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Collaborative History Projects and Their Impact on Communities: A Case in North City Center, Dublin

Fig. 1: "Rutland Street Lower." June 27, 2014. Image by author.

Walking down Sean MacDermott Street in June 2014, entering north central Dublin, is an area of Ireland's capital city that is marked by its unique cultural characteristics and signs of socio-economic disadvantages.[1] The hustle and bustle of the city surrounds the community, and the area is thriving with the day-to-day grind of

1 "Northeast Inner City Project," Dublin City Council, accessed August 21, 2014, http://www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-your-council-your-area-central-area-regeneration-projects/north-east-inner-city-project.

 https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111675930-009

its people. A group of women lounge at the front steps of their connecting houses while smoking cigarettes and telling tales of daily gossip, as they watch children kick around a ball in the front garden and ride scooters on the sidewalks and in the street. Families stroll past on their way to and from O'Connell Street and Parnell Street with shopping bags in tow, while a group of men repair a brick wall outside Our Lady of Lourdes church, famous for its shrine dedicated to the "venerable Matt Talbot."[2] They say hello by giving a nod, and we share a curious glance at one another as they continue to crack jokes with the group in their sharp north side Dublin accents.

The area can be challenging to an outsider as parts of it are newly renovated with modern architecture and beside them sit derelict buildings left to wither away, their remnants providing clues of a time gone past. There are noticeable marks of deprivation such as faded street signs, litter in the streets, graffiti adorning the sides of abandoned buildings and houses, and stray dogs roaming the neighborhoods. It is easy to assume that North City Center (NCC) is just another urban area, marked by poverty, in the midst of ongoing urban development and gentrification. After engaging with members of this community, listening to their concerns, and researching the area, it became evident that NCC faces many social, political, and economic obstacles that distinguish it from other areas of Dublin.

This chapter focuses on the importance of community-based historical projects and how they allow further understanding of an under-represented demographic and their heritage.[3] It is based on a co-designed series of classes focusing on the history of an underrepresented community in Dublin's NCC in 2014. I led the series as part of an internship with Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS). An ethnographic approach was used to examine the significance of public history and its role in collaborative historical education projects that emphasize community participation. The next sections focus on some of the economic and socio-cultural factors that have impacted the NCC community over time.

2 Matt Talbot, revered for his piety and charity, and considered by some as a patron to those struggling with alcoholism.

3 Paul Born, "Community Collaboration: A New Conversation," *The Journal of Museum Education, Museums and Relevancy* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 9–12.

North City Center

When first starting this project in NCC, I asked an elderly woman from the area who owned a fruit stand on Talbot Street if she would be interested in being interviewed for a local history project. She replied, "Why do you want to know? There's nothing here worth talking about, no one else cares. Why do you?"[4] This, arguably, demonstrates how many residents from this area believe that their history and culture is less significant than other sectors in Dublin. This is unfortunate because the area is rich in history and culture, such as the street names and historical landmarks that commemorate the heroes of modern Irish history, remnants of Georgian architecture, the distinct accent, and the demonstrable camaraderie among neighbors in the area;[5] the community's heritage is not only worthy of study but imperative to understanding Dublin and Ireland. As Kemp and McKinley Parrish explain: "The voices of the marginalized are often missing… However, those interested in moving past the story of the elite of society use creativity and persistence to piece together remarkably rich stories that document the lives of others within society."[6]

Dublin is known for its widely diverse neighborhoods. Not only do the accents differ from place to place, but so does the way of life.[7] Popularly known as North Inner City, the northeast portion of central Dublin has been socially and economically deprived though a great deal of its history.[8] In this chapter this area is referred to as "North City Center" due to a request from a local community member, Una Shaw, who claimed: "It has always been City Center, not North Inner City. Even when we get our voting papers it says City Center. I feel like they just copied what London was doing at the time, and it stuck, but it doesn't define us correctly. To me, it stigmatizes us."[9]

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4 Samantha Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes* (Dublin, Ireland, n.d.).

5 Jimmy Wren, *Crinan – Dublin: A History of 13 North Inner City Streets* (Dublin, Ireland: North Inner City Folklore Project, 1993); Ben Trawick-Smith, "Dublin: A Tale of Two Accents," *Dialect Blog*, accessed August 21, 2014, http://dialectblog.com/2011/02/02/dublin-a-tale-of-two-accents/.

6 Amanda Kemp and Marilyn McKinley Parrish, "(Re)membering: Excavating and Performing Uncommon Narratives Found in Archives and Historical Societies," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 127 (2010): 46.

7 Lee Komito, "Politics and Clientelism in Urban Ireland" (University College Dublin, 1985), www.ucd.ie/lkomito/thesis5.htm.

8 *Common Goals and Unmet Need: Meaningful Collaboration in Tackling Exclusion in Dublin's North East Inner City* (Dublin, Ireland: Integrated Services Initiative, 1997), 5.

9 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes.*

It was decided by the community group that the best way to identify the area was as "North City Center" because the term still recognizes the division between the north side and south side of Dublin while keeping the original "City Center" title.[10]

Although the 2006 census showed a significant decrease in unemployment, unemployment continues to be an issue for many NCC residents, which leaves sections of the local area at an economic disadvantage.[11] In the mid-1990s new urban regeneration schemes caused a population growth in Dublin's inner city, which created new opportunities. However, the new employment generated has been white collar or highly skilled work, leaving much of the area's largely traditional labor force excluded from new economic opportunities.[12] NCC has seen some of the most concentrated redevelopment throughout the city since the last recession. These new accommodation developments are highly segregated with gated communities and high-tech security systems, enabling extreme divides between wealthy newer residents and the disadvantaged, local long-term residents. Some of these challenges are new and can be attributed to the evolving city that continues to emerge around them, while many other challenges lie within the area's historical backbone.

Historical Context

Up to the beginning of the 1800s, a large section of the north side of Dublin's city center was considered one of the most desired areas to reside, set to the backdrop of attractive Georgian townhouses, grand thoroughfares, and illustrious parks.[13] However, in 1801 the Act of Union dissolved the Irish Parliament and all political power and influence shifted solely to Westminster. As the nobility withdrew they left their stately Georgian houses in Dublin to fall to decay, be converted into offices, hotels, charitable institutions, or divided into residences.[14] Dublin became the epicenter for the desperate masses during the great famine and its aftermath, be-

10 "Dublin Northsiders vs Dublin Southsiders. The Great River Liffey Divide," accessed August 21, 2014, http://www.dublinescape.com/dublin-northsiders-vs-dublin-southsiders.html.

11 Komito, "The Inner City and Flatland."

12 *Common Goals and Unmet Needs*, 6.

13 Jacinta Prunty, *Dublin Slums 1800–1925: A Study in Urban Geography* (Dublin, Ireland: Irish Academic Press, 1998), 274.

14 O'Brien, *Dear Dirty Dublin: A City in Distress, 1899–1916*, 7.

tween 1841 and 1900, and particular areas of Dublin were especially noted for their tenement slums, many of these at the core of NCC.[15]

Although most of these slums were removed by the late 1950s, some occupants remained in their Georgian houses well into the 1970s. Many of these stood out noticeably in the modern cityscape of a changing Dublin.[16] Una Shaw, a participant in the collaborative history project in NCC, explained: "We just want to put that past behind us. It seems that every historian that comes to the area only wants to talk about the depressing stories of Dublin tenement life on the North Side, but that's not our only history, and it's something that residents around here would prefer to forget."[17]

However, the area continued to face hardships well into the latter half of twentieth century. By the late 1980s the population of inner city communities had declined rapidly due to suburbanization and the decline of traditional industrial employment. This caused enormous change and high levels of unemployment. Many facilities such as schools and community services closed or were left neglected.[18] Larry MacAulay, a long-time community member, reflected on this loss of population and urban infrastructure: "The fifties and sixties were great here. Everyone knew one another, and everyone was close, but by the 1970s all that changed. Dublin became a ghost town overnight and vandalism took over. Everyone left, everything was knocked down. It was like a warzone; it was that bad. They even filmed war movies here because the area looked like it had been bombed."[19]

Another factor that contributed to the stigmatization of the area was the heroin "epidemic" in the 1980s. Many of the community members interviewed for the project mentioned the effects of heroin in some way. Kathy Moore, a local, explained: "Everyone in the area has been affected by heroin. It's better now than it was back then, or at least it is not as noticeable anyway, but we have all seen the toll it can take, either by addiction or the loss of a friend or family member, or from our own experiences."[20]

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15 Kevin C. Kearns, *Dublin Tenement Life: An Oral History* (Dublin, Ireland: Gill & Macmillan, 1994), 7.

16 Ibid., 21.

17 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes.*

18 Haase, *Changing Face of Dublin's Inner City*; Andrew Maclaran, "Suburbanising Dublin: Out of an Overcrowded Frying Pan and into a Fire of Unsustainability," in *Renewing Urban Communities: Environment, Citizenship and Sustainability in Ireland* (Aldershot, 2005), 60–74; H. A. Gilligan, *History of the Port of Dublin* (Dublin, Ireland: Gill and MacMillan, 1988), 64.

19 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes.*

20 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes.*

Heroin usage reached a "plateau" in Dublin in the mid-1980s, although the availability of opiates continued in the inner city and was believed to be "contained" in these areas. Due to this, the heroin problem in NCC disappeared from the public agenda and there was little support for the communities affected.[21] NCC remains in a constant state of change. Although the population has regenerated, many of the older inhabitants have been left comparing the community to the way it was then to the way it is now. Christy McGee, a NCC resident, explained: "We can tell that the area is in much better shape than it was back then, but the transition, from old to new, has been a challenge as well, and the area is still very deprived in some circumstances."[22]

Paul Hansert, a local from NCC, who worked as a scaffolder in Dublin for over 30 years, and later as a trade unionist, described the conditions of NCC and how it has changed for some local residents:

> Well, for the ordinary person that has lived here, probably going back a hundred years, very little has changed. The conditions, more or less, are better than they were, but they still struggle to find work. There's a lot of addiction in the area, either alcohol or a drug addiction. It tends to be an area that's not too much thought about. There's early school leaving and many social problems. They've been there for generations. So, in that way, I don't think much has changed for those people, but the area itself has changed. First of all, there's not as many people living in the area because they cleared a lot of them, and then you have new apartments which would mostly be people from outside this area that live in those apartments. They wouldn't really mix in the area; they wouldn't see themselves as part of the area.[23]

Some of the NCC neighborhoods have become the most segregated of all inner city areas, largely on account of the International Financial Service Center (IFSC) being located in what used to be one of the most derelict areas of the city. Urban development in the inner city over recent years has been successful in attracting large numbers of new residents to the area. This has helped to create a new population of much younger, affluent, and ethnically diverse residents. This has caused divisions between the newer residents and members of the older established community.[24] Many of these renovations were needed and welcomed but have contributed to other challenges in the area.[25] Hansert explained:

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21 Aileen O'Hare et al., "The Opiate Epidemic in Dublin (1979–1983)," *Irish Medical Journal* 78, no. 4 (April 1985): 107–10; Emer Coveney et al., *Prevalence, Profiles and Policy: A Case Study of Drug Use in North Inner City Dublin, Case Study* (Dublin, Ireland: North Inner City Drug Task Force, 1999), 30; Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes.*

22 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes.*

23 Hansert, Collaborative Project Oral Interview.

24 Peter Howley and Brian Clifford, "The Transformation of Inner Dublin: Exploring New Residential Populations within the Inner City," *Irish Geography* 42, no. 2 (July 2009): 225–43.

> The old community is there, but it is not as vibrant as it was, and the new apartment blocks, you see, those people, they don't associate themselves with the inner city. They tend to keep to themselves. If you look at the Docks area, they have a wall separating them from Sheriff Street. A physical wall going around it. It's like an enclave, but a middle class enclave. They have their own shops, chemists, doctors, all in that area, which is surrounded by a wall.[26]

The area experiences pockets of acute poverty while other areas are completely gated off from the neighborhood, leaving segregation and lack of connection between newer and older residents. NCC has also seen an increase in ethnic minorities, a side effect of progressive migration policies initiated by the European Union in May 2004.[27] This has led to more multicultural urban areas where such groups tend to gravitate due to their proximity to job opportunities.[28] This influx has also impacted the identity of NCC, creating segregated enclaves.[29] As Hansert related, "In the 1970s it was just one community in the whole North Inner City, everyone knew each other. It's not like that anymore."[30] This juxtaposition raises questions about the impact these changes have had on how community members view themselves, their history, and their identity. From extreme poverty to loss of residents through suburbanization and government policy, to the impacts of heroin on the community, to constant redevelopment and change in infrastructure: what does this do to their definition of their community, their history, their memories? This chapter asserts that history projects based on community participation, stories, and individual memories can help create a sense of identity within a community that feels they have been forgotten, or rather, left behind, in a city that continues to change.

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25 *Expanding Dublin's Horizons to Meet the Critical Challenges, Dublin City Development Plan 2005–2011* (Dublin, Ireland: Dublin City Council, n.d.), www.dublincity.ie/development_plan/2.pdf.

26 Hansert, Collaborative Project Oral Interview.

27 *Towards Integration: A City Framework* (Dublin, Ireland: Office for Integration and Dublin City Council, n.d.).

28 Peter Szlovak and Ian McCafferty, *Monitoring Integration in Dublin City: Challenges and Responses Full Report, Towards Integration: A City Framework* (Integration Centre, Dublin City Council, March 2012).

29 Neil O'Boyle and Bryan Fanning, "Immigration, Integration and the Risk of Social Exclusion: The Social Policy Case for Disaggregated Data in the Republic of Ireland," *Irish Geography* 42, no. 2 (July 2009): 145–64.

30 Hansert, Collaborative Project Oral Interview.

Co-Designing a Collaborative History Project in North City Center

Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LYCS) is located in the heart of NCC and most of the work for the project took place here. LYCS is an integrated community-based education, training, recreation and development project whose mission is to give participants the opportunity to become involved in their own development and the development of the community. LYCS emerged in Dublin's NCC in the late 1970s and early 1980s as an attempt to "combat the relentless economic and social decline experienced in inner city Dublin."[31] A very active Adult Education Program developed at this time, providing a wide variety of services primarily for women. At the time of the project, LYCS was located where the Rutland National School used to reside on Rutland Street Lower. The Victorian red brick building (Figure 2) is iconic in NCC and the school's history carries many memories from the area for many residents.[32] LYCS made its basement and ground floor suitable as a shared space for the community.

There was only one goal agreed upon by the LYCS supervisor and me, to create a series of history classes for community members involved in the Adult Program at LYCS that focused on local history. The collaborative project was generated as part of the classes as an alternative approach to teaching local history. Quotes, ideas, and procedures were documented through dated field notes from January to October 2014.

As an outsider to the community it was difficult to teach a history class without having previous knowledge of this particular subject matter, the history of NCC. The solution was to learn local history together, through the group's stories, memories, and knowledge of the area, and through utilizing my access to historical resources. The group decided that an oral history project that highlighted the area's history was an effective solution. The class decided on three main goals for the project: to show NCC in a positive light, rather than a negative one; to learn about past and current issues in the community; and to exhibit the history of the community for the local population.

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31 "Lourdes Youth and Community Services," October 12, 2005 accessed August 26, 2014, http://www.lycs.ie/LYCSweb/aboutContent.aspx?pageType=1&list=98&im=n&id=56&TierSli cer1TSMenuTargetID=56&TierSlicer1TSMenuTargetType=1&TierSlicer1TSMenuID=22.

32 "Give up Yer Oul' Sins, or Give up Yer Oul' Name . . . That Is the Dilemma," *The Irish Independent*, accessed August 26, 2014, http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/give-up-yer-oul-sins-or-give-up-yer-oul-name-that-is-the-dilemma-25961255.html.

Fig. 2: LYCS Building Past. 'GD113 Rutland Street | a Whole New World,' Dublin City Council Photographic Collection, 1982. This image shows the LYCS building from Summerhill, shortly after the demolition of tenements. June 17, 1982

At the first meeting, the group began to swap stories with each other about NCC. One participant, Peter Egan, began to tell the class a story about how he used to work in a wool factory. He left school at 13 because he "needed a few bob." He reminisced on how he used to stamp down on the wool with his bare feet in order to separate the wool, and to clean and compact it. The class began to exchange their work experiences with each other as responses to this. One of the members suggested that the topic for the history project should highlight all of the ways people used to work in the area, whether working down by the docks, or in garment and sewing factories, or selling newspapers or flowers on the streets, that any and all occupations in NCC could be addressed. The project's theme was then decided: the group would capture and record stories from the area on how they worked and their occupations, entitled, "Working Lives of Dubliners in North City Centre."

Each week the class met every Thursday afternoon at the LYCS from January to October 2014 to learn, discuss, and develop the project (Figure 3). In total, the group involved about 30 community members. I would usually present historical data and/or past and recent forms of media about or from the area to spark historical discussions. The group also investigated newspaper articles from the past and present to view how the community is represented in the media and to stimulate and enhance the classes. We also watched movies such as *The Commitments*, *Strumpet City*, *Unspoken Truths*, and Nora Connelly's interview about her father,

Fig. 3: 'The History Group', August 2014. Image by author.

James Connelly, a socialist and revolutionary of the 1916 Easter Rising, which was recorded in the 1960s and found on YouTube. I also shared articles to read about the area and about Irish history, public history, and oral history. Archival images were used to supplement the classes and were found at the National Library of Ireland, Dublin City Archives, or online. The images were used for the series to promote the area's history, as well as for comparisons between what the area used to look like in the past and what the area looks like today. The class used the images as part of the presentation that coincided with the exhibition, which took place during the second week of October at a local library in NCC.

Sometimes I would impose an informal leading question on them such as: what was your favourite past-time growing up in the area? Where was the best place to grab a bite to eat in the area in the 1960s? Or "I have been doing research on Mitchell's rosary bead factory off Waterford Street, did you know anyone that used to work there? I read that the smell from the factory used to be stifling, do you remember it?"

The series gained interest outside the class and new participants attended or joined the discussion frequently. The group that attended the series became close, and it developed into a social connection for community members who participated. Members began to meet outside of class, on some occasions to tour the commu-

nity in search of historical buildings and landmarks, other times to meet for a cup of tea or a pint in order to further discuss local history. They began to celebrate each other's birthdays during the class and send cards of condolence from "the history group" when another member was sick or had a loss in their family. The class meeting came to be not only about the history of NCC community but about friendship. These connections were made by their similar interests in local history and through the sharing of their memories and stories. This at times was challenging, however, because when new participants attended, the group, although welcoming, would be hesitant to engage them in the project, and would sometimes speak over new members or not interact with them fully. Over the course of nine months, the group evolved, some members began taking leadership roles, others who rarely participated and mostly listened to the others began to speak up on historical, political, and social issues in the community, and many made connections between their community's history and current problems. At times there would be heated arguments about local history or political and social views within the class. As an outsider, I learned an immense amount from these discussions.

Oral History

The oral history interviews were the most challenging aspect of the project. The community group was involved in almost every aspect except for the recorded interviews. This portion of the project was done by the author and a community member, Maria MacAulay. There were two main obstacles in conducting effective interviews: some interviewees did not trust having an outsider interview them, which led to unsuccessful interviews in some cases, and some did not like being recorded, especially for a project that would be presented to others in the community. Some of the interviewees therefore remained anonymous. One solution was having Maria join me for the interviews. She knew the area and residents well, having lived there her entire life, and for many of the cultural nuances that I did not identify with or understand she was able to help fill in the gaps and make the interviewees comfortable.

Another obstacle of the interviews was getting people interested in the project and encouraging them to participate. Ger Doherty, the LYCS supervisor, also helped coordinate the interviews. He contacted everyone on the LYCS mailing list and arranged meetings, posted an ad about being interviewed in the community newspaper, and then allowed me to present to the community at their end of year certification ceremony. The two of us also walked around the community and gave flyers to businesses and organizations about the project. In total, Maria and I interviewed 16 people for the project.

Before beginning the oral history interviews, the history group met to discuss effective procedures for interviewing, watched clips and learned about other oral history projects on the internet from around the world, and I discussed the importance of ethical interviewing. I created a legal document for the interviews to be used for academic and community purposes, and then the group decided on what questions should be asked in the interview. As the project progressed, the interviews were revised to only asking two or three broad questions about their experiences working in the area and how the area has changed. Then the individual was asked to help plot different locations, buildings, and factories on a map of the area from 1966.

Many pertinent findings emerged from the interviews, and I was able to make fitting comparisons with Shopes' work: "Oral history is long haul work. Making contact with community representatives, gaining entrée, cultivating trust, and then doing, analyzing, and presenting a body of interviews cannot be accomplished in one or even two semesters. It requires a commitment of years."[33]

This demonstrates three caveats in this public history project: how difficult it can be to gain a community's trust and rally behind a local cultural project; how much effort, time, and will power it takes to successfully construct a project like this; and that despite many efforts, the project needed much more time than allotted for the internship to produce a project that effectively represented NCC. Shopes' work also demonstrates an ethical challenge that I encountered: how should the information I have gained through the interviews be presented to the public? What aspects of the project should be highlighted and what aspects of it should be omitted? Should I try to portray NCC only positively, as discussed by the group, creating a glossed-over version of its inconvenient history, or should the project present some of the frustrations, challenges, and concerns of the community that were revealed through the interviews?[34] These tensions point to the essential disjunction between academic history and popular history as seen through the public eye. These projects, however, provide an opportunity to bridge the gaps between the two mediums, opening up dialogue about the nature of historical inquiry.[35] I believe this makes them eminently worth doing.

33 Shopes, "Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," 269.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

Mapping

Mapping of the NCC area's past became a vital aspect of the project and dominated other aspects including the oral history interviews. The suggestion of mapping came up during one of the group meetings to get more people interested in the project, and as a strategy to enhance the interviews. Through mapping the group developed an idea to recreate the area in a creative form to present for the exhibition. I found a map from the Trinity College Dublin Map Library from 1966, issued by Ordnance Survey Ireland that provided detailed coverage of the area. The group began to make lists individually of places that they remembered or used to work that were no longer there.

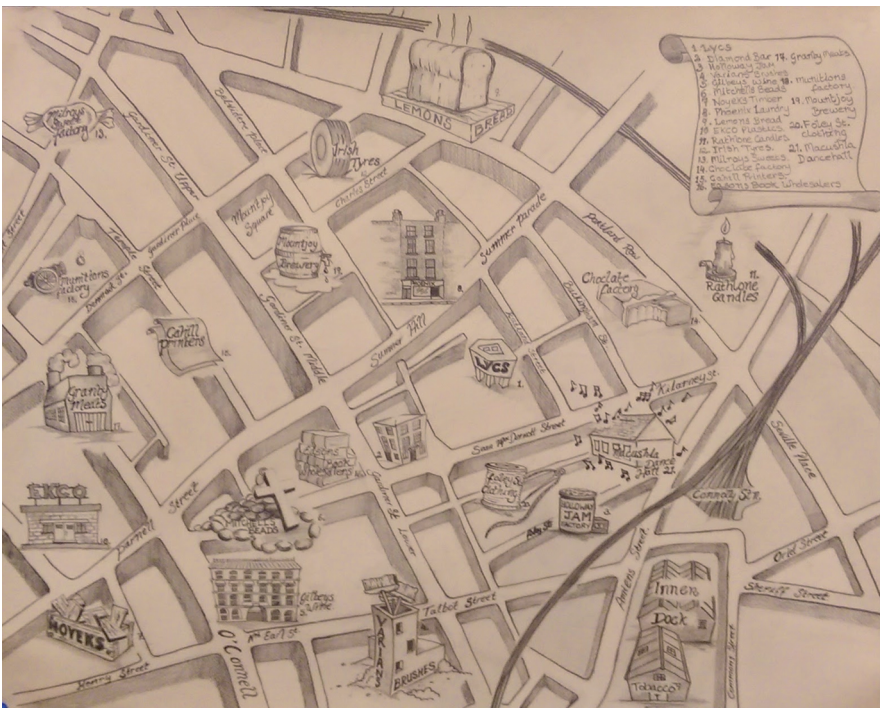

Fig. 4: Detail of Map created by the History Group. Image by Ciaran O'Neill.

The mapping of NCC was immensely helpful in bringing forth stories and memories. For example, some of the commentary included: "Do you remember that fire at Noyeks off Parnell? Six people died there." Another group member, Larry, responded:

> It wasn't six people who died, it was thirteen. I know, I used to work across the street from there. I remember that was when the hot pants came into fashion for women. Funny, we always thought that would be a style that would go out quickly, and now everyone wears pants! But anyway, all of us lads were watching all the women going to Noyeks that day, checking them out you could say, next thing we know we were watching those same women in the windows, banging on them trying to get out and away from the fire and smoke. I remember I saw one of the women collapse to the floor from the window. We couldn't get them out, it was helpless.[36]

Mapping elicited elaborative memories to form from the group, and enhanced connection between participants. The mapping procedures demonstrated how shared places, the memory of them, and their history can support social identities among a community group.[37] By plotting points on the map, the group remembered their favourite places, such as dance halls and cinemas, triggering memories of music, films, dress, and events that have taken place in their lives. The group shared their stories in vivid detail, coloring their memories and creating a greater bond among them as they connected their stories to NCC and to each other.

Talja Blokland argues that this type of nostalgia can feed into a blurred boundary between community and familiarity, which can be at the source of an often vented regret that "the neighborhood is no longer what it used to be, when it was a real community."[38] This occurred in reference to the project, where the more the group plotted points and shared their memories the more frustrated they became at the way the community is changing. As one interviewee, Maureen, stated:

> It was great growing up like, even though we had nothing, it was great. The area has changed an awful lot. The youths gone, there's nothing for them to do. I know we had nothing to do, but we had to get up and try and do something to make a living for our mothers. The kids have no jobs for them, everything was cut back. You had to fight for everything back then, these kids today don't.[39]

The process of plotting the locations on the map demonstrated a massive portion of lost factories, buildings and occupations. After plotting over 60 locations in the community in just two class meetings it became evident that what we were really doing was capturing the history of unemployment, social change, and the transformation of the NCC's physical infrastructure. Unemployment is one of the main stigmatizations of the area, now and throughout its history, and the map demonstrated how it became such an issue: lack of opportunity due to the closing and moving

36 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes.*

37 Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 39 (April 1995): 182–92.

38 *Expanding Dublin's Horizons to Meet the Critical Challenges*, 271.

39 Maureen, Oral History Interview, March 13, 2014.

of factories and businesses. With this newfound realization the group decided to change the title for our upcoming exhibition to better reflect this outcome, entitled, "Working for a Few Bob: Lost Employment in Dublin's North City Centre."

Una Shaw wrote a message to say at the exhibition that is an excellent example of how the project changed through the course of the series, and how the project became more than just an overview of the history of work in the area:

> This exhibition is a cross section of workplaces, and how much employment there was in this general area from 1940 to the present day. All are gone, either going out of business, or relocated. Either way, it left unemployment and jobs at an all-time low, and we have never recovered from it. We see little if any commitment from past or present governments to generate employment in this area, and so it continues. We see no light at the end of the tunnel, while those in power have tunnel vision.[40]

The project evolved into something much more social and political, in contrast to a positive representation of NCC's working history. This evolution brought it full circle to one of the main objectives of the project: to show NCC in a positive light through its local history. Could the project still enhance a positive view of local history within the community and outside the community? This points to another underlying dilemma within the public history field: how dangerous is it to present the history of a community in a glossed over, sentimental way, emphasizing the "we were poor, but we were happy" version of history. This type of history is often presented in marginalized and under-represented communities. Although they possibly allow for a sense of pride to develop within a community, and can increase engagement and interest in local history, historical inaccuracy and disregard for the negative aspects of history can be detrimental to a community, as many social issues and grievances will continue to be ignored. I believe it is more beneficial, in this case, to portray the history of the neighborhood as wholly as possible, in hopes of raising awareness to current problems. The issue lies more in the importance of using history as a catalyst for community involvement and social activism rather than just as a presentation about the community's history to create cohesion.

Exhibition

The exhibition took place on October 9, 2014, in the Charleville Mall Library. When the group began to brainstorm about how to approach the exhibition there was a desire to reconstruct the map into a piece of artwork that would be done by the

40 Wells, *Collaborative History Field Notes.*

group and another intern at LYCS, a socially engaged artist, Ashley Moore, who was obtaining a postgraduate degree at National College of Art and Design (NCAD) at the time. The group asked the artist to assist in developing an artistic representation of the map on a laminated poster to first display in the library and then later hang in the LYCS building. The artistic representation of the map included many of the factories and buildings that are no longer in NCC and has quotes from the interviews. The map was bordered with images from the area that the group had found in archival collections. With the map, the group organized a presentation for the library that focused on many of the stories that were collected, and the research throughout the series.

Conclusion

To me, the importance of public history lies in its ability to impact communities and to provide history to others outside of the academy, especially ones that have little access to their own history. When considering the transitional changes and challenges present in NCC, such as social segregation, rebuilding, and redeveloping of urban infrastructure, and for many, a continued lack of social amenities, community engagement and participation in Public History projects can benefit disenfranchised areas.

This project encouraged group members to gain perspective and insight on what the community has endured through its history, and the series of classes gave them the space to discuss these issues in a safe and creative outlet. Although much of what the class discussed in the series ignored elite, national, and academic history, the group was able to occupy their local history and engage in a conversation about the history that surrounds them on a daily basis. Collaborative community projects can enhance an individual's sense of belonging, connect a community to their heritage, and make an area that is often overlooked through traditional methods of documenting history more visible.

Working on this project with NCC community members was a valuable experience, and by collecting stories and sharing local history with residents I was able to see a side of Dublin that many outsiders would not be able to explore. There is a strong cultural character that shines in NCC and it deserves to be celebrated through creative outlets. Through collaborative history projects there is opportunity for greater representations of local histories and the ability to connect communities to aspects of their cultural identity.