

# INTRODUCTION

## SPATIALITY, MOVEMENT AND PLACE-MAKING



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### **Vignette 1**

As a young child, I had always loved visiting the city. A chance to wonder at the huge fanciful department stores filled with treasures. A chance to get a special treat of fish and chips or tea and cake. But one day that changed. The city was under attack. In the chaos we were forced into the path of the explosion. My senses were overwhelmed: the dull thud; the shattering glass propelling through the air before crashing to the ground; the screaming and shouting; and the sight of helpless policemen and shoppers trying to figure out what to do in all this chaos. I was uninjured but the encounter left its mark. My visits became less frequent and eventually stopped. (Reflection on ‘the Troubles’, Angela Mazzetti, 2016)

### **Vignette 2**

During my fieldwork in Belfast, one of the members of the women’s group told me how they bonded over everyday problems and supported each other. ‘When my daughter Kate was 19,’ she said, ‘the fella who she was with was an absolute dick. I remember speaking about her with the girls, in WLP. “Yes, yes, that’s terrible,” I said, “let me tell you what happened to my girl.”’ Talking about such things, Catholic and Protestant women found out that they had a lot in common. ‘You have the same problems,’ she explained; ‘There is just this underlying thing of Catholics and Protestants,

but it's not of our making, and it's not of their making'. (Reflection on fieldwork, Andrea García González, 2016)

### Vignette 3

MS: Remember where we first met?

MK: We met through the children's crèche of course! I think I had seen you coming and going, with Tristan in the pram, up and down the Rugby Road. I could tell that, like me, you were not a native to Belfast but I have always been shy in making new acquaintances so I didn't approach you. I can't remember exactly the first time that we spoke but you probably spoke to me first.

MS: I also can't remember exactly when that was, but I do remember being really happy to meet another migrant mother, and the fact that our children got on well. I also remember the contrast of the atmosphere in the crèche and, only five minutes away, the dynamics of the university environment; having to switch all the time to a different mode of being. I liked making friends outside the professional sphere. (Conversation between Maruška Svašek and Milena Komarova, 2016)

### Vignette 4

Sitting in front of my computer in the peaceful atmosphere of my home in rural Ireland, I follow online discussions about Northern Irish politics and evolving conflicts. My engagement with social media links me to other people and places in and beyond the region, and the research process is often a surprisingly intense experience. The pages and timelines, simultaneously open on my machine, reveal past and emerging threads of emotional interventions, tongue-in-cheek conversations, hurtful insults, and playful remixes. Digital research requires continuous decision making about whether or not to click on a given link. Concentration and discipline are key in the face of the multiple tracks. (Reflections on online research, Augusto Soares, 2016)

This book challenges widespread images of Northern Ireland as either a 'conflict-ridden' or a 'post-conflict' society – images that have dominated both academic writing and media reportage. The contributions to this volume seek to enrich these politics-laden approaches with more varied perspectives on life in the region. While we do not deny that decades of both violence and peace making have strongly shaped Northern Irish society, we argue that an overarching focus on political conflict and reconciliation severely limits insights into the histories and spatial practices of individuals and groups in the region, and into the nature of conflict as such. In our view, an approach that foregrounds the analysis of sectarian and territorial tensions between unionist (or loyalist) Protestants and nationalist (or republican) Catholics, overlooks the more diverse processes

of place-making that individual members of these groups are involved in, and sidelines the voices of other inhabitants in the region, including non-sectarian ‘locals’, migrants, refugees, and people of different religious and ideological persuasions, and sexual orientations.

The four vignettes at the start of this introduction demonstrate that people born in, or migrated to, Northern Ireland have been caught up in a diversity of spatial experiences that cannot be understood through the prism of political agency alone. Their authors, all contributors to this book, reflect on personal and fieldwork experiences that emphasize specific aspects of spatiality. In the first vignette, Angela Mazzetti, born and raised in Northern Ireland, remembers a bomb exploding at the time of ‘the Troubles’. In this example, there is no denial that her concrete, multi-sensorial experience of ‘the conflict’ had a strong impact on her everyday movements at the time. In fact, the situation of ongoing violence continued to influence her life choices as she decided as a young adult to move to England in the 1980s. More recently, she has returned to explore the effects of ‘the Troubles’ on her peer group in an attempt to make sense of her past.

In the second vignette, Andrea García González, who grew up in Madrid and came to Belfast to conduct MA research in 2014, writes about the friendships between Catholic and Protestant women in Belfast. The text shows that their shared experiences as mothers created mutual understanding and conviviality within the group. Here, it is clear that an analytical focus on past conflicts and ongoing ethno-religious tensions does not suffice to explore the women’s social and emotional interactions, even though they constitute a reality that also marks their predicaments.

The third vignette throws light on our own experiences as working mothers and migrants, and reminds us that Northern Ireland is not only populated by ‘autochthonous’ citizens, but increasingly by people of diverse national backgrounds. Our conversation – Milena is Bulgarian, and Maruška was born in the Netherlands as the daughter of a Dutch mother and a Czech father – alludes to our mutual identification as new arrivals in Northern Ireland in the late 1990s, when we were trying to create a sense of home. The dialogue also refers to the quick adaptations needed when moving from one socio-spatial context to another, in this case the crèche and the university environment. The necessity to adjust rapidly to different and changing surroundings is a more general feature of the human condition and, in situations of conflict, this need can manifest itself through flight or fight responses, as illustrated by Mazzetti’s words. In García González’s vignette, women travelled from majority Catholic and majority Protestant neighbourhoods to meet up in agreed upon spaces where they reoriented themselves emotionally as female friends, downplaying other identities and loyalties. Our own verbal exchange illustrates that life in Northern Ireland (both past and present) also includes adjustments between settings unrelated to sectarian tensions or political conflict.

In the last vignette, the Brazilian journalist and PhD student Augusto Soares addresses movement in another spatial realm, namely that of the digital world. His reflections remind us that in the Internet age, much social interaction, including social science research, takes place in a digital arena that connects distant places and people. Highly relevant to this book, the Internet allows individuals who refuse to meet face-to-face to interact in the online sphere. In the case he describes, the digital space creates the potential for humorous interaction and ironic comments on politicians and paramilitary groups. The interactions also potentially reinforce territorial claims, mutual animosity and conflict.

As the examples indicate, this book provides a critical perspective on territoriality, political conflict and conflict transformation. While avoiding a narrow focus on 'ethno-national' territoriality, it investigates a wide variety of spatial discourses, practices and embodied experiences. In our view, this broader approach is not only relevant to research in Northern Ireland, but can also be productive in other regions. As such, our findings aim to contribute to the wider scholarship on post-conflict societies.

### **Space, Place and Territoriality**

This is a book about place-making – from the smallest scale of individual intimate sensorial experience to the large scale of political geographies of nation and state. At all of these levels, as Cresswell (1996, 2010) reminds us, spatial processes inform the ways in which people live their lives. For over two decades, academic theories of 'place' and 'space' have proliferated across the social sciences and humanities, reflecting its axiomatic centrality to both the ontology of human life and our attempts to make sense of it. In the words of Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003: 1), 'all behaviour is located in and constructed of space', and the theorization of spatial perspectives has become 'an essential component of sociocultural theory'.

Being migrants, our own histories of mobility and our changing understanding of life in the region have strongly motivated us to produce this book. Growing up in Bulgaria and the Netherlands at a time when the only news in the international media about Northern Ireland reported stories of violence, our initial image of Northern Irish society had been strongly tainted when we arrived in Belfast almost two decades ago. Perceiving Northern Ireland through the lens of conflict, we were overly wary of being caught up in territorial clashes, especially during the marching season. We also both consciously chose not to live in streets marked with flags or coloured pavements, which are indicators of territorial identity (see Figures 0.1, 0.2 and 0.3).

Tellingly, some of our worries about violence were based on hypersensitivity and silly misunderstandings. When, for example, a few weeks after her arrival in 1999, Maruška told one of the secretaries at the then School of Anthropological Studies that she was scared because she had heard



Figure 0.1 Loyalist mural and painted kerbstones in North Belfast. Photo by Milena Komarova.



Figure 0.2 Peacewall in West Belfast. Photo by Milena Komarova.



Figure 0.3 Orange Order parade in West Belfast. Photo by Milena Komarova.

shooting during the weekend, the secretary laughed and explained that it was almost Halloween, and that, for the first time in many years, people had been allowed again to set off fireworks. To her, the sound (and sight) of firecrackers marked a return to ‘normality’. The reference to ‘normality’ reminds us that Northern Ireland is not only a place of conflict and conscious peace building, but also a setting of ‘ordinary’ activities – a place, to paraphrase Therborn (2011), where people live, work, raise children, make friends, and enjoy themselves; an environment in which people visit relatives, do their shopping, and talk about mundane things (see Figures 0.4 and 0.5); an educational hub where internationally mobile individuals study, teach and conduct research, thus linking the region to locations elsewhere in the world. This book in fact illustrates the latter point, as eight of the eleven contributors are not British citizens, but Japanese (Maehara), American (DeYoung, Hinson and Rush), Brazilian (Soares), Bulgarian (Komarova), Spanish (García González) and Dutch (Svašek). Of the three British contributors, two were born in England and settled in Northern Ireland (Franklin and McCafferty) and one moved in the opposite direction (Mazzetti).

As scholars, we find ourselves in an intellectual landscape which has, by necessity, been overwhelmingly focused on aspects of conflict, sectarianism and reconciliation. The resulting studies have depicted Northern Ireland as a deeply divided society, a ‘territorialist’ place where bordered spaces



Figure 0.4 Jogging in South Belfast. Photo by Milena Komarova.

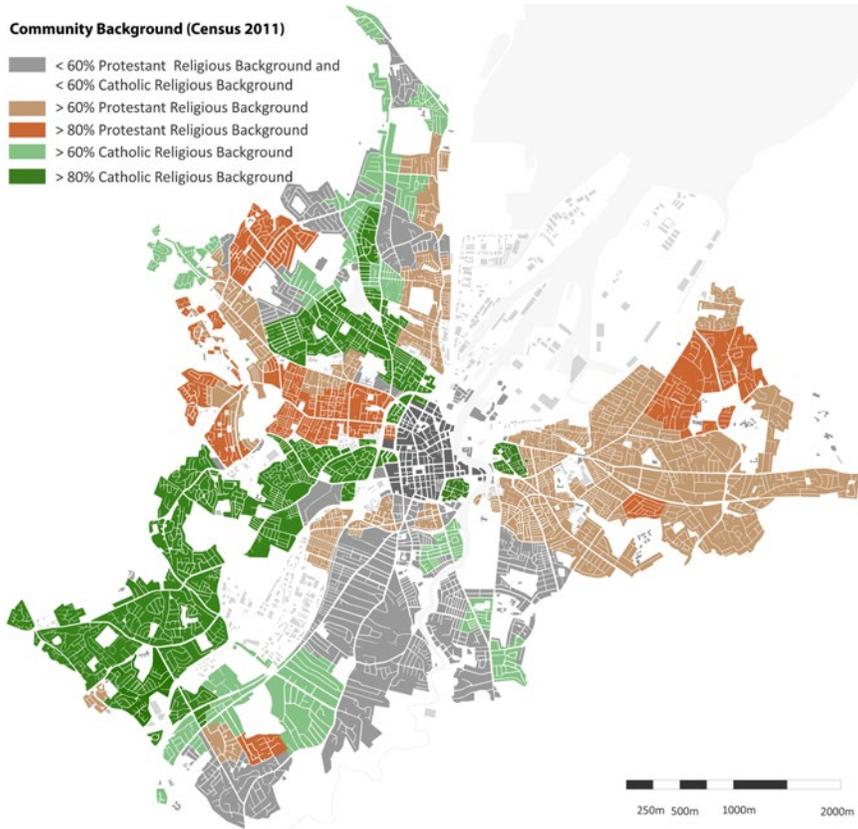


Figure 0.5 Shoppers near Victoria Square. Photo by Maruška Svašek.

inform practices of social control, classification, communication and political symbolism (Sack 1986). There are of course good reasons for this kind of scholarship. As Ó Dochartaigh (2007: 475) has argued, when internal sectarian boundaries are produced and intensified by disputes over international borders, '[t]erritory as both stake and strategy [is] at the heart of violent conflict'. In Northern Ireland, territorial conflict is ultimately generated and experienced at the intersection of ethno-national identities and place; it is engendered through 'the content of space [and] how it is imbued with forms of meaning' (Nagle and Clancy 2010: 79). Both during and after the end of the Troubles, political meaning has been inscribed in the Northern Irish landscape through rituals and material and symbolic practices that have marked specific neighbourhoods as 'loyalist' or 'republican' territories. Numerous scholars<sup>1</sup> have explored such practices, providing detailed studies of murals, flag displays, parades and commemoration ceremonies. Their work has convincingly shown that highly visible territorial divisions reflect 'broader social struggles over deeply held collective myths [that] concretize . . . fundamental and recurring . . . ideological and social frameworks' (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003: 18).

Geographers, sociologists, anthropologists and even planners tend to distinguish between 'place' and 'territory'. While 'place' is a malleable, habitable space to which people have varied emotional attachments (Gieryn 2000), 'territory' is often understood as a process of claiming and bordering areas by particular groups (Brighenti 2010). Gaffikin and Morrissey (2011), for instance, note that in cities marked by territorial conflict, the fight for control strongly influences the spatial experience of the inhabitants. As the map of Belfast in Figure 0.6 outlines, spatial division is still a reality for many inhabitants. Majority Protestant and majority Catholic groups continue to dominate specific areas, and numerous urban spaces are divided by 'peace walls'. In the Afterword to this book, Dominic Bryan reflects on the spatial proximity of people living on the opposite sides of these walls. The map of Belfast also shows that various parts of the city, such as the university area and the city centre, are non-sectarian or culturally diverse locations, due to mixed student populations and the influx of migrants.

It must also be noted that, since the summer of 2016, territoriality has gained new meanings in Northern Ireland in the light of the Brexit referendum. While a majority of Northern Irish voters, fearful that Brexit would reinstate hard borders between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, expressed the wish to remain in the European Union, the UK-wide referendum resulted in a vote for separation. The continuing (and indeed again increasing) relevance of territorial discourses and practices in Northern Ireland, Europe, and beyond, means that questions of ethno-national conflict remain highly topical. Yet, to borrow a phrase from O'Dowd and McCall (2008), this perspective can also act as a 'cage', as a limiting interpretative framework that can only explain certain aspects of social, political and cultural life in the region.



**Figure 0.6** Map of Belfast by Community Background. The map is based on pre-2014 council boundaries and does not reflect the current Belfast council area. Reproduced courtesy of Chris Karelse.

### Conflict: A Multifaceted, Processual Perspective

So how can we escape this cage? One of the ways out, we argue, is to take a multifaceted and processual approach to the study of conflict, not just focusing on large-scale political oppositions but also taking smaller-scale tensions into account. Such an approach is based on the view that everyday strains are innate to human existence and that, to understand political conflict and the occurrence of large-scale violence, it is necessary to explore how small-scale tensions may (or may not) lead to violent confrontations (Ashmore, Jussim and Wilder 2001).

Three arguments are crucial. Firstly, mundane conflicts between people are common, and while they often have no wider societal relevance, they are spatially significant. Minor stressful encounters are usually local and may last only minutes – for example, when a baby cries as her mother drops her off at

the crèche, or when grandparents get annoyed when their teenage grandson is constantly texting on his mobile phone, giving his sole attention to geographically distant friends. In these cases, familial obligations and daily movements are enacted or ignored, and what is at stake is the socio-spatial performance of kin identity. In the latter example, there is a clear mismatch of experience and expectation between the locally oriented grandparents and the trans-local attention of their grandson, causing momentary irritation. Irritations can also simmer or intensify over long periods. But even then, they do not necessarily turn into factional oppositions that are played out beyond the sphere of the family. Disagreements between siblings over their parents' inheritance, for example, can strongly shape the interactions of later generations of kin, dispersed across distant locations, but often they remain within the family sphere. Yet while family disagreements may be irrelevant when measured against full-blown intergroup violence, they are still an important element in the spatially lived lives of individuals.

Secondly, even when societies are troubled by violent conflict, or when people attempt to tackle histories of violence in post-conflict situations, we need to bring into focus the complexity and diversity of struggles for power in other socio-spatial spheres. In this respect, social science analyses have often overlooked types of place-making in Northern Ireland that emanate from the daily lives of women, children, young people, the elderly, non-heterosexual individuals, the disabled, migrants, refugees, or even ex-political prisoners. Conflicts linked to competing claims over uses of space among such social groups, and played out in relationships of subjugation, oppression or cooperation, have remained rather peripheral to the bulk of social science of Northern Ireland, or have been subsumed under the logic of competing national or sectarian claims.<sup>2</sup> This volume aims to throw light on the complexities of these tensions.

Thirdly, a processual perspective is needed to explore how intergroup interactions within particular locations are shaped by concrete spatio-temporal dynamics. Local clashes between individuals and groups that become intensified and gain political significance can result in serious intra- and inter-group battles. Non-political conflicts, in other words, can transform into sectarian wars. To explore these processes, we can draw on findings in various disciplines. Social psychologists, for example, have developed theories of social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1979) and self-categorization (Turner and Oakes 1986) to explore the minimal conditions of intergroup conflict (Tajfel 1978 Oakes and Turner 1980; Brewer 1979; Wetherell 1982). Evolutionary psychologists have argued that increasing population density has led to a human inclination to categorize large numbers of people into 'friends' and 'enemies', enabling the management of socio-spatial relationships (Kurzban and Neuburg 2015; Kurzban and Leary 2001). According to Paladino and Castelli (2008), one of the strategies to evade conflict is to avoid approaching members of perceived out-groups and remain in one's own territory, and, using a coalitional index

model, Boyer, Firat and Leeuwen (2015) have recently found that perceived threat tends to increase commitment to in-groups and the preferential treatment of in-group members, even at the expense of individual gain.

Increased group identification can lead to prejudices towards, and the discrimination of, those perceived as outsiders, and intergroup conflicts can build up over time (Brewer 1979, 1999, 2001; Taylor and Doria 1981). A disagreement between neighbours, for example, can slowly escalate into an enduring fight between neighbourhood factions whose public spatial performances of mutual resentment reinforce perceptions of 'us' and 'them'. What needs to be acknowledged, however, is that the people embedded in antagonistic situations are only in extreme cases fully defined by them. After all, people are normally engaged in multiple identification processes that are informed by all sorts of experiences, desires and frustrations. Daughters and sons become lovers, partners and parents, and take up different professions and hobbies, have unique, idiosyncratic life trajectories, and are engaged in multiple processes of place-making.

Four contributions in this book explore the significance of the spatial legacy of 'the Troubles' to place-making activities in Northern Ireland, but do so through the eyes and experiences of individuals or groups considered only sporadically in most publications. Many of the contributors zoom in on alternative place-making processes, for example among migrants, refugees, social circus performers and entertainment seekers. The overall approach in this volume thus aims for 'fertile complication' (Dovey 2008), throwing light on the interweaving processes of place-making in and beyond a narrow focus on political conflict. It poses questions such as: How are power relations exercised in the making of place in different social spheres? How do practices of place-making enable or question particular expressions of social identity in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and political alliance? And how do spatial processes inform and afford individual life trajectories?

### **Place and Place-Making: Analytical Dimensions**

To address these and other questions, it is necessary to sketch the outlines of relevant theories of space, place and movement. Appadurai (1996) has contended that all social phenomena are emplaced and are constituted through location, materiality and meaning. In line with this argument, Gieryn (2000: 471) has identified three 'necessary and sufficient features' of place. Firstly, place refers to geographic location, a unique spot in the universe which, although finite, has elastic boundaries. Secondly, places have physical or material forms through which social differences, inequalities and collective actions are shaped and manifested. Thirdly, all places are invested with meaning and value through processes of identification, naming and representation. Places, in other words, are 'endlessly made, not just when the powerful pursue their ambition through brick and mortar, not just when design professional [*sic*] give form to function, but also when

ordinary people extract from continuous and abstract space a bounded, identified, meaningful, named and significant place' (ibid.).

The individual chapters in this volume show a wide variety of (often conflicting) ways in which individuals and groups in Northern Ireland understand and use specific locations, thus reproducing or challenging particular relations of inequality through spatial actions. Various contributors zoom in on emotional attachment to certain locations and investigate related issues of belonging and non-belonging. This theme resonates with work by the political geographer John Agnew (1989), whose analytical definition of place comprises three dimensions: *location*, a point in space with specific relations to other points in space; *locale*, the broader context of social relations for individual locations; and a *sense of place*, the subjective feelings associated with a particular location. This third dimension has been addressed by numerous anthropologists exploring emotional learning processes in human ecologies (Milton 2005), feelings of belonging and displacement among migrants and refugees (Brun 2001; Valentine, Sporton and Nielsen 2009), and memory, materiality and emotions (Heatherington 2005; Lysaght 2005; Svašek 2005, 2012; Milič 2012).

The idea of 'place-making' echoes the Lefebvrian understanding that space is socially produced, that it is simultaneously 'conceived', 'perceived' and 'lived'. What distinguishes the notion is its emphasis on 'making' and potential transformation. Place, as Gieryn (2000: 467) affirms, is an 'interpretative frame through which people measure their lives, evaluate others, take political positions, and just make sense'. Tim Cresswell concurs:

Because we live in place, as part of place, and yet simultaneously view place as something external, place can be thought of as a centre of meaning and an external context for action – as ideal and material. . . . Place, as a phenomenological-experiential entity combines elements of nature (elemental forces), social relations (class, gender, and so on), and meaning (the mind, ideas, symbols). Experience of place, from a phenomenological perspective, is always an experience of all three realms, each of which affects our actions in place. (Cresswell 1996: 156–57)

Through his succinct investigation of the relationship between place and socio-cultural power Cresswell (1996: 161) helps us to delve further into this line of argument. Because place is an immediate and material context of our actions, he suggests, it acts as a 'fundamental form of classification', helping us to order the world into 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there', and to 'make interpretations and act accordingly'. Place, in other words, contributes to the creation and reproduction of action-oriented beliefs and ideologies that naturalize place identifications. In Belfast, for example, the Falls Road has been produced as a street that cannot be but 'Catholic' and 'nationalist'. By contrast, the Shankill is regarded as an inherently 'Protestant' and 'loyalist' area. Such fixed territorial place-identity reifications often rest on underlying moral claims that have political significance.



**Figure 0.7** Cross-carrying procession. Photo by Milena Komarova.

Here '[t]he "nature" of place [is] offered as justification for particular views of what is good, just and appropriate' (ibid.), making it a terrain of ideological struggle between ideas, symbols, representations and meaning.

Clearly thus, place is not only the multilayered context of our everyday lives but it also intrinsically connects with ontological questions, urging us to wonder 'who we are', to employ specific categories and markers of self, and to make particular identity claims to 'community', 'ethnicity' and 'nation' (Dixon and Durrheim 2000). As some of the chapters in this book demonstrate, people often have unequal powers to fix and spatialize social identities, to claim rights to access and control the use of specific locations. Ideas of neighbourhood ownership can, for example, challenge the presence of non-residents in the area, ideas that in Northern Ireland have been spatially performed through demonstrations against Loyal Order parades. By contrast, organized walks and processions across socio-spatial lines of division, such as Belfast's 'peace walls', can question specific notions of difference (see Figure 0.7). This again shows that '[p]laces are not inert containers. They are politicized, culturally relative, historically specific, local and multiple constructions' that reflect multiple 'voices' (Rodman 2003: 205). Consequently, we have to explore 'the contests and tensions between different actors and interests in the construction of space' (ibid: 209).

This argument directly reflects in the aim of this book to break free of preconceptions of Northern Ireland as a conflict-ridden place by examining

both the multiplicity of voices in the making of place, as well as its multi-locality. Multi-locality also refers to relations between geographic locations through bodily movement and to changes of specific locations over time. This is apparent, for example, when new people settle in a particular neighbourhood and, as a result, the spatial experiences of both existing and new populations change. To newcomers, memories of past and distant settings profoundly shape the understanding and experience of new sites, and existing populations often compare new socio-spatial developments to earlier experiences. In Northern Ireland, such processes occurred on a larger scale when Catholics and Protestants had to relocate due to 'Troubles'-related territorial tensions, and when migrants started moving to the region in larger groups in the late twentieth century. People's different socio-economic, ethnic, religious and other backgrounds also influence their attitudes to spatial change. To explore this diversity, we suggest a framework that focuses on three interrelated dimensions of spatiality and place-making, namely discourse, practice and embodied experience. The remainder of the introduction elaborates this perspective.

### **Place, Identity and Place-Making: Discursive Constructions**

Dixon and Durrheim (2000) emphasize that rhetoric or discourse is a fundamental tool through which places and associated identities are imbued with meanings. Symbolic constructions that link identity to place are, for example, deployed within everyday familial discourses, justifying specific spatial actions in the home. A father, regarding himself as 'head of a household', may claim the most comfortable chair in the living room as 'his', without much thought, assuming that it is his right to sit in it. Influenced by dominant gender discourses, his wife and children may take this small act of place-making for granted, accepting it as a 'natural' state of affairs. Yet as Cresswell (1996: 8) argues, 'value and meaning are not inherent in any space or place' but 'must be created, reproduced and defended' through discursive representations that structure social practices. While such practices can cement taken-for-granted meanings vis-à-vis place, individuals can also contest or resist specific place-identity constructions. Place is thus an ongoing discursive production, a multi-vocal act of imagining.

Reviewing a tradition of writing in social psychology that highlights the relationship between language, self-narration and place,<sup>3</sup> Dixon and Durrheim (2000) argue for a discursive approach to place-making and identity formation that goes far beyond the realm of individual mental engagement. Instead, the focus is on 'collective' constructions of place, a social and political process whereby people perform place identities through site-specific forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. An example is the temporary transformation of a football pitch into a place of collective and competing nationhood when the crowd, dressed in the nation's colours, sing the national anthem and shout national slogans. Another example is

when a war memorial, not really noticed on an everyday basis, annually transitions into a place of national heroism and victimhood through ritual speeches and embellishment. Such discursively produced links between self and place, Dixon and Durrheim argue, can have crucial social and political dimensions and effects. In the first case, the enthusiastic support for opposing teams, and in the second, feelings of shared suffering and pride, reflect and reinforce deeper animosities or a sense of solidarity. The two occasions can also be connected when the ritual warfare of sport (a Polish–German football match; an Irish–English rugby game) is experienced as an extension of the bloody histories of war between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In the Northern Irish case, dominant discourses of ‘Irishness’, ‘Britishness’ and ‘Northern Irishness’ have long shaped people’s place identities (Graham 1997; Reid 2004). Yet as this book will show, other discourses have also influenced people’s site-specific feelings, for example through the lens of images of ‘gender’, ‘diaspora’ and ‘cross-community’. Distinct identity discourses also intersect, for example when migrant groups are framed (or frame themselves) as new ‘communities’ that need to secure a peaceful place in society through interaction with existing, formerly antagonistic ‘communities’. In this case, an overall ‘cross-community’ discourse connects the politics of reconciliation to anti-racist policies.

### **The Social Practices of Place-Making**

The discursive dimension of space must be combined with an analytical focus on spatial practice. Cresswell (1996: 16) pays extensive attention to the importance and centrality of practice, particularly since place-specific social practices have ideological effects that may be used to affirm or contest a status quo. He also suggests that place-making processes can be explored as concurrent production and consumption: ‘Practice is simultaneously a form of consumption (insofar as the actor acts according to assumed norms, he or she “buys” them) and a form of production (as the actor, by acting in accordance with assumed norms, contributes further to the continuation of accepted “commonsense” place meanings)’. (Ibid.: 17).

We would like to emphasize here the relevance of Bourdieu’s (1977) theory of practice, which understands everyday life and social action as the outcome of an ‘often non-conscious sense of ‘fitting in’/ being at ease, or not’ (Smyth and McKnight 2010: 7). In Cresswell’s interpretation, both conscious and unselfconscious modes of acting can lead to a multitude of spatial actions that sustain and reproduce specific place-encoded hierarchies and identities. A revealing Northern Irish example is how Orange Order lodges’ members of different generations have continued to meet and organize activities in their buildings, regarding Orangeism as a crucial part of their family history and cultural heritage. By entering these structures and engaging in a variety of activities that also spill out into the public

realm, lodge members perform unionist or loyalist identities in very visible ways. Through routinized practices such as marching that are highly exclusive, their practices of place-making clearly sustain discourses of difference. Some of the contributors to this volume demonstrate how persistent practices of division and contestation within unionist or loyalist and nationalist or republican spheres, as well as in the often tense 'interface' areas, have continued to reproduce generations-old predispositions.

In Bourdieu's analytical framework, feelings of belonging and non-belonging to place are informed by symbolic and material forms of capital that have distinct value in certain social fields, but are worthless in others (Bourdieu 1977; Leach 2005). The knowledge of how to perform *puja* (an act of worship in Hinduism), for example, can be highly valuable to Hindus in Northern Ireland who worship their deities on a regular basis, both at home shrines and in various temples in the region (Svašek 2016). Their ability to perform the right rituals and celebrate festivals that are central to Hindu practices is most likely irrelevant in other Northern Irish localities. Such practices are, however, occasionally 'normalized' in public spaces, which happened in October 2015 when ArtsEkta, a non-profit organization, organized 'a thrilling celebration of a classic Indian tale' in front of the Belfast City Hall. The show, funded by the Northern Irish Arts Council, had been inspired by various Hindu festivals (see [www.ninenights.co.uk](http://www.ninenights.co.uk)).

Numerous authors have used theatrical metaphors to explore socio-spatial practices that produce or contest place-specific identities. Rose (2002) has used the term 'enactment' to describe strategic practices that link specific discourses to social space. 'Enactment', he suggests, 'is comprised of the material acts and gestures that make texts a recognizable feature of social life' (ibid.: 393). In a similar vein, Anderson and Jones (2009), have employed performance theory to argue that place-making practices are integral to people's lived experience of identity. De Certeau (1984) has stressed the significance of mundane performances of subversion by individuals who use acts of walking, naming, narrating and remembering to challenge dominant voices in society. Such small-scale acts, he argued, often serve as means by which individuals reappropriate the landscape. In the words of Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (2003: 22), different levels and scales of enactment, from 'public festivities, parades, performances, and spontaneous demonstrations' to the minutiae of touch and bodily comportment have also been used to 'temporarily invert dominant power relations to contest political and social issues'.

When exploring spatial practice, a longer-term perspective on the construction, use and transformation of particular buildings and structures is also needed. An obvious example from Northern Ireland is the 'peace walls' of Belfast and Derry (Londonderry). Perhaps ironically, these structures have become more numerous and have, in individual cases, been enlarged or extended, rather than reduced or dismantled, during the last decade of peace building (Jarman 2012). Other changes in architecture

reflect the growth and spatial presence of migrant populations. The Indian Community Centre in Belfast, for example, was established in a former Methodist church in North Belfast, bought by Indian migrants in the 1980s. More often than not, appearances of new or transformed architectural structures and cityscapes trigger different responses in different groups and individuals.

### **Embodied Experience: Being in, Attaching to, and Moving through Place**

This brings us to the third dimension of our analytical framework: that of embodied experience. This perspective emphasizes that people, as inherently mobile beings, are engaged in dynamic processes of sensorial and affective interaction as they constitute, and move through, changing spatial settings (Jensen 2009, 2010; Jiron 2010). Drawing on phenomenology and cognitive theories of perception, scholars like Csordas (1990, 1994) and Milton (2002) have argued that emotional experiences in specific spatial settings are shaped by memories and expectations. For Milton (2005: 37), to be in the world means to be engaged in a constant learning process whereby ‘emotional reactions, feelings and expressions arise and develop out of a complex interaction between an individual human being and their environment’.

As Karen Lysaght has shown in a study of fear and the use of space in Belfast, expectations of danger amongst certain groups of Protestants and Catholics at the time of her research were informed by a ‘tacit agreement . . . on the nature of violence and on the relative threat posed by various situations’, which lead to the use of a ‘variety of spatial strategies . . . to offset potential danger’. These strategies involved ‘complex mapping processes’, whereby space is carved into safe and unsafe zones, where both macro- and micro-territorial considerations exist, involving respectively the ‘other side of town’ or the ‘other side of the street’ (Lysaght 2005: 140). Clearly, when understanding spatial practices, affective processes need to be taken into account. For Csordas, ‘embodiment’ is a constant process whereby multi-sensorial experiences are objectified and inscribed in the body. Of interest here is the link between perception and the different senses, often selectively hypercognized in different contexts. As made clear in the first chapter by Angela Mazzetti, violent conflict can be smelled, heard, seen, tasted and touched. Both perpetrators and victims of violence may hear gunshots, smell the smoke of explosions, see people running for safety, taste blood when wounded, and carry the bodies of those killed. Our broader focus in this book acknowledges that, in politically tense situations, people also feel sensations and sentiments that are not directly related to concerns about safety. In the relative security of their domestic settings, for example, people experience affective relatedness through sensuous interaction, touching each other, sharing meals, listening to music, and so on. Such activities can instil a positive sense of kinship and

define the home as a place of intimate belonging. Engagements related to work, hobbies and friendships can also help people to positively attune and attach to specific environments. Milligan (1998: 6) has used the term 'place-attachment' to describe the process that occurs when recurrent and memorable experiences transform a location into a place of bonding and emotional investment.

The perspective of physical movement is essential when exploring embodied experiences of spatiality and place-attachment (Edensor 2010). Importantly, people move between locations in different manners, which influences not only their perception of the environment but also the ways in which they experience their own bodies and construct a sense of self. Walking, cycling and driving are each associated with characteristic rhythms and social interactions (Jensen 2009). Running the Belfast Marathon, for example, informs a sense of movement and identity that differs from doing the school run, or taking a bus to the airport. What is clear is that mobility, as a fundamental socio-spatial practice and experience, is an essential means of constituting place, and that sensorial perceptions and experiences through movement do not occur in social or political vacuums.

Movements through the environment are, of course, to a great degree limited by architectural infrastructures. The physical presence of streets, shops, houses and traffic affects how bodies sense and move through the urban landscape. Dovey (2005, 2008) has argued that buildings are 'inherently coercive [as] they enforce limits to action and enable social practice to take place' (2005: 291). The built environment as a whole, he contends, mediates and materializes forms of power over users of space, for example through coercion, manipulation, seduction or authority.<sup>4</sup> In Belfast, specific architectural strategies were meant to manage the use of public space in an attempt to gain control over paramilitary action during 'the Troubles'. Since the start of the peace process, developers and government agencies have built numerous impressive structures to attract locals and tourists to Belfast, including state-of-the-art shopping malls, the Titanic museum, the Waterfront Hall and major works of public art (Hocking 2015). In different working-class neighbourhoods, reimagining projects have replaced the more aggressive loyalist and republican murals with toned-down symbolic messages. In addition, in several locations in the city, migrants have opened specialized shops and supermarkets, and some migrant organizations have moved into highly visible community buildings.<sup>5</sup> All these changes account for new ways in which the city is experienced in the twenty-first century.

## **Movement, Method and Knowledge**

This brings us to questions about methodology. Which methods can be used best to explore the politics and poetics of movement and place-making

in Northern Ireland to provide an understanding of ‘a world of incessant movement and becoming, one that is never complete but continually under construction, woven from the countless lifelines of its manifold human and non-human constituents as they thread their ways through the tangle of relationships in which they are comprehensively enmeshed’ (Ingold 2011: 141).

While an in-depth discussion of methodological issues is far beyond the scope of this introduction, it is crucial to address the issue in this book. Over a decade ago, Law and Urry (2004: 403–4) argued that existing methods of research in the social sciences and humanities did not deal well ‘with the fleeting – that which is here today and gone tomorrow’; ‘with the distributed – . . . that which slips and slides between one place and another’; and ‘with the multiple – that which takes different shapes in different places’.

One of the more pressing matters, in our view, is to acknowledge that our own research activities are as spatially embedded as the activities of our research participants. We agree with Tim Ingold who has argued against models of scientific knowledge production that oppose an assumed ‘objective space’ of science to the ‘subjective places’ of the inhabitants of research sites. His dynamic perspective on habitation and movement<sup>6</sup> emphasizes that scientific knowledge

grows in a field of practices constituted by the movements of practitioners, devices, measures and results from one laboratory to another. Thus, contrary to the official view, what goes for inhabitant knowledge also goes for science. In both cases, knowledge is integrated not through fitting local particulars into global abstractions, but in the movement from place to place, in wayfaring. Scientific practices have the same place-binding (but not place-bound) character as the practices of inhabitants. (Ingold 2011: 154)

Earlier, we proposed an analytical framework that distinguishes three interconnected dimensions of spatiality and place-making, namely discourse, practice and embodied experience. The remainder of this section will examine how this perspective can help us to think critically and reflectively about the production of knowledge through various methods.

Starting with the first dimension, the purpose of discourse analysis in spatial research is to identify knowledge formations that reflect, and make assumptions about, specific notions of emplaced subjectivity, and to examine how different individuals and groups of people reproduce, reinforce or challenge ideas around identity and territoriality through both habitual and conscious discursive constructions. Researchers have explored these processes employing various methodologies, for example recording relevant speech events during council meetings. They have also learnt to recognize recurrent and competing discursive constructions of spatial subjectivity while spending time with relevant research participants, holding informal chats, conducting interviews and producing biographical

narratives. Discourses of spatiality and spatial subjectivity have also been explored through the investigation of letters, archival records, newspaper articles, and digital media posts. Importantly, these research materials have to be analysed against the background of wider social and political structures that legitimize territorial claims.<sup>7</sup> Photography and film have added an important visual aspect to spatial research, demonstrating, for example, how related verbal and visual discourses naturalize specific claims to spatial ownership. The question is how academics' own spatial histories and movements influence their research, and how their positionalities and spatial presence influences communication with their research participants. How, for example, does the particular phrasing of an interview question, posed at a specific location, build on and trigger particular discursive constructions?

To continue with the second dimension of our analytical approach, discourses are produced and reproduced through spatially embedded practices. As noted earlier, our understanding of practice is mainly based on Bourdieu's practice theory, which highlights that people operate in dynamic social fields that are often hierarchical. To gain access and power in these fields, they need to acquire specific forms of social, symbolic and cultural capital. From a methodological point of view, the exploration of socio-spatial practice calls for longer-term research engagement with research participants who occupy different and changing positions in concrete social fields. The resulting comparative perspective provides insights into the spatial activities through which individuals, in interaction with others, shape and negotiate spatial interaction. For researchers interested in practices of place-making, this means that questions should be asked about the specific kinds of knowledge and social networks that enable individuals to enter and appropriate specific spaces, and to literally follow their research participants to locations that may be far apart (Hannerz 2003; D'Andrea, Ciolfi and Gray 2011). To gain a good sense of such activities, and to be able to distinguish between 'what people do and what they say they do', researchers need to get to know their research protagonists over longer periods. Sharing time and space, in other words, is a crucial dimension of successful fieldwork (Hammersley and Atkinson [1983] 1995). The method of participant observation, a process of deep hanging out with research participants, can take many forms, from participation in political meetings to attending funerals or helping out with the washing-up. It may also require a willingness to learn new skills, such as playing the flute to enable research into marching bands (Ramsey 2011). Again, a critical awareness of our own movements into and out of the fieldwork setting, and into our own changing habitual conduct, is crucial. For example, increasing familiarity with the spatial movements of our research informants must be discussed in our interpretations.

Finally, the spatial movements of research participants and researchers generate specific embodied experiences. As has been pointed out by researchers who have used the 'walking method', moving at a slow pace through

a relevant environment can help to revive memories that trigger rich narrative accounts (Kusenbach 2003; Mitchell and Kelly 2011; Buscher, Urry and Witchger 2011; Hodgson 2011; Shortell 2015). The specific sounds, sights, smells and tastes of a particular location can have strong emotional associations that are less easily recalled in more conventional interview situations. Importantly, it is not just the lived experiences of research participants that shape academic knowledge. Emplaced in ‘ethnographic contexts’ (Pink 2008a: 179), in interaction with their research participants researchers themselves produce memorable encounters through a ‘range of “shared” multi-sensorial experiences and collaborative productions’ (Pink 2008b: 2). Consequently, as fieldworkers we need to be aware of our own movements in the field.

### **Interim: A Short Reflective Exercise**

While writing this introduction, we reserved one day to consider this issue through an activity that was both ethnographic and autoethnographic – ethnographic, because we exchanged ideas and tried to understand each other’s spatial experiences; and autoethnographic, because we actively reflected on our own perceptions and feelings. On a cloudy day in June 2016, we walked through Belfast and explored how we each mapped and interpreted the city as a result of our previous experiences. Our first task was to choose a starting point and roughly decide how we would progress during the day. After some thought, we decided to set off from University Square, on the main Queen’s University campus. In the light of our personal histories, this was an unsurprising choice as our offices were situated there and we had frequently met in one or the other for work. Aiming to move through a variety of areas in the city, some visibly marked by sectarianism but others less clearly influenced by territorial politics, we planned to walk first to the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) in West Belfast where Milena’s children had been born, and to end up at the Ulster Hospital where Maruška had given birth to her son. The choice to include the two hospitals corresponded to the logics of our own family histories in Northern Ireland. Our planned route also reflected our interest in territorial divisions in the city. Walking away from the university area, we would first pass through a Protestant/loyalist neighbourhood, then cross over a motorway footbridge to reach the RVH, return to the university area through a Catholic/nationalist neighbourhood, and finally drive by car through East Belfast to the Ulster Hospital in Dundonald. The chosen route showed our awareness of symbolic markers of political identity and conflict, and demonstrated familiarity with different urban planning and infrastructural projects. As will become clear, throughout the walk our professional knowledge constantly conversed with our private memories and experiences of people and spaces, both in and beyond Northern Ireland.

Walking down the Donegall Road, the north boundary of the loyalist area known as ‘The Village’, leading to the Royal Victoria Hospital, we



Figure 0.8 Unionist marker: Poppies. Photo by Maruška Svašek.

were reminded of recent official attempts to reimagine the city. This policy of reimagination has aimed to remove aggressive sectarian symbols and replace them with alternative visual imagery. Along the road, we saw an eclectic concoction of symbols of loyalism and unionism that were now purposely interspersed with the imagery of the neighbourhood's 'forgotten' class and gender history (see Figures 0.8 and 0.9).

These recent attempts at reimagining jarred with some of our earlier experiences as researchers and residents of Belfast. Milena explained to Maruška that she had walked down the Donegall Road on numerous occasions, particularly during her first years in Belfast. At that time her encounters and interactions with local residents had influenced her early impressions of the city. While most of her journeys had been smooth and unremarkable, on one occasion, en route to the RVH for a maternity appointment, she had a frightening experience when entering the footbridge over the M1/Westlink motorway that links the neighbourhood to the hospital grounds (see Figure 0.10). Already on it, she realised belatedly that a raucous group of boys of the age of about eleven had gathered on the bridge and were banging on its metal caging with wooden bats. The group's rowdy behaviour, her vulnerability as an expectant mother and the caged, narrow structure of the bridge, made Milena feel threatened (see Figure 0.11). She thought of retreating but reasoned that such an attempt would be all too obvious, and likely to attract unwanted attention. Instead, her glance lowered as she proceeded forward, hoping to pass by the group unremarked. As she levelled with them, however, one of the children fixed his eyes on her and,



Figure 0.9 Reimagining; Suffragettes. Photo by Maruška Svašek.



Figures 0.10 Footbridge. Photo by Milena Komarova.



Figure 0.11 Metal cage. Photo by Milena Komarova.

swinging his bat back and forth, hissed in her face ‘you f–ing fenian!’<sup>8</sup> Barely managing to keep her wits about her, she briskly walked on. The physical attack that she expected never happened and, leaving the bridge on softened feet, she vowed never to take that route again.

This incident, vividly remembered while we walked across the bridge, had changed Milena’s awareness of, and sensitivity to, how she was perceived as an ‘outsider’ in Northern Ireland. Experiencing first-hand the way in which local communal divisions often serve as a lens through which ‘otherness’ in general and new migrants in particular are perceived, made her question the very possibility and meaning of ‘neutrality’. Her research in and on Northern Ireland since has often confronted her with how ‘others’ are ascribed affiliations (or ‘sides’), depending on perceived cultural, national or racial background. The scary experience has directly influenced how she manages her professional identity ‘in the field’, and even how she teaches research methodology.

However, since that time, Milena has often been back to the area for research purposes. Standing once again on the footbridge on the day of our urban tour, her private experiences of the location were also strongly tinted by later research and by communication with Maruška. We saw it as a noisy and polluted space of poor quality, and commented that the road (the Westlink) beneath us clearly reinforced exclusion from the city. We spoke of the ‘doughnut’ of roads (Sterrett at al. 2012) around the city centre that



**Figure 0.12** Roads as barriers. Photo by Milena Komarova.

has destroyed pedestrian connections, creating a barrier effect for deprived inner-city communities who depend on walking (Figure 0.12). Research on Belfast rarely investigates how such barriers result in spatial patterns of communal division and forms of social deprivation.

Having passed through the RVH grounds and exited from its west end, we now found ourselves on the edge of the nationalist Falls Road area. The sight of republican graffiti and symbols of nationalist identity that were immediately visible evoked for Milena powerful memories of walking here for the first time on the day of arriving at the hospital to give birth to her daughter (Figures 0.13 and 0.14). She remembered feeling particularly intimidated by a sign on an external hospital wall in support of the IRA. It had now faded away, although another republican sign could be discerned on almost the same spot.

At that time, having only recently moved to Northern Ireland, the abbreviation IRA encapsulated the entirety of Milena's knowledge about this place. This was knowledge that had been gleaned from listening to news bulletins since childhood and that evoked only images of violence. She explained to Maruška that she had felt fearful, unsettled and worried about the safety of delivering her child in this hospital. This made Maruška think of her own encounters with, and imaginations of, 'sectarian' perspectives. Being Dutch, she had once attended a celebration of Queen's Day organized by the Dutch society in Belfast when her son was about three years old.



Figure 0.13 'Broadway Defenders' sign. Photo by Milena Komarova.



Figure 0.14 'Brits Out' sign. Photo by Milena Komarova.

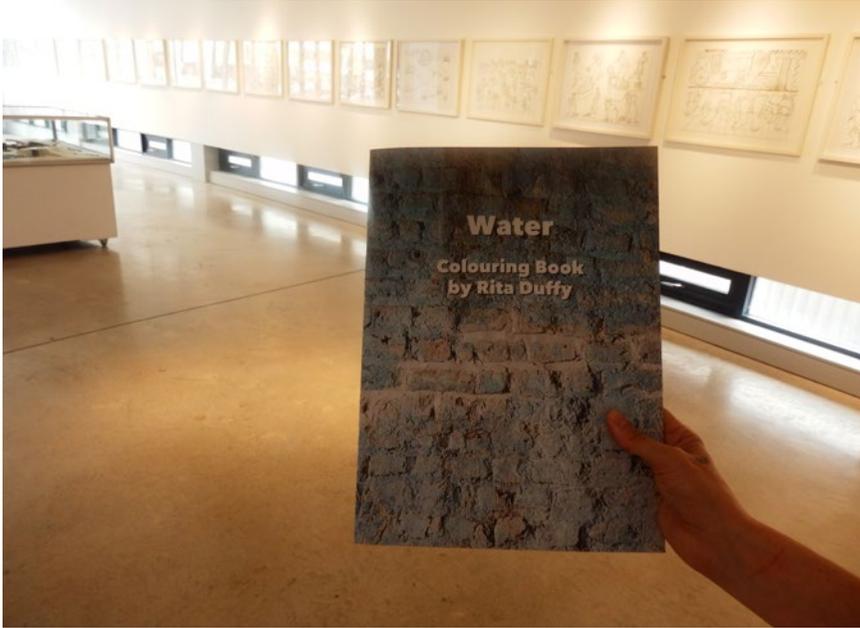


Figure 0.15 Exhibition space. Photo by Milena Komarova.

Following Dutch traditions, she had dressed him in orange clothes. When, travelling by train to Belfast where the celebration was to take place, she had become aware of staring passengers, she suddenly realized that the orange colour might mark her out as a 'Protestant' family and she began to feel ill at ease. This feeling emerged again when, during a flight from Belfast to Amsterdam a year later, a drunken passenger asked her where she lived, and she responded 'Northern Ireland'. With a rather aggressive tone of voice, the obviously nationalist man shouted that she should have answered 'Ireland!'

Our own memories of sectarianism were evoked in direct response to the urban environment. Yet, we also had many other experiences that undermined territorial readings of the landscape. Taking a break in the cafe of the Cultúrlann centre on the 'nationalist' Falls Road, we were reminded of the numerous times we had been in this place before: Milena had sung and shared Christmas dinners with her choir in the building. Maruška was drawn to an exhibition of Rita Duffy's artwork in the adjoining gallery, an artist she had got to know during earlier research on creative production (Figure 0.15). Again, our perception of our surroundings clearly intertwined with memories of a variety of past experiences, only some related to politics. Interestingly, some memories were also evoked by our belongings. The jotting pad that Milena was using for her field notes, for instance, was an old unused school notebook from her 'communist' childhood, its plain appearance and Cyrillic script apparently at odds with the place, time and



Figure 0.16 The old notebook. Photo by Milena Komarova.

purpose for which it was now used (Figure 0.16). For her, however, the notebook signified connectedness with earlier phases in her life in a different spatial and political realm. As Milena began to recall her memories, Maruška vividly remembered the social and economic conditions in state-socialist Czechoslovakia, a country that she had visited many times during the Cold War. In deep conversation, we were transported back to other times and places, and no longer noticed the cafe around us.

Our day ended with a journey by car to the Ulster Hospital. The relative swiftness of our movement in the car made us aware of the way different modes of transportation affect how much, and what, can be seen in the landscape. On the way, Maruška told Milena about the difficulties her son had faced after birth and the support she had received from the nurses in intensive care. We ended agreeing that motherhood had made us identify with Northern Irish and other mothers, and had given us access to new socio-spatial contexts in our current place of residence, such as nurseries, schools and the homes of our children's friends.

The above shows that the route we chose to take, the stories we told each other, and our changing and contradictory sense of place as we moved through the landscape, were all linked to our personal histories as researchers, mothers, migrants, artists, and once-upon-a-time children in faraway places. Our experience of Belfast on that day clearly drew on overlapping aspects of the 'personal' and the 'professional', the 'past' and the 'present',

and places ‘here’ and ‘there’. To produce the reflective textual outcome of our urban walk – the very words you are reading right now – we had to select and translate a complex reality of movement and multi-sensoriality into an argument relevant to this book. We hope that the resulting ‘interim’ has shed some light on our own histories of mobility and place-making, and on their momentary resonance with the place-making activities of others.

## The Chapters in the Book

Spatial issues related to histories and memories of the Troubles are most centrally addressed in the first three chapters of this book. In Chapter 1, Angela Mazzetti explores her own experiences of growing up in Northern Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s in an autoethnographic analysis. Her self-reflective narrative considers the importance of first-hand experiences, visual cues, and media reports to her perception and use of public space at the time, exploring how they shaped her anticipation that certain sites were ‘dangerous’, and others ‘safe’. Her account confronts the reader with a world of saturated senses and emotions. She describes, for example, walking by a shop after an explosion, a place in which her senses were ‘flooded with the destruction: the black charred remains of what were once colourful toys and trinkets; the sound of water cascading down through the walls and ceiling’. Exploring how she coped with the embodied memories of such experiences, she investigates how concrete temporal, seasonal and situational factors during childhood and early adulthood contributed to a changing sense of (social) self.

The theme of self in transformation also weaves through Chapter 2, in which Erin Hinson investigates how, between 1972 and 1988, former Ulster Volunteer Force and Red Hand Commando prisoners formed positive place attachments to the compounds of the Maze/Long Kesh prison through the production and use of artefacts. Hinson builds upon Milligan’s concept of locational socialization, and shows how the prisoners, as they developed their skills, were not only engaged in the crafting of a variety of objects, but simultaneously crafted the social and material prison environment. Learning to work with leather, paint and other materials also helped them to pass time and gain a sense of agency within the confined setting, producing a mental space in which they could ‘escape’ from this reality. Craft production also facilitated communications with the outside world, as artefacts were sent to family and friends as gifts and commodities, connecting the local to the extra-local. In addition, Hinson shows how in the twenty-first century, the artefacts have been newly framed in an exhibition space established by the ex-prisoners. Their aim was to challenge the one-dimensional perception of themselves as loyalists and murderers, supplanting these perceptions with a multi-dimensional view that includes their past as skilled craftsmen and artists.

In Chapter 3, Elizabeth DeYoung uses walking as a methodology for uncovering how the physical environment of Belfast reflects broader narratives of remembrance through plaques that commemorate people who died during ‘the Troubles’. Regarding the streets as ‘repositories of stories’, she explores how she encounters the memorial plaques in highly segregated working-class areas. As in Chapter 2, material production and display are regarded as an important process in which place is being made and place identities are being claimed. The walking method that DeYoung uses also opens questions of memory, forgetting and victimhood, and reminds the reader that the materiality and practice of commemoration has the power to render people, things and events invisible, just as much as to bring them into the limelight. The analysis emphasizes spatial dimensions in Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory, demonstrating that place-making and mobility are crucial aspects in the reconstruction and reshaping of past events within present-day frameworks.

Andrea García González turns the focus in Chapter 4 to processes of multiple identification that are only partly territorial, zooming in on relations of friendship and gender. Based on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork with a women’s group in Belfast that included members of both Protestant and Catholic backgrounds, she questions the more pervasive static notions of place characteristic of communal divisions and ethnonational conflict. Based on de Certeau’s understanding of ‘speaking’ as an opportunity to challenge dominant spatial discourses and practices, she explores the alternative ‘space of female friendship’ that is created by the women through regular face-to-face verbal exchange. The analysis demonstrates that the group members practise cross-community female friendship in newly appropriated spatial settings, including a Protestant community centre and a gym. Their ‘mutation’ of dominant territorial discourse thus problematizes divisions between and within their communities, not only in terms of rigid communal identifications, but also of established gender relations as they share a critical view on male dominance. Ultimately, González demonstrates that the discursive space of female friendship is a space of political possibility.

By contrast, in Chapter 5, Milena Komarova examines how in urban environments characterized by political conflict material change resonates and intersects with everyday movements and commemorative practices, with varied spatial and temporal effects. Building on Brighenti’s (2010) work on visibility, Komarova investigates how a transformation of a physical barrier (a security gate in one of Belfast’s longest and oldest ‘peace walls’) is affecting nationalist–unionist territorial divisions in the area. The analysis focuses particularly on the temporary opening of the gate to allow the annual Orange Order Whiterock Parade to pass through, a moment when territorial tensions rise as nationalist demonstrators gather to protest. Komarova compares the specific spatial and affective dynamics at this contentious moment with less contentious, everyday uses of the

gate, and contrasts the case with more peaceful parades in other parts of the city. The chapter specifically discusses the impact of the replacement of the once-solid iron gate by a see-through structure, a change reflecting the longer-term goal of completely demolishing the dividing wall. On a positive note, she argues that the new visibility produced through such changes ‘can serve to transform territoriality and to support and extend the public nature of urban space’. Yet, as she also suggests, the way visibility and movement are used strategically as part of both mundane embodied practices and organized events, modifies and occasionally subverts the effects of this spatial change. Finally, Komarova also addresses the effect of mediatization and the appearance of the resulting film fragments in digital space on the permeability of the new security structure at the study site.

A peace wall is also traversed in Chapter 6, but here with the aim to challenge ethno-national division and offer a way out of territorial conflict. Kayla Rush explores the Lift the Cross (LTC) initiative, organized by River of Hope Pentecostal Fellowship (RHPF) in West Belfast in a well-known interface area of the city. Presented as a spiritual solution for the divided inhabitants, the initiative involves street-level interactions with local geographies through daily ‘cross walks’ and ‘cross vigils’ through Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods. Like Komarova, Rush is interested in questions around visibility and spatiality. Based on six months of fieldwork with the group, she examines urban walking as a way of knowing and enskillment, and as an opportunity for visual manipulation of the environment. In their acts of carrying or standing with the crosses, LTC participants quite literally inscribe or ‘etch’ the image of the cross over places in West Belfast on a daily basis – both in literal embodied ways and in highly visual virtual spaces. While the embodied inscription of this ‘crucentric’ vision is performed in situ, its online representation engages what Rush calls the ‘Facebook gaze’, and produces new, religion-themed forms of urban *flânerie*. In both cases, the aim is a symbolic rearrangement of perceptions and discourses of West Belfast, foregrounding the Pentecostal view. Rush argues that, notwithstanding their limited success in changing the image and experience of West Belfast for urban residents whom they physically encountered on their daily walks, the participants in the initiative successfully engaged online spectators.

In Chapter 7, Augusto Soares is also interested in digital practices and explores the spatial interplay between offline events and movements on the Internet. He investigates how, through processes of intertextuality, administrators, users and followers of the political and satirical commentators’ blog LAD (‘Loyalists Against Democracy’) generate and multiply meaning in a process of constant (re)production and inversion as they criticize, mock, or full-heartedly support aspects of local social and political life. The posts by LAD afford trans-local communication in ways rarely realizable in the offline world, particularly in a region with sharp spatial divisions. Yet, this

is not to suggest that the variety of reconfigurations ignited by discursive online place-making are straightforward or unproblematic when it comes to addressing social and political conflict. While on the one hand acting as a space for dialogue and for developing ties beyond one's own social background and political affiliations, it is recognized, on the other hand, that the online can lead to diversifying and heightening hostile contacts and attitudes, and brings new modes of conducting and experiencing these. Either way, Soares demonstrates how the online provides a platform and a potentiality, a discursive space for particular political expression and exchange that is often not possible in the physical spaces of Northern Ireland.

In Chapter 8, in his analysis of the annual Belfast's Festival of Fools, Nick McCaffrey demonstrates, however, that the region *does* provide opportunities for joyful intermingling when the city centre is temporarily transformed into a place of laughter. In contrast to the small-scale meetings of the women's group discussed in Chapter 4, the festival links Belfast to places outside Northern Ireland, bringing artists from around the world to the streets of Belfast. As with similar festivals across locations in different countries, the festival is aimed at local audiences who look for family-oriented entertainment and travel from different locations to take part. Consequently, it provides the opportunity for interactive spatial sociality that transcends practices of Protestant/unionist and Catholic/nationalist ethno-political place-making. McCafferty investigates to what extent the festival organizers, performers and audiences are engaged with the reconciliatory aims of official policies of 'shared space', a concept that reflects an intention to change spatial perceptions and practices, leading to a more inclusive society. Interested in affective and sensorial dimensions of sociality, he also explores the influence of the festival's specific bodily experiences on the perceptions of interacting performers and audience members.

Emotions are also central in Chapter 9, in which Maruška Svašek examines an event organized by senior members of the Indian Community Centre (ICC) in Belfast, a former Methodist Memorial Church Hall. During the event, several groups of elderly people were invited to celebrate Diwali and participate in a documentary about ageing. Exploring discourses of 'community' and 'cross-community' typical to Northern Ireland, the chapter investigates the transformation of the ICC into a cross-community place. The shared aim of the participants was to draw attention to the plight of Northern Irish elderly people and find support for the different organizations they were part of. As the chapter shows, there was, however, a limit to the ways in which specific people and things could be reframed for new purposes. The case demonstrates that people do not have unlimited power when shaping social situations through spatial or material engagement. Imbued with meaning and agency, some sacred artefacts demanded specific behaviour, as they played a central role in the lives of Hindu worshippers.

In Chapter 10, Naoko Maehara sheds light on the spatial experiences and practices of the growing number of migrants in Northern Ireland. More specifically, she explores the processes of emplacement among Japanese women (one of the smaller migrant populations) living in different parts of the region. The women are all married to ‘local’ husbands. Born and raised in Japan, leaving behind familiar spaces and places back home, they have encountered and interacted with their new physical and social environment in myriad ways. Unfamiliar surroundings – new sights, sounds, smells, weather, language, food, and ways of doing things – have caused the women to experience an occasional sense of loss. Hoping for integration in their husbands’ society, the women have also shaped, or tried to shape, positive representations of their surroundings. Expectations of life in ‘the West’ and Ireland have influenced their experiences of cross-cultural marriage and motherhood. Informed by particular concerns, social and affective goals, desires, and future prospects, Northern Ireland has become a different space for each of them. The analysis of emplacement, whereby the women transform an unfamiliar physical space into a personalized place, shows how their experiences, are also infused with conscious reflections and interpretations.

In the final chapter, Chapter 11, Malcolm Franklin investigates the myriad ways in which asylum seekers and refugees have sought to find a semblance of belonging in Northern Ireland through socio-spatial practice. The majority of those who arrived in Northern Ireland during the time of the research in 2010–11 relied on agents operating within people-smuggling networks, which were decisive in determining their destination country. In other words, the people central in the analysis did not choose to end up in Belfast. In their subjective life narratives, the physical setting of the urban environment of Belfast contrasted with memories of rural life in distant countries. The chapter builds on the perspective of ‘home’ developed by Rapport and Dawson (1998) that contends that lives are lived in movement and that identity is formed and adjusted in processes of transit and transformation. This dynamic notion of home and (non-)belonging helps to emphasize the fact that the lives of asylum seekers and refugees are not only shaped by experiences of uncertainty and apprehension, but also by the creation and use of social networks in the new environment. The inquiry demonstrates that ‘home’ is a processual and mutable product of social activity, and that the analysis of displacement and loss of home must be related to a critical investigation of refugee policies and local political dynamics in the places of arrival.

As Dominic Bryan argues in the Afterword, the book as a whole provides valuable insights into small and large conflicts arising in specific socio-spatial settings in twenty-first century Northern Ireland. Each chapter highlights different aspects of movement, sociality and place-making, exploring questions that are relevant to research far beyond the region.

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## Notes

1. See, for example, Brown and MacGinty 2003; Bryan 2000, 2007; Bryan and Gillespie 2005; Bryan and McIntosh 2007; Bryan and Stevenson 2009; Bryson and McCartney 1994; Buckley 1985; Cashman 2008; Donnan 2005, 2006, 2014; Feldman 1991; Harrison 1995; Jarman 1993, 1997; Jarman and Bryan 1998; Lisle 2006; Loftus 1990, 1994; McCormick and Jarman 2005; McIntosh 1999; Nic Craith 2002; Ramsey 2011; Rolston 1991, 1992, 1995, 2003; Ross 2007; and Santino 2001.
2. Aspects of place-making in Northern Ireland that do not overtly address, explain or suggest a way out of political conflict have attracted relatively little attention from anthropologists, political scientists or sociologists. O'Dowd and Komarova (2013) comment on the power of influential 'spatial narratives', most prominently those of the 'conflict' and of the 'new post-conflict capitalist' city, to shape the ways in which physical changes, particularly in Northern Irish urban landscapes, have been envisioned and imagined by policymakers and academics.
3. See, for example, Proshansky et al. 1983; Burkitt 1991; and Bonaiuto et al. 1996.

4. All this also speaks to the relationship between movement, visibility and visibility in lived environments. It is through the visual, Hodgson (2011: 55) suggests, that we 'read' the urban landscape, and make decisions 'about the paths we want to make'. Murray (2014) discusses how readings of visual cues and street semiotics impact on our perception and use of space – for example, to determine whether one is in the 'right' part of the city. Scollon and Scollon (2003, as referred to by Murray 2014) have called this a process of 'geosemiotics'.
5. After their completion, 'buildings hide the many possibilities that did not get built, as they bury the interests, politics and power that shaped the one design that did' (Gieryn 2002: 38–39).
6. Partly based on work by the sociologist David Turnbull (1991), Ingold argued that those who use comparative observational data tend to make brief visits to local settings with the aim to 'collect' research material. Analysing these materials elsewhere, in their office or lab, they tend to regard their own movements into and out of these locations as irrelevant. This, Ingold argues, is how 'the researched', framed as 'data', come to be associated with subjective place, and the researchers get the status of objective outsiders who conduct scientific work (do their comparisons, make conclusions) in an abstract space of scientific rationality. Ingold criticized approaches that assume that 'places exist *in space*' (Ingold 2011: 146, italics in original), and introduced the concept of the 'pathway' to explore how, as individual people inhabit the world through movement, their horizons constantly change. In his terminology, emerging and interweaving individual trajectories create dynamic 'meshworks', conceptualized as interlinking trails and knots of intertwining lifelines. He preferred the idea of the evolving meshwork to what he saw as the restrictive perspective of network theorists who regard connections between individuals as lines between static dots.
7. See Wetherell and Potter 1988; and Hall 1992.
8. Derogative for Catholic.

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