

## How to make a city act European: regeneration policy and politics in Belfast

“A more normal city; a more European city.” This is the dream for a post-conflict Belfast, according to both residents and policy makers in the rapidly changing Northern Irish capital. Since the 1998 Belfast Agreement, which marks—in one version of events—a diplomatic end to the decades-long conflict in Northern Ireland, policy makers and political movers have been actively redeveloping Belfast after a particular utopian ideal: The European City. Taking a semiotic approach to urban social change, this paper explores both policy and popular discourse regarding the “new” Belfast, examining the meaning of the “European” ideal in the process of physical and social regeneration. In particular, I examine the impact of EU policy and funding in Belfast, and the translation of policy objectives to new ways of thinking about the city. This paper asks, finally, whether the redevelopment of Belfast is also a retraining of its citizens, an attempt to transform a population divided by ethno-national and religious ideologies into “Europeans” (and what the difference may be).

Katharine Keenan

[kak2140@columbia.edu](mailto:kak2140@columbia.edu)

[kathareenan@gmail.com](mailto:kathareenan@gmail.com)