

## **Long Kesh/Maze: A Case for Participation in Post-Conflict Heritage**

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When I first visited the prison officially named HMP Maze, also known as Long Kesh, on a bright cold day early in January 2002, it had been emptied of prisoners for a year. I vividly recall three aspects of the site. First was the scale of the prison. Enclosed within high long walls was an expanse of flat land with the same structures duplicated, over and over, there were walls everywhere. Second was the colour grey. Concrete, corrugated iron, mesh fencing and barbed wire were all grey. The brick facing on the eight H blocks, the cell units for which the jail is most famous, was pale yellow but since all buildings from the Nissen huts, the oldest structures erected in 1971 to house internees on a disused Royal Air Force (RAF) base, to the additional visiting area that was constructed in 1990s, were encased in their own wire cage, everything appeared grey. The bright light of the January day became opaque inside the jail. Third, was the atmosphere of oppression; this sense of restriction was most acute inside the H blocks. They were cold, damp and discomforting. Only a little daylight filtered in and a feeling of weighty nothingness pervaded the entire space of the empty prison. Of course, structures create sensations. Any official building, prisons especially but also court rooms, hospitals and even some schools can cultivate hesitancy, a fear of free movement. These forms have been studied as systems of control and discipline (Cohen, 1985; Foucault, 1979). The scale of Long Kesh/Maze and the similarity of its structures, its long views that always ended in walls, evoked the enormity of imprisonment and offered to a fleeting visitor, such as myself, a fraction of the sensation of prolonged isolation; it is not possible for a single body to fully register the affects felt by others, by the approximately ten thousand male prisoners (Ryder, 2000), suspected of or sentenced for 'conflict-related' offences, many of whom spent much of their youth, in Long Kesh/Maze.

The brutal sameness of the walls and blocks initially obscures the material complexity of the site. An architectural survey in 2004 identified over three hundred building types that belonged to two prison systems, geographically adjacent and historically overlapping, within same perimeter wall. Twenty-two compounds containing the shared spaces of four Nissen huts comprised Long Kesh internment centre while the eight H blocks contained 96 single cells. It is the H blocks, constructed between 1976 and 1978, that carry most widely known history of the prison: the Republican prisoner protest over political status, that began with the refusal to wear prison clothing and ended with the hunger strikes of 1981. The older compounds reveal layers of prison history: the sectarian nature of internment in the very first years of 1970s then, by the middle of the decade, the establishment of both loyalist and republican self-organisation within the spaces they called the 'Cages'. Other prison structures such as the visiting areas, of which there were two, are little remarked upon, but once contained intersecting experiences of conflict: the separation of families, the love of friends, political solidarity. While the H block narrative has coalesced around the figure of Bobby Sands, who died of starvation after his election as MP for Fermanagh and Tyrone, the 1981 hunger strikes are also a history of the political bonds between individuals and collectives. The nine men that followed Bobby Sands were drawn from two republican organisations: the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), to which Sands, belonged and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), Support for both generated street protests across the globe, the Republican prison struggles often overshadow other aspects of H block life. They were a site of everyday confrontation, including that between Loyalist prisoners and prison officers that reveal one of the most contradictory relationships of the conflict. Cells represent most powerfully the containment of prisoner's life but there were journeys within each H block, repeatedly undertaken, such as the prison officers' walk along the wings. Also, in each wing were dining and association areas, which from the mid-1980s were forums for political discussion that led to ceasefires of the mid-1990s, the Good Friday Agreement and, ultimately, to the period of post-conflict heritage examined within this book (Challis, 1999; McKeown, 2001).

### **The prison and post-conflict heritage**

Long Kesh/Maze has been called both a microcosm and an icon of 'The Troubles', the conflict 'in and about' Northern Ireland (Keenan, 2005; Dorrell, 2005).<sup>1</sup> It presents both a summary of the conflict and is most

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<sup>1</sup> The phrase 'in and about' Northern Ireland is used by conflict-resolution group Healing Through Remembering (<http://www.healingthroughremembering.org>) to acknowledge that status of Northern Ireland is contested.

recognisable image, a portrait. For this reason, it may seem the most obvious and appropriate place for post-conflict heritage. But, for the very same reason, it is also proved to be the most difficult. Most importantly, all the key protagonists to the conflict occupied some of the space of the prison; they had a place within it. It was built at the behest of the British government and its perimeter patrolled by the battalions of the British Army; prison officers, usually locally recruited, were aligned to Northern Ireland's security forces; republicans and loyalists were its prisoners. Who are soldiers or civilians, the perpetrators or victims? Categories overlap. Relatives of those killed in the conflict may well regard prisoners sentenced for their involvement in the death of their family members as the perpetrators of violence. Those same prisoners detained under emergency powers, arrested under draconian terrorist legislation and sentenced by no jury courts can also be considered victims of the conflict. Under what conditions does a member of a republican or loyalist community or a British soldier or a prison officer carry weapons then use them to against another person? Long Kesh/Maze and its formerly occupied spaces raise the most fundamental issues relating to the causes of violence and conflict as well as the most pressing political concerns about the extent of victimhood.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement provided for the early release of the prisoners sentenced for conflict-related offences. As Long Kesh/Maze emptied a debate, increasingly fierce, has circled around the past and future of the site. The contested nature of the heritage of Long Kesh/Maze is well established (Graham and McDowell, 2007; Flynn, 2011; McAtackney, 2014; Welch, 2016). The possibility of the prison site as one of heritage became one of the causes of a series of stalemates within the power-sharing consociational arrangements devolved upon Northern Ireland since the Good Friday Agreement. It was, and still is, one of the sources of political disagreement: the resolution of the destiny of the former prison as bound up with resolution of the conflict itself. But twenty years on, much has changed at the site itself.

As prisoners were released, entire wings, then blocks were emptied; the interiors of the cells were dismantled; standard cell furniture of beds, shelves, curtains, even light fittings were removed and stored. Some blocks, kept in 'warm storage,' were re-painted and re-fitted. Others were simply cleared and cleaned: marks of political affiliation erased, for the most part. The removal of materials to be reused within the prison estate and remaining documentation to Public Record Office was more systematic once the prison was formally decommissioned in 2002.

In April 2005, the Environment and Heritage Service listed one H block (H6) and its setting (yards, fences, vehicle entrance, airlock gates, Northern Ireland Prison Service watchtowers), one prison chapel, the prison hospital, two sections of the perimeter wall and two British Army watchtowers. One compound (number 19) comprising four Nissen huts and its high wire fence were also listed with a view to relocation closer to the H block structures. Buildings relating to the earlier history of the site as RAF base, the hangars and shelters have been scheduled. The rest were demolished between 2006 and 2008. When the remaining buildings of Long Kesh/Maze were flattened, gradually the site altered. Its prison structures once overlaid the airbase, but now fencing, cultivated hedges and formal lawns demarcate Second World War heritage from that of 'The Troubles'. The geographical scale of the prison site, and with it some of its historical significance, has visibly shrunk.

Tracing the debate surrounding Long Kesh/Maze, the task to which this chapter is addressed, should offer some insights into the wider politics of post-conflict heritage as well as that of the former jail. I want to suggest there are three phases in the politics of heritage in Northern Ireland since the sign of the Good Friday Agreement that have manifested around the former prison: a time of hope, a period of government management, and another season of conflict.

In the years since Long Kesh/Maze emptied, its buildings effaced, its space reduced and overgrown, the practice of heritage has also changed. Public engagement is valued more highly than pristine preservation, immaterial values matter more than material values and 'doing' heritage (Smith, 2006) is more important than

simply seeing it or just knowing it is there. All this could be summarised as heritage practice as participation, which, I argue in conclusion, could find a place at Long Kesh/Maze. Before I start sketching the phases of post-conflict heritage and then embark on a discussion of participation as a heritage practice, I want to note that two decades since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and the whole period of post-conflict heritage to which this volume is addressed, was, is, one of global political change summarised as neoliberalism. Perpetual war has created a global crisis that has re-shaped power relationships between Middle East and United States, intensified the divisions and inequalities between Europe and North Africa, Europe and the Middle East, Europe and Syria, Pakistan and Afghanistan, between West and East. Division and inequality is most forcefully evident in defended borders and displaced peoples. It is to this contemporary global context that practice of participation in the cultural domains of museums, art galleries, social centres and heritage is addressed. What I suggest in this chapter, then, is a contemporary global practice developed as a critique of conflict and its consequences might find a place in Long Kesh/Maze or elsewhere in contested landscape of Northern Ireland.

### **A time of hope**

The first phase of an emerging politics of heritage began when last prisoners were released under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement from Long Kesh/Maze, 84 people released on a single day (28 July 2000). In both local and national media, the dualism of the conflict was re-instated in heritage discourse: two traditions, two positions translated into Republican and Unionist, were played off against each other in a simplified opposition between preservation and demolition. Former Republican prisoners suggested that the prison could be turned into a museum; Unionists responded that it should be razed to the ground. The power of the two warring tribes' media narrative established through years of reporting the conflict should not be underestimated; it fed an entrenched political opposition that has subsequently settled upon the site but it did not hold sway in this initial phase of post-conflict heritage.

The emptying of Long Kesh/Maze generated interest in the history of the jail for two reasons. Firstly, former prisoners drew attention to their experience of imprisonment during the conflict. Prisoners' stories, especially but by no means only Republican prisoners' stories, had circulated throughout the conflict but the mass releases under the Good Friday Agreement raised the political and cultural status of all prisoners and allowed for more sympathetic reception of their histories. Secondly, the condition of the prison building changed; into now empty spaces another future was projected. Closed structures were a source of speculation; re-occupying a site of incarceration seemed possible. This early phase was one of open debate and some indeterminacy: not all positions on the future of Long Kesh/Maze were decided in advance. For example, Sir Reg Empey, then Enterprise Minister in the Northern Ireland Executive, stated 'a museum could play a part' in a mixed development at the site (BBC, 2002) whereas Antony McIntyre, 'dissident' Republican and Long Kesh/Maze prisoner between 1975 and 1993 stated 'I don't care they do with it as long as I don't get sent back there'.

McIntyre's contribution to the Long Kesh/Maze debate was made in gallery in a public discussion organised as part of Belfast Exposed's show of Donovan Wylie's photographic work *The Maze* (2004). These images and this exhibition were just one of a much wider series of art productions and cultural events that responded to the end of imprisonment at Long Kesh/Maze, to Good Friday Agreement and the beginning of the end of conflict. Photography, film, exhibitions of material culture, of sculpture and other artworks offered a series of perspectives upon the prison and its post-conflict heritage. Wylie, for example, sought an objective rendering of depopulated prison structures whereas Cahal McLaughlin's *Inside Stories* (2005), a collaborative film project enlivened the empty prison spaces with the return journeys of a Republican prisoner, a Loyalist prisoner and a prison officer. Their three narratives were shown simultaneously on three screens in one gallery space, a juxtaposition that convened past co-existence and present inclusivity. The material culture of Long Kesh/Maze, seized prohibited items such as sills, radios, banners and weapons, was the subject of Amanda Dunsmore's film, *Billy's Museum* (2005). Billy was a prison officer who held this collection of objects; his act of keeping was one of the recognition of the jail and its artefacts as historically significant. The film and the collection cannot be reduced to a single narrative: the objects reveal the struggle between prisoner and prisoner officer, strategies of resistance the prison regime and the attempt to impose it. Two

cinema releases, *H3* (2001) and Steve McQueen's *Hunger* (2008), drew upon only the Republican experience of prison protest, but neither can be reduced to a single community interest: both films privilege a human over political story. However, a former Republican prisoner created artworks of universal meaning. Raymond Watson's *Hands of History* (2003) sculpture repeatedly casts the metonym of humanity in an overtly optimistic artwork that restages the politicised handshake of official agreement as an act of unity between communities. In this all too brief review of works made about Long Kesh/Maze in the years immediately following its closure more could be said but these are offered as ways of thinking about the site: as objective record of conflict, as historically significant, as a site of human experiences, a place of co-existence and of a new unity. Importantly, it was in cultural centres and art galleries in particular that were open forums for discussion of post-conflict heritage. Such discussions, initiated by former prisoners, especially those organised under the wing of Coiste na n-Iarchimí, and sustained work of artists, photographers and filmmakers, intersected with an initiative from the political sphere: a public consultation.

On 14 January 2003, the then Secretary for Northern Ireland, Ian Pearson, announced a public consultation on *A New Future for Maze/Long Kesh* to be conducted by a Maze Consultation Panel composed of four political parties: the Ulster Unionist Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Social Democratic Labour Party and Sinn Féin. Public and community meetings were held and submissions were invited by post and email. The Maze Consultation Panel was a mechanism for channelling aspirations about the development of the prison site, creating a process through which individuals and organisations, people and communities, could present their views on what should happen. Anyone could submit proposals and almost sixty per cent of those who did were 'private individuals'. Openness, a defining feature of this moment of post-conflict heritage, characterised the consultation process. However, proposals were required to meet 'government objectives' that set high stakes for the site: submissions had to provide evidence of how the plans could transform the former prison site into 'an internationally recognised beacon for Northern Ireland'; they had to 'be new and innovative,' bringing 'economic,' 'social', and 'community' benefits, but also 'deliverable and sustainable' meeting 'Physical, Supply and Demand constraints.' Such ambitious criteria may have deterred smaller scale projects and people without the skills of long term financial planning, offsetting some openness but the criteria was certainly optimistic. Hope resided in an important aspect of Maze Consultation Panel's purpose: it was a conflict resolution process. The Panel's work could be described as an attempt to manage the debate about the past of the prison and to direct the consideration of its future. It tried to balance the aspirations for and repugnance towards the site, the desire to preserve the prison and a demand that it be razed to the ground.

The Maze Consultation Panel published its *Final Report* in February 2005. Its role as mediating different aspirations that manifested around the site, thus its in conflict resolution, was demonstrated by that its selection of recommendations that could command 'the broadest possible support from all sections of society' (Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel, hereafter, MCP, 2005:10). A mixed, even eclectic, zoned development included: a multi-sports stadium in a Sport Zone, a Rural Excellence and Equestrian Zone, a hotel and leisure village, an International Centre of Conflict Transformation and a Community Zone, light industrial development, a healthcare part, a regional arts centre. The Panel tried to fit all proposals into the space but the two proposals prioritised, were described as 'government-led' and set to 'proceed simultaneously and with all possible speed' (MCP, 2005:10).

In the weeks before the publication of the Maze Consultation Panel's report, the Environment and Heritage Services Northern Ireland, the conventional state body for heritage matters listed a 'representative' number of buildings: a compound, an H block, the administration buildings, the hospital. The preservation of particular prison buildings informed the Panel but it is their *Report* and not the official heritage management decisions that have effected the site itself and post-conflict heritage more generally. It is around the new buildings, the stadium and the International Centre for Conflict Transformation that a post-conflict heritage was articulated. At this point, the official process of listing was largely unnoticed.

The multi-sports stadium was largest single structure proposed for the site, requiring a disproportionate amount of any investment, justified because it would define the site as a visitor destination. The *Final Report* dwelt upon its social benefits at some length, making a case for its positive contribution to conflict resolution: 'the potential to play an important part in promoting a shared society' (MCP, 2005:11). Northern Ireland's 'three main sporting bodies', the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Irish Football Association and the Irish Rugby Football Union, were all offered a stake in the same place. Shared use was central to its role in reconciliation. As a new location, 'home ground', for the fixtures of these different sports (Gaelic football, football and rugby) and for their associated communities (nationalist and republican, unionist and loyalist), the stadium challenged the sectarian geography that characterises the cultural life in Northern Ireland; it provided space, and the same space, for different 'cultural traditions'. Thus the stadium itself would promote 'tolerance and respect for diversity' (MCP, 2005:11).

The role of the International Centre for Conflict Transformation was similar to that of the stadium, complimentary to a great extent. It, too, would contribute to 'promoting a shared society.' It would provide 'a facility that would support and facilitate the ongoing processes of dialogue and building trust and confidence within and between communities.' Conference, office and archive rooms were envisaged as a shared space in which conflict resolution of the conventional kind, that is, talks, would occur. But it was also conceived as 'a neutral, inclusive and constructive place apart' (MCP, 2005: 14).

While the multi-sports stadium and the International Centre for Conflict Transformation were both new buildings, the former seemed to carry the future while the latter looked, just a little, to the past. A small note to bear in mind '[s]ensitivity to built heritage did not detract from the contemporary design aspirations for the stadium: 'the best of its type in these islands' (MCP, 2005: 11). Spatial and political connection between the International Centre for Conflict Transformation and the preserved buildings was closer; the Panel stated: 'Since part of the purpose of the Centre would be to acknowledge and learn from the past while looking to and building for the future, it would be fitting to do so in a setting which played a major role in the conflict' (MCP, 2005:11). It is only in relation to the International Conflict Transformation Centre that the prison buildings feature in the report and they only do so as background. They are just there without interpretation: 'Straight forward information should be available on site for those wishing visit either the centre or the protected buildings' (MCP, 2005, 17). Their heritage is not mentioned. Indeed, the *Final Report* could be read as one long announcement of how to supplant an old regime of meaning for a new one, a re-branding exercise. The whole site, stadium and International Conflict Transformation Centre, would be covered with 'key brand or recognition symbol for the site'. An international art and design competition might supply 'iconic art elements in the specification sufficient to signify the major social investment in promoting peace and prosperity and the transformation of society' (MCP, 2005:16), from 'symbol of conflict' to 'symbol of on-going transformation from conflict to peace.' (MCP, 2005:14). Thus a commercial language, often antithetical to heritage, contained both hope and optimism that the meaning of the prison could be changed. This was not without its problems, played out in later period, for it denied the specific historical significance of the site.

### **Government management**

The second phase of post-conflict heritage began, I suggest, when the consultation process ended. This period is defined by government involvement. A cross-party group of Members of the Legislative Assembly, under the auspices of within Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Executive was convened as the Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group to receive the *Final Report* of the Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Group. The purpose of the cross party group was 'implementation strategy,' to consider how, practically and financially such the plans in their *Report* could be brought into being. The group generated planning scenarios based on where buildings, the stadium and the Centre for Conflict Transformation in particular, would be located in the site, and the transport networks required to make these, especially the former, viable. Whilst the Long Kesh/Maze Monitoring Group declaimed they were allocating without resources for government decisions, their work was grounded in the territory of economy, which appeared safer than that of history.

Post-conflict heritage was bound to economic development once government took up its control of heritage sites. Economic advantage began to be presented as the primary purpose of heritage; this economic heritage discourse, a version of an Authoritative Heritage Discourse (Smith, 2006), was underpinned by an economic mechanism, the Regeneration and Reform Initiative, through which sites managed by the Northern Ireland Office or Home Office were transferred to Northern Ireland Executive, from British government to that of Northern Ireland. Long Kesh Maze was one of four, including Crumlin Road Gaol, the Magherafelt security base and Ebrington Barracks transferred without charge in 2002 for re-investment.

The Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group released a Masterplan in May 2006. Hope and optimism for shared spaces or place apart was dissembled into a notion of economic benefit. A rhetoric of conflict resolution remained in one statement released to the press. Monitoring Group Deputy Chair, Paul Butler, said, 'The International Centre for Conflict Transformation symbolises where we have come from in this society and points us in the direction of where we want to go, towards a society which looks outward in hope and not inward in fear.' He repeated a well-known pacifist phrase that hints at productive gain. 'It is not a cliché to say this is really about turning swords into ploughshares.' Monitoring Group Chair, Edwin Poots, however, associated the International Centre for Conflict Transformation with the past of the site offset by the future promised by the stadium. He stated:

we believe a balance has been struck between recognising heritage in the form of the International Centre for Conflict Transformation and embracing a dynamic future symbolised by the multi-purpose sports stadium and other developments (Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group, hereafter, MMG, 2006b).

The multi-sports stadium was largest single structure proposed for the site, requiring a disproportionate amount of any investment, justified because it would define the site as a visitor destination. The economic benefit it would bring, including becoming a 2012 Olympic venue if built in time, seemed to convince the Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group that it was a structure around which agreement about the whole site could be secured. Its symbolic role was scaled down. Some detail was added: it was stated that the stadium would have a capacity for 'about 42,000 spectators' and not only used for Gaelic sports, rugby and football but for 'open air concerts and other large events'. It would also 'contain a hotel, conference facilities, and offices'. Rather vaguely, it was noted that the stadium could provide for 'a range of community uses' including helping to 'fulfil needs of young people' (Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group, hereafter, MMG, 2006) but the concept of shared space between different communities is absent along with the rhetoric of conflict resolution that suffused the earlier *Final Report*. Only in the concluding comments about the social and economic potential of the whole site does the *Masterplan* revert to the Maze/Long Kesh Consultative Panel's vision of conflict resolution at the site:

The overriding objective is to provide an internationally recognisable physical expression of the ongoing transformation from conflict to peace and to provide an inclusive, shared resource for the people of the region and beyond, reflecting the broad range of aspirations expressed during the work undertaken by the Maze Consultation Panel. (MMG, 2006:121)

It was in this phase of post-conflict heritage, government-led heritage practice that the site itself was transformed. Demolition began. The partial listing, the Regeneration and Reform Initiative, the *Final* report of the Maze/Long Kesh Consultation Panel, the Masterplan of its Monitoring Group, all paved the way for demolition. The act of destruction appeared as one of development, like the clearing of a pathway to the site, moving forward, to use a phrase of the peace process.

The financial offer of the future facing multi-sports stadium, intended to solicit agreement since it had none of the historical weight of the International Conflict Resolution Centre associated with the preserved parts of the prison and the idea of a museum, was opposed, vehemently. Northern Ireland football supporters campaigned against the stadium at the former site. Their opposition was articulated in sporting terms: it was argued that the different size pitches required for gaelic football and rugby would not allow growing numbers of Northern

Ireland football fans to get close enough to the action. There were claims that stadiums never succeed outside major cities combined with criticism of the inadequacy of transport links to the Maze's Lisburn location. But the underlying issue was the past embodied in the preserved prison buildings. The past was not dispelled by its sporting future. Colin Dunn, in a letter published in March 2006 issue of *When Saturday Comes*, wrote: 'The idea of a national stadium sharing a site with a terrorist museum is a complete anathema to me ... if there are to be museums/memorials then let them be built in the Republican and Loyalist hinterlands, not at a sporting venue' (Dunn, 2006: 44).

Opposition to the stadium became a party position. On 23 June 2007, the *Newsletter* reported that: 'Senior DUP figures yesterday queued up to say "no" to a national stadium at the Maze while it includes a "shrine to terrorism"' (Dempster, 2007:8-9). North Belfast DUP MP Nigel Dodds stated: 'However it is dressed up, whatever spin is deployed, the preservation of a section of the H-Blocks - including the hospital wing - would become a shrine to the terrorists who committed suicide in the Maze in the 1980s' (McGinn, 2007:8). The media narrative had been rumbling on. It was continuous noise against which the second phase in the politics of heritage of Long Kesh/Maze got underway and was now heard more loudly by the politicians than by the artists, activists and community groups that shaped the debate in the earlier phase. In 2009, the Sports Minister and DUP MLA Gregory Campbell announced that multi-sports stadium would not be built at the site.

All heritage policies are, to some extent, shaped by party politics at local, regional and national levels: in Charlottesville, USA, the Republican Party defence of statues to Confederate generals is just one case in point. Party positions often polarise and especially so in consociational arrangements such as in Northern Ireland. That different communities are represented separately through the duplication of political office allows for the negotiation of differences at governmental level and its entrenchment. Opposing views are assumed and become unwavering positions that bar agreement. Long Kesh/Maze became caught up in consociationalist politics. The period of government involvement in post-conflict heritage is also characterised by the dualism of the conflict itself.

What government-led heritage politics had failed to address was the materiality and meanings of the site, how the buildings continued to contain the past, a Republican past, in particular. The Masterplan was an attempt to draw attention away from the past with the promise of financial gain in the future and thus did not acknowledge meanings. Such meanings could not be wished away. This denial, an attempt to get agreement to the implementation of development plans by avoiding the matter of history of imprisonment and the heritage of conflict, failed. The proximity of new buildings to old ones was a source of opposition: the distance between old and new was unacceptably close.

The loss of stadium meant the site, now razed bar the listed buildings, was in abeyance. Empty, unused and in stasis, it begins to function as a problem of the past and is no more a space of optimism. Driving heritage debates through an economic discourse also leaves hostages to fortune. Investment appears as a cost as well as a profit: the media narrative took detour to position Long Kesh/Maze as money pit. *The Belfast Telegraph* reported, on 14 August 2009, that a 'remediation strategy' preparing new plans for the site, including some decontamination of soil and water, would cost £5 million (Belfast Telegraph, 2009). BBC Northern Ireland announced that £12.5 million had already been spent (BBC, 2010a). The figures were accompanied by complaints about the waste of taxpayers' money. Without the stadium the International Centre for Conflict Transformation was the sole lead development. The economic promise of the former became attached to the latter, under an amended name, a Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Facility. Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness repeated some of the optimism of the Maze Consultative Panel when he announced on 29 July 2010 a European Union funding application for the Long Kesh/Maze site: "It is anticipated that the centre will be a world-class facility of international importance designed to strengthen our peace-building expertise and to share our experiences with others throughout the world" (BBC, 2010b). First Minister Peter Robinson stuck resolutely to the economic argument for post-conflict heritage. 'The constitution of a development corporation for this strategically important Maze/Long Kesh site will enable us to realise the full

economic potential of the site', he noted. 'The site represents a unique opportunity to help revive our economic output in these difficult times' (BBC, 2010b). Their announcement was a cue to turn up the volume on the media narrative of inevitable division. 'Row continues over the Maze site plans' ran the headline of an article in the Unionist paper the *Newsletter*, published a few days later (Gray, 2010). Fear of the heritage of the prison, or more precisely of the Republican history attached to buildings that prisoners occupied, was raised. A representative of Families Acting for Innocent Relatives, Willie Frazer, quoted at some length, stated: 'When people visit the Maze they will be very quickly steered away from any conflict resolution centre toward the H-block, which in reality will be little more than an obscene shrine to IRA terrorism' (Gray, 2010:7). Again, the concern and cause for disgust was the proximity of the original remaining structures to any additional architecture. The news in August 2012 that Daniel Libeskind would work with Belfast based architects McAdam Design (Fulcher, 2012) on the variously titled £18 million 'new peace building centre', 'conflict transformation centre' or 'Peace and Reconciliation Centre' or 'conflict resolution centre' was followed by another instalment of the same old story.

Daniel Libeskind, architect of post-conflict iconography in Berlin and New York, did fulfil, albeit briefly, the hopes of the Maze Consultation Panel for buildings 'specified to the highest architectural standards' that would carry a 'key brand or recognition symbol for the site.' It globalised the site; it was part of a trend of heritage management across the world that cultivated reconciliation through economic regeneration (de Jong and Rowlands, 2008). However, as Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern note that global patterns of conflict-resolution are not simply played out or straightforwardly reproduced in Northern Ireland. The question of '[h]ow should a society emerging from conflict remember and deal with the violence and injustice of the past' has been preceded by another: 'should we be remembering the past at all?' (Lundy and McGovern, 2008: 29).

On 15 August 2013, Peter Robinson called a halt to the plans for a conflict resolution centre of any kind; he claimed there was no wider consensus for construction of new building and also spoke of prohibiting public use of preserved buildings. Thus the second phase of government management of post-conflict heritage ends without resolution, indeed, in conflict over the site of Long Kesh/Maze. Heritage had become a repository of unresolved differences about the past. Robinson's withdrawal of support for development at the Long Kesh/Maze site immediately preceded Peter Haass's involvement in brokering power-sharing (Moriarty, 2013). Power-sharing in the Northern Ireland Executive had broken down and the fate of Long Kesh/Maze prison was an integral difficulty in the peace process itself.

### **Another season of conflict**

The third and current phase of post-conflict heritage began unfolding in 2013 and continues to the present day. The past itself is a source of conflict and site of the Long Kesh/Maze, that icon of the Troubles, remains the most contested manifestation. The past, alongside flags and parades, was one of three issues addressed by the 2014 Haass talks. In the early agenda setting stages, it was reported that Long Kesh/Maze itself was to be discussed (Rowan, 2013a). It was not. It was ruled out in order to attempt agreement on other issues. A 'source' quoted in the *Belfast Telegraph* claimed that, initially, 'issues were included that, realistically, were undeliverable, put there to be taken out (such as the Maze peace centre)' (Rowan, 2013b).

The whole period of post-conflict heritage, in whatever way that period is distinguished or understood, has been one of restricted access to the site. For the most part of twenty years since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, the site is not visited or studied, recorded or interpreted in any sustained way. Whilst site is the subject of debate; the contest is over established political meanings rather than those that may be contained in its remaining material forms. Its meanings have tended to be fixed through media narratives and thus according to political perspectives rather than through practices of heritage. Indeed, divisions have thrived and stalemates sustained by its closure. Lack of investigation of the complex materiality of the prison as a space and a system has permitted a political simplification of history in which a binary opposition is perpetuated: Republican commemoration against Unionist denial.



Although access has always been limited, the initial hopeful time of post-conflict heritage and conflict-resolution, it was possible to apply to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister to join group tours. Guided by local civil servants working for the Northern Ireland Executive, the tours encompassed the listed buildings (the administration buildings, the hospital, H block 6, compound 19, a section of a wall and a watchtower). There was no wandering. The route was prescribed and its script presented as intermediate account while site was prepared for both development and an agreed interpretation. On this limited tour, with its own prohibitions on entering buildings that were not listed, the whole site could still be seen and it was possible gather sense of the scale of the prison and feel its atmosphere. The demolition that came later abolished this view; collapsing buildings and removing the materials from which they were made is an absolute denial of access. What was left of the Long Kesh/Maze has also been open on one weekend of occasional years from 2011 as part of the European Heritage Open Days. Infrequent but less prescribed once at the site, these visits have been welcomed as far as it is possible to tell from visitor figures (two hundred on the first open day) and online postings.

But tours and open days are the exception. At Long Kesh/Maze there has never been the most basic requirement of access: widely published regular opening times allowing people to enter with anonymity and without announcement. For example, whilst no-one was refused permission to join a Northern Ireland Executive guided tour, the act of requesting it cannot be described as publicly accessible: making these arrangements is not the same as just turning up. Public access to sites that are as open as possible, as free as possible to as many people as possible is an imperative of heritage practice: it has become priority above preservation. The purpose of heritage is participation.

### **In need of participation**

I would like to suggest that participation offers an alternative to the denial of access that has fostered the ossification of political positions about the past and future of the Long Kesh/Maze; a reopening rather than closing down the site could do the same for its meanings. The political stand-off over the conflict resolution centre at site of the H blocks and hospital, a polarisation over the proximity of peace building, was too fixed, too far apart. Consequently, its cause could not be discussed and was excluded from the Haass talks. It is now a political silence that prevented the practice of heritage. It is heritage practice that is required, a practical consideration of strategies through which contested heritage can be made accessible.

Potential lies in heritage as participation. This is not a straightforward alternative to heritage as preservation but it does not rely upon it. Preservation and its role within plans for economic regeneration are dependent upon high-level political decision-making, which is not necessary for participatory events. Participation, moreover, requires no permanent interventions at a site that might fix its meaning for the future. Participation is temporary, a performance, which will, as all actions, leave a trace, but one that intrudes a little less on the site and, certainly does not seek to make structural changes associated with architecture.

Theories of participation have become most fully articulated within art theory that has explored the relation between art and politics in period of disenfranchisement in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century: the reduced public space of neoliberal regimes and the dominance of the global markets over local communities. Forms of participatory art are traced back to early twentieth century,<sup>1</sup> but participatory art has accumulated a critical mass since the 1990s. It is one of the 'hallmarks,' to borrow a term from Claire Bishop, of 'artistic orientation towards the social in the 1990s'. She observes: 'the work of art as a finite, portable, commodifiable product is reconceived as an ongoing or long-term *project* with an unclear beginning and end; while the audience, previously conceived as 'viewer' or 'beholder', is now repositioned as a co-producer or *participant*' (Bishop, 2012). In her introduction to the White Chapel Gallery publication, *Participation*, she summarises its imperatives. Firstly, to 'create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation.' That experience of participating in art creates 'individual/collective agency'. Such 'collaborative creativity', secondly, tends towards a 'non-hierarchical

model' that allows for shared authorship; 'more egalitarian and democratic than the creation of a work by a single artist'. Inviting people to participate in space and a process in which they have an equal stake is, thirdly and finally, addressed to a 'crisis in community and collective responsibility.' Whatever its specific project, participatory art attempts 'a restoration of the social bond through a collective elaboration of meaning' (Bishop, 2006: 12).

For Claire Bishop, the crisis of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century is global: capitalist alienation extending across all corners of the world. This scenario may not translate straightforwardly in Northern Ireland in and after conflict but effects are similar: the dislocation of people from a political sphere, a lack of collective endeavour, an absence of society. Bishop's account of the potential of art participation to breathe renewed life into political subjectivity and to constitute a collective agent of change, may seem out of place in the stillness of the closed site of Long Kesh/Maze. That is the point. Its space could be inhabited differently. Furthermore, the practice of participation as a form of shared authorship of art could contribute to a shift in the assumed relationships of opposing communities to the prison. A visitor who is a participant is not a recipient of an already determined meaning but a person who may add to its interpretation.

Current theories of heritage also favour forms of participation. Heritage studies has not simply borrowed from art theory or other philosophical enquires in humanities. Attention to the intangible rather than tangible heritage has led debates about the role of participation in the practice of heritage. Heritage is practices by people rather than residing in things, located at a site or in specially object; heritage is not set in stone, so to speak. Thus, Rodney Harrison writes of how heritage practice relates to objects:

We use objects of heritage (artefacts, buildings, sites, landscapes) alongside practices of heritage (languages, music, community commemorations, conservation and preservation of objects or memories from the past) to shape our ideas about our past, present and future (Harrison, 2009: 9).

Practice and the object, Harrison suggests, are equally significant and are dependent upon each other. However, he does present practice 'in addition' to its certain 'physical' form (Harrison, 2009: 9). The argument has been taken further. A radical rejection of heritage as an object of associated with the work of Laurajane Smith's above all: 'Heritage is *not* a thing, site or place, nor is it 'found', rather heritage is the multiple processes of meaning making that occur as material heritage places or intangible heritage events are identified, defined, managed, exhibited and visited' (Smith, 2012).

If Smith's argument is taken seriously, the heritage of Long Kesh/Maze has hardly happened yet. Lack of access has not allowed it. Its heritage could be permitted to unfold through forms of participation; its histories revealed by people who, for whatever reason, have a connection to the site. Participatory heritage practice, which intersects and overlaps with participatory art practice has a track record elsewhere, at other contested sites of conflict. The development of the court and museum at Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, the site of an apartheid jail, began by repopulating the space with parties, raves to be most accurate and it remains a music venue. The global heritage project, Sites of Conscience, has initiated and supported many dialogues about the relationship between past and present oppression and exploitation at sites across the world. All are dependent upon participation: physical presence at the site. Examples abound and could be applied to Long Kesh/Maze.

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