POLITICIZED TRADITIONS: THE REPRODUCTION OF SPATIAL CONTESTATIONTHROUGH THE MEMORY OF CONFLICT

Neighborhoods across the globe are becoming increasingly 'divers,' yet their urban encounters reproduced through negotiating differences, exhibits models of social inequality and spatial imbalances. The paper will investigate young people's relationship with contested traditions of the built environment in the context of Northern Ireland (NI), which has an extended history of profound ethnic conflict known as the Troubles. It will explore how the youngsters' everyday practices are constantly colored by heavily 'mythologised' memories of conflict driven by political subjectivities of segregation. The argument is that their daily engagement forces them to employ tactics to challenge or resist these logistical realities by adopting alternative means of interaction within the public realm. Building on Mark Juvan's 'spaces of intertextuality, I will explain how young people in NI are widely exposed to 'objects of conflict' that contextualize memory of disturbing incidents. The paper questions whether the growing cultural and ethnic diversification of societies in NI could lead to transformative social relations of integration and belonging beyond groups defined by their ethnic identity.

INTRODUCTION

Cities are changing and becoming more connected. Individuals belonging to wider groups in society are also becoming more diverse, demonstrating distinctive behaviors. While communal territory connects groups, endorsing diversity is practiced through various forms of everyday encounters, in different ways and with different outcomes. In this regard, ethnic groups tend to have dissimilar interpretations to diversity, including its social counterpart implications. Such elucidations often serve as a bedrock for different thoughts and beliefs, particularly those connected to group positions and relations[1]. As such, we observe how social practices, intergroup relations and ideologies of the past and the present (re) shape entire communities, in particular, those dominated by ethnic division and those that have lost their privileged position. These communities forge authority through their own territories, each defining its personal territoriality as a condition of control claimed by one group over a defined geographical area and defended against the *Others*.

Northern Ireland has an extended history of profound ethnic conflict. Representations of space are extremely dependent on images of division and disconnection. The distinctiveness of communities and cultures are based upon apparent spatial 'fractures' that signifies the *Other*. This forms the starting point from which to theorize contact among cultures and societies. Social segregation and the ongoing legacy of religious clashes have traditionally led to the formation, institutionalization, and consolidation of two distinctive and opposing cultures in Northern Ireland; Protestant and Catholic. These traditions exhibit forms of an exclusive social organization that emerged during the seventeenth century leading to constant

violence until comparatively recently[2]. Since 1969, space in Northern Irish cities, like Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, has been defined by boarders, barriers and walls that dissected the city's landscape and pinned down a long rooted portrait of contestation. The division had its imprints in the form of hardened territorial claims to ensure that boundaries remain in place and that territory does not slip into the hands of the *Others*[3]. These territories become spatial milieus for practicing power and claiming authority whereas each group managed their condition of insecurity by fortressing physical boundaries that gradually became part of their identities. (Fig. 1)

This conflict placed a devastating burden on Northern Ireland's young people – the sons and daughters of the 1994-ceasefire generation - who lived through and witnessed traumatic violence and experienced bereavement[4]. Young people from either side certainly suffer from distrust of the *Other* community – the same attitudes that have burdened their parents for decades. Until today, they frequently engage in uncontrolled violence or verbal confrontations. They are strictly attached to their local inherited territories, which are filled with memories of the past, while cultivating their personal encounters against the *Other.* They stem important benefits 'from their ability to shape their identities by occupying public spaces', but these spaces gradually converted into sharp chains of edges and borderlines in which stories of lose and grievance are engrained[5]. In many cases, the youngsters are *demonized* as the cause of the violence, particularly those connected with criminality, damage, and chaos[6], And to the degree that the communities have been labeling them as 'youths causing annoyance' and anti-social behavior[7].

This paper aims to examine young people's relationship with memory and territoriality and the impact of the Troubles in shaping Northern Ireland's contested and politicized urbanism. I will explain how the politics of territoriality and everyday encounters in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland's second largest city, are largely driven by the city's dense political history. In a way, their dependent or independent status is still fragile, and in some cases, they cannot claim 'places of others' because historically they are prohibited to do so[8]. Their experience of and association with territory is often challenging and problematic and dictated by remarkable violent events that formalized their integration, engagement and participation in the communities they belong to. These youngsters' status, growing up in segregated enclaves was that perpetuate strong myths about the 'other side' and provoked their fear, while division, simultaneously, became part of their everyday life and an ideology that could not be dismissed[9]. When relating or referencing past events, they have no memories of violence but must relate to history books and the *eyewitness* stories of their families to reflect on the national conflict. Over the years, many of these bloody histories are

still alive and become inherited and celebrated as traditions that has not entirely vanished and seems to never fade away. But the undeniable fact is that young people are still growing up in a divided society where 'us' and 'them' beliefs endure. I also argue that even when communities engage on a daily basis, they have no choice but to employ *tactics* to challenge or resist these logistical realities by adapting alternative means of interaction in the city. In fact, they formulate their own traditions of contact or segregation strategies colored by memories of the Troubles and bloody incidents[10]. People eventually generate closed, integrated groups limited to their own members and distance themselves from the *Others*.

This paper is informed by a multiple-dimensional discourse of analysis and theoretical encounters: the treatise of identity, memory, and social practices. I will utilize the concept of *intertextuality*, developed by Fairclough, which draws on the role of the past, as well as contemporary history[11]. The paper provides accounts of the ways in which representations of place and territory have created manipulated geographies interlocked with place, history, and memory within the contested spheres of cultural identity and nation building. These *texts* are concerned with 'mutual discourses of inclusion and exclusion', based on antagonism to the *Other*[12]. They are constructed to act as signifiers of particular discourses within the welter of contested identities that is modern Ireland. I will explain how networks and narratives of historical events from their social environment inform young people's practices, thus treating these teenagers as competent social actors in their own right. It is recognized that they do not, or should not, simply reproduce adult assumptions about the world they live in but develop their own methods of knowing. Therefore, I will shed light on some of these narratives and explore the ground-level dynamics and everyday struggles involved in the battle over space created by division.

SPACES OF ENCOUNTER: CONTACT WITH THE *OTHER*

Recent debates related to diversity, interethnic encounters, and spatial and social integration have raised questions about 'spaces of interaction' to empower evocative encounters among different social groups driven mostly by political and social conditions[13]. Theories by Gordon Allport on the *contact hypothesis* fostered a constructive interactive relationship among distinctive groups to minimize prejudice and increase meaningful engagement with Other groups[14]. Kwan argues that developing mature and close bonds with *Others* is not sufficient on its own to exhibit emotional appreciation, rather than reasoning approaches towards contact, but expressing indirect interpersonal contact also increases constructive attitudes between groups[15]. It is common that Individuals disclose mixed feelings when referring to Others to whom they are opposed and, hence, display different encounters as an outcome of difference. While indirect interpersonal contact also increases constructive attitudes between

groups, on its own that contact is inadequate for producing respect and reducing conflict [16]. This proposition is backed by relevant research in ethnicity practices that questions the reliability of recording, monitoring, and analyzing mutual contact to count as credible encounters. Although success in addressing problems of political violence is evident, we still find post conflict communities low at the level of improving inter-ethnic relations and promoting the kind of shared identity that can begin to transcend the twin problems of sectarianism and racism. Ethnic groups, for example, tend to maintain high levels of intergroup isolation regardless of proximity to geographical localities, which is further evidence that territoriality could be destructive in conditions where fear drives young people to limited traveling outside their comfort zones[17].

Scholars have explained how new 'contact zones' provide less hardened territories of interaction and where 'cultures clash and grapple with each other'[18]. Young people could normally engage on the streets, in community and youth centres, schools and church halls, on boats or mountains. These localities are governed by, questioning relationships among individuals and groups, and challenging dominating opinions to offer new possibilities and opportunities of integration. As such, contact between groups, on its own, is not sufficient to produce divers communities and mutual respect for the Other, but could 'entrench group animosities and identities' [19]. But, in some cases, contact zones infrequently display tolerant contact, as they meant to be, but on the contrary, reproduce segregation in one from or another [20]. In fact, fear from the *Other*, whether based on personal experience or on imaginary scenarios, was a key aspect that deterred citizens from engaging with such places. Migrants, similarly, construct their own contact zones that are both embodied and metaphorical, fostering interconnections in simple forms of representation of bounded geographic worlds[21]. In fact, contact zones 'are not natural servants of multicultural engagement', considering that these spaces are 'territorialized by particular groups, and therefore steeped in surveillance, or they are spaces of transit with very little contact between strangers'[22].

But the question is whether the growing cultural and ethnic diversification of contemporary societies can lead to transformative social relations of integration and belonging beyond groups defined by their identity. In examining the politics of intolerance towards minorities in multiethnic Europe, Ash Amin argues that this form of politics is symptomatic of a breakdown in social cohesion and is in need of the correction offered by community and contact [23]. He focuses on the figure of the *stranger*, tapping into a deep-rooted vernacular of *phenotypical* prejudice and intolerance. Marco Antonsich examined ways to avoid falling into the trap of 'socially de-contextualized individualism', claiming that constructive contact is profoundly bonded with belonging and identity [24]. He argues that belonging should be analyzed from various perspectives such as personal emotions, place

attachment, and sense of being 'at home' in a place, in order to be a position to 'construct, justify, or resist forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion' [25]. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's *right to the city* as 'the right of all its inhabitants to shape urban life and to benefit from it', Amin (2013) pushes for a politics of the commons that makes space for, and *publicizes* rituals of, cohabitation, 'a welfarist bio-politics and other collective interventions that might strengthen civilities of indifference to difference'[26]. However, connecting *rights* to the debate of encounter and appreciating the city's diversity are particularly pertinent to encounters between ethnically divided groups in contact zones. These groups coming together will necessarily be mediated by the question of rights and the ability or inability to participate through *common grounds* that allow *multiplicity* as a gathering of equals, a meeting ground and shared turf'. There is no doubt that denying these groups the privilege of celebrating basic entitlements robs them of the capacity to have the same rights and same means to participate and contribute to urban life.

The forthcoming sections of this paper are based on qualitative research to provide aimed at providing reliable accounts and in-depth analysis of young people living within divided groups who share hostile attitudes towards each other. The empirical research was conducted through two phases of field interviews with young people aged 14-20 from the Fountain and the Bogside areas of Derry/Londonderry in addition to four community workers from each group. The first phase covered semi-structured interviews with 20 young people (9 Protestants and 11 Catholics). The signification processes of their own interpretation and reflected spatial practices in the form of hostile attitudes towards the other group were not always rationalized; but occasionally they contradicted views expressed by other interviewees, particularly when the boys were part of a bigger peer group. The second phase of interviews comprised three focus groups of 4-6 members each. The latter were structured around the topics and themes identified by participants.

CONTESTED TRADITIONS AND IMAGINED SPACES

Derry/Londonderry is a city located on the north coast of Ireland; it is well known in Irish Nationalist/Catholic culture as 'Derry' and in Ulster Unionist/Protestant culture as 'Londonderry'[27]. The city was the scene of conflict long before the modern Troubles. This political division is spatialised through borders and natural landscape – both material and symbolic. The city's landscape is divided by the River Foyle and by man-made walls built in 1613-1618 to defend the lives and properties of Protestant settlers inside the walled city, within which Catholics were mostly forbidden to live. Social and spatial segregation in Derry/Londonderry emerged long before the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and paramilitary ceasefires: Catholic communities had become gradually excluded, a 'powerless majority

hemmed into a ghetto outside the centre of their own city, currently known as the Bogside; but also as a powerless minority trapped by partition within a state run by their enemies'[28]. The conflict led to a reduction in inter-community socialising, education, work, and wider habituation'[29]. And the 'spatial imposition and contestation of state power, remembered in highly politicized cultures of public commemoration'[30]. Having survived the famed Siege of Derry in 1688-89, the city was transformed into a mythical place, 'forever memorable as an impregnable bulwark of British Protestantism, of civil and religious liberty'[31].

Division in Derry/Londonderry regulated the ways in which is experienced through collective memories of traditions and contestation grounded in its public sphere. Both communities have experienced disturbing pasts for several decades, particularly between 1969 & 1973 when a 'legacy of hurt' occurred following the Protestant exodus from the west bank of the Foyle to escape sectarian tensions. In January 1972, the Bogside area was turned into the site of a massacre of civilians known as 'Bloody Sunday', an event that hung like a dark cloud over the city for decades and which remains a pivotal event in the escalation of the Troubles throughout Northern Ireland[32]. The incident occurred when a Civil Rights march against the policy of internment of Catholic residents of the Bogside was banned from entering the city center. Angry young men began to hurl stones at British soldiers; the upshot was that 13 Catholic men were shot dead close to Free Derry Corner. Ten years later, the bombing of the Droppin' Well bar in Ballykelly near Derry/Londonderry was described as 'one of the most horrific crimes in Ulster's tragic history': 11 soldiers and six civilians were killed when a bomb exploded during a disco in the pub[33]. The Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), a Republican paramilitary group, carried out the attack targeting soldiers stationed at the nearby Shackleton barracks in Derry/Londonderry. Survivors of the attack still remember the pain and grieve until today. A 17-year-old boy, although not physically injured in the explosion, carried psychological damage in the years to follow. He said[34]:

> It's just a nightmare that never goes away
>
> Everyone involved is going to be sore.
>
> They are going to remember the last time they spoke to the person that didn't come home.

The youth and their relatives believe that events like the Bloody Sunday and many others have not been forgotten over time; the same way the 1972 exodus impacted the Protestant community too, heightening sectarian tensions within and without Derry's walls. Each community has very contrasting feelings: what one side considers a major abuse of human rights and inequality, the other criticizes it as a matter of exaggeration[35]. For Catholics,

Bloody Sunday brought outrage and grievance; for Protestants, it brought fame[36]. Such beliefs mostly define clear-cut relationships and social behavior between the communities and impact the lives of young people. These also have crucial implications for shaping the identity of each one: Protestants were historically ranked above Catholics, a mind-set that determined the way the new state of Northern Ireland, created in 1921, acted towards and treated its Catholic population[37]. This, in turn, influenced how Catholics defined their identity in opposition to that of Protestants, thereby constructing a social world of two opposing identity categories of 'us' and 'them'[38].

People's social relations and identities are represented by the synchronisms of discourses, whereas 'people's lives, networks, and identities were patterned geographically and discursively ... across different sites of activity, e.g. work, home, community'[39]. The broad interpretation and regulation of space establishes and/or reshapes social relationships and hierarchies, and constantly shifts subject positions. The social identity theory explains how people have a fundamental need to belong and possess a secure sense of self through participation in groups[40]. Tajfel proposes that 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 uplift our self-image, we tend to enhance the status of the group to which we belong – for example, saying 'my community is the best in the city'. Groups can also increase their self-image by discriminating and holding prejudiced views against the *Other* group, to which they don't belong. They seek out negative stories of the *Other*, thereby enhancing their self-image[41]. This explains why Nationalists in the Bogside and Unionists in the Fountain communicated their legendary battles through *lieux de memoire,* or sites of memory, which are parts of the built environment and places containing distilled reminiscences of the past objectified in the murals in housing estates, painted curbs, and flags[42].

SITES OF MEMORY AND *INTERTEXTUAL* SPACES

Young people in Northern Ireland mostly learn about their history not only by hearing stories from their families and relatives, but by being exposed to elements, or what I call *objects of conflict,* that contextualize and spatialize conflict surrounding them everywhere. Successive generations in Northern Ireland in whom conflict is instilled predominantly communicate the memory of disturbing incidents through street and granite monuments displaying their sorrow and/or the bravery of 'their' people; these *objects* and monuments gradually become cultural expressions used to demarcate ownership and claim public spaces[43]. For decades, young people from the Fountain estate (a Protestant enclave on the overwhelmingly west bank or Cityside of Derry) and the Bogside area (a predominantly Catholic area) have been exposed

to these *objects* on daily basis; through their school journeys, trips to and from the town center, accessing amenities, and visiting public parks. The high number of murals in the Fountain and the Bogside enable people to reminisce and remember their past. Ingeniously, those that built them utilized their everyday living spaces in the service of remembrance by using original photographic materials and sharp colors to create a sensitive and sensible aesthetic appeal for passers-by[44]. When touring the Fountain, one cannot miss a renowned Unionist mural stating 'Londonderry West Bank Loyalists Still Under Siege No Surrender'. This artwork became a tradition and a landmark that deeply conveys the sense of a wartime blockade and an attitude of defiance towards the invader [45](Fig. 2). Another well-known mural records the Catholic Bishop of Derry, known then as Fr Edward Daly, waving a blood-stained white handkerchief on Bloody Sunday as others carry a seriously wounded young man through the streets of the Bogside. To this day, that mural remains an enduring image of the Troubles and perhaps stands out more than any other as a symbol of Bloody Sunday, while also validating the identity of the Bogside community as a subjugated social group (Fig. 3).

Here, I would like to draw additional attention to 'text' representing spaces shaped by mutual relations and boundaries. They normally presuppose discrete and structured delimitation, and, within their boundaries, a coherent internal structure. This could be described as spatial composition or, rather, as hypotactic structures of inter-spatial relationships. These spatial compositions articulate and segment textually represented spaces and constitute their hierarchy, as well as dictating how people interact within the space. For example, people mobilize in the city in different ways and in different imaginaries which form the boundaries between one space and another or between different kinds of spaces, whether material or cognitive. As such, Intertextuality is cognized as the practice of 'transposing, juxtaposing, and blending heterogeneous semiotic spaces, not only those represented in the textual world', through *objects* and *metaphors* like murals and paintings, but also through those evoked by linguistic and genre forms on the textual surface[46]. Intra-textual space also contributes to a significant part of the imaginary, since it is repeatedly attached to recurring elegiac memories that carry archetypical ideals to organize the subject's awareness of the past and future. Intertextuality, as interpreted in this discussion, is a central concept that explains ways in which people could interrogate new meanings in the production of space through the insertion of past 'texts' into the present[47]. This is of vital significance, since memory and history are integral to people's everyday lives in Northern Ireland. These texts are materialized through powerful reminiscences, which allows people to construct and avail of the public realm in certain ways.

Sites of memories in the Fountain and the Bogside epitomize history related texts, whereby young people are able to express aspects of identity and contact. The Catholic memory of the Troubles and the Protestant memory of the Siege of Derry are manifested across both groups. Catholics living in the Bogside, for example, express their identity through commemoration revolving around the many deaths in their community since the recent conflicted began in the late-1960s. The well-maintained Bloody Sunday Memorial is one. Free Derry Wall, erected in 1969 to separate the Bogside from the rest of the city, retains political and historical significance to the present day. It was also the venue of unpleasant celebrations following the death of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher[48]. Sectarian attacks by Catholic youths on residents of the Fountain estate followed[49]. These reminiscences and events, although different in type, maintain a refreshing image of stasis and ongoing memory, sometimes imagined and sometimes intimidating, but still imbedded in the minds and territories of the young; this is crucial to the group's ideological strength. When these symbols of the past play such as important role in the life of people today, disagreements and division within the city arise, as each display becomes a competition. Protestants also experienced critical historical events, such as the 1641 Rebellion (when settlers were executed by Catholics rebelling against British rule), the Siege of Derry in 1689, the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, defiance to Home Rule between 1912-1914, and the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in 1985. The symbols of Protestantism, displayed on wall murals and Orange banners, certainly icon these events as chronicles of blood sacrifice and deception[50]. Nevertheless, These do not trigger an ongoing narrative or theme that connects them together through a 'text' set by representation of territory. For most adults, 'the mainstream cultural unionist identity remains highly reductionist in its version of the past, largely dependent on sectarian depictions of the Other to legitimate its discourse of exclusion'[51].

In a way, we observe the reproduction of unique intertextual networks that manifest their feelings of prejudice and anger towards the other community[52]. The original texts are usually informed by adults' perceptions of the past or actual participation and involvement in one event or another related to violence or the struggle for freedom and civil rights, and which eventually become masters of the narrative[53]. Despite Derry/Londonderry now being relatively free from violence, young people still rely on their parents' accounts to better explain themselves and their hostile attitudes. For those that were involved in violence, the reproduction of histories constructs an opportunity not to feel regretful for what they may have done, as long as a senior member of the community did so in the past. This displays the vertical dimension of intertextuality in relations between actions and their original accounts in space[54]. Fathers' and sons' texts, for example, become interconnected and associated with

each other to back their current practices, which become heavily informed by past formulas of bravery and pride, despite playing only a very marginal role in this narrative[55].

As Raoul 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'[56]. For this, the Fountain and the Bogside youth interpret their social and spatial interaction practices according to their past imaginaries of the ingrained conflict. Apter notes 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', although it must be conceded that it is now occurring on much lower levels than in the past[57]. Residents gradually see the *objects* as *metaphors* to express their feelings and thoughts about inhabiting and living beyond their own territories. Youngsters from the Fountain mostly incorporate these objects and metaphors into their everyday encounters[58]. The *siege* conveys areas of attack and resistance in a battle and, therefore, suggests the militarization of thought and practice as ways of protecting themselves, reacting, and progressing from day to day. Over time, the identity of places such as the Fountain and the Bogside become visualized and personalized by objects, which unknowingly inform mutual contact and practices of the people of that part of the city.

Indeed, Northern Ireland's young people are strongly seen as the nation's peace builders and its brightest hope to end over three decades of conflict[59]. Nevertheless, they face excessive forms of prejudice which can sometimes develop into serious violence. We still hear stories from both communities being reconciled with the current situation and basing their conclusions on what they have heard from history: 'Irish and English don't like each other, and we will always have clashes, that's how we see it'[60]. Statements like this explain why people's memories of the past are still shaping and legitimizing their future relationships[61]. In fact, *text* wreckages of the Troubles arose repeatedly in words used by the youth of the Bogside, even though, as teenagers, none of them has witnessed or remembers what the *Other* did in the past, as did the inevitability of a continuous struggle. They also interpreted violent events, although not those in which they have participated, into social and spatial texts of the present struggle and how it has shaped relations among them[62].

The broad current discourse concerning the Troubles seems to have largely shifted in favor of the Catholic community and provides a very powerful resource to be drawn from. In Derry/Londonderry, visitors and sightseers visit the Bogside to look at popular murals and visit the Museum of Free Derry which mostly provides a different restructuring of texts conditional to other relations of power. We also find that the social confines of young people from the Bogside are not very constrained, with the discourse of past suffering of their

community providing a backing and considerable numerical superiority in comparison to the Fountain the position of power, at least for the first sight. Violence often starts as a minor altercation between young children but may easily escalate to a full-scale riot; therefore, the range of socio-spatial practices between groups linked to segregation becomes unpredictable. The question here is how could both segregated communities acknowledge sharing and using public spaces on an everyday basis without jeopardizing their safety and emotional wellbeing? Do they share travel routes to schools, public transport, and access to basic services? The demographic decline of the Protestant population living on the west bank of the Foyle River in Derry/Londonderry, for example, paralleled a 'reduction in violence that led to re-engagement with the shopping areas in the Cityside'[63]. Protestants were willing to interact regularly and socialize with non-Protestants, but they remained *culturally* uncertain, leading to higher levels of marginalization and a sense of inequality[64].

YOUNG PEOPLE PERFORMING TERRITORIALITY

The Fountain estate presents a character similar to that of the Bogside, apart from having smaller houses and being trapped in behind 'peace walls'. The physical proximity of the Fountain and the Bogside regularly aggravates judgments when it comes to engagement and interaction in Derry's public spaces. The people of the Fountain are in relatively low-income or insecure forms of employment, and face housing and/or health concerns. They normally express community-based narratives of social disparity, injustice, and victimhood, acknowledging that these issues collectively are allowing minimal contact with Catholics living nearby. Their fear of contact is also controlling their mobility patterns[65]. The fact that the estate is composed solely of housing units, with the exception of the school, the youth club, and the church, and lacks basic services, has escalated the situation. The estate has 'no newsagents, cafés or restaurants, leaving its residents with a long trip outside the estate to reach basic amenities'[66]. Some small shops were available in the past, but 'the migration of many people from the Fountain to the Waterside led to their closure'[67]. The people then had no option but to travel to shops on Carlisle Road, which is relatively long walk outside the estate.

Under stressful settings of communal anxiety, young people in Derry find it hard to have mutual respect for and integration with groups they perceive as a threat. Being prejudiced could become an asset for some individuals by presenting them as victims of their own failures. It also provides them with a conferred interest in favoring intolerance, even if a radical progression in individual encounters with the other side is seen. The community influence in the Fountain, for example, leads to a negative perception of the Bogside youth: 'If we are from the Fountain … we know that we would never become friends with them'[68].

In some way, they refuted the opinions held by the Catholic community, scornfully expounding the matter of Bloody Sunday, the causes of riots in the late 1970s, and/or how the hunger strikers 'died for no reason[69]. Therefore, celebrating the achievements of the latter, as evidently is the case in the Bogside, would not portray the speaker in a good light. In fact, a group of teenagers did not dismiss the Hunger Strikes of 1981 as intrinsically wrong; but being loyal to their community, and the sense of *togetherness*, they interpreted the text from the past to be in favor of belonging to their own people – 'the British soldiers and the British citizens'[70]. The boys believed that feeling themselves to be the victim of prejudice is not a problem: in fact, in their words, they are 'still making themselves victimized', with the government having 'spent a fortune on investigations, whereas Protestant civilian deaths were not investigated'[71].

Moreover, the local media, such as daily magazines, the *Derry Journal* and TV programs, usually condemn sectarian acts in accordance with the widespread official discourse of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Many of the young people interviewed gradually started to draw up their views based on this discourse and some even found themselves obliged to exert an explicit influence over others[72]. However, in the discourse of political violence, the anti-state position is what stipulates that protests be held, its logical causes, and a 'discourse community'[73]. Yet, in Derry, the principle stays the same. While displaying hostile attitudes towards and rioting with the *Others*, in many cases, young people are encouraged to participate in confrontations and certainly do not face criticism from their community. One of the Bogside youths observed:

> *We act like this because of what happened in the past … we were brought up with heartbreaking stories … we did not witness them … but my parents still have them live everyday… riots and violence is not bad and my community supports it. My family understands my actions and where it is coming from … there is no other way to make it work.*

However, what is more striking is how Derry's division manifests itself at the present day and how we observe expressions of violence, incivility, and discourtesy from both communities becoming naturalized acts of everyday encounters. In the past, celebrations of the siege were not only a frequent source of trouble, but also a celebration of Protestant Unionist identity. That ceremony 'constitutes a dialogue, more or less a silent game of chess, enacted in the streets to remind people that despite the Catholic majority in Derry, the city continues to be Protestant territory[74]. The commanding position taken up by Loyalists on the city walls during the parade often evokes intimidation and threat. Catholics in the Bogside also organize a small number of commemorative parades like the Easter Rising ceremony and

Proclamation of the Irish Republic in 1916. These reinforce 'a rigid, unwritten law that Catholics could not march within the city walls', one enforced with violence by the police[75]. Still, much progress has been made in the last few years between the Bogside residents and the Apprentice Boys of Derry (organizers of the annual siege commemoration) regarding marching – and even the question of Nationalist marches on the walls has progressed successfully. This is evidenced by the recent Maiden City Accord protocol agreed and approved in 2014. This initiative from the local 'Loyal Orders' seeks to manage their parades in the city and 'promote a dignified, respectful parading culture'. The annual march was frequently a source of trouble, but this accord provides 'a real way forward, both for the Loyal Orders and for the entire community'[76].

However, the Fountain's youth rarely bring up stories from the past and may possibly have avoided talking about it[77]. This is evident during the annual Orange Order parades on July 12, for example. On that day, a carnival often moves from the Waterside, over the Craigavon Bridge and into the Fountain, passing by the Diamond area in the city center. Teenage informants spoke of how they attend the annual parades: 'the same as others and so aren't restricted from celebrating their culture'[78]. Yet, we still see that parades always require a heavy police presence, to keep tensions between *the kids* at bay[79]. Community workers also collaborate closely 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 (Fig. 4).

Even so, there are certain levels of imbalance caused by the physical location of both the Fountain and the Bogside communities and their relationships. The fact that basic amenities are located at some distance from the two estates highlights one form of instability and uncertainty. The result is that errands must be made at certain times of the day and, for some people, only in a group, which once again reveals a stronger version of the moral and political metaphor represented by *siege*. The closure of the gate in the Bishop Street wall at night also fuels a *siege* metaphor, whereby temporal and spatial dimensions of freedom are denied, and residents are 'hemmed in' and only allowed 'out' during the day[80]. As one teenager explained, 'The physical presence of the gate is irreplaceable to alleviate tensions … as long as the walls are still there'[81] (Fig. 5). To a certain degree, the present economic climate in Derry/Londonderry is preventing new facilities from being brought into the Fountain, leading people to be eager to increase free mobility without fear of attack from their Bogside neighbors, whereas fear and paranoia relating to 'the other side' would always remain. Despite this, a new play pitch was opened in summer 2012 for children of the Fountain community as part of the primary school and youth club landscape. Before then, the closest

recreational area was the Riverview Play Park located in the Bogside and Brandywell areas, which the Fountain residents avoided for fear of violence despite efforts at integration having been put in place. This new venture was anticipated to improve facilities in the Fountain with the hope of establishing a better environment for engagement and contact.

The serpentine shape of the Peace Bridge erected in 2011 was designed as a structural handshake across the Foyle, creatively built to tackle the problem of separate communities by creating genuine and unique shared space. The new bridge across the river was a constructive materialization of stimulating diversity in Derry/Londonderry. Although it was intended to improve connections on both sides of the river, patterns of movement available to both groups are yet to help in improving social interaction and experiences of a different culture. Using public transport is always preferable, as members of the youth club said: 'It is crucial not to walk in groups, but we prefer to take a bus to go anywhere, even on the shortest journeys'[82]. When a visit to the Peace Bridge was planned in 2013 for club members, some boys from the Bogside community were waiting at notorious interface areas and violence broke out[83]. In such cases, victims of this violence feel offended, disrespected, and powerless to the extent of being subject to administered and politicked mobility across the city. For a couple of decades, cross-community organizations have been making progress, through great efforts, to *listen to communities* and promote contact[84]. But this initiative has had difficulties of its own: 'When both groups worked together, male youths from the Fountain were attacked after being recognized'[85]. It is necessary 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 beyond the borders of the Fountain, although it might not be based on fact, informants build their sense of belonging with fellow residents and with their own community. When the play pitch was built in 2012, all community members gathered there with their children, instantaneously keeping intact both their boundaries with the other community and this potential new transformation.

FOSTERING INTERCULTURAL DIALOUGE

Since the peace process started, policy agendas in Derry have been determined by ideas of cultural diversity, which support the manifestation of the two traditions and foster better inter-group relations. Opponents claim that this approach has barely loosened ethnic boundaries and has not boosted reconciliation[86]. Nevertheless, recent years have seen intercultural initiatives and the NI Executive's 'Building a United Community' scheme, both genuine responses to understanding 'the need to set the relationship between communities as the focal point of both official discourse and practice has been recognized more widely'[87]. Besides,

peace organizations, through financial support from the EU in particular, understand the significance of fostering dialogue between communities to produce events and programs that address tensions subtly. They are also aware that 'neutralizing the politics of identity is required to provide better opportunity for inter-cultural exchange between Unionist and Nationalist communities' (ibid.). Indeed, manifestations of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland are countless, but some particularly relevant local initiatives are noted below.

A number of initiatives have emerged from the context of intercultural and international communication using dialogic theory and practice in Northern Ireland[88]. Despite increasing efforts at resolving differences in that city, one could easily admit that 'there are two public spaces in Derry/Londonderry. The larger one is Catholic/Nationalist and the smaller one is Protestant/Unionist'[89]. Incidences of violence in Derry/Londonderry among the young demonstrate that proximity between the two communities has not brought about social transformation and, therefore, that there is need for building of new relationships and new generations of peacemakers in Northern Ireland. One remarkable venture that certainly brought the two communities closer together was Derry/Londonderry being designated the inaugural UK City of Culture (CoC) in 2013. Receipt of this distinction saw some tough questions being asked: would this 'rebranding' gesture become 'life and place changing'[90]; would it succeed in bringing 'new stories' as opposed to conflict (Doak, 2014); and would it lead to a rise in the 'profile of the City'?[91] Nonetheless, additional cross-community engagement was anticipated to have greater potential for stimulating peace and community benefits, and civic pride, and for healing wounds[92]. For example, the Ebrington area was rebranded as a 'neutral and depoliticised space' open for mutual cultural encounters with both communities', increasing levels of positive emotional impact and real cohesiveness and a sense of unity'[93]. For the first time, CoC empowered people in Derry/Londonderry to experience culture and arts away from their reference to past 'texts' and metaphors, thus progressively augmenting their fragmented community interactions.

Programs delivered by the Youth Service in Derry/Londonderry vary; however, the city has certainly witnessed progressive work on the youth working together, changing customs, and spatialized behaviors on the go. A promising venture inaugurated by the local education authority began in 2016. The 'Our Space' youth facility, located in Guildhall Square, was the first city-center provision developed to engage young people who would not normally participate in youth service activities. Liam Curran, a senior figure in Youth Services, considered the venture 'a safe and neutral venue that acts as both a place where young people can meet and a place that promotes the ethos of participation, acceptance and understanding of others and the testing of values and beliefs'[94]. In addition, the Arts Council of Northern

Ireland organized a sculpturing venture in 2011, 'Re-Imaging Communities'. Derry City Council supported this program to produce a number of artifacts designed by local schoolchildren and community groups[95]. Indeed, endeavors like this is anticipated to bring communities together and to empower the 'recognition or acknowledgement of otherness in situational specificity', rather than, for example, to constantly develop robust bonds of friendship[96]. It is also a long-term strategy to learn for future developments by establishing social programs set out to identify social niches through well-defined methods and processes of implementation. A similar scheme went ahead in July 2015, when Derry/Londonderry hosted 'Release the Pressure', a graffiti and mural arts festival with renowned graffiti artists traveling to the city from all over the world. An 80-foot piece of graffiti art was created, in Ebrington Square, by Derry's youth from all communities and went on public display to mark the launch of the festival. The project aimed to build positive relationships among youth culture and address current issues, including hate crime, sectarianism, youth engagement, community cohesion, and urban regeneration. The groups had been working together for three weeks, participating in exciting graffiti and street art-inspired workshops, creating art that was non-political but which promoted creative expression. During the festival, the young people had the opportunity to work with and meet international artists (Fig. 6). Contributing artists from UV Arts stated:

> *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 obvious achievement for spatializing micropublics of peace in Derry/Londonderry would be to pull down the dividing walls and for people to move freely and safely across the city[97]. The Northern Ireland Executive set a target date of 2023 for the removal of all peace walls. There is acknowledgment that such strategy should include the consent and support of the residents that live beside these structures. To practically enforce this, long-term negations with Northern Ireland ministers and policymakers have been held during the past ten years. A central obstacle in this plan is the absence of a central policy that reinforces all subdivisions represented within the Northern Ireland Executive, whereas 'peace walls continue to be viewed very much as a security issue, and therefore, one that requires a policy response underpinned by security values and processes'[98]. Stakeholders from both communities worked closely to make this initiative a reality, receiving tremendous support from the Peace

Walls Programme (PWP), which has been embraced across the country to encourage both communities to oversee a transformation from the past and stop searching for differences. It also aimed to develop confidence and relationship building interventions to help people reach a position where they feel it is safe and appropriate to move on with the removal of their local peace walls and to escape their violent and traumatic conflict for good. Up till today, limited actions towards peace walls, barriers and fences removal are recorded, with one security gate removed in Derry/Londonderry and an eight-foot barrier long standing in an interface area in North Belfast. For young people living in Northern Ireland, the physical objects of segregation are not simply a symbol of the historical conflict, nor a reminder of the peace-building challenges that remain. In fact, the abnormal has become normal and their acknowledgment of how peace is perceived and therefore represented and practiced is momentously taking shape through a lens that is defined by physical division and permanent segregation.

CONCLUSION

This research on the young people of Derry/Londonderry has revealed several important facts. It poses question on why change towards transformative social relations of integration and belonging beyond groups defined by their identity is important and what this mean for their future in line with the government's strategy to remove all peace walls by 2023. First, territoriality is highly problematic in areas witnessing daily ethnic conflict. The disadvantaged backgrounds of the youngsters led them into territorial behavior, which has contributed to increasing their disadvantage. A wide group of them explained that space is central to practice diversity and celebrate differences; it also limits their everyday activities and interaction with the *Other*. But we still have limited evidence of the positive social impact of improving interaction among young people. Second, they drew various distinctions in references to religious affiliations such as Catholic/Protestant and Republican/Loyalist. For both communities, mutual hostility towards the *Other* appeared to fluctuate, particularly when referring to grievances which usually pointed towards 'all Protestants or all Catholics'. Displaying negative behavior towards the *Other,* as part of everyday encounters, leads to a generalized negative impression towards the entire community. As Gill Valentine argues, normalized attitudes could be represented in the context of positive encounters; therefore, people need to understand differences and realize that it is not impossible to live together, even with the disparate views that are definitely apparent in Derry/Londonderry[99]. Nevertheless, we find that young people tend to adhere to their locality and seek to symbolize it, regardless of violence that could arise. We also realize that their attachment to place

emerges out of these emotions and regular use of streets and routes as a place of assembly and recreation.

On the other hand, a higher level of respect and appreciation towards the *Other* is crucial. The critical debates in human behavior tend to produce progressive agendas to increase the value of identity and multiculturalism in opposition to inequality. Group and individual lived experience and willingness to risk change and open up their worldview somehow hinder diversity in Northern Ireland. Promoting diversity thus requires rationally applying bottom-up communication and providing communities with the power of planning for their future. One major key is building trust, in order to understand possible ways of healing the past. New paths and channels are required to bring together the different narratives that construct conflict, thereby offering the possibility of understanding its impact on newer generations that may or may not be involved in it. Experiencing diversity in closed localities like Derry will be best manifested through constructive dialogue that allows people to freely share their experiences without anxiety of reprisal from the *Others*. Dialogue will also open new channels and opportunities for coming together to understand and, consequently, appreciate each other's differences. Mutual communication through dialogue, therefore, requires different groups to meet, interconnect, and interact, thereby allowing authentic quality of thought to progress. It is a transformation in how people understand the self, the other, and the societies they inhabit'[100].

Finally, this paper shows that many of the regeneration ventures in Derry/Londonderry have focused on revitalizing postindustrial decline, improving employment rates, and integrating the city into the global tourist market. Local people taking into account that certain places are associated with a dissonant past oppose these initiatives. Despite frustration that the City of Culture initiative did not directly increase employment opportunities, the city generated new intercultural narratives, which were applauded by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council' launched in the 1970s[101]. The events arranged demonstrated that government and policymakers progressively aimed to enforce the role of the renegotiation of culture in wider debates on future relations between communities and on promoting social equality. The existence of barriers in Derry/Londonderry provided safety and security during times of tension, and drew hard lines of segregation, yet they remain physical signs of paranoia and fear of the other side. But we are witnessing bold and courageous mind sets for change and integration, with both sides of the conflict mostly anxious to move on with their futures.

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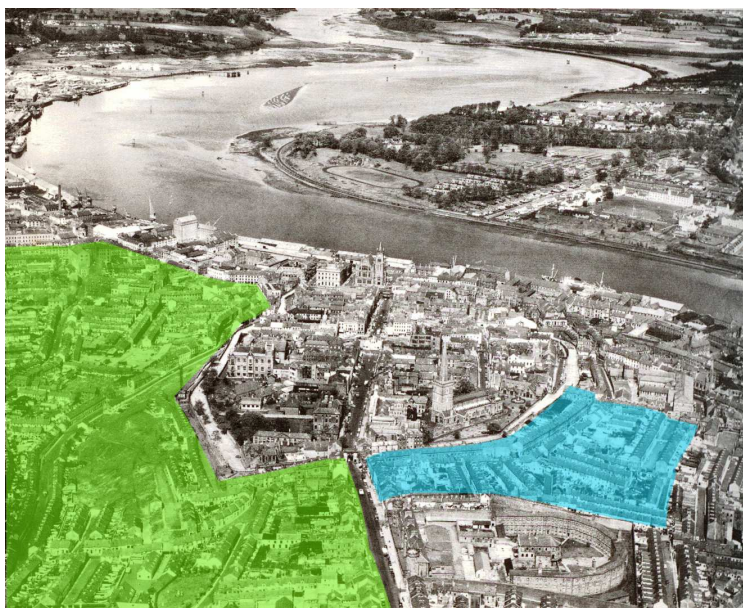
FIGURES

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

Fig. 2. Murals evoking the sense of a wartime blockade

Fig.3. Murals of Bloody Sunday in the Bogside.

Fig. 4. Young Nationalist children watch Loyalist bands through secured screens.

Fig. 5. Police in riot gear guard the ancient Butcher's gate of Derry, during the annual Orange Order parade.

Fig 6. Youth Street Art in Derry: ' Release The Pressure', 2015.