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Moving Out of Conflict: Negotiating Social Identity in Response to Segregation in Northern Ireland

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Abstract

This paper examines the impact of territoriality on young people's everyday experiences in Northern Ireland's segregated communities. It shows how urban encounters are reproduced through negotiating differences and the ways in which living in divided communities escalates moods of social inequality and spatial imbalances. The empirical study undertaken in the city of Derry shows how individuals and community groups position and identify themselves under the impact of social segregation. Building on Gordon Allport's (1954) theories of contact, I explain how people in Derry have established their own sense of belonging, of who they are, based on their group memberships which eventually became an important source of pride and self-esteem. They also presented their own intertextual references as a cause of routine survival and belonging, allowing them to be more constructive about their future. Under deeply rooted segregation in Northern Ireland, the young generations are sought to provide lasting change to foster peace and integration between the two communities.

Introduction

Territoriality or place attachment is a condition of control claimed by one group over a defined geographical area and defended against others. It is an aspect of human behaviour that has drawn scholars' attention, but with limited manifestations on its interpretations among young people in areas of conflict and disadvancement. Early indices appeared in Giddens manifestations of structuration on the human agency and social structure dichotomy (1986). Individuals and groups, in his view, could achieve a sense of security and welfare through the exercise of control within foreseeable routine encounters, and therefore, territories remains an imperative medium of everyday experiences and self-identity (Giddens, 1984). The *Human Territoriality* by Robert David Sack (1986) highlighted that not only policymakers and governments form the geography of space, but there is also an overlooked societal dimension taking on less formal roles that entail personal identity and place attachment. Place attachment, on one side, provides access to groups through social networks (Low and Altman, 1992), which in return, reinforces a communal sense of identity, particularly through shared experiences or a common culture or lifestyle, but at the same time it limits the freedom of other individuals and groups to access or utilize the same space, leading to conflict.

Albeit people are increasingly mobile across urban space, their immediate localities remain crucial territories in their lives, whereas groups with similar values are proximately connected (Savage et al., 2005). Less mobile people living in poorer localities consider that their living contexts, mostly their immediate neighbourhood, may take on even greater significance (Gore et al., 2007; Green & White, 2007), and hence, control over these instant spaces is central to both a sense of wellbeing and access to community resources. But indeed, social capital is *bound up* with the existence of spatial geographies. The core conception is how people benefit from their relationships, which can be absorbed through their common norms and trust, and access to or exclusion from resources. Putnam (2000) designated binary forms of social capital, namely 'bonding' and 'bridging'. Bonding encapsulates robust connections engendered through frequent interaction with immediate social

networks, and could hinder interaction with others to become closely associated with the expression of territoriality. Bridging captures extensive networks and connections for diverse societal relationships across community divisions to facilitate social mobility.

Ethnic divisions have come to the fore fairly in the public life of many cities, as an outcome of the political and social efforts for building diverse communities. However, the disturbing upfront of ethnic deprivation and segregation in poor urban areas and the widespread moralization about what it takes to self express identities and concern and what activities could it support is still far behind realistic outcomes. It is also argued that young people particularly drive such behaviours. Childress (2004), for example, argues that teenagers 'have limited ability to manipulate private property', and therefore tend to use territories like public spaces and the city streets and squares, to express control (p.192) or positive psychological and social benefits (Robinson, 2000). Young people view these localities as a domain in which social values are asserted and contested as expressions of intolerance and difference within society. Karen Malone (2002) discussed the ways in which distrust, intolerance and moral censure limit the spatial world of young people in Australia, where various regulatory practices are common. In contrast, young people in Boca-Barracas, Argentina, experienced their public territories as sites for cultural production to explore relationships with peers and other members of the community, and where young people shared and expressed cultural connections and differences (Cosco & Moore, 2002).

In Northern Ireland, a long history of ethnic and political conflict known as 'The Troubles' between Catholics/nationalists and Protestants/unionists is still active. Between the 1960s and '90s, concrete walls veiled working-class neighbourhoods as an iconic symbol of protection from fear, violence and conflict. Territories on both sides were controlled and monitored, while lacking consumption and leisure facilities until recent days. This situation raises questions on how human activity and communal contact become a catalyst for conflict and how public life is shared and used among younger generations who in great cases did or did not witness the Troubles. Even if more than twenty five years have passed since the original causes, similar constants emerged from the young people by which they judged their territories as not satisfying their everyday needs or failing them, such as experiencing social exclusion and segregation, fearing crime and lacking a cohesive community identity. I therefore argue that segregated ethnic groups reproduce their individual spheres of social identity and contact through closed cycles of interaction, in a way that ties with their political and social preferences. I also intend to explain how people in Derry have established their own sense of belonging which was grounded in their group memberships and eventually became an important source of pride and self-esteem.

Contact and Segregation: The *Other* and *Us*

In *The Nature of Prejudice,* introduced in the 1950s, Gordon Allport (1954) instigated debates on what is called the 'contact hypothesis', arguing that interpersonal contact between different groups would potentially lessen prejudice and increase positive attitudes toward the unknown *Other*. People usually feel uncomfortable and anxious about the *Other*, and therefore fear the encounters of difference. But contact equally produces a sense of familiarity that engenders insights of predictability and control (ibid). In the 1980s, focus shifted towards the impact of contact on minority groups and their experiences, recognition and rights, but through the appreciation of emotional rather than reasoning approaches towards contact. Scholars expressed that not only could the majority group develop mature and close bonds with the formerly *Other* (Kwan, 2000), but indirect interpersonal contact also increases constructive attitudes between groups. Such understanding is rooted primarily in social and spatial analysis proposing that groups use public spaces differently because of differences in access and the inequitable distribution of resources such as urban open space and neighbourhood amenities which could either facilitate or prohibit use of the public realm.

Valentine and MacDonald (2004) argue that contact between groups is not adequate on its own to produce respect and reduce conflict. Ethnicity theories explain that varying patterns of use in public spaces are the result of differences in cultural values attached to a space or activity, not merely differences in access. Therefore, encounters of the everyday interaction are sometimes not even reliable as encounters. Backers of this line of thought proclaim that more time and energy need to be focused on designing places that are reflective of the diverse cultural values and preferences of segregated communities. Izhak Schnell and Benjamini Yoav (2001) argued that there is no correlation between the territorial and the interactive dimension of socio-spatial isolation, in fact, minority groups retained high rates of intergroup isolation, regardless of their geographical location. Studies on other territories like public parks, streets and shopping malls theoretically revealed that good contact and interaction emerge in such open landscapes where diversity and mutual respect are expressed through behavioural patterns. But in practice, mixed-use gestures like these hardly function in the way they were designed and are 'not immune to re-segregation through users' practices (Matejskova & Leitner, 2011:720) where the diverse groups fail to interact and are accused of neglecting the presence of *Other* (Sennett 2005; Amin and Thrift 2002).

There is evidence that territoriality could be destructive in conditions where fear discourages young people from travelling beyond their living areas, particularly in disadvantaged territories, or as a cause that prevents access to services, which reinforces social exclusion. Examples could include, but are not limited to, access to health services, neighbourhood safety, area effects, public transport and leisure, and finally, opportunities for employment, particularly through the increased potential to acquire police records, but also through self-imposed travel restrictions (Caldwell et al., 2003; Atkinson and Kintrea, 2004; Bairner and Shirlow, 2003). But the fact is that segregated groups undoubtedly choose not to engage in certain activities or visit certain public places because they do not feel welcome due to the overt expectation that discrimination will occur. It is not that Catholic or Protestant communities inherently do not value certain types of public places, it is rather that such spaces in their communities are historically neglected and therefore may not be or feel safe, comfortable to inhabit. This simply situates young people from these groups, for example, to face challenging everyday life encounters mostly driven by the historical confines and rooted mental structures of conflict and social organisms. One example is the deficiency of direct interaction within these spatial and temporal territories to practise routine activities in near or more distanced locations, while hybridization of culture in public space is still promoted (Valentine, 2008).

But there are always positive opportunities not made available to disadvantaged groups, and therefore segregation will result in one group being unable to participate in societal activities such as low school participation, a weak housing market, limited political participation and restricted social and cultural integration (Gordon & Monastiriotis, 2006). This explains why segregated groups tend to display what de Certeau advocates as *tactical* practice against the *Other* set of strategies, making the everyday living spaces a sharp series of boundaries that are soaked in rooted encounters of conflict (De Certeau, 1984). Through drawing on the diverse concepts of territoriality and everyday encounters, I argue that the young generations of ethnic groups may embrace alternative tactics, deeds and attitudes as strategies of segregation, described as the *art of the weak*, to explain that they may restrict enclosed integration networks to their own members while isolating themselves from members of other groups. My interest is not to cover causes of the young people's violence, but to examine the micro scale of segregation to study its social aspect from a bottom-up vision in which the *everyday* invents itself by encroaching in countless ways on the property of others (de Certeau, 1984, note 2, xii.). These encounters collectively are seen as a form of grappling with the lived space and a disorderly narrative of endless recitals in which each actor has their individual account. In Derry/ Londonderry, the young people mostly engage in uncontrolled violence or verbal offences in the streets or public spaces, yet they are simultaneously very attached to their local territory, which seems to have a significant role in their lives. I will therefore shed light on some of these narratives and will explore the ground-level dynamics and everyday struggles involved in the battle over space in a context strictly characterized by division. Even when communities engage in routine practices, they

have no choice but to employ tactics to subvert, challenge or resist these logics by adapting alternative means of interaction in the city.

Young People Living in the Fountain Estate

The River Foyle geographically divides Derry/Londonderry along with man-made walls built in 1613-1618 as defences for early settlers from England and Scotland. The walls stretch about 1.5 kilometres in circumference and form a walkway around the inner city, which highlights the ethnic separation between the Catholic and Protestant communities. Following the famous Siege of Derry in 1689, it was classified a Protestant town and Catholics resettled in the Templemore and Long Tower areas just outside the city walls, while wealthy Protestants moved out of the inner city to the Waterside area. The Troubles of the 1960s marked obvious evidence that working class Protestants and Catholics simply could not co-exist, as previously mixed areas became exclusively one or the other. The people's political opinions were set in stone from this time on - a "them and us" mindset' (Murray, 2013). In fact, defensive walls and security barriers at interface zones, isolating urban sections of Derry/Londonderry, have increased (O'Brien & Nolan,1999:557),

The Fountain estate is home to the last Protestant community living in the Cityside section on the West bank of the Foyle and is surrounded by the predominantly Catholic areas of Brandywell, Bogside and Creggan. Population demographics show that the working-class estate houses approximately 500 residents living in blocks of terraced houses, many of which are managed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the Fountain Primary School and the Life Triumphant Church. The minority group is hemmed into a small area by means of Peace Walls and barriers constructed on two sides along Bishop Street, Bennett Street and to the rear of houses on Harding Street, while the historic Derry walls border the estate on a third side. The barrier along the Fountain interface and Bishop Street was erected in the 1990s to control access to the estate through a security gate that could easily connect or seal off both areas during times of tension and violence. However, almost forty years after the start of the Troubles, the walls and barriers still remain intact and are used for what they were intended: to separate.

Politically motivated violence in Derry/Londonderry encouraged people to retreat to the 'security' of their own enclaves or to create new ones, as 'mental divisions, through which the signified places are communally guarded and bounded, often strengthen physical boundaries and vice versa' (Kuusisto-Arponen, 2003:73). Despite the fact that peace negotiations have been going on since 1997, new barriers have been constructed (ibid.). On the other hand, division, combined with close proximity to the 'other', promotes a heightened cultural self-definition and causes the distinctions between the two to be massively exaggerated, 'the narcissism of minor differences' (ibid.:22). The barriers also distorted travel patterns, as 'routes from one enclave to the other have been reduced or gated so that they can be closed off in times of 'high tension' (Bevan, 2007). In a way, levels of social equality appear unbalanced under high measures of governing free movement and walkable routes.

Living in such settings is not without its troubles on either side of the barriers. Flags, parades and gable-end murals are all signs that distinguish differences in Protestant and Catholic cultures, when in fact the differences between the two are very slight at root (ibid.). The estate kerbstones and lampposts are emblazoned red, white and blue to match the fluttering Union flags. When walking around the Fountain, one cannot miss a well-known mural stating 'Londonderry West Bank Loyalists Still Under Siege No Surrender'. The mural widely evokes the sense of a wartime blockade and an attitude of defiance towards the invader. Even though Derry/Londonderry has been free of any ongoing battles for a while, the residents use *metaphors* like this to express how they feel about living on the estate and their thoughts about life beyond its borders. They mentally incorporate this meaning into their everyday encounters and behaviour, in which some people interestingly say that 'we have a siege mentality …. but sometimes we feel that we are under real siege' (R10). Indeed, the term *siege*

brings to mind areas of attack and resistance in a battle, and therefore the militarization of treatise implies the militarization of thought and practice. Accordingly, people living 'under siege' probably tend to have their own ways of protecting themselves, reacting, and progressing from day to day.

The events of the Troubles remain stories handed down to the younger generations of both community groups. Learning about history for younger generations facing conflict is a great challenge, not merely because 'it eventually surrounds them everywhere' (R1). As this paper explains, their daily journey to schools and public amenities passes through memories of conflict articulated in artefacts and murals displaying pain and distress. The Bogside Catholic murals, for example, communicate the British government's domination and the community's resistance since the 1960s. A caption on a gable wall noting 'You are now entering free Derry' recalls the Bogside Battle in 1969. McCann (1993) claims that such assertions are reproduced differently by newer generations, who have traditionally received similar accounts from the past, and demonstrate a particularly inimical attitude towards the *Other*, with a sense of belonging to one's personal group that knits people together. The Fountain, similarly, displays murals on the walls, but they deliver different narratives, displayed and told through its own people. Murals in the Fountain not only express the loyalty of the Protestant groups to the British crown, with flags extremely visible at the first glimpse, but communicate accounts of their past experiences and solidarity (Rolston, 2010:294). While these may be seen as intimidating, they allow ethnic groups in Derry/Londonderry to maintain their identity alongside that of their surrounding neighbours; many residents feel that without these symbols, as they are surrounded by nationalist or unionist neighbourhoods, their cultural identity would eventually be diminished.
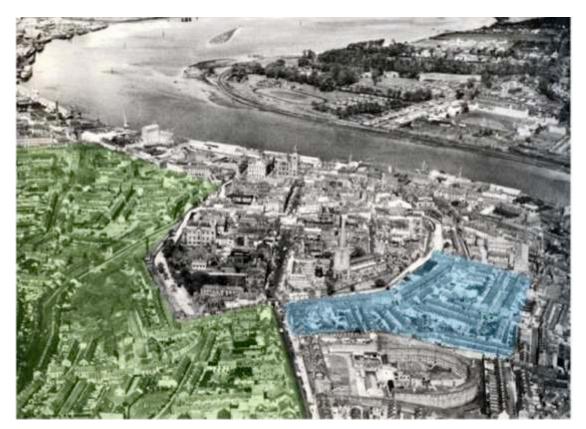

Fig. 1. Distribution of Protestant population (blue) against Catholics (green)

Fig. 2. Public amenities surrounding the Fountain Estate

Fig. 3. Murals evoking the sense of a wartime blockade

Performing Territoriality in the Estate

According to social identity theory, people have a fundamental need to belong and a need to a secure sense of self through participation in groups (Tajfel 1979). Tajfel proposed that the groups to which people belong are an important source of pride and self-esteem because they provide their followers with a sense of social identity: a sense of belonging to the social world. Yet, in order to upsurge our self-image we tend to enhance the status of the group to which we belong. For example, to say 'my community is the best in the city'. We could also increase our self-image by discriminating and holding prejudiced views against the *Other* group, to which we don't belong. They will seek to find negative aspects of the Other, hence enhancing their self-image (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

The young generation living in Northern Ireland are often seen as society's silver lining for peace building following three decades of long lasting conflict (Maggil and Hamber 2010). They are still subject to prejudice and uncertainty from the *Other* community, but with persisting lower levels of violence that featured in the past. In some cases, violence begins as a minor fight amongst young children, but may easily escalate to more serious violence such as stone throwing and participation of older youth leading to full scale rioting. In this case, the range of socio-spatial practices between groups linked to segregation is vast. How could two ethnically segregated communities accept sharing public spaces, travelling routes to schools, healthcare and public transport without jeopardizing their safety and emotional wellbeing? Key answers to this question may critically reflect on the history and politics of spatial segregation, which are certainly relevant to social psychologists. Peter Shirlow (2005), for example, looked at the urban demographic decline of the Protestant population living in Derry/Londonderry as showing a 'reduction in violence that led to re-engagement with the shopping areas in the Cityside' (Shirlow et al., 2005:4). In fact, Protestants were willing to interact regularly and socialize with non-Protestants. Nevertheless, they remained in a state of *cultural* uncertainty, which increased levels of marginalization and the sense of inequality (ibid.).

The physical proximity between the two communities often aggravates comparisons when it comes to accessing facilities. The people of Fountain community are in relatively low-income or insecure forms of employment, with housing and/or health concerns. They told community-based narratives of social disparity, injustice and victimhood, acknowledging that the barriers are allowing minimal contact with the outside and controlling their access and movement patterns, despite their significance to their safety or regardless of the socio-cultural integration with the Catholics living nearby. The fact that the entire estate is solely composed of housing units, with the exception of the School, the Youth Club and the Church, and lacks basic services, aroused their criticism. The estate, for example, has 'no newsagents, cafés or take-away restaurants, so residents must travel outside the enclave for the most basic amenities, especially in the morning time 'when they feel safest' (R3). In the past, small shops were available, but 'the migration of many people from the Fountain to the Waterside has resulted in their closure' (R5). Instead, residents have to visit shops on the Carlisle Road, which is a five-minute walk, but outside the enclave borders. The construction of the Peace Bridge across the river in 2011 was a concrete manifestation that visualized a wider vision of integration and contact. Although it was intended to improve connections on both sides of the river, movement patterns available to both groups are yet to help in diminishing its social implications. These quotations from some of the focus communities capture a sense of their persistence:

> There is no shared space for the Protestant community living in the estate; there is a park just adjacent to the Fountain at the bottom of the road, but our kids can't use that park. Anytime they try and use it they're stoned out. (R3)

> They are called Orange "B's" and all these terrible names. It's just a space we can't utilize at all. (R4)

> I couldn't name you a shared space on the Derry side at all. (R4)

> Our kids here are hemmed in. They can't even use the shopping centre unless there's a group of them together. They can't use the corner shop unless there's a group. There are no

For younger generations living in Derry, schools and universities would instigate amalgamation rather than separation where contact and intercultural exchange are most likely to occur (Vanderbeck, 2007). But hostility among them changes the equation. The negative side of this appears through social research outcomes showing higher levels of animosity in schools with different class, gender, and religion practices. Russell Orr (2012), for example, used a behavioural approach to test intergroup contact amongst young Protestant and Catholic individuals in schools, colleges and community groups in Northern Ireland. He found that participants made *self-segregating* decisions at early stages of interaction based on both religious tradition and national identity (Orr, 2012). However, mixed messages came out of the interviews. An elderly informant from the Fountain noted that:

> *I grew up in a mixed area of Catholics and Protestants. The only difference between my friends and I was that we went to different schools; although I really didn't understand why' (R12)*

> *We would not feel safe walking to school through similar travelling routes with the Catholics. That's why most children attend the local Fountain Primary School on the estate, or primary schools on the Waterside (R11, 5).*

In such settings of subjective and communal anxiety, people are likely to find it hard to have mutual respect and integration towards groups they perceive as a threat. At some times, being prejudiced could become an asset for some individuals by presenting them as victims of their failures. Being prejudiced, for example, could also provide them with a conferred interest in favouring intolerance despite progressive individual encounters with the *Other* community being in place. As such, actions of violence, incivility and discourtesy between proximate communities turn into naturalized acts of the everyday encounters. This is evident during the annual Orange Order Parades on the 12th of July, for example. Carnivals often move from the Waterside, over the Craigavon Bridge and into the Fountain passing by the Diamond area in the city centre. Young teenager informants recall that they attend the parades 'the same as others and so aren't restricted from celebrating their culture' (R8). But this is not without its difficulties. The parades are usually guarded, in certain areas, with high police presence, to keep tensions between *the kids* at bay (R7). The community workers also closely collaborate to ensure that young people from the other side are kept busy with activities organized during that time, or are taken on field trips away from any possible trouble.

But even under high measures of precaution, attacks by young Catholics would lead to frequent recall of the *Siege* metaphor by the majority of older residents of the estate. Using public transport is always preferable. The Youth Club Informants said that 'it is crucial not to walk in groups, but we prefer to take a bus to go anywhere, even on the shortest journeys' (R4, R9). An additional incident happened when a visit to the nearby Peace Bridge on foot was planned. On the return journey, groups of youths from the neighbouring community were waiting at notorious interface areas and violence broke out (R5). Individuals feel victimized and powerless, in such cases, to the degree of not being able to walk freely between sections of the city, as a spatial practice that became opposed to collective modes of administration and politicization (de Certeau, 1984:96). Community groups from the Fountain were largely in agreement in justifying their retaliatory violence against their attackers. Often in an aggrieved, or infrequently a matter-of-fact tone, they claimed that they were defending themselves.

Fig. 4. Cathedral Youth Club and the Fountain Primary School

Fig. 5. Peace wall running alongside Bishop Street and the Fountain Estate

Apparently, on-going cross-community schemes were put in place to *listen to communities* and promote contact (Murtagh, 1999), but even this initiative has remained problematic. On some occasions, conflict was in evidence, particularly 'when they allowed us to work face to face and male youths from the Fountain were attacked after being recognized' (R2). It is necessary here to grasp discourses associated with the reproduction of social cultures, such as social relationships, identities, beliefs and norms. By adhering to the discourse of feeling anxious and unsafe in the presence of members of the other community outside the Fountain's borders, although it might not be based on fact, the informants build their sense of belonging with fellow Fountain residents and with their own community. When a new play pitch was erected in 2012, apparently all community members gathered there with their children while simultaneously keeping their frontiers with the other community closed, and the potential transformation intact.

However, there are certain levels of imbalance influenced by the physical location of the enclave and its relationship with its outside neighbours. The fact that basic amenities are distanced from the estate highlights one form of instability and uncertainty. The result is that these errands must take place at certain times of the day and, for some people, only in a group reveals an increased version of the moral and political allegory of 'the Siege'. While the current economic climate may prevent any other facilities being brought into the Fountain, people are eager to walk and travel freely without the fear of attack from the *Other* side. The closure of the gate in the Bishop Street wall at night also fuels the 'Siege' metaphor, where temporal and spatial dimensions of freedom are denied, and residents are 'hemmed in' and only allowed 'out' during the day (R11). However, it is yet believed that the physical presence of the gateway is indispensable to alleviate tensions, thus confirming the theory put forward by Calame et al. (2009) that, as long as the walls remain intact, fear and paranoia relating to 'the other side' would always remain.

To a certain extent, the Fountain community restructured their socio-spatial and contact practices according to their spatio-mental images of their rooted division. Raoul Vaneigem (1967) believes that direct communication between *qualitative subjects* is the end of spectrum to which history leads people, to become manipulated as passive *objects* in the absence of qualitative richness descended from proclaiming their complex distinctiveness. People in the Fountain rarely recall stories of the Troubles, or probably have inherited little from the past (R5). As Vaneigem argues, 'an ideology of history has one purpose only: to prevent people from making history … preventing them from coming to life, from rising from the dead and running once more through the streets of our daily lives' (Vaneigem, 1967:231). What actually stood out in this context were the omnipresent signs of security and defence. There is no harm if one is caught in a fight, simply because 'everyone has done it and they are inevitable'. Apter (1997) claims that, in time, rooted and long-lasting violence tends to become a norm of the everyday reality, where individuals acquire defensive skills that live in them (ibid.:1), although it is now occurring on much lower levels than in the past. Regardless of this fact, people from the Fountain still believe that feuds and tensions between Catholics and Protestants are unavoidable 'just because of what they did to us long ago' (R2). In fact, younger generations from the Fountain did not witness the Troubles themselves: 'they only reproduce the discourse of their community and what they were told by their families' (R8). 'The event is, so to speak, deep-frozen. It becomes illegal to retrieve it, remake it, complete it or attempt its transcendence. It is merely there, preserved forever in suspended animation, where the aesthetes can contemplate it at their ease' (Vaneigem, 1967:234). They repeatedly express *intertextual* stories of the history of the Troubles in a way that recalls the fact that they have never lived with Catholic communities, although they simultaneously feel disconnected from the other side of the community. 'If you are raised in the Fountain, you will never have friends from the other side' (R14). These narratives became unconsciously 'repeatable' and mentally stored from the past, to become model actions to legitimize the future non-acceptance of the 'other' (Porter, 1986:35). On occasions, the antagonistic attitudes towards the 'other' have developed from an apparent feeling of discrimination during the past, while the struggle still continues today.

Fig. 6. Bishop Street gate that closes between 9 pm and 7:30 am

Towards Visible Peace and Interdependence

Conflict incidences in Derry/Londonderry showed that proximity on its own is not sufficient to bring about social transformation, rather more emphasis on building the next generation of peacemakers in Northern Ireland is crucial. Ash Amin (2002) argued that it is essential to create spaces of *interdependence* to develop a mature intercultural understanding. But if we need to get closer to others, what should we do? Is it a matter of mental confidences for peace or should we raise the bar of our enthusiasm to develop platforms and paths of interaction and contact, with spaces that could help healing memories of the past to generate new hopes of futuristic peace and interdependence. As such, attempts from all sectors of the community to capitalize this process appeared on the surface.

In Ebrington Square during July 2015, an 80ft piece of graffiti art that was created by young people in Derry/Londonderry went on public display to mark the beginning of a major arts festival in the city. The city was set to host 'Release the Pressure', a graffiti and mural arts festival with renowned graffiti artists travelling to the city from all over the world. The project aimed at building positive relationships among youth culture and addressing current issues, including hate crime, sectarianism, youth engagement, community cohesion and urban regeneration. The groups had been working together over a hectic three week schedule, participating in exciting graffiti and street art inspired workshops, creating art that was non-political and promoted creative expression. During the festival, the young people had the opportunity to work with and meet the international artists. Contributing artists of UV Arts, commented as follows:

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A project of this nature will have the ability to engage some of the hard to reach areas of the city and outlying areas. It can provide an exciting alternative to those who may be disengaged with the education system, at risk of offending or reoffending."

This project aims to reduce hate crime, encourage shared environments and create a sense of belonging by the changing of space and place around our communities.

It will serve to change the perception of mural art and graffiti in Northern Ireland and celebrate the future of modern and contemporary non-political murals as a tool for social change.

Releasing the Pressure is a great event for the young people in our city.

After the festival, the young people will return to their areas where they will begin planning for a permanent mural, in consultation with their own community.

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland organized a sculpturing venture in 2011. The 'Re-Imaging Communities Programme' was supported by Derry City Council to produce a number of artefacts designed by local children from schools and community groups in the area (Derry City Council, 2011). Non-competing endeavours like these are anticipated to bring communities and individuals together and to empower the 'recognition or acknowledgement of otherness in situational specificity' rather than to constantly develop robust bonds of friendship, for example (Wise 2009: 35). It is also a long-term strategy to learn from the future through establishing social programmes set out to identify social niches through well defined methods and processes of implementation (Huse, 2014:189).

The everyday interaction, it is argued by Christina Ho (2011), could be generated in the *micropublics* of cross cultural contact and encounter, where various social settings of everyday life take place, e.g. workplaces, sports centres, communal parks, schools, and children and youth community participation schemes (Amin, 2002:969). In the micropublics, people with diverse backgrounds are brought together to negotiate new patterns of social and cultural exchange and to enable transcending cultural boundaries to transform inherited relationships of the past (Ibid.). But if we are asking how to spatialize micropublics of peace in Derry/Londonderry, the first obvious response will be by removing the security barriers first. This held long-term negations with Northern Ireland Ministers and Policymakers. In 2013, work started to take down 11 of the 16 gates, in the hope that this act would send a positive message about a city once blighted by some of the worst of the violence during the 30-year conflict. In fact, earlier in the year, Derry/Londonderry was selected as UK City of Culture 2013 and was designated one of the top ten cities in the world to visit, with the historic walls progressively welcoming tourists who flocked into the city to enjoy the wealth of cultural events. As noted by Northern Ireland Justice Minister David Ford, 'the walls can now be enjoyed without the imposing structures that point to our past rather than our future'. Working closely with stakeholders from both communities, this initiative was supported by the Peace Walls Programme (PWP) adopted across NI to encourage both communities to overlook the past and to stop searching for differences. It also aimed to deliver and develop confidence and relationship building interventions to help them reach a position where they feel it is safe and appropriate to move on with the removal of their local Peace Walls. With such an optimistic atmosphere, it may be hard for tourists to imagine the city's troubled past, which has been 'shaped by violent and traumatic conflict'.

Primary and secondary schools, as micropublic spaces for children segregated by ethnicity and religion from the age of three and educated separately until eighteen are also realistic starts. In 2013, 300 primary school children from the Derry/Londonderry City Council area gathered on the iconic Peace Bridge to welcome Children in Crossfire's patron, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to the city. The party engaged in a symbolic walk across the Peace Bridge, from the Cityside to the Waterside, chaperoned by the children, who formed a guard of honour, singing 'Peace is flowing like a River'. The Serpentine of the Peace Bridge itself was designed as a structural handshake across the Foyle, creatively built to tackle the problem of the separated communities by creating genuine and unique shared space. Landscape wise, a newly installed all-weather play pitch opened in summer 2012 for

children of the Fountain community, to form part of the landscape of the Primary School and the Youth Club. 'Facilities like this, and improvements being made to housing in the estate, have resulted in some new families moving into the area' (R5). In the past, the closest recreational area was the Riverview Play Park located in the Bogside and Brandywell areas, which were avoided by the Fountain residents, fearful of entering these neighbouring areas despite efforts for integration having been in place since 2011. But what seemed an interesting fact is that the minority Protestant community from the Fountain rarely referred to their own historical propositions to locate themselves in history, either to position and describe themselves in opposition to the majority of Catholics surrounding the Fountain in terms of historical successes or to present their community as victims of the past. Instead, they presented their own *intertextual* references to what has become more important for them, as a matter of daily routine survival and belonging, which adds meaning for them to be more positively constructive about themselves. One explanation for this is that people lack robust ties with their modern history and repeatedly get confused information about the past.
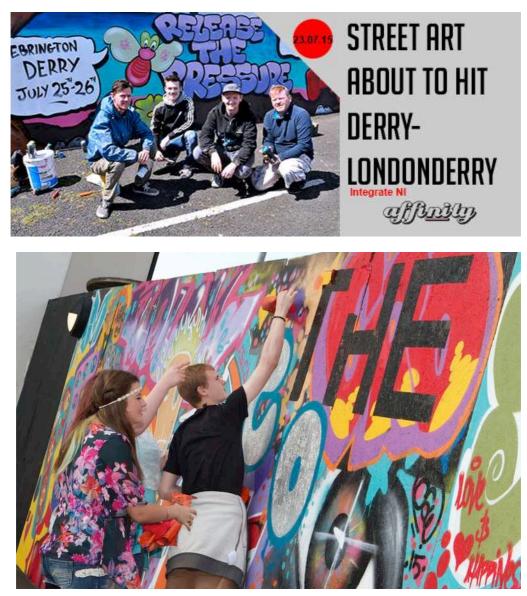

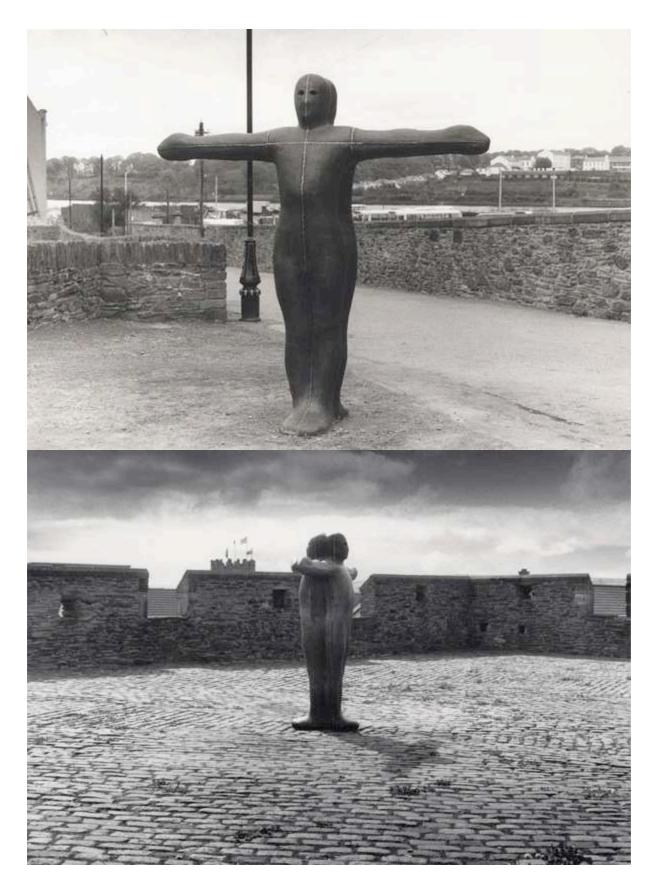Fig. 7. Youth Street Art in Derry: ' Release The Pressure', 2015.

Fig. 8. Sculpture for Derry walls, 1987, Northern Ireland
Source: http://www.antonygormley.com/sculpture/item-view/id/214#p3

Conclusion

Evidence derived from interviews with young people in Derry/Londonderry showed several important aspects. First, territoriality was highly problematic in areas witnessing daily ethnic conflict. The disadvantaged backgrounds of young people led them into territorial behaviour, which contributed to further increase their disadvantage. For a wide group of young people, space is an important factor in limiting their activities and successful interaction. But we still have limited evidence of positive social impact on improving interaction among young people. Second, when individuals of one group display negative behaviour towards the *Other,* as part of the everyday encounters, this probably leads to a generalized negative impression towards the entire group. Powerful attitudes could also be represented in the context of positive encounters. Third is that 'encounters never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power' (Valentine, 2008), and these conditions certainly are evident in Derry/Londonderry. Conflict and tension between rival communities of Protestants and Catholics, Unionists and Nationalists, Loyalists and Republicans are well-documented Derry's history and the rest of Northern Ireland. Yet, negative encounters tend to be generalized while positives only represent individual endeavours, and indeed, judgments from both sides will be usually based on their *intertextual* accounts of the Troubles that will consequently develop into a model of actions even to legitimize their future encounters.

Young people tend to adhere around their living localities and seek to represent them whenever they are outside their own areas, and are prepared to defend them as required to gain or maintain respect. Their place attachment emerges out of these emotions and regular use of streets and routes as a place of assembly and recreation. A possible resolution, I argue, is the need to retreat models of contact with indexes that allow interactions. A fundamental start will be acknowledging equalities and the *right to the city* for all community groups, such as by enabling even resource, e.g. job opportunities, affordable housing and reasonable education. Only in such settings will the different groups become less defensive or antagonized. Certainly, initiation of close working relationships between the two communities started some years ago, to minimize interface trouble during the marching season. Further relations have developed after initiation of a number of cross-community programmes and activities supported by a dedicated teams funded by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) Peace Walls Programme. The programme aims to transform the enclave into a shared community asset to reduce the physical and physiological barriers surrounding the estate.

Along with these initiatives, a high level of appreciation of the *Other* is crucial. This approach requires critical inquiries in human behaviours to deliver efficient frameworks in adding more values towards cultures and identities and to cut back discrimination or intimidation. Interviews with the Protestant community of the Fountain have endorsed conclusions to be drawn in relation to how the everyday encounters in a divided city impact the use of space, access to amenities, movement patterns and the socio-cultural identity. Moreover, the security barriers, the city walls and indeed the River Foyle all act as intimidating boundaries, with lasting effect on the lives of residents leading to a life of controlled movement and fear of the other side. Yet, it could be argued that some of the positive aspects of divided communities were witnessed here: a culture and identity, which are distinct from the *Other*, have emerged in this small community, while the Fountain community spirit enables this identity to be zealously maintained. The creation of groups such as the Cathedral Youth Club enhances the community's opportunities to gain person-to-person contact with like-minded people and gives rise to positive influences on behaviour (Gordon et al., 2006). The work carried out by the community workers and their colleagues certainly backs up this claim; proving that the residents' welfare in the estate is of the utmost importance, so 'thinking outside the box' helps them to provide opportunities and enhance the lives of the residents.

Spatial improvements are also necessary in the Fountain in order to achieve social equality. The 'peace walls' around the estate have both positive and negative value: they provide security for the residents and alleviate tensions; however, as highlighted by Bevan (2007), as long as these walls

remain intact, paranoia and fear of the other side will remain, and full integration into the rest of society can never be achieved. But although attitudes are evidently changing, with many people eager to progress with their lives, this timely process is slow to show major results. As long as there are political and cultural tensions in Northern Ireland, there will always be divided cities.

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