

Violence, fear and ‘the everyday’: negotiating spatial practice in the city of Belfast

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Abstract:

This paper seeks to address the effects on people’s everyday lives which result from fear of sectarian violence in a city characterised by residential segregation. It examines how people in five working-class areas of inner city Belfast manage their lives ‘on narrow ground’ and negotiate sectarianised space on a daily basis. The paper aims to counteract the tendency of existing studies of violence and segregation in Northern Ireland to focus on the spectacular (violent incidents) and the static (residential divisions) and, instead, to cast light on the mundane and the everyday.

Keywords:

violence, fear, segregation, spatial practice, sectarianism, Northern Ireland, qualitative approaches

Introduction

Catholic female, thirties: “I mean it’s not just you’re a Catholic, it’s that they think you’re a Catholic and that’s what fears me.”

Violence, segregation and the spatialised nature of fear in Northern Ireland

The paramilitary cease-fires of 1994/7 and the attendant ‘peace process’ have brought significant change to everyday life in Northern Ireland. Sectarian violence, however, remains an aspect of daily reality for many people. High levels of residential segregation in urban areas show few signs of diminishing. Segregation is most pronounced in districts which are working-class in composition. While neither the intensity of sectarian violence nor segregation is uniform across Northern Ireland, they continue to form the social and spatial parameters within which many people’s everyday lives take place.

Discourse on sectarian violence within the general population tends to emphasise violent incidents, victim profiles, individual perpetrators and their respective paramilitary organisations. While these themes are significant, they tend to ignore the wider societal implications of fear of sectarian attack. Just as violent attacks do not occur in a social vacuum but are conditioned by a web of social relations that stretch beyond the individual, their repercussions transcend the individuals involved to affect society at large. Incidents are ‘digested’ by communities and translated into narratives, which, in addition to personal experience, provide pivotal sources of subjective local knowledge. Such bodies of information form the building blocks with which individuals construct their perceptions of safety and danger in relation to their environment. The resulting constructs, however, are not monolithic; rather they resemble a mosaic in which various emotions of varying intensity are attached to different places that – in their entirety – make up an individual’s environment. Fear, in other words, is highly spatialised. Perceptions of relative threat inform decisions on spatial behaviour. People do not merely exist fixed in a single location, instead they engage in a multitude of productive and consumptive activities as they go about their daily lives. This necessitates moving outside the boundaries of their own ethnically exclusive neighbourhood and criss-crossing the territory of the ‘other’. In consequence, many individuals have to negotiate the spatial realities of violence and fear on a daily basis and develop appropriate coping strategies designed to offset potential danger.

This paper seeks to address the relative lack of attention given to the mundane implications of sectarian violence within socio-political, as well as academic discourse in Northern Ireland. In particular it wishes to draw attention to the experience of fear of sectarian violence and how it shapes spatial practice. In pursuit of this objective we shall first review the current Northern Irish research landscape on the topic, before proceeding to examine spatial practices in working-class districts of Belfast. The analysis focuses on the movements by local residents into both the territory of the ‘other’ and into public space bordering their residential neighbourhoods. The paper explores the specific factors which local people take cognisance of in their daily spatial negotiations. The final section draws together the findings and draws conclusions with respect to some of the effects of political violence on everyday life.

Spatialised fear, coping strategies and the Northern Irish research landscape

Sectarian violence and segregation have for many years drawn the attention of academics with an interest in Northern Ireland. Studies of the impact of violence have traditionally followed one of two lines of investigation: either the largely positivist analysis of lethal incidents or the socio-psychological examination of the effects of violence on surviving victims or witnesses of attacks.

The first of these is comprised by the work of a range of scholars, geographers and political scientists in the main, who focus almost exclusively on fatal attacks, individual perpetrators (or their respective paramilitary organisations) and the characteristics of the victims involved (Murray 1982; Poole 1983; O'Duffy and O'Leary 1990; Poole 1990; White 1993; O'Duffy 1995; Fay et al. 1999). Their main interest lies in measuring violence over time and in identifying patterns with regards to victims and locations in which violent incidents occur. For example, Murray (1982), analysing data on victims of killings and explosions between 1969 and 1977, identifies gender and age as significant variables. Moreover, he detects specific spatial patterns, pointing to five regions displaying high levels of violence within Northern Ireland: Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, South Armagh, the Fermanagh and Tyrone border areas, and Mid Ulster. Finally, Murray identifies various factors to explain these spatial patterns, predicting that the ethnic composition (a great majority of Catholics), high levels of segregation, a history of resistance and specific environmental properties of a place (terrain containing targets such as specific people or buildings and/or providing cover and escape routes) are conducive to high levels of violence. More recently, Fay et al. (1999) have followed a similar approach. Compiling and analysing a comprehensive database on killings, the authors set out to construct a profile of victims and the geographical variation of violent incidents, based on quantitative analyses.

What is characteristic of this first kind of research is its focus on the primary effects of violence with the analysis most commonly restricted to lethal incidents. While these analyses provide indispensable insights into patterns of violence, the wider social repercussions of such deaths are beyond their scope. Furthermore, this research is characterised by a specific conceptualisation of the role of space in relation to violence: geography features as location, as objective co-ordinates of violent attacks. In contrast, the examination of secondary effects relates to both the construction of mental maps as a mediated result of violence and its impact on spatial behaviour.

Sociologists and psychologists have examined violence in Northern Ireland from an alternative angle. Their main interest relates to individuals who have survived or witnessed violent incidents and how they cope with these traumatic experiences (Smyth and Fay 2000). Frequently, the emphasis is placed on children and young people. Some studies have widened their focus to look at the broader impacts on socialisation processes, asking whether the experience of violence during the Troubles has produced a generation which is more violence prone. Cairns (1987) reviews existing (quantitative) studies on individual coping strategies (such as denial and habitualisation), on the extent of psychological disorders amongst children in Northern Ireland and on children's moral development (regarding both moral standards and behaviour). He concludes that in spite of the immense suffering of some, the majority of children in Northern Ireland have shown a remarkable resilience to the experience of violence. Moreover, he sees little evidence of a detrimental effect on children's moral standards. Smyth (1998), drawing on Cairns' work, deals with both children who have survived attacks themselves and children whose parents have gone through traumatic experiences. She vividly illustrates the

effects of such experiences and the resulting coping strategies (e.g. displacement of memories, silence and non-communication within families, substance abuse).

The merit of this research in relation to violence lies in widening the study of its effects to the living, escaping the focus on killings which marks the first group of writers. The prevailing emphasis is placed on traumatic experiences and the fear that develops from such occurrences. The insights gained from this research lead on to further questions as to the wider socio-psychological implications of individual trauma; those processes which may engender perceptions of fear amongst whole communities. Moreover, it then becomes important to draw attention to the way fear permeates people's perceptions of space, the manner in which space becomes mentally tagged with attributes of 'safety' or 'danger'.

The importance of space in relation to violence is addressed by the literature on residential segregation in Northern Ireland (Boal et al. 1976; Boal 1978, 1981, 1982, 1987, 1993, 1994; Boal and Livingstone 1983; Doherty and Poole 1995; Poole and Doherty 1996). The literature is predominantly concerned with, alternatively, examining the wider functions of segregation or measuring its scale. The former is most clearly addressed in the work of Boal, who identifies four main functional aspects: defence, preservation of one's own culture, avoidance of contact with the 'other' community, and providing a base for attack on the opposition. Doherty and Poole (1995) serve as an illustrative example of the second of these endeavours. The authors calculate a number of segregation indices for data on Belfast's population. The study of segregation scales over time, in conjunction with an analysis of historical sources on riots in the city, leads them to conclude that segregation must be seen as the spatial outcome of violence, echoing earlier claims by Boal et al. (1976). Residential movements are thus interpreted as a behavioural response to violence.

Studies of residential movement implicitly suggest that individuals cope with fear of sectarian violence through a one-off decision: through moving house, into an area that is perceived to be safe. In many ways, however, coping is an ongoing process. Since the majority of urban communities in Belfast are not self-sufficient, residents need to negotiate their spatial practices on a continuous basis. Coping, in other words, is very much a feature of daily life. In addition, the existing literature does not distinguish between segregated space (based on residential housing) and sectarianised space (based on behaviour and perceptions of behaviour). In short, the (differential) *experience* of residential segregation by different communities and residents is beyond the scope of these studies, which is largely a result of the positivist approach they adopt.

With one notable exception, the relationship between residential and activity segregation has not been the focus of the literature to date. The exception is Boal's earliest work (1969) in which he conducts a quantitative analysis of activity patterns in the area surrounding Cupar Street in West Belfast. Based on a survey of residents, he examines spatial movements to bus stops, grocery shops and social visits and detects clearly demarcated activity spaces between Catholic and Protestant residents. Whereas the former show a distinct orientation of movements towards the (Catholic) Falls Road area, the latter's activities are almost exclusively directed to the (Protestant) Shankill Road area.

Boal's study, which predates the Troubles, is seminal in drawing attention to the daily spatial movements of residents and in casting light on discernible patterns therein. The outbreak of the Troubles and the attendant steep rise in the level of violence and segregation have underlined the importance of fear in relation to spatial behaviour. Accordingly, important questions emerge concerning the decision-making processes which lead to specific behavioural patterns and, more importantly, the daily negotiations entailed.

Darby takes the examination of violence and residential segregation a step further (Darby 1971, 1986, 1990; Darby and Morris 1974). He applies a multi-method research design, using both quantitative and qualitative elements in the analysis of intimidation and residential movement. Darby (1986) provides an ethnographic description of the way fear of violence induced large-scale residential de-mixing in the early 1970s. Similar to Doherty and Poole (Doherty and Poole 1995; Poole and Doherty 1996), Darby focuses on residential movement as one specific behavioural response to fear. His contribution lies in providing an in-depth analysis of the underlying socio-psychological processes. More importantly, Darby also turns his attention to the evolution of relationships between neighbouring communities after de-mixing. Based on the analysis of social contacts (personal friendships and interactions between community groups), the author contends that communities adopted two main behavioural patterns after times of violent confrontation: avoidance of contact and partial interaction (restricted to clearly defined contexts such as the pursuit of common material interests).

In the course of his analysis, Darby devotes some attention to daily activities and the spatial movements involved once residential relocation has taken place, however the issue is addressed only as a minor part of his investigation. Darby's main interest lies in the link between violence, segregation and community relations rather than in the implications of segregation and violence for the everyday life of individuals as members of these communities. He is concerned with the nature of intergroup relations, not with individual practice. Darby's interest does not pertain to the intricate ways in which the use of space shapes and is shaped by social relations.

The research rationale

The present project, thus, builds on this existing valuable research on violence in Northern Ireland and attempts to address certain significant gaps. It aims to cast light on the daily negotiations of spatial practice, which are induced by fear of sectarian violence and informed by subjective constructions (perceptions of 'safety' and 'danger') of objective realities (violence and segregation). It takes a microscopic view of spatial behaviour, drawing attention to the various coping strategies which individuals employ as members of one or the other of the two main 'ethnic' communities in Northern Ireland. The study reaches beyond the most immediate and visible effects of sectarian violence in Belfast to its wider social impacts, which are no less 'real' or significant even if less tangible.

Individuals' negotiations of spatial practice are by definition highly subjective and as a result, the examination calls for a qualitative approach in order to unravel the perceptions and rationales underlying behaviour. Accordingly, in-depth and focus

group interviews were chosen as primary methods¹. In total approximately 80 residents were interviewed during the period May 2000 to May 2001. Access was gained to these individuals through various neighbourhood-based organisations such as residents groups, community centres and youth clubs, church groups, schools and political parties. Given the close association of violent incidents and residential segregation with working-class areas, detailed ethnographic work was undertaken in working-class, segregated, inner-city study areas located in east and south Belfast².

Quantitative data (see Table 1) underlines the deprived character of these communities. They display strong patterns of residential segregation, high shares of public housing, unemployment and low car ownership. Their demographic dynamics differ, however, with Catholic districts (Areas 2, 4 and 5) being characterised by a relatively young population while Protestant districts (Areas 1 and 3) show high levels of elderly residents. The contrast between 1991 and 1999 figures illustrates contracted populations in some Protestant areas and growing populations in Catholic districts.

TABLE 1 NEAR HERE

Spatial practices in working-class areas of Belfast

In the city of Belfast, day to day reality in segregated working-class districts builds upon a paradox. Though regular reference is made to the fact that there is little or no contact with neighbouring districts, residents often speak of those from neighbouring areas by name. Despite the existence of walls and fences dividing certain districts from one another, mechanisms are at work whereby people have quite detailed information about one another, derived from moving in the same narrow spaces. It is not only the names of leading paramilitary figures from beyond the divide which are common knowledge, the identities of less high profile individuals are also familiar. Contact and knowledge often result from cross-community schemes, school programmes, engagement in recreational rioting or involvement in the occasional examples of cross-community dating or marriage.

Certain forms of routine contact have a ritualised nature, where playful acts of competition and conflict are enacted between neighbouring groups:

Protestant male, thirties: ...when Rangers [Protestant supported football team in Glasgow] and Celtic [Catholic-supported football team in Glasgow] play, and when Celtic win you will get phone calls to the Brighton Rock Bar [Protestant bar] from The Blackthorn, The White Lion [Catholic bars], and the Flying Fox [city-centre mixed bar] asking what was the score, they ask for people by name. When Rangers win we would ring The White Lion, and the Blackthorn. And we would all gather around the phone and start singing. It happens every Celtic and Rangers match. They slam the phone down. It is getting to the stage if Rangers get beaten, you don't answer the phone, because you know who it is.

¹ All geographical referents have been anonymised to provide confidentiality to respondents.

² These areas are distinct from other districts of Belfast (particularly in the west of the city), which are segregated on a larger scale, thus ensuring that residents have little necessity to enter 'hostile' territory.

Such ritualised acts of conflict between neighbouring districts take on a more territorial form at interfaces. Boundary spaces are treated by some as zones of confrontation and identity performance, particularly in the shape of rioting (throwing stones, bottles, paint bombs, breaking windows). Many of those involved are young people who often choose to wear their Celtic and Rangers football shirts as they engage in displays of territorialism on their neighbourhood boundaries. In addition, involvement in bands and fraternal organisations who parade on local thoroughfares and interfaces means that participants are identifiable even when not clothed in organisational regalia. Ritualised expressions of conflictual relations between groups ensure that people become aware of their neighbours' identities. Moreover, mere exiting and entering of ethnically exclusive neighbourhoods marks ethnic identity.

A whole range of sources, therefore, provide knowledge about residents in neighbouring districts. This has crucial implications for life 'on narrow ground'. Given that ethnically distinct communities coexist in a limited geographical area, reducing visibility in boundary areas proves difficult. As a result, people travelling in the vicinity of their local community cannot assume that they are unrecognisable.

Catholic male, forties: ...the communities live cheek by jowl and people get to know your face.

Protestant male, thirties: ...they would know you because you were on the interface [rioting and posturing]. You get to know people and faces and names.

Protestant female, forties: ...they know where you're from. I mean I can look at somebody in the town and I'd say they're from the Prendergast Road [a main thoroughfare linking Protestant and Catholic districts]. 'Cause I know their faces, we're so close.

As a result of these various forms of interaction, it proves practically impossible for residents to mask their religious identities within the local area and its surroundings.

Behaviour in neighbouring 'hostile' territory

This belief that group identity is highly visible impacts on how people use space outside their own residential areas. Individuals adopt strategies which allow them to regulate the relative visibility of their daily movements. One strategy which is employed is that of completely avoiding neighbouring districts which are ethnically different, and hence perceived to be hostile. The following examples point to such a coping mechanism:

Catholic female, thirties: There's a lot of people up there [registered with a doctors surgery located across an interface]. ... what we actually do, it's illegal, but we get them to ring our prescriptions down to our pharmacy. You don't have to go up...they're not supposed to do that, but they do, because they know people are nervous and they're quite accommodating.

Catholic female, teens: I had to do a project for School so I was going up to get books on it and my Daddy left me up to the library and he came back to collect me in 10 minutes so I was sitting there looking for books and asking the woman and there was this crowd of wee girls and wee boys sitting in the corner going 'you're a Fenian [used as a derogatory word for a Catholic] aren't you?' I didn't know what to do. I just stood there beside the woman and they started calling me 'Fenian'. What am I to do for books now if I have to do a project or anything? So we're scared to go up to the library so we've nothing to do for books now.

Frequently parents impose their own mental maps of 'no go' areas. Adults commonly speak of their fear for the safety of their children and young people, and the need to impose micro-geographical boundaries on their movements.

Protestant male, forties: I think the people who worry most are the parents. They probably don't worry so much about themselves, as they do about their children. I say to my kids 'These are no-go areas, don't go into town, don't go here and there. If you go anywhere, stay deep inside [your own area]'.

While utilising an avoidance strategy is commonplace, access to shared services necessitates that many people must regularly enter into 'other' neighbouring districts. It may be possible not to use a library, but other daily activities are essential and leave people with little choice. In these cases individuals utilise a range of coping strategies designed to reduce the visibility of their ethnic identity. While parents impose spatial rules as to where young people are allowed to venture, they are also realistic about the need for children and young people to leave their local neighbourhoods, whether for school or leisure pursuits. In such cases parents try to impose restraints on their children's choice of dress or language use.

Catholic female, thirties: My ones are mad into Celtic and if they're going somewhere, into the town or the doctors or hospital appointments... I'd say 'don't put that [football shirt] on you ... if you've to go to the city'... I'd be nearly having a heart attack.

Catholic female, thirties: I remember one time my son used to think that British was a bad word. He heard that many people shouting 'you dirty British [bastard]', but he thought that British was the bad word so we were walking up Gordon Road [Protestant area] and it was coming up to the 12th [of July – climax of the marching season] and all the flags were out, and there used to be a toy shop on the corner and he wanted a toy in it and I just hadn't got the money to buy it for him. So he says 'you dirty British', he shouted at me, and I ran up the street, it was just to get my hand over his mouth, you know, before he said it again.

Restraints are not only associated with the use of clothing and language, but also with the number of individuals venturing into neighbouring districts in a group. Large groups are perceived as likely to cause provocation:

Catholic male, twenties: ...You might get two friends going up but you wouldn't get the crowd of girls that would roam the streets. You wouldn't catch them all saying 'let's go up to Parkfields [shopping centre located in a neighbouring Protestant district]'. You know on foot, two girlfriends taking a walk. But you wouldn't catch a crowd of them. When I say a crowd I mean about four or five.

Safety measures are therefore not only imposed by parents, as children and young people independently adopt strategies designed to offset threat:

Catholic woman, forties: My youngest daughter is 9 and her name is Ciara [Irish name associated with the Catholic population] and I have never ever said to her that she had to take her school uniform off or explained it but she always knew that if she was going to Parkfields Shopping Centre with me she couldn't say her name was Ciara and she had to put a coat over her to cover her school uniform. I didn't even notice it until about 4 weeks ago, we went to a shopping centre on the Clifford Road [Catholic district] instead of Parkfields and she said to me 'Mummy do I not need to put my coat on here'? And I said 'no, you're alright' she said 'why, do they like Irish people up here'?

As the quotation above demonstrates, people employ several important coping strategies in their everyday spatial negotiations. The first of these involves the practice of not using or changing certain names: Irish first names such as Mairead and Séan identify people as Catholic, just as English names such as Sammy and Billy are more commonly Protestant. These names rarely cross the religious divide. Hence the act of changing or not using names in particular spaces can be seen as a deliberate strategy to offset the possibility of ethnic identification. Similarly, in order to reduce the chance of being associated with families known to be politically active in neighbouring districts, people refrain from divulging surnames. This is a particular concern in the case of cross-community projects with neighbouring districts, where such knowledge would be available. A second coping strategy which the quotation vividly illustrates arises from the connection of schools with particular religious groups, and the resulting ease with which an individual's religious affiliation can be identified by the uniform worn. Respondents refer to covering uniforms, wearing jackets and removing ties as measures designed to reduce potential threat when moving in mixed city spaces.

Crucially, what all of these strategies seek to address is the overriding need to avoid attracting attention to one's ethnic identity; the paramount need to avoid provoking a negative reaction to presence within the territory of the other community.

Protestant female, teens: I wouldn't walk down Pleasance Road [Protestant district], past Merville Heights [Catholic district] with my uniform on. I would get the feeling that I would be provoking them or something, if I was going down I would take my blazer off and only wear my skirt and jumper. Everyone knows it is the Arlington blazer [Protestant school].

Coping strategies not only relate to people's behaviour in the public realm, but also to their use of space, in particular when accessing services. As the catchment areas of

schools are spread across wide geographical areas in a city characterised by residential segregation, it is necessary for many young people and their parents to negotiate a complicated mosaic of territories in their movement to and from school.

Catholic female, twenties: My kids go to school up the road and I won't go up to school the same route every day. I change routes, different streets, to make sure that I'm not seen because I've had remarks made to me when my kids have had their school uniform on and they've recognised the uniform.

Just as it is imperative that individuals avoid incensing those in 'hostile' areas, they must also seek to ensure that they do not represent an easy target. Residents aim to reduce the possibility of an attack by choosing to vary their routes. This coping mechanism is not restricted to travelling to and from schools. It is equally employed when travelling to the post office, shopping centre, unemployment exchange or the workplace. They avoid adopting a 'same time, same place' predictability to their daily movements. Such strategies are informed by experience and reinforced by wider family and community valuations of 'intelligent' spatial behaviour. Remarks such as 'what was he/she doing there?'/ 'walking there was asking for it' / 'working there was stupid' are value judgements which serve to impose community norms with respect to spatial practice. In summary, residents regulate their behaviour to reduce both provocation and predictability, in order to successfully manage their relative (in) visibility in 'hostile' territory.

Travelling through 'no-man's' land

Not only are movements into the 'other's' territory inevitable, residents also must undertake journeys which bring them into areas that cannot initially be defined as belonging to either group. This includes main roads without adjacent residential housing, motorways and flyovers, green spaces, bridges, train stations, and industrial or waste ground. Despite their supposed non-segregated and indeed non-political nature, these spaces become sectarianised through use. Spatial practices in 'no man's land' are highly patterned, primarily by the need to reduce the threat of potential attack. As when moving through the 'other's' territory, spatial choices are arguably dictated by the maxim 'Become Invisible'. People walk on specific sides of the street which are viewed as alternatively Protestant or Catholic. They follow predefined routes, crossing roads at particular traffic lights or junctions.

Protestant female, teens: That's how you know, see when people's walking up and down the Prendergast Road [main thoroughfare linking Protestant and Catholic districts] if they're on the side of the post office they're not Protestants and that's how we've always known.

Protestant female, teens:...If we were walking into town it would be on the side opposite [to the Catholic district] so we would be nowhere near them. I would have stayed on that side until I got to the train station and then I would have crossed over so I wasn't walking on the same side as The Beeches [Catholic estate next to the train station]. At night, I would probably get a taxi but if I were to walk at night I would walk that way because I wouldn't stay on the other side just in case anyone was to say anything. I remember when I was younger walking home from the train station and it was late at night and I was walking on that [Protestant] side and there were ones on the other side

and they threw stuff [bottles] over. They were running across the road and throwing them.

Using the predefined 'Protestant' side of the street is part of a silent contract by which non-residential space is territorialised into areas which are alternatively 'ours' or 'theirs'. Such non-verbalised agreements effectively produce and define micro-geographies. This 'contract' appears to offer the possibility of dividing sectarianised space into zones of possible use. If adhered to, there is a lack of interest in this routine; presence effectively becomes unremarkable, even invisible.

Sectarianised spatial practices, however, entail an essential ambivalence. The young woman's reference to the difficulties in using these predefined routes at night clearly illustrates that while this arrangement allows a division of territory into relatively 'safe' spaces, it also marks out people's ethnic identity. For those intent on finding a target for their violence, patterned spatial practices provide the means for easy identification, particularly for night-time attacks.

While thoroughfares are functional spaces, other places could be more accurately described as 'void' spaces. Such areas are characterised by their lack of immediate function, especially at night. Here, fear of an imminent attack is often the result of the dominance by one group of a particular space. It is through certain leisure activities of young people that public space of this type can become sectarianised. Those engaging in underage drinking or making unacceptable levels of noise in their local districts may choose to gather at (or be instructed by paramilitaries to move to) open spaces where they can indulge in their leisure pursuits without fear of harassment from the police, paramilitaries or indeed parents. Drinking gangs habitually gather on vacant land; under flyovers, in playing fields and on green spaces, behind railway stations, and by the river. These young people are viewed by some as marking space as sectarianised by their sheer presence. Their actions ensure that others perceive the locality as threatening regardless of the actual intentions of the young people involved:

Protestant male, forties: When they built those new roads [flyovers] they put in a green area underneath, with flowerbeds and stuff, and they decided to put seats in there, which they thought was a good idea at the time. But of course there was nowhere for the young ones in Merville Heights to go. They didn't want their parents to see them drinking, so under that flyover they knew there was a row of seats and flowerbeds. Perfect spot, nobody could see you and you could see who was coming. The Protestants wouldn't walk on the far side of the road where Catholic territory was, they walked, because they felt safe, on their side of the road but, of course, there the Catholics were sitting with their drink. After a long number of years and some serious incidents they removed them [the seats] which actually, believe it or not, made a hell of a difference.

The research reveals, therefore, that space outside segregated residential areas is equally sectarianised as that within. Though particular places may be contested and usage may shift over time, these spatial practices and the perceptions which underpin them are clear-cut in the main, reproduced in the daily negotiations of those who share this body of knowledge.

Tacit agreements between communities

Whether or not sectarianised space is identified by group emblems and markings (and thus visible to the uninitiated), local people possess a complex body of knowledge about these locales and how they should be negotiated. This knowledge takes the form of a 'text of fear' or a 'boundary rulebook', imposing boundaries on personal behaviour within space. It provides a body of information on the appropriate use of sectarianised locales, which when properly employed acts to reduce the likelihood of violent assault. This common stock of knowledge is area-specific and deals with the micro-geographies of particular districts; whether individual corners, sides of the street, the place to cross the road, clumps of bushes, bus stops or bus routes.

Several factors are highly important in any risk calculation. Among these are social characteristics such as the age and gender of the individual concerned, temporal conditions, the wider political atmosphere and socio-economic factors. Various stages of the lifecycle are reflected in spatial behaviour within sectarianised territory.

Protestant male, thirties: I think when you're younger [there's more danger], if a 20 year old is walking down the Prendergast Road and there's three or four 20 year olds coming there is a good chance there would be a confrontation. But if there's a 45 year old walking down and his hair going grey and he's got a jacket on and trousers, chances are that those 20 year olds will walk past him and ignore him...I think it is because when you are into middle age you're not sort of seen as a threat. A guy in a suit or in a pair of trousers and a jumper isn't seen as a threat where a young lad with maybe a short hair cut and a T-shirt and tattoos would be seen more as a threat...Age has got a lot to do with it.

In addition, spatial freedoms are clearly gendered, with men and women displaying different spatial practices.

Protestant male, fifties: Men would be a natural target. I mean we're in a society where men were the main combatants more or less for thirty years and they were seen as the threat. Most men would probably see another man as a threat but you could have a woman who could do you ten times as much damage and be physically twice the size of the man but it's in your thinking. You're going to ignore her because she's a woman and you're going to concentrate on the man.

Catholic male, twenties: In recent years there have been women intimidated off the roads, but as I say it has generally been the rule that women usually can have freer movements than the men.

The research reveals that men's activity spaces are severely curtailed, relative to women. Indeed, their movements are so restricted that they take place almost entirely within the boundaries of their own community. The liberties that women

possess represent an extension of the domestic sphere; allowing them to fulfil the tasks of everyday family management.

The boundary rulebook, thus, delineates a range of social characteristics which allow individuals a means of calculation as to whether they could potentially become the victim of a sectarian attack. These criteria are also used in order to assess the relative danger that others pose. While an elderly person is viewed as non-threatening, a young man is deemed more likely to pose a danger. Such common criteria for crediting threat and vulnerability demonstrate that an expectation of equivalence exists between the two groups. Despite limited interaction between neighbouring communities, there are clearly shared beliefs about appropriate behaviour. In many respects, the two communities view one another as mirror images of themselves.

Likewise, temporal factors play an important role in influencing the possibility of increased levels of sectarian tension. Wet miserable evenings and dark winter nights keep young people indoors and off the streets and interfaces, whereas bright summer evenings allow them to spend considerable amounts of time outside. Time specific variations, thus, interplay with knowledge of the locality and its geographical referents to produce a patterned use of space within the city.

The Northern Irish 'marching season', from spring to early autumn, is associated with significant controversy and street disturbance. Cyclical in nature, the marching season represents a highly politicised period, which impacts on the mundane features of daily life during the summer months. As one Protestant man notes 'we're condemned to the politics of the marching season'. Other respondents echo this sentiment, speaking of the threat felt to be present in particular months of the calendar year:

Catholic female, thirties: I wouldn't mind working there [in a Protestant dominated workplace in East Belfast] from September to May, but then once it comes after May, you don't know what's going to happen.

Catholic woman, thirties: I suppose the doctors are either on the interface or across it. In the norm it doesn't really affect people but in tensions, round about the July time when you've got UVF flags flying at the top of the street and banners, it's intimidating for even fellas or young girls to go up because maybe there would be a crowd standing at the corner. You actually have to go round the corner onto Pleasance Road for the chemist. So people might go to the doctor's but they mightn't walk round to get their prescription.

The wider political situation, in fact, is crucial amongst the various constraining or enabling conditions for spatial practices. While individual movements can be negotiated through an evaluation of one's social characteristics against the existing temporal conditions, the wider political environment provides an all-embracing atmosphere within which all spatial decisions are made.

Protestant male, thirties: The problem with these areas is that if there is an incident somewhere else and it has nothing to do with you or anyone, if they are going to retaliate, they pick on an easy target. Because it is easy and you are guaranteed to get away. It is very difficult [to get a high profile target] and it takes a lot of time and preparation.

People's spatial behaviour is informed by such perceptions of fear. The parameters of perceived safety and danger shift in response to heightened tensions. Movements into the territory of the other community are temporarily suspended, only to be resumed after an appropriate cooling-off period.

While it is possible to find patterns in the use of space which are dictated by such factors as age, gender, temporal and political conditions, many people negotiate their daily lives with much more ease. This is particularly the case for those individuals with a higher level of disposable income or access to a car. For those with access to a car, spatial divisions can be ignored and overcome. However, with low levels of car ownership and dependence on public transport in interface districts (see table1), most residents rely on services such as doctors' surgeries, post offices, and shops being provided locally. This suggests that the repercussions of sectarianised space are particularly significant to those whose socio-economic position is such that they neither own cars, nor have sufficient funds to allow for private transportation. For these individuals, spatial negotiations are even more intricate and constrained.

Conclusions

Fear of sectarian violence remains a highly significant feature of everyday life for many residents in working-class areas of Belfast. It is mediated by the knowledge that acts of violence continue to be carried out on an almost daily basis, as well as by residential segregation enforced by territorialism. This paper has sought to address the effects on people's everyday lives which result from fear of sectarian violence, examining how people manage their lives 'on narrow ground' and negotiate sectarianised city spaces.

To date, research in Northern Ireland has devoted inadequate attention to the impact of violence on daily spatial practices, focusing instead on violent incidents, their psychological effects on victims and on the relationship between communities. In a similar manner, literature on segregation in Northern Ireland does not cast light on these intricate spatial negotiations. Its concern with residential segregation conveys a static picture of life in the divided city of Belfast. It does not provide insights into the mundane activities of everyday life, which are dynamic and necessitate movement across diverse spaces and territories.

Spatial practices both in the territory of the 'other' community and in 'neutral' territory are highly rule-bound. An elaborate rulebook serves as a regulating mechanism. Its primary objective is to minimise risk. As a result of numerous contacts, whether formal (such as cross-community contact schemes) or informal (such as encounters of 'recreational' rioting), residents possess a substantial body of knowledge about neighbouring communities. Consequently, mutual recognisability is taken for granted. Masking one's own identity is impossible as members of one community enter a neighbouring community (in the course of undertaking fundamental daily activities). As a result, they seek to minimise the time spent in 'hostile' territory. More

importantly, spatial practices are guided by two distinct strategies. For one, it is essential not to attract 'unnecessary' attention to one's presence and not to 'provoke' those in the 'other' community. Secondly, the need to reduce the predictability of one's movements is paramount. If adhered to, these strategies effectively allow individuals to move into 'hostile' territory. In this sense, activity spaces are incongruent with residential spaces and activity patterns can be seen to challenge residential patterns. From this point of view, segregation is diluted on a daily basis through the sheer presence of the 'other' in supposedly segregated space. Ultimately, however, these movements are only possible if an individual complies with the unwritten rules imposed by the 'other' community and suppresses her/his own ethnic identity. By so doing, spatial divisions are reinforced and power relations reproduced.

An intricate text of norms likewise determines spatial practices in supposedly 'neutral' spaces surrounding ethnic residential territories. The research clearly demonstrates how such spaces become sectarianised through behaviour, despite a lack of outward territorial marking. Unwritten rules create geographical divisions on a micro scale. Thus, public space surrounding segregated residential areas is not so much shared as divided along ever finer lines. Residential segregation is thus reproduced by people's spatial practices as they engage in a multitude of activities relating to production and consumption. These behavioural patterns, however, also entail a crucial ambivalence. While the minute carving up of 'neutral' space is primarily motivated by the desire to increase safety it simultaneously serves to increase the visibility and predictability of people's movements. An individual's identity can thus be read off her/his use of space.

It moreover emerges from the research that the rules for spatial practices in both types of areas are gender and age specific. Fear of violence most severely curtails the activity spaces of young males. Beyond the social characteristics of individuals, likewise, temporal factors play an important role. Any spatial movements, however, are subject to the overall political climate. Residents feel obliged to re-negotiate their spatial practices in times of heightened tensions. Ultimately, the decisive factor, however, is socio-economic: it is those who lack private transport whose lives are most severely affected by fear of violence.

It is important to note, furthermore, that the boundary rulebook crucially builds on the assumption of equivalence and reciprocity: that is to say on the expectation that the members of the 'other' community follow identical rules. It thus constitutes a tacit agreement between communities.

The research leads to the conclusion that an unwritten rulebook impacts on spatial practices in local neighbourhoods in a twofold way: it prescribes which spaces an individual can use (and which are 'off limits') and it dictates how an individual should adapt her/his behaviour when moving about in public space. It effectively defines 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' spatial practices in terms of safety and danger.

The findings suggest that Darby's concept of two main strategies underlying behavioural patterns (avoidance of contact and selective interaction) can be refined as a result of shifting attention from relations between communities towards individual members of one or the other ethnic community in Northern Ireland and

their specific spatial practices. Strategies of avoidance do not merely seek to curtail social interaction with members of the 'other' community. Individuals utilise coping strategies which are far more intricate. In situations where an individual's activities necessitate entering the neighbouring territory of the 'other' community or supposedly 'no-man's' land, the imperative is to *avoid* drawing attention to one's presence, to *avoid* provoking the 'other', to *avoid* becoming a target for sectarian violence by managing the predictability of one's movements. In other words, the overall aim guiding spatial practices is to use space 'intelligently' and thereby to achieve an 'unremarkable', near 'invisible' presence.

Thus, the spatial practices of many residents in working-class areas of Belfast are highly conditioned. Though they may safeguard individuals from falling victim to sectarian attacks, they simultaneously inflict violence on people's everyday lives. The fact that individuals are forced to undertake these complex daily negotiations of their spatial movements ultimately represents a further manifestation of the violence of the Northern Ireland conflict, one which permeates to a much wider population than those who fall victim to the bombings and shootings with which it is most commonly associated.

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3. Placing Murals in Belfast: Community, Negotiation and Change. 4. The Everyday Agonistic Life after the Unveiling: Lived Experiences from a Public Art World Café. Part II The Education of a Public Artist. 5. Creating the Global Network: Developing Social and Community Practice in Higher Education. 6. Throwing Stones in the Sea: Georg Simmel, Social Practice and the Imagined World. 7. Open Engagement: Accessible Education for Socially-Engaged Art. 8. "Context is Half the Work": Developing Doctoral Research Through Arts Practice in Culture. Part III The Spatial Fabric of Public Art and The extent of fear experienced by urban dwellers is not necessarily directly linked with actual victimisation rates among a given population, often rooted in media sensationalising and demonising certain parts of cities (McIlwaine and Moser, 2007). In the context of shifting terrains of violence and insecurity, individuals in some communities in Colombia and Mexico have had to learn to adapt and try to stay safe in insecure environments. By taking social struggles as our starting point, the city of fear becomes recognizable as a platform for social action, a place for the elaboration of a theory and practice of social change, a staging ground for the reappropriation of the city. View. Show abstract.