SSE leveraged capital investment, improved the supply of social finance, supported the growth of community businesses and helped to develop new policies and investment programmes. This has in turn, strengthened area-based strategies (inner-city), sectors (ageing), practice (skills) and infrastructure (finance) to sustain more inclusive forms of urban regeneration and local development. These effects include leveraging GBP12,500,000 in investment; supporting the start-up or growth of 62 social enterprises; and creating 165 FTE jobs. This was taken forward via a KTP with Ashton Community Development Limited (ACDL), which has added GBP1,100,000 in commercial income to this social enterprise.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)  <p>As poverty, exclusion and segregation become a more significant feature of the urban age, this programme of research explores the potential of the SSE as an alternative site of community mobilisation and inclusive economics. The impacts are primarily within Northern Ireland but draw on empirical work in north and south America, Europe and Africa. The SSE is, like the private economy, an assemblage of firms (social enterprises and cooperatives); social entrepreneurs; intermediaries (business support, research, capacity building); social finance; and advocacy networks operating at a national and global level. The value of the case study is that it addresses these elements, their limitations and how they work together to create a distinctive approach to urban regeneration and community-based planning (<b>R1</b>).</p> <p>Asset based development  Murtagh (PI) was commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) to lead a review of <u>Community Asset Transfer</u> (CAT, 2011-12) (<b>R2</b>), which showed the social, economic and environmental impact of schemes in NI, but also stressed the need for a stronger regulatory environment (asset transfer legislation, capital investment and skills) to sustain and scale these outcomes. Research for the Housing Executive on <u>Asset Transfer and Social Housing: Building on Delivery</u> (NIHE, 2011-12, Murtagh PI) evaluated the importance of land, commercial property and housing transfers in tenant-led regeneration using secondary data, Geographic Information systems (GIS) analysis and case studies. This showed how asset-based development and community anchor organisations have turned estates around, created jobs and new services and produced significant cross-community outcomes, especially in (religiously) segregated areas (<b>R3</b>). <u>Alternative Economics and Social Inclusion</u> (The Executive Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers for NI), TEO, 2011-14, Murtagh PI) was commissioned by TEO and used a quantitative survey of social enterprises; secondary data on the structure of the sector; and case studies to set out policy recommendations to the NI government to strengthen the 'social economy ecosystem' (especially preferential debt finance) for asset holding community businesses (<b>R4</b>).</p>		

**Alternative ageing**

Ageing is a significant economic, community and spatial challenge and this research explored the role of the social economy as an alternative way to address poverty and strengthen NGOs to deliver services to the most excluded old. The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP) is a USD6,000,000,000 US donor with a concern for social justice and The Age Sector in NI (AP, 2004-09) critically reviewed the nature of political and policy advocacy and how social economics might support a more independent sector, better able to provide services to an ageing population. Murtagh (PI) led a three-stage research project. Phase 1 examined global best practice, the needs of older people and existing social economic activity across the age sector. This emphasised the need for an integrated programme to strengthen the enabling environment including social finance, technical skills, intermediary labour markets and new community businesses. The second phase involved the design, implementation monitoring and evaluation of a programme of six projects to be funded with a GBP2,240,000 investment by AP. This included projects in capacity building, Time Banks, social enterprise start-ups and new social finance products. Learning and impact was developed in the third phase via a grant on Sustaining Models of Practice (AP, 2014-18, Murtagh PI), which used participatory research with 11 projects across the AP portfolio to show the various ways in which they had sustained their work after grant aid had ended. This centred on social enterprise models, how Social Return On Investment (SROI) metrics can present a more effective case to 'impact investors' and how blended funding models (grant/debt/social investment) are needed to strengthen organisational viability (**R5**). We later developed and evaluated some of these models in a dedicated Work Package to look at 'innovative actions' including social enterprises (GEMS ILM), to support communities as they age in Healthy Urban Living and Ageing in Place (HULAP), which was a joint project between Belfast and Curitiba, Brazil (ESRC-Newton Fund, 2016-19).

**Integrated urban regeneration**

Murtagh was PI on Social Economics and Ethical Development (Social Investment Fund; 2015-19), which delivered the North Belfast Ethical Investment (NBEI) programme to support asset-based local economic development (**R6**). This is a partnership between the university and the social enterprise LEDCOM to use a range of research methods (market analysis, global best practice, social value measures and impact evaluation) to scale the social economy in the inner-city. The research informed a three-stage investment programme with small, medium and large grants, together with technical support to develop particular sectors. This prioritised, for example, community heritage including a significant support for a tourism initiative by the Belfast Charitable Society. Using research to help create viable community businesses with a strong social impact is being taken forward by Murtagh (PI) via a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with ACDL (Innovate UK, 2019-21). Diversifying Social Enterprises aims to commercialise services; develop procurement capacity; strengthen social value measurement; and create an open-source toolkit with technical resources to help social enterprises access the competitive tender market.

**3. References to the research**

- R1** Murtagh, B. (2019) *Social Economics and the Solidarity City*, London, Routledge. ISBN 9781138122215. (This book was the focus of an *Author Versus Critics* debate at the Royal Geographical Society-Institute of British Geographers Conference 2019 that is reported in a special edition of the journal *Space and Polity*, 24(3), 2020 <https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cspp20/current>).
- R2** Murtagh, B. (2015) Community asset transfer in Northern Ireland, *Policy and Politics*, 43(2), 221–237. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557312X655837>.
- R3** Murtagh, B. and McFerran, K. (2015) Adaptive utilitarianism, social enterprises and urban regeneration, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 33(6), 1585-1599. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0263774X15614151>.
- R4** Murtagh, B. and Boland, P. (2019) Community asset transfer and strategies of local accumulation, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 20(1), 4-23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2017.1347270>.
- R5** Murtagh, B. (2017) Ageing and the social economy, *Social Enterprise Journal*, 13(3), 216-233. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-02-2017-0009>.

**R6** Murtagh, B., Grounds, A., Boland, P. and Fox-Rogers, L. (2020) Social economics, poverty and violence after peace, *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 4(2-3), 220-238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2019.1674184>.

#### 4. Details of the impact

##### Impact on leveraged investment

The research had **direct effects on investment decisions of charities, donors and government agencies**. The AP *Social Economy Ageing Programme* led to an **investment of GBP2,240,000** that created Tier 1 capital investment of GBP500,000 in Charity Bank (NI); an Investment-readiness programme for NGOs (delivered by Ulster University and Charity Bank); Intermediary Labour Market for Older People (GEMS); a social enterprise Handy-Van project for older people living at home (Bryson Charitable Group); Time Bank volunteering for older people (Volunteer Now); and a social enterprise start-up programme (UnLtd). SROI methods showed that the investment produced a mean impact of GBP1 of grant aid to GBP2.68 (of social value benefit) across the 6 projects. For example, UnLtd created 20 jobs, 40 new start micro-social enterprises and a SROI of GBP1:GBP1.79 **[SOURCE 1]**; while GEMS placed 94 people into employment, generated GBP6,100,000 in waged income, reduced welfare payments by GBP1,100,000 and generated a SROI of GBP1:GBP2.75 (both over 5 years) **[SOURCE 2 CEO GEMS] (R5)**. Developing this theme, we explored a range of innovative social enterprise models such as intermediary labour markets, loneliness initiatives and recycling (drawing on experiences of the Brazilian partner in Curitiba) to target the most excluded and isolated old as part of our HULAP grant. Based on our case study of GEMS, we argued for a stronger emphasis on practical approaches to poverty and more recently, labour market integration for older people has become a priority for a range of policies and programmes such as Age-Friendly Belfast as well as specific access to work schemes **[SOURCE 2 CEO GEMS]**. The NBEI project also provided development capital to Belfast Charitable Society (BCS) to support heritage services in its iconic, Grade-A listed building and related ancient graveyard. This detailed sectoral research deployed user surveys, best practice in the management of community heritage museums and an analysis of revenue potential to help inform a **GBP500,000 investment in heritage-led tourism** by BCS including accommodation and related conference facilities **[SOURCE 3 CEO Belfast Charitable Society]**.

##### Policy impact and the regulatory environment

The longitudinal aspect of our work on community assets emphasises the time, post-research effort and partnership work with advocacy groups required to maximise impacts. The JRF project had an impact on the content of the **development of the NI Government strategy on Community Asset Transfer in Northern Ireland (2013-19) (R2)**. However, there was a concern among NGOs about whether the policy would reflect QUB findings, which emphasised the need for a strong legislative and financial basis to asset transfer. We worked with the lobby group *Stratagem* along with *Development Trust Northern Ireland* (DTNI) and sympathetic MLAs to table a formal Assembly Question (AQ) in the Northern Ireland Assembly and a commitment by the Minister that the research findings would feed into the new policy (quoted in Hansard, 2013, p.WA.293)]. DTNI was established to provide technical support, training and advocacy and we continue to work closely with them to organise best practice visits along with key policymakers (most recently to Scotland in 2019); undertake (by colleagues in QUB planning) a focused study on the feasibility of a *Community Rights Act*; and lobby for investment support, especially as Murtagh was appointed to the government's *Strategic Insight Lab on Asset Transfer* (September 2019) to set out a new direction for policy in NI **[SOURCE 4 Director DTNI]**. The emphasis on asset-based regeneration and community accumulation strategies raises significant implications for policy, local practice and support for individual social enterprises **(R4)**.

##### Innovative urban regeneration

Part of the story of impact in this arena is to take the lessons from previous programmes to create more effective and sustainable interventions. Murtagh and McFerran **(R3)** reported their evaluation of the EU URBAN II Initiative 2000-08 that aimed to regenerate north Belfast, using a community-based economic development approach. The paper showed that the investment in social enterprises largely failed because financial aid was not accompanied with appropriate

technical support; the investment was too small to sustain or grow a proper business model; and because managers lacked the commercial experience to develop markets, supply chains and value-added services. Drawing on this experience, QUB partnered with the leading social enterprise LEDCOM in a three-year action research project to **develop the social economy in the inner-city**. The research helped to scope and develop key sectors such as heritage based tourism, textiles and property development; support individual businesses to exploit specific market opportunities; provide technical assistance to help 'translate' research for organisational planning, campaigning and networking; transfer best practice from other countries; build an advocacy evidence base (for policy support, legislation and finance); develop and apply local economy multiplier methods to better evaluate community businesses; and a programme of 7 MSc studentships to help train the next generation of practitioners in social economics and regeneration (<https://www.edtnorth.org/>). This secondary, quantitative, qualitative and evaluative data helped direct a GBP1,500,000 investment to support the development of asset holding community businesses with three levels of staged grant; technical assistance; and establishing a stronger learning and advocacy network. Part of the learning also involved leading practitioner visits to high-impact social economies in the Basque Country, Bologna, Bristol and Edinburgh. Independent government monitoring of the **programme showed that it has supported: 22 social enterprises; created 51 jobs; placed 661 participants through accredited training; leveraged an additional GBP3,100,000 from participating projects; and generated GBP580,000 in new sales [SOURCE 5]**. The analysis also showed that ACDL alone invests around GBP6,000,000 annually in salaries and supply chains which generates a **Local Multiplier Effect of GBP1 spend to GBP1.78 leveraged in the north Belfast economy [SOURCE 6]**. The Government-commissioned external evaluation also highlighted the innovative nature of the research component - 'through the dimensions of a true partnership where academics understood practitioner and service delivery issues while practitioners have recognised the value of contributing to the research agenda and strengthening relationships with academia' **[SOURCE 7, p.23]**.

The research also **challenged traditional models of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland** and in particular how to address spatially segregated communities. In critically evaluating identarian modes of conflict, it showed how poverty and not just religion has intensified segregation, resource competition and even violence in the most divided communities. Arguing that desegregation is firmly associated with economic and social mobility, it underscores the potential of a social economy approach to develop accessible facilities in blighted interfaces (childcare); enabled separate communities to plan, deliver and use common services (including trauma support and mental health programmes for victims of the Troubles); created cultural interdependence in the development of an integrated heritage approach (for instance between the Orange Order and Irish language groups); and integrated ex-prisoners and ex-combatants into the labour market (via appropriate education and work based training) (R6). The research informed a GBP140,000 stage 3 investment in the Belfast Charitable Society's 200-year-old listed headquarters at Clifton House. This now tells the story of the 18thC cross-community United Irishmen and their concern for public health, social reform, education and sanitation in the rapidly changing city. Our evaluation was able to plot the effects of the grant, as between 2018 and 2019 the number of visitors doubled to 2,773 pa; formally accredited docents also doubled to 31; and social media hits increased by 19% to 4,494. These individual project effects may be comparatively modest, but the link between social enterprise and peacebuilding has had a direct effect on the design of the new EUR1,000,000,000 EU PEACE Programme 2020-27. This has now used our research and specifically prepared briefing papers as the basis of a new investment in the social economy in Northern Ireland and the border counties. ([https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/Social%20Innovation%20Funding%20Call/SocialInnovationCall\\_Final.pdf](https://www.seupb.eu/sites/default/files/styles/Social%20Innovation%20Funding%20Call/SocialInnovationCall_Final.pdf); see specifically pp.5-6).

### Transferring knowledge

The KTP with ACDL has diversified their income stream away from grants toward commercial contracts, especially via procurement tenders (<https://youtu.be/54I7N50gZdo>). The KTP Associate, working with the academic team, led 11 tender submissions between 2019 and March 2020 valued at GBP3,687,119 of which 6 were successful. The 6 successful projects



produced an additional commercial income into ACDL of GBP1,087,119 (30% success rate) **[SOURCE 8 Head of Programmes ACDL]**. The KTP introduced a new cost management system to help price bids and their profit margins more accurately; an online procurement toolkit; and a new evaluation and performance dashboard that shows how 'buyers' will achieve a social return in contract investment by working with social enterprises. The KTP Associate was shortlisted for the Innovate UK Best of Best Award 2020 - Future Innovator section based on the impact of the project on the commercialisation of the social enterprise sector. ACDL also used this approach to think about the income potential of its land and property assets and the importance of **hybrid (private-social enterprise) models** in service delivery.

It should be emphasised that not everything worked but the value of a longitudinal research programme is that it focuses on implementation and raises the need for new practices and evidence. The opportunity to draw this body of research together and acknowledge the institutional and political barriers, underscores the complexity of impact, not just on policy, but on communities, social enterprises and debates about inclusive urbanism (R1). Our research certainly played a role in increasing the supply of social finance but demand for such products remains weak, partly because managers lack the skills to use it. The EDT project, our KTP and on-going work with intermediaries such as DTNI aims to skill-up the sector, especially in financial management, project planning and pricing strategies. In 2019, Queen's appointed **one of the leading social entrepreneurs in Northern Ireland as Visiting Professor of Practice** to support our community engagement, plan joint research projects and contribute to taught degrees on urban regeneration and this emphasises the two-way nature of our approach to impact. The case study shows that impact happens in different ways. It can have a linear effect on outcomes, such as on the performance of the social enterprise sector, policy recognition and new capital investment programmes. However, it can also reflect the limitations of our own research-based recommendations (finance), identify the need for a different course of action (skills and capacity) and in particular to innovate (KTP) with new ways to grow the sector and how it impacts on urban deprivation.

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. **SOURCE 1** The Atlantic Philanthropies (2015) [Sustainability Learning Review](#), New York, The Atlantic Philanthropies
2. **SOURCE 2** *Letter of confirmation from* Chief Executive Officer, GEMS, Belfast (directly involved in the impact via the implementation and use of case study research).
3. **SOURCE 3** *Letter of confirmation from* Chief Executive Officer, Belfast Charitable Society, Clifton House (directly involved in the impact via the commissioning, implementation and use of the research).
4. **SOURCE 4** *Letter of confirmation from* Director, Development Trust Northern Ireland (DTNI) (observer of impact as user of the research findings for policy lobbying purposes).
5. **SOURCE 5** [Outcome Based Accountability \(OBA\) Final Audit Return](#), *The Executive Office – Strategic Investment Board NISRA Economics Branch*, June 2018, NI Government validated performance indicator
6. **SOURCE 6** NBEI-EDT (2017) [Ethical Development Trust Working Paper Measuring and Mapping the Economic Impact of Ashton](#), Belfast, NBEI-EDT,
7. **SOURCE 7** Gauge Consulting (2018) [North Belfast Ethical Investment Project Evaluation for The Executive Office](#), NI Government, Belfast, Gauge, page 23,
8. **SOURCE 8** *Letter from ACDL Head of Programmes*, including validated data analysis on KTP applications and awards (directly involved in the impact via the commissioning, implementation and use of the research, based on the KTP).