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Maze
Long Kesh

Maze Long Kesh

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Abstract

During the conflict known as the Troubles in Northern Ireland, a World War II aircraft hangar was converted into the major prison where political prisoners and paramilitary activists were incarcerated. Named Her Majesty's Prison Maze, it was previously known as the Long Kesh Detention Centre. Throughout its history, from 1971 to 2000, it held around 10,000 prisoners, turning it into one of the main scenarios of the conflict. However, there was no agreement on what should happen with the site after its closing. While the Northern Ireland government was more focused on the economic possibilities of what could be the most significant development project in the country, former prisoners and local communities pushed for the musealisation of the space and the construction of an International Centre for Conflict Transformation. This occasional paper analyses the different proposals, the contestation around them, and the political and social dynamics that should be considered in the decision-making process.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the conflict in Northern Ireland in 1969 (known as The Troubles), circa 3,600 people have been killed and over 40,000 injured.[1] Three set of actors have been involved in the conflict, each having their own political expressions and ideology, but also militant armed groups:[2] Nationalist/Republicans,[3] Unionist/Loyalists[4] and the British State.[5] In 1971, in the midst of the conflict, a former World War II aircraft hangar was transformed into an internment camp for prisoners during the Troubles and at times housed up to 1,700 prisoners. Throughout its functioning, it incarcerated around 10,000 prisoners. It imprisoned both Loyalists and Republicans without trial during its almost thirty years of operation and became a crucial site in which the Troubles played out. Between 1972 and 1975, a total of 1,981 people were detained: 1,874 were Republican (around 95%), while 107 were Loyalists (around 5%).[6] Despite the presence of prisoners from all armed fractions of the conflict, in the public discourse, Long Kesh is mainly associated by international audiences with Irish Republican prisoners and their political activism inside the prison, mainly the 1981 hunger strike.

As a result, the prison complex has been a source of contestation with two confronting narratives about its history and identity, extending to its name: Long Kesh or Her Majesty's Maze Prison. Republicans and Loyalists insist on Long Kesh, or 'the Kesh,' while officials refer to it as HM Maze Prison. Additionally, since the prison was closed in 2000, there has been a continuous debate on the site's future for its historical significance and because it represents one of the most significant single potential development opportunities for the country.

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[1] Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release*, PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Nationalist/Republicans advocate for Northern Ireland to leave the UK and unite with Ireland. The IRA has been the largest and most active Republican group engaged in political violence during the Troubles. Since 1969, they conducted a campaign of political violence, based in bombings and shootings in Northern Ireland, Britain and Europe which has included attacks on security forces, political and judicial figures, Loyalists paramilitaries and civilians. Together with the targeting an bombing on economic and commercial targets designed to damage the British and Northern Irish economy, as they said 'to make the occupation of Ireland costly for the British.' As with many other groups, the IRA has splits and schisms like the Official IRA, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), and the Irish People's Liberation Organisation (IPLO). To know more please see: Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release*, PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).

[4] Loyalist paramilitaries also carried out a violent campaign in support of remaining in Britain. The three main paramilitary groupings are the Ulster Defence Association (UDA, also known as Ulster Freedom Fighters), the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Red Hand Commando. The UDA is the largest of the paramilitary groupings, emerging from working class Protestant vigilante groups in the late 1960s. Their attacks mainly targeted Catholic civilians, economic or civilian targets in the Irish Republic and Republican activists. To know more please see: Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release*, PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).

[5] The British State has been an actor through the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the British Army (especially the Special Air Service and the locally recruited Ulster Defence Regiment) and various intelligence agencies. Their activity has been mainly focused on direct armed actions against paramilitaries and civilians. To know more please see: Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release*, PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).

[6] CAIN Web Service, "Internment - Summary of Main Events," CAIN, January 17, 2022.

Background

The tensions that led to the Troubles can be traced back to the independence of the Irish Free State in 1922. However, to understand how these events developed, it is also important to consider the colonialist presence of the United Kingdom on the island of Ireland.[7] Claims for Home Rule started in the late 19th century.[8] The last Home Rule Bill from the 1920s already contemplated the partition of the island between the twenty-six Southern-Republican counties and the six Northern-Loyalist counties to ease the conflict, as the first asked for Independence and the latter wished to remain loyal to the UK.[9] The difficulties in approving a Home Rule Bill provoked a Home Rule Crisis, which developed into the Irish War of Independence. A guerrilla war fought from 1919 to 1921 between the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and British forces, namely the British Army, along with the quasi-military Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) and its paramilitary forces, the Auxiliaries and Ulster Special Constabulary (USC). In 1921, the Irish won the War, and the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed that same year, which allowed the self-governing Irish Free State to be created. As part of the agreement, Northern Ireland was entitled to opt out of the new Irish Free State, which it did.[10] Thus, Ireland was partitioned into two countries: the Irish Free State, almost entirely Catholic, and the smaller Northern Ireland, primarily Protestant with a Catholic minority.[11]

Most of the Irish independence movement's leaders were willing to accept this compromise, at least for the time being. However, many militant Republicans were not, and most pre-Truce IRA who had fought in the War of Independence refused to accept the Treaty leading to the Irish Civil War. The war ended with the defeat of the anti-treaty side, but it was not the end of the tensions. While Ireland was fully independent, Northern Ireland remained under British rule. In consequence, two opposing forces coalesced in Northern Ireland mainly along sectarian lines: the Irish Republican 'nationalists' versus the British 'unionists.' The first ones called for the unification of Ireland and equal rights, while the other fought for remaining in the United Kingdom.[12]

[7] The Normans first conquered Ireland in 1169, and as part of the British colonisation, many English and Scottish people were encouraged to settle in the north of Ireland by establishing plantations. The planters, or settlers, mainly loyal to the Crown and Protestants, were granted large acres of land on the island of Ireland. This produced the division of Irish society according to the national and religious identity of the citizens: on the one hand, planters were Loyalists and Protestants, and on the other hand, Irish citizens were Catholic and asked for home rule and a Republic. Aside from a brief decade of independence during the 1640s, Ireland formed an integral part of the English imperial system until 1922, with the foundation of the modern state of Ireland. To know more please see: Ask About Ireland, "The Ulster Plantation," askaboutireland.ie, accessed June 20, 2022.

[8] Four Home Rule Bills between the 1880s and 1920s were proposed to deal with the rising tensions but ultimately failed.

[9] Kate Phelan, "The Partition of Ireland: A short Story," Culture Trip, October 4, 2016.

[10] Ibid.

[11] John Dorney, "The Irish War of Independence - A Brief Overview," Irish History.com, September 18, 2012.

[12] Irish War, "Irish War of Independence," Irish War.com, accessed June 7, 2022.

The Troubles

In cities like – but not only – Belfast and Derry, the Nationalist communities complained of discrimination and unfair treatment by the Loyalists-controlled government and police forces. In the 1960s, a new generation of politically and socially conscious Republican-Nationalists in Northern Ireland started looking to the civil rights movement in America as a model for ending what they saw as anti-Republican discrimination.[13] In 1967, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was founded, its objective was

Figure 1: 'Mural in remembrance of Bloody Sunday.' Image by murielle 29 via Flickr CC BY-SA 2.0

> to bring an end to injustice in the system of public authority housing provision, injustice in public and private employment practices, injustice in voting and representational rights, and the arbitrary and oppressive powers available to the state to suppress dissent.[14]

Inspired by the United States Human Rights movements, on October 5, 1968, they planned a protest march in Derry. The nationalist activists wanted to draw attention to discriminatory housing policies that resulted in de facto segregation along sectarian and religious lines. The Northern Ireland government banned the march, and when the crowd started to move, they were barricaded by a string of police from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), who charged against the protesters. TV cameras captured disturbing footage of RUC officers beating marchers with batons and chaos in the streets. For many, this can be considered the beginning of the Troubles.[15]

In the following years, more protests around the country followed with similar violent results. On New Year's Day, 1969, nationalist political organisation People's Democracy organised a march from Belfast to Derry. The route took them through known Loyalist strongholds, where the threat of violence was palpable. The RUC provided a police escort for the nationalist protests throughout the multi-day march until they reached Burntollet Bridge outside Derry. At that point, a Loyalist mob started raining rocks down on the protestors.[16] The ambush at Burntollet Bridge was similar to March 7, 1965, when peaceful Selma marchers crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge and were violently beaten back by a line of white-helmeted Alabama state troopers armed with tear gas, nightsticks and whips.[17]

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[13] Sean O'Hagan, "Northern Ireland's lost moment: how the peaceful protests of '68 escalated into years of bloody conflict," *Guardian*, April 22, 2018.
[14] Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, "About Us," *nicivilrights*, accessed June 20, 2022.
[15] Jeff Wallenfeldt, "The Troubles," *Britannica*, August 21, 2020.
[16] RTE Archives, "There is a Good Possibility that Some Stones May Be Thrown" 1969," *RTE*, accessed June 7, 2022.
[17] National Park Service, "Alabama: The Selma-to-Montgomery March," *NPS*, accessed June 7, 2022.

In the summer of 1969, the Battle of the Bogside provoked three-day-long riots in Belfast, which ultimately meant the deployment of the British Army across Northern Ireland. Loyalist groups regularly organised parades to commemorate Protestant military victories dating back to the 17th century. In Derry, they planned a patriotic Loyalist parade on August 12 that ran directly past predominantly Republican parts of town called the Bogside. However, in the so-called 'Battle of the Bogside,' some of the worst damage was inflicted in Belfast, where Loyalist mobs swarmed Republican neighbourhoods and burned 1,500 homes to the ground.[18]

On August 14, 1969, the overwhelmed prime minister of Northern Ireland called on the British government to send troops to restore order. It was the beginning of a decades-long deployment of the British Army in Northern Ireland. initially sent to safeguard besieged Republican enclaves. The Republicans initially welcomed the British troops as potential protectors. However, the army soon instituted a controversial 'internment without trial policy,'[19] as hundreds of suspected paramilitary groups' members were rounded up and imprisoned without due process.[20] Furthermore, British actions fueled the conflict. During the 1970 Falls curfew, British soldiers shot and killed four civilians and injured sixty.[21] Similarly, on January 30, 1972, Republican nationalists in Derry organised a march to protest the British internment policy, but the military was called in to shut it down. When protestors did not disperse, the troops opened fire with rubber bullets and live rounds. Thirteen protestors were killed and 17 wounded in a tragedy famously known as 'Bloody Sunday.'[22]

During the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, Northern Ireland suffered dozens of car bombings and attacks perpetrated by paramilitary groups on both sides, like the Provisional IRA (PIRA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). The Troubles ended, at least officially, with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, which created a framework for political power-sharing and an end to decades of violence. Overall, more than 3,500 people were killed in the conflict. Of those: 52% were civilians, 32% were British security forces, and 16% were members of paramilitary groups.[23]

[18] Journal, "Battle of the Bogside: It's 50 years since the community riot that changed Ireland," Journal.ie, August 11, 2019.
[19] To know more about the political imprisonment during the Troubles see: Peter Shirlow and Kieran McEvoy, *Beyond the Wire. Former Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland.* (Pluto Press, London, 2008).
[20] To know more about the British Army presence in Northern Ireland see: Paul Killworth, "The British Army in Northern Ireland: Internal Security Operations, Training and the Cease-Fire," *Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 20 (3): 1-20.
[21] Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release,* PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000), 222.
[22] Museum of Free Derry, "Bloody Sunday," *Museum of Free Derry*, accessed June 7, 2022.
[23] Henry McDonald, "Ex-soldiers should not be pursued for Troubles offences, report says," *Guardian*, April 26, 2017.

Imprisonment during the Troubles

Until 1997, there were five penitentiary institutions for male prisoners in the prison system, each with a distinct and unique role. [24]

- Crumlin Road, closed in 1996, a high security prison for conforming and non-conforming[25] politically motivated prisoners, together with ordinary prisoners.
- Maze Prison, also known as Long Kesh, held prisoners interned without trial, both conforming and non-conforming.
- Maghaberry Prison, opened in 1986, combines a maximum security, custom built prison for sentenced male politically motivated prisoners and long term ordinary prisoners, and a small female prison for all female prisoners, conforming and non-conforming political and ordinaries.
- Magilligan Prison, a medium security male prison mainly for ordinary sentenced prisoners with short term sentences or reaching the end of longer sentences.
- Young Offenders Centre, a male prison for prisoners between the age of 18 and 21 sentenced for up to four years.

Life in Long Kesh: the 'Blanket Men,' the 'Dirty Protests,' and the Hunger Strikers

> The whole architecture of the H-Blocks, it is not a normal type of architecture, this is an architecture that grew out of the whole horrific conflict situation. And it does strike me that the whole of the Maze Prison here, the whole of the H-Blocks, the whole Long Kesh reality, it's like something that physically was extruded from the pain and the conflict and the hostility and the armed struggle and all these various names that we give it.[26]

Long Kesh or Her Majesty's Maze Prison developed from infrastructure erected for the Royal Air Force (RAF) during World War II.[27] Officially renamed the Maze Prison in 1972, the site initially consisted of compounds, commonly known as 'cages,' each surrounded by 'razor-topped wire fencing' and containing 'multiple makeshift Nissen huts' (previously constructed by the RAF) 'to accommodate the internees.'[28] In the cages, prisoners were segregated and placed on their arrival with those with whom they 'self-identified,' meaning from the same paramilitary organisations or

[24] Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release*, PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).
[25] Conforming refers to those who have left the paramilitary ranks and conformed to the prison regime, being integrated with prisoners from oppositional paramilitary groups. Non-conforming as those prisoners who maintained their allegiance during imprisonment.
[26] Prisons Memory Archive, "The H-Blocks," *Prisons Memory Archive*, 2020.
[27] Laura McAtackney, "The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007).
[28] Prison Memory Archive, "Life in the Cages/Compounds of Long Kesh," *Prison Memory Archive*, accessed June 7, 2020.

similar political alliances, or thereby perpetuating the society's division.[29] The same year, political prisoners were granted 'Special Category Status,'[30] which granted them privileges formerly available only to internees.[31] As a result, the prison was the site of many protests and violent activities, including hunger strikes and mass escape attempts.[32] Those who protested were subject to a punishment regime of 'loss of remission (thus doubling their sentence), removal of the three privileged visits per month, denied access to radios, TV, writing materials and all published material other than the Bible.'[33]

Figure 2: 'Entrance to H-Block 4.' Image by neverending september via Flickr CC BY-SA 2.0.

Amid continuing violence, the 1972 privileges were withdrawn. The 1975 Gardiner Report[34] expressed the need to 'combat the paramilitaries through criminalising their prisoners.'[35] For this, it suggested the construction of a new structure. Built in 1976, the H-Blocks were self-contained prison wings with 25 cells and a central administration area in the shape of an 'H'.[36] After its completion, the British Government pursued a policy of criminalisation, and prisoners arrested after 1976 lost their special category status and were housed within these blocks.[37] Losing special status restricted prisoners' rights, treating them as ordinary criminals. As professor McAtackney analyses, this was achieved

> most visibly through the provision of individual cells rather than communal areas and of concrete foundations rather than tiles over dirt floors, and by the wearing of prison uniforms rather than civilian clothes. The number of visits and food parcels were reduced to that of ordinary prisoners. Most importantly, prisoners of different paramilitary organisations were integrated and freedom of association (the right of prisoners to associate with whom they wanted, when they wanted) was

[29] Laura McAtackney, "The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007).

[30] Until then, prisoners were held in Crumlin Road jail in non-segregated accommodation, with no free associations and subject to periodic attempts to force them wearing prison uniforms. What Special Category Statues entailed was that prisoners had de facto prisoner war status and enjoyed conditions similar to other internees. To know more please see McEvoy.

[31] Prison Memory Archive, "Life in the Cages/Compounds of Long Kesh," *Prison Memory Archive*, accessed June 7, 2020.

[32] Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Maze Prison," *Britannica*, September 8, 2009.

[33] Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release*, PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).

[34] To know more about the Gardiner Report please see: David R Lowry, "Internment: Detention Without Trial in Northern Ireland," *Human Rights* 5, no. 3 (1976): 261-331.

[35] Laura McAtackney, "The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007).

[36] Prisons Memory Archive. "Life in the Cages/Compounds of Long Kesh." Prisons Memory Archive, 2020.

[37] Prisons Memory Archive. "The H-Blocks." Prisons Memory Archive, 2020.

stopped.[38]

The reaction was a series of protests with prisoners demanding six key rights: (1) the reinstatement of political status for Republican prisoners and meeting of giving demands; (2) the right of prisoners to wear civilian clothes at all times; (3) the right to free association within a block of cells; (4) the right not to do prison work; (5) the right to educational and recreational facilities; and (6) the restoration of lost remission of sentence.[39]

The protests began with the 'blanket men,' in which 300 men refused to wear a prison uniform and only wore the blankets they were provided with.[40] Failing to achieve its aims and the intensification of the prisoner's physical harassment, it soon led to what has been known as the 'Dirty Protests.'[41] The 'dirty protest' refers to the extreme actions taken by some Irish prisoners who smeared every hard surface with excrement during this time, into which they worked particles of rotting food, and urine was used to dilute the mixture before it was spread.'[42] This protest lasted for forty months and has been considered 'the most remarkable campaign in any prison anywhere,'[43] as it was the impulse for the better-known 1980-81 hunger strikes.[44] Although Loyalist prisoners were also involved in the negotiations with public authorities, their involvement was less public. However, Loyalists and Republicans were known to coordinate their protests to be more disruptive to the authorities.[45]

Figure 3: Photo of the H-Blocks. Image by Allan Leonard via Flickr CC BY-NC 2.0

Seven prisoners refused food on October 28, 1980,[46] seven as it matched the number of signatories to the 1916 Irish Proclamation of Independence. This first hunger strike ended on December 18, 1980, after 53 days of the apparent concession of the British

[38] Laura McAtackney, "The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007), 32-33.
[39] Prisons Memory Archive. "Hunger Strikes." Prisons Memory Archive, 2020.
[40] Brian Graham, and Sara McDowell. "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh." *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007): 348.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Seán McConville, "Dirty protests: why Irish Republican prisoners smeared their cells with faeces to make a political statement during the Troubles," *Conversation*, May 6, 2021.
[43] Ibid.
[44] To know more about prisoners' resistance tactics and protests pleas see: Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release,* PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).
[45] Laura McAtackney, "The Negotiation of Identity at Shared Sites: Long Kesh/Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," Paper Presented at the Forum UNESCO University and Heritage 10th International Seminar "Cultural Landscapes in the 21st Century" Newcastle, April 11-16, 2005.
[46] Peter Taylor, "Bobby Sands: The hunger strike that changed the course of N Ireland's conflict," *BBC*, May 1, 2021.

Government to their Five Demands.[47] However, months later, on March 1, 1981, when it became clear that the British Government had no intention of upholding its commitment, a second hunger protest began. Led by the PIRA commander in the Blocks, Bobby Sands, it was followed with a strike by 22 men, each joining one at a time, at staggered intervals.[48] Days prior to this second hunger strike, 3,500 people marched at a H-Block demonstration in West Belfast, although some months earlier there had been a bigger protest with 10,000 attendees.[49]

Five days after the beginning of the hunger strike, the surprise death of independent Republican MP Frank Maguire in 1981 led to a by-election in Fermanagh and South Tyrone, in which Sands, through an outside representative, stood for election.[50] With other nationalist candidates standing aside, Sands narrowly won his seat before dying less than a month later. This led to a surge of support for the nationalist political party Sinn Féin.

On May 5, after 66 days of hunger strike, Bobby Sands died. Nine more men[51] – six IRA and three INLA – died during the hunger strike before it was called off on October 3, 1981.[52] At that time, families of the hunger strikers had already begun to intervene to prevent further deaths. Three days later, the British Government announced a series of concessions to the prisoners, including the right to wear their own clothes.[53] Regarding the impact of the strike,[54] in the short term,

> the calling off of the hunger strike was billed by the British press as a victory for Thatcher and a defeat for the PIRA. However, in the long term, the hunger strike boosted support for and recruitment to the PIRA. The Republican movement gained a great deal of international sympathy and Bobby Sands became known as an Irish Republican martyr (with 100,000 lining the route of his funeral).[55]

While Republican resistance is better known, Loyalist prisoners also used similar tactics like dirty protests' and hunger strikes. For example, in 1972, UVF Brigadier Gusty Spence went on a hunger strike together with other IRA prisoners demanding political statues.[56] When Republican prisoners were involved in the dirty protests, a few Loyalists started their own 'dirty protest,' refusing to 'do

[47] Frances Mulraney, "On This Day: Hunger striker Bobby Sands died at Long Kesh prison," *Irish Central*, May 5, 2022.
[48] Prisons Memory Archive, "Hunger Strikes," Prisons Memory Archive, accessed June 7, 2022.
[49] Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release,* PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).
[50] Ibid.
[51] M. Kate Flynn. "Decision-Making and Contested Heritage in Northern Ireland: The Former Maze Prison/Long Kesh." *Irish Political Studies* 26, no. 3 (2011): 389.
[52] To know more about the ending of the hunger strike please see: Anphoblacht, "3 October 1981 – The H-Blocks Hunger Strike ends," *Anphoblacht*, October 1, 2021.
[53] Prisons Memory Archive. "Hunger Strikes." Prisons Memory Archive, 2020.
[54] To know more about the impact of the hunger strike please read: Paul Howard, "The Long Kesh Hunger Strikes: 25 Years Late," *Social Justice* 33 (4): 69-91.
[55] Prisons Memory Archive. "Hunger Strikes." Prisons Memory Archive, 2020.
[56] Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Resistance, Management & Release,* PhD Dissertation (Queen's University Belfast, 2000).

work or wear the prison uniform but keeping their cells clean and using the toilet facilities normally.'[57] During the first 1980 hunger strike, six UDA prisoners refused food and demanded segregation from Republican prisoners, ending their hunger strike six days after the Republicans.[58] However, since 1983 with de facto segregation of prisoners, Loyalist resistance and protest were more prominent in other prisons like Magilligan where they claimed to be under threat from Republicans and asked for segregation.[59]

Only two years after the 1981 H-Block Hunger Strike, 38 IRA prisoners from H-Block 7 escaped on September 25, 1983. Known as 'the Great Escape,'[60] it was the most significant jailbreak in British history.[61] Of the 38 prisoners, 19 were recaptured, which fed into the IRA's narratives of resistance.[62] However, Long Kesh was not only famous because of the prisoners' resistance but also for the discussions and learning that took place and was nicknamed a 'university of revolution'.[63] For example, in 1972, the Open University began providing higher education courses to prisoners at Long Kesh, which was later expanded across British and Irish prisons.[64] Furthermore, informal learning was a key part of the prison experience alongside formal classes and courses.[65]

2000, Closure of the Prison

The fate of the Maze/Long Kesh was very much tied to the Good Friday Agreement and Peace Process.[66] Only two years after its approval, Long Kesh was officially closed in 2000. Since then, there has been a continuous debate on the site's future for its historical significance and 'because it represents the largest single potential redevelopment opportunity in Northern Ireland.'[67]

Long Kesh had special significance during the peace process, as many conversations happened there. From both sides, leaders of the Loyalists and Republican paramilitary groups encouraged the peace process and dialogue through their stay in Long Kesh:

> whilst in compound 21, UVF Commander Gusty Spence renounced the use of violence and encouraged Loyalists to adopt a political strategy. Upon his release in 1984 he became an important figure in the peace process, announcing the Loyalist ceasefires of 1994. And from compound 11 a

[57] Ibid., 78.
[58] Ibid., 79.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Anphoblacht, "The Great Escape from the H-Blocks of Long Kesh – 25 September 1983," *Anphoblacht*, September 25, 2015.
[61] Gordon Adair. "The Maze Escape: The Biggest Jailbreak in Uk History." *BBC News*, 22 September 2017.
[62] Brian Graham and Sara McDowell. "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh." *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007): 348.
[63] George Legg. "Redeveloping the Long Kesh/Maze Prison: Profiting from the Hunger Strikes?" *Irish Times*, May 5 2016.
[64] Prisons Memory Archive. "Education in the Prisons." Prisons Memory Archive, accessed June 7, 2022.
[65] Ibid.
[66] M. Kate Flynn. "Decision-Making and Contested Heritage in Northern Ireland: The Former Maze Prison/Long Kesh." *Irish Political Studies* 26, no. 3 (2011): 389.
[67] Brian Graham and Sara McDowell, "Meaning in the Maze: the heritage of Long Kesh," *Cultural Geographies* 14 (3): 343-368.

> young Gerry Adams called for more political involvement from Republicans. In 1974 a Camp Council was formed, comprised of the leaders of all political organisations in the compounds/ cages of Long Kesh. The Council facilitated dialogue across the various organisations and the discussion of common problems across the cages/ compounds.[68]

On January 9, 1998, Mo Mowlam, then Minister for Northern Ireland, visited Loyalist prisoners in the H-blocks to persuade them to support the Agreement.[69] The Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, was signed on April 10, 1998, and referendums held on May 22, 1998, approved it in Ireland and Northern Ireland. While citizens in Northern Ireland had to approve the Multi-Party Agreement, in Ireland, they had to vote for the Agreement and constitutional changes in the British-Irish Agreement.[70] The Agreement allowed for establishing a system of devolved government in Northern Ireland and creating many institutions like the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive, the North-South Ministerial Council and the British-Irish Council. One of the early and most controversial outcomes of the Agreement was the release of prisoners from Long Kesh. According to the 1998 Agreement, all paramilitary prisoners linked to organisations on ceasefire could be released within two years, regardless of the reason for their imprisonment. The last prisoners were released in August 2000, after which the Prison was closed and its contents removed.[71]

History of the Contestation

While the armed conflict has long finished, other contestations inherited from the conflict are still present in Northern Irelandsuch as housing, education, delivery of services and disparate interpretations of the past.[72] The contestations over the past, especially reflect on the continuation of 'unreconciled narratives regarding the nature and meaning of the conflict,'[73] which are present in the contestation over Long Kesh.

> Republicans interpret and narrate their conflict as one against the British state, a conflict which contains elements of territorial self-determination, assertion of civil rights and reactionary violence against torture, imprisonment and the violation of human rights. For Republicans, the British state has been engaged as an active and aggressive party at all stages in the conflict while simultaneously trying to portray itself as an unwilling but committed umpire between two warring 'tribes'. Thus Republicans recount their 'war' as an anti-imperialist rather than civil conflict.
> Loyalists, in contrast, construct their conflict as primarily one of defence: defence of their communities from Republican violence, and defence of the constitutional Union. Although the

[68] Prisons Memory Archive. "The Role of the Maze and Long Kesh in the Peace Process." *Prisons Memory Archive*, accessed June 9, 2022.
[69] Prisons Memory Archive. "The Role of the Maze and Long Kesh in the Peace Process." *Prisons Memory Archive,* 2020.
[70] Citizens Information, "The Good Friday Agreement," *citizensinformation*.ie, March 31, 2021.
[71] Brian Graham, and Sara McDowell. "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh." *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007): 348
[72] Peter Shirlow and Kieran McEvoy, *Beyond the Wire. Former Prisoners and Conflict Transformation in Northern Ireland.* (Pluto Press, London, 2008).2-3.
[73] Ibid., 3.

> British state has not shown unqualified appreciation for these activities, arresting and imprisoning Loyalist paramilitaries for 'taking on' the enemies of the state, the Loyalists' enemy was clearly defined as Republicans (who were seeking to 'bomb' northern Protestants into a united Ireland) and, by extension, the Catholic civilian community.[74]

For this reason, the prison complex has been a long source of contestation for many reasons, starting with its name. Different 'highly-charged' names imply 'different connotations for the site and its political status.' On the one hand, ex-prisoners and their communities use names connected to 'Long Kesh' in association with the prisoners' internment and political status. On the other hand, officials and the wider public tend to use names connected to the criminalisation period of the H-Block, namely 'the Maze' or HM Maze Prison.[75]

Furthermore, Long Kesh has been central in the debate on the future of now-defunct elements of the physical and political legacies of the Troubles. Following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, many security infrastructures associated with the conflict – police stations, army bases, watchtowers and security posts – disappeared 'almost overnight with little discussion of their future or recording of their remains prior to destruction,'[76] making Long Kesh one of the last remaining sites linked to the Troubles. However, because of this, there have been two opposite reactions amongst the public: to retain or remove.[77]

A Chance for Reconciliation through Development?

Since it ceased operation in 2000, there have been numerous plans for the site due to its economic and commemorative potential as the largest potential redevelopment opportunity in the country.[78] In May 2002, together with other former security installations – Crumlim Road Gaol, the Magherafelt security base and the Ebrington Barracks –the prison complex was transferred to the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) under the 'Reinvestment and Reform Initiative.'[79] One of the first initiatives was the creation of the Maze Consultation Panel (MCP) in January 2003, with members from the main political actors involved in the contestation: Democratic Unionist Party (DUP); Ulster Unionist Party (UUP); Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Sinn Féin.

The retain/remove debate grew more prominent since the creation of the MCP and the publication

[74] Ibid.
[75] Laura McAtackney, "The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007), 34.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 49
[78] Brian Graham, and Sara McDowell. "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh." *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007):, 343.
[79] Ibid., 343.

of its final report in 2005, *A New Future for Long Kesh/Maze*, which attempts to appease both sides in the retention or destruction debate. The report calls for heritage creation and imposing a new identity on the site as 'a symbol of confidence and hope for the people of Northern Ireland.'[80] Their main proposal was to combine both positions on retaining and removing, thus, demolishing a part of the complex for constructing a multi-sport stadium and preserving some buildings to create the International Centre for Conflict Transformation.[81] Other site plan elements included: 'a rural excellence and equestrian zone; office, hotel, entertainment and leisure facilities; light industrial zone; a community zone; and a retained zone.'[82]

In May 2006, the MCP published a second report titled *Long Kesh/Maze: Masterplan and Implementation Strategy.*[83] The differences between both reports are very telling, especially as the second one responded to the contestations that arose in 2005. The 2006 report emphasised the 'transformational qualities' of the prison, focusing more on the 'potential for the site to become an economic and ecological proto-type for post-conflict Northern Ireland' and downplaying its historical significance.[84]

In preparation for this, the Northern Ireland Assembly had allowed the demolition of most of the prison site in 2006, except for some protected buildings – including one H-Block and the prison hospital.[85] Consequently, in April 2007, the walls of Long Kesh were demolished following a 'fully sustainable demolition process which [...] will involve 'every brick be[ing] crushed and turned into concrete.'[86] Although the majority of the complex was demolished, some parts were conserved:

> 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 (number19) comprising four Nissen huts and its high wire fence were also listed with a view to relocation closer to the H-block structures.[87]

Criticism of the Plans

The most controversial point of both reports was the construction of the multi-purpose sports

[80] Ibid., 50.
[81] Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group. *Maze/Long Kesh: Masterplan and Implementation Strategy Final Report 2006*. Belfast: Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2006.
[82] Brian Graham, and Sara McDowell. "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh." *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007):, 349.
[83] Laura McAtackney, "The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007), 50
[84] Ibid.
[85] M. Kate Flynn. "A Prisoner of Its Past? The Future of the Long Kesh/Maze." *Irish Times,* July 6 2016.
[86] Laura McAtackney, "The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007), 51.
[87] Louise Purbrick, "Long Kesh/Maze A case for participation in post-conflict heritage," In: Elizabeth Crooke & Tom Maguire (Eds.), *Heritage After Conflict. Northern Ireland* (Routledge, 2018).

zone, which would entail a stadium considered as 'a shared space in accommodating association football, rugby and Gaelic sports.'[88] However, sports in Northern Ireland have long been considered a 'symbol of religious, cultural and, often, political allegiances.'[89] Regarding this issue, authors such as Alan Bairner argue that

> At Gaelic games on one hand and sports such as rugby union and cricket on the other served to consolidate exclusively nationalist and unionist identities respectively whilst association football, although widely supported and played by members of both of the main traditions in Northern Ireland, had consistently provided a terrain on which sectarian contestation could regularly be played.[90]

Thus, if we look at the role of sports in the conflict, it is clear that sports tend to mirror the conflict instead of challenging it.[91] For example, Gaelic games, played almost exclusively by Irish Republicans, are governed by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), which is openly anti-unionist. On the other hand, rugby and other more British-associated sports like hockey and cricket were predominantly Unionist, and football, popular on both sides, only deepened antagonism.[92] Because of this, many argue that sports, together with religion, education, housing and politics, 'have been part of the sectarian 'system' which conditions individuals' experiences and life choices in Northern Ireland.[93] For this reason, the proposal to build a multi-sport complex was the most contested aspect of the MCP 2005 report. However, the contestation was articulated in sporting terms. The main claim was that each sport (Gaelic football, rugby and football) needed different size pitches, making it difficult to have one shared space for all sports.[94] Nonetheless, all major sporting bodies had agreed to the plans for a stadium, although the plans were dropped in 2009 after continuous contestations from the public.[95] For example, on June 23, 2007, the *Newsletter* reported: 'Senior DUP figures yesterday queued up to say 'no' to a national stadium at the Maze while it includes a 'shrine to terrorism'.'[96]

Without the stadium, the International Centre for Conflict Transformation became the central point for the site's development. It would have a similar use to the sports complex, contributing to

[88] Brian Graham, and Sara McDowell. "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh." *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007):, 349.
[89] Thomson9, "Sport and politics are (slowly) parting ways in Northern Ireland," LSE Blog, November 29, 2016.
[90] Alan Bairner, "Sport, Politics and Society in Northern Ireland: Changing Times, New Developments," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 90, no. 359 (2001).
[91] David Mitchell, Ian Somerville, and Owen Hargie, "Sport for peace in Northern Ireland? Civil society, change and constraint after the 1998 Good Friday Agreement," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 18, no. 4 (2016).
[92] Ibid., 985.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Louise Purbrick, "Long Kesh/Maze A case for participation in post-conflict heritage," In: Elizabeth Crooke & Tom Maguire (Eds.), *Heritage After Conflict. Northern Ireland* (Routledge, 2018).
[95] M. Kate Flynn. "Decision-Making and Contested Heritage in Northern Ireland: The Former Maze Prison/Long Kesh." *Irish Political Studies* 26, no. 3 (2011): 390-92.
[96] Louise Purbrick, "Long Kesh/Maze A case for participation in post-conflict heritage," In: Elizabeth Crooke & Tom Maguire (Eds.), *Heritage After Conflict. Northern Ireland* (Routledge, 2018).

'promoting a shared society,' and would consist of a 'facility that would support and facilitate the ongoing processes of dialogue and building trust and confidence within and between communities.'[97] The economic promise was set now on the Centre, although now renamed as the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Facility. The DUP and Sinn Féin's compromise of an International Centre for Peace and Reconciliation was seen as a more acceptable solution and received government backing for several years. However, Traditional Unionist Voice leader Jim Allister described this as a 'DUP climbdown'.[98] The UUP also raised concerns about the site choice: 'We believe the story of the Troubles needs to be told, but we are convinced that the site of the former Maze Prison is absolutely the wrong location. As a location, it places an undue emphasis on prisoners rather than victims.'[99]

Despite the criticism, Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness announced on July 29, 2010, a European Funding application to turn the Centre into a 'world-class facility of international importance designed to strengthen our peace-building expertise and share our experiences with others throughout the world.'[100] The plans were supported by both main parties in the Northern Ireland executive – with Peter Robinson of the Democratic Unionist Party and Martin McGuiness of Sinn Féin publicly supporting the re-development project in 2010.[101] In 2013, Stormont's (Parliament's) Planning Minister Alex Attwood granted permission to construct the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre. The building, to be constructed on the site of Long Kesh, was designed by architect Daniel Libeskind with McAdam Design. The European Union awarded an £18 million grant for the construction.[102] However, the same year First Minister Peter Robinson vetoed the construction of the Centre as he believed 'it would be wrong to proceed with the Maze peace centre in the absence of a consensus about how it will operate.'[103]

Additionally, during this period, the UK government held a Consultative Group on the Past within Northern Ireland, which touched on the potential for physical memorials to promote healing and reconciliation between the two sides.[104] [105] However, this did not explicitly mention Long Kesh and its potential to do so.

[97] Ibid.
[98] BBC News. "Maze Site Set to be Redeveloped." *BBC News*, 29 July 2010.
[99] Henry McDonald. "Maze Prison Redevelopment Gets Green Light." *Guardian*, 18 April 2013.
[100] BBC News. "Maze Site Set to be Redeveloped." *BBC News*, July 29, 2010.
[101] Ibid.
[102] David Young, "Controversial Maze peace centre gets go ahead," Independent.ie, April 18, 2013.
[103] BBC, "First Minister Peter Robinson stalls Maze peace centre," *BBC*, August 15, 2013.
[104] Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. *The Report of the Consultative Group on the Past in Northern Ireland*. London: House of Commons, 2009.
[105] Patrick Pinkerton, "Resisting Memory: The Politics of Memorialisation in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 14 (2012).

Musealisation Proposals

Long Kesh Prison is central to Republican narratives of the Troubles, with the Hunger Strikes a critical turning point in their history. However, during the consultations, the high level of engagement with ex-IRA prisoners meant they were seen to dominate.[106] The INLA, another Republican group that participated in the Hunger Strikers, even questioned whether Sinn Féin were looking to erase them through their focus on the IRA Hunger Strikers.[107] Whilst the idea of a museum was most popular with Republicans, not all groups were equally consulted.

In June 2003, the Irish Republican organisation *Coiste Na nIarchimí* (Ex-Prisoners Committee), funded in 1998 to facilitate the reintegration of Irish Republican prisoners, launched a campaign promoting the idea of constructing a museum in Long Kesh. In response, Martin O'Muilleoir, Sinn Féin representative at MCP, said: 'it's a no-brainer really. This is one of the most important late 20th-century historic sites anywhere in Europe.'[108] However, unionists rejected the idea arguing that the museum would become a 'shrine' to Republicans. Moreover, Loyalist prisoners are not considered very highly within the unionist movement.[109] Unlike Republican prisoners, who were viewed as a crucial part of the resistance, Unionist prisoners were stigmatised and less able to participate publicly in the consultation process.[110]

In addition, part of the backlash to the construction of the museum also came from the civilian victims of the Troubles, as noted in a letter sent to the newspaper Belfast Telegraph around the time:

> THE ANNOUNCEMENT that the derelict site of the Maze Prison is going to incorporate a museum must be totally abhorrent to all decent-thinking individuals throughout Ireland. While in no way wanting to suppress the Republican story, the thought of turning the Maze Prison into some sort of heritage centre is insulting to the victims of Republican and Loyalist terrorists. [...] The Maze Prison must be razed to the ground so that the people of Northern Ireland can move on. If Republicans choose to remember the sacrifices of their so-called volunteers, then they are perfectly entitled to do so. There is no need to have yet more Republican shrines to some of the worse fanatical psychopaths in the history of Ireland.[111]

Thus, the museum issue became entwined in the ongoing contestation of the Troubles' victim narratives. Concerns were raised about how the factual information presented at the museum would be 'inclusive', with both factions worried that the other narrative of the Troubles would

[106] Ibid., 396.
[107] Brian Graham, and Sara McDowell. "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh." *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007): 351.
[108] Ibid, 352.
[109] Ibid., 350.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Belfast Telegraph, "Forget about museum of terrorism," *Belfast Telegraph*, July 5, 2008.

emerge dominant.[112] Moreover, not only political prisoners were present in prison, but 29 Northern Ireland Prison Service staff died during the Troubles. This fact was also part of the contestation. Finaly Spratt, chairman of the Northern Ireland Prison Officers Association, argues that the museum's construction 'would be an insult' to the memory of the prison officers. However, it is worth mentioning that the officers already had a memorial within the prison complex, now relocated to the Prison Service's Training College at Millisle.

Many also consider the process of deciding what to do at Long Kesh as dominated primarily by the Northern Ireland executive and party politics.[113] The dissonance between this top-level politics, local politicians and stakeholders has also led to development delays.[114]

Despite abandoning the musealisation of the site, there are guided tours of the remaining buildings led by local civil servants of the Northern Ireland Executive.t. However, visitors may not wander as the route is prescribed and scripted. Furthermore, the remaining buildings are also open annually for one weekend during European Heritage Open Days.[115]

Decision-Making Processes

The nature of the Northern Ireland conflict has stressed the need for community involvement in the debate about what to do with Long Kesh, yet decision-making processes remain top-down. As indicated previously, plans for re-developing Long Kesh have been subject to delays over disputes on what to do with the site. On the one hand, it is a resource with considerable economic potential, and the Northern Ireland Assembly is keen to stress this.[116] However, the site holds different meanings for Republicans and Unionists. As a result, consultations on the site involved various Republican and unionist groups, as well as prison officers, the police and victims' families. However, initial consultations on what to do with the site were shorter than expected, disrupted and limited.[117] Whilst they paved the way for demolishing parts of the site in 2006, disagreements over what the site meant have led to stalling plans, particularly when viewing the site as a heritage site.

[112] Ibid., 353.
[113] Louise Purbrick. "Trading the Past: Material Culture of Long Kesh/Maze, Northern Ireland." *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 6, no. 1 (2013): 62.
[114] M. Kate Flynn. "Decision-Making and Contested Heritage in Northern Ireland: The Former Maze Prison/Long Kesh." *Irish Political Studies* 26, no. 3 (2011).
[115] Louise Purbrick. "Trading the Past: Material Culture of Long Kesh/Maze, Northern Ireland." *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 6, no. 1 (2013).
[116] BBC News. "Maze Site Set to be Redeveloped." *BBC News,* 29 July 2010.
[117] M. Kate Flynn. "Decision-Making and Contested Heritage in Northern Ireland: The Former Maze Prison/Long Kesh." *Irish Political Studies* 26, no. 3 (2011): 395.

The Maze Consultation Panel

The Maze Consultation Panel was formed by representatives from the four main political parties: Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), and Sinn Fein.[118] 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'.[119]

However, one of the reasons why their final report was so problematic and contested was that proposals were required 'to meet government objectives,' meaning:

> 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.'[120]

Consequently, the actual functioning of the MCP deterred smaller-scale projects without the ability for long-term financial planning. However, the MCP tried to fit all proposals in their report, whose most prominent project was constructing the multi-sport complex. For this, the three central Northern Ireland sporting bodies – the GAA, the Irish Football Association and the Irish Rugby Football Union – were offered a place in the decision-making body as one of the primary calls for the complex was the idea of a 'shared use.'[121] Furthermore, an 'international art and design competition' was considered to supply 'iconic art elements in the specification sufficient to signify the major social investment in promoting peace and prosperity and the transformation of society from a 'symbol of conflict' to a 'symbol of ongoing transformation from conflict to peace.'[122]

The Government Involvement

Under the auspices of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of the Northern Ireland Executive, a cross-party group of Members of the Legislative Assembly was formed as the Maze/Long Kesh Monitoring Group. Its purpose was to develop the 'implementation strategy' on how to implement the plans of the 2005 report.[123] Thus, the group created possible scenarios of where the buildings, stadium and International Centre for Conflict Transformation could be

[118] Ibid., 344.
[119] Louise Purbrick, "Long Kesh/Maze A case for participation in post-conflict heritage," In: Elizabeth Crooke & Tom Maguire (Eds.), *Heritage After Conflict. Northern Ireland* (Routledge, 2018).
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

allocated. Their results were published in the 2006 report, giving particular importance to the development plans and mainly to the construction of the multi-sports stadium focusing on the possible economic benefit it could bring as a visitor destination.

Ultimately, as the Long Kesh site states, the 'development of the site is currently subject to Ministerial agreement on the way forward.'[124] However, the power-sharing arrangement at Stormont, whilst suitable for keeping the peace, is not designed for decision-making and policy governance.[125] With Sinn Féin and the DUP in power and holding contrasting views on what Long Kesh means, what to do with the few remaining heritage buildings at Long Kesh is likely to remain unresolved.

The Local Involvement

As a high-security zone, a classification that continues to exist despite the site being empty since 2000, any access by the local community is highly controlled. Its public presence, already since the late 1970s/early 1980s, derives from two primary sources: its continual depiction in the mass media and its use as an image in wall murals around the country. Through these means, the Long Kesh/Maze had and still has significant political and cultural significance in the local community, not only for the former prisoners.[126] Furthermore, due to its important role in the Troubles as another site where the conflict developed, the debate about its future reflects post-conflict Northern Ireland. It is fundamental to consider the different experiences of the actors involved in the conflict in the discussions and decision-making processes about Long Kesh, mainly because the contestation around the site has traditionally taken place through a binary antagonism of Republican vs Loyalist, as explained throughout the case study. Loyalists worry that the stron Republican identification with Long Kesh will turn it into a 'pilgrimage site to Republican martyrdom.'[127] While Republicans worry that its destruction will induce forgetting the experiences of the Republican prisoners who fought and died there.

In 2017, thanks to local involvement support by 'individuals, community groups, sports clubs and businesses' from all over the country,[128] the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service was

[124] Maze Longkesh Corporation. "Maze Long Kesh." Maze Longkesh Corporation, 2020.
[125] M. Kate Flynn. "A Prisoner of Its Past? The Future of the Long Kesh/Maze." *Irish Times,* July 6 2016.
[126] Laura McAtackney, "The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007), 42.
[127] Laura McAtackney, "The Negotiation of Identity at Shared Sites: Long Kesh/Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland," Paper Presented at the Forum UNESCO University and Heritage 10th International Seminar "Cultural Landscapes in the 21st Century" Newcastle, April 11-16, 2005.
[128] The fundraising for a Northern Ireland air ambulance service started in 2005 through the Air Ambulance Northern Ireland (AANI) charity in partnership with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and the local Health Trusts, which pays the salaries of the medical team and provides the medical equipment. To know more please see: Suzanne McGonagle, "Air Ambulance service launches in Northern Ireland after 12-year campaign," *Irish News,* August 2, 2017.

established in Long Kesh after years of local and public campaigning. The Northern Ireland air ambulance allows emergency paramedics to reach any part of the North within 25 minutes, which, according to campaigners, could save between 18 and 50 lives a year.[129]

While the armed conflict is over, another conflict arises around the different experiences and narratives around its meaning and legacy, which is maintained through a continuous contestation about the past in Northern Ireland and its representation. Thus, the contestation around Long Kesh is representative of 'wider socio-political problems of confronting and dealing with the past in 'post-conflict' Northern Ireland where partisan heritage, memory and practices of commemoration play a prominent role in political contestation at the expense of narratives of recognition, reflection, acceptance and reconciliation.'[130] Due to this, decision-making processes around Long Kesh should also consider the site as a crucial element in the cultural development of post-conflict society in Northern Ireland and how it has been represented and enacted by the different communities. This refers not only to the continuous presence of Long Kesh around the urban landscape in the murals across the country but also to the cultural artefacts made by prisoners that were in circulation and used inside and outside of the prison (for example, wood carvings, leather work, painted handkerchiefs and paintings).[131] At last, an important and overlooked aspect of the site is the existence of different layers of history, from the RAF's Nissen huts to the 1970s H-Blocks, where the same buildings have been used for very different purposes without significant structural change, which present a challenge on how to interpret the site and the possibilities of redevelopment.

Dynamics to consider in decision-making for this case include community involvement in decision-making and peace-building, economic and heritage concerns, competing political narratives and motivations over a site, i.e. the role of Long Kesh in both Republican and Unionist narratives of the Troubles.

Summary and Conclusions

Plans to redevelop the Maze Prison were never likely to be easy, with the site holding different meanings for different groups involved in the Troubles. Not only had very little time passed since the 1998 peace agreement, but the prison itself was also a key site in the conflict. It, therefore, continues to be seen through a Republican-Unionist binary. While in the aftermath of the Troubles, the focus was set on the politics of conflict resolution, subsequent plans emphasised more the possible social and economic benefits of the redevelopment of the site to the local

[129] Guy Warner, “Air Ambulance Northern Ireland,” *Flying Ireland*, February 6, 2018.
[130] Brian Graham, and Sara McDowell. "Meaning in the Maze: The Heritage of Long Kesh." *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 3 (2007): 349..
[131] Laura McAtackney, “The Contemporary Politics of Landscape at the Long Kesh/ Maze Prison Site, Northern Ireland,” In: Dan Hicks, Laura McAtackney, Graham Fairclough (eds.) *Envisioning Landscapes. Situations and Standpoints in Archaeology and Heritage* (Routledge, 2007).

communities and the country.

With Northern Ireland's governance focused on power-sharing rather than policy deliverance, the conflict over the Long Kesh site will likely continue. This case raises questions over how the recent past can be addressed when competing narratives of the Troubles continue to dominate present-day politics.

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