Splintering Stories

Deconstructing Narratives about Belfast by Movements through Space

By
Nicole Peloquin

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Supervisors
Professor Andreas Dafinger
Professor Daniel Monterescu

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ABSTRACT

The city of Belfast is more than a collection of buildings, it is a built environment created by and for inhabitants who have been affected by thirty years of political and ethnic conflict within the city. In one narrative, the city government conceptualizes Belfast as a body. Some areas of the city, such as the city centre, embody health. These areas are thriving physical spaces which exude well-being and fiscal strength. Yet as one moves from the city centre to the political neighbourhoods, the outer limbs of the city, scars from the years of political turmoil begin to appear. These scarred areas on the extremities of the city contradict the notion of perfect health that the city officials try to portray, and many members of these scarred areas do not even promote the narrative of Belfast as a body. I argue that the city government's narrative of Belfast as a body, or an organic whole, is contradicted as an individual moves through space. Furthermore, this research will question whether narratives, such as the one that the city government produces of a unified, 'body politic,' leads toward a healthy future or is simply a 'strategy' to erase certain aspects of history and culture within Belfast. Each of the individual chapters will represent stories about the different parts of the "body" of Belfast, beginning with the city centre which exudes vitality, moving to the interface areas which are marked by healing scars and finally to the political neighbourhoods which are located on the extremities of the city, and are still places which display wounds and visual displays from the 'Troubles'.

Keywords: Belfast, peace-building, narratives, space

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INTRODUCTION

In 1998, all of the major political parties in Northern Ireland signed the Good Friday Agreement, marking a turning point in the conflict between the Loyalist and the Nationalist political groups. It has been over ten years since the agreement has been signed, and by all indications Belfast can be considered a post-conflict city. Despite the fact that a relative peace has been established in the region, there is still a demarcation between Loyalist and Nationalist territories.[1] Programs and initiatives instituted by the city government have attempted to 're-new' and 're-image' narratives about division within Belfast, one example being the use of the body metaphor to portray Belfast as a healthy and interconnected whole. In this sense, the notion of the 'body politic' and other narratives of cohesion serve as peace-building tools employed by the state for two reasons. First of all, it conveys a sense of unity between the multiple spaces within the city by visualizing them as interconnected parts. It also provides an opportunity for the city to promote narratives about a progression towards an optimal state of health. This thesis will examine the government's use of language to portray the cohesiveness and vitality of Belfast by exploring the use of the body metaphor as a peace-building strategy after over ten years of relative peace within the city. More specifically, how does the city government use images of unity and health as a peace-building strategy, and are they effective in the promotion of that narrative? It will be argued that this particular peace-building strategy is reflected in the utopian city centre, but as an individual moves through space within Belfast this narrative is contradicted just as the image of Belfast as a body begins to fragment. The process of fragmentation begins on the main roads leading into the city centre where abandoned buildings and areas in transition

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[1]The term Loyalist is used to describe someone who considers himself/herself a member of the Protestant, Ulster, Loyalist, and/or Unionist community. The term Nationalist is used when referring to someone who considers himself/herself as a member of the Catholic, Irish, Nationalist, and/or Republican community.

contradict the notions of wellbeing and wholeness of the 'body' of Belfast. This image is further shattered in the political neighbourhoods on the extremities of the city where members of the Loyalist and Nationalist communities do not promote narratives of the city as a unified whole.

The first chapter will provide contextualisation for the data presented in the thesis by positioning it within the existing debate. The methods used while completing field research in Belfast will be explained in the second chapter, and the importance of the body metaphor will be explained in Chapter Three. The succeeding chapters present the data and analysis, and will be divided in such a way as to represent movement through space, and take the narratives from the city centre, to the interface areas, and finally to the political neighbourhoods that occupy the outer regions of the city. The fourth chapter will focus on the city centre, or the 'heart' of Belfast. In this chapter, the city centre as a healthy and vibrant part of the city will be examined. The nature of the city centre as a 'utopia,' or model of perfect physical construction and social health will be investigated in light of the stated goals and strategies used by the city government. Reports, executive summaries, and government-sponsored research will be used to illustrate the city administration's efforts to create an area within the city which exudes vitality. Interviews conducted with government officials and individuals connected with the tourism industry will be employed to demonstrate whether those narratives of health translate to the present environment within the Belfast city centre.

The fifth chapter will begin to move away from the city centre to the major roads and spaces connecting the outlying political neighbourhoods to the 'heart' of the city. These 'arteries,' which connect the centre to the political neighbourhoods in the extremities of the city, occupy a transitional phase of health. Victor Turner's (1987) theory of liminality will be applied to these spaces as they represent a state which is 'betwixt and between' control by members of

the Loyalist and Nationalist communities and active management by the state. They are often the sites of former interface areas, and as such they do not inherently belong to either the Loyalist or the Nationalist communities; however, re-development schemes which have transformed the city centre have yet to restore these areas to an optimal state of health. In this chapter, literature from the city government initiative "Renewing the Routes" will be used to demonstrate how the government intends to re-develop these areas in an effort to extend the city centre's image of neutrality and vitality to the outer areas. However, material which documents the competing nature of the political communities' definition of interface areas and the city government's definition of the spaces, as well as the abundance of derelict buildings and abandoned lots will be used to show that these spaces occupy a liminal phase of health. While these areas do not display obvious wounds from the 'Troubles,' they also do not reflect the city government's narrative about the health and neutrality of the city.

The final chapter will transition to the Loyalist and Nationalist political neighbourhoods which often occupy a space in the extremities of the city. These areas are typically contained spaces, ringed by car parks, highways, fences, and concrete walls. The physical structures built by city officials create a feeling that the city government has constructed these barriers to contain a contagion, to keep it from spreading to the sanitized regions of Belfast. The contained political neighbourhoods still display open wounds from the period of the 'Troubles,' which are visible in the political murals and gardens of remembrance for those who died in the political violence. Signs of territorialism contradict the state's narrative of Belfast as a body by creating seemingly self-contained islands of space for the Loyalist and the Nationalist communities, without any clear connection between spaces belonging to the other paramilitary group or the city centre. In this chapter, Certeau's (1984) concept of the tactics of 'everyday life' will be overlaid onto these

political communities to show how the community members' decisions to display the injuries endured by the 'Troubles' contradicts the image of health that the city government would like to display. Furthermore, several of the Loyalist and Nationalist community members' 'tactics' will be shown as challenging the peace-building strategies that aim to demonstrate a sense of unity, such as of the body metaphor, that are used by the state.

1. Reviewing the Literature: A Contextualisation of the Case

In order to position this thesis within a larger academic debate, I will be reviewing literature about the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland, territorialism, and peace-building. These topics were chosen and will be reviewed in this order, because the main focus of this thesis is a peace-building strategy used by the state. In order to understand the peace-building strategy within the context of Belfast, possible explanations for the 'Troubles' provides the background, literature on territorialism demonstrates one of the most persistent remainders from the period of conflict and an issue that the state is trying to address, and literature on peace-building strategies provides a look at various measures states and citizens may employ in post-conflict cities. Drawing from literature about the 'Troubles' is important as it provides a framework for understanding the inter-communal tension in the past, and some of the events which continue to this day. Although the period of the 'Troubles' is typically set between the years 1969 and 1998, some of the activities that characterized this period in Northern Ireland's history still continue. As recently as April 2011, a bomb left on the Annandale embankment in South Belfast was connected to attempts by paramilitary groups to target members of the police force (RTE News 2011). Another key reason for including literature on the 'Troubles' is the fact that not only are activities which were a feature of the period continuing to the present, but rhetoric and visual reminders of the political violence are an enduring feature of the political neighbourhoods. Divisions between political neighbourhoods, which were a result of the 'Troubles,' will be examined through literature on territorialism. Works on territorialism provide context for the markings which are present throughout the Loyalist and Nationalist neighbourhoods, and also provide a possible explanation as to why these symbols continue to be important for some community residents. The final section will cover material on peace-building and post-conflict periods, which is particularly important when analysing the data for the research.

1.1 The 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland

A survey of literature which attempts to explain the conflict in Northern Ireland should start with a work about the impact of history. Brendan O'Leary and John McGarry (1996) argue that Northern Ireland would not exist as it does without the colonial ambitions of the Tudors and the plantation of Ulster. In their view, the roots of the conflict between Protestants and Catholics can be traced to the period of English rule when monarchs attempted to secure the region by facilitating the immigration of Protestant Loyalists from England and Scotland. These immigrants to Northern Ireland under English colonial rule were meant to supplant the Irish Catholics who were currently living on the land. These attempts were not entirely successful, and Ireland and Ulster, also known as Northern Ireland, had to be re-conquered under the Protestant armies led by Oliver Cromwell and William of Orange. (O'Leary and McGarry 1996) To this day, images of Oliver Cromwell and William of Orange in Protestant Loyalist areas are considered to be contentious, and have often been the target of city government programs aimed at re-imaging the past in order to present a more unified narrative of the city. [2]

Although pre-industrial Ulster can be compared to other agrarian empires in Europe, O'Leary and McGarry (1996) claim that this region is different in that it "was a colony; the policy of religious persecution was aimed at the majority of the governed population not the minority… and the region was to play a pivotal role in the successive efforts of English and British rulers to govern Ireland" (62) The Protestant colonization of Northern Ireland in the seventeenth century brought immigrants into a land inhabited by Irish Catholics, and a debate began about which group was rightfully entitled to the land. (Horowitz 1990) This debate continues as members of the Loyalist and the Nationalist communities use territorial markers to

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[2] In an interview conducted on April 14, 2011, the interviewee stated that a mural depicting Oliver Cromwell in the Loyalist Shankill Estates was scheduled to be painted over as part of a city government initiative, partly because Cromwell was known for "killing loads of Catholics."

claim particular spaces, and it is amplified in areas where the communities live in close proximity and competition redoubles. In a competitive environment, the Catholics in Northern Ireland have a fear that their adversaries are somehow "better equipped to deal with the world they confront," and this view is further complicated by a fear of domination (Horowitz 1990: 454). Horowitz's interpretation of the conflict in Northern Ireland also focuses on the relations between the Protestants and the Catholics within the power structures present in the governing of the state. He argues that viewing sovereignty as something that is possessed or it is not can lead to tensions between ethnic groups who are either controlling the state, trying to control the state, or finding a way to escape from the control of others (Horowitz 1990:452).

Control over resources as a source of inter-communal conflict can also be extended to the economy. McGarry and O'Leary (1995) assessed Garret FitzGerald's, the head of the Republic of Ireland's government from 1981 to 1987, argument that religious and political explanations were not enough to explain Loyalist Protestants' opposition to Catholic Nationalism. Instead, FitzGerald emphasized the importance of the region's economic dependence on the British market (276). Furthermore, proponents of the economic explanation point to an opinion poll which demonstrates that Catholics who are part of the middle class are more likely to be members of the Alliance party or SDLP, whereas economically disadvantaged Catholics tend to support the more radical Sinn Fein which advocates for union with the Republic of Ireland. (McGarry and O'Leary 1995) The fact that a link exists between economic status and the radical nature of political views is significant given the fact that many of the economically disadvantaged areas that the city has marked for re-development also happen to be political in nature. Although McGarry and O'Leary reference the economic explanations for the 'Troubles,' they argue that this aspect does not explicate the conflict. Instead, they state that the conflict in

Northern Ireland has been fought paramilitarily and politically because of competing national identities, and not because the two communities wanted to promote their economic well-being (McGarry and O'Leary 1995:306).

In John Whyte's (1990) book, *Interpreting Northern Ireland*, he details several of the competing theories which attempt to explain the conflict. One potential source of community division which Whyte mentions is the belief that although religion is an important factor in segregating the two communities, religion itself is not enough to cause conflict. He then goes on to quote psychologist E. E. O'Donnell (1977) who states that in Northern Ireland religion is not only tied to spiritual beliefs but encompasses "historic, national, tribal, social, economic and other differences, all subsumed under the heading of religious allegiance" (5). Furthermore, it can be argued that it is not about religion, but about regional identity and is "a conflict *between IRISH Catholics and ULSTER Protestants...*" (Whyte 1990: 307). O'Donnell and O'Brien's work represents the view that the quarrel in Northern Ireland is a conflict of competing ideologies where religion plays a major role. By questioning the legitimacy of viewing the conflict as religious, it highlights the complexity of the opposing groups' identities and the importance of identity-building and history defining narratives that are often displayed as murals in the political neighbourhoods. These murals are often the same ones that are subject to removal by city government peace-building programs.

1.2. Conflicts over Space: Territorialism

Murals in Belfast not only display identity-building narratives for particular communities, they are also employed as territorial markers to delineate space. These murals, along with flags and painted kerbstones, visibly demonstrate that particular spaces are deemed as Loyalist or Nationalist territory. Elizabeth Cashdan (1983) discusses human territorialism through the lens

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of evolutionary ecology by looking at four Bushman groups. In her work, she argues that human groups can limit access to 'their' space through multiple methods including perimeter defence and reciprocal altruism. Although perimeter defence is not the main focus of her work, this concept can provide some insights into the forms of territorialism evident throughout the political neighbourhoods in Belfast. Cashdan mentions the case of the Vedda whose territory was clearly defined by natural boundaries and pictures cut into trees. Similarly throughout Belfast, political neighbourhoods are defined by physical markers such as the Westlink Highway, major roads into the city, and peace walls. They are also demarcated by pictures such as murals painted onto houses, walls, and the sides of buildings. Another element of the Vedda's relationship to territory that Cashdan mentions is the lack of movement across territorial boundaries. This aspect is also echoed in Belfast where Loyalists and Nationalists rarely reside in the other's domain, and if they do it is often considered an aggressive tactic to claim more territory for the particular community (Heatley 2004).

Thomas Carter (2003) also discusses human territorial behaviour, taking Belfast as a case study. He argues that territorialism in Belfast is not simply instinctive, but a "geographical expression of power, that acts to physically restrain movement and spatial organization" (265). This restraint placed on the people who inhabit Belfast takes many forms within the city. Carter describes political housing estates which serve a similar function to gated communities by restricting access to outsiders. These estates have narrow and limited entrances that are often blocked from the city centre by car parks, walls, and fences. Once inside the estates, the maze-like physical layout can inhibit the navigation of those who are unfamiliar with the space. [3] Territorialism aided by physical layout is not only a factor for political neighbourhoods, but it is

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[3]For photographs displaying examples of the entrances to the political estates in Belfast and their interior layout see Figure 1 in the Appendix.

a phenomenon in the city as a whole. The Westlink, a major highway which in some places is located on a physical plane below the city's ground level, separates many of the political neighbourhoods on the extremities of Belfast from the neutral and commercialized city centre. Carter points to the fact that the Westlink's limited number of crossing points could easily be controlled by security forces who may choose to restrict the access of political community residents to the centre.

Bollens (1999) argues that the state may also perpetuate sectarian divisions within Belfast through city planning and policies regarding the political neighbourhoods. He contends that the rigid sectarian divides within the city, which are manifested in physical barriers such as peace walls and symbolic barriers like flags and churches, are reinforced by city government policies which do not provide adequate opportunities for Loyalists and Nationalists to share spaces. In an interview conducted in April 2011 with a city employee who works on physical development of the city, he stated that the concept of "shared spaces" between the Loyalists and the Nationalists is beginning to be emphasized by the city. This shift in strategy by the city government reflects attempts to transition post-conflict Belfast from being a city which can be characterised by segmentation, a "tendency towards separation with well-developed ethnic institutional structures" to one which more closely embodies pluralism, "considerable social integration but some maintenance of separate ethnic institutions and cultural attributes" (Boal 1999: 588). However, the acceptance of this concept is more recent than many development projects, so although it is now recognized as a desirable strategy older development projects created physical barriers between the groups. (Alistair DSD April 2011). Bollens maintains that while government officials should not force the integration of the political communities, policies that recognize the "complex realities of sectarian geographies" and promote ethnic engagement could

be the deciding factor which leads to a re-emergence of ethnic conflict or peaceful, post-conflict existence (123). In the case of Belfast, this could mean a continued focus on initiatives which attempt to create "shared spaces" where members of the Nationalist and Loyalist communities can interact, without forcing integration through mixed housing developments. Sectarian geographies in Belfast may still serve a function considering one resident of a Loyalist neighbourhood stated that "90% of them people in the community still won't look outside their own community. Yes, okay the 'Troubles' are over, we're over the moon. We don't want to go back, but we still feel safer within our own community." This sentiment was also echoed by a member of the Nationalist community who despite a showing of solidarity between Loyalist and Nationalist politicians at a funeral for a Catholic police officer[4] and an optimistic outlook, he believed that it would take another 20 years before the peace wall separating Loyalist and Nationalist housing developments could be removed.

1.3. Post-Conflict Representations

Peace-building strategies employed by the government in post-conflict situations are not the only structuring force within societies. Community members also employ different methods to represent their environment. In Paul Gladston's (2006) work on visual displays of historical events in Germany, he discusses the conflicting narratives that are portrayed and their importance given Germany's involvement in World War I and World War II. It is this sensitivity to the past that influences the "way in which modern Germans have chosen to develop their urban and rural environments" (79). Similar to Gladstone's description of post-war Germany, the physical environment in Belfast is also marked by references to the past. In 2007, the Belfast city government started a 15 year regeneration campaign to create a 75 hectares space

CEU eTD Collection

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[4]In April 2011 Catholic constable Ronan Kerr was killed by members of a dissident Republican group in an attempt to de-stabilize the peace in Northern Ireland. The group's actions were condemned by key Irish and Nationalist politicians.

dedicated to the history of the Titanic. This is one of the largest waterfront regeneration projects in Europe, and represents an attempt to memorialise a particular narrative in Belfast's history. (Blackman et. al 2007) In post-war Germany, the urban and rural environments are characterized by competing desires for modernisation and an attention to the past that appears as a form of "memorialism." In this setting, structures such as shops and galleries that play into a consumerist lifestyle are positioned next to the carefully preserved remains of a concentration camp. (Gladston 2006) Erasmus Schroeter, a photographer who has captured images of conflict in Germany's past, uses his art to further explore these juxtapositions present on the German landscape. In his work the *Bunker Series*, Schroeter captures 'ruinous traces of the past' and reframes them in such a way that they do not appear as isolated structures, but instead portray a sense of "progression" (80). This sense of progression from a past which may have contained a period of conflict to the present and perhaps even the future can be narrated by the state of a physical structure. This progression of history can also be seen in the physical structures in Belfast. The history not only of the particular buildings, but of Belfast itself, can be viewed by the succession of uses and abandonment of particular structures, especially those located in the interface areas. The changing narratives of the political communities and the city government are often etched onto their ever-altering facades.

Post-conflict narratives may not only appear in art produced within a society, but they may be part of a story about a particular culture. Vanessa Pupavac (2006) discusses the impact of culture on conflict, and she includes a quote from the UNESCO *Culture of Peace Programme* which states that in the post-Cold War era wars are characterized as "largely originating in the exploitation of others, and of other beliefs, values and perceptions, and ignorance and violation of fundamental human rights" (136). In an effort to prevent wars of this kind, the programme

aims to transform 'cultures of violence' into 'cultures of peace.' This type of transformation would involve changing ethnic group's previously held "values, attitudes and behaviours to those which promote a culture of peace and non-violence" (136). Because international conflict management advocates for changes of cultural norms at all levels, the different ethnic groups are not necessarily free to determine policy or even their own cultural expression. Various government sponsored programs in Belfast attempt to determine the nature and content of cultural expression within the city. Initiatives such as "Re-Imaging Communities" partner with local leaders in an effort to alter the communities' sectarian murals into ones that convey images of peace and reconciliation. Pupavac argues that in programmes such as these, 'symbolic aspects' of a culture may be preserved while "eroding their personality." This erosion of a culture's personality may undermine the intimacy of relations between members of the ethnic group which is necessary for building a sense of community, hamper the creative aspect of self-expression, and create a situation where their cultural identity is determined by an outside source. In these scenarios, "cultural features are emptied of their social significance and reduced to symbolic accoutrements" (Pupavac 2006:136). City government control of cultural self-expression in an attempt to depict peaceful citizens can be particularly significant for group members within Belfast. According to an interview with a member of the Nationalist political party Sinn Fein about the Loyalist group identity:

> The First World War stuff that is all the history they have. Our history goes back over a thousand years. Their history is non-existent. Their only history is the Orange Order. That's why they breed the hatred… That is the only thing they have. They never heard of Ulster Scots before, and all of a sudden they are bringing up Ulster Scots.

Although this is only one view within the debate on Loyalist identity, it illustrates the perceived importance of self-expression and "personality" in representations of cultural identity within Belfast. If it can be argued that Loyalist identity is constructed through narratives of conflict, then the city government's attempts to re-image those narratives may have a profound impact on the group's self-representations and identity.

Although the Belfast city government may institute peace-building strategies that do not have the full support of members of the Loyalist and Nationalist communities, they are by no means passive subjects to be acted upon. Mitchell and Kelly (2010) argue that despite economic development strategies employed by the state, which could be classified as peace-building policies, members of the political communities challenge these strategies by use of their own 'tactics.' By utilising Certeau's theories on the tactics of everyday life, Mitchell and Kelly explore practices of interfacing which oppose government-endorsed narratives of unity. Interfacing typically refers to practices which maintain boundaries between adversarial groups, and Mitchell and Kelly argue that in Belfast it can take the form of refusal to attend integrated institutions, graffiti on the walls of new developments, and "existing in conditions of poverty in areas next to luxury developments" (14). Although some members of the political communities support the city's peace-building strategies, others may contradict some aspects of the policies. Throughout the course of the interviews conducted with members of both the Loyalist and the Nationalist communities, it became clear that several individuals not only supported some peace-building strategies and not others, but their stated support would sometimes alter depending on their physical location within the city.

2. Methodology

Interviews were an essential part of the research for this thesis. They provide the framework and supporting evidence for much of the data that will be presented. These interviews can be described as being in one of two categories. The first was the stationary interview, in which dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee was confined to one location. The second type was the travelling interview, which took place while walking or driving through different areas of the city. They typically started from the city centre or a place on the outskirts of the city centre, and travel through the interface areas, then the political neighbourhoods, and end near where they began in the neutral zone. While the subjects discussed in the stationary interviews were often based on pre-established questions, work responsibilities, history and identity, topics discussed in travelling interviews were frequently associated with perceptions of and relationships to space.

Both travelling and stationary interviews were conducted with members of the Loyalist and Nationalist communities, city government employees, a former member of the British army, and individuals who do not identify with being a part of the aforementioned groups. These provided perspectives from individuals who represent different ethno-political groups within the political neighbourhoods, as well as the city government's official narratives. The stories and information that was shared by members of the ethno-political groups was sometimes sensitive in nature. In order to protect their identity, only some of their biographical data is shared in the thesis. The original names and titles of the interviewees from the city government positions remain the same since their interviews reflect the government's perspective of the city, tourism, and development. These narratives are not personal in nature, and do not pose a risk to the safety and security of the individuals. In order to supplement the government's official stance on

theories of development for both tourism and physical structures, the city's archived maps, development plans and documented strategies for future growth will be utilised.

While narratives about spaces are an essential element of the thesis, the physical layout of space within Belfast is also integral to the argument. In order to gain a deeper knowledge of the spatial arrangement of buildings and neighbourhoods in Belfast, physical mapping was used to document their placement within the city. Physical mapping for this project involved travelling the major roads, or arterial routes, within Belfast to the outer neighbourhoods, and walking the individual blocks within the city centre to pinpoint the locations of political neighbourhoods within the neutral zone. During the course of the physical mapping procedures, a trend appeared which demonstrated that political neighbourhoods appeared to be separated from the neutral areas of the city by parking lots.[5] A discovery of the areas surrounding car parks listed on the city government's map became a part of physical mapping processes as a result. When political neighbourhoods were discovered within the city centre or along the arterial routes, they were marked on a map with either crosses for Nationalists or x's for Loyalists (See Figure 1).

Photographs were also taken of the political neighbourhoods and their relationship to neutral buildings, such as car parks, in order to document the placement of the neighbourhoods and their relationship to the surrounding areas. Photographs not only helped capture the placement of political neighbourhoods within the city, but they also aided in the documentation of signs of territorialism. Photography was also used to record efforts by the city to re-define the spaces through maps and signs sanctioned by the government. These physical maps and photographs are organised into field notes with captions documenting in words the spaces that the photographs and maps represent.

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[5]In an interview conducted with a former soldier in the British army, he claimed that Belfast had more parking lots than any other city in Europe. He claimed that this was due to the fact that when areas within the city were destroyed nobody wanted to build another building, so the now vacant lots became car parks

Figure 1- Map of Belfast City Centre and Adjacent Political Neighbourhoods
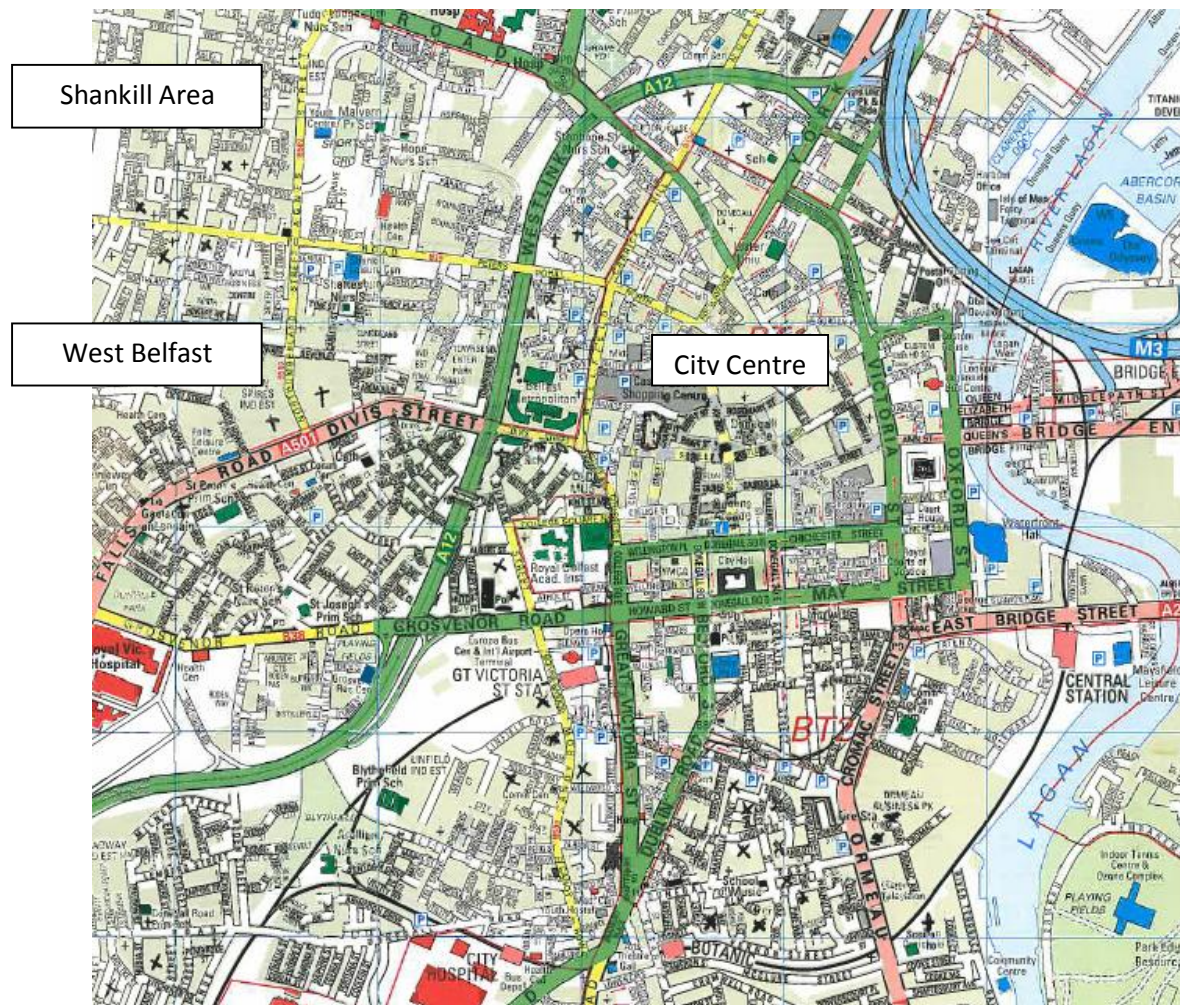
The Shankill area is considered "Loyalist" territory, West Belfast is considered "Nationalist" territory, and the Westlink separates the two neighbourhoods from the neutral city centre. A number of car parks (marked on the map with a "P" in a blue box) separate Loyalist and Nationalist neighbourhoods in the city centre (marked by crosses and x's) from the interior region of the centre.

(*Street Finder: Belfast* [Map]. (2011) Collins World Finder)

3. Belfast as a Body

> Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reverse, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body (Certeau 1984:108).

In an edited volume of papers comparing cities to bodies, David Harvey (2003) gave a brief overview of this history of seeing the city as a "body politic," and some of the problems and benefits of applying the metaphor to urban spaces. Harvey recognizes the fact that seeing a city as a body politic can lend it an authoritarian view, positing a head of state as a Hobbesian power governing the city. Visualizing the body politic as an enclosed entity that's optimal state is embodied in a harmonious and healthy whole can also have negative implications if it leads to rhetoric about utopian cities. In these utopian environments, authoritarian and fascist expressions about the city as a body may lead to language about 'purifying' the body by expelling unwanted elements that may threaten the utopian environment. However, Harvey also states that there are some illuminating aspects of the body metaphor when trying to understand a city as a coherent whole. In viewing the city as a body politic, the processes within the city can be evaluated in terms of health. The metaphor of the body can also illustrate the fact that there "are political choices to be made concerning how the body politic becomes constituted and how, once constituted, it can position itself to confront issues such as social inequality, health and welfare" (Harvey 2003: 43).

In order to portray an image of Belfast being a healthy and unified whole, the city government uses a variety of metaphors and language illustrating this concept, including a

comparison between Belfast and the body. The body metaphor appears in various development strategy documents, notably literature on the "Renewing the Routes" programme and city centre enhancement. The Belfast city government uses language describing the 'heart' and 'spine' of the city when describing the city centre and the roads connecting the centre to the outer political neighbourhoods are described as the 'arterial routes' in their literature on development strategies. These uses of the metaphor often seem forced, and overlook the complexity of spaces and relationships between spaces within the city. They are also fleeting, in the sense that they are just some images within a repertoire of language that the state uses to convey the perception of unity and health within Belfast. However, language of the body to refer to different parts of the city is significant, because it helps to illustrate the type of language that the government uses when referring to the city. Demonstrating a form of unification among parts of the city is an important narrative for Belfast given the city's history as a site of inter-communal tension where a sense of cohesion was tenuous at best. Literature produced by the city administration employs images, such as the body metaphor, as a way to show that the city is moving forward toward a cohesive and vibrant future. However, unlike several narratives endorsed by the city government, images of cohesion like the body, is not echoed by the Nationalist and Loyalist communities in the political neighbourhoods outside of the city centre.

The fact that the body metaphor and similar language is not part of the rhetoric of the political communities not only illustrates the fact that the Loyalists and Nationalists are diverging from the city government by not using this language to describe the city, but that their views of the city could be considered 'tactics' which contradict the 'strategies' of the city government (Certeau 1984). Diverging views between the political groups and the city government when it comes to images of cohesion is also significant given the way that the city

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government views the political neighbourhoods. The city administration sees the political neighbourhoods as something that needs to be 're-imaged' and 're-developed.' The programs the city administration creates to deal with the political neighbourhoods positions them as something that needs to be healed and unified with the rest of the city. However, by the political neighbourhoods avoiding language of interconnection, they may not only contradict the views of the city as a coherent whole, they can also challenge the idea that in being part of a larger entity their areas need to be fixed in order to create a feeling of unity or health.

Although the body metaphor is not central to the rhetoric of the state, it has some illuminating aspects for Belfast. It is not only an example of one of the tenuous images promoted by the city government to show a unified Belfast, but it can illustrate the relationship between different parts of the city. In this sense, the body narrative will have two purposes for this thesis. It serves as one example of the metaphors and language on interrelation that the state uses as a peace-building strategy which is contradicted in the political neighbourhoods, and it also demonstrates how the city would appear if it was viewed as a body. When I envisage a metaphor that helps understand the city of Belfast, I imagine the body of someone who has lived through the 'Troubles.' Belfast is no longer inflicted by the violence which was a part of the city environment before the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998, and there has been a period of peace which has allowed the body to heal. The city centre, like the trunk of someone who has lived through the 'Troubles' and is on the road to recovery, reflects a vision of health and vitality. It is the centre of the city, just like the trunk is the centre of the body. However, as a narrative gaze leaves the trunk or centre and moves to the outer limbs, scars from the period of violence begin to appear. For the city of Belfast, these scars represent the interface areas and main roads into the city centre. These places were sites of violence during the 'Troubles' and

although the same level of violence no longer occurs, reminders of this period have left their mark. The interface areas and major roads into the centre would be the arms and legs of someone who has lived through the 'Troubles.' These areas may have been sites of deep wounds which are no longer sources of pain, but the wounds were deep enough to still show traces manifested in scars. The last area of the city, the political neighbourhoods, continue to be sites of healing wounds as remembrance gardens of those who died during the period of the 'Troubles' and murals memorialising fallen "heroes" are present throughout these deeply divided areas.

4. Belfast City Centre: a Picture of Health

> The classic utopian work is a description of an ideal city and society… It is the embodiment in stone of a political order: the 'solid geometry' of a perfect way of life (Wilson 1991: 19).

After the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998, the government officials in Belfast began to work on re-structuring not only the physical aspects of the city, but the narratives of the city as well. In order to present a new image of Belfast, the city government began to institute a variety of programs aimed at presenting a different view of the city that was divorced from the political turmoil in the past. In 1999, the Department of Social Development was created as part of the Northern Ireland Executive with one of the missions being to create "vibrant cities, towns and urban areas" (Department of Social Development 2011a). In particular the city centre, the 'heart' of Belfast, received special attention in the development schemes as it represented a major focal point for those who visit, live and work in the city (Department of Social Development 2005b: 2). The city's argument for developing the city centre states that the physical presentation and development of the city centre is not only important from an aesthetic point of view, but it also influences the social development of Belfast. (Department of Social Development 2005b)

In 2002, the Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE) in the United Kingdom issued an executive summary on public attitudes to the built environment within cities. The findings from this summary were gathered by the research company group Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute which worked with CABE to gather information on "liveability" and how the physical environment affects the people living within the space. The findings for the MORI and CABE report illustrate that of the respondents surveyed for the research, 81% stated

that they were "interested in how the built environment looks and feels" (CABE 2002). Furthermore, the report argues that the visual aspect of the built environment is often what is used to judge the accuracy of narratives about the urban life of the community by the people who are inhabiting the space (CABE 2002: 1). The question of how the 'liveability' of an urban space affects the social aspects and perception of the environment is re-visited by both MORI and CABE in later publications. In 2005, MORI released a follow-up report which again examined the concept of "liveability" in urban environments. In the updated report, MORI argues that there is not only an increased recognition among members of the public about the importance of the physical condition of space, but also that "the improvement in the ratings of local environments is vital to the recovery in local government's reputation, particularly if councils are able to harness this with a strong narrative about what they are doing and how they are making life better locally" (Mori 2005:2) In a similar report that CABE released in 2004 the concept of "liveability" was also examined, but in the context of the development of shared public spaces. The researchers argue that not only does the built environment have an impact on the way that actors in the space feel and live their lives, but it emphasizes the importance of the "planning, design and management of the space" (CABE 2004: 3).

The report produced by CABE in 2004, as well as the research that the report was based on, is important in the context of the Belfast city centre because the concepts and arguments explored by CABE and MORI influenced the rationale the Department of Social Development provided for the re-development of the space (Department of Social Development 2005a). The idea that the physical or built environment of the city can affect the people inhabiting the space by influencing cognition and altering their perspectives of the space, or that the physical environment can shape narratives about the city government and the city itself, can have

important implications when trying to design the space. Beyond recognizing and taking into account the fact that the city centre can be the image that the city presents to its inhabitants and the outside world, and that the physical environment can affect the narratives that individuals within the space may construct about their environment and the city government, the administration in Belfast is also responsible for making sure that development complies with section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act of 1998. (Department of Social Development 2005a)

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act specifically relates to requirements by government officials to endorse policies which promote equality of opportunity. It also creates the groundwork for strategies such as Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) which not only tackles historic inequalities, but facilitates concepts of equality becoming a part of public policy. (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland 2005) In order for the DSD to comply with Section 75 when re-developing the city centre, the department has also taken into account the importance of facilitating "good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion and or racial groups" (Department of Social Development 2005a:9). In this sense, the city government's re-development of the space within Belfast should not only project a certain image about the city itself, but it is responsible for creating a narrative of healthy relations between those who make up the city's population.

4.1. Utopian Cities and 'Controlled' Narratives: A Theoretical Perspective:

Elizabeth Wilson (1991) argues that the concept of a 'utopia' manifested in a cityscape, is a way to create a perfect city with the perfect architectural plan. Like the Belfast city government's plan for the city centre, a utopia not only projects a pristine image, but it controls social order and regulates "human deviance and unreason" with the use of a perfect plan (Wilson 1991: 20). Wilson is not the only theorist who argues for the effect that 'perfect' city planning

can have on the social environment and the narratives that may emerge about the city. Lefebvre (1996: 99) also states that "planning as an ideology formulates all the problems of society into questions of space and transposes all that comes from history and consciousness into spatial terms." The ability to create a city provides the perceived opportunity for individuals to remake the world that they live in to resemble the ideal, 'utopian,' world that they imagine (Turner 1967). If an architect, as God and creator of a city, can create a perfect, utopian space then he can define the human relations that occur within that space (Lefebvre 1996: 98). If one could create a functional, healthy space in which human interactions could occur, then one can assume that those interactions will be functional and healthy. In a city such as Belfast, creating a city centre which exists as a utopian space which generates pre-existing social realities and defines the human relations within the area is almost essential for the life of the city.

While many city governments may claim to see the benefits of creating a utopian space within the city centre, this idealized version of space which defines human interaction takes on special significance for Belfast. After almost 30 years of internal political and ethnic struggle, Belfast is trying to move beyond its label of "divided city." In order to re-narrate the story that Belfast presents and encourage the growth of its tourism industry, the city administration had to remove itself from the violence which was a part of the 'Troubles' and the physical scars that accompanied that violence. One strategy that the city government employed to distance itself from the physical aggression and the physical marks that accompanied it was to create plans for a "neutral," utopian zone within the city (Personal Interviews April 17 & 18, 2011). This "neutral area" as defined by the interviewed users of that space, was constructed to not only remove the physical reminders of the period of violence, but to construct a new narrative about the future of the city. This future is perceived to be one where city planners have created a utopian city which

is free from the unhealthy inter-communal relations which were a feature of the 'Troubles.' Sennett alludes to the fact that city planners in the use of certain materials have a talent for creating neutral and sterile environments; he argues that "the designers of parking lots, malls, and public plazas seem to be endowed with a positive genius for sterility, in the use of materials and in details" (Sennett 1990: 42). While certain materials may connote neutrality and sterility, they can also symbolize visions of the future. One of the users of the space, who was interviewed for the current research, argued that the fact that glass was used for a majority of the re-development projects was meant to create a narrative of Belfast as a city that is moving forward. For him, the glass buildings took on a special significance of the embodiment of the new narrative that the city administration was trying to construct about Belfast's present and future (personal interview April 17, 2011).

4.2. Sterile Space at the Heart of the City

During the course of a travelling interview with a former British soldier who is now employed as a Belfast tour guide, he remarked about the number of glass buildings that have been a part of the city's re-development initiatives over the last four years. He stated that while structures that were built during the 'Troubles' were marked by thick concrete walls and windows that were like tiny slits on the building's face, edifices with large, fragile glass windows have proliferated throughout the city centre since the mid-2000's. He finds it amazing "that a small bomb could wipe the whole lot of this area out now because it's all glass. But the trust and the belief is obviously stronger than the fear." The use of materials to convey a certain image about the city centre is an important aspect of progress, and part of the city's strategy for development contains a section about appropriate materials for the neutral zone (Department of Social Development 2005b). This not only covers building elements, but also objects and

structures for public use. One type of object that the city places regulations on is interpretation panels.

Echoing Pupavac's (2006) work on peace-building strategies that transform cultures of conflict to ones of peace by determining cultural expression, the Belfast city government has placed signs throughout the city centre giving their interpretation of Belfast history and culture. Appropriately named 'interpretation panels,' information panels, and public art within the heart and civic spine of the city is meant to portray healthy social relations between the "citizens, visitors, and the fabric of the urban form" (DSD 2005b: 24). These signs, like the one in Figure 2, select certain elements of the city that the government would like to promote. In an interview with the Communications Assistant at the Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau, she emphasized the recent economic development within Belfast and the growth in the numbers of hotels, cafes, bars, and restaurants in the city centre. When asked about particular tourist attractions that were major draws she briefly mentioned the "political tourism sites," but quickly transitioned to discussing the upcoming 100th anniversary of the Titanic setting sail.

Figure 2- An Information Sign in the Neutral City Centre

The government's practice of re-focusing narratives about the city from the political violence of the past to a more neutral phase of history, exemplified by a focus on the Titanic, is an attempt to transform 'cultures of violence' to 'cultures of peace' [6] by influencing self-description. The re-focusing of narratives from the 'Troubles' to more neutral history was not only evident in the interview with the Communications Assistant, but it is also a feature of the physical environment within the city. While completing physical mapping of the city centre, it became clear that the city had an interest in promoting the politically neutral history of the Titanic over other narratives which allude to a history of violence. In the area in front of the capital building, several ten foot tall signs dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the Titanic provided a sharp visual contrast to the small, temporary-looking crosses on the side of the capital building memorialising those who "fell in the line of duty" during Bloody Sunday (1920).[7] (See Figure 3).

Figure 3- A Comparison of Signs for the Titanic and Memorial Crosses by the Capital Building

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[6] When mentioning 'cultures of conflict' and 'cultures of peace' it will be in reference to the peace-building strategy mentioned by Pupavac (2006).

[7] Bloody Sunday 1920 which occurred during the Irish War of Independence, was a day marked by violence. It began with an IRA operation to assassinate a team of undercover British agents, which included British army officers, living in Dublin.

The city government and residents whose professions are tied to tourism have become adept at portraying the aspects of the city that depict health, vitality, and peace. In an interview with a hostel owner, he stated that most of the hostels are located within "neutral territory" which he defined as the area between Lisburn Road, Ormeau Road, and includes the Holy Lands, as well as the Strand Millis area. If tourists' paths and visual images of Belfast are confined to these areas it is easy to conceive of Belfast as a united and healthy whole. There are limited signs of division within these spaces, and an abundance of consumerist destinations such as shopping streets and the Castle Court Shopping Centre. Carter (2003) argues that the construction of some tourist-friendly attractions, such as the Odyssey Arena, serve a function to support the narrative of a peaceful and unified Belfast. He maintains that the city uses these "new architecturally-innovative buildings to obscure social violence in the streets and provide images of attractive settings for conspicuous consumption" (267).

Another way that the city uses physical space to distance itself from narratives of conflict and division is through the use of parking lots. In reviewing a map of the city, it was discovered that there was an abundance of car parks forming almost a ring-like border around the city centre. During the course of physical mapping, a pattern emerged which demonstrated that car parks often served as a physical barrier between the city centre and political neighbourhoods. Nearly all of the car parks along the edges of the city centre existed in a space between consumer areas and neutral spaces within the centre and political neighbourhoods. The subject of car parks was also raised in an interview with a tour bus operator. He stated that the areas of where recent development is occurring used to be "wasteland, they were car parks, because what was the point of building to be blown up again?... There were more car parks in Belfast than anywhere in the world." The fact that the current car parks have not been redeveloped or acquired by the

Department of Social Development for future redevelopment is significant given their location. They create a barrier between visible narratives of neutrality and unity within the city centre, and those of division which can be seen within the political neighbourhoods, while not being a part of either. In some sense, they are tabula rasas. They occupy a place between narratives of unity and the body politic as portrayed by the city government, and contestations of those narratives which exist within the political neighbourhoods. Parking lots, like interfaces and areas in transition, are in some ways a blank page on which new narratives can be written.

5. Interfaces and Areas in Transition: Healing Scars

> With the Troubles, came the division and this became, which I am sure you have heard- an interface. And basically it was a common area for civil unrest. And basically the connection between the whole area broke down, and the physical environment broke down. And you will see vacant land and rows of derelict houses. (Alistair DSD April 2011)

Interface areas in Belfast are scattered throughout the city. These areas experienced a large proportion of the violence during the times of the 'Troubles' as Loyalists and Nationalists lived in close proximity to one another. Similar to regions on the body where red and inflamed spots appear in places where disease and anti-bodies engage in struggle, these were the most inflamed areas on the body of Belfast. In Colm Heatley's (2004) book *Interface: Flashpoints in Northern Ireland*, he details some of what he considers to be the most notorious interface areas within Belfast. Heatley defines these areas as places where the two communities are exposed to each other in a physical sense, such as sharing a border, or they may meet during events such as a march. He discusses these areas as places where there was a significant loss of human life where many of the residents had experienced traumatic events. However, after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and peace began to be established in Northern Ireland, these interface areas began to heal. Peace walls divided communities and fighting left the streets. Despite this peace, the wounds inflicted on these areas by the 'Troubles' were deep, and as these wounds began to heal scars were left on the landscape. These scars took the form of derelict buildings and empty lots; structures that were hurt during the time of the 'Troubles' and have yet to be reclaimed by the city.

In a program initiated by the Belfast City Council, special attention is being paid to interface areas such as roads or "arterial routes" that run from the heart of the city. Several of

these roads were considered interface areas as they often served as dividing lines between the Loyalist and the Nationalist areas. These 'arterial routes' which can be considered interface areas include: the Crumlin Road, Donegall Road, and Antrim Road. In the introduction to the "Renewing the Routes Programme," the city administration emphasizes the fact that the "arterial routes radiating from the city centre are key gateways and the lifeblood for the social and economic functioning of the city" (Belfast City Council n.d.:2). The goal of the program is not only regeneration of the roads that are part of the program, but to also "facilitate economic competitiveness, tackle social exclusion, promote physical and environmental development and to promote creativity" (Belfast City Council n.d.:4). Through the Renewing the Routes Programme, the city government is in the process of transforming the areas that used to be the wounds of the city into thriving spaces. Although the arterials routes from the 'heart' of the city are areas of focus for the city government, they are not the only areas of transition to which the city administration dedicates attention.

As time progresses, the segment of the Department of Social Development (DSD) that works in physical regeneration would acquire pieces of property such as the abandoned lots and derelict houses in interface areas. These areas are typically spaces that private developers have insufficient interest in acquiring without incentives provided by the city. The Department of Social Development would acquire these pieces of property either through an agreement with the previous owner or through compulsory acquisition, and auction the properties to interested developers. As part of a stipulation for purchasing the properties, the DSD has some control over how developers use the space. (Alistair DSD April 2011) By taking an interest in the derelict buildings and abandoned properties within the scarred interface areas, the city has an opportunity to direct the healing process in these spaces; however, there are more derelict and

abandoned spaces than the DSD is able to sell. Starting from the economic downturn in 2008, the DSD has had trouble finding developers who are interested in buying properties in transition neighbourhoods because of the economic risk that is connected to the purchase. Furthermore, banks are less willing to loan money to developers and contractors who would be the potential buyers. The effects of the economic downturn have led to a situation where there are many spaces within the city that were taken over by the DSD but remain vacant. These spaces are no longer owned by members of the Loyalist or Nationalist neighbourhoods, but the city's stake in these properties is limited since the city administration's primary function in regards to the lots is to find buyers who are willing to develop the properties. (Alistair DSD April 2011) These spaces are liminal entities within the city as they occupy a position that falls between the city's active governance of the lots and the community claiming control.

5.1. Liminality: Interface Areas Existing Betwixt and Between

Victor Turner's concept of liminality focuses on a condition that describes those who "slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space" (Turner [1969] 1991:95). The derelict buildings and abandoned lots that marked the interface areas outside of the city centre were entities that could not be easily placed into a position within cultural space. While they technically were owned by the city, the city administration that held the rights to the spaces was often far removed from them both emotionally and physically. However, the Loyalist and Nationalist communities could no longer claim technical ownership, and in many cases these buildings have been left abandoned by the communities for years. These entities do not have the properties of the state that they were in before the 'Troubles' when they were functioning as churches, court houses, jails, and houses, and they do not possess the qualities that will be a part of their state when they will be bought

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and re-developed. Instead they embody liminality, their position is ambiguous and has "none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner 1987:5).

In Sharon Zukin's (2010) work "Landscapes of Power: From Disney World to Detroit," she looks at places of liminality within cities as they progress through stages of gentrification. During this process, the city moves from being a place that is accessible with a greater diversity of structures to one that is "an aesthetically or historically homogenized landscape" (Zukin 2010: 293). For her, buildings that exist between the death of their initial use and their reconstituted form as part of the gentrification process are characterized by this liminal phase. These liminal buildings and spaces echo Gladston's (2006) work on physical structures which embody progressions of historical narratives, and they are in a state between being representations of narratives about a culture of conflict and a culture of peace. They are no longer characterised as examples of political violence between the Nationalist and the Loyalist communities, but they are not typified as representations of the fiscal and social health of Belfast. This state is tenuous, a perpetual condition of being in-between as they go through the process of being turned from an abandoned 'low' position to a 'high' position with a renewed purpose. (Turner [1969] 1991) This change is also important in that it creates a situation where these structures fall into disrepair, are abandoned and wiped clean of their former uses as they become tabula rasas on which the city government can inscribe new narratives. These forms illustrate the "fragments, fluid multiplicities of details which do now cohere, but which impress by their being so fragile, so tentatively drawn" (Wolfreys 1998:166).

5.2. Interfaces and Areas in Transition: The Spaces Between Narratives

During a physical mapping session of the Shankill Road, one of the arterial routes connecting the Loyalist neighbourhood of Shankill to the city centre, competing maps of the area were discovered. They display the contesting narratives of the Shankill area as a site with a profound connection to Loyalist traditions, which is illustrated by a community-sponsored map, and a place with a neutral history, which is demonstrated by the city government's map. The claim that Shankill is closely connected to the 'Troubles' was substantiated by several of the interviewees during the course of the fieldwork. One interviewee, a Nationalist Black Taxi driver, referenced a story about the Shankill Butchers who would station themselves on the outskirts of the city centre and abduct civilians who were travelling to the Nationalist areas, torture, and kill them during the times of the 'Troubles.' In another interview a Loyalist from Shankill, mentions his deceased friend and neighbour Stevie McKeag who was known in the area for killing the most Catholics.

These stories highlight versions of history which portray Belfast and the Shankill area in particular as being part of a "culture of conflict." However, as part of the city's peace-building strategy they have overlaid narratives of a neutral history onto the Shankill area, with a map that highlights points of interest that include: the Shankill Graveyard, the Orange Hall, St. Matthew's Parish Church, and the Shankill Memorial Garden. (See Figure 4) On the government-sponsored maps, mentions of the 'Troubles' were limited to a sentence which discussed the "civil and political turmoil" which occurred in recent years. Even the mention of the Shankill Memorial Garden limited potential references to the 'Troubles' by focusing on "the men and women of the Shankill who died during the First and Second World Wars and in subsequent conflicts." Although the Shankill Road no longer represents an area of political and violent conflict, it does not fully embody the city's narratives of a peaceful, healthy, and neutral culture.

The physical space along the road is slowly being stripped of the visual markers that defined the space during the time of the 'Troubles' through redevelopment initiatives and government programs such as Renewing the Routes, but it still embodies a liminal state between competing narratives.

Figure 4- Belfast City Government's Map of Shankill

On the edge of the Shankill area is another major road into the city centre that is also a part of the city's "Renewing the Routes Programme." This road, the Crumlin Road, is also an interface area as it separates the Loyalist area of Shankill from the Nationalist area of Ardoyne in Northern Belfast. One example of a structure that has been affected by the history of violence on Crumlin Road is the Carlisle Methodist Memorial Church. The Carlisle Methodist Church was completed in 1875, but by 1982 it was no longer functioning as a place of worship due to its location in the interface area (BBC 2009). The church is currently one of the abandoned buildings along the Crumlin Road functioning as a scar and visual reminder of the 'Troubles.' Other notable buildings that are now abandoned along the Crumlin Road are the Crumlin Road Gaol, and the Crumlin Road Courthouse among several other residential and commercial buildings. (See Figure 5)

Figure 5- Several Abandoned Buildings Along Crumlin Road

From left to right: Carlisle Memorial Church, Crumlin Road Gaol, and Crumlin Road Courthouse

The Crumlin Road Gaol which serves as a visible scar that reminds residents of the 'Troubles,' has recently been taken over the city administration. On Culture: Northern Ireland's site, the writers of the website's content said that "for most people in Belfast and across the island of Ireland, Crumlin Road Prison evokes memories of the conflict" (Culture: Northern Ireland 2011). Since the city government perceived the Crumlin Road to be one of the arterial routes and gateway points into the city, the city administration recognized the need to "re-new the route" (Belfast City Council n.d.). In 1996, the last inmate left the Crumlin Road Gaol, and in 2006 the Department of Social Development purchased the property for re-development (DSD 2011b). The Department for Social Development's plan for the Crumlin Road Gaol is to take the building, which is a reminder of the dark period of the 'Troubles,' and to create a new narrative about Belfast using the space.

Margaret Richie, the Minister for Social Development, stated that she wants the prison where 25,000 people were imprisoned, political prisoners interned, and 17 men were executed to "serve as a major symbol of hope and economic regeneration" (Department of Social

Development 2011b). The Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau which will be running the tours to the prison for the Department of Social Development, describes it as "one of Belfast's most distinctive landmark buildings. This grade A-listed building is the only Victorian era prison remaining in Northern Ireland" (Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau 2011). The narrative about the Crumlin Road Gaol that the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau is promoting is supposed to show the neutral and sterile environment within Belfast. Instead of mentioning the many connections that the prison has to the 'Troubles,' the Visitor Bureau focuses on the architecture of the building and the architect who constructed the space (Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau 2011). However, the prison is currently closed and not allowing access to visitors, so the narratives that the city has constructed are not being told to the groups of visitors who are meant to tour the property. Instead, the abandoned building exists in a liminal phase between its original use as a prison which became infamous during the time of the 'Troubles,' and a site where the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau conducts tours which emphasize the building's architecture.

The arterial routes are not the only representations of cases where a place exists between the narratives of the political neighbourhoods and that of the city administration. According to an interview with an employee in the Physical Regeneration segment of the Department of Social Development, the street Duncairn Gardens in Northern Belfast used to be an affluent area before the 1960's, but during the times of the 'Troubles' Duncairn became an interface zone. The road denoted the division between a Loyalist neighbourhood and a Nationalist neighbourhood, and since it held that position it was marked by violence. He stated that in an effort to separate the two communities and demonstrate the fact that Belfast is a city that is moving forward, the DSD built a business complex on Duncairn Gardens separating the Loyalists and the Nationalists. The

business centre echoes the neutrality of the city centre as it is positioned between the two communities, but is not a part of either one. In this sense, the sanitized city centre is being extended to the more peripheral regions of the city, the arterial routes. However, this narrative of neutrality that is a part of the city centre's sterile account of Belfast exists in an area of competing accounts. Figure 6 displays a picture of the entrance to Duncairn Gardens. From this photo, the sign for the neutral commercial complex is positioned between a sign for the Nationalist and the Loyalist political party members. This photo visually displays the fact that the centre is not only physically placed between non-neutral political neighbourhoods, but is also inhabits a space between competing narratives.

Figure 6- Entrance to the Interface Area Duncairn Gardens

Former interfaces such as Duncairn Gardens and Crumlin Road and areas of transition like Shankill Road represent places where the progression of historical narratives can be illustrated by the physical transformations of spaces along the routes, mirroring Gladston's (2006) work on photographic representations of structures in Germany. However, these spaces are currently in a period of transition and embody a liminal state; they do not represent narratives of the period of the 'Troubles' or a healthy city. Instead, they exist betwixt and between narratives. While the city centre adheres to the peace-building strategy which attempts to demonstrate a transition from a "culture of conflict" to a "culture of peace," the liminal spaces exhibit continuing transformation. The continuing transformation of liminal spaces contradicts the government's peace-building strategy of re-focusing narratives to portray Belfast as a peaceful and healthy city. This strategy is further contradicted by the existence of political neighbourhoods, where individual residents use 'tactics' to challenge the city's peace-building 'strategies.'

6. Diseases of the City: Containing the Contagion

> Just as the causes of urban destruction are multiple and varied, the forms of reconstruction everywhere reflect a battle over the control of the direction of the urban body politic.
>
> (Susser and Schneider 2003:5).

While the city centre of Belfast tries to construct a narrative about the city as a place that is free from disease, the political neighbourhoods on the extremities of the city contradict this notion of health. These neighbourhoods continue to display traces of the 'Troubles' that are evident not only in the visual representations that are present throughout the place, but also in the narratives of the people living in these areas. While the city centre is supposed to represent neutral territory, the political neighbourhoods not only go against this idea of neutrality, they use certain markers to display territorialism. The use of territorial markers demonstrates that a particular place is not only biased towards one side of the conflict, it illustrates the fact that the Loyalist and Nationalist communities are actively separating themselves. These territorial markers take a physical form which is manifested in political posters, flags, curb-side markers, and murals, but they are also revealed through the stories that the Nationalists and the Loyalists tell about themselves and about the other group.

Although, the city government has made attempts to bring health and neutrality to these political neighbourhoods, through the use of re-development in connection with the Department of Social Development and programs such as "Re-Imaging Communities," these contradictions continue to the present. According to an interview with an employee from the Department of Social Development, the DSD focuses on which areas to institute development programs based on the Noble List.

There are what is called Noble indicators, based on the person who did this study was Noble, and basically he identified what was, I think, 500 needy areas within the province. And then we work within the worst 10% and again that falls under neighbourhood renewal and that is our justification. Those areas will be the most run-down area within Belfast, the ones that need the most intervention. The ones that need the most help, really. (Alistair DSD April 2011).

The DSD's Final Implementation Plan details the areas that fall under the worst 10% according to the Noble indicators, and these areas typically tend to be political neighbourhoods such as South West Belfast, Greater Shankill and the Lower Falls area (Department of Social Development 2005a).

The importance of the political neighbourhoods from the point of view of the city centre is not only that they tend to be economically deprived and hence blights for the city, but that they have the potential to spread. In the Final Implementation report, the political neighbourhoods appear as contained wounds that are exacerbated by political tension, but have the ability to infect beyond their current reach. The "symptoms" that cause the disease within the political neighbourhoods could "turn individual issues into much more serious problems that affect the whole community" (Department of Social Development 2005a). If the contagion were to spread beyond the political communities, the narrative of Belfast as a healthy city that the city government tries to promote could be threatened by the encroaching disease.

While the Department of Social Development focuses on displays of depravation within the political communities, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland is responsible for instituting programs that are meant to address the murals present throughout the neighbourhoods. These murals are narratives that are present within the Loyalist and Nationalist political communities which "are normally sectarian, antagonistic and offensive, and are intended as visible and

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unambiguous statements of opposition and aggression" (Independent Research Solutions 2009:vii). The Re-Imaing Communities program was started with the intention of addressing these statements of opposition and aggression. One way the Arts Council mentioned of being able to replace these divisive murals is by re-focusing the narratives of the community through "imagery that reflects communities in a more positive manner" (Independent Research Solutions 2009: vii). The Re-Imaging Communities campaign displays similarities to the peace-building strategies mentioned by Pupavac (2006) where communities' cultural expression is determined by programs which are meant to ensure that a certain image is portrayed. However, in an attempt to maintain the "personality" of cultural representations, some actors in the political communities use tactics to oppose the city's peace-building strategies, such as the Re-Imaging project.

6.1 Community 'Tactics:' Contradicting Notions of Health

In Certeau's, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* he details the difference between 'strategies' as "the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that become possible as soon as a subject with will and power… can be isolated" and 'tactics,' "the art of the weak" (Certeau 1984: 35 & 37). 'Strategies,' which can be employed by a power such as a city, give precedence to spatial relationships since they often draw their power from the established places. 'Tactics' on the other hand are typically utilised by those without power derived from place, and challenge that power by drawing on the element of time. (38) Another way that individuals employing 'tactics' can contest the 'strategies' used by a power such as the city, is by the use of space. Certeau argues that a city founded on a 'utopian' and 'urbanistic' discourse is concerned with three practices. These practices consist of repressing diseases, such as "physical, mental and political pollutions," that may cause harm, creating a system to substitute tactics which produce a

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non-neutral, non-state-sanctified narrative of history, and instituting a "universal and anonymous subject which is the city itself" (94).

Although the city may attempt to manage these diseased elements, beneath the narrative that the city government promotes are other contradictory stories which cannot be entirely controlled (Certeau 1984:95). Certeau's concept of 'strategies' and 'tactics' has been adapted to illustrate the relationship between the Loyalists and the Nationalists in the political neighbourhoods and their relationship with the state. In a working paper by Audra Mitchell and Liam Kelly (2010), they applied Certeau's theory of 'tactics' and 'strategies' to the Loyalist and Nationalist communities' responses to peace-building, development and securitization. Mitchell and Kelly argue that while the city government employs 'strategies' in their intervention and peace-building efforts in the political neighbourhoods, the communities respond with their own contradictory 'tactics.' The political communities' tactics "preserve, create or posit different 'worlds' than those promoted by peace-building, whether in keeping alive alternative histories or contesting official ones, or marking territorial space through interfacing" (Mitchell and Kelly 2010: 28).

6.2 Every Wound Tells a Story

Despite attempts by the city government to promote sanitized and neutral narratives about the city of Belfast, the political neighbourhoods on the extremities of the city employ different 'tactics' to contradict these narratives. These 'tactics' are similar to methods the Vedda used, which was described by Cashdan (1983), to delineate and defend their territory through the use of territorial markers. Territorialism in the form of flags, painted curbs and political posters claim different spaces as Loyalist or Nationalist territory, contradicting the city government's portrayal of "neutral" Belfast. Despite the fact that the 2005 DSD policy document listed

displays of flags, murals and kerbstones as 'inappropriate and aggressive,' these forms of symbolism continue to proliferate throughout political neighbourhoods. When a hostel owner was interviewed about housing options in neighbourhoods, he stated that one easy way of figuring out whether a neighbourhood is a political in nature and subsequently a place with cheap rent is by looking to see whether the pavements are painted and there are "a lot of flags hanging outside." Flags and other territorial markers within political neighbourhoods are portrayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7- Displays of Territorialism in Political Neighbourhoods


Nationalist Displays of Territorialism

Loyalist Displays of Territorialism

Within these spaces, outside of the 'heart' and 'arterial' routes of the city, wounds from the 'Troubles' are still on open display. Although wounds may negate notions of health, every wound has a story. These narratives of the past that the city is trying to "re-image" are often important for the political communities who put them on display. Through different methods of agency employed by the Loyalists and Nationalists, they manage to not only challenge attempts by the city government to "neutralize" the areas, but to find ways to continue to create their own definitions of the space. One of the visible tactics that the community used to try to portray their narrative of space was seen on the wall around the new development Weavers Court. Weavers Court is a business centre built on the boundary of Sandy Row in Loyalist South West Belfast. This development is considered to be one of the re-development projects that will improve the health of the city. However, this business centre forms a kind of privileged island within the political neighbourhood. There are two security entrances to the development and the manicured lawns within the centre contrast with the community gardens outside the walls.[8] The strict security around Weavers Court seems to act as a method of excluding the contagion of the political neighbourhoods. However, the community uses their own 'tactics' to fight against this particular narrative. On the outside of the centre graffiti artists have inscribed the name of the

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[8] For a comparison between the green space within Weavers Court and the Sandy Row community garden see Figure 3 in the Appendix.

community onto the wall as a way to visually claim rights to this space. (See Figure 8)   These 'tactics' used by residents of Sandy Row are similar to the ones cited by Mitchell and Kelly (2010: 14) who described walls around luxury developments, which are redevelopment projects and consequently thought of as peace-building strategies, as "a canvas onto which an opportunity for possible forms of contestation can be played out."

Figure 8- Graffiti on the Wall Surrounding Weavers Court

A building within Weavers Court

Graffiti of the community's name
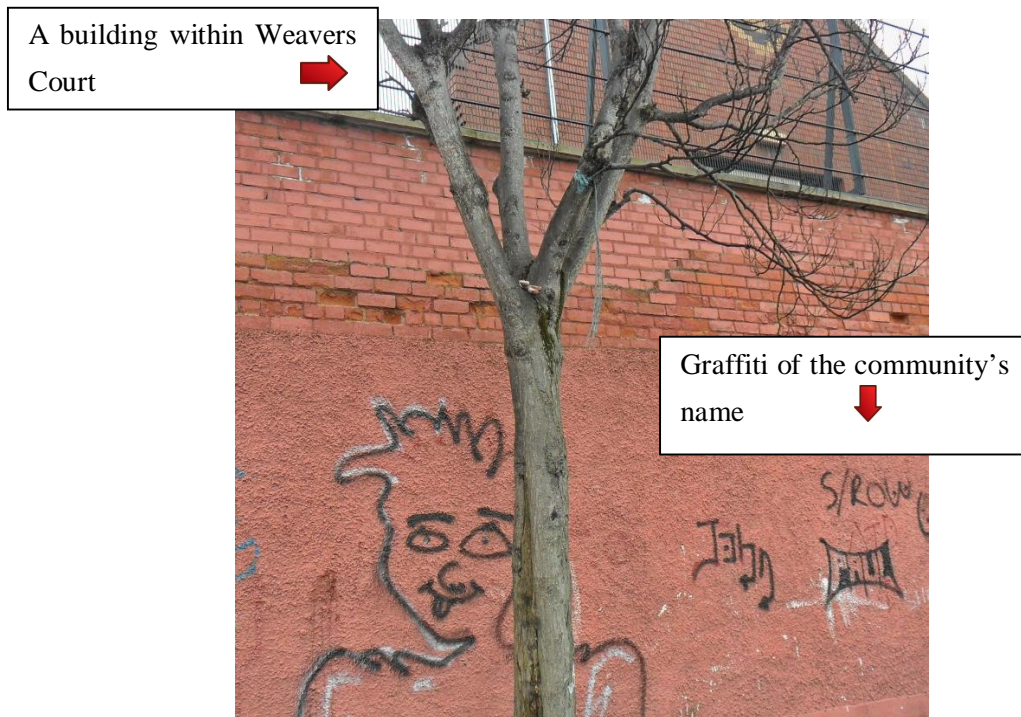
Another 'tactic' that the community uses to claim their right to the space and to promote their narrative is through the remembrance gardens located within the political neighbourhoods. The remembrance gardens not only contradict the notions of the 'neutral' city, but they are not regulated by the city government.   These gardens display the wounds of the 'Troubles' by remembering those who died during the political conflict.   They also are built by the community without the permission of the city government.   When asked about obtaining permission from the

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city for the remembrance gardens, one of the members of the Sinn Fein political party stated that the people in the community did not need the city's permission to build the remembrance gardens, that it was a community decision where the gardens should be placed.

Although the community has created attempts of promote narratives of unity through the "Re-Imaging Communities" program run through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, political communities have found ways to continue to tell their version of history. When completing a walking tour of Sandy Row in South West Belfast, one of the political areas that the DSD chose to focus on for re-development (Department of Social Development 2005a), a "neutral" narrative sanctioned by the city government was politicized by the community. Figure 9 is a picture of a mural in the Loyalist area of South West Belfast that was used to promote unity between the Loyalist and Nationalist community. In the picture a boy is depicted wearing "I love W. Belfast" stickers. This is significant given the fact that West Belfast is a strong Nationalist neighbourhood and the mural is in Loyalist territory. However, graffiti artists covered up "W. Belfast" and wrote "North Belfast" which has a Loyalist majority. This is an example of where the city tried to promote a narrative of unity and neutrality within the political neighbourhoods, and the community responded by overlaying their narrative.

Another area of focus for the "Re-Imaging Communities" campaign was the Loyalist neighbourhood in the Shankill Estates. The Shankill area is known for their murals; in fact, even the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (2011) lists the "political" murals in Shankill as a point of interest. In an interview with someone from the Shankill Community Association, he mentioned extensive involvement with the "Re-Imaging Communities" program. He stated that he and other members of the association had been actively involved with the Arts Council in order to choose the murals that would be re-imaged and the narratives that the new murals would portray.

However, there were some murals within the Shankill Estate that he said could not be touched. These were often for paramilitary leaders and were memorial murals, and because of that they community would not allow them to be re-imaged. Although the Shankill community was working with the city government to promote new narratives within the political neighbourhoods, they continued to tell their "story" and to some extent still display the wounds of the 'Troubles' by maintaining that some murals will remain on the walls. For example, there is a memorial mural that cannot be re-imaged for Stevie Top Gun McKeag, who is known within the Loyalist community for killing the most number of Catholics. (See Figure 4 in the Appendix)

Figure 9- Competing Narratives on a Mural in a Loyalist Neighbourhood

These 'tactics' which are a feature of many of the political neighbourhoods contradict peace-building strategies employed by the state to create an image of a unified "body politic" that is progressing toward a state of social and fiscal health. Programs which are instituted to

"re-image" residents of the city as peaceful citizens and re-focus historical narratives are countered by attempts by individuals to preserve the "personality" of their self-representations. These attempts often appear in the form of 'tactics' used by residents of the political communities to maintain their version of history and depiction of their identity through the use of territorial markers, and graffiti on government sponsored murals and markings on the walls surrounding luxury building complexes which were part of the state's redevelopment schemes. These tactics which are visible within the political communities contradict the city's representation of a unified and healthy body politic in such a way that as an individual moves through space from the city centre to the political neighbourhoods on the extremities of the city, the city's narrative begins to fracture.

Conclusion- Fragmentation of the Body

Throughout the thesis, it has been argued that the Belfast City Government has used the metaphors, such as the one the body, as a peace-building strategy in order to narrate the city as a cohesive whole. The city government uses stories that depict this 'body politic' as moving towards a state of optimal social and fiscal health. However, just as a tension exists between 'strategies' used by those in positions of power, and 'tactics' used by the actors to contradict those strategies, a tension exists between the narratives of the city government and the residents of political neighbourhoods. As a narrative gaze moves from the city centre past the 'arterial routes' and interface areas to the political neighbourhoods on the outskirts of the city, the image of Belfast as an integrated whole begins to fragment. Competing views of the city manifest themselves in physical spaces and the way that people portray narratives of the history of Belfast on those physical spaces. In this sense, the city government's portrayal of Belfast is contradicted on two levels. In the city government's attempt to create the image of Belfast as a healthy, unified whole, they not only use metaphors that overlook division, they also attempt to re-image stories of Belfast's history. These re-imaged narratives of the history of Belfast sanitize the image of the city, and illustrate the residents as a peaceful culture, a peace-building technique advocated for by UNESCO (Pupavac 2006). These attempts by the city administration to re-focus Belfast's history appear in their desire to highlight historical events such as the Titanic, and paint over political murals which display images of the 'Troubles.' However, some community members use their own 'tactics' to hold onto reminders of this period of history by creating memorial gardens within the political neighbourhoods, and refusing to erase murals to "heroes" from the period of political violence. By using these 'tactics' several residents refuse to let, what Pupavac (2006) would term the "personality" of the culture, disappear from the physical landscape.

While this thesis has attempted to illustrate the competing nature of the 'strategies' employed by the Belfast city government, which can be illustrated by the use of the body metaphor, and the 'tactics' utilised by members of the political neighbourhoods, more work can be completed on the multitude of competing narratives within the city. Although the chapter on the political neighbourhoods discusses the point of view of 'members of the community,' these communities are by no means a homogenous group. Varying viewpoints and responses to the city government's peace-building strategies create a dynamic and complex web of narratives within the groups termed as 'Loyalist' and 'Nationalist.' Even the labels "Loyalist" and "Nationalist" simplify the complicated nature of the actual relations between the two communities and individuals' perceptions of their own identity within these groups. Further complicating the classification of individuals into the city government, Loyalists, and Nationalists is the fact that several of the employees who currently work for the city used to be residents of the political neighbourhoods.

Further research on this topic would benefit from a more in-depth look at identity studies, and the interplay of identity formation and competing narratives about the city of Belfast. Although the thesis would have benefited from this inclusion, this element of the particular case will be deferred to later versions. A look at identity formation may have aided in providing an answer to 'why' there are competing narratives; however, the main focus of this thesis was to establish a rough answer to question dealing with 'what.' More specifically, it addresses the question: what is the response to the city government's use of the peace-building strategy manifested in language such as the body metaphor? The answer lies in the competing narratives exhibited in different parts of the physical environment in Belfast. The fact that some residents of the political communities continue to use 'tactics' which contradict narratives of unity and

health the city government utilises as post-conflict 'strategies' can provide insights into peace-building policies. An increased understanding of the types of tactics residents of a post-conflict city may employ when confronted with city government-sanctioned peace-building strategies can be helpful not only in the case of Belfast, but also in other post-conflict situations.

Appendix

Figure 1- Entrances and the Interior of Political Estate(s) in Belfast

Entrances to Political Estates
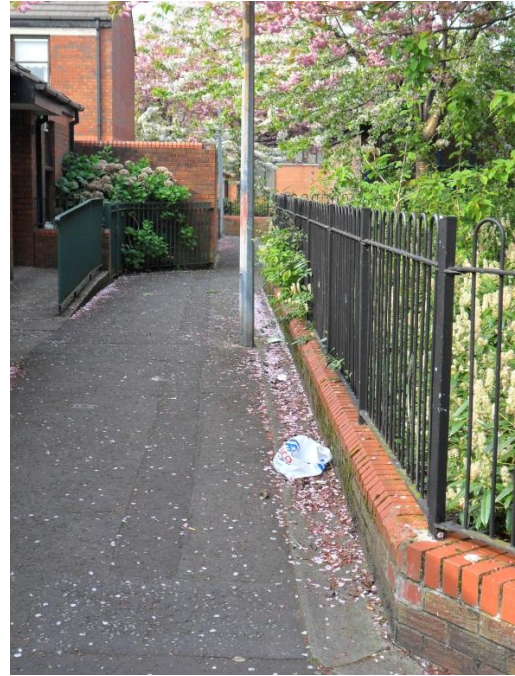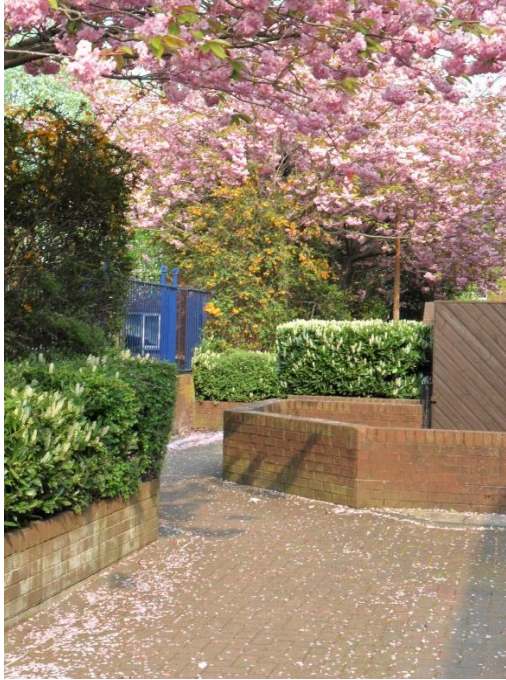
The Interior of a Political Housing Estate

Figure 2- Entrances to a Non-Political and a Political Neighbourhood in the City Centre

Figure 3- A Comparison of the Green Space in Weavers Court and Sandy Row

Figure 4- A Memorial Mural for Stevie Top Gun Mckeag

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