Imagining a New Belfast: Municipal Parades in Urban Regeneration

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ABSTRACT

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This work highlights civic events and celebration as functional components of Belfast, Northern Ireland's ongoing post-conflict regeneration. Exploring the broad networks that fund and organize such events through a material semiotic approach, this dissertation sketches an outline of the process that produces parades, and examines the motivations and intentions behind them. It finds that parades function within a negotiated process of "place-making" to convey idealized visions of a peaceful "New Belfast". In particular the tropes of multiculturalism and European identity are repeated as aspirational ideals for Belfast's regeneration. The parades display, and in doing so reify these ideals as a temporary reality. Longer-term effects of the parades are difficult to determine, but they may potentially change public opinion regarding the social space of the city center, leading to more integrated and liberal use of the city center. In these events, issues central to Belfast's political life—from tourism, physical redevelopment, to European integration—are addressed through carnivalesque play and performance, as the events' producers and participants imagine Belfast's future urban identity.

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Chapter One: Making Places and Remaking Cities

On a warm late-April afternoon in Belfast, I came down to the City Center to attend a walking tour of the local art galleries. It was the day after the Royal Wedding, and the long weekend was packed with events. As I was exploring the city center, I encountered some acts from the Festival of Fools, a street-performance festival that draws clowns, acrobats, magicians and the like from all over Europe to Belfast. A juggler on the City Hall lawn had recruited a far-too-young assistant from the crowd, who walked away with his scarves. The audience found it hilarious, but the juggler couldn't finish his act. A bluegrass band was busking in Cornmarket square, and as I was crossing High Street, a May Day parade came around the corner, carrying the banners of the teachers' union, the Queens University students' union; members of the local fire brigade and police service marched along with members of the Chinese Welfare Association, following dancers in Chinese Lion and Dragon costumes. The city center was vibrant with activity, people enjoying drinks in the sun, shopping, stopping to watch performances and parades that seemed, on that day, to emerge from every corner. It was surprising and exciting, as if the energy stored up during the winter season had finally been released in a frenetic explosion of comedy, art and celebration. "This is Belfast," I thought.

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It is almost impossible to begin to write about Belfast without immediately characterizing it as a city "deeply scarred" or "torn apart" by the conflict, the "Troubles," which inhabited it for the last several decades of the 20th century. It is impossible, as well, not to trace the origins of the sectarian guerrilla war that played out on its streets to the colonial and religious power dynamics that shaped Ireland's relationship with Britain over as many centuries. And yet, those familiar with Belfast recognize also that it is like any other city; its residents pace their public squares en route to the office or the pub or the shops, undaunted by the past that transpired there. As in any other city, people participate in the making of "places," socializing the space in which they live through their daily activities, both mundane and symbolic. But perhaps unique to Belfast, that scarred, conflict-riven past makes this process especially challenging, and makes the work of creating and recreating the space of the city into a place where people live an object of anthropological interest. This dissertation is about a narrow facet of place-making in Belfast: municipally sponsored parades, which, I argue, are a medium for the envisioning of Belfast's future and the joint negotiation of a shared, local identity. In particular, I examined two parades produced by the Belfast City Council in conjunction with two community arts organizations in Belfast: the 2011 St. Patrick's Day Carnival, and the 2011 Lord Mayor's Day Show.

There is a longstanding practice of parading in Northern Ireland, the most infamous of which is the July 12th Orange Order parade. Since the Order's inception in the 1790s, Protestant 'Orangemen' have commemorated William of Orange's defeat of King James II, the last Catholic King of England, at the 1690 Battle of the Boyne (Bryan 2000, Rolston 1991). It was an instantiation of this tradition that captured the attention of

the international news media when, from 1996 to 2000, the Portadown Orange Order

marches were surrounded by protests, intimidation, and sectarian murders, culminating

each year in a massive standoff between police and Orangemen at the Drumcree Church

in Portadown (Bryan 2000). Dominic Bryan has argued that these parades became the

locus of intense contestation, precisely as the Troubles were ending, because the

changing political context in Northern Ireland also made uncertain the meaning and the

ideology of loyalism itself. The Drumcree conflict marked an internal battle among

different elements within loyalism to appropriate the legitimacy of the parading

'tradition', and to "import a unity, a sense of stability, and a sense of timelessness to an

ethnic identity" (2000:72). As Bryan argues, "the more internally diverse the community,

the more elaborate and regular the attempts to define it" (2000:12). Bryan's work

demonstrates that public rituals such as the Orange parades are sites of symbolic

confrontations that play a part in identity formation (2000: 8). Nonetheless their

importance is perceived as attached to the discourse of "tradition"; "despite the

recognition that the events have altered considerably in living memory…the idea that

'traditional' parades express for Protestants a continuity with the past in the present"

gives them legitimacy both as potent rituals and valuable objects of inquiry (2000: 155).

There are other types of parades, however, and other forms of public ritual and

performance that, I argue, are equivalent in their attempts to define and legitimize a

particular community. Indeed, the parades of my inquiry bear little resemblance—and

intentionally so—to the Orange parades, yet they gain credence from both their familiar,

conventional forms and their discontinuity with both of the ethno-nationalist 'traditions'

in the North. As I will demonstrate, Belfast's municipal parades are part of a broad

political process of urban "regeneration." This policy term, roughly equivalent with similar jargon such as urban renewal, describes an integrated project of social and economic development, peace building and community work, and a revival of local arts and culture. Yet the term, stemming from the same root as "genesis" also connotes a rebirth, and in this respect, "regeneration" is not simply the restoration of peace after a conflict, but the generation of a new society unaffected by the Troubles, oriented away from contentious national ideologies, and toward a cosmopolitan, European community. I will argue that the municipal parades play a role in this transformation, precisely because of their rejection of ethno-national politics and their discontinuity with "tradition."

An Anthropology of Imagining

The events that I address in this work, unlike the Orange Parades[1], are officially sanctioned, via financial, technical, and logistical support, by the municipal government in Belfast, and are explicitly meant to be socially inclusive and family-friendly. They are meant to promote a "post-conflict" Belfast, and a "shared" civic identity both to its residents and the outside world, though what that means is as yet imprecise. And as such, much like the Orange parades, they are also sites of symbolic contest and identity construction. During my time in Belfast, I witnessed disputes over funding, the overarching purpose of civic events, and what they are meant to convey. According to Bryan and McIntosh,

> Such symbolic conflict does not simply lie on the periphery of disputes but forms a substantive part of the political and cultural domain. In Northern

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[1] Bryan (2009) notes, that while Orange parades were afforded legitimacy by the membership of many public officials and political leaders in the Orange Order, the parades themselves were never part of the official civic culture. Even while the Ulster Unionist Party, predominantly composed of Orangemen,

Ireland, the type of flag that flies over a building, the types of parades that march along particular streets, the statues and the paintings on the walls, the history of buildings, the crest or badge on a uniform, and days designated as public holidays matter. They symbolize the conflict. Symbols provide the material through which communities, groups, nations and state attempt to imagine themselves. (2005: 128).

This, then, is an ethnography of imagining. For as much as it is a study of the products of an urban renewal project, it is also an exploration of the exercise of inventing new symbols with which to imagine a new community. In a reflection on Belfast's attempt to win the 2008 European Capital of Culture honor, former Culture Arts And Leisure Minister for Northern Ireland, Nelson McCausland wrote:

If we are to build a stable society in Northern Ireland, then our cultural life must be based on the principles of diversity and equality. For too long the cultural establishment has tried to force us into a restrictive 'two traditions' cultural model which as been damaging and distorting. We are more than two traditions. (Carruthers, Douds, Loan 2003:35).

Yet, in the same volume, other commenters wrote that Belfast "is a city whose citizens have not yet found the space to agree on the kind of city they want," attributing the loss of the Capital of Culture bid to the "absence of shared vision" (4). It is within this context that I understand Belfast's municipal parades as pragmaticist[2] art interventions in the city's otherwise pragmatic regeneration program: they are meant to spark the imaginations of the city's residents and to propose a new way of conceiving of Belfast, a new way of "being Belfastian" that transcends ethno-religious conflict and social inequality, in the hope that these conceptions of place and identity might draw reality closer to the ideal. The new civic parades are both part of a discursive process of

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[2] Pragmaticism is the name given by Charles S. Peirce to his maxim of critical logic, "which argues that the import of the sign is established in its generalizable effects" (Liszka 1996: 30-31). For the purposes of this study, it means that the effects of these parades on the field of interpreters, Belfast's residents, is what ultimately amounts the parade's "meaning," or its ability to convey a particular conception of the "new Belfast" to inhabitants of the city.

imagining the city, and the products of its evolution. Colin Graham, noting a trend in the

Belfast art scene, writes:

> New artistic forms and practices have partially, and critically, distanced
> themselves from the weighty expectation that they will somehow address
> the troubles. Instead they have…manifested an urban art which registers
> Belfast as a city…as if the changed political scene has suddenly allowed
> for the city to be understood as an ordinary, lived-in place, overwritten by
> its past and present (Graham 2009: 106).

What Graham saw in Belfast's galleries is equally apparent on its streets, with the

residents "remaking" the city by consciously choosing to utilize spaces which formerly

were cut off and uninhabited due to the troubles. In the same way, the parades, which use

the public square and city streets, represent new ways of conceiving that civic space. To

the people who observe and participate in them, they are signs that the city's past is being

overwritten with new imaginings of urban civic life. Part of a city-wide conversation

concerning the "regeneration" of Belfast itself, the parades, and the policy concerning

them, reflect multiple voices and agencies, conveying meaning and intention through

imagery, music and symbolic actions—the choice to reject some historical icons and

embrace others, to chart a particular, meaningful course through the city center, or to

reshape emblems of ethnic identity to suit ideals of a unified society. Precisely because

this is a conversation, however, rather than the articulation of a particular ideology,

Belfast's public events, particularly these municipal padres, still lack that "shared vision"

missing from the Capital of Culture bid. In Benedict Anderson's foundational definition

of the imagined community, he argues, "it is imagined because the members of even the

smallest nation will never know of most of their fellow members, meet them or even hear

of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (2006: 6). This

dissertation, then, examines how that image comes into being by examining the semiotic

process by which the re-imagined Belfast is communicated, analyzed and debated via policy, performance, and spatial practice.

Highlighting these municipal parades does not imply that they have an exclusive or causal role to play in Belfast's post-conflict progress; they illustrate only a portion of the exceptionally complex process of social transformation that has occurred since the 1998 Belfast Agreement. But thorough investigation reveals them to link Northern Irish, British and European agendas for investment and economic regeneration to numerous, often competing, creative visions for what Belfast should become as it transitions to greater peace and stability. On the one hand, these events are products of a complex field of cultural production that channels funding and resources through specific mechanisms of control. In this respect, they are municipal interventions in the process of urban renewal, motivated by the potential economic gains of increased tourism and international investment. On the other hand, they are communal activities in which participants share in an experience that has a pragmaticist bearing on, or practical consequences for, their collective perception of the city. Synthetic, transient, and some would argue spurious, these parades are also highly visible, symbolic interjections into an ongoing dialogue among local stakeholders about the possible outcomes of change, visions for the future of the city, and the formation of a new civic identity.

Broadly, I take the parades to be "place-making" activities, which, adapting Barth's formulation of ethnic identity, are conscious, organizational actions taken by multiple actors to construct a *localized* identity through the production of shared symbols and experiences (Barth 1998). Barth's view characterizes ethnic identity as a transactional process, and a culture as a sharable and mutable thing that emerges through

an ongoing dialogue among people both within and outside an ethnic group. As Varenne writes, culture "is to be found *in* interaction because it arose *through* interaction" (1986: 211). Applied to the city, "place-making" activities address themselves to the symbolic nature of place, shaping the relationship of citizens to the city and to each other through languages of architecture, roadways, public squares, and the myriad ways of using the urban landscape. Hence, "the freedom to make and remake our cities" writes David Harvey, "is a right to change ourselves by changing the city" (2008: 23). Like most rights, the power of the public to exercise it can be endangered by structures of political exclusion or monopolized by the wealthy. In Belfast, the municipal parades are more than sites of symbolic confrontation; they reveal exertions of power and resistance in a struggle to remake the city according to different actors' utopian ideals. Whether a new civic identity emerges, and what that will be, is still uncertain; it depends on how these parades influence people's perception of and participation in the public sphere and civic life. This dissertation begins an exploration of this process by including in its analysis the motivations and interpretations of those who join in or witness the events, as well as other uses of the city's public spaces.

Ethnographic Imaginings of Post-Conflict Belfast

A broadening body of literature exploring Belfast's post-conflict transformations suggests that the nature of civic space and identity is indeed changing. Dominic Bryan writes, "we may be seeing the development of a 'civic culture' or a 'public space' that is shared in significant respects and does offer an element of common identity to the citizens of the city that was lacking in 20th Century Belfast" (2009: 15). This conclusion is evident across a variety of approaches, from studies of political culture (Roe, et. al

1999, MacGinty 1999, Hazleton 1999, Jewesbury 2000), tourism and economic development (Etchart 2008, Jones 2003, Zuelow 2006, Lisle 2000), to changing and emergent forms of symbolic expression (Bryan 2009, Bryan and McIntosh 2005, Crowley 2011, McDowell and Switzer 2011, Santino 2001, Bryan and Gillespie 2005, McCormick and Jarman 2005, Rolston 1999, McCauley 1999, Fraser 2000, Cashman 2008). These approaches share an emphasis on how the peace process has responded to existing social divisions and urban segregation, often through a "third way" intervention. The "third way" typically refers to the center-left politics of the late 20th Century social democratic movement; however in Belfast, it also refers to any attempt to create an ersatz middle ground between political poles (Graham and Shirlow 1998). Several of my interlocutors, for instance, refer to the municipal events in question as "third way parades" while Belfast's tourism developers have attempted to define a "third cultural way" that will capture local heritage without replicating internal divisions (Etchart 2008: 37). The general consensus appears to be skeptical that these new constructions of culture and identity could be "authentic" products of an organic peace process, and instead characterizes them as statist interventions meant to obscure—rather than deal with—the political legacy of the Troubles. As Anderson notes, however, imagined communities "are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (2006: 6).

In particular, the anthropology of tourism in Northern Ireland showcases a key limitation of this body of literature. Etchart (2008) and Jones (2003) both characterize tourism development in Belfast as "molding heritage into a tourism product" (Etchart 2008: 37), and using local culture, sold for tourist dollars, "as a citywide regeneration

tool" (Jones 2003: 15). Lisle (2000), discussing tourism in former war zones, argues that tourists are attracted to the safely packaged "nearness" to danger, and that tourism development in a place like Belfast is really a "process of sanitization" (2000: 95). Their work reflects a general pattern in the anthropology of tourism, identified by Stronza (2001), of viewing "host" societies as passive and disadvantaged under the powerful "tourist gaze," implying that the authenticity of their culture is compromised by its commodification. These studies presume that a cultural "product" is only for external consumption, and that "sanitization" is necessarily experienced as a loss. The shortcoming in viewing tourism development merely as an economic process and not also a "place-making" activity is that it discounts the viewpoints of those who *desire* to remake Belfast as a tourist destination and a source of cultural capital and poses the ethnographer as the authoritative interpreter of the value and authenticity of that project (Stronza 2001).

The political anthropology of Northern Ireland since the peace process has focused on the effects of constitutional transformation on a variety of political actors. These authors investigate divisions and dissent within paramilitary groups as they toe their way into the legitimate political sphere (Farrington 2008, Lynch 2005, McIntyre 2008, Rolston 2006, Gallaher 2007), and examine whether "peace dividends" actually benefit the historically marginalized communities that sustained the greatest casualties during the Troubles (O'Hearn 2000). While some studies have addressed the expansion of the voluntary sector as evidence of a shift toward a more cooperative inter-agency form of governance (Morison 2001), very limited work has been published on the impacts of these political processes on civic space (Crowley 2008, Bryan 2009, Bryan

and McIntosh 2005, Bryan and Gillespie 2005, Stevenson, et al 2006, Rolston 2012, Keenan 2010, Rallings 2012).

Studies in symbolic anthropology have demonstrated by far the most comprehensive understanding of the relationship of political processes to cultural identity and social space in Northern Ireland (Buckley 2008, Buckley and Kenney 1995, Beiner 2007, Cashman 2008, Santino 2001, Rolston 2009, Bryan 2009, Bryan and McIntosh 2005, Crowley 2011, McDowell and Switzer 2011, Bryan and Gillespie 2005, McCormick and Jarman 2005, Rolston 1999, McCauley 1999, Fraser 2000). Naturally a key concern within this body of literature is how the social divisions in Northern Ireland are perpetuated through symbolic processes. According to Roe, et al (1999), Northern Ireland's "long history of conflict has led to the emergence and maintenance of Catholics and Protestants as distinct ethnic groups [who] selectively remember, construct, interpret, and celebrate their shared history…in distinct social or ethnic memories" (122). Alternatively, "Nationalist" or "Unionist," which refer to political identity, are used interchangeably with the religious ascriptions to describe the same duality. The reification of ethno-religious and political identity under these labels implies a "timeless permanence," which studies of these "communities of difference" must strive to resist (Jarman 1997:258). This "two tradition paradigm," as Nic Craith (2002) refers to it, obscures the cultural traits, practices and symbolic structures that Nationalist and Unionist communities share, and reinforces the political work of maintaining narratives of differences. Clearly, anthropologists of Northern Ireland have been careful to parse these narratives, examining how the same symbols are used both to construct and subvert structured views of the world (Buckley 1998), how visual genres, such as murals, change

over time, adjusting their symbolism to contemporary issues and politics (Rolston 1991, 1992, 1995, 1999a, McCormick and Jarman 2005, Vannais 2001), as well as how symbolic expression in parades invite both internal and external definitions of identity, which inevitably conflict (Bryan 1998, 2000). Nonetheless, the vast majority of literature tends to neglect the rare moments of creative collaboration or un-sided cultural products that appear outside the "two tradition paradigm," which have neither the familiarity nor clarity of long-established tropes. This may reflect the relative newness and rareness of "shared" forms of expression, since they do tend to be the results of peace-building projects and government interventions, or it may reflect a scholarly bias that views them as inauthentic.

My research design offers a simple corrective to these problems. Instead of defining a group of actors as my research subjects, I re-centered my inquiry on the parade itself; thus my interlocutors must include not only the actors who produce the parade, but also grant-makers, council officials, and—as much as possible—participants in and observers of the event. By including these individuals, my research incorporates local interpretations of their significance, and attempts to assess what influence they have in the emergence of a new Belfast identity. By exploring the policy and funding streams that legitimize and condition uses of public space, this approach is also able to trace meta-political processes to their direct effects on the ground. Finally, by choosing as my object of inquiry what is ostensibly a "third way parade," I am able to resist the problematic dualities of "Protestant/Catholic" and "Unionist/Nationalist" until my interlocutors identify themselves as such.

A Semiosis of Parades

Characterizing the parades as "place-making" activities within a dialogical process of re-making the city situates this study more in the periphery of symbolic anthropology, which (as shown above) deals with the meaning of symbols, and closer to the field of semiotic anthropology, which concerns itself with "the activity of signs" (Daniel 1996:73). Peircian semiotics, brought into anthropology through Morris (1970), Singer (1984, 1991), Sebeok (1991), Daniel (1984, 1986), Gell (1998) and others, emphasizes meaning as processual—oriented always toward the practical consequences (feeling, product, or effect) a sign has on an interpreting agency.[3] Applied to anthropology, a semiotic approach locates constructions of culture, identity, and self "within the process of communication, external and internal" (Singer 1985: 48). In Peirce's theory, the sign is triadic; it is "anything which is related to a second thing, its *Object*…in such a way as to bring a third thing, its *Interpretant,* into relation to the same object" (De Waal 2001: 70).

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[3] Though problematically, Singer and Morris place semiosis within a fixed "symbol system." Morris, on whom Singer's work depends, is accused of neglecting Peirce's emphasis on continuity, and presenting the interpretant not as a potential new sign, but as a passive "disposition to react in a certain way because of a sign" (Deledalle 2000: 117).
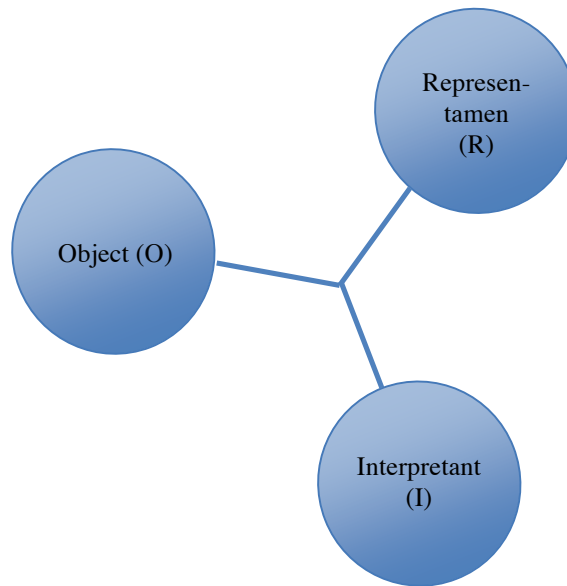
Figure 0.1: Diagram of a tripartite sign.

In the relation of the sign to the object—as, say, "period" relates to "."—we see Saussure's familiar dyadic construction (1986). Crucially however, Peirce adds a third element, an interpreting agency, which takes different forms. For instance, an interpretant could be the human mind, which is assumed in the Saussurian model, but it could very well also be a physiological response, such as shiver or an automatic reflex, which in turn requires more analysis before it can be converted into a logical conclusion: "I shivered because I am cold." The degree to which the interpretant requires further thought depends partly on the determining power of sign in relation to its object, or the clarity of representation (Liszka 1996: 23). If the interpetant is not absolutely and finally determined by the sign, if it requires further interpretive agency, semiosis continues; the interpretant in turn signifies the initial dyad to yet another set of interpretants. This model then opens a space of interpretation, polysemy, possibility, and launches the sign into perpetual motion. In Peirce's theory, "There is no exception to the law that every

thought-sign is translated or interpreted in a subsequent one, unless it be that all thought comes to an abrupt and final end in death" (Liszka 1996: 84). This model is thus a diachronic approach to semiosis (Mertz 2007), which preserves the uncertainty and possibility of dialogue as it transpires, making it especially useful for my purposes in which the "meaning" of the parades and "identity" of the city remain unfixed and under negotiation.

Semiosis also implies an extralinguistic approach to communication. In a Peircean semiotic, therefore, interpretants can be both human and nonhuman, and signs are not necessarily linguistic—as in a weathervane, which turns to signify the direction of the wind, or the traveler who, feeling a shiver, buttons up her coat. Peirce's model accommodates a material semiotic approach in which signification is not beholden to human intentionality or subjectivity. This allows researchers to trace semiotic activity not only between multiple forms of signification, but also within the wider institutional structures and material conditions of a given social field (Mertz 2007: 344). As a whole, all the interrelated human and nonhuman actors that relate to each other through semiotic activity can be grouped as a single actor network, who "define and shape one another" (Law 2009: 146). An actor network—or in Bennett's (2005) formulation, an "assemblage"—is a "cascade of becomings" in which agency, or the power to affect outcomes, appears loosened, destabilized, multidirectional, and less clearly intentional (2005: 457).

Applied to Belfast's municipal parades, we see a broad network of policies, funding streams, politicians, artists, and performers interacting for a variety of ends; out of these interactions a parade is produced, which stands for the "new Belfast" in relation

to this entire field of production (Deledalle 2000: 73). Attempting to understand the object of the "new Belfast" requires a careful unpacking of the network in order to elucidate the other components of this sign activity—for example, how individual actors relate to each other, in what directions power and money are distributed, and as much as possible, the chronology of interpretations. In Latour's (1987) concept of the "black box"—a network that produces consistent and expected results without our fully understanding how it functions—we see a semiotic which has been fixed in habit (Deledalle 2000: 75, Liszka 28), and in which a particular configuration of power relationships exerts control over the productive process (Law 2009: 146). Yet these relationships are also precarious, and become untied if the balance is disturbed, resulting in broad-reaching, unintended and chaotic consequences (Law 2009, Bennett 2005). This is precisely what happened in what coming chapters will refer to as the "funding turn," in which a reallocation of municipal resources resulted in a dramatic shift in the form and content of the 2011 Lord Mayor's Show.

Conceiving of parades as part of the semiosis of imagining the city supposes that "regeneration" is a diachronic process, preserving certain continuities over time, which Peirce describes as "the tendency of an idea to bring other ideas with it" (Liszka 1996: 84). Peirce's theory thus explains the parallels between the municipal and artist actor-networks and the parades they ultimately produce; these are a series of signs communicated between bureaucratic actors, artists, and residents of the city, trending toward a mutual understanding of a single object: the "new Belfast." It is a conversation, within which the parade is a single—if complex and multilayered—utterance. To the extent that a parade is the product of an artistic field of production, it is also a source of

social value and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1993). To the extent that it utilizes and manipulates conventions of genre, the non-sectarian parade also disrupts observers' expectations, causing them to think about what they've seen and thus engaging them in the semiotic process as well (Bakhtin 1968, 1981). And to the extent that over time these parades constitute an artistic *oeuvre* to which many artists and producers have contributed, they represent "an externalized and collectivized cognitive process" regarding the development of a particular Belfast aesthetic (Gell 1998: 222). In all these respects parades are uniquely transformative utterances. In particular, the parades produced by the BEAT Initiative, a carnival arts company that I spent a great deal of time observing, have had a profound impact on the practice of parading in Belfast, on local understandings of civic events, and most importantly, on people's perceptions of and behavior in public space. These dynamic effects are as representative, if not more representative, of the meaning of a "new Belfast" than whatever symbolic messages they convey.

The indexicality of the Parade to the city center is what, ultimately, defines them as "place-making" activities, which are vital to the production of "social space" (Levebfre 1991). They operate within the physical and cultural landscape engaging memory, architecture, politics of belonging and different uses of space to produce new perceptions of place[4] that have meaning and value for its inhabitants (Tuan 1977). Place-making in its various forms is necessary because, according to Tilley (1994) the "perception of the world and the constitution of that which is important or unimportant to people does not work in terms of a 'blank environmental slate' on which perception and

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[4] Tuan (1977) differentiates culturally meaningful "place" from generic, undifferentiated "space." Lefebvre's term, "social space," is basically synonymous with Tuan's "place." This text will use "place" and "social space" interchangeably.

cognition sets to work, but in terms of the historicity of lived experiences in that world" (1994: 34). Social space links present to past generations, giving an impression of continuity. As people manipulate and refine space over time, making it into their place, what they create in turn shapes and defines local identity and shared history for themselves and generations to come; "place grows out of experience and in turn it symbolizes that experience" to others (Richardson 1984: 65).

To bring the semiotic framework back to bear on this theory of space, what I perceive happening in Belfast is a semiotic process pertaining to the social space of the city center, and the "identity" of the city in general (see Figure 1.2 below). A network of policy documents and funding streams (R^1) convey a political agenda for the city's future (O^1) to the organizations that produce the parades (I^1). In turn, the parades they produce (R^2) convey a filtered version of that agenda, along with their own visions for the city (O^2) to participants and spectators (I^2), whose memories and reactions to the events (R^3) re-inscribe their perceptions of the city center (O^3) and prompt them to use the city center in new and different ways (I^3). All of these together form a broad scale conversation, in which a new understanding of the city's social space, a new Belfast identity (O^n), is evolving through the semiotic interactions of state and city policy, creative arts, and civic activity.

(R¹)

R¹: Urban renewal policy and parade funding

O¹: Municipal agenda for the city center

(O¹)

I¹: Arts organization contracted to produce parade

(I¹)

(R²)

R²: The Parade

O²: Artistic visions about the city

(O²)

Oⁿ: Evolving social space, "New Belfast" identity

I²: Parade spectators and participants

(I²)

(R³)

R³: Memories of and reactions to the parade

O³: Residents' perceptions of the city center

(O³)

(I³)

I³: Residents use the city center in new or different ways

Figure 1.2: Illustration of semiosis of "New Belfast" in process.

This diagram is somewhat too seamless a representation of the evolution of social space and civic identity. As I will demonstrate throughout this text, each individual link in this chain-like process—the "policy-sign," pertaining to urban renewal policy and funding, the "parade-sign," and the "space-sign," pertaining to residents' perceptions of the city center—is a site of contestation and negotiation. Place reflects no single unified vision or individual agency, composed as it is of multiple layers of meanings and historical associations. While a city's most powerful residents have greater capacity to build their will into the urban landscape, its residents also subvert control by personalizing and manipulating it (Low, Taplin, Scheld 2005). According to Lefebvre, patterns of urban design and zoning "facilitate the control of society, while at the same time being a means of production" by which new understandings of social space can be produced (1991: 349). But De Certeau adds, "Practices of space also correspond to manipulation of the basic elements of a constructed order…they are, like the tropes in rhetoric, deviations relative to a sort of 'literal meaning' defined by the urbanistic system" (1984: 100). His linguistic terminology is apt; as Bakhtin notes, discursive interactions are also means of production: "every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions" (1981: 282). From Peirce, of course, we see that conceptual systems are not merely linguistic but also composed of materials, actions, and emotions. On the day I described at the beginning of this chapter, the street performances filling the squares with laughter, the parades slowly forging a path of color and sound through the city streets, and the movements of pedestrians crossing barriers, taking

shortcuts, and mapping their own meanings and memories onto the city center, I observed

Belfast, through all its many voices, making and remaking itself.

A Semiotic Methodology

At the most basic level, the objects of this inquiry are Belfast's new civic parades.

My intent in this dissertation is to describe them, the conditions of their production, and

the effects they in turn produce. As I have argued, the policy, parades, and spatial

practices together constitute a broad-scale conversation, and as such, my methodology is

loosely modeled after conversation analysis, in which the goal is "to describe the

intertwined construction of practices, actions, activities, and the overall structure of

interactions" (Strivers and Sidnell 2013: 2). Given that my 'conversation' is not an

interaction among individuals but among multiple objects, practices and discursive

communities, however, I am committed also to a material semiotic approach in which

human agency is decentered, and particular human actors appear incidental to the

processes under investigation. This shifts my approach into a more diachronic analysis,

rather than focusing on an isolated episode (Clemente 2013: 699). Still, like any

conversation, my analysis can only address one snippet of a discursive event that began

before I arrived in Belfast, and continued after I left. My approach thus confines me only

to sketching the outline of a semiotic process, and of the actor networks that form the

discursive community, rather than digging deeply into any given set of relations,

interactions or symbols. From this wide-angle view, however, I am able to capture an

impression of what I perceive as the object of regeneration in general, and these parades

in particular: to imagine a new Belfast community, and perhaps, in fleeting moments of

celebration, to realize it.

Thus, the structure of this dissertation follows, to some extent, the semiotic chain diagrammed above. Splitting the semiosis of a "new Belfast" ideal into three steps of signification—the "policy-sign," the "parade-sign" and the "space-sign." Each "sign" contains its own actor network, and internal processes of semiosis. Within each sign the internal relations of different actors, their various motivations and intentions, articulations of power and influence, and discursive ideologies must be examined along side the interconnections between signs and the context that structures their transactions. This methodology exposes the evolution of shared meanings that are "highly contingent and revisable", which are both context-shaped and context-shaping (Goodwin 1990: 286-289). Thus an analysis of the semiosis of parades, framed within the broader project of post-conflict regeneration, captures and describes a moment in the process of social change. At the end of my analysis, Belfast is different than when it began, if only incrementally, because over the sequence of utterances that I examine, each parade has added to the background knowledge of parading, to meanings of spatial practices, and to the shared imagining of a ideal Belfast.

The "policy-sign," as discussed in Chapter Four, is composed of both national and municipal legislation and policy relating to a national agenda for development following the 1998 Belfast Agreement. The sign-activity within this policy network is the continual translation of policy into actionable, measurable, reportable tasks, as well as the allocation of funding as way to ensure and regulate outcomes. Even limiting my discussion to policy that is in some way concerned with performance in public space, this chapter describes a series of government offices and statutory agencies in Belfast. My method of data collection with respect to the "policy-sign" consisted of first identifying

the sources of funding that finance parades such as the St. Patrick's Day Carnival and the Lord Mayor's Show. With this list of funders, mostly departments within the Belfast City Council and agencies of the Northern Irish government, I then sought interviews with individuals in each office who could articulate the requirements of that funding and their office's interest in civic parades; I also collected policy documents outlining their departmental agendas organizational remits. These interviews snowballed into a broad assemblage of government actors and policy documents, giving an expansive (though certainly not exhaustive) picture of the scope of post-conflict redevelopment and the intended role of civic events as a tool of social regeneration.

The "parade-sign" centers on two events of interest: the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, which occurred in March 2011, and the Lord Mayor's Day Show, which occurred in June that year. When I entered the field in September 2010, I expected both these events to be produced by the BEAT Initiative, a carnival arts organization. I began ethnographic research with the BEAT, as a participant observer in their workshop in January of 2011, in order to observe the work of organizing and producing a carnival-style parade. I interviewed staff and artists, attended participant training workshops and occasionally helped in the workshop. On St. Patrick's Day in March, I also walked along in the parade, following as a steward and interviewing participants and spectators along the way. Just a few days before that event, however, an unexpected turn of events resulted in the allocation of funding for the Lord Mayor's Show to another arts organization, ArtsEkta. As the BEAT reeled from the decision, I also quickly changed my plans, and increased my focus on ArtsEkta, following its process of production as I had with the BEAT—though I had much less access to the group's staff and artists. On June

18, 2011, I walked along in the Lord Mayor's Show as well, this time with a group of participants attending from the Northern Ireland Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

The "parade-sign" constitutes three chapters of the dissertation that follows. In Chapter Five, I discuss the BEAT Initiative, describing their work of translating funding and grant requirements into a physical parade. This chapter also discusses the team's intentions in doing so, and the visions they believe they are bringing to the broader process of regeneration. Chapters Six and Seven discuss the St. Patrick's Day Parade and the Lord Mayor's Show, respectively, as well as the apparent symbolic content of each. More than just a comparison of the two events and the messages they convey, these two chapters demonstrate changes to the semiosis of parade-making before and after what I refer to as "the funding turn."

Finally, Chapter Eight settles on the parade-viewing public, and the effects these parades seem to have on perceptions of public space and the broader understanding of Belfast's civic identity; the "space-sign". Although again, the conditions of this research prevent a comprehensive look at spatial practices in Belfast City Center, I conducted a small street-intercept survey, which provides a glimpse into how users of Belfast's public space talk about parades and about the city's civic life. Although my sample was not representative of Belfast's population by any stretch of the imagination, it did reveal a number of patterns that linked the regeneration agendas of the "policy-sign" to the spatial practices of the "space-sign" through the mediation of the "parade-sign." Or to place these three elements in a Peircian triad, the parades and similar civic events represent the object of regeneration policy—a "new Belfast"—to users of public space.

The question that remains, then, is whether imagining a unified community through the symbolism of parades and other civic events can actually produce that "deep, horizontal comradeship" that Anderson describes among the people of Belfast (2006: 7). Perhaps it can, eventually, but for now, as one of my interlocutors noted, "We're only really at the start of the process." Let us then start at the beginning as well; in the next chapter, I introduce Northern Ireland's historical conflicts, and the place Belfast currently occupies in the transition to peace.

Chapter Two: Easter Promises

April 10th, 1998, was Good Friday. In Belfast on that day, after more than six months of talks, multi-party negotiations between representatives of the governments in London and Dublin and various political parties in Belfast came to an end. The concluding agreement, known popularly as "The Belfast Agreement" and "The Good Friday Agreement," was not a binding treaty, but a good-faith pledge among the participants to commit to the aims of "partnership, equality and mutual respect as the basis of relationships within Northern Ireland, between North and South, and between these Islands" (1998 1.3). [5] Following in short order: The Agreement was popularly endorsed in simultaneous referenda in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland on May 22nd, 1998; the constitution of the Republic of Ireland was amended to remove sovereignty claims over the North; and the UK Parliament wrote the provisions for a new government in Northern Ireland into law, via the Northern Ireland Act of 1998.

In Christian liturgy, Good Friday is a day of solemn reflection and penitence, when Christians consider, in a spirit of contrition, the events that led to the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ. Also on Good Friday, Jesus is mourned in the knowledge of His resurrection on Easter Sunday, the fulfillment of a prophecy that the sins and the

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[5] Following Morgan (2000), I will use the name "The Belfast Agreement" throughout.

failings of the past would be forgiven. After four years of false starts, failed ceasefires

and broken-down talks, which themselves followed decades of conflict, the Belfast

Agreement surely echoed the tone of that day of observance and its hopes for a more

positive future. The opening of the document reads,

> The tragedies of the past have left a deep and profoundly regrettable
> legacy of suffering. We must never forget those who have died or been
> injured, and their families. But we can best honour them through a fresh
> start, in which we firmly dedicate ourselves to the achievement of
> reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust, and to the protection and
> vindication of the human rights of all. (The Belfast Agreement, Section
> 1.2)

The Agreement voices a spirit of forgiveness and rebirth, calling for the establishment of

a new government in Northern Ireland, the rapid release of paramilitary prisoners,

associated with the Paramilitaries' commitment to ceasefire and rapid decommissioning,

the removal of extra security installations and emergency powers in Northern Ireland, and

the review and reform of the North's policing and justice structures. The participants in

these negotiations believed that agreeing to these terms was "a truly historic opportunity

for a new beginning" (The Belfast Agreement, Section 1.1). This chapter explores

Northern Ireland's history through the central interventions of the Agreement, focusing

on the historical trends to which the framers seem to have responded. It also attempts to

follow the effects of the agreement through to their contemporary implications for urban

regeneration policy in Belfast. Though the Good Friday Agreement is widely considered

to have been successful, whether Northern Ireland can yet celebrate its Easter is still

uncertain.

The Seeds of Self-Determination

The first issue addressed in the Agreement is self-determination for the people of Northern Ireland and commitment on the part of both UK and Irish governments to support and facilitate "whatever choice is freely exercised by a majority of the people," while also acknowledging "the diversity of their identities and traditions" and "the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both" (The Belfast Agreement Section 2.1.v-vi). This promise addresses the centuries-old relationship entwining the populations and politics of Ireland and Britain; Ireland was England's first, nearest, and longest-held colony. At the crux of Anglo-Irish relations, and many of the conflicts that have played out on Irish soil, is an ambivalence between close neighbors whose inhabitants are intimately related across both islands, who have at times been economic partners, fought shared enemies, and, at other times, have battled each other for local dominance.

From the time that Normans first arrived in the 12th Century CE to unseat the powerful Celtic chieftains, English politics have had a stake in Ireland. England's control was refined throughout the centuries until the Tudor dynasty of the 16th Century began to govern Ireland through a technocratic elite, much as it did its colonies in North America, and displaced the Norman aristocracy in the process (Hayes-McCoy 2001: 139). This period in Ireland's history established a pattern by which the island's politics operated on two levels; while a culturally and linguistically distinct elite maintained ties of fealty to the Crown of England, the tribal allegiances and social institutions of the native Gaelic

population resisted Dublin's influence, shaping politics beyond the Pale.[6] The Protestant

Reformation, which also occurred during the Tudor reign, added a religious element to

this mix. After the disestablishment of the Catholic Church in 1534, and the Plantation[7]

of mostly Protestant settlers to subdue the rebellious north, it was a distinct ethno-

religious enclave that displaced the political elite as well as landowners and peasants, and

enjoyed special privileges and protections denied to the native population with which it

intermingled (Moody and Martin 2001). These "planters" were the progenitors of a

highly concentrated Protestant population in the North of Ireland who would maintain

strong political allegiances with the authority of the crown (Elliot 2001:121).

　　　As the political repercussions of the Reformation and Counterreformation

churned in Europe and the Islands of Britain, securing Ireland became an issue of critical

importance in English domestic policy (Bew 2007: 556). Resentment of the Plantation

and English rule boiled over into rebellion[8], and civil conflicts related to the unification

of Ireland, England and Scotland under one monarch, and to the established state religion

all played out within Ireland throughout the 17th Century. It was not until after the

Glorious Revolution in 1688, which restored a constitutional monarchy under William

and Mary, that Ireland's Protestant minority achieved a relative level of security and

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[6] Meaning literally an individual stake in a perimeter fence, the phrase figuratively refers to the boundary between the counties of Louth, Meath, Dublin and Kildare, which were under English control, and the lands and peoples outside its scope.

[7] The Plantation was not an explicitly religious project, rather a political technique for subduing the native population. Henry VIII and his successors granted tracts of confiscated land in politically unstable regions to loyal English subjects, who were tasked with building colonies, sufficiently numerous, powerful, and loyal, to keep the peace. (Clarke 2001: 153). The plantation of Ulster began in earnest in 1609 under James I, and did include many Catholics among the settlers from lowland Scotland and England (Elliot 2001: 87).

[8] In particular, the rebellion of 1641 is remembered as a brutal uprising of Ulster Catholics against the plantation settlers that devolved into a vengeful, massacring mob, though it may not have been as extreme as popular memory suggests (Elliot 2001: 101). Ironically, it was the 1798 rebellion by the multi-faith United Irishmen, in the spirit of the French Revolution, that effected the most significant shift toward sectarianism in popular ideology (Bew 2007: 49).

stability. The period of the Protestant Ascendancy, lasting roughly a century, was characterized by increasingly strict "Penal Laws" that disproportionately disenfranchised Catholics and Protestant dissenters (Presbyterians and other non-Anglicans) (Finnegan and McCarron 2000). Nonetheless, rebellions and uprisings were never long in coming, as Ireland's politics—everywhere but in the north—leaned increasingly in favor of home rule and autonomy from Britain. In an attempt to resolve these political and religious differences, the 1801 Act of Union forever transformed Ireland and England's relationship by joining the two islands under one crown. Its supporters, arguing that the two countries were already economically "integrated and interdependent," believed that a political union would reconcile Catholic and Protestant interests and "lead to the creation of 'one people'" (Bew 2007: 62-63). Belfast flourished under the Union, emerging by the end of the 19th Century as an industrial giant, but its success was an exception in Ireland, serving only to destabilize the population and distribution of wealth in surrounding areas, and never quite sharing in the prosperity of England (Bew 2007: 565-566).

Ironically, it was a natural disaster, the Great Famine, which permanently tipped popular opinion against English rule and forever etched a memory of English negligence and incompetence on the Irish consciousness. In 1845 a blight affected the Irish potato crop, which was the staple food of more than two-thirds of the population (Green 2001: 220). At that time the population of Ireland was over 8 million, and despite a flourishing economy for cash crops such as corn and wheat, most of the rural poor were tenant farmers, whose subsistence needs were met exclusively by the potato. When that failed, the impoverished population faced both starvation and tremendous unemployment. The initial response by the English government at the time was swift and effective; imported

corn stabilized food prices, and a relief commission subsidized by government grants and loans provided employment so that people could purchase food. Yet as the demand for direct relief grew ever more urgent, the English attitude toward government involvement became more conservative. The blight returned again in 1846 and 1848, but the English government would not repeat its interventions, forcing Irish institutions exclusively to bear the costs, and putting further tax burdens on landed rate-payers and their tenants. Ultimately the conservative government did extend direct food relief in 1847, but the damage had already been done. Starvation, epidemics, and emigration would account for a population loss of more than two million people, and the experience would convince many more that the only solution to Ireland's problems—from tenants rights to food prices to unemployment—was Irish Home Rule (Bew 2007: 177).

Support for Home Rule fueled attempts to achieve autonomy through both parliamentary and violent means, culminating, in the years following the 1916 Easter Rising, in a quickly quashed rebellion that nonetheless succeeded in gaining the sympathy and support for the nationalist republican party, Sinn Féin. Once in power, Sinn Féin declared Ireland an independent republic, established a para-government and proceeded to undermine British authority through both violent and nonviolent means. This progressed to a guerrilla war with both Irish Police and British Special Forces, the "Black and Tans," and concluded with a 1921 Treaty that granted "Dominion" status (autonomy over all internal affairs) to two separate Irish governments, one in Belfast and

one in Dublin[9] (Bew 2007: 424). A new border was formed between Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State, which would later become the Republic of Ireland.

Sectarianism and Consociationalism

It is not incorrect to characterize Ireland's contemporary conflicts as a mostly continuous struggle for self-determination, though in keeping with the country's diversity, this campaign has taken many forms and many directions. The parliamentary Home Rule movement in Dublin was countered by the signing of the Ulster Covenant,[10] a declaration of conditional loyalty to the British Union, in Belfast. Irish nationalism manifested in a literary revival as well as violent republicanism. Likewise, the modern Republican campaign in Northern Ireland claimed to perpetuate the cause of a free, united Ireland, decades after the Irish war of independence had concluded with its compromised, divided autonomy. Also Loyalist paramilitaries have frequently claimed to fight for the cause of an Ulster Nationalism (Rolston 2006). In the full light of Ireland's political history, therefore, it is impossible to reduce the modern Troubles, or indeed any Irish war, to a simple antagonism of the colonized against the colonizer, the masses against the elite, or one religion against another. These polemical frameworks obscure the fact that both Irish Nationalism and British Unionism are indigenous to Ireland, and that for centuries home-

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[9] Two governments were established because Ulster Unionists objected to Dublin rule, which they expected to be sectarian and partisan (Finnegan and McCarron 2000: 283). The six northern counties with Protestant majorities opted out of Treaty, which meant establishing a separate state with a lesser degree of autonomy than the Irish Free State. Partition occurred over several years, with Northern Ireland establishing a government in Belfast in 1921, while the South was still resolving its conflict with Britain. De-facto autonomy had devolved to Dublin by 1922, but a civil war over the terms of the treaty and specifics of independence continued until 1923 (Lynch 2001).

[10] Undersigned by over 400,000 people, the 1912 Ulster Covenant was a petition of protest against the Irish Home Rule and declaration of loyalty to the English crown. Even so, it can be considered an aggressive act of self-determination, demanding that unless Ulster's inhabitants kept their "cherished position of equal citizenship," they would "refuse to accept [the] authority" of any local parliament forced upon them (Ulster Covenant 1912; Stevens 1986; Bew 2007: 425; Lyons 1979).

rule and republican movements crossed over ethnic, class, and religious boundaries (English 2006: 453; Lyons 1979).

Nonetheless, sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland had so calcified between the Partition and The Belfast Agreement, that much of the population, even in the major cities, lived, worked and were educated in religiously segregated communities. It was necessary to write a power-sharing plan similar to the consociationalist governments of Belgium or the Netherlands into the structure Northern Ireland's Assembly, to accommodate both nationalist and unionist political identities (Dartnell 2000: 74). Dartnell (2000) attributes this resolution, and the Agreement's additional guarantees for the protection of linguistic diversity (6.3), employment equality and anti-discrimination legislation (6.2.iii), and a "fair and impartial" police service "free from partisan political control" (9.2) to the growing influence of the European Union in the politics of the British Isles. The Agreement's demand that the devolved Northern Irish government should be capable of "operating where appropriate on a cross-community basis" (Section 3.4) reflects not only the desire to resolve the Troubles, but a European pressure for its member states to coexist as a "family of nations" and to "systematize the saccharine concept of 'unity in diversity' (Borneman and Fowler 1997). From the Partition to the Belfast Agreement, politics in the North reflected both the entrenched aporia of mutually antagonistic identity groups, and the EU's increasing financial leverage and governmental power in both Ireland and the UK.

In the wake of the first World War, the reorganization of Europe around nationalist ideas was equally prevalent in Ireland where disagreement over the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty, which created the Free State of Ireland but allowed unionist counties

to 'opt-out', fueled a civil war in the South from 1921 to 1923. Meanwhile, the six

northern counties which would become Northern Ireland began building a local

government to protect their interests, in particular the flourishing shipping and

manufacturing industries in Belfast, free trade within Britain, and the security of the new

Irish border. Importantly, these economic concerns coincided with the interests of the

unionist Protestant population, whose ascendancy in the North had never completely

subsided. During the Home Rule crisis (which the Protestant population perceived as a

serious threat to their livelihoods and safety), long-standing sectarian animosity boiled

into frequent mob violence. In the War of Independence, the Irish Republican Army

under Michael Collins had targeted the Royal Constabulary and other forces of British

Authority. Even as he negotiated the Treaty, Collins himself directed the IRA in a secret

campaign to destabilize the northern economy and intimidate those in favor of partition

(Bew 2007: 427). The builders of the Northern government thus had every incentive to

consolidate power within a Protestant elite. Unionists were aided in this effort by

republicans themselves, who, refusing to recognize the legitimacy of the new Northern

Irish state, chose to abstain from government, and refused to work in the civil service or

law enforcement (McCracken 2001: 264).

> Herein lay the dilemma which has vitiated political life in the North ever
> since. The nationalist attitude enabled the unionists to appropriate loyalty
> and good citizenship and to use the national flag as a party emblem. Since
> the nationalists drew their support exclusively from the Catholic part of
> the population, it led to the Protestant unionists, or at least the rank and
> file of them, to identify Catholicism with hostility to the state.
> (McCracken 2001: 265-266).

Unionist leaders iterated this sentiment frequently and publicly deep into the 1960s

(Elliot 2001: 391, 394; McCracken 2001:285). It justified gerrymandering that would

ensure a protestant majority in most constituencies, and it facilitated discriminatory

employment practices in many of Northern Ireland's key industrial sectors (Bew: 459;

Elliot 2001: 391). According to McCracken, "a social structure emerged that was based

on the Catholics being members of an underclass, and Protestants being a dominant class"

(2001:284). This statement reflects both a generalized reality of life in Northern Ireland

after Partition, as well as the reification of prejudice and antagonism into simple religious

tropes, which people came to believe. Moreover, separate religious education and the

discriminatory status quo reinforced additional differences distinguishing each

community's view of history, tradition, politics and national identity (285). Thus, despite

the extant religious and ethnic diversity in Northern Ireland, the social forces at work

conspired to cleave the population into two moiety-like communities, each revolving

around apparently opposite identities: Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist (PUL) and Catholic –

Nationalist-Republican (CNR).[11]

Post-partition Ulster balanced on an inherently unstable arrangement of power,

and it has even been called totalitarian by certain critics (Bew 2007: 457). Resistance

took the form of protests, sectarian riots, and violent bombing campaigns by the

remainders of the IRA's northern volunteers, who had lost their legitimacy due to the

partition, but not their *raison d'être*. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) established a

special branch of reserves, the "B-Specials," to crack down on the rebels. These armed,

militant enforcers often operated under their own command to pursue sectarian reprisals,

leading them, and other branches of the police force, to be deeply distrusted by the CNR

community (Bew 2007: 402, 427).

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[11] These acronyms are used frequently in Northern Irish policy documents and research reports. I tend to
use them as shorthand when the groups in question cannot be further refined.

Protests and Paramilitaries

In the decade preceding the modern conflict, the IRA's continued violent resistance lost popular support, while a Catholic rights movement gained momentum. Young activists modeled their protests after the American civil right movement, but eliminated the nationalist narrative, and didn't challenge the legitimacy of the state. Pressure from London and Dublin supported reform, and in this context, leaders in the Unionist government began drafting anti-discrimination legislation in 1969. Nonetheless, the loyalist right was suspicious, believing the civil rights movement to be an IRA plot, and reform measures to be a sell-out (Whyte 2001: 290-291). Extremists frequently disrupted protests, but a watershed occurred in the winter of 1968-69, when a quick succession of demonstrations turned violent, including a confrontation in Burntollet, where both loyalists *and* the police attacked a peaceful march (Whyte 2001: 290, Finnegan and McCarron 2000: 297). Rather than leading to greater civil equality, the events of '68-69 instead "helped unearth layers of ethno-nationalist animosity and hatred that had remained at least partly buried over the previous decades" (Bew 2007: 493). The IRA soon did renew their involvement; Loyalist extremists organized into their own paramilitary groups to retaliate; and the urban areas of Belfast and Derry-Londonderry exploded with riots and sectarian turf wars. Conditions in the North rapidly deteriorated.

It was the inability of the Northern Irish government to maintain order that amplified the crisis of the late '60s into the protracted conflict referred to as the "Troubles." Catholics, distrusting the police, barricaded their neighborhoods from all representatives of the state, and relied on the IRA and their political branch, Sinn Féin, as a de facto para-government. In August 1969, British troops were called in under

"Operation Banner" to restore order to the streets, (Whyte 2001: 290), and Bernadette Devlin, a Catholic MP representing Northern Ireland in Westminster, called for the radical measure of direct rule from London to override the Northern Irish government in Belfast (Bew 2007: 494). Bew suggests that the failure to follow through immediately with direct rule, "was the greatest mistake of British policy during the Troubles" (496), because it allowed the British Army, which had initially been welcomed as a peacekeeping force, to become the apparent "tool of the 'Orange' Stormont[12] ascendancy regime" (Bew 496). The Army settled in for almost forty years, establishing fully functional military bases, occupying residential spaces on the Falls Road in Belfast, and constructing walls, gates and checkpoints throughout the city (Barnes 2007, Brown 2002). Meanwhile, Loyalist paramilitaries responded to recommendations to desegregate and replace the RUC with violent and often erratic backlash. As the violence reverberated into Dublin and London through the 1970s, both the Irish and British governments chose to distance themselves from what they viewed as an intractable provincial problem (Bew 2007: 521). The result was a Northern Ireland that was even more polarized, ghettoized, and militarized than ever before, with no local authority capable of implementing and enforcing political solutions, if there were any to be had.

During the same decade the UK and Ireland both applied to join the nascent European Communities, three extra-governmental institutions meant to organize continental European economic, energy and material resource policies under the same rules and goals, which predicated the European Union. The UK was twice vetoed by the French vote in 1963 and 1967 (Davis 1997). The added scrutiny during this time of

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[12] The name of the country estate near Belfast that is the seat of the Northern Irish Assembly.

internal conflict must have proven embarrassing, even if French President de Gaulle's

stated reasons for the veto were irreconcilable economic and foreign policy interests

(Davis 1997: 454). In practice both the British and Irish governments muted their

responses to the early years of the conflict, effectively ignoring it as they focused on

broader European priorities (Fanning 2001: 69).

But the crisis escalated and could not be ignored; gun fights, riots, bombings and

violent skirmishes were frequent occurrences, and given the clandestine nature of the

paramilitary organizations, it was not always clear whether the casualties were

combatants in the conflict. In 1972, however, in the "Bloody Sunday" tragedy of January

30, the British army fired on demonstrators and killed 13 unarmed men, none of whom

where known to be IRA members (Bew 2007: 507). Direct rule followed almost

immediately, with the Northern Ireland Temporary Provisions act of 1972. The law

suspended the Stormont government indefinitely, but also reinstated the 1922 Special

Powers Act a relic of the post-partition era, which gave the civil authorities of Northern

Ireland additional powers to arrest, detain, sentence and confiscate the property of anyone

suspected of committing or conspiring to commit crimes against the state (Civil

Authorities Special Powers Act Northern Ireland 1922). While direct rule gave the British

authorities the ability to reform Stormont from the top down, it also provided Nationalists

with a stronger position from which to promote their 'ancient' cause: independence from

the occupying forces of a foreign power. In 1973, however, when both Ireland and the

UK finally gained admittance to the European Communities, the Troubles also became

Europe's problem to solve. As the federated Europe expanded its remit, and in 1993

became the European Union, the influence of European politics on the peace process

notably increased.

Negotiating a Settlement

       The power vacuum that characterized Northern Irish politics during the Troubles

meant that no negotiated peace could successfully ignore the influence of the paramilitary

groups, which kept order within the respective communities and commanded popular

votes. Nonetheless, the conservative government in Westminster (led first by Edward

Heath and then by Margaret Thatcher between 1970 and 1990), branded all paramilitary

combatants as criminals, and refused to negotiate with them (Bew 2007: 528). This tactic

only further incensed the IRA, whose cause was ideological. In 1981, IRA members in

the Maze Prison organized a hunger strike in order to be recognized with political

status.[13] Ten men died before the strike was called off, but not before several ran for Sinn

Féin in various 1981 elections, including Bobby Sands, who won a seat in the British

House of Commons while on the protest. The strike enhanced Sinn Féin's credibility and

political base, despite its clear connection to the IRA. That Nationalist interests had

leverage in the political proceedings was already apparent in the 1974 Sunningdale

agreement, which was a short-lived experiment in power sharing. Hardline Unionists,

however, viewed the move as sympathetic to the cause of a united Ireland, and rejected

the settlement as a betrayal against their loyalty (Crimmins and McGarry 1986). After

only five months, the Ulster Worker's Council organized a general strike, effectively

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[13] Thatcher had removed special category status for convicted paramilitary prisoners in 1976 (Bew 2007:528)

shutting down the government and reverting again to direct rule (Gillespie 2007).

Thatcher's refusal to negotiate, the paramilitaries' influence over voters, and an

intractable "Ulster says no" attitude among many Unionists meant this pattern would be

repeated many times over in the following decades.

Momentum toward a constitutional resolution advanced with both the Anglo-Irish

Agreement (1985) and the Downing Street Declaration (1993), both of which

acknowledged Nationalists' desire for a United Ireland (Richard English 2006: 390).

These agreements dealt with the "Irish dimension" by recognizing the Republic of Ireland

as a stakeholder in the conflict as well, and requiring the establishment of cross-capital

councils to correct the asymmetrical power balances between Dublin, Belfast, and

London (Williams and Jesse 2001). This condition predicated an amendment to Ireland's

constitution, following The Belfast Agreement, that abdicated the Republic's territorial

claim over the North of Ireland. These predecessors to the 1998 agreement required

mutual consent from both Dublin and London, and promised "full respect for the rights

and identities of both traditions in Ireland" through inclusive negotiations (Downing

Street Declaration 1993). This appeared favorable to both mainstream party members and

the more radical elements of the conflict because it promised entry into the peace talks

for any paramilitary that abandoned violence. "Mainstream unionists now conceded

ground on power-sharing and the Irish dimension, while constitutional nationalists aimed

for joint authority rather than a united Ireland" (Bew 2007: 540). Sinn Féin embraced the

Downing Street Agreement, initiating the 1994 ceasefires, and with powerful outside

actors such as the US backing the multi-party talks,[14] the road seemed paved for a

peaceful resolution.

Among the major effects of involving the paramilitaries in the 1998 negotiations

was the release of all qualifying prisoners, convicted according to the special powers act,

on the condition that the organizations with which they were affiliated commit to a

"complete and unequivocal ceasefire" (The Belfast Agreement 10.2). The parties also

agreed to the decommissioning of the armed paramilitaries, to be overseen by an

independent international commission (7.3). Importantly, acknowledging the legitimacy

of the paramilitaries in the Agreement both validated the opposing political identities, and

committed them to a negotiated peace. Once the Agreement had been 'ratified' by

popular support, it was apparent that the public would no longer tolerate violent

resistance to the peace process in the name of a loyalist or nationalist ideology. In August

1998, a dissident splinter group of the IRA planted a car bomb in Omagh, killing 29

people including children and tourists. Public outcry was so severe that the dissidents

later apologized (BBC 1998). And in 2011, when a dissident car bomb killed a young

Catholic police officer, Ronan Kerr, thousands of people turned out in Belfast City

Center to hold a moment of silence for him.

In tandem with these local shifts, the European Union was also changing shape.

Borneman and Fowler defined the concurrent developments by which the EU served to

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[14] During a 1995 Speech in Belfast, President Bill Clinton promised the US's support for a negotiated settlement, and US Senator George Mitchell led an assessment on decommissioning, and set the tone and conditions of the multi-party talks. The parties included several Northern Irish political parties as well as representatives from paramilitary groups: Sinn Féin, the political arm of the IRA; the Ulster Democratic Party (UDP), affiliated with the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) a.k.a. the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF); and the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), which was the political branch of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

"solidify and subsidize processes of discrete nation making and to enforce pan-European standards" as a process of "Europeanization" (1997:489). This process included both the invention and promotion of a transnational European identity, but also the increase of the EU's organizational and administrative power throughout its member states. As Dartnell has noted, "In this highly complex and multi-layered system of governance, some previously-held national powers have been transferred up to EU institutions while others have transferred been down to sub-national players (regional and local governments)" (2000: 75). The process of Europeanization, however, "assert[s] the reality of Europe as a *cultural* entity," so that while its growing influence plays out in economic and political spheres, it also exerts pressure to conform to a particularly European construction of "diversity" (Varenne 1993: 226, see also Varenne 1998). Finally, despite the apparent absence of European figures around the negotiating table, the EU exerted a very real influence in the form of financial incentives for peace:

> In direct response to the IRA ceasefire of August 1994 the EU
> Commission set up a Special Support Programme for Peace and
> Reconciliation at the request of its then president, Jacques Delors.
> Throughout the period of ceasefire, its later breakdown in February 1996,
> and the protracted negotiations and talks that ended with the Agreement, a
> five-year disbursement of almost £400 million targeted directly at cross-
> community cooperative projects has provided a powerful incentive to
> create the material conditions for peace. Deliberately calculated by the
> Commission to bypass government and party channels, the project has so
> far involved an estimated quarter of a million people in cooperative tasks.
> (McSweeny 1998: 99)

Following suit, the British government announced a £315 million program for economic development only one week before the referendum on the Belfast Agreement was to take place (McSweeny 1998:99). These "peace dividends" have profoundly affected the form and substance of peace-building and "cross-community" work in Northern Ireland and its

border region by creating a direct transactional relationship between European bureaucratic structures, and local councils and non-profit organizations. Through these direct lines, the EU reproduces its pan-European identity in the North by using grant applications and the promise of "peace dividends" to enforce "the saccharin concept of 'unity in diversity'" (Borneman and Fowler 1997: 495).

The Post-Agreement Conflicts

Events like the murder of Ronan Kerr suggest that the peace process, like the conflict, proceeds in fits and starts, with one slowly displacing the other over a period of decades, rather than miraculously reanimating on Easter Sunday. The paramilitary ceasefires officially began in 1994, but decommissioning was delayed on all sides, and only completed to the Independent Commission's satisfaction in 2010 (BBC 2009, BBC 2010). Paramilitary groups, having been central to the peace process in the 1990s, suddenly lost their *raison d'être* in the new century. Fissiparous loyalist paramilitaries degenerated into internal turmoil and turf wars (Rolston 2006, Gallaher 2007), while the IRA had difficulty giving up its lucrative criminal "fundraising" activities (Bew 2007: 580).

It was during this period that the Drumcree Orange Parades became flashpoints of violence. Orange Parade routes are almost always disputed by residents of Catholic neighborhoods, who object to the triumphalism of the celebration,[15] and the likelihood that the marching bands count paramilitaries among their members. However, as Bryan (2000) has argued, while the Drumcree conflict ostensibly was about the parade route, it

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[15] As noted in the introduction, the Orange parades celebrate the victory of King William of Orange over King James II, and the supplanting of the last Catholic royal dynasty in England with a Protestant one.

also reflected the uncertainty of the place of Loyalism, and the nature of Unionist identity in the post-agreement era.

During this time, the population of Northern Ireland also harbored deep-seated fears of their neighbors. Residents of urban areas, Belfast and Derry/Londonderry in particular, continue to live in voluntary segregation, and "peace lines," metal and concrete separation walls, continue to be erected at interfaces between Protestant and Catholic areas.[16] In a tragic example of how extreme the mutual sectarian segregation had become in Belfast, between 2001 and 2002, the young students of Holy Cross Catholic Girl's School were attacked as they walked to school through a Protestant neighborhood, because, the aggressors claimed, the parents who escorted them were probably IRA members.

Their uncertainty was not unfounded, given that, even after the Agreement, power-sharing governments persistently failed due to hard-line Unionists' refusal to work with Sinn Féin. In 2006 the St. Andrews Agreement finally remedied this obstacle, when Sinn Féin agreed to Unionist conditions to shed its paramilitary affiliations and embrace the newly formed Police Service of Northern Ireland, with its affirmative action employment quotas and nonpartisan oversight (Bew 2007: 581). In 2007, after a series of false starts and returns to direct rule, administrative authority was once again devolved from London to Belfast with a power sharing arrangement led by Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness. That same year the British Army withdrew its last troops from Northern

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[16] The first Peace Line was built as a temporary structure in 1969 after the predominantly Catholic Bombay Street, on the interface between the Catholic Falls Road and Protestant Shankill road, was burnt out by a Loyalist mob; today over 40 sections of metal and concrete walls, some over 20 feet high, serve to buffer neighboring Protestant and Catholic communities.

Ireland, marking the end of "Operation Banner," Britain's longest continuous military operation (Barnes 2007).

Even as the political peace progresses, the "Irish problem" hasn't been solved so much as the historical circumstances have changed. Both British and Irish governments have been more focused on European integration and the economic highs and lows of the first decade of the 21st Century, than the question of Irish unification, and despite the nominal nod to the nationalist wish for a United Ireland, the issue has become largely irrelevant. Meanwhile, the 2004 European expansion has dramatically changed Northern Ireland's population demographics; Ireland and the UK are the only two European Economic Area (EEA) states to allow nationals from the newly-joined Eastern block states to work and reside there, with certain restrictions (Bell, Jarman, Lefebvre 2004). Both the North and the Republic of Ireland have received unprecedented economic investment from both businesses and Peace funding, which includes EU, British and American sources, as the concurrent influx of migrant workers from Eastern Europe seems to highlight problems of xenophobia and racism, revealing the subcutaneous problems of sectarianism, social isolation and chronic economic deprivation (Bell, Jarman, Lefebvre: 6-7).

Re-Imagining and Re-Building

In 1998 the framers of The Belfast Agreement looked forward from an uncertain time toward a future they knew they would have to build together on the aporia of Northern Ireland's history. As a condition of the 1998 agreement, each member of government now takes a pledge of office promising to "operate in a way conducive to promoting good community relations" (3.36 G Code of Conduct). In 2005, articulating

this idea further, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) published the Shared Future Policy and Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland.[17] Though the policy is not itself law, it sets an agenda of equality, anti-sectarianism, and good relations for all future policy and legislation in Northern Ireland.

> The overall aim of this policy is to establish, over time, a shared society defined by a culture of tolerance: a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered as equals, where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere and where all individuals are treated impartially. A society where there is equity, respect for diversity and recognition of our interdependence. (OFMDFM 2005: 10).

In 1801, when the Act of Union was being considered as a solution to the fractious politics in Ireland, its supporters "insisted that the union would create a new imagined community, 'one people', in the United Kingdom" (Bew 2007: 558). Like the Shared Future document's insistence on a "normal, civic society," this illustrates that solutions to the conflict in Ireland have never been merely about repairing cleavages as they have been about inventing and realizing an ideal.

In the hopeful euphoria of post-agreement Belfast, fueled by promises of international investments and peace dividends, civic officials expressed a new interest in the arts. In 2002 a bid to have Belfast named the European Capital of Culture originated within the city council and professional arts community. The Capital of Culture is a title designated by the European Union to one or several cities each year. The title carries no financial award, but nonetheless compels local investment and development as cities

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[17] Shared Future was shelved in 2010, to be replaced by the *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration*, which had stalled in the consultation process by spring 2011. The CSI document was meant to further the objectives outlined in Shared Future, directing them toward implementation at the local level. However, it was criticized for being too vague, and lacking the definitions that would make the agenda actionable and the outcomes measurable. I will refer to "shared future" throughout, as it remained quite influential during the time of this study.

compete to raise their international profiles, attract tourism, and enhance local pride and self-confidence (Palmer, Jones, Will, et al. 2004). Belfast's bid for the 2008 title failed even to be short-listed because, according to professionals in the arts community, there appeared to be no unified vision behind it, and the council's reallocation of the arts budget in 2002 suggested that its support for the project was in name only. Reflecting on the loss of bid, and the future of the arts in Belfast, a group of artists, politicians and public figures published a "manifesto for the arts" titled *Re-imagining Belfast,* which claimed that "Belfast chronically needs a new sense of a shared identity, of a highly developed sense of a 'one city'" (Carruthers, Douds, Loane 2003: 4)

Though the politics of the troubles dominated life in Northern Ireland generally, the physical damages and majority of casualties that occurred throughout the conflict were concentrated mostly in and around Belfast (Gallaher 2007). The city entered the 21st century deeply scarred by the guerrilla war that had taken place there, by the paramilitary garrisons in working-class residential neighborhoods and by the Army checkpoints, watchtowers, and "peace lines" (Gallaher 2007: ix). Slowly, the city center, formerly densely populated, was vacated of both residents and businesses; footfall in public squares was limited mostly to daytime working hours; and curfews meant the city's core was deserted at night. It became a controlled, sterile, and neutral space. Segregation increased in Belfast's working class communities, where people felt safer patronizing neighborhood shops and businesses, among people they knew, whose ethno-religious backgrounds they knew (Boal and Livingstone 1984).

Beyond the cleavages of conflict, misguided public works projects also contributed to the city's vivisection. In the 1970s, work began on an inner ring road, a

highway proposed to orbit the City Center and reduce internal traffic. Although the project was never completed, the effect of the initial re-zoning and demolition was to create a totally uninhabited zone of broad streets, car parks, and abandoned buildings around the city center, further distancing residential communities from the urban core, as well as deteriorating their internal composition and solidarity (Wiener 1975) (See Appendix 2: "Missing City" Map). Thus the city's residents, already suspicious of each other and perceiving danger in the public realm, lived their social lives at such a remove from the city center, and for so many years, that, when the checkpoints were finally taken down, business and footfall never quite got back to normal.

Redeveloping the city after the Troubles thus posed a variety of challenges. The twin problems of segregation and social isolation belied a lingering unease within much of the population. Nonetheless, Northern Ireland continues to receive a great deal of international aid and investment to promote reconciliation efforts and reconstruction, and accepting it requires the state to push forward a "post-conflict agenda" determined by outside funders (Uvin 2001).[18] The resulting planning and policy documents have focused on social and physical "regeneration," which aim to elevate Belfast both as the lynchpin of an emergent Northern economy, and the symbol of a new, post-conflict era.

Regeneration in Belfast has thus followed several imbricated strands. In an effort to encourage economic growth, the National Planning Service, a part of the Department of the Environment, aims to "To promote [Belfast] as the regional capital and major

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[18] The term "Post-conflict" occurs within the literature of development as an agenda that promotes peace and reconciliation in recipient countries. Like development projects, the "post-conflict agenda" has been criticized as neo-colonial and interventionist (Gordon 1997, Uvin 2001). Alternatively the "post-conflict" label is also used to designate war-torn locales as peaceful, and thus to reduce aid prematurely (Moore 2000).

focus for administration, commerce, specialized services, cultural amenities and employment opportunities" (DOE 2004: 12). For instance, following this plan, the City Council's Arts Unit has worked to attract businesses within the "creative industries," such as film and television production. But the physical space of the city must befit its new role as well, by attracting visitors, providing sources of entertainment, fine dining and shopping, and facilitating the shared use of the public realm, as called for in the Shared Future Policy Framework in 2005.[19] To that end, physical redevelopment in the city center has focused on creating pathways and public spaces that connect residential areas to the economic and entertainment core, as well as building new residences there. Yet it has also preserved the sterile neutrality of the city center, and for the most part efforts to repopulate the area have failed.

For the city center to be inviting and attractive for both visitors and businesses in the way that the city's guardians and policy-makers envision, regeneration must also focus on providing cultural offerings and programming, as well as making the city center a more aesthetically appealing place. A number of art pieces have been installed in public squares; new funding is available for festivals and performances utilizing public space; and a granting scheme, the 2007 Re-Imaging Communities Programme, provided funding to community groups that want to replace intimidating paramilitary murals with other installations. Revitalizing and renewing the aesthetic of the city center was one of the motivations behind the Capital of Culture Bid, and it is indicative of why cultural

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[19] For many years, all that resulted were new shopping centers, but a shopping center can be a meaningful development, according to Carol Ramsay and Michael Pettigrew of the Belfast Regeneration Office. Building the Castle Court Shopping Centre in the mid-80s, a large glass-fronted mall near Donegal Place, was a significant statement of optimism and success for the city's developers (Gallaher 2007: 64). With separate entrances near the Loyalist Shankill Road, and Republican Falls Road, it created an integrated space for shopping and socializing that would funnel shoppers into the city center without incident.

regeneration is so vital to Belfast's total recovery. The city's character, the perception of its citizens, its image in the world all depend on the character of its cultural production, and yet, as the artists who worked on the bid have argued, Belfast "is a city whose citizens have not yet found the space to agree on the kind of city that they want, let alone the value and place of the arts within it" (Carruthers, Douds, Loane 2003: 4).

This dissertation, by focusing on municipal parades as one aspect of Belfast's total regeneration, investigates precisely this issue: How are public arts, in particular the parades in question, being used to "re-imagine" the city? What is being imagined, by whom, and toward what ends? As the historical conditions that have produced the conflict in Northern Ireland have also produced the particular conditions of its peace process, the following chapters explore how post-Agreement policy has in turn produced a particular vision for "the kind of city" Belfast is to become.

Chapter Three: In Belfast

In 2010, having completed my qualifying exams, defended my research proposal and completed my teaching responsibilities, I departed New York City for Belfast, ready to start my fieldwork. At the time I was interested in examining a somewhat different question, which originated during a previous trip to Belfast in 2007 to study how political murals were changing after the Belfast Agreement. In late June and early July each year people in loyalist areas start piling wood and rubbish for their 11th Night bonfires, which are part of the annual commemorations of the Battle of the Boyne. Typically the bonfires are decorated with Irish flags, which burn up in the fire to the cheers of onlookers. But in 2007 I had noticed that Polish flags were alighting instead.

I learned later that this was due to the relatively large numbers of Polish and Eastern European migrants that had arrived in Belfast since the 2004 European Expansion. The UK and Ireland were the only two European member states that had granted work visas, albeit with provisional restrictions, to these Accession 8 Nationals.[20] In 2007 alone the number of migrants to Northern Ireland was 27,500, which equates to approximately 1.5% of the total Northern Irish population (NISRA 2008) and Maciek Bator, director of the Polish Cultural Association, estimates that the number of Polish

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[20] A8 Nationals include citizens of Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Until 2011 they did not have reciprocal rights to work and reside in any European country, as nationals of the 25-state European Economic Area did (Jarman 2007).

migrants alone had increased by 1000% since the time of the expansion (Interview 17 September 2010). Moreover, almost 30% of the migrant population of Northern Ireland resided in Belfast (Jarman 2007).

This was a noticeable presence, especially in the economically depressed urban areas where housing was cheap and groups of young economic migrants would lodge together. For many, the sudden increase of foreign laborers was easily imagined as a threat; migrants are painted variously and incoherently as stealing jobs from the working class, or stealing benefits from the unemployed, as drunkards, drug dealers, beggars, or as harder workers. And especially dangerous in Protestant-loyalist neighborhoods—the Polish are mostly Catholic.

These current events seemed to explain why I was encountering anti-Polish and other xenophobic slurs on bonfire stacks more usually devoted to anti-nationalist sentiment, but they provoked a larger question: How does the influx of European migrants complicate the peace process in Belfast? Still interested in the role of symbolic display and representation in conflict transformation, I determined to return to Belfast to contrast the representation of diversity in large scale public events, such as the Lord Mayor's Show and the Belfast Carnival, which I had seen that summer in 2007, with the actual needs and experiences of migrants living in Belfast.

The intention then and now has been to describe the changing city, to capture an image of the "New Belfast" flickering into being through all the processes of conflict transformation and "regeneration." "There is a difference between emphasizing reproduction and emphasizing emergence," writes Rabinow, urging anthropologists to keep an open eye to the undercurrents of social processes and the outlying relationships

among social actors (2007: 3). He calls on anthropologists to resist the niceties of explanatory structures and timelessness of self-reproducing relations. Instead he calls for an ethnography of the contemporary, of the things in the world that are "moving through the recent past and near future in a (nonlinear) space that gauges modernity as an ethos already becoming historical" (2007: 2). He desires that anthropologists should enter the field not having already defined "scientifically significant things" but only, more vaguely, "objects of inquiry", and to approach these objects understanding that

> Inquiry is a continuous, reiterative process…not restricted to scientific or traditional philosophic questions per se, but is involved with ordinary life as well as larger political and cultural issues. Hence inquiry begins midstream, always already embedded in a situation, one both settled and unsettled. Inquiry moves through the process of inquiry itself to other situations and other problems, themselves both stabilized and troubled. (Rabinow 2007: 8).

The ethnographer, then, should be open to what emerges midstream, and should be present to the world she is attempting to transcribe, diacritics and all.

Emergent in Belfast

What *was* emerging in Belfast between 2010 and 2011 were the reverberations of both local and global events. It was the year of the Arab Spring, when the youth of Muslim countries throughout the Maghreb rose up in protest of a variety of grievances having to do with corruption, civil liberties, free elections and economic decline. Like a tidal wave, protests rose up, first in North Africa, then on the Arabian peninsula, overthrowing governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya, and spurring resignations and elections elsewhere. When first believing that my research in Belfast would concentrate on the integration of migrants to the city, one of my earliest interviews was with women at the Belfast Islamic Center, who recounted some of their attempts to

make friends, join clubs and adapt to life in Belfast, as well as encounters with rude or hateful locals. In early February, when the protests had spread to Egypt, one of these ladies, a young mother from Egypt named Nermeen, texted to invite me to a demonstration at the City Hall, to show solidarity with the protesters. She ended her message with the missive "I pray that we will soon be free." At the demonstration, a Saturday afternoon in the cold, about one hundred people were assembled, men women and children from all throughout the Muslim world, as well as their friends and supporters. I greeted some of the faces I recognized from the Islamic Center women's group, and noted that some of the same women who told me they never went to public events unless they were child-friendly now encouraged their toddlers to hold sings reading "Mubarak must go!" At the same event I saw Alamin, a Sudanese asylum seeker whom I sometimes tutored in the English conversation group at the Northern Ireland Center for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS), where I volunteered while I in the field. Alamin was there with Somali friends he'd made at NICRAS and the affiliated "Friendship Club"; they told me they were there to support the simultaneous protests in Somalia and the secession of South Sudan.[21] Their causes blended into each other, but amplified the energy of the afternoon, and their numbers added to the accomplishment of being seen.

Another wave rolled into Belfast in the wake of global recession sparked in the United States by the subprime mortgage crisis in 2007[22] and in Europe by the sovereign

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[21] A referendum held in January of 2011 resulted in the secession South Sudan in July of that year. Minor protests occurred in Somalia during the early days of the Arab Spring, leading to elections in 2012.
[22] Following a real estate bubble a large number of American homeowners defaulted on their mortgages leading to a wide scale loss of liquidity by the banks who held the mortgages as securities; exacerbated by low employment rates, high interest rates and dishonest trading of some risky securities, a series of global

debt crisis, which started with Greece in 2010.[23] Conservative Prime Minister David

Cameron began promising austerity measures in 2009—freezing civil service salaries and

implementing sweeping cuts to social services to forestall the effects of the economic

downturn in the UK (Summers 2009). By 2010 those promises led to further cuts, salary

freezes, increased sales tax, and increased university tuition fees. Students protested these

measures in December 2010 and January 2011 by marching from Queens University to

the City Hall, in the middle of University and Dublin Roads, intentionally disrupting

traffic along the way. I joined friends from the Institute of Irish Studies at Queens, where

I had been granted a nominal research affiliation, for the January demonstration. More

organized and less confrontational than the protest in December, this march included

Faculty and their families, and contingents from the local trade unions showing their

support for the students. In March it was the trade unions' turn to take up the mantle of

protest against the austerity measures. Unite and Unison, two of the UK's largest unions,

covering dozens of industries, marshaled hundreds of thousands of people for

simultaneous demonstrations across the UK. In Belfast five thousand union members

marched from St. Ann's Cathedral to City Hall, joined by students and other supporters

(Townsend et al 2011).

Witnessing these events I reflected how connected Belfast was to events

elsewhere in the world, and how the chains of consequences that were toppling

governments and banks around the globe also had effects here, many of which manifested

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financial institutions came close to complete failure and needed to be "bailed out" by government
intervention.

[23] Also affected by the boom and bust that preceded the American economic crisis, and some guilty of
government overspending, a number of European nations were operating with large structural deficits that
soon threatened government collapse. Greece, the Republic of Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and more recently
Cyprus have each received major bail outs from the EU.

in public displays such as these. Throughout the course of my year in Belfast, several local events also made their reverberations felt, though I was surprised at the lack of public demonstration when, for instance a Catholic schoolboy found a pipe bomb in his schoolyard in September (Rainey 2010), or when in October and November investigators recovered the bodies of two of the IRA's "Disappeared" victims—people who were abducted, killed and secretly buried for suspicion of being informants. It was the death of Ronan Kerr in early April, a young Catholic man who had recently graduated from the police academy and joined the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), that sparked public outcry. Although I found all of these events disturbing, Kerr's murder by car bomb, planted by dissident republicans, inspired numerous marches and memorial services; at noon on April 6th, less than a week after he died, more than a thousand people congregated in front of the City Hall, filling Donegal Square for a minute of silence. Council Members from several parties spoke on a small stage erected for the event, and after the moment of reflection a piper played as attendees dispersed into the city streets and back into their offices. Nationalist and Republican politicians iterated the slogan "not in our name" to shame and distance the dissidents who claimed responsibility for the attack. Another few days later, Kerr's sister arranged a similar rally and moment of silence, which 150 people attended (BBC 2011c). A 500lb bomb planted near the motorway outside Belfast during the same week was covered merely as an addendum to the tragic news of Kerr's death and events in his name.

Nor were spontaneous public displays always peaceful. The student demonstrations in December involved some brick throwing, and there were serious riots in East Belfast, near my apartment, in the week before I left the field. More recently, in

the winter of 2012-2013, a Council vote on the display of the Union flag over City Hall predicated major riots in the city center. Occasionally a story would reach the international news cycle, and I'd receive an email from a friend or relation inquiring about my safety in the field.

While all of these events serve to reinforce the fact that Belfast—and myself within it—inhabit a globally connected world, what they also indicate are the inconsistences, contradictions and non-sequiturs that accompany its coming-into-being. The riots and bombs that contradict its "post-conflict" image, the outrage and action accompanying only some instances of violence; Belfast's interaction with the world, and with its own exigencies is selective. In Lefebvre's late essays on globalization, he emphasizes the tripartite connections of spatiality, temporality and "worldness" as a process of productions that operates on simultaneously at different levels of the local and global, composing multiple, interconnected "presents" rather than a "linear sequence with a clear beginning and end" (Brenner and Elden 2009: 22). As Camus writes, there is no order to the universe but "the present and the succession of presents before a constantly conscious soul" (1955: 63). It is up to the anthropologist, then, in conversation with her interlocutors, to name patterns, give form to inquiry, and to generate an understanding of a particular present, remembering that "an understanding" is a temporary agreement, negotiated with the proviso that it "can be relied on for a given time" and always "attentive to the issue of what difference does today make with regard to yesterday" (Rabinow 2007: 24, 59).

And so, as my inquiry took shape, I also had to be selective, to make choices and filter my attentions, as each day turned into yesterday and my decisions, as well as the

emergent events around me, formulated a particular, sometimes narrow understanding of the Belfast of the present.

Selections

The happenings described above punctuated a year spent with my attentions focused primarily on other types of displays: celebrations of culture and art, civic parades and festivals. The initial narrowing of my ethnographic endeavor to these performances was predicated, again, by my 2007 study of Belfast's murals. At that time, a new funding scheme, the Re-Imaging Communities Programme, funded by the EU's Peace II fund for Northern Ireland, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Executive, was beginning to produce new public artworks throughout Belfast. The scheme partnered artists with groups who wanted to improve the visual landscape in their neighborhoods or housing estates; it provided the funds, the expertise, and the community consultation process to whomever could commit to replacing or removing sectarian displays, such as flags, painted curbs, and political murals (Keenan 2010). Knowing that such a program existed, with the express intent to replace markers of political identity with public art that would signify a more "normal civic society" as one administrator put it, I desired to know whether other forms of creative display—in particular the many, many, parades and public events that graced the city streets—were also subject to the same bureaucratic machinations. I hypothesized that the city would use civic events to covey a "re-imaged" Belfast, to re-generate the social space of the city center it an image that suited their policy agendas and fell in line with external pressures and global connections. Whatever events I encountered, I imagined they would represent a

bureaucratic vision of the city that couldn't possibly resonate with the people who resided there.

There are, indeed, a vast array of public events in Belfast, some sponsored by the City Council, some merely advertised by it. Some events honored local dignitaries, events and history, some imported foreign cultural celebrations to put on display. In the table below, is an inexhaustive list of the events that occurred over the course of one year in Belfast.

Public events in Belfast September 2010- September 2011		
Council Sponsored Events *Organized by Events Unit, or paid for via Council tender*	Council Supported Events *Supported in part by Council funding and advertised on its homepage*	Other Notable Events
	September 2010 Cathedral Quarter Culture Night *Evening of broad cultural offerings in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter showcasing restaurants, galleries, and cultural activities that take place there.*	Chili Fest *Weekend of American bluegrass concerts staged in a large tent on Customhouse Square (ticketed).*
Halloween *Static fairground, concert and children's parade in the parking lot of the Odyssey Arena in East Belfast, concludes with fireworks.*	October Belfast Festival at Queens *Art and cultural festival, classical and jazz music, performance and galleries in South Belfast*	Belfast Restaurant Week *Special offerings and events at various restaurants throughout Belfast*
Christmas Tree Lighting *Illumination of Christmas Tree on the City Hall grounds and decorative lights in city center.*	November Diwali Samhain *Indo-Celtic festival featuring music and dance, workshops, concluding with a parade in Botanic Garden. Organized by ArtsEkta.*	
Christmas Continental Market *Food and craft stalls set up on the City Hall lawn.* New Year's Eve fireworks	December	

	January 2011 Out to Lunch Festival *Series of lunch time and evening concerts and performances in Cathedral Quarter venues.*	
	February Chinese New Year *Static event in St. George's Market with performances and market stalls. Organized by Chinese Welfare Association.*	
St. Patrick's Day Carnival *City center parade organized by the BEAT Initiative and City Council Events Unit*	**March** Holi Festival *Hindu rite of spring, static event with music, dance and "Color Arena" in St. George's Market. Organized by ArtsEkta.*	Féile an Earraigh *Irish traditional music festival, different venues in central and West Belfast. Organized by Féile Belfast (some ticketed).*
Titanic Made in Belfast Festival *Week of events celebrating the history of the shipbuilding industry, remembering the anniversary of the Titanic's construction and sinking.*	**April**	Festival of Fools *Week of international busking and street performance. Organized by Belfast Circus School.* Royal Wedding *UK-wide festivities and bank holiday*
Belfast Marathon Continental Market *Market stall at City Hall.*	**May** Polish Cultural Week *Crafts workshops, films and performances related to Polish and other cultures. Organized by Polish Cultural Association.*	May Day Parade *Celebrating laborers and unions in Belfast. Organized by Unison and Unite trade unions.*
Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival *Tall ships and fair activities on Belfast Waterfront and* Lord Mayor's Show *City center parade organized by ArtsEkta and Small World Music.*	**June** Belfast City Blues Festival *Venues throughout Belfast host local and touring blues bands (ticketed).*	Novena *nine-day religious observation, public masses and musical performances at Clonard Monastery in West Belfast.*

	July	
Open Weekend *Festivities associated with marking countdown to 2012 London Olympics. "Big Screen" video feed opens on City Hall lawn for sporting events and outdoor films.*	Belfast Pride *Gay pride parade.*	12th July Loyal Orange Parades. *Marching bands congregate in Belfast and march to fairground and back.* Life is a Carnival *Static carnival event in Botanic Garden.*
	August	
	Taste Fest Belfast Food fair and concerts in Botanic Garden (ticketed).	West Belfast Festival Performances, lectures, workshops, and music organized by Féile Belfast (some ticketed). Mela Indian and Asian culture heritage festival featuring dance, food and music in Botanic Garden. Organized by ArtsEkta.

Figure 3.1: Some public events in Belfast 2010-2011

I narrowed my scope a second time, to two events, the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, and the Lord Mayor's Day Show, which at the time, I understood to be organized by the same group, the BEAT Initiative. They also both suited my inquiry, as it was developing, which was concerned with the representation of cultural diversity in the context of Belfast's post-conflict regeneration. Of the many multicultural events occurring in Belfast, these were the only two that were directly sponsored by the City Council, on its list of premier civic events, and which involved local residents as performers. Their direct sponsorship also meant that they were most closely affected by Council policy and political agendas. Moreover, as parades, both events access a particular set of meanings tied to this ritual-like genre. These parades in particular tied the symbolism of the City Hall, where one originated and the other ended, to the mass of bodies and the signs they carry as they traverse the city center. "Ceremonially and socially," write Myerhoff and Mongulla, "movement provides linkages between places and people. Movement not only

is display and performance, it is also highly motivating. Solidarity is built into its very form" (1986: 121).

In this choice, a second theme emerged, which would come to supplant the issue of diversity to a certain extent. These two events, given their genre, and their importance on the calendar were the most conspicuous manifestations of a Belfast *civitas,* simplified, unified, and on parade. As Myerhoff and Mongulla note, "belonging to the city is most powerful when ethnicity and locality coincide," but in a plural society—in a divided society—"it was necessary to mount an assemblage of disparate ideas, purposes and people, and then literally parade them as unity" (1986: 121, 126). These events represented an idealized populace, and through them an idealized polis, but more than that, the act of parading, the motion connection people to place and to each other, "make the paradox into a simpler, experienced reality" (Myerhoff and Mongulla 1986: 127).

In this respect the parades are not just representations, but are exercises in imagination and (re)generation. A parade is a "present" that proposes a future, reifying, only for that moment, which immediately becomes the past, an imagined ideal. My commitment to a transactional definition of culture suggests then that each effort to imagine and portray an idealized Belfast urban identity is constitutive of that identity. As I will emphasize in further chapters, however, these proposals are also open to interpretation, and induce reactions and consequences, in the succession of presents. *These* parades, I will argue, skirt the issues and the dangers of cultural pluralism In doing so they "produce a historical particularity, a 'culture' that frames" difference within an "elaborate cultural construction": "European" cosmopolitanism, and a local identity that transcends ethnicity (Varenne 1998: 28).

Inquiry in Midstream

And so I arrived in Belfast in September of 2010 with expectations that swiftly dissolved into the exigencies of fieldwork. Knowing, or presuming to know that my chosen events would both be organized by the BEAT Initiative, as they had been in previous years, I sought contact there, first with the development artist, Damian, and then with the Creative director, David Boyd. In early January, when preparations for the St. Patrick's Day Carnival were already underway, I began several weeks of interviews and participant observation at the BEAT workshop. While attending whatever events I could on the public roster, and pursuing interviews with policy makers and public officials, I maintained constant contact with the BEAT artists, visiting the workshop and following the progress of the floats.

I could not have expected what none of my interlocutors at the BEAT knew, and what no one in the funding circles could reveal: the funding for the Lord Mayor's Show would be granted to ArtsEkta instead. The decision came down from the City Council Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit less than a week before St. Patrick's Day. I refer to this turn of events as the "funding turn" because it was a moment in which not only my research, but also the network of actors and the processes of production pivoted. The funding turn interjected uncertainty, transposed relationships between different actors, and introduced new players to the world in which I was already embedded. Having formed my relationships with the BEAT team, having appeared as a steward in their parade, it should come as no surprise that when in late March I finally contacted ArtsEkta, I was met with some suspicion. I attempted to reiterate the process of participant observation that I had initially started with the BEAT, interviewing artists, observing

workshops, following the progress of the team's preparations, but this time I had less access and less time. It didn't help that by happenstance of timing, it seemed I was comparing the BEAT's parade to ArtsEkta's. My interlocutors naturally wanted to defend themselves and the work they had not yet produced against my presumed prejudices.

The funding turn demonstrates with certainty that inquiry always has possibility of moving in unexpected directions. As a result, my research turned more toward a description of the slippages and conflicts within the networks of people who produce parades, and the different political usages of representations of "diversity" as a trope, or as Varenne (1998) writes, as a "cultural category", rather than as a demographic descriptor. In this, Rabinow's words are a comfort: "to claim to know beforehand precisely what one is going to do, or to find, as grant proposals demand, would constitute bad method, poor logic, and falsely disciplined inquiry. Or, more accurately, it seems to me, to run the risk of not doing inquiry at all" (2007: 8).

Chapter Four: An Assembly of Policy

Naturally, understanding the context in which the material project of Belfast's

urban regeneration takes place is key to understanding the parades at issue in the rest of

this work. A parade is a single, seemingly negligible outcome of the multilayered and

monumentally complex activity of regeneration which produces it. To describe the

entirety of that process, to map its many points of origin, the objects and people it targets

and the ultimate aims of its transformations, would be a dissertation in itself. Moreover,

according to Latour (2005), such a description would necessarily rely on conventional

views of the social, assigning the work of social transformation to a priori categories and

ill-defined social forces. Instead, "it is best to begin in the middle of things" (Latour

2005: 29), to choose a point of entry, however microscopic, allow it to reveal its own

linkages and associations, and to travel wherever these lead us next (8). This material

semiotic method, utilized here to describe the network of policy and funding that

conditions parades, allows us to "explore the strategic, relational, and productive

character of particular, smaller-scale, heterogeneous actor networks" (Law 2009: 145).

When done well, according to Law (2009), an actor network account demonstrates

heterogeneity in that it includes both human and nonhuman actors; it is able to illustrate

how elements of a network define and shape each other; and it attributes agency only to

the actors it describes, rather than to unseen, omnipresent "social forces." Crucially, it

also describes a process—a dynamic "how," rather than a static "what"—in terms of how actors interact, how power, money or objects flow through the network, and how the whole thing falls apart when certain elements are out of place (Law 2009: 146).

Highlighting the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman actors, Timothy Mitchell (2002) describes how the anopheles mosquito, carrying a virulent strain of malaria, participated in the delayed infrastructural modernization of Egypt. He subverts the conventional historical account of Egypt in the 20th Century by integrating the human actors fully into the natural and technological worlds with which they interacted, roundly demonstrating the inadequacy of traditional social theory to explain social change. "No explanation grounded in the universalizing force of human projects and intentions can explore whether the very possibility of the human, of intentionality, of abstraction, depends on, at the same time as it overlooks, nonhuman elements" (2002: 29). Similarly, in his exegesis of the pasteurization of France, Latour (1988) explains Louis Pasteur's "genius" as his ability to recruit and coerce microbes, farmers, army doctors, and colonial administrative ledgers in pursuit of his effort to eradicate disease. Latour replaces the trope of the "hero-scientist" with an astute military strategist, and the totality of "an advancement of science" with a swirling network of competing social actors and conflicting interests (Latour 1988).

What these and other examples of actor network theory argue at their core is that "We are no longer dealing with *construction*, social or otherwise: there is no stable prime mover, social or individual, to construct anything, no builder, no puppeteer" (Law 2009: 151). To speak of Belfast's regeneration, therefore, in terms of the "the City's work," or "Belfast's intention," though I will do so throughout, is a convenient, if fallacious,

placeholder. There is no single actor that can be totalized under the title "the city" or the name, Belfast. What "acts" is a much broader constellation of people and things, all of whom engage in the activity of regeneration, each contributing meaning to those labels.

From the entry point of the parade, I reassemble the social network around it, articulating the internal relationships within the "policy-sign" described in Chapter One. By asking who funds the parade, I uncover nested layers of local and national governments and statutory bodies, not strictly hierarchical, whose contributions help to finance Belfast's municipal parades. By asking what conditions these funders set and what returns they require from their grantees, I reveal both their invested interests in funding parades, and the framework of documents—laws, contracts, departmental strategies and more—that shape and mediate those interests. Through these we may begin to see what parades are expected to do, what role they are expected to play in the regeneration process, and what objectives these groups are hoping to achieve through them.

Even with a myopic focus on parades, in particular those produced by one local art organization, the BEAT Initiative, the result is a description of how urban regeneration is carried out on a broad scale. The specificity of this example is necessary to illustrate the nature of the connections between the BEAT Initiative, as a creative producer of events, and the governing and statutory bodies that both finance and regulate the BEAT's work in multiple ways. Naturally, each of Belfast's arts organizations—in fact, each individual event that is produced in Belfast—has a different constellation of funders, creative collaborators and participants; however, the BEAT serves as a useful model for how municipal events in Belfast are generally produced. The BEAT, like other

arts organizations, is an obligatory passage point linking the worlds of public funding and regulation on the one hand, and artistic production on the other. For now, the BEAT itself should be considered as a "Black Box"—in this case a parade-producing machine—whose interior operations and associations are temporarily obscured while we focus on network external to it (Latour 1987: 139).

Money Flows Down

There are a number of actors whose financial investments and statutory or governmental responsibilities mediate how the BEAT Initiative produces parades in Belfast city center. The form funding takes likewise reveals several types of associations between the BEAT and the other organizations that finance it. The BEAT's *operational funding*, that is the money that covers core costs such as renting a space, purchasing essential equipment, and paying full-time administrative staff, is provided by Belfast City Council (BCC) via the Development Department's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit, and by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI), which is a semi-autonomous body established under the direction of the Northern Ireland Executive's Department of Culture Arts and Leisure. These sources of funding must be re-applied for every few years, and typically amount to grants of £100-150,000 or more over 1-3 year periods. While the Belfast City Council receives its funding directly from the rate-payers residing in Belfast, ACNI's budget comes down through Department of Culture Arts and Leisure (DCAL) from the UK parliament's disbursement to the Northern Ireland Executive government. ACNI's source of funds is also supplemented by the UK Big Lottery, which is generated from the sale of lottery tickets throughout the UK.

The BEAT also receives *project funding* for specific events and programs. These frequently overlap—with different organizations or streams of funding within the same organization being applied to the same event. For example, the BCC Good Relations Unit grants the BEAT Initiative a £70,000 contract to produce the city's St. Patrick's Day Parade each year since the event began in 2006.[24] However the Tourism Culture and Arts Unit also has a yearly budget of approximately £4 million, which it allocates to arts organizations through its own funding schemes. In addition to the *operational funding*, which it provides to the BEAT through a multi-annual scheme, the unit provided the BEAT with more than £15,000 of *project funding* in 2009-10 from the Community Festivals Fund and the Development & Outreach Fund, which supplement the BEAT's workshop programs with participants of the parade. The Arts Council also has a variety of other award schemes that are funded by the National Lottery for the Arts, through which the BEAT has won more than £100,000 for once-off events, projects and equipment needs over the past three years.

The BCC Tourism Culture and Arts Unit, in turn, feeds the Community Festivals Fund with a grant from the European Union. Known locally as Peace III, the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, now in its third generation, is a €333 Million kitty jointly established by the European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund, and the European Social Fund exclusively to target peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and its border regions (SEUPB 2007: 6). Peace III granted over £70,000 in 2010 to Belfast City Council's initiative entitled "City of Festivals", and over £16,000 directly

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[24] Given the unique history and controversial nature of St. Patrick's Day in Belfast, outlined in Chapter 5, this particular contract has been awarded directly to the BEAT without a competitive bidding process, though that is not the case for other municipally sponsored events.

to the BEAT Initiative for their efforts to incorporate people of all political and religious

backgrounds in their creative work (DFP 2010). This fund has been a readily-available

source of financial support for any activities that can be described as cross-community or

peace-building work since the 1994 cease-fires, when the EU proposed an initial

investment of £400 million (McSweeny 1998). Nonetheless, like all grant-based funding

streams, recipients must re-convince the funders of the merit of their projects at every

application cycle.

Finally, the St. Patrick's Day Parade also incorporates a bandstand and

performances at Customhouse Square, a public space that falls under the domain of the

Belfast City Centre Regeneration Directorate (BCCRD), a statutory body operating under

the Belfast Regeneration Office (BRO), which is part of the Executive's Department of

Social Development (DSD). For any group that would like to host a public event in

Customhouse Square or any of the public spaces near the River Lagan, the BCCRD

administers the Laganside Grant Scheme, which offers grants of £1000 aimed at

encouraging people to make use of and animate these recently developed public spaces.

See Figure 4.1 for an illustration of these funding streams.

Naturally, each grant of money comes with a set of conditions, more or less

explicit, that the awardees must meet, either in their grant applications or as delivery

outcomes. These criteria are the exertions of power that money authorizes. In other words,

the grant application is an "examining apparatus," a method of questioning that both

deploys disciplinary force (demanding that applicants meet grant criteria) and extracts

knowledge (how criteria are interpreted as actionable goals) (Foucault 1977: 184-185). In

this way grant criteria mediate creative output, perhaps more so than the enabling power

of money itself. The following revisits the same network described above, this time to examine the requirements and responsibilities that a disbursement of money carries with it.
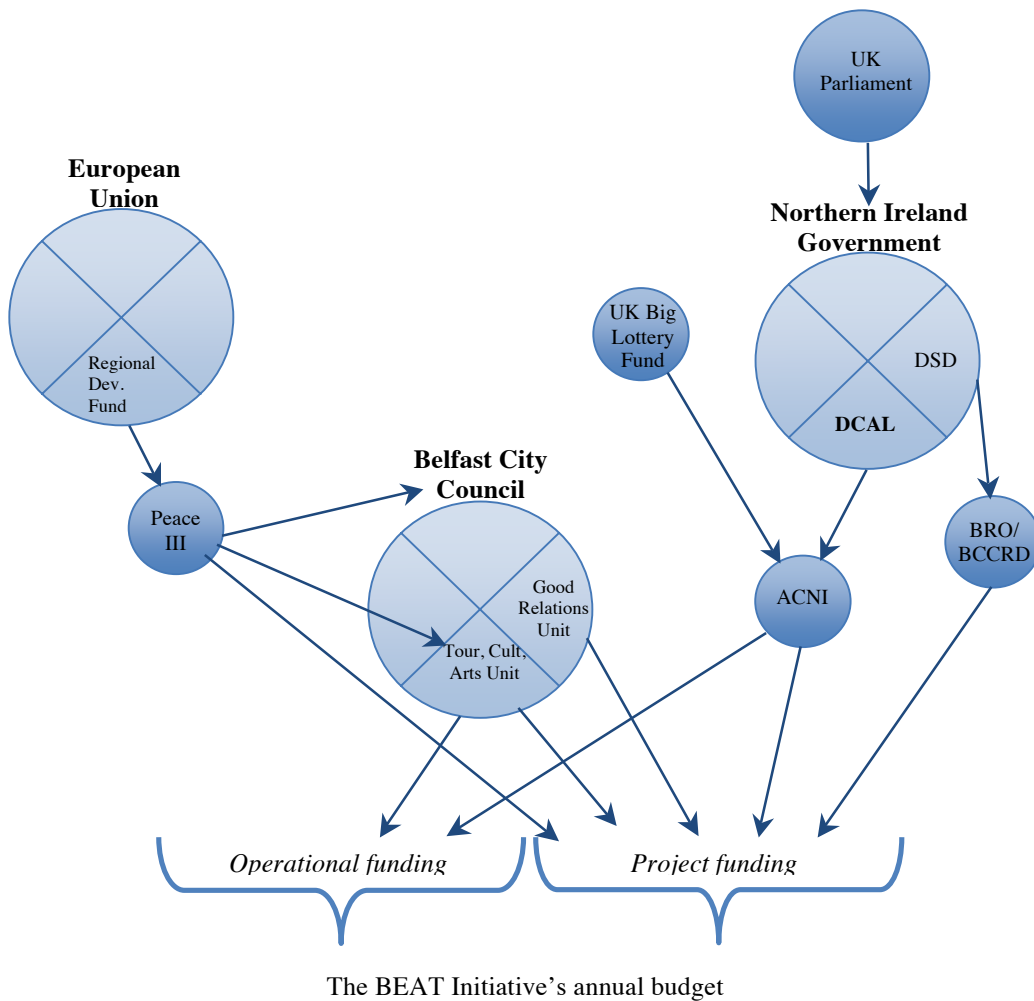

The BEAT Initiative's annual budget

Figure 4.1: Illustration of the BEAT's financial associations and some sources of funding.

Determining Deliverables

Firstly, the requirements of a vendor contract, such as the one granted to the

BEAT by the BCC's Good Relations Unit to produce the St. Patrick's Day Parade, is

different from the criteria imposed by other grant schemes because it has a very specific set of deliverables. It is also unique among other event contracts because the event proposal was developed in council and committee sessions specifically with the BEAT in mind.[25] The "hard deliverables" in the St. Patrick's Day contract required that the vendor provide a "carnival parade" beginning at "neutral start point" in the city center, to include "fire-eaters, jugglers and stilt-walkers to create a carnival atmosphere" and ending with a family-themed concert in Customhouse Square (Minutes of the Special Policy and Resources Committee, February 4th, 2005). Following the BEAT's own methodology for developing participation at its events, the contract required the grantee to facilitate artistic workshops with the various groups who would then march in the parade. Finally, the tender committed the BEAT to employing the council's structures for event management and stewarding (requiring them to work in cooperation with the Council's Events Unit), and to making all reasonable efforts to avoid the "use of symbols or signage that may be regarded as offensive or triumphalist"[26] (Ibid).

The specific consequences that these qualifications had on the production of the St. Patrick's Day Parade since 2006 were significant. That the location must be neutral, for instance, implies that if the parade were to begin in a residential community, or at a site that is associated somehow with one "side" of the conflict or another, it cannot be an

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[25] As noted above, and described in detail in Chapter 5, the controversial nature of St. Patrick's Day in Belfast required special consideration from the City Council as to how to produce an event with "mutual buy in" from both Protestant and Catholic communities, according to Gerry Copeland of the BCC Events Unit (Interview January 21, 2011). The city councilors and council officers who developed the 2006 proposal knew that the BEAT initiative had connections and rapport with groups representing PUL, CNR and other backgrounds throughout Belfast, such that they could pull off an inclusive event.

[26] Readers familiar with Northern Ireland will understand this to refer to paramilitary flags, including the national flag of Ireland, a green white and orange tricolor, which is also associated with the IRA. Clothing referencing the Scottish Rangers or Celtics football teams is also taboo, because the teams' colors have been co-opted and "sided" by their Northern Irish fans.

"inclusive" event. Likewise the prohibition of potentially offensive signs and symbols not only bans paramilitary flags, but also the Irish National flag, which has been used as a symbol of the paramilitary IRA. The pressure to be inclusive of all residents of Belfast and invite broad participation from all sides, almost overrides the fact that St. Patrick's Day is both a Catholic saint's day and a national holiday in the Republic of Ireland. These associations with Northern Ireland's CNR community must be played down in anticipation of the negative response they might evoke from the event's Belfast's PUL observers. Thus the responsibility falls on the BEAT Initiative, through its contract with Belfast City Council, to create a St. Patrick's Day event that acknowledges and celebrates *all* the residents of Belfast, without favoring anyone.

These were the conditions of the contract's "soft deliverables." The event must "promote and develop respect for diversity in one's own, other, and shared cultures, beliefs and traditions;" it should "develop opportunities which facilitate difficult conversations in a safe environment which challenge stereotypes and division;" and it should "increase understanding and co-operation between different cultural, ethnic and local community identities by building capacity and supporting networks of communication" (Minutes of the Special Policy and Resources Committee, February 4th, 2005). These requirements brought the contract into compliance with the City Council's Good Relations Strategy, a municipal policy document that both established the Council's Good Relations Unit (which directly funds the St. Patrick Day Parade), and outlines how the Council will fulfill its statutory duty to promote equality.

This statutory obligation is derived from Section 75 (2) of the Northern Ireland Act, the act of Parliament establishing the terms of the 1998 Belfast Agreement in British

law. The Northern Ireland Act establishes a devolved Northern Irish government and mandates that "a public authority shall, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, or racial group." However, the act does not explain what is meant by "good relations," which the authors of the BCC's Good Relations Strategy defined for themselves:

> In the absence of any official definition of good relations, we have interpreted the theme as widely as possible and taken it to mean all working relationships, both internal and external. …We also aim to promote good relations in a broader sense, indirectly, between people from all communities within the city, by using our influence as a civic leader with our partners and other leading agencies in Belfast (Good Relations Unit 2003: 29).

As a result, the Belfast City Council has committed itself to employing a demographically representative workforce within its own ranks, delivering services equally, and working to "to contribute to a more stable, tolerant society" (2003: 32). The council approaches this last contribution through the acknowledgement and celebration of cultural diversity, "To contribute towards an inclusive pluralist society, by establishing a cultural diversity programme, which acknowledges and respects the cultural diversity within the city, and to promote and support the celebration of such diversity in an inclusive manner" (2003: 39).

In illustrating these policy requirements (see Figure 4.2), it becomes clear that law and policy at national and local levels relate to each other as a series of translations with enumeration. The 1998 Belfast Agreement and the 1998 Northern Ireland Act articulate broad-reaching policies, touching many aspects of Northern Irish life. As the remit of each policy narrows, however, general policy directives are interpreted as specific

requirements and "hard deliverables." These translations indicate several important points

regarding the activity of the "policy-sign," which clearly contains a fairly complex

process of semiosis within it. Firstly, each translation is logically determined by the

policy that precedes it, in part because each level of policy is a more practical application

of the previous statute. However, these translations also indicate a determining

distribution of power. The Belfast Agreement, though not a legal document, is backed by

the support of a popular referendum. The Northern Ireland Act, which enacts the

Agreement into law, imposes statutory demands on the Northern Irish Government and

Belfast City Council. They in turn hold the financial sway over the BEAT Initiative,

which stands to lose a main source of both project and operational funding if it fails to

meet the requirements of its tender. But a second look shows that each level of translation

results in considerably wider room for interpretation; the Belfast Agreement does not

outline the structure of the Northern Irish Government, but the Northern Ireland Act does,

for instance. And as we see above, what is meant by "good relations" is left for the City

Council to define. Even within the city council's operational departments, there is

considerable independence regarding how policy shall be applied and money allocated.

1998 Belfast Agreement

↓

Northern Ireland Act 1998

| Terms of the Agreement enacted in UK law | All public authorities required to promote "Good Relations" | Northern Irish Government established |

↓

Council Good Relations Strategy

| Deliver services equally | "Contribute to a more stable, tolerant society" | Establish cultural diversity program, celebrate cultural diversity |

↓

Requirements of St. Patrick's Day Tender

| Facilitate art workshops with participants | Hold the event in a neutral location | Challenge stereotypes and division | Increase understanding and cooperation across cultures | Avoid offensive and triumphalist symbols |

Figure 4.2: Policy Translations

Unlike the procurement contract, grant applications for arts funding typically do not make such specific demands: however, they nonetheless require some degree of conformity to their stated program objectives and broader strategic policies. The BCC Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit, for instance, scores applicants for the Annual and Multi-Annual Funds according to 5 broad categories: Leadership, Celebration, Good Relations, Economic Regeneration and Management (which refers specifically to the financial probity of the funded organization). To these, the festival fund adds that grant-winners must show how their proposals will address "the cultural identity of a community, history, and issues that currently confront it" and "celebrate its uniqueness" (Community Festivals Fund application form, 2010). Although quite open-ended, these criteria are contextualized for both scorers and applicants by the unit's two key strategic documents, the Integrated Cultural Strategy, and the Integrated Tourism Strategy.

The Arts Unit contributes approximately £1.4 million annually to supporting local

arts organizations and creative industries, but has a much broader remit of responsibility, which includes essentially all of the activities and infrastructure that makes the city of Belfast appealing to tourists. It supports the marketing and promotion of the city through Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB). It is responsible for interpretive and directional signage, public art pieces, and developing the businesses and services that support tourism. The Tourism Strategy states, "our aspiration is that Belfast will be recognized as a leading tourism destination, with delivery driven through a partnership of organizations, institutions and businesses across the whole city committed to position Belfast among the top twenty city destinations in Europe" (BVCB 2010: 8). It is in the service of this goal that the unit supports the arts—to enhance the city's image as a "cultural destination," according to Kerrie Sweeney, the unit manager. By developing the city's cultural offerings in terms of its local culinary, literary, and musical heritage, its social and political history and role in the Irish Diaspora, the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit hopes to promote a uniquely "Belfast experience" (BVCB 2010: 16). For the authors of this document, a vibrant arts infrastructure and tourism industry in turn benefit the ratepayers of Belfast, providing employment opportunity as well as wider access to the arts.

While the tourism strategy concerns itself with purely economic dividends, the Arts Unit recognizes wider benefits in developing the arts. In the Integrated Cultural Strategy, authors from the Arts Unit shared a vision "to create a vibrant, cultural capital where arts and culture are placed firmly at the centre of economic, social and environmental regeneration in a way which inspires, empowers and elevates those who live, work and visit in the city" (Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit 2007: 11). The document

commits DSD and DCAL, both departments in the Executive, ACNI, and the Belfast City Council to joint objectives and projects for artistic development in Belfast. The central objectives of the strategy commit each organization to "strategic leadership" in terms of investment, infrastructure and integration of public services supporting the arts and cultural sector; "creating wealth" in the form of training, employment, cultural activity, and "cultural hubs": and finally, to improving "quality of life," such as the vibrancy and use of public spaces, heritage buildings, cultural offerings and landmarks, and increasing opportunities for cultural engagement (Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit 2007: 39).

In light of the Council's goals for Belfast to become a leading tourist destination, to promote equality while celebrating diversity, and to develop the city economically, we as readers of these documents should be in a better position to interpret the Arts Unit's five funding criteria: Leadership, Celebration, Economic Regeneration, Good Relations and Management. These categories, which Sweeney admits may still be too broad, are left intentionally vague so that they may accommodate the council's different initiatives or strategic plans in any given year, as well as the range represented in the applications they receive. So while we may carefully qualify each category—taking Leadership to mean demonstrating innovation and good practice, or Celebration to refer to the city and its diverse population, for example—we must also realize that applicants to the Arts Unit's funds are also engaging in an interpretive exercise. They shape their proposals, and presumably the creative work that follows, to suit these criteria and win the grant. When Sweeney explains, "We view the current criteria that we have linked to all of these schemes and tweak it a bit to better reflect some of the corporate strategies that we're working to," (Interview May 11, 2011), we should remember that she is not just detailing

the work of a municipal bureaucrat, but of a disciplinary exercise.

The grant application, as noted above, is an "examining apparatus" (Foucault 1977). Foucault's concept refers to a tool in the academic disciplines that elicits an expository response—a question that must be answered. And each individual answer is framed in relation to "a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation, and the principle of a role to be followed" (182). In applying for a grant, the arts organization submits itself to the scrutiny of the granting institution and conforms itself to what it believes the grantor wants. It produces a tangible product of that interpretation, contributing to a corpus of publicly funded art, which in turn can be held as an example to be emulated by future applicants. The application, as Foucault might describe it, is "at once a deployment of force and the establishment of truth" (184), where the "truth" is demonstrated by objects that conform with the higher order policy's regeneration agenda. In a slightly different formulation, Liszka explains Peirce's definition of truth as a complete determination of the interpretant, "where there is no longer a latitude of interpretation between utterer and interpreter" (1996: 94). Nonetheless, a great degree of latitude remains for the arts producer. As we follow the sources of the BEAT's funding to higher and higher levels of government, a pattern emerges: in each government body or public authority a proliferation of strategies, corporate plans, and policies both mediate higher-level documents, and determine the actions of subordinate bodies and grant-recipients. In each determination there is an indication of the final object, the regenerated "new Belfast," but in each space of interpretation that idea is again obscured.

A Policy State

At the national level, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland has a set of three broad criteria similar to that of the arts unit, on which it bases its funding decisions. Proposals are judged on the quality of the artistic activity, the strategic impact and public benefit, and the quality of the applicant's management structures and financial probity. These are similarly qualified by the Arts Council's corporate plan (ACNI 2007a), and its Five-Year Strategies (ACNI 2001 and 2007b), which define the Council's working objectives under several broad themes. Since 2007, the key theme informing both the corporate plan and the 5-Year Strategy has been to place "art at the heart," to increase the perceived value of the arts in Northern Ireland's social, economic and creative life. But as with the BCC's Integrated Arts and Good Relations strategies, ACNI's objectives are embedded within the language of a changing historical moment and social context:

> As we move into a new era in Northern Ireland, with a vision to establish a fairer society where all individuals are considered equals and diversity is respected, we will highlight ways in which the arts and artists can play a role in addressing issues such as racism, discrimination and sectarianism and cultural tourism. (ACNI 2007b: 10)

Further, under the theme titled "Growing Audiences and Increasing Participation," the strategy promises:

> Arts activity has the power to both express the richness and diversity of contemporary society and confront the challenges raised by prejudice. The Arts Council of Northern Ireland through its funding will continue to actively foster the expression of cultural pluralism, build dialogue and promote mutual understanding, through interchanges within and between communities and their cultures. (ACNI 2007b: 18)

Clearly there is a sense within the Arts Council that the arts have a role to play in the nation's broader post-conflict transformation, and this is reflected in the specific policy statements that apply the Council's corporate objectives to each of the art forms it

funds. Municipal parades typically fall under either "Carnival Arts" or "Community Arts" headings, which are both defined as "inclusive and democratic" and well as "an effective tool for community cohesion, social inclusion and the celebration of diversity within our society" (ACNI 2007c, ACNI 2007d). Moreover, the large carnivals and festivals supported under carnival arts funding "support tourism and have an important economic contribution to make" (carnival arts policy). For both art forms, ACNI's aims are to support and develop arts organizations, as well as to enhance the quality of their work, build their audiences, and finally, to "develop programmes which promote inter-cultural and cross-community tolerance and respect" (ACNI 2007c). We see that, written into the textual operations of both local and national government, not only are the arts employed to facilitate regeneration, but they have a role to play in the establishment of a "fairer society" to "confront the challenges raised by prejudice" (ACNI 2011).

While similar to the thrust of the Belfast City Council's Good Relations Strategy, ACNI's emphasis on enhancing intercultural and cross-community relations is directly derived from other policy documents authored within the Northern Ireland Executive and higher levels of government. Arts Council policy cites the corporate strategy of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), the Programme for Government, a strategic plan authored by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) every three years, and The Belfast Agreement, among others. Each higher level of responsibility covers a broader range of statutory duties, strategic objectives, and goals of governance. DCAL's remit, for instance, includes support for the arts, but also for sports, waterways and fisheries, museums and libraries, and linguistic diversity. The Program for Government addresses the Executive's agenda for the entire country. Thus,

as we approach the founding document of Northern Ireland's current government, the

Northern Ireland Act, and the peace terms of The Belfast Agreement, which preceded it,

their frame of reference becomes broader, and their specific goals have less to do with the

BEAT or with municipal parades, but they nonetheless shape the lower order strategies.

The Programme for Government 2008-2011 was developed in the Northern

Ireland Assembly by elected representatives and published by the OFMDFM. The

document explains, "growing the economy is our top priority" (OFMDFM 2008: 2),

while also pledging to build "a shared and better future" (6). In this as in other documents,

specific goals are interspersed with the language of peace and reconciliation, all in the

service of a new and better city or country: "our over-arching aim is to build a peaceful,

fair and prosperous society in Northern Ireland, with respect for the rule of law and where

everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in years to come" (5). Its authors

seem to perceive the imbrication of economic development with post-conflict

transformation, and within this they see tourism, and all the elements that feed into it, as

the most promising sphere of opportunity.

> We will work to grow the economy and private sector to generate high
> value jobs. This will include, amongst other things, a focus on increasing
> private sector investment in innovation and improving the strength of our
> tourism sector. This will require investment in our infrastructure, driving
> forward social transformation and environmental improvement and
> realizing the potential of our arts and culture sector, to create a region
> which offers a high quality of life to those who wish to live and work here.
> (OFMDFM 2008: 9)

Although the document does not mention municipal parades specifically, it does

target a 2% increase in the proportion of the Northern Ireland population who attend and

participate in arts events, to "enable as many people as possible to improve their quality

of life by experiencing, participating and accessing the excellence of our cultural assets"

(OFMDFM 2008: 38). Within the context of economic goals, the document promises to "promote Northern Ireland as a must-visit destination to facilitate growth in business and leisure visitors," targets an 80% increase in out-of-state visitors, and a 70% increase in revenue derived from their custom (33). Interestingly, the Northern Ireland Executive's commitment to invest £229 million in culture, arts and leisure infrastructure and projects is listed among the document's tourism objectives, and not with those regarding access to the arts or quality of life (33).

The Programme for Government also targets the physical regeneration of specific sites throughout Northern Ireland, and the Laganside riverfront area in Belfast in particular (OFMDFM 2008: 41). These goals are delegated to the Department of Social Development (DSD), and its subunit, the Belfast Regeneration Office, which produce a plethora of regeneration strategies, policies, master plans and other documents for each of the city's North, South, East, West, and Central segments, and for each area therein targeted for Neighborhood Renewal. Even in these documents regeneration is ill-defined, though the activities of the DSD and its subunits gives a sense of how regeneration is understood in practice. In areas of deprivation and social need, neighborhood renewal projects facilitate private financial investment in physical and economic development in the area. The DSD also works to improve educational outcomes and employment opportunities in targeted neighborhoods, and in general to "promote and implement a comprehensive approach to tackling social, economic and physical regeneration and to redress disadvantage in cities and towns across Northern Ireland" (DSD 2003: 3). In the city center, DSD's interventions are more focused on integrating private sector investment with the development of public spaces, affordable housing, conserving

historical landmark buildings, and importantly, with re-animating the city's public spaces with people and activity. In the service of this goal, we see the Laganside Grant Scheme, as administered through the BRO's Belfast City Center Regeneration Directorate, offering funds to events that attract a significant number of participants or spectators to the Laganside area, attract positive media coverage, and benefit those directly affected by the DSD's regeneration objectives. The grant also requires applicants to show how they will satisfy the equality requirements under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Finally, it should also be noted that Peace III funding naturally also carries certain requirements. Given the EU's interest in promoting establishing Europe as a cultural entity in and of itself (Varenne 1993), with a pan-European identity that "systematizes… the saccharin concept of 'unity in diversity,' [and] the idea of a European continent whose major characteristic is its diverse 'family of nations'" (Borneman and Fowler 1997: 495), it should come as no surprise that the EU invests in peace and reconciliation efforts that prioritize "shared identity and cultural diversity" or that "regenerate urban spaces and interface areas" (SPEUB 2007: 71). While the Peace III program is designed to serve the development needs of Northern Ireland specifically, it also serves the image of a European community in which "identities turn…around categories of exchange, difference and value" in which the principle of "peoplehood" is invoked "to direct historical memories from both national and continental perspectives" (Borneman and Fowler 1997: 490-492).

Viewing these documents as a whole discourse illuminates the Northern Irish State's interest in Belfast's improvement, which generally is to rebuild, reinvest in the local economy and deprived communities, and finally to revitalize an urban social life.

Although parades are not an explicit priority at the national level, tourism and culture are, as well as promoting the use of newly developed public properties. In this context, the BEAT Initiative and other arts organizations appear ready-made to meet the needs of public officials seeking to deliver on their departmental strategies. For instance, the BCCRD has no capacity to produce activities on the Laganside waterfront, but they allocate funding to groups that can. In doing so, they can also shift the equality requirements to shoulders of grant applicants, while still "ticking the boxes" of their own delivery promises. In this respect, the existing work of arts organizations also partly determines the local delivery of these national agendas for development, thus adding another gauze over the ultimate object of regeneration, the "changed civic society" and the "new Belfast." Somewhat more clarity emerged in interviews with representatives from several of the agencies discussed in this chapter. These public officials articulated a series of imbricated goals with respect to arts development: cultural programming should have economic dividends; it should produce a neutral and inclusive city center; and from this, a unified Belfast identity should emerge.

Economic benefit

Firstly, Belfast's economic development is a primary concern, as stated in Belfast City Council's tourism strategy and the Program for Government. There is a clear objective to develop both the infrastructure that serves tourists and the cultural offerings that attract them. A stronger tourism sector will bring more money into Belfast's economy and consequently open up opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship for Belfast's residents. Importantly, tourism is also framed in terms of changing people's

perceptions and creating an international "identity" for Belfast. Michael Pettigrew, of the

BCCRD, added this as almost an after thought,

> We're meeting our objectives by providing that space, providing that
> opportunity, and encouraging people to use those, … creating activity and
> the possibility of money being spent in the city center, [and] you know if
> people have a positive experience in the city center, then you have
> publicity, an advertisement of the city center.
> ~Interview June 20, 2011

Sweeny, of the BCC Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit explains that funding public events

is useful because "those images then are promoted internationally; this is what Belfast

does and it does it well." In the Council Events Unit, which has a responsibility for

measuring the economic return on city festivals, the manager, Gerry Copeland, didn't

sugarcoat the negative impression that outsiders have of Belfast's past, but nonetheless

believes that celebratory events will change that view:

> All the negativity and all the bombers and all the bullets and the rest are
> disappeared. So the key thing is to use all that negativity and turn it, so it's
> about a welcoming city…it its about a city that has a deep cultural past, a
> city that is diverse, that has a huge range of cultural activities that people
> can enjoy, take part in, and certainly at least witness.
> ~Interview January 21, 2011

Copeland's comments reflect a sentiment I heard in interview after interview with both

municipal and national officials—developing tourism, and within this, that the city's

artistic and cultural offerings are about changing Belfast's image. Copeland also offers a

clue as to what that new image should be—Belfast as a welcoming place, a diverse place,

and a place where a violent history is rebranded a "deep cultural past."

Neutrality and Inclusivity
This feeds into two additional themes that are iterated throughout the documents,

and what public officials have to say about them. On the one hand, Belfast's city center

must be reinvented as a "neutral" space, and on the other, the events that occur there must celebrate the city's diversity—specifically it must be accessible and welcoming to both PUL and CNR residents.

My interlocutors recognize "Neutral" as a problematic term, perhaps associating neutrality with a void of meaning and personal attachment (Lysaght and Basten 2003: 235). Nonetheless they use the word frequently to describe the quality of a public space that can host people of all backgrounds at the same time. Carol Ramsay, head of the Regeneration Policy Team of the BCCRD, explains that the overriding intention of regeneration is to look after the neutrality of the city center and to make sure it is a "welcoming" space (Interview June 20, 2011). The City Council Good Relations officer, Leish Dolan, indicates that within the council strategy, "we would promote a shared city in the widest sense—that all communities feel part and parcel, lesbian and gay, disabled people, all faiths, and political viewpoints" (Interview September 29, 2010). Michael Pettigrew, another member of the Regeneration Policy Team, sees creative activities in particular as formative of a "neutral" space.

> The ideal is to have a cultural hub of like-minded artists or cultural type groups…. Those offer sort of a neutrality in that …we're there to nurture that hub and those cultural activities that are for all, so that the door's open to all, both with regard to the tenants and the people who use the services or the facilities that they are providing.
> ~Interview June 20, 2011

The sense of inclusivity these officers wish to promote is congruent with public policy, but also reflects their reactions to how they have experienced the city in the past. Pettigrew recalled, "when I grew up, nothing happened in the city center like that, so you had to go to a place that maybe, because of your religion you wouldn't have felt very happy in, so maybe you didn't go. Whereas now, you come to the city center no matter

who or what you are and feel comfortable there" (Interview 6/20/11). Patricia Freedman,

who is the Cathedral Quarter Development Manager, a position funded by the DSD to

direct the physical and cultural regeneration of part of Belfast City Center, iterated the

same idea.

> There's so many issues in Belfast around the city center, having to do with
> it having been blown up fairly regularly, and so on. If you look at what
> would then reverse that, activity is a huge part of what makes people feel
> safe. Seeing other people there, seeing things going on. Lighting is another
> huge part of it, cleanliness is a huge part of it, good maintenance, and so
> on.
> ~Interview May 18, 2011

For many years, though, public policy facilitated social isolation and the

degeneration of the city center by tolerating "separate but equal" leisure centers, public

facilities and housing. According to Dolan, "The legacy of the conflict in Belfast is that

there is two of everything" (Interview September 29, 2010). The de facto segregation of

public amenities also contributes to fear and mistrust of the "other," so that people might

choose to live their lives entirely within the boundaries of their own neighborhoods.

Therefore, according to the ACNI Head of participatory arts, Fionnuala Walsh, new

government initiatives are about that

> Healthy civic society, where communities don't want to look threatening,
> [they] want to look welcoming, want to invite businesses into their area,
> want to make sure their children are growing up in a healthy vibrant space
> as opposed to one where maybe one side of the community doesn't feel
> welcome.
> ~Interview June 2, 2011

Walsh herself had worked with the BEAT Initiative earlier in her career, when the

carnival arts company was still located in a particularly deprived area of East Belfast. She

said of one of the first carnivals the BEAT produced there, "in that area, it's never going

to be 'neutral' because that's a stupid term, but it was inclusive," meaning that people

from neighboring communities, who, on any other day, would have gone to separate parks, leisure centers, and shopping malls and never would have offered a passing greeting, worked together on the same celebratory event in full knowledge of each other.

Hence the flipside of neutrality is inclusivity, which is only apparent, according to my interlocutors, when highlighting the various identities of the people who are included. Dolan, the BCC Good Relations Unit officer, explains,

> We are trying to move beyond multiculturalism, the idea of communities as apart and separate. We are trying to move toward an idea of "interculturalism," which emphasizes different cultural identities within the frame of the law—that communities can have their cultures respected, while also respecting the rule of law.
>
> ~Interview September 29, 2010

This imparts a pressure on grant recipients, such as the BEAT, to engage with and visually represent all of Belfast's minority ethnic groups in the parades funded by the city council. Moreover, the council Events Unit, which is responsible for logistical management, adds the pressure to appeal to a diverse family audience by disallowing the sale of alcohol, or flags, emblems or clothing (including football jerseys) that could be perceived to be of a sectarian or partisan nature. The result of this effort to "neutralize" council activities, according to a junior officer in the Events Unit, should be a "fun, peaceful, and inclusive event." Interestingly, the pressure to be both neutral and multi-cultural seems contradictory—in order to maintain a peaceful event there is negative pressure against partisan self-expression, while in order to maintain the premise of an inclusive event, there is a positive pressure for intercultural engagement and tokenistic representations of diversity.

Unity and Identity

More than creating a merely "neutral" space, public events are expected to enliven and revitalize the city by promoting positive experiences among people who would not otherwise interact. The theme of "bringing people together," which emerged from both the policy documents and my interviews, is thus something more than "neutrality." In congregation is the implicit idea of reconciliation. For Walsh, regeneration means "repopulating an area…showing how an area can be vibrant and fantastic, and showcasing all of the arts, and [that] it's good fun and people come from all over" (Interview June 2, 2011). But this necessarily requires bringing different people together in a context that provides "a safe way of expressing who you are and where you are coming from" (Fionnuala Walsh interview June 2, 2011). This freedom of self-expression is a new phenomenon in Belfast's public space, and it is a result of the physical creation, led by the BCCRD and the BRO, of creating new squares and open areas, and then encouraging their use. According to Carol Ramsay of the BCCRD, "physically there are things, there are parts of Belfast, that things can happen in now, that aren't seen as one side or the other" (Interview June 20, 2011). Likewise, Freedman said, "people coming into the city center and not thinking about who else is going to be there, what kind of person was going to be there," facilitates the development of a social identity that is shared between them (Interview May 18, 2011).

Among my interlocutors there is a sense that promoting inclusive, city-center events will result in a new, organically emergent identity for Belfast. Importantly, they recognize that the work of the council and the bodies entrusted with regeneration and redevelopment is not to impose something artificial and designed by the Tourist Board,

but to facilitate Belfast's population to begin to develop it themselves. As Patricia

Freedman explained,

> It is about bringing the city together, and … it's not about creating a single
> identity for the city; it's about … having some kind of a shared identity for
> what it means to live here. As opposed to really such separate identities
> that you might as well be in completely different places. So it can't be
> superimposed; it has to come from the people who live here.
> ~Interview May 18, 2011

Ultimately public events do more than facilitate economic growth and the

expression of a shared identity; they build self-confidence. It is a standard claim of arts-

educators that performance builds confidence, but within the context of regeneration,

these policy makers also believe that civic events will "build a more confident city"

(Kerrie Sweeny interview May 11, 2011). And confidence is of the utmost importance to

the production of a "healthy civic society," as Fionnuala Walsh characterized Belfast's

progress, "We are becoming a bit more normalized as a society…because again we're

coming into a new era… but it takes a certain confidence in a community to be able to do

that." (Interview June 2, 2011).

The Real and the Ideal

That the ideal of a healthy civic society and a more confident city is expressed

through a jumble of policies, funding schemes, and human interpreters should not

diminish the agency it exerts in Belfast's changing social milieu. In his tome on religious

ritual, *Elementary forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim argues that images of the ideal are

indispensible from the lived world.

> A society can neither create nor recreate itself without creating some kind
> of ideal by the same stroke…it is the act by which society makes itself,
> and remakes itself, periodically. Thus when we set the ideal society in
> opposition to the real society, like two antagonists supposedly leading us

in opposite directions, we are reifying and opposing abstractions. The ideal society is not outside the real one but is a part of it. Far from our being divided between them as though between two poles that repel one another, we cannot hold to the one without holding to the other. A society is not constituted simply by the mass of individuals who comprise it, the ground they occupy, the things they use, or the movements they make, but above all by the idea that it has of itself. (1995 [1912]: 425)

If, as per Durkheim, the ideal constitutes the real, then the work of these policies to facilitate a process by which Belfast's citizens can articulate their own ideals, is also a process of actualization. As written in the Integrated Cultural Strategy for Belfast, "Culture needs to be produced, experienced and communicated, and the city must seek to find the most appropriate platforms, mechanisms, and groups to ensure that these three processes are given appropriate support" (Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit 2007: 17). Producing images of the ideal Belfast—the parades, the shared civic spaces, the tourism brochures—also reproduces the real Belfast in that image.

There can be no doubt that the goal of regeneration is a lofty one; it aims no lower than to "create a vibrant, cultural capital where arts and culture … inspire, empower and elevate those who live, work and visit in the city" (Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit 2007: 11). And to communicate this goal through the medium of a parade may seem shallow. In Barbara Myerhoff's study of Jewish secular ritual in Los Angeles, she expresses skepticism with the efficacy of a parade's unifying message, "the final event not only may fail to arouse the effervescence that Durkheim considered the point of such events, but worse may call into question the very message it was designed to demonstrate" (1986: 122). Yet her skepticism reveals a space of ingenuity that is precisely what Belfast's bureaucratic actors are counting on. Myerhoff writes, "We are dealing here with secular ceremonies that require innovation, persuasion and metaphoric usages that are not

fully institutionalized" (1986:123). Their unfamiliarity conveys the prospect of change, without prescribing its direction, externalizing the myth of an ideal city "as an event available to further interpretation" (123).

Despite my interlocutors' emphasis that they are simply creating platforms for the organic expression of a new Belfast identity, and the broad leeway for interpretive applications of policy, the framework of documents discussed above nonetheless conditions what is possible. The City Council's criteria for civic events, and the requirements of the regeneration grants, are top-down deployments of force that restrict the "ideal" to what can fit within Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, or with the city council's definition of Good Relations (Foucault 1977). The funding and policy network acts through its dispersed agency to enforce a vision of the ideal Belfast that, though vague, enshrines a saccharine, tourist- and family-friendly multiculturalism (Latour 2005, Law 2009, Bennett 2005).

> Lewis Mumford writes that the function of the City is to bring together
>
> Within relatively narrow compass, the diversity and variety of special cultures: at least in token quantities all races and cultures can be found here, along with their languages, their customs, their costumes, their typical cuisines: here the representatives of mankind first meet face to face on neutral ground. The complexity and the cultural inclusiveness of the metropolis embody the complexity and variety of the world as a whole. (1961: 561)

The Belfast of the Troubles may have failed in its function as a city and capital to "prepare mankind for the wider associations and unifications which the modern conquest of time and space has made…inevitable" (1961: 561). Segregation, isolation, and conflict dominated people's associations with the City, and characterized it as a space of fear (Anderson and Shuttleworth 2007). Space being the medium in which individuals act,

perceive and experience social life, the segregated city could only serve to reproduce itself in that fearful image (Lefebvre 1991). But the project of regeneration—which includes changes to both the physical space and the public imaginary—reflects a desire to fulfill the responsibilities of that noble title "City," first granted to Belfast by Queen Victoria in 1888.

In the 1890s, after gaining city-status, Belfast the industrial boomtown reinvented itself as Belfast the European capital, building the copper-domed City Hall, the Grand Opera House, widening Royal Avenue, and pointing the province toward the aspirational architectures of Paris, London and Berlin (McIntosh 2006). The promise of grandeur and cosmopolitanism remains in the limestone facades of the city center; it was the loss of footfall, the fear of the other, and vacancy of public squares that drained the city center of its vitality. With the conflict-era checkpoints dismantled, the bombed Opera House and Hotel Europa rebuilt, the work of repopulating and revitalizing remains. These policies acknowledge the fact, however, that regeneration is not just a physical project. Just as for Harvey (2008), the ability to "remake our cities and ourselves" is a precious and necessary right, public ritual is the precious and necessary expression of that right. In the ecstasy of performance and shared experience, Durkheim exclaims, "our societies once again will know hours of creative effervescence during which new ideals will again spring forth and new formulas emerge to guide humanity for a time" (1995 [1912]: 429). The project of regeneration aims this high—whether any individual within the assemblage realizes it—because reinvention can only aim at an ideal.

Chapter Five: The Producers

Until now the BEAT Initiative has been contained in its black box, producing parades predictably while I explored the semiosis of policy and funding. How an arts organization operates to produce the civic events entrusted to it, however, is no less complex. Moreover, it is the work of artists to create—and in the context of Belfast's regeneration, their inventions present the urban audience with visual, audible, tangible representations of the ideal Belfast, rather than just policy jargon. A look at how the BEAT produces parades is equally an exploration of cultural genesis. The works that the BEAT and other arts organizations interject into the civic life of the city become the memories and experiences that transform the urban center from undifferentiated "space" to enculturated "place" (Tuan 1977), and remake the city into its ideal self. The BEAT Initiative, an acronym for Belfast East Arts Trading, is a carnival arts training, education, and production company that has worked since 1995 to bring a Brazilian carnival style to Belfast to and build the confidence of young performers. Highlighting the BEAT Initiative as a model, this chapter explores the motivations and visions of the production team; it examines how the city's public policy and regeneration schemes reverberate in the BEAT's programs; and it addresses the broader theme of how "third-way" parading contributes to Belfast's ongoing physical, social and economic regeneration.

In a Warehouse on Boyd Street

I turn the corner onto Boyd Street, where warehouses stare down terrace houses along a short block of Belfast's undisturbed industrial past. Situated between the M2 highway and North Queen Street, this tiny row of brick survived the road works demolitions of the 1970s only to find itself cleaved from the town center, at the edge of the run down Shankill Road. As I walk toward my destination, the warehouse at the far end of the street, I brush my fingers along the sills and doorknobs of the homes on my right. These workers' houses, built during the Edwardian expansion, are so small that property lines are marked by the door jamb on one side, and window frame on the other. In my absent-mindedness I nearly knock the teacup out of the hands of a woman standing in her open doorway; I nod an apologetic good morning and hurry on; she continues to watch her dog sniff at car tires. It was ten a.m., but on the quiet street it felt like early morning, and in the warehouse at the end the carnival was still slumbering.

Even when they lack the puppeteers and pushers that animate them, the fanciful creations of the BEAT Initiative, which line the walls and pack every corner of the warehouse, are alive with vibrant colors and the goofy faces of anthropomorphized animals and objects. Giant puppets hang over the railing of a small balcony, and are packed into the space between the lofted offices and the corrugated roof. Oversized props are protected from dust by clear plastic covers, making them look like foil-wrapped hard candies fit for a giant. And among them sits Gulliver, the giant himself, built for the 2008 Belfast City Carnival, who has been repainted and re-accessorized each successive year, an enormous doll-like palimpsest, to suit each year's theme. For now he is still, piled high with props, his detachable head resting between his knees to make him smaller than the garage door, he waits patiently to be rolled out for the next parade.

The warehouse is more than storage for the people that work and create here; it is a prototype of what the BEAT's founder and creative director, David Boyd, has named the "Carnival Center of Excellence." In the architectural rendering that hangs in the office loft, the Center of Excellence is a purpose-built performance, studio and exhibition space, with a little café open to the public. In the reality of the warehouse where I stood, there is less room and no street presence to entice the public in, but it nonetheless meets many of the needs envisioned in the drawing. The existing space is two linked workshops, the larger of which also houses lofted storage, offices and studios. There is a sound-proof music room, where the Beat'n Drum samba band practice, and the children's group "TinyBEAT" meet. Above this, racks of costumes, organized by color, are packed into the lofted costume shop. The smaller workshop could be mistaken for an auto repair or ironsmith's; here sculptors and welders build the floats' internal metal frames. And on the day of my visit, they were hard at work attaching a human-sized hamster wheel to a stripped car chassis. Across the room, at a table amid piles of Styrofoam, core-board and lightweight sculpting materials, the Carnival Creations club had left their papier-mâché constructions to dry. Next to them were shelves full of puppets made by the BEAT's artists and students in their puppet-making workshops, which are held in a small room at the back, packed with colorful felts and fabrics, paint, beads and trims that catch the eye and glint in the sun on parade day.

Despite the scale of the BEAT's productions, it is actually quite a small organization, with only about half a dozen employees. In the main office at the front of the warehouse, Eileen and Jean effectively run the administration of the company. Eileen, the project manager, writes grant applications, promotional materials, and is essentially

responsible for explaining the BEAT's work and vision to a wide array of funders and board members, and for liaising with partner organizations. Jean keeps the books, hires artists, and maintains an archive of promotional materials and newspaper articles that have featured the BEAT. Jean, who is also David's wife, has been in a supporting role since the organization's beginnings. She is perceived as a sort of "mother hen" by many of the BEAT's staff, and even refers to herself as having "mommied" the BEAT's long-running samba band, Beat'n Drum, "until it got a life of its own," she says, along with the youth clubs which she still runs, Carnival Creations and Tiny Beat. Damian, the Development Artist, leads the Beat'n Drum samba band, and helps to coordinate project development. Several part-time staff and freelance artists split their time between the workshop and the upstairs office; most projects are tackled with all hands on deck. Matt shares Damian's duties leading the Samba Band and teaching drumming workshops, and Emily coordinates participating groups and instructional workshops during the busy parading season. John, who has a background in mechanical engineering, clowning and circus performing, manages the workshop and creates many of the BEAT's floats and props. David C., the warehouse manager, is a fixer; he helps build, cleans, repairs equipment, engineers the sound during performances, and organizes the transportation of the costumes, floats and props to and from the parade site. And Christine, perched in the sewing room at the back of the workshop, sews all the participants' costumes. Beyond this staff, the BEAT regularly employs about a dozen or more freelance artists to both conduct instructional workshops with the BEAT's clientele and perform in its events. On actual parade days, the BEAT's numbers are expanded with dozens of volunteers, stewards and other helpers.

The BEAT Initiative Team		
Name	**Role**	**Responsibilities**
David Boyd	Creative Director	Develops annual themes, liaison with board and collaborators, hiring, some prop-making, collaborates on design and event planning
Eileen	Project Manager	Grant applications, liaison with board, inter-organizational collaborations, internal reviews, collaborates on design and event planning
Jean	(No title)	Payroll, accounts, TinyBeat and Carnival Creations club leader, keeps media archive, collaborates on design and event planning
Damian	Development Artist	Teaches and band manager for Beat'n Drum samba band, researches new projects, website and social media, collaborates on design and event planning, collaborating with outside artists
Matt	Development Artist	Teaches and manages Beat'n Drum, collaborates event planning, building and prop making,
John Q.	Workshop Manager	Designs floats and mechanical puppets and props, Builds structural supports for floats and large props, teaches workshops, performs at events,
David C.	Warehouse Manager	Manages storage and space usage in warehouse, manages transportation of floats and prop to and from parades, sound technician, general maintenance, building props and floats
Emily	Event Coordinator	Liaises with event participants, organizes parade order
John G.	Temporary Placement	Office assistant, research, prop-building, website
Christine	Freelance Artist	Chief costume-maker
Catherine	Freelance Artist	Paints props, make-up artist, makes costumes
Paddy	Freelance Artist	Metal worker, builds large props and floats
Sally	Freelance Artist	Workshop leader and make-up artist and event steward
Sheelagh	Freelance Artist	Workshop leader and event steward
Katie	Freelance Artist	Musical performer
Mark	Freelance Artist	Workshop leader and performer
Susie	Freelance Artist	Workshop leader and performer

Figure 5.1: List of roles and responsibilities of BEAT Initiative employees

The BEAT Initiative also provides professional development to the arts community by inviting international artists to share their skills in special workshops and perform in the BEAT's events. In 2011, for instance, both a Brazilian carnival performer and a French puppet-maker held in-house training sessions and participated in BEAT events. Along with the opportunities for local artists, Beat'n Drum, Carnival Creations and Tiny Beat provide arts education and creative outlets to people of all ages. While the younger members gain the opportunity to perform in front of large groups, the Beat'n Drum band often to travels internationally to samba invitationals and maracatu encontros. Regardless of the attention granted the BEAT's parades, these clubs are at the heart of the organization's mission. Established in 1995 in East Belfast, a loyalist area, the BEAT taught carnival arts, both to serve as an alternative to the politically fraught atmosphere surrounding Orange parades, and as a creative outlet for youth in the impoverished and socially isolated corners of the city. Capitalizing on the early popularity of the Notting Hill Carnival in London (Cohen 1993), the carnival style, and in particular the samba drumming, was meant to attract young Loyalist boys away from the "blood and thunder" fife and drum bands that often had paramilitary links (Radford 2001, Cooper 2010). When the BEAT began producing carnivals, it was to provide these young people with the chance to perform for their communities. The first carnival was not in fact in the city center, but on Albertbridge Road, a main thoroughfare in East Belfast and the route through which July 12th Orange parades enter the city center. Over the years, despite precarious financing and a sometimes-tenuous relationship with the City Council, the BEAT grew its events as it gained popularity and clientele. In 2006, the same year the BEAT first took on responsibility for organize Belfast's St. Patrick's Day festivities, the

BEAT merged its summer carnival with the Council's official summer parade, The Lord Mayor's Show.

I began participant observation with the BEAT Initiative, with permission from the creative director, in January of 2011. In the early months of that year I was a daily visitor to the Boyd street warehouse, as the BEAT prepared for the March St. Patrick's Day Carnival. I chatted with artists, conducted interviews with the organization's key players, observed workshops, and even helped with some of the lighter creative work, where I could. I learned how the staff coordinated with community groups to build its list of participants for the parade day. And on St. Patrick's Day I spent the day with the BEAT, walking along as a steward in both the Belfast Carnival and the Downpatrick Parade, where the Beat'n Drum band and several floats made an additional appearance.

Making Culture

Just as civic events are conditioned and determined by a network of policy and funding streams, the creative work of producing a parade also takes place within a semiotic; however this is more broadly conditioned by what Bourdieu calls the field of cultural production (1993). The BEAT's work integrates into the larger arts community, responding to trends and concerns affecting local artists, many of whom also freelance with the BEAT Initiative.

The field of artistic production in Bourdieu corresponds to Marx's economic theory of production; production in all cases is subject to the material conditions and structural relations in which it is embedded. Moreover the "field" is a space of "strategic possibilities" (Bourdieu 1993: 314) in which actors compete with each other, values circulate, and actions are conditioned by existing patterns of behavior, beliefs and

assumptions (Hanks 2005: 73). Applied to the production of art, this means that the distribution of different forms of capital—economic, cultural and symbolic—conditions the ability of artists to operate autonomously with regard to the expectations and conventions of the field in which they operate (Hesmondhalgh 2006, Bourdieu 1993). To translate this in terms of the semiotic theory with which we have already been dealing, Bourdieu is suggesting that the "latitude of interpretation between utterer and interpreter" (Liszka 1996: 94) depends on both parties' access to forms of capital and positions within the field of production. Producers of art hold positions with relatively low economic capital, but high cultural capital, meaning that while they cannot command the power of money, they do have influence over social tastes. They are somewhat independent of the capitalist principle of domination (i.e., whatever maintains the power of the dominant class of consumers), acting instead within a space open to innovation, creativity, and rule-bending (Bourdieu 1993).

Importantly, artistic products do not derive their value exclusively from their commodification. A work of art results from the cooperation a large network of people, from the instrument maker to the composer to the conductor to the virtuoso violinist; this network "is the source of whatever social value is ascribed to a work" (Becker 1976: 705, see also Gell 1998). It is "their mutual appreciation of the conventions they share and the support they mutually afford one another [that] convinces them that what they are doing is worth doing, that the products of their efforts are valid works" (705). Bourdieu overlays this network of production with a theory of power, since art is "embedded within a universe of categorization, selective distinctions and evaluations" (Hanks 2005: 77). This is Bourdieu's *symbolic* principle of domination: "works of art exist as symbolic

objects only if they are known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such" (Bourdieu 1993: 37). Therefore, understanding a work of art in the context of the field of cultural production requires understanding both its material production, and its symbolic production.

> The production of the value of the work… amounts to the same thing [as] belief in the value of the work. It therefore has to consider as contributing to production not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work—critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such. (1993: 37)

This adds a tautological element to an understanding of the actor network which produces any art object: the network as a whole adds value, a symbolic mode of signification,[27] but only to those who recognize that value as significant.

In a theory of communication, the capability of recognition implies both that utterances—or artistic products—can be completely new and unique, while also fitting into a social context in which different individuals with different sets of experiences and knowledge share a mutually understood mode of discourse. It is the quality of answerability, according to Bakhtin, that links the conceptual system of the utterer, to the conceptual system of "one striving to understand" (1981: 282), whose reaction "consummates" the meaning of the utterance (1990: 5). Thus, Bakhtin writes, "every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is

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[27] According to Peirce, symbolic signification necessitates a human interpretant, or "the idea of a symbol-using mind" because symbols are conventional or common forms of conveying meaning (Liszka 1996: 39). As Liszka explains, "In general the symbol is a sign precisely because it is interpreted as such."

indissolubly merged with the response, with a motivated agreement or disagreement" (1981: 282). Together, utterance and response "establish a system of complex interrelationships, consonances and dissonances with the word and enriches it with new elements. It is precisely such an understanding that the speaker counts on" (Bakhtin1981: 282).

Whereas Bourdieu characterized artistic generativity as struggle, "the product and prize of a permanent conflict" (1993: 34), Bakhtin is suggesting that each utterance actually transforms the system of meaning in which it is embedded. Neither of these authors aligns precisely with Peirce, whose theory of communication assumes that its purpose is the complete "determination of the transmission," that is, to eliminate the latitude of interpretation between utterer and interpreter and to achieve complete mutual understanding (Liszka 1996: 94). All three theorists, however, add crucial elements to this discussion of cultural production in Belfast. It is already clear that the parades in question occur within a field of production concerned with urban regeneration, in which certain priorities are promoted over others, depending on the relative social and economic capital of each actor. Moreover, the parades, as artistic productions, occur within "an urban art which registers Belfast *as a city*," and as against the historical weight of the Troubles (Graham 2009: 106). But the parades also, and intentionally, propose something new and *indeterminate* with regard to how the how the city shall be understood, and they count both on the capacity of their audience to recognize the "third way" parade's dissonance with existing cultural genres, and the transformative effect that a new understanding of "the City" could have on public culture and social space in Belfast.

A major symbolic shift of the type that reverses meanings, alters public

perceptions, and produces change necessitates a radical disruption of established discourse and settled meanings. Such an utterance has a mediating agency of its own, unintended by the speaker. This is the uncertainty of "Iconoclash," a term coined by Latour to describe the mediating effect of attempts at iconoclasm, where the results are unknown or unexpected—as when an attempt to destroy an icon perceived as dangerous reproduces the icon with an entirely new and unintended meaning (Latour 2002: 20).

In Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* (1968), carnival affronts the official culture of church and state. The "carnivalesque" and "grotesque" are base, erotic, scatological, humorous, transgressive, liberal and egalitarian elements of popular folk culture that reinvent and reorder the social space of carnival for "purely human relations" (Bakhtin 1968: 10), absent the hierarchic distinctions, norms and prohibitions of officialdom (Webb 2005: 122). Carnival "disrupts the uniformity of thought" that is the consequence of the automation and routinization of conventional practice (Elliot 1999: 129). Whereas Bourdieu views routinization as a mode of control over the cultural processes that uphold the status of the dominant classes, both he and Bakhtin view "official culture" as enforcing banal conventions, and imposing heteronomous definitions of what may be considered "the legitimate mode of cultural production" and "human accomplishment" (Bourdieu, 1993: 41). In contrast with these dominant modes of aesthetic expression, carnival has the effect of parody, which according to Bourdieu, renders canonized conventions incongruent and even absurd (31). Moreover, the "carnival reversal implies a change from principles of stability and closure to constant possibility" (Elliot 1999: 130). The carnivalesque operates within a space of innovation and rule-bending, conveying cultural capital and the power of valuation to the community of carnival participants and

performers. The multivocality of carnival means that its symbolic messaging can never be overdetermined by a single speaker, but rather offers a proliferation of new and different modes of meaning.

Hence the transformative power of carnival is contained not only in its capacity to disrupt and parody official culture, but also in its ability to unify the community of artists through the creative process. For Alfred Gell (1998), works of art have *dureé*, a lasting presence that reproduces itself in future responsive acts by other artists or viewers. For Gell, as artists learn from, respond to and build upon each other's work, "the structures of art history demonstrate an externalized and collectivized cognitive process" (1998: 222). Gell suggests, like Bakhtin, that the effects of each utterance on the social discourse, or artistic genre, are reproduced in future utterances. Thus, an artistic *oeuvre*, a body of work over time, has a discernable impact, not just on the production of art, but on the collective aesthetic and cultural mode of understanding, resulting eventually in a new communal truth (Gell 1998).

Operating within a field of production in which economic capital is distributed according to conformity with development agendas and regeneration policy, the BEAT Initiative produces carnivals in intentional contrast to the politically contentious Orange Order parades and other sectarianized forms of public celebration. Bryan (2009) writes that the BEAT's productions in general seem more staid than "carnivalesque," given that in Belfast they do not serve as "spaces of resistance" as they might in other cultures (14). By choosing the carnival style, the BEAT enters into correspondence with altogether more daring and transgressive implementations of the carnivalesque; the development of the Notting Hill Carnival in London in the 1970s, for instance, was characterized by

particularly volatile politics (Cohen 1993). Nonetheless, the carnival style is a non

sequitur in Belfast's culture of parading, and the artists who produce it perceive value in

their project. Carnival thus opens up a space of innovation, however small, and however

dependent on the support of official civic culture; it is space of cultural production. As

Bryan admits, carnival parades "show some elements of a shared experience and identity

across the normally conflicting political identities" (2009: 14). In the description below

of how the BEAT assembles its parades, it is clear that they operate within a network as

precarious as any other, though, given the degree of creative control which they do

exercise, what they produce ultimately proposes a clearer vision of the ideal Belfast.

Producing Carnival

While the organizational structure of the BEAT Initiative is not all that unusual

for a non-profit arts company in Belfast, the group is uniquely collaborative in terms of

how its parades actually come together. At its helm, David Boyd is responsible for the

company's creative directions. When he founded the company as Belfast East Arts

Trading, he had envisioned it as "a home for artists," a center of gravity that would pull

artists back to Belfast and provide an infrastructure for access to a workspace, facilities,

professional development training and ultimately employment. Moreover, he wanted to

develop a youth arts program, to provide new means of creative expression to the youth

in working-class East Belfast who clearly had an appetite for rhythm, music, and

performance, but who knew little else but the fife and drum bands that march in Orange

Parades. David believed the stylistic features of Afro-Caribbean and Brazilian carnival

traditions, which tapped into outdoor performance, dance and drumming, would be

appealing and culturally relevant to a Belfast audience.

Since the first carnival event in East Belfast in 1995, David's vision has been validated by an increasing demand from community groups and city councils to replicate carnival in their streets. He explains:

> When people started to see what carnival could do as an inclusive activity on the streets, that meant a huge amount to communities, but also to agencies and the likes of the City Council.… Both in Protestant Loyalist areas and in Republican Nationalist areas of the city [people] have wanted to develop local festivals and local parades and we have worked with them to facilitate that.
>
> ~ Interview May 11, 2011

What started as a small children's parade on the streets of East Belfast has since grown into a citywide event. Despite several years of uncertainty and lack of funding, by 2010, the BEAT's premier event, the summer Carnival, had been fully integrated into the City's largest municipal parade, the annual Lord Mayor's Day Show, featuring participants from all over Belfast performing dances and percussion music they learned through BEAT workshops, and wearing costumes sewn by BEAT artists. And among them were enormous puppets, stilt-walkers, international performers, and whimsical floats carrying musicians and dancers.

Bringing the event together requires collaboration over many months at several levels of operation, from seeking funding, to logistical planning and creative design, down to prop painting. The process begins with each year's annual and multi-annual funding applications to the City Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. The BEAT must demonstrate how it will use the funds to further grow its public outreach and advance on the previous year's work. Typically David and Eileen develop an in-house theme for the year, which they then articulate in their grant applications. The staff sets to work designing the large-scale projects, floats and mechanical props, which will appear

in all of the BEAT's events for a given year, before project-specific funding has been secured. Thus, much of the creative work involves fitting project-specific themes and grant-requirements into the organization's broader goals for that year.

While each of the core employees at the BEAT has his or her own particular domains of expertise, everyone takes part in the creative process and in bi-weekly staff meetings that last for hours. At a meeting I attended in early March, in preparation for the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, the entire upstairs and downstairs staff debated ideas for costumes, budgetary limits, and where to place participating groups in the procession.

For the most part, the BEAT controls the look of the entire parade by providing the props, costumes and performance workshops to their participants. Performing groups who become involved, such as the Belfast Circus School and a variety of cheerleading and gymnastics clubs, don't necessarily need the BEAT to provide workshops with artists, but will coordinate with Emily or Eileen regarding the event theme and costumes. During this meeting, Emily came to the table with news that a new group from East Belfast would be participating; Dee Street Community Centre had received a small grant from the City Council Good Relations Unit to participate in the parade, and it had determined on its own that its members would show up as a "teddy bear picnic," having used the grant to provide an outing to the Build-a-Bear store. The room was bemused and annoyed; the idea didn't fit with the "green for recycling" theme, nor had Dee Street received any outreach services or development workshops, which were one of the BEAT's grant requirements. Their enterprising idea would not have been so consternating had the BEAT's artists not cared quite as much about the thematic and visual consistency of the entire parade. For instance, the group requested that they be

placed near another Protestant group from East Belfast, whom they would feel comfortable with, but the artists thought they would "look" better near a group dressed as flowers—from the nationalist Turf Lodge. Damian joked, "They won't recognize each other from the stone throwing," referring to the recreational rioting that so frequently occurs at interfaces between loyalist and nationalist areas. It was a pickle, and it wasn't going to be solved at that meeting. John ended the discussion grumbling about the City Council, "What's the point of giving us a theme if they're going to let any Tom, Dick and Harry do what they want?"

Staff meetings often involve working through hiccups such as this, but they are also where the visual spectacle of the event comes together; they pass around draft sketches of floats and the ideas they offer begin to flesh out the unique characters of every stilt-walker and clown. Their humor builds excitement and the artists are sent away with a renewed sense of their tasks and purpose.

In the final few weeks before St. Patrick's Day, Paddy, a kinetic sculptor, John, and John G., a part-time builder and office helper, put the finishing touches on the large props and floats, and take the human-hamster-wheel car out for a spin behind the warehouse. Christine and an assistant seamstress finish up the costumes, hanging them on racks and along all the banisters of the lofted sewing room, ready to be taken to the City Hall. Christine's sister Catherine, also a part-time artist, paints papier-mâché props to look like "Irish Beer" bottles (these will dangle in front of clowns dressed as shipyard workers). Damian and Matt, who meet with their drummers every week regardless of the season rehearse the pieces they'll play at the parades, and arrange for a bus to carry the samba band from the Belfast Parade to the Downpatrick parade, where they've also been

booked. Eileen is waiting for word from the City Council to see if the interfaith police bagpipe band will really be taking part—another first for St. Patrick's Day in Belfast. Emily continues to work out the numbers of participants and the arrangement of the groups in the procession, and schedules the remaining workshops. The 2011 St. Patrick's Day Carnival is building up to have the largest number of Protestant participants ever.

A week before the Parade, I attended a BEAT workshop at the Finaghy youth club, with two freelance artists, Mark and Susie. This youth club serves a primarily Protestant community, where, Jamie, the youth counselor, told us that many parents were concerned about violence during the parade. They were thinking of the Holylands, she laughed, referring to a neighborhood of brick terraces behind Queens University, where the streets are named after Palestine, Jordan, Jerusalem, and the like, and where drunken students had caused major disruption and destruction on St. Patrick's Day in the previous few years. "I guarantee you the city center event is not like that," she said, but she wasn't surprised that the parents in Finaghy would conflate the university students' reputation for drunkenness with their expectations for a parade they'd never been to. The children at the workshop, all between eight and fourteen, had none of their parents' concerns, and were just excited to be involved in something big and fun. None had ever been in the St. Patrick's Day Parade before, they told me, and a number of the girls said that they were excited to perform because they weren't allowed to join the marching bands at the Orange Parades, which are almost exclusively male (Radford 2001). Mark led a warm up to get them relaxed and comfortable with using their bodies and voices in unison, while Susie and I prepared crafts materials. The task was to make reflective superhero cuffs and hats that looked like road-cones; they would be provided with reflective vests on the day

so they could march as part of the "safety brigade." Then Mark brought them back in a

circle to practice performing as their characters.

Back at the BEAT, I spoke with John G., who had been observing a different

workshop in the Shankill, another Protestant area, much more economically deprived

than Finaghy, and more known for loyalist paramilitary associations.

> Forget the fact that here these kids were happily working away at their
> props for performing in the St Patrick's Day Parade, despite being
> Protestants in the roughest part of the Shankill, but one kid was decorating
> his shakers with red white and blue *and* green white and gold. Woah! *And*,
> they were working with kids from Ardoyne[28] and didn't even blink an eye
> about it.
> ~John G. quoted in field notes March 14, 2011

He called it revolutionary. On the other hand, he added:

> Nobody should give a rat's ass that the PSNI[29] are in the parade, and
> nobody should care that kids from Ardoyne are working with kids from
> the Shankill. But the only way it's going to get to that point is at glacial
> speed—for this generation to grow up not caring about and not
> remembering conflict, and for the next generation not to be taught to
> hate—but here is the BEAT creating a space for one of those incremental
> moves to happen now.
> ~ John G. quoted in field notes March 14, 2011

Most of the BEAT's family of artists and freelancers express a similar feeling,

that the BEAT, merely by promoting "the value in creative arts pursuits, just as a part of

life," as Boyd put it, were also doing something spectacular and important for Belfast as

it transitions out of the conflict. In the discussion that follows, the BEAT's team of

organizers and artists explain the value they see in the project of carnival, and what they

believe it can add to a vision of Belfast's future. In particular they believe that the

BEAT's carnival-style events bring people together for shared celebrations; they provide

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[28] A nationalist area in North Belfast.
[29] Police Service of Northern Ireland.

a necessary outlet for performance and creative expression; and they are a sign of a more

confident city.

Integration, Celebration

That the Brazilian Carnival style incorporates Samba drumming is crucial to the

success of the BEAT Carnival in Belfast. Several people implied that the Samba style

was reminiscent of the indigenous tradition of martial marches with fife and drum bands,

which is germane to both PUL and CNR communities,[30] without being specific to either.

The BEAT team believes they have a unique ability to draw people from different

backgrounds to the same event. As David C., the warehouse manager, explained:

> I think…to bring people together without there being a religious
> perspective on it, I think that's a good thing for Northern Ireland. It's one
> of the things that I enjoy about it most, that people from all communities
> come and join in. I think it's something that the BEAT brings to Belfast
> quite a lot, like, even on Paddy's day they had Catholics and Protestants in
> the parade, which is quite a big step forward. I don't think that would have
> been there without us, to be perfectly honest.
> ~Interview April 4, 2011

Of course it is one thing for the BEAT to draw on its extensive contacts and

returning clients to produce an integrated event, but to know that the audience, especially

on St. Patrick's Day, would also be integrated, was a particular source of pride for many

of the staff, including Jean:

> This St. Patrick's Day there are so many more participants, and…within
> Tiny Beat there are a few who come locally from the Shankill, and…the
> parents have to be with the children in the parade. So I have these few

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[30] Ireland is home to a variety of fraternal societies that originated in the 18th and 19th centuries, to promote language, heritage and in many cases political interests. Those that remain today, in particular the Loyal Orange Order, which serves the PUL community, and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which serves the CNR community, are politically conservative, and follow very similar visual and symbolic conventions, from carrying banners with historical and biblical motifs, to the sashes and bowler caps they wear (Jarman and Bryan 1998).

mommies that come along who are from the Shankill and are in that parade, so it's great. And in the older group, again, a local girl was involved and her mommy was in the audience. That's something that would have been hard to imagine four years ago, because…St. Patrick's Day would have been seen as such an event for the other side, and the fact that that has changed now, people coming from the Protestant side are more likely to come to see the parade.

~Interview April 5, 2011

According to John:

Parades in Northern Ireland are a contentious matter; they have always been segregated. There was never a community, communal parade until carnival came around. And it's something that's not celebrating a massacre 400 years ago, or one religion or another. To see the diversity of people that come out and dance up the street side by side, that's a positive thing. People know about us, there are hundreds and hundreds of people at every event that have been touched by what we do in this organization.

~Interview April 1, 2011

For the same reason, having been impressed and "touched" by a BEAT parade, local artists will seek to be involved, even if just as volunteers. They recognize that integrated performance and celebration has not just a symbolic potency, but also produces the practical effects of building people's confidence, teaching them to cooperate, and simply how to connect with others. Eileen reflected, describing one of her grant applications, that ultimately a parade such as theirs is not about any particular heritage or ideology, but about sharing the experience of living and getting by in the same city:

By everyone coming out in the carnival day in costumes they've all made, they've all had the same sort of artist contact time, it's more about celebrating the similarities than celebrating the differences. Because no matter what part of Belfast you go to, if you go into the New Lodge or up the Shankill Road, the kids are dealing with the same issues and youth workers are trying to keep them off the streets. There are more similarities than difference.

~Interview April 5, 2011

The "effervescent" experience of communal celebration is something that is real and inspiring to the artists who have become involved with the BEAT. "Don't

underestimate what you can achieve through bringing people together in a craft workshop or singing," said Katie, a singer and actress who wore an incredible "Miss Recycling" dress made of plastic shopping totes at the St. Patrick's Day Parade. She added, "It might sound silly but, really, there's a togetherness…the togetherness of all these people on the street." Katie remembers feeling deeply moved by her first encounter with the BEAT Carnival, by the "togetherness" she felt, despite the fact that "I didn't know anyone. I didn't know anyone at the BEAT; I'd never met David. I just felt part of something really incredible, and I just felt elated, and I wanted to—that was when I knew I wanted to work there." For Katie, the experience of just *seeing* the carnival parade, before she became involved with the BEAT, gave her a sense of pride that she had never expected to feel for her hometown.

> I felt proud because something like that was going on here. I just thought it was amazing, all the floats, I'd never seen anything like it honestly. I studied in New York, and even being in the Greenwich Village Halloween Parade, it didn't have as much impact on me as the Belfast carnival parade did, you know, because I hated Belfast when I grew up here. I hated it. All I wanted to do was get away from it. But I just couldn't believe that this happened in Belfast. Because Belfast seemed so boring to me, and this was amazing.
>
> ~Interview April 13, 2011

The idea that people could fill Belfast's streets without antagonizing one half of the population, or without rioting, was incredible and inspiring to this group of artists. The parades thus had the effect of opening up their imaginations and, as Paddy notes below, the future. John G. recalled the first time he had seen a carnival parade:

> Whenever I was back from Holland my brother and I were in town and heard the drums come out of nowhere. What's that? It's not the 12th! Then I see this carnival go by, one of the first, and I didn't even know that was possible.
>
> ~Field notes March 14, 2011

Paddy, the kinetic sculptor who built the hamster wheel car, added:

> Yeah, it was new and exciting, and it seemed like it was the future. At the
> time, whenever I was looking to get involved in it, it was a new idea and it
> seemed that there was hope in it.
>
> ~Interview April 12, 2011

What the BEAT carnival parades provide, in Damian's words, are a "third way" form of parading. His reference to the Blair-era moderate politics, implies that the BEAT's productions could be a bridge between the different extremes within Belfast's population. Carnival offers something more than an amalgamation of familiar, conventional styles; it is something so new and different, it could spur new shared interests, "We were trying to bring a 'third way' into Northern Irish Music, in that you have the Irish traditional sounds, you have the sounds of the flute band in Loyalism…a new type of parading was needed that was nonpolitical, inclusive, and that's what we did" (Interview September 16, 2010).

Owning the Streets

For people who specialize or freelance in community arts or arts education and outreach, creative expression is a natural and necessary feature of human life. But the public aspect of parading adds an additional layer of meaning; performing is an opportunity to imagine oneself and one's identity differently, and a way for people to make one's presence known on the streets and to the viewing public. Christine, the costume maker, saw this role-playing as central to carnival:

> I mean they're just costumes, but once you put the performers in them and
> the kids in their costumes as well, they're what makes the carnival. If you
> send people down in colorful carnival clothes, then they'll, like, get into
> that person, that role, and they enjoy themselves because they're letting

themselves, letting their hair down, becoming a different person for the day.

<div align="right">~Interview March 30, 2011</div>

Katie emphasized that carnival provides a completely different atmosphere of fun and silliness, which is an invaluable source of release and relaxation,

> Just getting everyone out on the streets…and saying, like, 'Let's go out and just enjoy this and not think about what it means too much except that it's about spacemen or cows with wibbly-wobbly eyes.' …That's really what people need, isn't it? Because no matter what stresses you have in your life…you need something that provides light relief. And I think this does [that] and I don't think it should be underestimated. You know, the power of one event, if it makes someone's day better or makes someone's week better or more, it's important.
>
> <div align="right">~Interview April 13, 2011</div>

For many artists, the very same scenario makes an equally important political statement. That people can perform together in an inclusive and integrated event *without* reference to politics is itself an important message, and it is the BEAT's intention to convey that message. Eileen explained that carnival taps into a basic impulse for collective action:

> That's what people do. They want to come out and be in large numbers and support something or prove something or whatever, and that's kind of what carnival does because, obviously, … you're getting all those people out. But we're doing it in a way that we're not necessarily blatantly, boldly making a statement about 'oh we've got peace and we're all walking down the street' kind of thing, I think it's a more accessible way for people to get involved in kind of having a voice or owning their city or owning the streets.
>
> <div align="right">~Interview April 5, 2011</div>

The time of our interview was only a few days after the young police officer, Ronan Kerr, had been killed by a car bomb in Omagh. News was circulating about a planned demonstration in front of City Hall, for a moment of silence and protest, and Eileen was

reflecting on how the BEAT's events tap into the same desire to make one's voice

heard—not for any particular political end, but simply to be heard and recognized.

In many ways, the BEAT taps into traditions and behaviors that already exist in

Belfast, but in recombining them with outside styles, adding humor and irreverence, they

have the "carnivalesque" effect of subverting and re-signifying the old familiar tropes.

Sheelagh, a multidisciplinary artist, who often freelances with the BEAT, described

seeing an Orange parade, in which she recognized a sense of excitement and pride of

place, but could not extricate it from the weight of a contentious history.

> It was a big event; there were little kids and it was very much a family
> thing. There were a lot of teenage girls [for whom] this was obviously a
> big deal. There was just the spectacle of 'Ooh, I know him!'….[It's] just
> something that you don't see that often, especially in working class
> Protestant areas with working class Protestant men, that they were just
> really proud to be in their uniforms and to be playing for their audience.
> And I was just thinking, God, if you could harness some of that, and take
> all the politics and negative triumphalism and celebrating historical acts
> that are acts of aggression, and you just took that energy of being
> seen…and being really proud of what you are doing, that you are
> twiddling your baton, or playing your drum or your flute…. They were
> fantastic traditions that have just been lost in this *thing*.
> ~Interview April 15, 2011

Sheelagh, though Protestant herself, had grown up with a prejudice against Orange

parades because of their association with violence. By incorporating carnival styles into

their events, she explained, they really could transform spaces and attitudes. By drawing

on familiar seeming but exogenous traditions that carry no attached stigma, the BEAT's

events lay the groundwork for a genuine shared identity, which, she said, "is quite a

subversive idea for a place like this with the tradition that it has" (Interview April 15,

2011).

> The BEAT has the power, carnival has the power, to take some of those
> things that people are familiar with and gradually over time—I don't think

> we're there yet—to make it into something that has a real community ownership…to manufacture out of nothing that feeling of 'We own the street. This is our street. Look at us.'
>
> ~Interview April 15, 2011

Sally, another freelance artist, added, "I think carnival in Northern Ireland has a certain sort of Irish humor; it's quite self depreciating. It really is an amalgamation of carnival styles but fitted into sort of a Belfast sensibility" (Interview April 13, 2011).

Public performance is a naturally occurring, even necessary, activity in Belfast, as it is in any culture. What these artists recognize in the tendency of Belfast's residents to turn out onto the streets to perform in their various ways and for various purposes, is an *a priori* shared identity, shared formal conventions and symbols that underlie whatever divisive twists the city's divergent factions have cleaved to. By bringing in the carnivalesque elements of humor, reversal, and familiar-yet-unfamiliar signifiers, the BEAT hopes to cultivate the underlying commonalities into something that all the residents of Belfast can identify with and have pride in.

Confidence

Finally, reiterating a theme also apparent among Belfast's public officials and arts administrators, the BEAT's parades cultivate a sense of confidence in Belfast's progress and development. Sally expressed this beautifully, saying, "I think regeneration happens in a city that is happier with itself. If a city is still in turmoil or in trouble, and although things have just started exploding again here, I think if a city is contented in itself and communities are happier with themselves and with their surroundings, I think things follow" (Interview April 13, 2011).

Often, my interlocutors cited the fact that the city center has become a thriving

commercial, if not residential, center, as proof of this newfound confidence. As Sally

explained:

> The fact that community groups are now coming into the city center for
> the likes of St. Patrick's Day Parade, like kids never used to come in. A lot
> of kids who live in the estates, like even the New Lodge, which is right off
> the city center, don't necessarily go into the city center. You know that's a
> really big thing. And if they feel safe to bring their kids in, it's a reflection
> of how, not contented, but how happier they are with coming into the city,
> and that itself feeds a feeling of good feeling, of a city that is actually quite
> thriving.
> ~ Interview April 13, 2011

This sentiment echoed throughout my interviews, many crediting the BEAT with

facilitating positive change, or at the very least, creating opportunities to make progress

more obvious. Eileen reflected:

> For a long time no one came out into our streets, you know. I mean city
> center was locked down in the evening times, nobody went out in it, so it
> is that idea of … reclaiming the streets—and in large numbers. You know
> that's showing that people in this city want that to happen.
> ~Interview April 5, 2011

For David, the possibility of "reclaiming the streets" was proof of the value of his work

as creative director:

> You keep hearing people say 'people taking over the streets and having
> ownership of their streets for the day,' and that stands whether it's the city
> center or whether it's a local parade, a local festival, local carnival.
> …Otherwise the streets and the city center can be seen to be just run by
> the bus company, the traders association and so on…. Carnival does have
> an important role: to say that the city is also about people.
> ~Interview May 11, 2011

All of these themes—celebration, ownership, confidence—are ultimately constitutive of a

post-conflict Belfast identity, which, as Sally articulately explained, is neither ersatz nor

inauthentic, but genuine expression of what Belfast's inhabitants have in common:

I think people are prouder of their identity—not prouder, that's the wrong word—more aware of their background and of where they come from, and aware of others around them… People are just happy to be who they are… and, I think, that is the real thing that is shining through in Belfast now… I think we've had the dark days, and the people have different ways of dealing with it. And I think we're dealing with that… You know we're not like a utopian society, but I think being happy with our past…just being who we are and being proud of that—and that's something that we've talked a lot about in the BEAT—[is] what makes us what we are.

~Interview April 13, 2011

Jean and David note that the popularity of the carnival is double-edged; while it has the byproduct of "the tourism side, in making the city more attractive to people from outside, and helping to change the image of the city," according to David, Jean has noticed that everything new and different seems to be described by the Belfast press as having a "carnival atmosphere." To some extent the BEAT's carnival product has been commodified and reproduced in the demands of funding schemes and public event contracts since the BEAT began its work in the 1990s. When the BEAT began, for instance, there was no category for "carnival arts" at the Arts Council for Northern Ireland, as there is now. Now that the carnival arts have been defined and delineated by the state and municipal funding networks, the demands for what carnival can achieve are also greater. In reflecting on the relationship between the BEAT and the City Council, David explained:

I think it's still clearly an issue where we have a very strong rear guard position from some of our leaders who are very much caught up in the past, even if it's just the recent past, and then others who are making a break with some of the historical baggage and traditional baggage to look toward the future. And of course that's where the carnival work has been important in relation to our community traditions, our cultural traditions here of parading and marching and proclaiming your identity in relation to the past and sort of unchanging traditions.

~Interview May 11, 2011

The BEAT Initiative has struggled to establish its audience and obtain a steady stream of funding, and as David notes, it has faced opposition from those who fear change just as a matter of course. Nonetheless, the organization has produced a recognizable body of work that has become immensely popular throughout Northern Ireland, with many cities requesting the BEAT's floats and samba band to be included in their events, and neighborhood groups desiring to develop their own local carnivals. The Beat'n Drum band, which now has an international reputation, has even spurred a spin-off group, the Streetwise Samba Band, which performs professionally throughout Ireland. Gell describes an artist's *oeuvre* as a "single, distributed object…a four-dimensional entity" (1998: 245). Likewise, the BEAT's carnival *oeuvre* has left a lasting impression on the consciousness of Belfast's various publics. Through its network of artists, participants, and enlisted sources of funding, the BEAT has brought carnival into Belfast's mainstream, creating a new space for "third way" parading.

A New Carnival, a New Belfast

In Abner Cohen's 1993 study of the Notting Hill Carnival, he describes the evolution of the London event as "a political-cultural movement" (148).

> In such a movement a collectivity creates, revives, modifies, mobilises and integrates various cultural forms to deal with rapidly changing economic-political conditions. The evolving cultural structure defines the political identity and exclusiveness of the collectivity, serves as a system of communication, an ideology to guide their action. In the process the cultural forms undergo a transformation by being cermonialized, ritualized, aestheticized, mythologized and thus appear as autonomous, irreducible, signifying functionlessness, detached from politics. (Cohen 1993: 148)

What Cohen describes is a politically contested form of popular culture, established and promoted by a community of West-Indian migrants battling racism and marginality in

their new England home (1993: 4-5). The Notting Hill carnival thus occasioned release and revelry for celebrants, affirmation of self-identity, and resistance to the social order, suiting Bakhtin's theoretical construction of the "carnivalesque," until, eventually, it was coopted into the dominant culture and became, like other rituals, "a cathartic mechanism," an innocuous celebration, and the inspiration for David Boyd's BEAT Initiative (1993: 154). By the time Boyd had imported the carnival style to Belfast, the cultural form of carnival was conceived not as a mode of resistance or a political movement, but as an aesthetic genre.

In this respect, the Belfast Carnival more closely resembles a produced work of art, operating within genre to articulate a particular critical message. As the artists above report, they believe the BEAT's work promotes integration, a democratic ownership of public space, and a more confident and authentic local identity, and all this in contrast to the funding network's official agenda of regeneration, which represents a "new Belfast" characterized by economic development and political neutrality. But these two messages are more closely related than they seem. Colin Graham writes, "the unfolding political process of the North is ghosted into the structure of artworks, most often in ways which…register the burden of the moment and the necessity to note and critique, if not give voice to, the unspoken elements of the new Northern Ireland" (2009:106). The emergent body of Northern Irish art, which I argue includes the BEAT carnival, "gives voice," according to Graham, "to the paradox of a society which was perhaps once suffering from an over-reliance on history suddenly finding its history made anodyne and replaced by signs of the global market" (2009: 111). Ironically, Boyd has stripped the carnival of its political-historical baggage, and uses it to do the same to Belfast. In the

"hollowing out of the past in the present" (Graham 2009: 111), the carnival issues its carnivalesque disruption of habituated and routinized practice. It offers, in place of the old divisions and heavy history, a "new Belfast" composed of "purely human relations" (Bakhtin 1968: 10).

Illustrations to Chapter Five

Figure 5.2: The BEAT warehouse.

Figure 5.3: Props in the BEAT warehouse, puppet rickshaw passengers and Gulliver, with his head in his knees, behind them.

Figure 5.4: A performer's costume made of newspaper.

Figure 5.5: The human hamster wheel in the BEAT workshop.

Interlogue: The Funding Turn

"Did you hear the news?" asked Matt when he buzzed me into warehouse.

"No, what?"

The staff meeting was already underway. David had issued a press release the night before, the night he heard from the City Council that the BEAT Initiative had not won the tender to produce the Lord Mayor's Show this year. Emily was upstairs fielding calls from group leaders wanting to know if the St. Patrick's Day, only ten days from now, was still on. Some promised not to participate in the Lord Mayor's Show, if the BEAT wasn't running it.

"It's a disgrace," said John, after letting me take a run on the hamster wheel, "The money went to a private company."

ArtsEkta, another community arts organization that runs a number of Indian cultural events, won the tender. Its partner, Small World Music, is a private company specializing in event management.

"We would never dream of competing for Mela," said Jean, referring to ArtsEkta's premier summer festival and betraying her possessiveness of the Lord Mayor's Show. "How could they have thought we wouldn't be affected by this?"

Free now from the staff meeting, David told me, "This affects everything we do."

It was only a few years ago that the BEAT had merged its Summer Carnival with the Lord Mayor's Show, shifting all of its creative energies into the Council-sponsored event rather than its own. "So here we are having worked so hard to create an event that the Council themselves can't do, and have said they can't do themselves, and they go and take it away."

Boyd and the BEAT team were quickly forced to reevaluate their plan for the rest of the year, and scrambled to secure the funding to replace what they had lost. Due to the BEAT's practice of designing the whole year's work around a single theme, and reusing their major builds in each of the year's events, the floats for the St. Patrick's Day Carnival were only partially paid for by the St. Patrick's event contract. The funds expected for the Lord Mayor's Show would cover the rest. Now, having lost the year's biggest contract, and with St. Patrick's Day less than a week away, the BEAT faced a warehouse full of unpaid-for floats, and lacked a pretext for the rest of the work they had planned.

Although the BEAT's team of performers and artists would be involved in a number of events throughout the 2011 season, after St. Patrick's Day no other event would require the degree of outreach work or new constructions that the Lord Mayor's Show would have involved. The BEAT's extended network of freelancers would lose work, and new builds would be limited to a professional training workshop where the BEAT artists learned how to make large papier-mâché puppets. There was less activity in the warehouse on the days when I came back in to interview, and, as it could hardly be avoided, my interlocutors often reflected on the funding turn, trying to understand the

Council's decision. Many felt a sense of betrayal, while others questioned their own

complacency and satisfaction at what they perceived to be their accomplishments.

Those who had been with the BEAT since its inception felt that the BEAT and the

Council had evolved a special relationship over the years, and that the BEAT was integral

to transforming the City's public culture into something that would draw diverse crowds

and participants. As Jean explained:

> When we started doing the parades, it would have been harder to have got
> groups to take part because it was more an unknown thing…and it wasn't
> always easy. Our first St. Patrick's day we had to get two hundred people
> involved and it was difficult enough. Now, we have worked with groups
> on an ongoing basis over so many years now, and over multiple events
> that they know what carnival is, and they come and enjoy it and take
> part… And you know that's the frustrating thing about the other group
> doing the Lord Mayor's parade, because…now you ask people [if] you
> want to be involved and it's, 'yeah, because we know what it is and we
> enjoy it.' Whereas we had been building that for years.
> <div align="right">~Interview April 5, 2011</div>

Jean's frustration is that it was the BEAT's outreach work that had built the network of

willing and trained participants to take part in events such as the Lord Mayor's Show.

The BEAT had paved the way for the type of product the Council wanted by explaining

the concept of carnival, convincing its clients to take part in multi-cultural events and

assuring their safety. In a way, Jean perceived the readiness of Belfast's residents to take

part in and attend city center events as a product of the BEAT's labor, and, she felt, the

council didn't have the right to hand it over to some other organizer.

The uncertainty of the year ahead left the artists grasping at answers, too. Paddy

cynically associated the funding decision with the broader project of regeneration.

> I suppose how just…capitalism gets its teeth into things and tries to use it
> to its own advantage. Yeah, that must be it.… It's easy to lose parts of
> Belfast that are real…when you're trying to polish up a city and leave it
> shiny and clean, convince people to spend their money there. It's not even

> about the end audience, or even the design team, it's probably more about funders and customers in City Council, more to do with what they perceive civic events should look like.
>
> ~Interview April 12, 2011

Paddy suspected that the Council had decided to go with a different event partner because it better suited the Council's agenda to make the city center more "normal."

> You get the impression that whenever people talk about regeneration or normalization that they feel Belfast should be exactly the same as everywhere else, should be uniform—the idea of normalization as kind of a homogenization of culture, and I don't think it serves Belfast really well to become a facsimile of everywhere else, like a shopping mall.
>
> ~Interview April 12, 2011

On the other hand, Christine felt the decision was a necessary shock, which would result, eventually, in more and better work:

> I suppose you can rest on your laurels too much, as well, so maybe it's a good thing. It's a good way to reinvent and look at all these other things, because I found that meeting the other day very much more inspiring than a usual meeting. Because when you face hardship, you face, like a choice or something. … It's scary. So it's like you either sink or you swim, so I think they will pull together.
>
> ~Interview March 30, 2011

Jane Bennett, describing the distributed agency of actor networks, "assemblages," writes, "an unstable cascade spills out from every 'single' act…An intention becomes like a pebble thrown into a pond, or an electrical current sent though a wire, or a neural network: it vibrates" (2005: 457). The funding turn flashes Belfast's assemblages into bright relief, buzzing with the artist's questions, the group leaders' worry, Jean and David's sense of betrayal. A cascade of effects issued from this decision, but none more strongly felt than the shifting of interpretive agency from the BEAT Initiative to ArtsEkta, who now hold the platform of the city center and the latitude to convey their very different representation of the "new Belfast." In the following two chapters I shift my

focus again from the producers of parades to the parades themselves, and to their activity as signs. Despite their differences, both the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, discussed in Chapter Five, and the Lord Mayor's Show, Chapter Six, are part of the same discourse of imagining the city. Though whether their representations of an ideal Belfast contain the seeds of a real post-conflict future will be determined neither by the policy network nor the artists' network, but by the witnessing public, and by the effects these parades have on their perceptions and uses of the city center.

Chapter Six: St. Patrick's Day Becomes Us

Despite the surprise of the funding turn in March of 2011, the BEAT Initiative produced a spectacular show for the 2011 St. Patrick's Day Carnival. The event involved over 900 performers from various community groups and clubs throughout the city, many of whom were Protestant unionists. Their inclusion was hailed as a major accomplishment for both the BEAT and the City Council, given that St. Patrick's Day commemorations have been a source of contention in Belfast since the onset of the Troubles. Prior to the 1994 ceasefires, events celebrating Ireland's patron saint in Belfast city center would have been rare, but even afterward, St. Patrick's Day events were plagued by disagreement, partisanship, and sectarian accusations. Nonetheless, local demand sustained years of campaigning to have the City Council sponsor an annual St. Patrick's event. Since 2006 the Belfast City Council has contracted the BEAT Initiative to produce St. Patrick's Day as an inclusive, nonpartisan event. This chapter follows the history of the Belfast St. Patrick's Day Parade up to the 2011 event. In previous chapters, I have established the workings and the motivations of the networks that produce events such as this; here I shall explore the symbolism of the event itself, along with some of the public's reactions to it, in order to examine what this civic ritual contributes to the ongoing discourse of regeneration.

Calling St. Patrick

The floats circled Queen Victoria along the drive in front of City Hall; props and puppets piled at her pedestal like an impromptu memorial for a deceased circus performer. Her proud statue, for the moment, marshaled a silent and stationary parade, while upstairs in the City Hall's plush staterooms, a staging area of costume racks, changing booths, sewing machines, and make-up stations waited quietly for the impending arrival of hundreds of schoolchildren, community groups, sports teams, and performance troupes. At eight a.m., though, it was only the seasoned staff of Council Events Unit and the BEAT team who prepared coolly for manic day ahead. As the parade's noon kick-off neared, the staging areas began to fill with costumed children, stilt-walkers, puppeteers and character performers. Local celebrities, including the 2010 Belfast Marathon winners, the Lord Mayor and a few Councilors, milled and mingled behind the City Hall's tall black gates as crowds began to form along the parade route; and the event staff, still unruffled, readied the fancy-dress infantry for their imminent departure to Custom House Square.

The 2011 St. Patrick's Day Carnival was the most diverse St. Patrick's Day event that Belfast had seen in recent years. According to statistics reported by the BCC Events Unit, approximately 60% of the 10,000-person audience at the parade were Catholic, 27% were Protestant, and 13% reported as "Other" (Seamus Rooney City Council Event Manager, email message dated April 8, 2011). These numbers matched the breakdown of participants in the carnival parade itself, the largest ever proportion of Protestant participants since the Council had taken on the event. These numbers are perhaps even more impressive, given that on the same day several Protestant groups had pulled out of the nearby Downpatrick parade over a Councilor's insistence on carrying an Irish

Tricolor at the front of the parade (BBC 2011). Although both Protestants and Catholics

honor St. Patrick as the man who brought Christianity to Ireland, Patrick had long since

lost his status as unifying figure (Jarman 1997: 58). In the 20th Century, commemorating

St. Patrick was broadly seen as a nationalist activity, and thus became embroiled in the

same controversies over flags, symbols and space that affect other forms of parades and

visual displays in Northern Ireland (Cronin and Adair 2002, Jarman 1997). Thus in 2011,

it was seen as a huge success that seven of the BEAT Initiative's participating groups

hailed from predominantly Protestant areas of Belfast; even more astonishing was the fact

that the participants from East Belfast Mission and Dee Street Community Center, which

are situated in a staunchly loyalist area, carried a banner proudly naming their group and

announcing their presence. Overall, approximately 270 of the BEAT's 970 participants

(or 28%) were Protestant, not including Protestant members of already-integrated

participant groups. Across the board, those aware of these numbers called it a feat of

cross-community collaboration and inclusivity.

     Tom Hartley, a former Lord Mayor and current Sinn Féin Councilor in Belfast,

described the increased Protestant participation as a sense of "opening-up," referring to

what he perceives as an Irish-Catholic celebration opening up to accommodate other

identities. He explained:

> St. Patrick's Day should be owned by everyone and you can see that that's
> beginning to take shape, and maybe there will always be someone who
> will want to see it in a very overtly Irish sense, and then there'll be others
> will probably see it in a very mild Irish sense. And all that's got to do
> [with] where this society is at the minute. What I noticed, for instance, this
> year the crowds were bigger, so I do think it's gaining popularity. And you
> know you begin to see community groups say from Sandy Row
> participating. So there's a new sense of what's taking place opening up.
> ~Interview May 16, 2011

Despite the optimism of this statement, Hartley's contrast of "overtly Irish" and "mildly Irish" indicates that "Irishness" itself is a potentially dangerous sign in the context of a public event with a mixed audience. According to Hartley's formulation, positive and negative reactions boil down to how *Irish* the event appears, with Irishness being an expectation of CNR audience members and a potential threat to PUL members. How Belfast's St. Patrick's Day parade has been made to accommodate this paradox is a fascinating moment in the semiosis of a new Belfast identity.

In 2006, when the City Council first contracted the BEAT Initiative to produce a St. Patrick's Day Carnival, the key requirements were that the event should encourage intercultural understanding and celebrate cultural diversity, and avoid the use of "symbols and signage that may be regarded as offensive or triumphalist" (Stevenson, et al. 2006: 25). Participants were barred from wearing or bringing "Flags, emblems or paraphernalia of a political, sectarian, racist or partisan nature" to the event site (101). In actual practice, the Council sets a theme each year, which attempts to inoculate the event against the potential for "overtly Irish" interpretations—grafting loosely related local themes and interests onto the paradigmatic repertoire expected of St. Patrick's Day. In 2011, in an effort to raise awareness of the city's new recycling initiatives, the theme was Green for Recycling. Accordingly, the council produced costumed mascots to covey the message visually—"litterbugs" who were chased by "Litterbins," styled after Belfast's Council-issue black and gold garbage cans, and two superheroes, "Green Girl" and a muscled, blue-caped, "Captain Cleanup", sporting the Belfast City Council logo on his chest. The BEAT, in its style, had also created costumed characters who represented the theme— "Street Sweeper Sue," a broom pusher with attitude, two fashion queens in dresses made

of newspaper and plastic bags, and "Marigold Molly," whose coat bloomed with flowers made of plastic bottles. The BEAT's builders added two floats along this theme: a human-sized hamster wheel, mounted on a stripped car chassis, which was powered by the marathon runners, and a pedal-powered, Belfast-blue, street-cleaning van, which chased performers along the parade route—much like the life-sized version does to innocent pedestrians most other days. As is the BEAT's practice, the parade participants received two or more arts and performance workshops in the months prior to the event. In these workshops artists contracted by the BEAT helped children and adults create props and costumes, and coached them to perform in the parade. More experienced performance groups were simply provided with costumes by the BEAT's talented team of seamstresses. A group of cheerleaders wore cleaner aprons and carried dusters as pompoms, school groups made crowns of flowers from recycled materials, and an international group of expatriates, students and refugees, wore paper bibs and green caps that replicated the white limestone and green copper dome of the Belfast City Hall.

| **The 2011 Belfast St. Patrick's Day Carnival** |
| Parade order and description |
| 1. *Marshaled by 2010-2011 Lord Mayor Pat Convery (Social Democratic Labor Party), and Event Unit manager Gerry Copeland, surrounded by costumed council characters "litter bugs" and "litter bins", "Green Girl", and "Captain Cleanup" and BEAT featured costumed characters in the Newsprint dress and Plastic bag dresses.* |
| 2. *A professional event steward in a red jacket, asking spectators to step back to widen the space for the following group.* |
| 3. *St. Lawrence O'Toole Pipe Band, wearing solid hunter green kilts, black blazers, and feathered cap badges. They were founded in Dublin in 1910, in association with a Gaelic Athletic Association, but maintain no official political affiliations. In 2010 they won championships at World, European and All-Ireland competitions.* |
| 4. *Stilt-walkers, "Marigold Molly", "Uncle Recycling" in a flower-pot top-hat and tartan coat roughly mimicking an Uncle Sam costume, but with recycled plastics and fabric, and a man in a purple and gold costume and headdress (no specific* |

character, the same costume appears in many parades).

5. *Suffolk and Lenadoon Interface Group: moms and small children in white t-shirts wearing head bands they made in workshop, and carrying green shamrock paper flags (where were handed out by council stewards).*
6. *John Q. in a T-Rex puppet/costume.*
7. *David Boyd taking pictures.*
8. *"Scrapercussion" float, carrying "Northern Ireland Soul Troop" performers, playing recycled instruments (such as a PVC percussion organ) made by John Q. and Paddy, and wearing kilts made of denim and bottle caps made by Christine. Volunteers push the floats wearing stylized "Druid" robes, recycled from the BEAT's performance at the Dublin Special Olympics opening ceremony in 2003.*
9. *Sandy Row Falcon Cheerleaders, all-female, all age-group, wearing cleaning-lady costumes and cheering with feather-dusters instead of pom-poms, some wearing yellow and black team sweats.*
10. *Volunteer event steward in reflective vest with BEAT logo.*
11. *Two puppet rickshaws, pushed by performers with their faces painted yellow with long thin black moustaches.*
12. *Professional event steward in a red jacket.*
13. *Saol ur Sure Start: elementary school-aged children with their faces painted, guided by teen and adult volunteers, some in green and one in a Celtics team T-shirt (which is officially banned at Council-sponsored events). Behind them, toddlers and infants, accompanied by parents.*
14. *Beat'n Dance: Teen girls associated with the Carnival Creations club, dancing with 7-ft tall red and purple poppy flowers.*
15. *Nubia Youth Club: Teens and young children dancing in black, wearing sun masks and collars.*
16. *Beat'n Drum: samba drummers wearing orange and red collars and caps, integrated with youths from Brownlow (in Craigavon), wearing blue caps and collars, and Spring Beat, a youth branch of the Beat'n Drum group. Playing a variety of drums to a samba beat.*
17. *Wandsworth Community Center: Parents and toddlers wearing green t-shirts and green foam crowns cut to look like blades of grass with flowers on them. Wandsworth carries a banner noting the name of their group and their neighborhood in East Belfast.*
18. *Three first-aid responders acting as event stewards in yellow reflective jackets.*
19. *Carnival Creations: Teens carrying marionette-style puppets they made with Jean. The teens wear black and make the puppets dance in front of them.*
20. *Volunteer Event Steward in reflective vest with BEAT logo.*
21. *TinyBEAT: Toddlers wearing reflective vests and road cone hats, carrying road signs colored with different recycling tasks, their moms (called the BEATniks) accompany them carrying umbrellas with painted Styrofoam animal figures on top (which they had made while their children were occupied with the TinyBEAT club).*
22. *Two BEAT staff members wearing reflective jackets acting as event stewards.*
23. *Queens University Boi Bumba: Drummers and dancers pantomiming a traditional Brazilian comic play concerning a cow and peasant love triangle.*
24. *A local newscaster and her cameraman.*

25. *Finaghy Youth club, elementary-aged children and adolescents wearing reflective vests and road cone hats.*
26. *Two first aid responders on bicycles in yellow reflective coats.*
27. *Three performers on "Scrap Tricycles", clowning as if they are racing each other, sometimes pushing children on their vehicles.*
28. *"Street Sweeper Sue", a performer pushing a broom and wearing a scrub brush as a Mohawk hairstyle, clowning with spectators, whom she tells to pick up their rubbish.*
29. *"Hamster Wheel", the Human-powered vehicle, with a clown "aviator" in the driver's seat, which lifts up and down as the car move forward, and the male and female winners of the 2010 Belfast marathon in the wheel powering the vehicle. They are "coached" by the artist Paddy dressed in green and gold a boxing coach (this costume was recycled from a former year in which St. Patrick was portrayed as a boxer fighting a snake).*
30. *Belfast Circus School: About twelve adolescents and teens riding unicycles and leaning on each other when they have to pause, accompanied by their group leader and teacher.*
31. *LORAG: Dance group associated with the inner-South Belfast community center.*
32. *Afreeka: African drum performance group, playing drums and wearing red team t-shirts.*
33. *Rathgael Gymnastics: Elementary school-age children performing tumbles, somersaults, cartwheels and flips.*
34. *Friendship Club, Inclusive Neighborhood Project (INP) and Northern Ireland Centre for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (NICRAS): A mixed group of locals and immigrants from Africa and the Middle east with their children, all wearing hats and collars to look like the Belfast City Hall.*
35. *BEAT artist acting as event steward, in reflective vest and BEAT Initiative t-shirt.*
36. *An Droichead: parents and young children from an Irish language learning center and school walking with self-made paper necklaces and hats.*
37. *South Belfast Area Project and Chinese Welfare Association: adolescent children wearing blue and carrying a large multi-handler fish puppet appear to swim over a blue waving sheet of fabric.*
38. *"Samson and Goliath" float; a float with two cartoonish versions of the yellow Harland and Wolf cranes from the East Belfast ship-yards. Puppets of a ringmaster on a penny-farthing bicycle and a trapeze artist hanging from it are pulled back and forth on a high wire between the two cranes. Speakers on the float play ragtime style music.*
39. *Bruiser: a comedic theater troupe performing as shipyard workers clown on the Samson and Goliath float, or carry prop tools and iron beams, or "backpack" cranes which dangle prop beer bottles in front of them.*
40. *Holy Trinity Youth Club: young children and moms carrying maypoles made with strings of multicolored fabric.*
41. *Stilt walker: performing in a large 10-foot long skirt hanging over the stilts, costume is red, orange and purple, not a specific character.*
42. *Dee Street and East Belfast Mission: Two East-Belfast community groups carrying a banner declaring their name and home neighborhood. They are wearing*

> *matching t-shirts, carrying green teddy bears they bought with council funding on an outing to the Build-a-Bear workshop, blowing whistles and waving balloons and streamers.*
> 43. *Chinese Dragons: A team of volunteer performers (adult musicians and artists associated with the BEAT), perform with a Chinese Dragon puppet borrowed from the Chinese Welfare Association.*
> 44. *Mount Vernon: Teens and school-age children carry umbrellas decorated with butterflies and fabric streamers, colors are purples and pinks and pastels.*
> 45. *Streetwise: a carnival performance group composed of professional performers and workshop students. Teen and special needs performers wear jester and wizard costumes and puppets of birds and butterflies. Several control a large articulated puppet that takes multiple handlers, others carry paper lanterns.*
> 46. *St. Matthew's Special Needs School: younger children teachers and parents follow the Streetwise performers wearing matching school t-shirts in dark green, some carry the Council's paper shamrock flags.*
> 47. *New Lodge Arts and Youth Center, An Munia Tober, wearing flower hats and recycled clothing.*
> 48. *"Belfast Dustbuster": A clown driving a bicycle made with an outer frame to mimic the Belfast street-cleaning van. The clown careens toward spectators and performers.*
> 49. *Five performers wearing Muppet-style costumes they had made themselves through puppet-making workshops at the BEAT and Streetwise.*
> 50. *Police Service of Northern Ireland pipe band, wearing hunter green blazers and wearing red, green and yellow plaid kilts (the tartan pattern of Prince Charles Edward Stewart).*
> 51. *Followed by an ambulance.*

Figure 6.1: Parade order and description

Estimating by the numbers given to her by the groups she liaised with, Emily the participant coordinator, suggested that there would be more than 700 individuals in the parade itself, (though this is less than demanded by the city council grant, and more than probably appeared on the day itself). Nonetheless it was an impressive showing for Belfast, and took approximately one and a half hours to wind its way from the City Hall to Custom House Square, where the City Council Events Unit had arranged for a free concert with several British pop stars and further performances. No barriers separated spectators from performers as the parade passed by its thousands of spectators—as many of whom were wearing the colors of the Irish flag as were not. The crowd was often quiet,

only cheering when they recognized their friends or applauded performers, such as the

Rathgael gymnasts, and the marathon runners in the hamster wheel. The drumming and

music accompanying the parade could be heard very clearly over the crowd, The BEAT

had arranged for a dozen people, including myself, to steward the event, greater than the

number of professional stewards hired by the Events Unit. These stewards made sure

there was room for the wider floats and performing groups to pass, kept young kids away

from John Q.'s dinosaur tail and away from the Hamster Wheel's moving parts. About

half of them had walkie-talkies that helped them coordinate the stops and starts, or any

emergencies that might occur. The tail of the parade an ambulance followed, as per city

regulations.

Importantly, according to Emily's master list of participants, seven of the groups

that marched, including all of the groups with banners, Wandsworth, Dee Street and the

East Belfast Mission, were primarily composed of Protestants. Dee Street, East Belfast

Mission, the Sandy Row Cheerleaders, Mount Vernon also all hail from neighborhoods

especially associated with loyalism. In fact this list of neighborhoods could double as a

map to some of Belfast's most intimidating paramilitary murals, yet here they were

enjoying their participation in the parade. Given the large size of these groups, and the

large sizes of the many integrated groups that also participated, Emily felt safe

approximating that one third of the St. Patrick's Day participants were Protestant.

Noticeably absent were any direct references to Irish national symbols—not even

St. Patrick himself. Both of the pipe bands would have worn small pins and buttons that

may have had symbols such as shamrocks or harps on them, but these were hardly visible

from the crowd. Many spectators were saturated in green and orange, but these colors

were never used together on the same costumes or props to the extent that they could be interpreted as referring to the green, white and gold Irish flag. Instead, the event staff handed out green shamrock flags and t-shirts. Although some people did not respect the council rules that ban apparel associated with sporting teams (support of which tends to follow sectarian lines), if they had tried to enter the enclosed concert at Custom House Square, they would either have been turned away, or given a Council t-shirt to cover up the sports logos.

In the absence of "Irishness," a second theme emerged: the parade highlighted local Belfast icons, logos, and characters that would be familiar only to regular visitors or inhabitants of the city. One of the most stand-out objects was a float featuring Belfast's iconic yellow Harland and Wolf cranes. It struck me as odd to see those cranes represented in the St. Patrick's Day event, given Harland and Wolf's history of discriminatory hiring practices (Butler 2012), though I never encountered anyone who complained of their presence in the parade.

Nonetheless, the lack of explicitly Irish icons did trigger negative reactions—one group leader from the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) was particularly disappointed that her group of enthusiastic children could not even decorate themselves with shamrocks or the colors of the Irish flag:

> I don't agree with the fact that the kids aren't allowed to do shamrocks and green, white and orange whenever they want to. They're clearly Irish and St. Patrick is Irish, so it is important, but basically what we do is just take part in the parade and then go back to our local community where they can take part in more Irish festivities.
>
> ~Interview April 7, 2011

Likewise, a number of spectators at the event expected to see St. Patrick, or at least more traditional Irish music and dance:

> The parade as a whole was good. However I didn't see any reference to the man himself…I mean it is his day after all. Or, how about a float with Irish musicians, playing traditional Irish music? The icing on the cake would have been Irish dancers. I think that would have been absolutely amazing & would have rounded the day off nicely.
> ~Informal Interview March 17, 2011

> [There were] Lots of different acts featuring a wide range of music, except Irish music and any reference to St. Patrick—He did not feature in his own parade!
> ~Informal Interview March 17, 2011

It is worth noting that the expectations most spectators had of the parade were not explicitly political—no one expressed disappointment that there were no banners or speeches demanding a united Ireland, for instance. Rather, their expectations, shaped by the international media, fit within a repertoire of symbols and modes of celebration that had been imported from other St. Patrick's Day traditions around the world (Cronin and Adair 2002). Even so, participants and witnesses who were not already familiar with St. Patrick's Day traditions expressed fleeting uneasiness at the symbols they did see. One spectator who exclaimed, "Never seen so many tricolors in my life!" nonetheless concluded:

> It was the first time I had ever been at a St Patrick's parade and had decided since I will be 50 next year that I wanted to go to Belfast and see what all the fuss was about. Very glad I went and I will be back for from now on.
> ~Informal Interview March 17, 2011

Among the several Protestant groups who participated, the Tricolors carried by many spectators sent contrasting messages. The Irish national flag, for instance, is associated with both the IRA, an anti-state paramilitary, and with the government of Ireland. One group leader from a Loyalist area, Mount Vernon, offered an interpretation of the flag and of the whole event that was more palatable to her:

It's for both sides of the community…so we try to tell the kids. "It's green for them, peace, and the orange is for us." But the carnival thing's brilliant at getting both sides of the community, [it's a] very meaningful event to do with the kids, and we're starting to do the history and they're starting to learn where St. Patrick came from and that he actually was a Prod [sic] and that he came over here and that he was for everybody, not just for one side of the community. So they're learning that as well.

~Interview April 4, 2011

Interestingly, it was a participant from the South Belfast-based Friendship Club, a migrant outreach group, who viewed the event most closely in line with the Council's message of inclusivity and diversity. He marched in the parade along with members of the Inclusive Neighborhood Project (INP) and NICRAS, the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers, which support migrant and host communities in through various services and activities. He explained:

This is a different dimension to St. Patrick, with people who are new to our shores taking part in something that's our tradition. I think it's a really good way for them to experience the origins of our life here, something that should unify us as people within Ireland, and we hope that they will gain something from that particular experience, enjoy the color of the day, the bustle and the noise of the day, and feel part of all of us for this particular day…we need to actually claim St. Patrick for all of us, and this day for all of us, whether we're Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or don't practice any particular faith, and no matter what the color of our skin is, no matter what our tradition and culture is, today is a special day for us all here to celebrate.

~Informal Interview March 17, 2011

Thus in one of the most positive appraisals of the 2011 St. Patrick's Day Carnival by a real-time participant, we see the explicit substitution of ethno-religious diversity for Irish national and Christian heritage as the object of the celebration. Ultimately, the Carnival was not really about St. Patrick, or about any existing understanding of "Irishness"; rather, in the context of the ongoing regeneration project, it is a conceptualization of an idealized

city in a future where the impact of the Troubles has been displaced by more positive associations. As one spectator put it:

> It is an international recognition of St. Patrick and Belfast. We are sometimes in the media for the wrong reasons [but] this should become us…. It is a glimpse of a better future where we love and use our city streets for the right reasons.
> ~Informal Interview March 17, 2011

This is consistent with the semiosis of regeneration as described in previous chapters. Between the translations and interpretations of the policy network and the artists network, the most clearly conveyed message is of a Belfast re-imagined as one that embraces diversity under a unifying local identity. The "new Belfast" ideal remains vague, because as Tom Hartley aptly noted, "We're only really at the start of the process to give all of us a Belfast identity." As the discursive community, which now consists not only of the producing networks but also the urban public, continues to negotiate Belfast's post-conflict redevelopment the meaning of that sign, the "new Belfast" will accrue greater depth and nuance.

Becoming St. Patrick's Carnival

The transformation of St. Patrick's Day from a symbol of Irish national identity into a sign of what Belfast is becoming is an issue of some concern, however. As Hartley implied, in order for a Belfast-centric meaning to reify, some aspect of the parade's "Irishness" needs to fall away. How this occurred, and how it was justified in the service of the regeneration project, illuminates a problematic trend: the intentional sanitization and obfuscation of the past.

Although at one time St. Patrick may have been a unifying figure to both Protestants and Catholics (Jarman 1997: 58), during the modern Troubles, "the ownership

of St. Patrick became a symbolic battleground for the two main communities in Northern Ireland" (Cronin and Adair 2002: 191). The "stockading effect" identified by Boal and Livingstone (1984), which saw the Protestant and Catholic populations of mid-20th century Belfast retreat into the perceived security of closed-off, homogeneous neighborhoods, also resulted in the segregation and decentralization of public commemorations. St. Patrick's commemorations took on a "tribal allegiance" as a "counterweight to the various William of Orange and 12 July parades held by the Orange Order" (Cronin and Adair 2002: 191).

Importantly, while St. Patrick's events were relegated to the republican periphery of Belfast, Orange Parades and other civic events such as the Lord Mayor's Show reserved access to the city center. This had the symbolic effect of both elevating the prestige of centrally located events, and inscribing the city center as a Protestant space. Thus removed from the legitimizing power of the civic core, celebrants of St. Patrick's Day had to recognize themselves as a counterpublic, a group "socially marked by their participation in this kind of discourse" (Warner 2002: 210). According to Warner, "Ordinary people are presumed not to want to be mistaken for the kind of person who would participate in this kind of talk or be present in this kind of scene" (120). Thus even as St. Patrick's Day commemorations expressed local pride and political resistance, they further isolated celebrants from a sense of civic ownership and coequality. St. Patrick's Day could only be commemorated in the city center if it was presented as a depoliticized, cross-community endeavor. Such an event occurred in 1979, a time when the political status of Republican prisoners dominated Northern Irish politics, yet it could not be addressed during the parade (a perfect forum for political protest), out of consideration

for the sensitivities of other participants. Indeed, right up until the ceasefires, and even after, it continued to be a "problem for St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Northern Ireland…that patrician observances could not be removed from their contemporary political context" (Cronin and Adair 2002: 192).

Only with the changing political atmosphere that accompanied the ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement could the tensions around St. Patrick's Day celebrations begin to loosen. Even then, simply achieving recognition as a legitimate civic celebration was an uphill battle. "I grew up in a city [in which] St. Patrick's Day wasn't even recognized," explained Tom Hartley, "The first big political battle was to get it recognized as a part of the civic life of the city" (Interview May 16, 2011). But had recognition simply been about the event itself, the perfunctory cross-community events of previous years might have sufficed. Conor Maskey, a current Sinn Féin councilor who was a teenager at the time of the ceasefires, described the importance of being recognized both as a Republican *and* as a person with equal right to the civic space of the city center.

> It must have been around [the] ceasefire in '94; Republicans in Belfast took a view that this isn't a Republican city but it's certainly a shared city, and…we need to stake our claim… We should be entitled to have, just as any Unionist group can have, a political rally outside of City Hall…and the line was 'it's our city also.' …So I remember being on a parade, the sense of taking back, not of overtaking…but trying to take back that ownership that, you know what, it is a city center that should include Republicans. So I remember taking part in that first march and the tension around it because we tried before but the police stopped us…And we ended up walking round the corner, out to City Hall, and there was leader of Sinn Féin making a political speech, totally and utterly groundbreaking stuff. But the sense it instilled, I then started to feel… was saying "Let's not, if we come into the city center, try to dominate anybody else, but let's strongly assert our equal right to be here and to work here and shop here and to experience events here." So I'm conscious that I was 16-17 years old at the time there were 80-year-olds that have never got that sense of the city center before.
>
> <div align="right">~Interview June 24, 2011</div>

Maskey's experience suggests that being present in public space along with markers of

identity is inherently political. To announce one's presence and demand recognition is

political; to fill a space with sounds and symbols that temporarily overlay and re-inscribe

the conventional meanings of social space is inherently political. The initial push to have

St. Patrick's Day recognized arose out of the post-conflict agenda for a more pluralistic

society. As Section 75.1 of the Northern Ireland Act states, all public authorities must

"have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity-between persons of

different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual

orientation." In this context, the celebration of an Irish-nationalist commemoration should

be perfectly acceptable, but given the potential danger perceived by Protestant unionists

in the very symbols of "Irishness," those early parades were easily contested as threats to

"good relations." Section 75.2 states:

> Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public
> authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland
> have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between
> persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the promotion of "good relations" is open to broad

interpretations, among which is the Council Good Relations Unit's use of the concept to

promote mutual understanding, respect and trust among the different ethno-religious

communities in Belfast. In the initial wake of the Good Friday Agreement, one of the

most salient consequences of this clause was that "many symbolic issues, such as the

flying of flags and the right to parade, became central to political debate" (Cronin and

Adair 2002: 194).

In the positive and hopeful atmosphere of 1998, Belfast gave life to the "good relations" clause in an "inclusive and intercommunity" St. Patrick's Day event, jointly sponsored by the Belfast City Council and Northern Ireland Department for Social Development's "Making Belfast Work" group. The event was met with enthusiastic support by the local press, which hailed it as a "turning point" for the New Northern Ireland (Cronin and Adair 2002: 192). This encouraging response led the event's organizing committee, of which both Hartley and Maskey were a part, to urge the City Council to incorporate St. Patrick's Day into its yearly calendar of publicly funded events (McAdam 1998). The perpetuation of the event was vital goal, according to Tom Hartley:

> That was really very important because now as opposed to being organized by people from West Belfast[31] it had become part of the structure of Belfast City Council. And if you think about it, you've got the St. Patrick's Day, you've got the Lord Mayor's Day Parade, and you've also got Halloween. …So there's a whole range of stuff happening throughout the year, and it really means that the council has a very proactive view of how it should be promoting the City. …We still have problems you know, and there's still trends in this city that run up against that, but nonetheless the commitment of the Council is to highlight the very positive side of our character in this city.
> ~Interview May 16, 2011

As Hartley suggests, incorporating St. Patrick's Day into how the City Council promotes Belfast would not only help sanitize St. Patrick's Day's political connotations, but would ensure a permanent place for Irish national heritage in the official public culture. But the 1998 St. Patrick's Day Parade had not found universal approval yet; "many Unionists objected to the nationalist symbolism that was attached to the parade—as well as the decision by parade organizers that 'all flags' would be welcome at the event" (Cronin and Adair 2002: 193). Some, including then Lord Mayor Jim Rodgers, claimed the parade

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[31] A mostly Catholic/Nationalist/Republican area.

had been "hijacked by Sinn Féin/IRA" (McAdam 1998). In the year that followed, the campaign for a council-sponsored St. Patrick's Day fell apart; Unionists pulled out of the cross-community organizing committee, and the Council pulled its proposed funding (Cronin and Adair 2002, Stevenson, et al. 2006).

Despite these hindrances, the St. Patrick's Day organizing committee pushed ahead, seeking private sponsorship and raising money through other sources. Flags continued to be a point of contention through several years of successful parades, organized by Féile an Phobail, a West Belfast arts organization. Unionists continued to be perturbed by the use of the Irish flag, such as columnist Eric Waugh who argued forcefully that "The tricolor had nothing to do with St. Patrick's Day, that it's message was one of militant republicanism, and that while the flag was permitted in the parade, there 'was not the faintest hope of promoting a cross-community commemoration'" (Cronin Adair 2002: 194). At the same time, there was a perfectly reasonable precedent for carrying Tricolors at St. Patrick's Day events, and its proponents chafed at attempts to ban emblems and impose dress codes on "Irish" events, while the Union flag, which had its own negative connotations, was welcomed at every other civic event throughout the year. Caitríona Ruane, a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly for Sinn Féin, argued that banning Tricolors "would go against the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement and the ethos of a shared city" (Cronin Adair 2002: 193). Despite the yearly controversy, the Parade continued to gain an audience and momentum, even as the organizers became exhausted with their cause célèbre. "This was the maker or breaker for us," explained Maskey:

> The council has a policy on the use of flags and emblems, and basically it says, "no flags." So this was the argument for donkeys.[32] … But you also have an event based in Belfast called "Proms in the Park," that goes right into the grounds of City Hall, and at that event you have hundreds and hundreds of Union Jacks. It's part of being in Britain, it's part of what they do in a Proms night: they wave the Union Jack. …So ok, we accept that you have a policy of no flags, but we'll only deal on this if you apply that policy to the St. Patrick's Day Parade in the exact same way as you apply it to the Proms. So there's policy, and there's application of policy.
> ~Interview June 24, 2011

Maskey and Hartley understood implicitly that the Irish Tricolor is problematic for Unionist observers, but part of the struggle to have St. Patrick's Day legitimized required the recognition on the part of Unionists in government that *their* national flag was also a problematic emblem to those who recognized it as a symbol of a cultural and political hegemony, or as associated with Loyalist paramilitary groups. Rather than taking a moralistic stance against Union Flags, though, Maskey and the Carnival Committee insisted that the 'no flags' policy should not be enforced against parade spectators, just as they are not enforced against observers of other events throughout the year. Even after having left the Carnival Committee, Maskey continues to work with event staff to make sure that the policy is applied fairly and respectfully.

Finally in 2005, as the St. Patrick's Day Carnival Committee was losing steam, and the momentum of the early ceasefire years was giving way to the imbroglio of bureaucratic red tape, the council consented. On July 4, 2005, Belfast City Council agreed to fund and organize the 2006 St Patrick's Day event as part of the year-round "Celebrate Belfast" program, on the condition that "The same terms and conditions and site management processes that apply to all other current Council events should apply to

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[32] An abbreviation of the colloquialism "donkey's years," meaning a very long time.

the 2006 St. Patrick's Day event" (Stevenson, et al. 2006: 4). The council also promised

that the event could become part of its annual roster, if an independent evaluation proved

that it showed potential. Later, the BEAT Initiative, which was already well known for its

annual summer carnival, and for its good rapport in PUL communities, were granted a

£70,000 budget to produce the inclusive, city-center event. Although no Protestant groups

participated in the first Council-sponsored parade, it was a promising start; the BEAT has

been re-contracted each subsequent year (Stevenson, et al 2006: 55).

According to David Boyd, the BEAT's creative director, utilizing the BEAT's

special skills was the only way to change the parade such that people who identified as

Unionist or Loyalist could get on board.

> That St. Patrick's Day Parade was a completely political event. It was
> about republican politics, it was about prisoners, and politically it was
> about marching to the city hall and holding an event outside the city hall
> on a stage basically to say we're here, we want access to the city hall,
> which at the time they didn't really have. So there was that whole
> Republican agenda to St. Patrick's Day, which meant that the unionist
> loyalist community wanted nothing to do with it and despised it. …But the
> St Patrick's Day Parade had to change from being a one-sided, very
> political republican event to being something that everybody could be part
> of. Again the city council couldn't possibly do that, doesn't know how to,
> and they knew the only people that could do it would be us, BEAT, so we
> were asked to do that.
>   ~Interview May 11, 2011

Boyd's many years of work in Loyalist areas of East Belfast gave him a more stark sense

of how St. Patrick's Day was perceived outside of the committee that was pushing for it.

He also understood that a great deal more than just colors and flags would need to be

addressed before the stigma of being a "republican event" could be removed. Even so,

Boyd was careful to consult with previous organizers and potential participants on what

St. Patrick's Day should be.

> Theoretically St. Patrick's Day should be, could be, a celebration for everybody, and we did get involved in it, and we started producing it, and we spent a lot of time talking to people, checking that's what they wanted, that the original committee and communities that had made the parade happen originally, that they wanted us to take this on and change it and they did, so that's what we've been doing. And we've seen a huge change in St. Patrick's Day, fairly quickly, against the odds, getting Protestant communities involved in it and to the stage this year that we had groups from East Belfast declaring their presence there with banners, which was something quite new, brave and surprising, startling, and they seemed to get a good reception.
>
> ~Interview May 11, 2011

What the BEAT brought to the event, both in 2006 and in 2011, is an intentionally diversionary parading style, which their lead development artist, Damian, explains, is intentionally apolitical:

> Anything that is done by us does not address politics. We open it up for everyone. I teach anybody that comes in the door... But the best way to get people working together from different communities is not to address the problem at all. But to have a shared goal, a common goal, and that's our mission. We are trying to show people that it's ok to parade in a non-political way, by just doing it naturally. It's the most natural thing in the world to do…because it is so colorful, vibrant, fun, inclusive and everybody can forget about the real nature of parading in Northern Ireland, which is not so good.
>
> ~Interview September 16, 2010

The BEAT's involvement did not automatically obviate the potential for negative responses to St. Patrick's Day, however. An independent evaluation of the 2006 event prepared for the Council indicated that media coverage of the event tended to perpetuate longstanding debates over the use and control of symbols, depicting the event as a matter of possessing public space rather than sharing a celebration (Stevenson, et al. 2006: 33). Limited Protestant attendance and participation led the evaluators to conclude that the event was "not a fully inclusive event, but neither was it an exclusive, intimidating one"

(5). The BEAT and the Council had succeeded in creating a welcoming environment that would facilitate more inclusive events in the future.

So Belfast got its St. Patrick's Day, but in transmuted form. In a few short years the event had been transformed from a republican political protest march to a cross-community carnival. Without a doubt, as the symbolism and the meaning of the event have evolved, so has the political community interpellated by it. These parades, like all civic rituals, are necessarily "responsive to changing political circumstance, envisioning, creating and recreating the past for purposes in the present" (Wilson and Donnan 2006: 103). The event in 1994 needed to stake a claim for republican civic legitimacy in the same moment that Sinn Féin/IRA claimed its seat at the negotiating table. In 1998 the parade enacted an interpretation of the "Good Relations" clause, promising a bright post conflict future. Thus in 2011, the carnival responds to the politics of a Belfast in its second decade after the peace agreement, where there is a shared government in Stormont, but segregation in Belfast; where inclusivity and cultural understanding are the words of the day, but as in Downpatrick that year, the presence of a single flag at the fore can disrupt the entire event; and where violent actions still challenge people's desperate hopes for normalcy.

Remembering, Forgetting, Reinventing

Civic rituals have a variety of functional effects. In its most basic formulation, a parade is a collective activity that makes use of signs—symbolic colors, sounds, emblems, and evocative images—to generate a shared experience and a sense of community. Whether theorized as shared practice (Cohen 1985, Wenger 1998), symbolic activity (Barth 1998, Geertz 1973), or a communion of strangers who recognize themselves as a

single public (Warner 2002, Anderson 1983), the concept of community necessitates collective participation in some kind of meaning-making activity. Rituals serve this purpose by generating feelings of "communitas," a general sense of unity and equality (Turner 1969), and "effervescence" (Durkheim 1995 [1912]) that are amplified by the co-presence of other participants and other symbols. However, this broadly functionalist approach to ritual assumes that the communal identity, which ritual helps reify in participants, remains constant over time, whereas semiosis, as we know, is an ongoing process.

Taking the semiosis of the parades to include not only the material symbols present, but also the activity of participants in relation to each other, I argue that this civic ritual is a collective experimentation with and negotiation of a group identity in the particular historical moment of the parade. Consider the audience and participants as "a kind of social totality" (Warner 2002: 65). According to Warner, "a concrete audience, a crowd witnessing itself in visible space…knows itself by knowing where and when it is assembled in common visibility and common action" (66). This collective self-recognition lends a crucial second reading to the fact that so many Protestant people were present at the 2011 St. Patrick's Day event. By being present, the crowd engages in a discourse that defines itself as a unified public, subordinating individual identities "by virtue of our participation in the discourse alone and therefore in common with strangers" (77-78). Thus the increasing presence of Protestants at the St. Patrick's Day Carnival not only lends weight to the abstract hope that "St. Patrick's Day should be for everyone," but lends physical reality to an integrated citizenry, even if just for the length of the parade. Every individual spectator may understand himself or herself in

incommensurable terms as either Protestant or Catholic, but as the concrete audience of the parade they are a single unified public.

Within the context of the regeneration project, the framework of policy and funding that condition the production of civic parades, and the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, may appear artificial, as an ersatz community assembled from the BEAT's clientele. The integrated parade serves the municipal agenda of promoting diversity and intercultural understanding. However, examining the visual repertoire of the parade reveals a hegemony of the local. The use of local architectural and municipal symbols in the parade, and the elimination of all but the most generic icons of "Irishness," wash out the potential danger of diversity. In this, there is a specific strategy in play.

In Nicole Loraux's analysis of ancient Athens after a civil war that had left "a deep wound in the body of the city" (2002: 24), we see a valuable parallel to Belfast in the post-conflict period. When the violence in Athens had ended, a first civic act of restoration was the funeral oration for the war's dead. According to Loraux, Thucydides' Funeral oration for Pericles eulogized Athens itself. The eulogy "turns it into a spectacle or a mirage, it ends by displacing Athens from itself and substituting for the real city the phantom of an ideal polis, a utopia. Citizens of nowhere, the dazzled Athenians are enthralled by the hollowest of all fantasies" (2006: 336). The praise they hear is deception, "a false sense of unity" (333), and yet it was necessary to bridge the deep divisions left by the war. The oration ends with an oath, "solemnly sworn by all the citizens not to recall the misfortunes, now past and thrown back into the nonbeing of oblivion" (2002: 26).

Thus, in the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, as in the Oration of Pericles, we see an abstraction of the city as an ideal, and a call to its citizens, also abstracted and idealized in the moment of the event, to forget the past and to ignore each other's differences. The city of the oration, and of the parade, is imaginary, but at the same time, the reality of Belfast as a whole is inseparable from its representation. "The City" does not have mass, it is an abstract concept, like identity, which is diffused over time and space, and is articulated in the beliefs and actions of heterogeneous individuals whose cleavages threaten its cohesion. In a very real sense, the parade, the physical gathering of citizens in the city center, *is* the city, and the image it produces of Belfast, is—in that moment—the most real possibility for Belfast to transform itself into the image that it projects. This is more than an official ideology imposed on a public by the state, but it is a negotiated process. The space of the event is a "space for experiencing, testing and affirming" (Lyotard 1991, 76). At the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, the image of an ideal Belfast is proposed and tested. What we see from year to year, as the parade develops, is not simply an exchange of old for new, but an ongoing dialogue between the city and its citizens about what they want from each other.

Ultimately, though, it falls to the broader Belfast public to determine whether this particular vision of the "new Belfast" will manifest in a more permanent way of thinking about the city and relating to each other. Warner writes that the modern citizen is a consumer of cultural identity, "our desires have become recognizable through their display" (2002: 170). To participate in the parade indicates, to some extent, that people 'buy' the ideal it represents. And yet the hyper-local, vaguely Irish ideal of the St. Patrick's Day Carnival obscures what Cronin and Adair recognize as its most important

feature, "the Irish: their sense of self, their ties to home, their place in the world, their views of the past and their claims to the future" (2002: xv). The loss of Irish identity from the "new Belfast" ideal may be unacceptable. If so, the funding networks may shift the flow of resources, the artists may change their creative themes, the next parade will be different, and the negotiations will continue. As Hartley has said, "We're only really at the start of the process to give all of us a Belfast identity."

Illustrations to Chapter Six

Figure 6.2: Floats queue before the parade.

Figure 6.3: Council heroes--Litterbugs and Litterbins, "Green Girl" and "Council Man"

Figure 6.4: BEAT costumes--recycled dresses and "Street Sweeper Sue"

Figure 6.5: Participants waiting for the parade to begin.

Figure 6.6: In the parade, children from the Finaghy youth group; a marathoner powers the hamster wheel.

Figure 6.7: Members of the Belfast Friendship Club, dressed as the City Hall.

Figure 6.8: Spectators dressed in green and orange.

Figure 6.9: Beat'n Drum band at the Downpatrick parade.

Chapter Seven: One World, One Vision, One Future

The "funding turn" shifted Council monies for the 2011 Lord Mayor's Show from the BEAT Initiative, who had produced the Show for several years already, to ArtsEkta, an ethnic arts organization--demonstrating the precariousness of the networks that produce parades. In the wake of the funding turn, both the BEAT initiative and ArtsEkta scrambled to rearrange their plans—the BEAT to produce a smaller event that would still satisfy their other funders, and ArtsEkta to meet the requirements of a grant that was based on the BEAT's previous work. The result was a cascade of activity, releasing and enlisting artists, shifting finances, recruiting participants—all of which maintained the continuity of the regeneration project. Indeed the most notable change in the activity of parade production was that ArtsEkta suddenly occupied a particular space of interpretive agency formerly held by the BEAT. Though I do not suggest that only one artistic vision can dominate the semiosis of regeneration (rather that all civic events participate in the discourse), the funding turn serendipitously placed ArtsEkta and the BEAT, and their civic imaginaries, in opposition. The different directions of their work reveal competing visions for the "new Belfast" and illustrate the "masquerade politics" of public ritual (Cohen 1993). According to Cohen:

> What is at stake for participants fighting over the meaning of celebrations
> is that the celebrations expose, in a veiled form, the opposition,
> confrontation, subversion, and resistance that outlines the differential

access to resources and power that defines these actors' social and political positions. (Cohen 1993: xi)

The funding turn highlights not only the volatility of resource allocation, but also the variety of ways to imagine Belfast's future. As Belfast changes, as the needs and desires of its citizenry shift, its ideal is "re-imagined" and the city again is remade (Carruthers, Douds, Loane2003, Harvey 2008).

The 2011 Lord Mayor's Show, as produced by ArtsEkta and its partner Small World Music, was set to the theme "One World, One Vision, One Future." It was meant to showcase the variety of ethnicities and cultural traditions that coexist in Belfast. The event was well received as a positive representation of Belfast's changing demographics, though like the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, it also served to obfuscate, with a vision of harmonic diversity, real problems of racism, sectarianism and xenophobia.

A Show for the Lord Mayor
The Lord Mayor's Show has taken place in Belfast since the 1950s, presented in May of each year by the Junior chamber of commerce to occasion the end of the Lord Mayor's term in office. Historically, the parade was more of a trade show, highlighting "a broad spectrum of civic life, including charities, major local companies and various representatives of the military" and exhibiting floats from local department stores and businesses (Bryan 2009: 9). The event also had the broader purpose of expressing civic pride as a "celebration for Belfast's citizens" (McIntosh 2006: 138). Bryan explains that prior to the 1970s the Lord Mayor's Show reflected the nature of civic space at the time, which espoused unionist values even while including nominal representations of Irish identity (Bryan2009: 9-10).

> Belfast city centre was historically a more dynamic political, civic space, rather than a mere platform for Orange parades. Although the unionist administration and the police frequently made clear their attitude to displays of the Irish Tricolour, radical politics reflecting more complex constructions of identity were active in the city, often in front of the City Hall. In other words, the conception of public civic space was comprehensive enough to allow some political expression that not only challenged unionist hegemonic ideas but also, in measure, reflected left of centre ideals, including those expressed by Irish republicans (Bryan 2009: 9)

The event went into decline in the 1970s, however, as Belfast marked its worst years of sectarian violence and suffered high levels economic insecurity and unemployment (Bryan 2009). While the Lord Mayor's Show retained its purpose and basic structure throughout that period, by the mid-1990s, the event was no longer culturally relevant, or particularly interesting, compared to some of the other events on offer. After the ceasefires, an emergent civic cultural life began to return to the city center, including the BEAT's Belfast Carnival. According to Gerry Copeland in the Events Unit of City Council:

> The Lord Mayor's Show was originally backed up by the Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce, Belfast city center management, so it was very business orientated, [and] we had lots of floats with people on static floats waving, we even had Marks and Spencer's ladies in underwear, which was a very strange one. But it was that almost really cheesy, cringingly embarrassing stuff, and then within four weeks time you had this fabulously colorful, vibrant, multicultural event, and as a Council we were putting money into both.
>
> ~Interview January 21, 2011

The BEAT's Summer Carnival occurred in June, a few weeks after the Lord Mayor's Show. Before the two events were combined, the Council frequently rented the BEAT's floats and hired the same performers to liven up the event. Nonetheless, its popularity and economic viability continued to decline. According to Copeland, "businesses weren't willing to put the money in, so the commercial interest in the event had almost

disappeared…. We started to feed off the carnival and get some elements of the carnival... to the point where the two events were becoming more alike" (Interview January 21, 2011). Eventually he wrote a report suggesting that the two events be merged into one, and to use the joint event, placed later in the summer, as the vehicle through which the new Lord Mayor would be welcomed by the city. Copeland believes the change was approved because it had a financial incentive; "The big thing that ticked the councilors boxes was the fact that we saved them something like £40,000 in doing so" (Interview January 21, 2011).[33] From 2006 (also the year that the BEAT first took on St. Patrick's Day) to 2010, this relationship functioned smoothly at both ends, according to Copeland:

> So what we do is that the BEAT will tell us what the theme is; we'll inform the new Lord Mayor when they come in that within three weeks they'll be sitting at the head of the parade. Because the idea is about celebrating the city and celebrating its citizens, and that's what the carnival does. And that's the key focus for any new Lord Mayor, celebrating the city and its citizens and we've been able to do it, and it's been done really well with BEAT to date.
> ~Interview January 21, 2011

My interview with Copeland, in January of 2011, was two months before the Council Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit disclosed its decision regarding the Lord Mayor's Day tender. Although he almost certainly didn't know at the time that the Council would decide in favor of ArtsEkta, his comments actually hint at an ambivalence of the Council toward the arts organizations it contracts. His understanding of the parade's purpose—that of "celebrating the city and its citizens"—is broad enough to encompass either the BEAT's hyper-local vision or ArtEkta's "One World" theme. It speaks again to the

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[33] Minutes from the Belfast City Council indicate that the actual savings was £28,000 (Development Committee November 10, 2010).

latitude of interpretation which the civic ideal is open to, and the relative lack of symbolic

determination which the council's regeneration strategy imposes.

A Semiosis of "Why?"

The funding turn came as a surprise to David Boyd, the BEAT team, and many of

their collaborators. The BEAT staff and artists spent many hours discussing the tender

application, the Council's reasoning, and what ArtsEkta would do with event. First, the

grant writers thought back to a recent change in the format of the application: following a

critical external audit, Belfast City Council revised its procurement policies to ensure that

every tender, or contract, would be granted through a competitive bidding process

(Annual Audit Letter 2011). Funding for the Lord Mayor's Day Show, which had

previously been allocated directly to the BEAT as a line item in the annual budget, would

now be open to public tender, and applications would be evaluated by the Tourism,

Culture and Arts Unit, whose budget would include a maximum of £70,000 for the event

(Minutes of the Development Committee 10 November 2010). The grant writers at the

BEAT believed that this fiscal change was simply a formality—they had been assured as

much by their colleagues in the City Council—and they trusted that the history of their

involvement in its development would ensure them the contract. According to Eileen:

> We did everything we could to have a good working relationship with the
> officers at the City Council. We manage funds well. We have good
> reporting procedures. Whatever has happened with the recent tender, we
> just don't know what their intentions are. And we had met with the
> Council people, which gave us the impression that it was just a paper
> chase exercise. Maybe that was naive? We just don't know.
> ~Interview April 5, 2011

When the staff turned to questioning the Council's reasoning, David reacted with

somewhat more anger. Having spent years developing the Lord Mayor's Carnival as an

event that would facilitate community participation, provide arts training and

employment to local artists and performers, he saw the funding decision as the breaking

off of a long-fought relationship. Moreover, the tender referred to the event as a carnival;

it needed to involve approximately 1,000 participants from schools, clubs and community

associations; and it required the winning bidder to provide training workshops to the

participants—all of which essentially describes the BEAT's project model. David felt that

the BEAT had set the bar for this type of events without the Council's help, and

sometimes in spite of it. Moreover, he explained:

> But we, through our own dedication, vision, etc., knowing that there was
> community support for what we were doing, did keep Carnival going even
> on a smaller budget…we'd got carnival up to having 1000 people, which
> is actually a huge number for any event in Ireland, and particularly a place
> like Belfast.
>
> ~Interview May 11, 2011

To see standards he developed in the requirements of a tender his company lost

constituted, for David, a kind of theft. It confirmed a pattern by which the Council

capitalizes on the City's creative enterprises, using images of the Carnival to promote

itself as a tourist destination, for instance, but then cuts off sources of support for the arts

with no concern for their survival. Katie, a singer and actress who performs at many

BEAT events, echoed a similar sentiment. The City Council, she explained, has "labeled

Belfast 'Music City,' but it's simultaneously cutting all the funding for it and putting on

events where they try to get musicians to play for free" (Interview April 13, 2011). They

perceive the Council's support for cultural activity as in name only, and even then it is

geared toward its marketability. For David and Katie, the funding turn is at best

disingenuous, and at worst a betrayal. In his frustration, David lamented:

> The Arts Unit and the City Council have reverted to the Lord Mayor's
> Parade and there is no Carnival anymore. …Why is the Arts Unit

spending money on having a commercial company produce a one-off
event that doesn't have, isn't doing any of the developmental work that we
do? There's a huge disappointment, huge frustration with all of that, after
all the years of development and so on that…it could be the end of
carnival actually in Belfast.

~Interview May 11, 2011

At the very least, David argued, the carnival name was proprietary. If he prevented the

Council from naming this year's event the Lord Mayor's Carnival, as it had been called

since the Lord Mayor's Show and the Summer Carnival merged, he believed he could

protect the ethos of his work: the community engagement and integration, the

development of artists and creative partnerships.

Finally, as the BEAT team speculated about what ArtsEkta would do with the

tender, David became convinced that no one could replicate a carnival experience, which

according to his model, was the culmination of year-long process. The BEAT's *oeuvre,*

and the collaborative relationships its staff had developed over the years with community

leaders, local clubs, schools and afterschool programs, are what, he believes, allows his

organization and not others to produce integrated events of the sort the Council

demanded. But instead, the Council treated the Lord Mayor's Show as "a product to be

bought for a single day."

The funding turn also posed the BEAT with more pragmatic financial concerns.

As Jean, the chief bookkeeper, explained:

The tender wasn't really just a tender, it was part of a whole year's work.
The St. Patrick's Day [tender] paid for some of the money for the Summer
[Carnival]; the other pots of money that are raised go to the carnival,
there's a lot more money that goes towards it than just the £70,000. They
do it as just £70,000 and that's it. It's just a one day thing. I don't think
they really appreciate that not having that may mean there's actually loss
of work for maybe eight full time artists out there. Then does that mean
that we lose the space downstairs because we can't afford to pay the rent,
or there's no point in it because we can't build the floats? It impacts on

our work because the costs are spread across … for one of the floats the costs are spread across St. Patrick's day, Bangor and Summer Carnival, so even what we can supply for St. Patrick's day in Bangor would be smaller if we don't have Carnival to contribute to the costs.

~Interview April 5, 2011

Unfortunately, it was precisely this distribution of funding that turned the Council evaluators toward the winning applicants. In their submission, the BEAT Initiative had inadequately explained that their event would utilize funds from other sources, some of which had not yet been procured. This appeared to the scorers as if the BEAT either could not meet the targets for the budget provided, or that they were counting on money they hadn't yet secured. The Council officers seemed not to realize that in all their years of collaboration on the Lord Mayor's Day Show, the £70,000 tender *never* paid for the entire event, instead the grant supplemented the BEAT's total annual budget, through which it pays for an entire year's worth of floats, workshops, performances and costumes, which are then used at several events throughout the year.

This confusion highlighted the intriguing imbrication of two features of the BEAT-Council relationship. On the one hand, David and his employees feel underappreciated by the Council, and on the other hand, they don't understand what the Council really wants out of their collaboration, or the events they sponsor. In a rare moment of lucidity in the semiosis of regeneration, the funding turn caused many of the BEAT's team to question how their mission as an arts organization lined up with the Council's desires for civic Belfast. In Eileen's words, "My experience of coming in and watching the relationship with the City Council change has been especially difficult. It's not clear what they want; is Carnival the right outlet for what we're doing if there's no municipal support for it?" (Interview April 5, 2011). In a more cynical tone, Matt, a

Beat'n Drum bandleader, said, "We've been taken for a ride by the City Council…

they've never played by their own rules" (Interview April 11, 2011).

Alternatively, many took the moment to reflect on what they expected to receive

from the city as a result of their long-standing work, wishing that the BEAT would

achieve the broad recognition it deserves. David and Katie both complained that the

BEAT is better known from its various collaborations in Europe and South America than

they are in Belfast. According to David, "A lot of people just don't, people in the City

Council for instance, just don't realize what they do have here" (Interview May 11, 2011).

Katie agreed, "I think the Council takes them for granted" (Interview April 13, 2011).

Matt noted that the public doesn't even seem to know that the BEAT is responsible for

many of the municipal events each year. "They don't connect with the public despite

being here so long," he said (Interview April 11, 2011). Jean had a more pragmatic worry.

If the public doesn't know what the BEAT has done for them in the past, they won't be

loyal to it now. "That's partly why this ArtsEkta turn is so troubling," she worried,

"because we have worked so hard to get people on board, and it will be so easy for them

to get groups involved because of the work we have done" (Interview April 5, 2011).

Viewing Belfast's urban regeneration as an actor network, or an assemblage of

agency, allows us to understand moments like the funding turn as an act from which "an

unstable cascade spills out" causing reactions on all sides, "like a pebble thrown into a

pond" (Bennett 2005: 457). In this respect, actors are less able to determine the outcomes

of their actions, both in the pragmaticist sense of understanding all possible consequences

of a given act, and in the material sense of causing the effect one wants. According to

Bennett, "to focus on the cascade of becomings is not to deny intentionality or its force,

but to…loosen the connection between efficacy and the moral subject" (Bennett 2005: 457). That is to say, whether or not the grant reviewers in the Belfast City Council Arts Unit could have known what myriad effects their decision would bring about, that does not necessarily imply that what eventually happened was what they intended; their agency and determinative power is too broadly distributed across the wider actor network.

In the more distant ripples from the funding turn, some of the BEAT's grievances regarding the Council's funding allocations have been redressed. In the Minutes of the Development Committee dated 26 June 2012, more than a year later, the Development Committee proposed a combined tender of £100,000-£110,000 to one company for both St. Patrick's Day and the Lord Mayor's Show (both of which were previously contracted separately for £70,000 apiece). The Development Committee proposal also suggests that after one successful year the contract could be renewed for up to four years. While the tender is still open to public competition and offers less money overall, it better suits the BEAT's distributed financial strategy. This adjustment shows that not only does the Council affect the parade organizers, but in this instance, the BEAT's resistance and reactions to the determining agency of the Council had a determining effect of its own on Council policy.

In Peirce's triadic theory of the sign (see Chapter One), the determining effects of a sign on an interpretant can be categorized in a variety of ways: They can be "immediate," "dynamic" or "final," or with respect to human interpretive agency, they can be "emotional," "energetic" or "logical" (Liszka 1996: 25). In both cases, the immediate or emotional interpretant refers to a first sensation, an unanalyzed effect which necessitates further semiosis in order to more accurately articulate the object being

represented. Boyd's sense of betrayal and the ripple of shock that went through the BEAT's staff and clientele exemplify the emotional interpretant. In dynamic or energetic interpretants, the sign is brought into a relation of opposition or reaction with a second thing; it is a practical effect in the form of a reflex or an exertion of energy (Colapietro 1993). ArtsEkta's work of producing the Lord Mayor's Show and the BEAT's efforts to restructure its finances fit into this category. The final or logical interpretant is yet more distant from these early ripples from the funding turn. The final interpretant, according to Liszka is "any rulelike or lawlake effect a sign has on any interpreting agency" (1996: 27). That is, when the answer to Eileen's question of what the council really wants in a civic event is *finally* understood, it will theoretically produce in the BEAT and other event organizers the unerring habit of producing parades precisely according to the Council's desired image. It is the "most perfect account of a concept or sign" (27).

But the answer to Eileen's question will never really be understood, because in the semiosis of an imaginary, ideal Belfast, there is no final interpretant. As I have argued throughout, the meaning of a "new Belfast" is perpetually under negotiation. The resistances and backflows between different government agencies, between the council and the BEAT Initiative, and between the BEAT's clientele and ArtsEkta, suggest that the network is too broad, and the different actors too invested with interpretive agency for the semiosis of regeneration ever to reach a final, logical conclusion. As other authors who have taken up the question of material semiosis suggest, there is no "fixed point" toward which semiosis proceeds. For Latour, "meaning" is little more than the actualization of a relation between two actors (1988: 196). In this respect, the semiosis of

the city refutes Peirce's belief in a final interpretant; instead, like Bennett's assemblage, "it vibrates" (2005: 457).

Its confusion not entirely behind them, the BEAT set to work scaling back its plans for the Carnival into a smaller event featuring the international Maracatu performers they had already booked. Meanwhile, the winning bidders, Small World, an event management company, and its creative partner, ArtsEkta, began organizing what they hoped would be a "spectacle of colors."

Big World, Small Town

It was noon on a busy Saturday in June when the Lord Mayor's Day Show kicked off, with ArtsEkta at the helm and several hundred adults and children in ethnic costumes and self-made art projects following behind. The theme, "One World, One Vision, One Future," was meant to highlight the different world cultures in Belfast, and to celebrate the overall unity of a diverse populace. In the evening, the BEAT Carnival Initiative sent its Samba Band and carnival performers dancing through the streets to launch a night of Brazilian Maracatu drumming performances at the University's student union.

ArtsEkta specializes in educational programming that aims, according to its website, to "promote cultural bonding through the arts." It was founded in 2006 by Nisha Tandon, who moved to Belfast from India and recognized a need in her new home for the support of young minority artists, "young graduates who had good ideas about art, textiles, education and learning through the arts, and who had no opportunities because there wasn't a market here for it" (Interview March 31, 2011). She also saw a way that ethnic arts could be used in outreach to Belfast's indigenous population, and believed that "bringing them my cultural arts would have more of an impact on them" because of its

unfamiliarity. Nisha tapped into the Peace III funding for Northern Ireland to develop

cross-community programs that brought different ethno-religious groups together over

artistic endeavors, such as learning South Asian styles of dance, exploring Sanskrit and

hosting educational workshops that showcase different world cultures. She is particularly

committed to promoting intercultural awareness between migrants and their host

communities. ArtsEkta also hosts several festivals throughout the year, static events that

showcase performances by her dance students and international performers, exhibit local

artists' work, and offer in a fair-like setting, various activities, information, and goods for

sale. Tandon recognized a void in community arts programming in Belfast, which, she

felt, was too focused on bringing together Protestants and Catholics and ignored a

growing need for awareness and acceptance of racial and ethnic diversity. The

organization provides commercial services and educational programming in addition to

several annual events, which include public celebrations of the Hindu rituals of Diwali

and Holi, and a summer performance showcase and outdoor festival called the Belfast

Mela.

The 2011 Belfast Lord Mayor's Show
Parade Order and Description
1. *Streetwise caixa drummers: Wearing yellow shirts, green cummerbunds and black pants, four are on stilts, two dance on the ground between and around the stilt walkers.*
2. *Lord Mayor Niall Ó Donnghaile (Sinn Féin) and his family, he carries a young boy on his shoulders.*
3. *Eventsec professional steward in black suit and reflective vest.*
4. *Holy Cross Atticall Primary School Accordion Band: Girls and teens, wearing caps with white plumes, blue jackets and blue and white skirts.*
5. *Two Irish dancers in black and eight Bodhrán drummers behind them.*
6. *Eventsec professional steward in black suit and reflective vest.*
7. *Ulster Scots Musical group: playing piccolo flutes and drums, wearing black pants suede vests and pageboy caps.*

8. *Bright Lights Highland Dancers: Seven teenaged girl dancers wearing velvet jackets and tartan kilts and socks.*
9. *Claddagh school of Irish Dance, two teen dancers and approximately 20 young children dancers in aqua dresses or polo-shirts and black pants.*
10. *Four clowns in huge masks supported on their shoulders, two are old musicians and two are fish heads in Irish dancing costumes.*
11. *A small float of a male and female explorer in a red and white hot air balloon, reminiscent of "Around the World in 80 Days" by Jules Verne, pushed by four men in blue overalls and orange shirts.*
12. *Two Eventsec professional stewards in black suits and reflective vests.*
13. *Ashfield Girl's High School Performing Arts Group: Two teens at the front wear stylized versions of "Old West" ruffled dresses, and carry a banner that reads "Ashford Girl's High School. Celebrating 13 years in the Global Rock Challenge." Behind them others carry signs indicating the theater-related awards they have won. They are followed by at least 80 other girls, in various colorful costumes, clowns, sailor suits, and more "Old West" dresses in bright purples and pinks twirling blue and white pompoms. They are cheering to music played by a speaker on a cart, which is difficult to hear. Followed by four teachers in black.*
14. *Two stilt-walkers in "fire demon" costumes.*
15. *Two stilt-walkers in swan costumes; they are wearing long white robes with swan heads on backpack supports.*
16. *Transplant Sport UK: Six adults in blue t-shirts carry a banner reading "TSUK THANKS YOU."*
17. *Divis South Project, Frank Gillen Center: children carry a black hand-made banner, naming their West-Belfast community center, behind them approximately children and teens wearing animal print tunics, paper crowns and face paint beat small African djembe and talking drums or carry round painted prop drums on poles, with streaming ribbons around the sides. (It's possible although I can't confirm whether the Fortwilliam Youth Center and Mount Vernon Community House, from a staunch Loyalist area were also integrated with the Divis group, which is from a Republican area. Both groups were given African Drum workshops with the same ArtsEkta artist, and no other group in the parade used these props.)*
18. *Japan Society Northern Ireland: Carrying a simple white banner with their logo, Ethnically mixed group of women and children wearing kimonos of various styles and lengths, twirling parasols made of cocktail umbrellas. They are followed by an additional group of 10 men and women, some wearing simple red kimonos over their clothes, pushing strollers and carrying the Japanese flag, and behind them another group of women with parasols wearing different types of traditional Asian styles, such as Indian saris, South-East Asian kebayas and Philippine ternos, among other styles.*
19. *Queens University Students, also in Asian-styled clothing, their faces painted yellow, carry large painted Korean-style shadow puppets.*
20. *Chinese Welfare Society: Lion Dance, composed of four dancers, forming two Chinese lions, do acrobatic stunts along with drumming from taiko drums.*
21. *Belfast Metropolitan College Cultural Diversity Club: Carrying a banner with their on a pole. Behind the banner about 10 college-aged women with their faces painted*

yellow, twirl round kite-like props, with Japanese symbols on them and streaming ribbons on all sides. They are followed by a Chinese Dragon team composed of teenagers, wearing Indian-style tunics and saris.

22. *Eight ribbon dancers wearing white face paint and Chinese-style silk jackets.*
23. *Hot Pink Cerberus float with articulated, nodding heads, carrying three children on the back, pushed by people wearing black shirts and pants.*
24. *Afreeka: African drum performance group, playing drums and wearing red team t-shirts.*
25. *Peace Players: A charity which uses organized sports to facilitate cross-community peace building, a group of about fifteen children and adults wearing matching red t-shirts carry a banner with their name, and the Adidas sportswear logo.*
26. *Polish Saturday School and Polish Cultural Society: A group of eight adults and children carry a long banner advertising the Polish language school in Belfast, they also carry tall poles decorated with flowers and ribbons, and the children wear wreaths of flowers on their heads. They are followed by several dancers carrying more floral poles, and several boys wearing dragon costumes. Approximately 40 children and teenage girls dance a traditional Polish circle dance, wearing green skirts with aprons and floral head wreaths, and some more ornate traditional outfits with black embroidered vests. Behind them teenaged boys dance wearing black horse headdresses.*
27. *A group of disabled adults and their care takers, also Polish style props.*
28. *Friendship Club, INP and NICRAS; approximately 30 refugees and asylum seekers, and their friends from the Friendship club, also wearing or carrying Polish props, these the maypoles made of recycled plastic bags at the Redburn center.*
29. *A steward from the City Council Events Unit wearing an ArtsEkta reflective vest.*
30. *Fortwilliam Musical Society Youth Group: Two teenage girls at the front carry a banner, the rest sing and sign a medley of Christian and peace-themed songs. Several of the girls wore brightly colored tutus, but otherwise the group had no props or costumes.*
31. *Eventsec professional steward wearing a black suit and reflective vest.*
32. *A group of small children and their teachers wearing white t-shirts and tights with brightly colored ruffle skirts, leis, and sashes around their heads.*
33. *Sandy Row Falcons: All girls cheerleading group wearing saris and tunics with sashes, dancing in a Bollywood style.*
34. *Eventsec professional steward wearing black pants, shirt and tie, and reflective vest.*
35. *group, some yellow wind socks?*
36. *Eventsec professional steward wearing black suit and reflective vest.*
37. *Redburn afterschool club: young children wearing multicolored tunics and sashes and twirling windsocks; the adults that accompany them carry be-ribboned Ganesh elephant masks.*
38. *A woman in a Sari ringing a cowbell.*
39. *A mechanical float of a dinosaur-like robot lifting up the rear of a car and pushing it forward. In the car a "driver" honked the horn, while the float was controlled from behind the robot.*
40. *Two performers carrying prop bi-planes, painted to look like German and English*

> *World War I fighter planes.*
> *41. Eventsec professional steward wearing black suit and reflective vest.*
> *42. Volunteer pushing a loading cart with bottled water for performers.*
> *43. Antique fire truck, "McGreevy Engine North East Fire Brigade".*
> *44. Followed by an ambulance.*

Figure 7.1: Parade Order and Description

The Lord Mayor's Show would be the first time that ArtsEkta put on a parade, with all of its participants and its moving field of celebration. On the day of the parade, ArtsEkta and its private partner, Small World, had gathered just around 1000 participants; Tandon expected at least 1,046, based on her coordination efforts, but some groups did not appear on the day. They came from a variety of the city's youth groups, schools, community centers and cultural associations, and in this instance many more carried banners declaring where they were from or what they represented. Similar to the BEAT's method of engaging participants, each group had had the benefit of one or two workshops with ArtsEkta artists to create costumes or props that they would wear on the day of the event. Some groups learned simple music or dance routines to perform on the day; others were content simply to walk along as part of the brightly colored spectacle. ArtsEkta held all its workshops in the 2-3 weeks prior to the event, and I was able to attend a few—a drumming circle at an after-school center in Mt. Vernon, a Bollywood dance class with the Sandy Row cheerleaders, and a craft workshop in Redburn, where we constructed maypoles out of recycled materials. The artist at the maypole workshop, Trisha, showed me how to make rosettes out of plastic shopping bags, explaining, "In Poland, they do a lot of things with florals."

At the gathering place, a tent set up in Writer's Square, there were changing spaces and piles of props, which did not seem to be allocated for specific groups. I joined a group from the Friendship club, which was composed of locals as well as African and

Middle Eastern asylum seekers, and was handed a head wreath and maypole, like the ones I had made at Trisha's workshop. Along one side of the tent were face painting stations; signs noted what patterns the artists at each station would do: "Latin Face Painting", "African Face Painting" and "Asian Face Painting." The performers waited casually in groups throughout the market, and stewards corralled us into a branching queue shortly before the parade was set to begin. The queuing groups fed into a single stream of performers shortly before turning the corner onto Royal Avenue; from there it would still take almost an hour to march to our destination, the City Hall, half a mile away.

I noted that, though many of the groups I encountered were also in the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, it was indeed a much more diverse event in terms of the ages and ethnicities of its participants. Overall the event was thematically looser than the BEAT's Carnival parade; the floats were rented, not bespoke, and, except for a hot-air balloon carrying characters from "Around the World in Eighty Days," they didn't seem to fit with the "One World" theme. It also seemed that several of the groups, such as Transplant Sport and the Peace Players were not there to perform, and did not have props to carry, or may not have participated in the workshops. They were not there to perform—they carried banners and wore matching clothes in order to call the public's attention to their cause.

Tandon was adamant that "We don't want big, that wow factor. It's about what the kids will learn; it's about what the kids experience being a part of it" (Interview March 31, 2011). Tandon's vision of the event had color, sound, and performance, but really it was a showcase for inhabitants of the city who were marginalized by an eternal

focus on peace building between Protestant unionists and Catholic nationalists. The parade would emphasize the participants and the various communities they represent, because "That's what we are, who we are, where we're from, that all comes from the groups. There are these hidden communities that are scared to come out and don't see a space for themselves. We give them a space to tell people who they are" (Interview March 31, 2011).

And indeed, among the participants were several groups for whom this event was a rare but perfect opportunity for publicity. Transplant Sport, a group of athletes who are also organ transplant recipients, for instance, was motivated to participate in the parade to promote organ donation, and to express a deeply felt gratitude to the city of Belfast for hosting the 2011 British Transplant Games. Likewise, INP and the Friendship Club, which work on bridging contact between recently arrived migrants and asylum seekers and their Northern Irish neighbors, sent a contingent of local volunteers and recent migrants from the Sudan, Iraq, and Somalia. INP's organizers, as well as other migrant outreach groups such as NICRAS, take great pains to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are included in these highly visual parades, so that, on days like this, they get to be seen, cheered, and celebrated by citizens of Belfast, where on any other day they may feel marginalized and ignored.

Other groups in attendance included the Polish Cultural Association and Chinese Welfare Association, a Japanese women's group and Ulster Scots musicians and dancers, all of whom proudly wore their own costumes and traditional dress. Performance groups, schools, and community associations, which may not have been representing their own cultural backgrounds on that day, also carried ethnically themed props, such as African

masks, Polish flowered garlands, puppets of the Hindu god Ganesh, drums, gongs, and shadow puppets that they had made in educational workshops with ArtsEkta artists. Although these cultural tropes are problematic from an academic standpoint—they are essentialized, reductive representations of cultural identities, verging on Orientalist—in the atmosphere of the Lord Mayor's Show, they were colorful, aesthetic and uncomplicated markers of Belfast's diversity. Across the entire parade, the repetition of props, colors and sounds offered a multi-sensory image of unity and harmony. It was a safe, but effective, celebration of diversity.

Marshaling the parade was the newly elected Lord Mayor Niall Ó Donnghaile, a Sinn Féin Councilor, and Belfast's youngest-ever Lord Mayor at 25 years old. He commented on how pleased he was to see so many people turn out to celebrate his inauguration. Meanwhile, I walked along with the group from the Friendship Club, who had also been in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Today they carried the Polish floral maypoles, which I had helped Trisha assemble at her workshop with schoolchildren in Redburn. Behind us I could hear a choir singing "Heal the World" and some Christian hymns, and between their songs I could vaguely make out the African drummers of the Afreeka performance group ahead of us. I couldn't hear the Streetwise Band, a professional performing troupe that spun off from the Beat'n Drum Samba Band, because they were closer to the front of the parade—but I could see the caixa drummers on their stilts up ahead. Later I caught up with the group of cheerleaders from Sandy Row, who were thrilled to be in the Parade, but weren't used to the crowds; one little girl, who wasn't yet a seasoned performer, felt ill and had to be taken home. It was a warm afternoon, and from within the parade I enjoyed the attention and good will emanating

from the faces behind the barricades. I passed down Donegall Square toward the City

Hall, someone from the sidelines shouted "Happy Carnival!"

Overall, the event was deemed a success. In an email afterwards, Nisha Tandon

wrote:

> ArtsEkta's goals were to have a participatory element in the parade from
> young and old. We achieved this very well and all sections of the
> community participated. The parade was colourful, vibrant and had
> learning attached to it. People were reaching out and making connections;
> young people took ownership of the whole event. (Email Correspondence
> July 6, 2011)

Even the BEAT team, who were there to "check out the competition," and were generally

"underwhelmed" admitted that ArtsEkta had pulled it off, though they had a few nits to

pick with the sound system (too quiet) and the floats (rented), among other things.

Tandon agreed, it was a learning experience. ArtsEkta had never produced a parade

before, and she was surprised at how tight the budget and the timescale really was—even

without bespoke floats, ArtsEkta had to dip into its own resources to pull off what was

required by the tender contract. She also believed that accepting the award had given her

small organization a bad name in the arts sector, and had hurt her relationships with other

arts organizations. She suspected this was why some of her participants had pulled out at

the last minute. Ultimately, it was a very stressful experience for her and members of her

staff, and at the time I last spoke with her, she was not confident that ArtsEkta would

endeavor to produce another event like it. She reflected:

> I think the media coverage gave a fantastic insight of the event. The Lord
> Mayor was happy and content and that mattered a lot to us as we are a
> very small organisation who is trying their level best to make a difference
> through it's innovative programmes. We do meet with lots of hurdles from
> other major players, but we will keep our good work going and the
> message we are trying to convey is that Belfast is a City for All. Let's
> work together and make this place a better place. Again it might be just a

dream, but we will not give up. (Email Correspondence July 6, 2011)

Tom Hartley, a former Lord Mayor and Sinn Féin Councilor in Belfast took it as evidence (rather than just a representation) of the successful integration of minority ethnic groups into Belfast's social fabric; "It's proof," he said, "that these communities are buying into Belfast, buying into our city and are becoming central to our civic celebrations" (Field notes June 18, 2011).

Despite its success, the future of the Lord Mayor's Show was somewhat uncertain, even then. The Show's 2012 funding was to be diverted to a large scale event coinciding with the opening of the 2012 Olympics in London, called the Land of Giants (which was co-produced by the BEAT Initiative, the Belfast Circus School, Young at Art, a children's arts organization, and the Belfast City Council). City Councilors disagreed whether the event should return in 2013; some believed that turning the parade into a carnival, and holding it later in the summer had been the wrong direction all along, while others felt the old commercial format had "run out of steam" (McKeown 2012, BBC 2012).[34]

Representing Diversity

ArtsEkta's multicultural take on the Lord Mayor's Show reflects more than the organization's creative mission; most evident among the many changes occurring in Belfast over the past few decades is its increasing cultural diversity. Since the UK's

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[34] As noted above, the Development Committee of the city council eventually came to the decision to bind funding for both the Lord Mayor's Show and the St. Patrick's Day Parade together as part of one contract.

decision to allow Accession 8 Nationals[35] to register to work in the UK, an influx of tens

of thousands Eastern European migrants, many from Poland, have settled in Northern

Ireland.[36] They join the longer-established Indian and Chinese communities, Northern

Ireland's largest ethnic minority groups, who settled there in the 1930s and 1960s,

respectively. Though ethnic minorities and new migrant groups comprise less than 1% of

the Northern Irish population, their numbers are concentrated in Belfast, where their

presence constitutes a significant and highly visible change in the cultural and ethnic

composition of the city (Bell, Jarman, Lefebvre 2004).

This change has not occurred smoothly. Migrants to the UK are "racialized" as a

consequence of an immigration policy which treats them as "problematic bodies," and

offers them "to be blamed in periods of acute economic and social change" (Garner 2007).

Migrants in Northern Ireland suffer frequent violence such as harassment, racially

motivated crimes, and social isolation (Bell, Jarman, Lefebvre 2004: 6-7). Host

communities falsely perceive economic migrants as receiving housing or insurance

benefits, or resent the noise and refuse emanating from homes rented by groups of young

workers. In particular, young Polish workers have settled in the deprived parts of South

and East Belfast that have the cheapest housing, which also happen to be staunchly

loyalist areas. Because many Poles are Catholic, their Protestant neighbors perceive them

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[35] A8 Nationals are citizens of the states that joined the EU on 1 May 2004: Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. They do not have reciprocal rights to work and reside in any European country, as nationals of the 25-state European Economic Area have. The UK and Ireland have allowed A8 Nationals to work and reside there, with certain restrictions, such as a 12-month probation period before the worker is allowed access to social housing or public insurance (Migration Awareness Training, Field notes November 2010).

[36] In an interview with Maciek Bator, Director of the Polish Association of Northern Ireland, he estimated 50,000 Polish migrants alone since the 2004 Accession (September 17, 2010), while the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency reports there are 39,000 A8 nationals living in Northern Ireland as of 2009 (NIAR 246-11, 2011).

as a sectarian threat. Roma migrants have also faced significant racism in Belfast, given the stigma and stereotypes surrounding their traveling culture (McDonald 2009, NIAR 2011).

This has led to the proliferation of advocacy groups, such as the Chinese Welfare Association and the Polish Association of Northern Ireland, as well as council-sponsored programs meant to encourage integration and address the needs of both migrants and host communities. In particular, the South Belfast Roundtable on Racism, a consortium of different statutory and voluntary organizations under the coordination of Denise Wright, has taken a leading role in dealing with these issues, which require an especially delicate touch in Northern Ireland. Wright explains,

> It's not necessarily part of our psyche. We're still moving from one way of being to another way of being, and the level of migration we have…this all happened in seven years really. It's not a long time to change if you're post-conflict, when you have certain mindsets about the fact that people you don't know might be dangerous. So it is just taking time to seep in.
> ~Interview February 15, 2011

Wright's strategy is informed by contact theory (Allport 1954, Whitley and Kite 2010), the idea that the experience of encounter serves to defy and destroy stereotypes about the 'other.' To facilitate contact, the Roundtable has developed several initiatives aimed at fostering locally initiated integration. The Roundtable sponsors a weekly meeting of the Belfast Friendship Club at a café near the University, where people can mingle over a cup of coffee and partake in craft activities and art exhibits. The café already attracts an international clientele; it is located close by to Queens University and several hospitals, which have many international employees, and both the NICRAS offices and the Chinese Welfare Association are within walking distance. The Roundtable also staffs the club meetings with a social worker who can direct people in need to relevant service providers,

such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, or the Bryson House service center for asylum seekers. An Inclusion Festival, sponsored by the Roundtable, provides a weeklong series of separate events and performances around the themes of integration and diversity, all organized by different groups that have received small seed funds from the Roundtable. Wright believes that integration work must operate on a local level in order to lead to an improved situation for migrants, minorities and hosts communities, and to engage people personally with change occurring in their own neighborhoods. Write recognized a demand for long-term communication and facilitation between host and migrant communities. In Wright's experience:

> They needed to take things a little bit deeper. Rather than just superficial engagement once a year or one-off projects, they wanted to sort of begin to build deeper relationships, but also we began to realize that we needed to set the whole inward migration in the global context. People here weren't getting that…. And [we needed] for people to begin to understand the push and pull factors, … the rights of migrant workers… the history of migration in and around this island and link it up to modern migration to say, 'this is not new, this is part of quite a context, this has been going on for thousands of years. Yes, it is different for us, but that is because of our complex situation, we're just normalizing with the rest of the world.
> ~Interview February 15, 2011

So, adding programs such as a migration awareness training session, and education about bias, harassment and hate crimes, which Wright provides along with colleagues from the Good Relations Unit of City Council and Corrymeela, a private peace-building program, the Roundtable's overarching aim is to help Belfast's communities "manage change well." Recognizing that the Troubles have added a distinct set of pressures to Belfast's regeneration process, Wright explains that "managing change" means encouraging migrants and hosts to be good neighbors to each other, dispelling myths, and fostering interaction in neighborhood settings. Importantly, Wright adds that,

in her opinion, the kind of harmonious cohesion discussed in political forums and policy documents is dangerous because it "sets people up for a lot of wrong expectations" while politicians themselves are still "invested in separatism" (Interview February 15, 2011). "The kind of genuine sharing and integration and cohesion in Northern Ireland that the people on the ground want" needs to originate from the communities that are dealing with those tensions (Interview February 15, 2011).

To some extent, ArtsEkta shared this mission. Nisha's earliest impulse was to form the organization in order to provide support and creative outlets for members of minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland. Among Nisha's contributions to Belfast's civic life were several incredibly successful events connected to Hindu traditions and South Asian cultures, including Mela, a two-day outdoor festival, and "Diwali-Samhain," an Indo-Celtic crossover event featuring art and performance developed in residence at ArtsEkta and inspired by both Irish and Indian cultural forms. ArtsEkta also puts on an annual "Festival of Colours," which celebrates Holi, a traditional Hindu rite of spring. These events provide a forum for people of Indian heritage to celebrate their culture, as well as put it on display for Northern Irish consumers—with whom they have proved enormously popular. ArtsEkta is not alone in this practice; both the Polish Association of Northern Ireland and the Chinese Welfare Association produce annual events celebrating their cultures, which boast high attendance and positive media attention.

In this context, it seems strange then that Councilor Hartley saw the Lord Mayor's Show as "proof that these communities are buying into Belfast" (Field notes, June 18th, 2011), when there are so many other events that offer more "authentic" glimpses of other

cultures, and which foster more direct interaction among people of different backgrounds. In these events, though many of the groups are already integrated, the parade doesn't further facilitate cross-community activities, it merely puts diversity on display. The Lord Mayor's Show in particular, shaping residents of Belfast into archetypal cultural tropes, portrayed the wholesome diversity of essentialized "otherness" without ever addressing the underlying challenges of integration. The funding structure of both events is such that no meaningful contact between groups is facilitated unless the groups themselves have arranged for it ahead of time, through pursuit of other grants. In this respect, the Lord Mayor's Show's focus on diversity, like St. Patrick's Day's focus on localism, can be viewed as another alternative vision for a post-conflict Belfast. This one, though, was more determined by the concerns of a council who, as Wright implied, are still too "invested in separatism," and the incommensurable diversity of "Protestant" and "Catholic." Rather than proof that Belfast's minority ethnic groups are buying into Belfast, it seems that Belfast political actors are co-opting them as proof of Belfast's achieved peace.

One City, Two Visions

The BEAT Initiative and ArtsEkta do not typically compete with one another. Although they both follow broadly transnational themes, and both produce large-scale public events, they do not usually tender for the same contracts. Still, sharing the compositional structure situates both ArtsEkta's idea of a multicultural Belfast within the same conversational genre as the BEAT Initiative's localist vision, and moreover, highlights their points of convergence and contrast (Bakhtin 1986: 60). The special features of the parade genre—that they are public, heteroglossic, participatory, and take

place within the urban center—serve to interject them into a visual public dialogue, which in Bakhtin's terms, is an active process of agreement and disagreement in which each proposal for a new urban identity might be tested and questioned by other interlocutors (Bakhtin 1986: 159).

That said, I do not think it is fair to compare the contents of each parades on their individual messages, as both parades seem to covey essentially the same thing: the "danger" of the "Other"—the consequence of identification with particular, conflicting nationalities—is offset with a saccharine picture of cosmopolitan unity. The nationalist implications of St. Patrick's Day are defused with symbols re-appropriated from an idealized past, while the Lord Mayor's Show blends symbols of different ethno-national identities into a medley of colors and clothing of no further political consequence— anyone can be anything. Bornemean and Fowler have defined "Europeanization" as "a strategy of self-representation and a device of power" that attempts to reorganize the nationalist bases of state formation—territoriality and peoplehood—into a European group identity (1997: 487-489). A pan-European identity negates divisions between a national consciousness and the "Other" by allowing Europeans to "imagine themselves as resembling or replacing one another" (490). Highlighting the coexistence of multiple "peoples" within the same territory—continuing a more ancient pattern of "appropriating difference for its own ends"—the EU thus represents itself as a heterogeneous "family of nations" and reorients group identification toward transnational political alliances and Extra-national forms of sovereignty (489). To give a sense of the ubiquity of this shift, even when rebuking the idea of multiculturalism, the UK's conservative Prime Minister David Cameron, reiterated the European ideal of "unity in diversity": "Under the doctrine

of state multiculturalism," he declared at the 2011 European Security Conference, "we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We've failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong" (Cameron 2011). Cameron's vision of society—like the BEAT's—proposes a renewed sense of the local, a cosmopolitan unity in which coexistence supersedes ethno-national allegiance.

In their role articulating the details of "new Belfast," both parades seem to reiterate the above "European" ideal. This is due partly to the determining agencies of their sources of funding, the requirements of the Council, and the tradition of the Lord Mayor's Show. Ultimately, however, the significance of what these parades can convey comes down to the confining features of the genre. In this, however, the parade genre offers something unique and consequential in a *material* semiosis of the emerging idea of the city.

Bennett reminds us that in an assemblage, "Each [actant] harbors a simultaneous variety of virtual modes of expression" (2005: 457). Peirce's classification of interpretants as emotional, energetic, and logical articulates these "modes of expression" in the form of feeling, action, and cognition. Participants in the parade going public, as actors in the same assemblage, do not necessarily react by debating the validity of multiculturalism as a form of social organization, but they do respond with feelings of enjoyment or boredom, and with movement of their bodies as they follow the parade, linger in the city center for lunch or in the shops, and occupy space they might otherwise avoid. Walking, according to De Certeau (1984) is the practice of the city. "Linking acts and footsteps, opening meanings and directions," walkers articulate "a second poetic

geography on top of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning" (1984: 105). And of course, parades walk too. Beyond the literal meaning of their content they are materially present on the city streets, they and their audience are materially composed of thousands of people jointly celebrating a jejune symbol of the city's reinvention. If we take the civic parade genre to represent a city that is vibrant, cosmopolitan and diverse, the parade itself is proof of the ideal it imagines.

What emerges from the comparison of the BEAT Intiative and ArtsEkta, on the one hand, are the competing structures of the regeneration project, in which different actors trying to enlist each other to their agenda and determine their outcomes, compete, resist and redirect the vibrations of the assemblage. In such a network, Latour argues, "There is always room for controversy about the fidelity of any interpretation" (1988: 196). And Bennett adds, that what "will be actualized at any given moment is not predictable with confidence" (2005: 457). On the other hand, it shows that regardless of the intentions of any particular actor, the real work of regeneration is already being done, by drawing people into the city center and re-inscribing the space with new pathways, memories and meanings.

Illustrations to Chapter Seven

Figure 7.2: Props await participants.

Figure 7.3: Participants carry banners declaring who they are and where they are from.

Figure 7.4: The Polish Cultural Association waiting to join the parade.

Figure 7.5: Women dressed in different Asian fashions carry parasols made of cocktail umbrellas.

Figure 7.6: University students carry props styled after Korean shadow puppets.

Figure 7.7: Two boys in a dragon costume.

Figure 7.8: The Friendship Club marches toward City Hall with Polish maypoles.

Chapter Eight: Street Life

Throughout this text I have argued that parades are a civic medium for the envisioning of Belfast's future and the joint negotiation of a shared, local identity, but how to measure the impact of these events poses several problems. In the first place, as indicated in Chapter Six, what they are actually conveying to Belfast's public is not necessarily a logically articulate message, but rather like Turner's (1969) understanding of ritual, they provide a shared experience of some significance. A second problem, then, is to understand precisely *how* parades mean, or alternatively, what significance the public derives from them. In Chapters Three and Four, I explored the significance that public officials and artists attach to the parades they help produce, which in policy circles includes the economic benefit of drawing people into the city center, the "neutralizing" of "sectarianized" space, and the development of a sense of unity. For artistic circles, on the other hand, the parades embody integration and a democratic ownership of the streets, and they build confidence into a local sense of identity. But whether these intentions are ultimately conveyed to the parade-going public poses the third problem of this inquiry: assessing public perceptions.

Low, Taplin and Scheld's excellent study of urban parks (2005) demonstrates that a methodology of public space necessitates spatially contextualized data collection. These authors utilized techniques that would allow them to map behaviors and values onto sites

of inquiry. Crucially, most, if not all of their interviews were conducted in the parks they studied, allowing the physical environment to act as a cue, and sometimes as a fellow interlocutor. Following this example, and adapting it to apply to perceptions of public events, I designed a street-intercept survey around a series of sites in Belfast that hosted recent public events (See Appendix 3: Street Intercept Sites and Parade Routes). Using the location as a cue encouraged respondents to consider public events in the light of their feelings about the space they presently occupied, and prompted them to contrast it to their memories of Belfast during the Troubles. As a result, these interviews address not only what people have to say about parades, but also how they have perceived Belfast changing over time. In this respect, they approach an answer to the central question of this dissertation: how parades participate in the regeneration and re-imagining of Belfast.

Street Corner Research

The street intercept survey targeted pedestrians in five different locations in or near Belfast City Center that have been the site of a recent public event. The sites included: the City Hall lawn, where the Lord Mayor's and St. Patrick's parades originated, and which hosted a continental food market during my survey; Bank and Cornmarket Squares, both pedestrian shopping plazas where there are frequent street performances and occasional concerts; St. George's Market, a large covered market hall which hosts produce, antique and craft booths on Fridays and weekends, as well as ethnically themed events for Chinese New Year and the Hindu Holi Festival; and finally, the Botanical Gardens, near Queens University, a favorite city green space, and site of

ArtsEkta's annual Mela, among other concerts and events[37] (See Figure 7.1: Street

Intercept Sites). This sampling method produced 139 interviews, approximately 25-30 at

each site (See Figure 1: Sampling Design). While not useful for statistical inferences

regarding public opinion in Belfast, these interviews began to reveal certain patterns in

the way my informants talked about the city center and the events that occur there, and

also in the activities they were in the middle of when I stopped them (Bernard 2006,

LeCompte and Schensul 1999). This provides only the beginning of an answer; entering

these patterns into the ongoing discourse among funders, policy makers and parade

producers, however, conveys what core aspects of the post-conflict agenda have been

translated through the policy and the arts interventions to members of the urban public.

Figure 8.1: Sampling Design

Total Street Intercept Interviews (n=139)										
Site	City Hall (n=28)		Bank Square (n=29)		Cornmarket Square (n=30)			St. George's Market (n=27)		Botanical Gardens (n=25)	
Time	Sat 28 May AM* (n=17)	Sat 28 May PM* (n=11)	Sat 25 June PM (n=14)	Tues 28 June PM (n=15)	Sun 27 May PM (n=10)	Wed16 June PM (n=10)	Sat 18 June PM** (n=10)	Sat 21 May PM (n=15)	Fri 27 May AM (n=12)	Sat 4 June PM (n=10)	Sun 19 June PM (n=15)
* Continental Market on at City Hall during survey. **** Interviews occurred following Lord Mayor's Show.**										

My sampling design reflects an effort to capture a variety of users and uses of

public spaces, rather than the intention to compare responses across variables. I

conducted my interviews at times when I knew the locations would attract footfall, and

the weather would tolerate lingering outdoors. In the table above, I have also noted that

the Continental Market was on at City Hall during my interviews; while this attracted

numerous people who wouldn't normally have spent time on the City Hall lawn, it

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[37] I intended to interview at Custom House Square, which is a very large plaza where parades frequently conclude by feeding into an enclosed or tented concert space; however there is so little foot-fall there at other times, it would have been a challenge to reach the same numbers as at other sites. I made the same judgment regarding the Lagan Waterfront and Writer's Square, across from St. Ann's Cathedral, which are less frequently utilized as event spaces.

excluded others whom I have observed using the space at other times to eat their lunch, read, or as a meeting place. My interviews in Cornmarket Square are split over three days, because this was a particularly challenging spot to stop pedestrians. Although it is a busy shopping plaza, and boasts several cafes with outdoor seating, the central plaza is also a favorite spot for soapbox preachers and street-marketing promoters. Standing there with my clipboard and recorder, I probably looked like yet another proselytizer to avoid.

The interviews themselves were very brief, consisting of five questions and typically requiring less than three minutes to complete. (See Appendix 1 for the full interview schedule.) The content of the survey asked respondents to reflect on their surroundings and under what conditions they would attend public events. In short order, it asked whether respondents felt the space they were presently in was "safe and welcoming," if they would return there for a public event of some kind, and what kind of event they would be likely to attend. It concluded with broader questions about their perceptions of public space in Belfast. Useful to this analysis were the questions of whether respondents felt that civic events impacted their perceptions of the area and what they were presently doing in the city center.

Answers to the first question, "What brings you to the city center today?" demonstrate the scope of activities for which people specifically come to the city center. I classed the responses into eight categories: *Tourism,* which included sightseers and locals showing visiting friends around; *Shopping,* for unspecified browsing; *Errands* for named tasks or items; *Socializing, Exercising, Work, En Route* for those who said they were just passing through; and *Event,* for those who named the public event they were there to see. See Figure 7.2 for a representation of the results. While I do not suggest that this data

reached saturation—as noted above there may be more ways for people to use the City

Hall lawn, or other spaces, that I did not encounter during my survey—I do think they

represent most of the range of use. Unsurprisingly, of the fourteen responses coded with

Event, thirteen were at the City Hall at the time of the Continental Market, and one was in
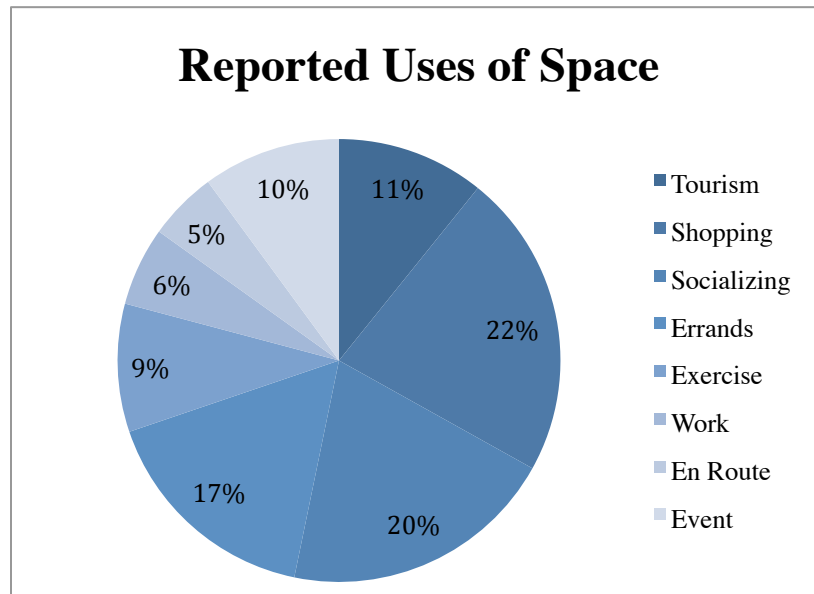
Cornmarket Square, after the Lord Mayor's Show.

**Figure 8.2: The pie chart notes the percentage of respondents (n=139)
reporting each type of use across all survey locations.**

Having been primed by previous questions to think of non-sectarian civic events,

question four of the survey asked, "How do public events change your opinion of public

space in Belfast?" This produced important results in the context of my broader study,

because it elicited responses describing what informants perceived to be positive changes

to Belfast's civic spaces. Of my 139 interviews, 102 (74%) answered in the affirmative,

that public events improve their opinion of public space. Many (17%) of these answers

were unelaborated, simply expressing sentiments such as "I think it's a good thing" (ID15,

St. George's Market 21 May PM) or "Marvelous. It's great to see it, it really does" (ID64,

City Hall 28 May PM). However, within the 85 elaborated responses (83% of affirmative

answers or 61% of the overall survey), certain patterns of speaking about public space
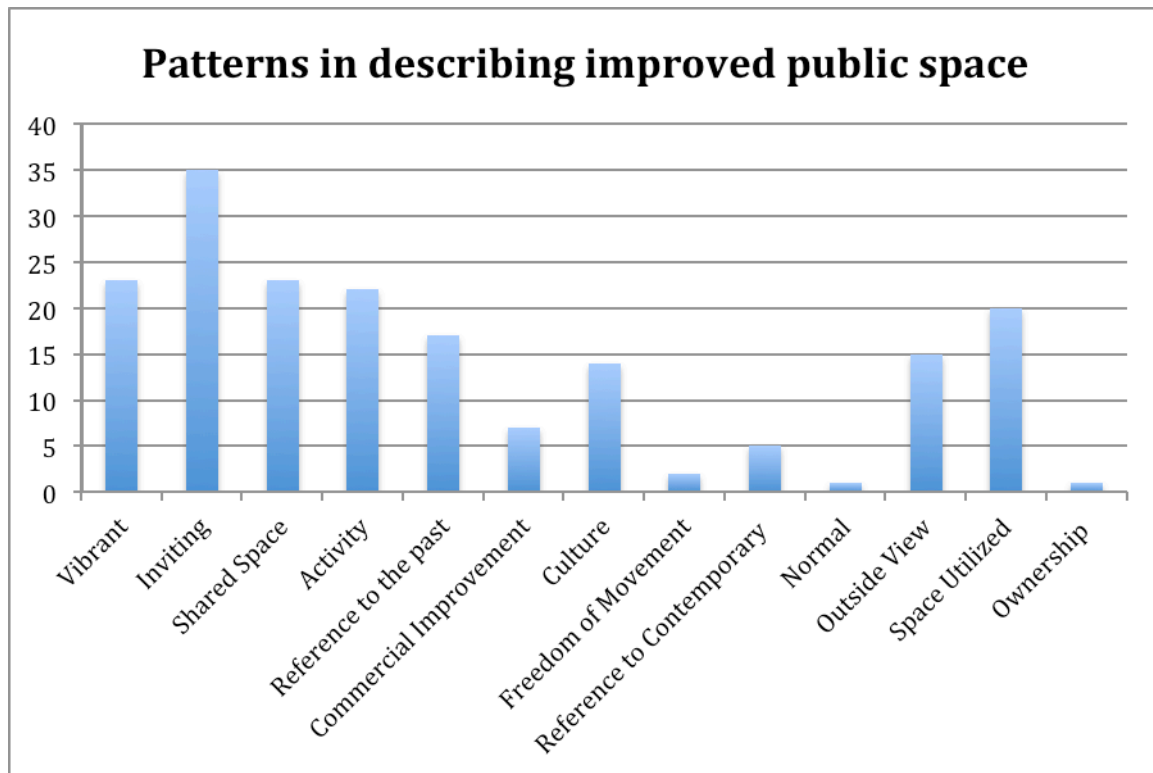
began to emerge.

Figure 8.3: Each bar indicates the number of times the indicated code occurs with in the 102 affirmative answers to street-intercept survey question four, "How do public events change your opinion of public space in Belfast?"

I classed the phrases respondents used to describe positive changes to public

space into 13 categories, and coded each response with as many tags as the answer

touched on. For example, respondent ID87 (Cornmarket 18 June PM) answered the

following "I think it brings it up a lot, it gets people out and about and more of a

community spirit going on. That way nobody cares who's who and where you come from."

I coded the phrase "It gets people out and about" as *Inviting*, which categorized all

responses in which people indicated that events "bring people out" or "draw people to"

the city center. I coded the phrase "community spirit" as *Vibrant*, which included any

response that described a generally improved atmosphere, or more "exciting" or

"happening" space. Finally, I coded the phrase "Nobody cares who's who and where you come from" as *shared space,* which was reserved explicitly for responses that describe people of different backgrounds or cultures coming together at the same time and place. Codes were not repeated within individual responses. Figure 7.3 shows the frequency of occurrence of each code, across the 102 affirmative answers to Question Four.

At first glance it is clear that the most frequently noted improvement, with 35 tags (or 34%), is that events make public spaces more *inviting.* The second most frequently mentioned codes, each with between 20 and 25 tags (20-25%), were *vibrant, shared space, activity,* for answers that describe events as "something for people to do," and the code *space utilized* for answers that specifically described spaces as "well used" or events as "a good use of space."
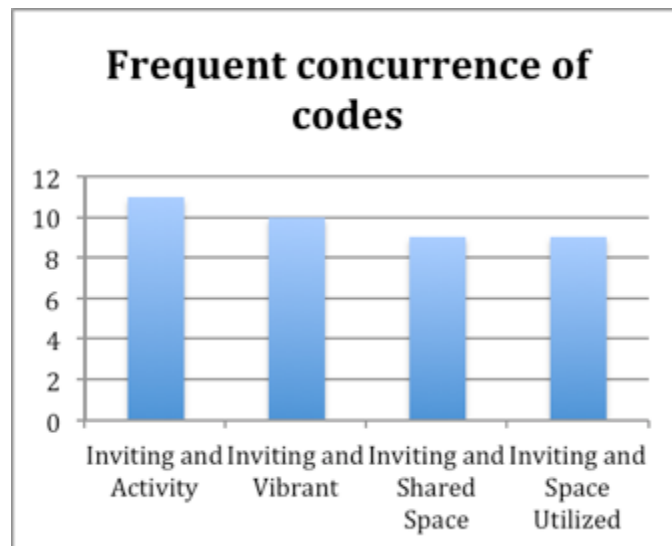

Figure 8.4: Each bar indicates the co-occurrence of
***Inviting* and other frequent codes.**

More interesting is the co-occurrence of these tags. Although *Inviting* occurred 35 times, or in 34% of affirmative responses to Question Four, it only occurred in isolation on three occasions. Every other time it appeared, it concurred with one or more other tags.

Figure 7.4 demonstrates the highest frequencies of co-occurrence. To give some concrete

examples, ID139 (Bank Square 28 June PM) explained:

> I think it draws more people into the city center and it's certainly good for
> the economy. I think it's getting the city center out of the doldrums that it
> used to be in, and it says it's becoming more active, a better city, better
> environment for people to come and shop in, whereas in the past it wasn't
> such a good place to be because of troubles, like. But hopefully it's more
> welcoming, more people coming into the city center, more lively. (Coded
> with *Inviting, Vibrant, Commercial Improvement,* and *Reference to the
> Past.*)

Likewise, ID91 (Cornmarket Square 18 June PM) said:

> Of course they're great, I think they're really good, even the Lord Mayor's
> Day Show—something that I'm not interested in, but—it's going to get a
> lot more people into the city, more exciting, something happening, instead
> of just the usual same thing every week. You look at Belsonic [a music
> festival in Customhouse Square] and other things around the city, so I
> think they're all good. (Coded with *Inviting, Activity,* and *Vibrant.*)

Finally, ID50 (City Hall 28 May AM):

> [Events] open it right up. …Something like a continental market, in a
> country like this where everything kind of gets mixed with divides and
> things, this has none at all. So there's no saying this is for Catholics, this is
> for Protestants. This is just like an open event that anyone can come to,
> which is what Belfast needs more of, just more open events that have no
> real denomination, that's just something fun that everyone can enjoy.
> (Coded with *Inviting, Reference to the Past,* and *Shared Space.*)

These comments, and the corresponding coding pattern, suggest that any new

activities in the city center, really any reason given to the public of Belfast to utilize,

traverse, or otherwise inhabit public space, produces the sense that it is more "inviting"

and "safe". This, of course, follows precisely the policy agendas of the Arts Council of

Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, and the

Belfast City Center Regeneration Directorate, all of which aim at increasing the diversity

of cultural offerings in the public sphere as well as increasing access to and attendance at

public events. As I have already argued, these agendas are less concerned with the content of the city's cultural offerings, so long as they "actively foster the expression of cultural pluralism, build dialogue and promote mutual understanding, through interchanges within and between communities and their cultures" (ACNI Integrated Arts and Good Relations Strategy 2007: 18). In the more succinct terms of a survey respondent, "Anything that gets people off and in the street is an asset in Belfast, isn't it?" (ID123, Bank Square 25 June PM).

Belfast Reanimated

As discussed in Chapter Three, regeneration policy has focused strongly on the pragmatic need to re-animate Belfast's city center, which suffered from depopulation and poor urban planning throughout and after the Troubles. As one respondent said, an event "introduces you to a space" (ID117, Bank Square 25 June, PM). Breaking into unused spaces with activity that inscribes positive memories and experience on a place is about drawing public life back into dead spaces, reviving and reanimating them. The pragmatic part of drawing people back into the center is about drawing commerce—a more long-term life-blood—along with them. This can be seen particularly in the use of events to highlight developing spaces, such as a new plaza created by the construction of a museum, hotel and apartment complex behind St. Ann's Cathedral, which hosted several performance events while the surrounding buildings were still under construction. The respondents who reported that their perceptions of public spaces improved because the spaces were being "well utilized" seem to reflect this same pragmatic agenda.

> I always think that it's great to see public space being used. It's always great to have a square there and it accumulating rubbish, but it's even better when it encourages people to come in and use it, and it's probably

good for the businesses around it as well. (ID83, Cornmarket 16 June PM; coded *Space Utilized, Inviting, Commercial Improvement*.)

Having lived here for 20 years, it's brilliant to see the city utilized a bit better for a start, even from a consumer point of view, to see a lot more people walking around looking at shops. I would like to see a lot more green spaces that they could use and sit and chill out rather than you have to put up a barricade to sit and have a coffee. I would like to see a little bit more of a street from an Italian/Spanish angle… Cathedral quarter does it perfectly. (ID22, Cornmarket 22 May PM; coded *Space Utilized, Commercial Improvement, Culture*.)

The reference to Italian and Spanish streetscapes, which I coded as *Culture*, is a less prevalent, but no less important pattern to emerge from these interviews. On many occasions, respondents commented that Belfast's redevelopment makes it, or should make it, a more "European" city.

I think it makes Belfast more like a normal city, like a European city. I think it brings people together, because people have always been so divided. I think it's the kind of thing that Belfast needs for tourism as well as in general, the rest of the public. (ID55, City Hall 28 May AM; coded *Culture, Normal, Shared Space, Reference to the Past, Outside View*.)

I suppose it makes you feel more, good, more together, more involved with the rest of the world. (ID57, City Hall 28 May PM; coded *Culture, Shared Space, Outside View*.)

I think it helps to promote the city really, to make it a bit more lively, more like other European cities, which it wasn't for a long time. So it's a lot better now. (ID81 Cornmarket 16 June PM; coded *Outside View, Vibrant, Culture, Reference to the Past*.)

I suppose it brings more people into the city and it gets them using the space that maybe they wouldn't have used before, and it makes you feel a bit more like a European city, rather than the typical view of Belfast. (ID114 Bank Square 25 June PM; coded *Inviting, Space Utilized, Culture, Outside View*.)

This emphasis on the "European city" as a model for Belfast's regeneration has a number of implications. In the comment from the interviewee above, who prefers streets

that have an "Italian/Spanish angle," "European" seems to be shorthand for a café culture or a more human-dominated streetscape. Architect Mark Hackett, co-founder of the non-profit think tank, Forum for Alternative Belfast (FAB), has become an advocate for practice-based or user-centric urban planning, which designs mixed-use spaces—housing, shopping, arterial routes all on the same land—rather than zoning different types land-use into distinct and separate areas. The latter zoning policy characterized urban development policy in Belfast and other UK cities in the 1970s, while continental Europe developed along the former "practice-based" method (Interview with Mark Hackett June 3, 2011). Hackett argues that the Troubles, along with Belfast's development policy, severed the pedestrian connections between the various zones of activity in the City Center, leaving unused dead-zones in between. As a matter of form, Hackett explains that "The classic European square is: grids of streets connecting into a space with people living and multi-function going on in a dense fashion in and around it" (Interview June 3, 2011). In contrast to this, what Belfast has produced through its haphazard planning schemes, according to Hackett, are failed spaces, like Customhouse square, which are architecturally beautiful but disconnected from residential and commercial areas by wide, busy roads. Writer's square, another "failed space," according to Hackett, "has poor quality buildings around it; it's an amorphous shape, which is just the product of what they demolished, and there is hardly a single activity on it" (Interview June 3, 2011). Neither space has fostered organic use by the local population. Hence the generic "European City"—imagined perhaps as a cobbled square with café tables encircling a central fountain, shops, street vendors, cyclists, pedestrians, and cars in the narrow lane left for traffic, and above it white curtains breezing out of open windows—stands as a

polar alternative to Belfast's gray limestone, glass shopping malls, empty plazas, and Irish weather.

As noted in Chapter Seven, however, "European-ness" is also an ideal that is intentionally promoted by the funding and administrative structures of the EU to transcend the national divisions among its member states, while for citizens of Belfast "European" seems to be an aspirational ideal of transnational cosmopolitanism. It is, moreover, a hope that reflects how these respondents want their city to be viewed by others. If Belfast were seen as a "European City," rather than a divided or conflict-torn city—whatever the "typical view of Belfast" happens to be—it might, for one thing, attract more tourists, more consumers, more investment. The city's tourism strategy has indeed billed Belfast as a "cultural destination," according to Kerrie Sweeny, the City Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit manager, which means that its art, entertainment and nightlife offerings should be equal to those of "the top twenty city destinations in Europe" (BVCB 2010: 8). Indeed, this aspiration on the part of Belfast's tourism board reflects a mutual interest from within the EU—which recognizes cultural tourism as "an important agent of economic and social change" and therefore also as a matter of policy attention (Borneman and Fowler 1997: 503). Particularly with respect to Belfast tourism's policy, the influence of the EU on Belfast's regeneration becomes clear. However it also demonstrates that "Europeanization" is a multidirectional process, both diffusing European structures and administrative powers down to the level of local government and reflecting regional and local views of what "Europe" means into the construction of a pan-European identity. If Belfast is billed as a "European City", Europe must also be a place to which a city like Belfast could belong.

Ultimately, "Europe" is also a self-reflexive ideal; it represents the way people want to feel about themselves as part of an urban population, such as the respondent at the City Hall continental market who felt "more involved with the rest of the world" (ID57, City Hall 28 May PM). There is a legitimacy attached to European cosmopolitanism, which both Belfast's policy makers and residents seem to want to appropriate. The poverty and segregation of Belfast's most deprived areas is neatly hidden under this generic cosmopolitanism. But the desire to forget the past and the unpleasant present should not be discounted. Drawing people, especially tourists, and commerce into the city center, it is believed, will draw Belfast, too lightly dismissed as provincial or violent, back into the European fold.

In another way, though, the European ideal is also about everyday uses of the city. Following De Certeau's (1984) theory of urban practice, Soderstrom (2008) reasons that cities should be walkable. For Soderstrom, walking, "the quintessential human activity," is a social good—a habit which, if facilitated in urban contexts, can lead to greater well being and quality of life (2008: 19). Even the Paris of Baron Haussmann, the 19th Century urban planner who rebuilt that city as a monument to modernity, changed only the scale of buildings and the breadth of urban vistas, not the human speed of travel, which remained, throughout that century, mostly by foot. Today, "the big tourist attractions of Notre Dame and the Louvre are both a half-hour away by foot" from Haussman's grand boulevards and the narrow meandering lanes first laid by Roman settlers (2008: 85-86). In Belfast, Hackett suggests, the quadrants that are "walkable," or rather those that invite the everyday practice of meandering, lingering, shopping and stopping to eat, are separated from each other by broad stretches of dead space, like the black glass front of

the Castle Court shopping mall, and literally dozens of landmark buildings that are vacant and deteriorating only blocks away from the City Hall (Interview June 3, 2011). Thus, when my interlocutors report that their perceptions of space improve when it is "well utilized," they are referring to this "quintessentially human" mode of use. Public events then demonstrate that spaces are walkable, and they reacquaint people with the possibility of passing through again.

The State and the City

Hackett remains skeptical of the project of social regeneration; for him public events are a "false strategy." In example after example, he demonstrated how urban planning in Belfast—from the route of the arterial highway, the placement of inner-city housing in enclosed cul-de-sacs, to the construction of "peace-lines"—has been disastrous (Hackett and Hill 2005, Wiener 1975). It has severed residential areas from commercial ones, sliced up the city center, and exacerbated both sectarian and economic segregation; then "we artificially make events and spaces…and try to bring people in and make them think differently about the city" (Interview June 3, 2011). (See Appendix 2 for a map of the "Missing City," highlighting the derelict and unused zone around the city center). Hackett is suggesting that the parade is a superficial salvo over the gaping wound of unused space, but there is a broader critique to be made here, with respect to the government's role in Belfast's development. Lefebvre characterizes this "space of state control," as space where "everyday life is programmed and idealized through manipulated consumption…[and] space is fragmented, pulverized by private property" (2009: 234). In this somewhat more sinister light, Belfast's haphazard and ill-planned urban development seems more akin to the way David Harvey (2012) described Baron

Haussmann's Parisian project, or the way Mike Davis characterized that of Los

Angeles—as "a new class war at the level of the built environment" (2006: 226).

In Los Angeles, Davis argues, "the paramount axis of cultural conflict…has

always been about the construction/interpretation of the *city myth,* which enters the

material landscape as a design for speculation and domination" (2006: 23). Although

Davis views Los Angeles's evolution through the lens of class warfare, between the city's

wealthy "Boosters" and iconoclastic "Noirs," the battle is fundamentally over whose

vision of the ideal Los Angeles will dominate, whose "myth" will be built into the urban

landscape. In Lefebvre's critique, when a dominant force overtakes the production of

space, it is "organized in such a way that, unless they revolt, 'users' are reduced to

passivity and silence" (2009: 234).

But here the comparison to Belfast falls short. As I have shown throughout this

work, the "myth" of Belfast is perpetually under construction. The material semiotic

approach reveals the actual lack of control that any given state or municipal entity can

reasonably exert on the symbolic production of space. While the profound mishandling of

Belfast's built environment merits critical investigation, the production of a "city myth"

has been entirely more democratic. The city demands it of the very parades used to

express its civic ideal: Belfast City Council requires its contractors to produce events

with a thousand participants from different communities throughout the city; arts policy

and grant terms demand practices that promote "inclusivity" and "intercultural

understanding." These may be derided as meaningless newspeak as they pertain to the

logical meaning of a parade, but they are embodied and actualized in its material

presence. In another study of Los Angeles, Peterson (2010) reflects on the aspiration of

harmonious diversity as expressed in free public concerts in downtown LA:

> Individual bodies, dancing and ethnically marked, are connected to and
> elided with the public body of the audience and of the city, creating a
> moral community of and for Los Angeles. The content of what is
> recognized is specific to a here and now of a neoliberal, global city and to
> a contemporary notion of multiculturalism that, in being recognized, helps
> produce those very things. In doing so it creates a new kind of urban
> subjects who, as members of a moral community that fosters tolerance
> over intolerance, consensus over dissent, and togetherness over
> fragmentation, enact and embody the comportment and disposition that
> facilitates urban civilities along those lines. (Peterson 2010: 151)

In this context, it is all the more important that the newspeak of regeneration policy

seems to match the language used by the respondents in my street-intercept survey.

Belfast's inhabitants report perceiving it as a more inviting, vibrant, and cosmopolitan

place as a result of civic events. Within the Belfast City Center Regeneration Directorate,

a dependent body of the state Department of Social Development, officials emphasized

their desire to turn Belfast into a "cultural hub" by encouraging inclusive, income

generating "cultural activities." In the organizations concerned with arts development, the

Belfast City Council Culture, Arts and Tourism Unit, and the Arts Council of Northern

Ireland, the words "welcoming," "vibrant," and "inviting" iterated through my interviews.

And in the Council Good Relations Unit, the idea of "interculturalism," or mutual respect

for diversity and integration, forms the core of its work. The apparent parallels suggest

that the city's inhabitants are party to the same conversation about regeneration as its

civil servants and policy makers, and they agree. Moreover, their actions in space, their

use or disuse of newly developed squares, "their manipulations of the…constructed order"

(de Certeau 1984: 100) are what ultimately produce civic space as the state desires.

As the process of Europeanization systematizes the production of a "pan-European" identity, and a Europe with a cultural reality of its own, after the model of the nation, local culture—such as the unique character of a city, or the food of a particular region may being to supplant the divisions between nations. This may indeed be the intended outcome for city-movers, who so deeply desire both a "European City" and a "normal civic society." But what has this transformation eliminated? What expressions of a "Northern Irish City" might have been? In Varenne's discussion of the question of European nationalism, he writes, "It may be that the local presence of Europe is mostly felt through the skeptical grumbling of people who do not quite recognize what has actually been achieved…. Still, we cannot ignore these grumblings and must take them for what they are: evidence that new constraints and possibilities have appeared while old ones are disappearing" (1993: 240).

Chapter Nine: Toward a Conclusion

Rabinow reminds us that in ethnographic research "inquiry begins midstream, always already embedded in a situation, one both settled and unsettled" (2007: 8). Latour, too, insists that we "begin in the middle of things" (Latour 2005: 29), because, of course, the object of ethnographic research is something that is always in the process of becoming: "the present and the succession of presents" (Camus 1955: 63). Culture is something that we do, something we produce, something we experience, and always in interaction with other people and things. An ethnography of imagining, as I have described this project, then concerns a present which orients itself toward the future—a future which is unknown and full of potential.

There are different ways of conceptualizing a future. I have explored policy, which poses the ideal of a "normal civic society" as the object of regeneration policy and funding. I have observed parades, which call on tropes of diversity and local heritage to represent a harmonious community of citizens. I have spoken with pedestrians, who cite European aspirations for their city. In all of these, however the consistent theme is the city, the urban spatio-temporal location which forms both the background and the object of their imagining. In imagining a "city-myth", I have argued, the policy-writers, parade-makers and pedestrians are negotiating an urban ideal, and simultaneously remaking their city in its image. The future of Belfast emerges from this present—but then it is always

emerging, and these same individuals will continue to debate what the city myth will be, and what Belfast should become next.

Rabinow's anthropology of the contemporary reminds us also that in the succession of presents there is ending, just the "moving ratio of modernity through the recent past and near future in a nonlinear space that gauges modernity as an ethos already becoming historical" (2007: 2). The present becomes the past and the conversation continues in the absence of the ethnographer, just as it had before she arrived in the field. That is to say, I can make no conclusions concerning what Belfast is to become, or even what the city-myth will be a year from now. I have captured only a single moment of becoming, a year in which the events that occurred surprised both me and my interlocutors; I can only describe the moments that made me feel "This is Belfast."

A Semiosis of Imagining

With respect to the interpretive evolution that produces the "city myth", an underlying question remains regarding how the many different ways of imagining Belfast's future interact in the same conversation. As I have argued throughout, they are signs within a semiosis that give meaning to Belfast's post-conflict civic ideal. Semiosis is, in Peircian theory, an unlimited sign process; the triadic relationship of the Representamen (sign), which stands *for* something (the object), contains, of necessity, a third thing (the interpretant), *to* which it stands in relation; it mediates the object to an interpreting agency (De Waal 2001: 70). The interpretant, in turn, is "the means by which a sign becomes connected or interrelated into another system of signs" (Liszka 1996: 27); it becomes the mediator, and so on *ad infinitum*. But the Interpretant has within itself another triadic subdivision; it "can be viewed as process, product and effect" (26). That is,

when we consider the "interpreting agency" as a human subject, we see that a sign can give a vague feeling or impressions which demand further analysis (process); it can produce a dynamic or energetic response, a physical or mental exertion of some kind (product); or, finally, it can produce a rule-like or law-like effect on the interpreting agency (effect). This complicates the process of semiosis by allowing uncertainty to enter the relationship between the Interpetant and the sign-object dyad. For Peirce, semiosis should ideally lead to a complete agreement among the three elements of the sign, with "no latitude of interpretation" (Liszka 1996: 93); but in practice, the sign is interpreted and reinterpreted over the course of many iterations before the space of uncertainty is closed and object is finally "known" (rather than represented) to the interpretant.

When the semiosis is "settled" in this way, the sign's meaning or effect becomes an established convention, a "habit of interpretation, or the habit of action which interpretation of the sign engenders" (Liszka 1996: 27). In one sense, a routinized meaning or habitual effect is the end of semiosis, but once a sign is settled in place, it can then accrue depth—those additional attributes that "we can ascribe truthfully to an object or class of objects given our present state of knowledge" (29). That is, for example, everything we can accurately presume to know about an object that has been given the label "parade."

So, final interpretants, or more simply, conventions of understanding, have the effect of closing off the possibility of alternative interpretations in the way the image of King William of Orange painted on a brick terrace-end can do nothing if not index the surrounding Loyalist neighborhood. However, a convention, once settled, can be deepened with greater nuance, and as Rolston (1991) has observed, over many

incarnations of King Billy murals, the image became intoned with reference to the

unionist alliance, Protestant religion and Orange pride. In Belfast, space and spatial

practices also fell into habits, in the form of urban religious segregation, and behaviors

such as Protestants using the "predefined 'Protestant' side of the street," for example, or

Catholic School children removing their uniforms before going into town (Lysaght and

Basten 2003: 235). Belfast's continued residential segregation has been theorized both as

a reaction to violence (Boal and Livingstone 1984, Doherty and Poole 1997) and as an

everyday cause of violence and fear (Lysaght and Basten 2003, Anderson and

Shuttleworth 2007). Segregation forces people to "undertake complex daily negotiations

of their spatial movements," systematically masking and unmasking their ethno-religious

identities in compliance with invisible sectarian boundaries (Lysaght and Basten 2003:

238-239). In turn, practices of avoidance or use serve to "sectarianize" space and solidify

unspoken rules regarding movement within and across sectarian boundaries (2003: 240).

 To change such habits, once established, demands a disruption of the interpretive

or reactive assumptions that form them, thus reigniting the activity of the sign.

Conventions must be made non sequitur, often through a "radical rearrangement of

meanings and forms" (Daniel 1996: 73). The municipal parades of this research are such

interventions; using familiar forms, they re-inscribe public space with unexpected and

unfamiliar arrangements of signs, shamrocks and shipyard cranes, for instance, or Polish

dancers and Japanese kimonos, forcing observers to revisit their assumptions and

reactivate their contemplative agencies. These parades, as I have noted before, are

moments of "Iconoclash"—when radical reappropriations of conventional symbols

suddenly propel their meanings into a space of uncertainty, where they must be evaluated and interpreted anew (Latour 2002).

Thus the "parade-sign," in Peirce's typology, is "rhematic"—meaning it is an "excessively vague" representation, indicating "some possible object," but not precisely what that object might be (Liszka 1996: 40).[38] Parker (1998) explains that the generality of the "rheme" is a necessary starting point of semiosis, which forms the foundations of associations and logical arguments of a higher order (162-163). I have described Belfast's civic parades as intentional in terms of the aims of regeneration policy and the visions of artists, but their intended object, a "new Belfast," has always remained elusive and indefinite—outside the control of any given member of this network. The parades connote a variety of possible characteristics for a post-conflict Belfast through multiple modes of signification. In the co-presence of different ethnic and cultural symbols the Lord Mayor's Show represented an urban community that is culturally inclusive, cosmopolitan, and "European." In the admixture of Belfast's historical and architectural icons and symbols of Irish identity, the St. Patrick's Day Carnival proposes a civic identity that erases and transcends the city's conflict-torn past. And in the indexical relationship of both parades to the city center, they imply a confident and democratic ownership of the streets. Considered together as a totality, this discourse of parades conveys a variety of messages related to an urban ideal, civic identity, and post-conflict transition. In this respect, the parade is a "rheme": it expresses only potential.

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[38] More specifically, the parade-sign, according to Peirce's classification, is a "rhematic indexical sinsign," referring to a sign which has a definite form (the parade genre), contains a spatial or temporal reference to its object (the city center grounding its reference to a civic object), but which does not "convey much about its sense or depth" (Liszka 1996: 49).

Therefore, as opposed to the body of anthropological literature which has typically treated parades and visual displays as reflective of oppositional identity politics (Buckley 2008), this research suggests that Belfast's new civic parades have the potential to liberate users of public space from the settled conventions of "sectarianized" spatial practices. It is no insignificant coincidence, then, that the BEAT Initiative produces its parades in a carnival style, and that the Belfast City Council requires its event contractors to provide a "carnival atmosphere." According to M. M. Bakhtin's (1968) theory of the carnivalesque, carnival is an anti-institutional space of transgression, reversal and radical equality. As such, "Carnival shakes up the authoritative version of language and values, making room for a multiplicity of voices and meanings" (Elliot 1999: 129). Bakhtin's concept was based on his analysis of the early French novel by Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel,* within the context of renaissance social institutions and ritual. Bakhtin describes carnival as "the people's creation…a boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed to the official and serious tone of ecclesiastical and feudal culture" (1968: 4). Carnival festivities, moreover, were a second world of experience and an alternative structuring of relationships for medieval individuals: "They offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world of man and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside of officialdom" (1968: 6). In applying the term "carnivalesque" to literature, Bakhtin implies that these elements can be present in other cultural forms beyond the explicit rituals of carnival.

Despite the fact that Belfast's carnivals are ostensibly "official," given that they are financed by public funds and subject to a degree of municipal control, there are a

number of important parallels to Bakhtin's concept. The most fundamental similarity is the presence of humor. We see Bakhtin's emphasis on the power of "folk laughter with all its wealth of manifestations" in such things as the BEAT Initiative's fanciful creations, the clowns and stilt walkers, and the simple amusements of the spectacle (1968: 4). Belfast's parades are "extrapolitical" in their attempts to be socially inclusive and explicitly non-sectarian. Moreover, if we take "official culture" not as political structures of power, but the as the "law-like" habits of settled semiosis, then Belfast's parades very clearly represent a carnivalesque "second life"; instead of the habits of segregation and sectarianized spatial practices, these parades offer a temporarily liberated space of "purely human relations" (10). And as Bakhtin explains, in the performance of carnival what is imagined as an alternative world also becomes real: "These truly human relations were not only a fruit of imagination or abstract thought; they were experienced. The utopian ideal and the realistic merged in this carnival experience, unique of its kind" (Bakhtin 1968: 10).

From the imaginative potential of carnival and the semiosis of Belfast's civic ideal there are a also a number of concrete effects. Since the BEAT Initiative's beginnings the City Council has altered the wording of its parade tenders to reflect precisely what the BEAT can offer; the term "carnival" has entered the local vernacular; and groups across Belfast have expressed interest in holding carnival-style events in their neighborhoods. These changes suggest a more fundamental transformation is at work. As Bourdieu argues with regard to the production of art, the community of artists, publishers, critics and gallery directors produce not only artistic works, but also the community of "consumers capable of recognizing the work of art as such" (1993: 37). A change in

artistic practice, and especially in the valuation of the art they produce, reflects more than an aesthetic shift; it reflects a change to the definitions of what may be considered "the legitimate mode of cultural production" and of "human accomplishment" (Bourdieu, 1993: 41). And this, congruently, reflects a transformation of the community of art producers and consumers (Gell 1998). Confirming this trend, many interlocutors in my street-intercept reported that they would be interested in attending more Council-sponsored events such as concerts, cultural festivals, and food markets.[39] The demand for and high valuation of these types of public events suggests both that Belfast's residents have greater expectations of cultural offerings from their municipal government, and that the residue of sectarianized spatial practices—the anxiety of crossing sectarian boundaries or encountering "the other"—is reduced, even if only with regard to ostensibly 'shared' events.

Final Thoughts

This dissertation describes a series of translations, like a game of telephone, cascading through a broad network of public officers, artists, community organizers, and citizens to diverse and wayward destinations. From the simple idea of "a new beginning" and a commitment to "reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust" (The Belfast Agreement, Section 1.2), the project of Belfast's regeneration has produced waves of activity affecting every aspect of social life and the physical realm. The civic parades under investigation here are only one narrow stream of that activity, reflecting the

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[39] 87% of respondents (n=139) reported that they would return to Belfast City Center for the purpose of an appealing event (Question 3). Among the most popular types of events cited were musical concerts, child-friendly fairs, cultural festivals and food markets.

translation of "reconciliation, tolerance and trust" into public rituals of integration and civic celebration. This is, as I have argued, a semiosis of imagining and reinvention. It is at the same time a proposal and embodiment of what a post-conflict Belfast could be. What is at stake in the public performance of this civic ideal is not merely popular support for a particular reconstruction agenda, but rather the genesis of a new civic identity, one which transcends the conflict and the sectarian divisions, and draws Belfast confidently into the European and Global imaginaries.

As I have argued, however, the aspirations of Belfast's municipal officers and artists are often in conflict, and the "new Belfast" ideal remains an excessively vague concept. So what, then, is settled? No more than that the semiosis of place-making, and of city-making, is alive and well in Belfast, and that it engages the participation of people from the highest levels of government to the tiniest child-performers at the parade. David Harvey has defined the "right to the city" as the claim to "some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade, and to do so in a fundamental and radical way" (2012: 5). If he were speaking merely of the capacity to build and rebuild, then Belfast is settled deeply in the habits of segregation and urban decay. But, Harvey adds, "what has been happening in the streets, among the urban social movements is far more important" (xiii). I find no revolution in Belfast, and perhaps Harvey would be disappointed, but what I have found, and presented here, is the shaping power of imagination performed on the city streets. The parade expresses an ideal, a utopia perhaps, which is unrealizable and which obscures a painful past, but an aspiration that nonetheless imagines "the kind of people we want to be, what kind of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we cherish, what style of life we

desire, what aesthetic values we hold" (2012: 4). Those critical might call the desires expressed in Belfast's civic parades and public culture bourgeois, or "vacuous" and inauthentic (Graham 2009). I don't disagree that Belfast's civic ideal currently lacks depth, but a vacuity is also a space of possibility, waiting to be inscribed.

Still, the tropes of "Europeaness" and "Diversity", vague though they are, offer some good deal of information with regard to what Belfast's contemporary "city myth" may mean. Diversity, as Varenne writes, "is never the simple end product of substances living together in some geographical space" but rather is the "product of an elaborate cultural construction" (1998: 28-32). We have seen, too, that an emphasis on diversity is intricately tied to the process of Europeanization, as a way of accommodating the concept of Europe as a cultural whole, it must embody a historically particular "European diversity" to accommodate all its disparate parts. In Ireland however, diversity, has been a term more dangerously associated with ethno-national divisions, where the recognition of difference more often than not has preceded discrimination—as in the Penal Laws of the 18th Century, the Partition in 1921, and the Troubles, to name a few examples. As Varenne writes "the issue…is not only one of asserting the extent of the persistent differences, it is also one of understanding how 'difference' is reconstructed in the local and not so local practices of people in the country" (1998: 32). In importing the European construction of diversity, and indeed the trope of "Europeaness" as a cultural reality in itself, Belfast accessing the legitimacy and prestige of a "European culture" while simultaneously strengthening the standing of that very concept elsewhere.

The emphasis on local heritage, evident in the St. Patrick's Day Carnival, fits less comfortably with the above analysis. In one important respect—the absence of Irish

nationalist imagery—the St. Patrick's Day Carnival seems to reinforce the European construction of diversity over an Irish one. However, marking Belfast's industrial history and local architectural icons as it did, this parade fit with the more local theme of regeneration. The references to the past, to Belfast in its time of glory, suggest a resetting of history, and thus a regrowth from a new beginning. This does not contradict the theme of European diversity, so much as implies a link between the construct of Europe and the emerging construct of Belfast. Like the municipal parades themselves, the local-historical theme offers a reformulation of familiar and unfamiliar. In the non-sequiturs and novel juxtapositions, the humor, the carnivalesqe the city-myth itself can be reformulated according to emergent possibilities (Rabinow 2007). As Myerhoff and Mongulla would add, however, novel improvisations such as these, "highlight the way mythical forms, once they are embodied in ritual—that is, once they have been externalized as an event available to further interpretation—enrich themselves with possibly unintended meaning" (1986: 122). The parade, like all conversational utterances, submit themselves to their audiences and to the process of semiosis. New understandings of Belfast will indeed emerge, but will always be negotiated and contested. The present will be succeeded by the present.

Ultimately, this dissertation is about an unfinished semiosis: the process of place-making in a post-conflict context. These events are attempts to imagine and thereby to actualize an urban civic culture, imbricated with processes of political transformation, economic investment and globalization. They facilitate a radical re-appropriation of public space, as well the transformation of an urban cultural aesthetic. They are also part of a semiotic process which is contradictory, contested, and unpredictable.

This work, as noted above, addresses only a single stream in the cascade of regeneration activity, and it is only an impressionistic sketch of that. In each of the component parts of this study, the "policy-sign", the "parade-sign" and the "space-sign", there exists a thick set of relations that invite deeper study. Each of the parades I have addressed here, for instance, could be further unpacked to address the motivations and experiences of participants. St. Patrick's Day has continued to evolve since 2011, and further study of this event could articulate the politics of nationalist identity within the context of Belfast's transnational aspirations. In particular, the question of whether Belfast's imagined identity lives in the minds of its citizens remains uncertain. A more comprehensive study of individual spatial practices and public representations of identity would be necessary to form a more complete understanding of how these parades change perceptions of Belfast's social space and civic ideal, although this was beyond the scope of this dissertation. Indeed, more research is needed in general to call attention to the ongoing processes of regeneration and post-conflict transformation.

Afterthought

During one of my visits to conduct interviews at the continental market by City Hall, I spoke to an elderly man who seemed be saying everything I wanted to hear about the changing city.

> Compared to what it was in the 80s, oh it's definitely far, far better. …
> Belfast has really turned over like a new leaf, has turned over to a really
> better country, better place all together. People can move around freely
> now, whereas in the Troubles they couldn't move, couldn't even go out at
> night, like. But now it's fantastic, it really is fantastic. It's like a new lease
> on life looking over at Belfast. I don't care about this whole dissident thing,
> I don't care what they're about, they're not going to get anywhere now—

Suddenly a loud bang exploded over the din of the market. I heard a few surprised shrieks, then quiet for a moment as the crowd looked toward Donegal Square and around for a visible cause.

> —It's probably just car exhaust. You see they're doing that there all the time. They're trying to disrupt the progress in Northern Ireland, but they're not going to succeed. We're still going to have our bit of peace and quiet in Northern Ireland again. (ID54, City Hall 28 May AM)

It was seamless. The noise, it turned out, was from the generator powering one of the food stands, but the man's comments were so timely—it was only a day earlier that dissident republicans, who object to the terms of The Belfast Agreement, had issued bomb threats throughout the city. And only two months before that, some of them had killed a young Catholic Police officer, Ronan Kerr. Despite Belfast's laudable progress, the Troubles are still very present in the public memory, the layout of the city, the carefully staged interactions of "cross-community" youth work, and the "power-sharing" politics. But to characterize Belfast in relation to the conflict, whether it is as a conflict-torn city or a post-conflict city, fails to reflect the current moment of transition, the uncertainty of what comes next, and the wild hope of imagining a future, which the people who live there presently—through their participation in civic life and presence in public space—will have some part in constructing.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

On a slightly drizzly evening in May I was enjoying a drink with friends from my Irish class at the beer garden in the City Hall continental market, when I learned that 14 bomb threats had been issued throughout the city since the morning. I wouldn't have noticed anything amiss had I looked over at the bus queue, but traffic throughout the city was at a standstill and public transport was on lock down while the police conducted a sweep of

the M2 and M3 highways, essentially the entirety of the ring road around the city center.

At the same time, the Castle Court Shopping Centre had been evacuated due to a bomb

threat, four or five hoax devices had been removed from several locations, and the police

conducted a controlled explosion of a suspicious vehicle near the dockyards to the

northeast of the city center (BBC 2011b). By five in the evening, two people had been

arrested and the event had been declared a major hoax, but traffic was still slow.

Collectively, we shrugged and ordered another round. I ate a knackwurst. Our teacher

brought us macaroons from the French Baker. It was the first time I had really been

inconvenienced by a ripple of the conflict. I thought about the peace rally after the death

of Ronan Kerr (Belfast Telegraph 2011). On that day thousands stood in silence

surrounding the City Hall to express their dismay and their respect for the fallen young

officer. Today, Donegal Square was lively with the activity of the Continental Market,

now made even busier by the commuters waiting for the busses to start running again.

"This is Belfast," I thought.

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Appendix 1: Interview Schedule for Street Intercept Survey:

Hello, I'm conducting interviews for an independent study on public events in Belfast, would you like to take part?

I am a doctoral student at Columbia University, and these will be used in my analysis of public opinion concerning civic events in Belfast. If you'll allow me, I'll be recording audio the interview, but I will not ask your name or any identifying information. Do you mind if I record? I can also take notes by hand, if you prefer.

1. What brings you to [location] today?
    a. Did you come from outside Belfast, or do you live in the city?
    b. And how often do you come to the city center?
2. Do you find this [location] to be a safe and welcoming environment?
3. Would you come back to this [location] if there were a public event on, such as a parade, a market or a concert?
    a. What type of event would interest you in particular?
4. More generally speaking, how do public events affect your opinion of public space in Belfast?
5. What is your strongest overall impression or memory of Belfast City Center?
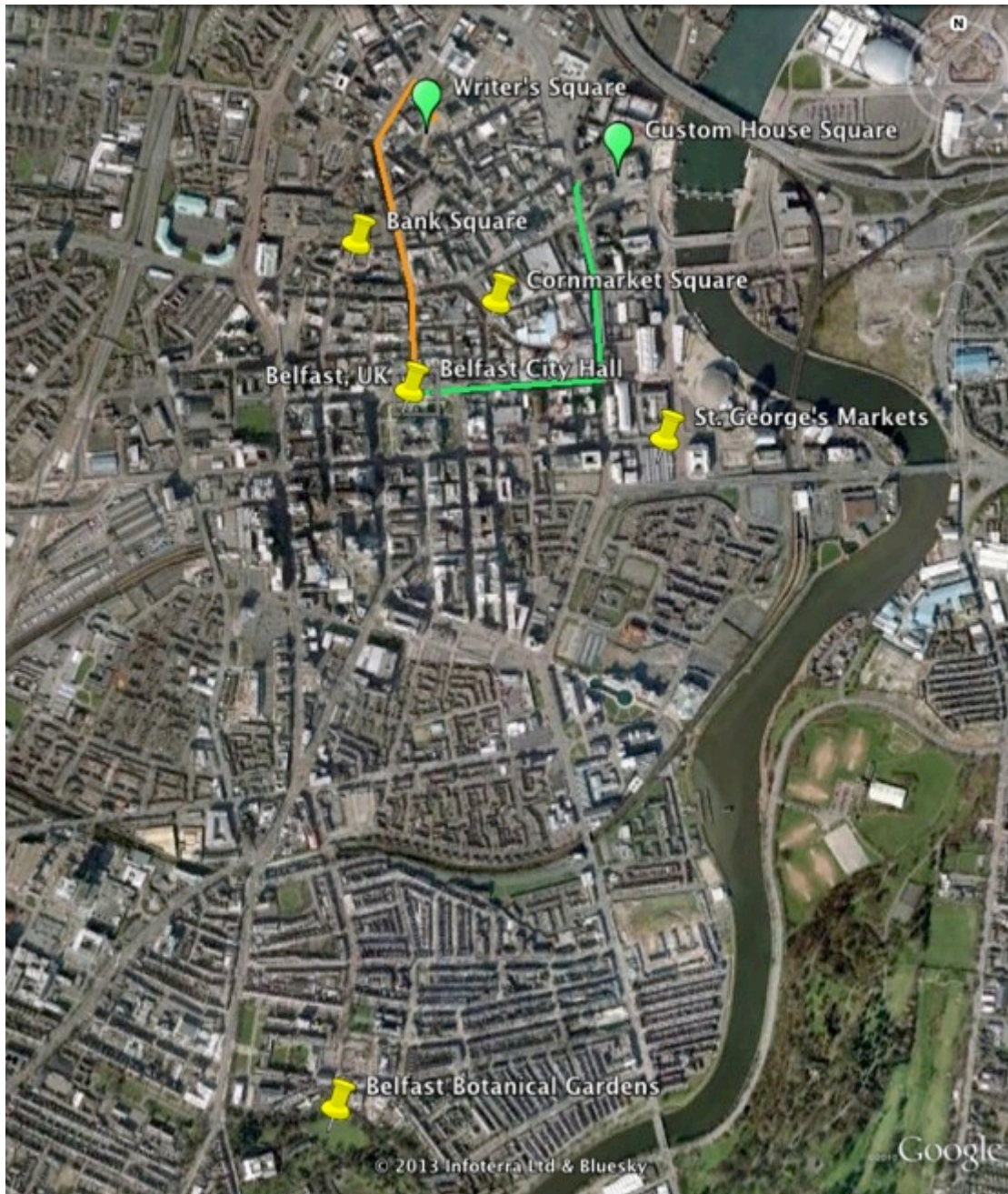
[The interviewer will also note the size of the party, the gender of different speakers, and their apparent ages.]
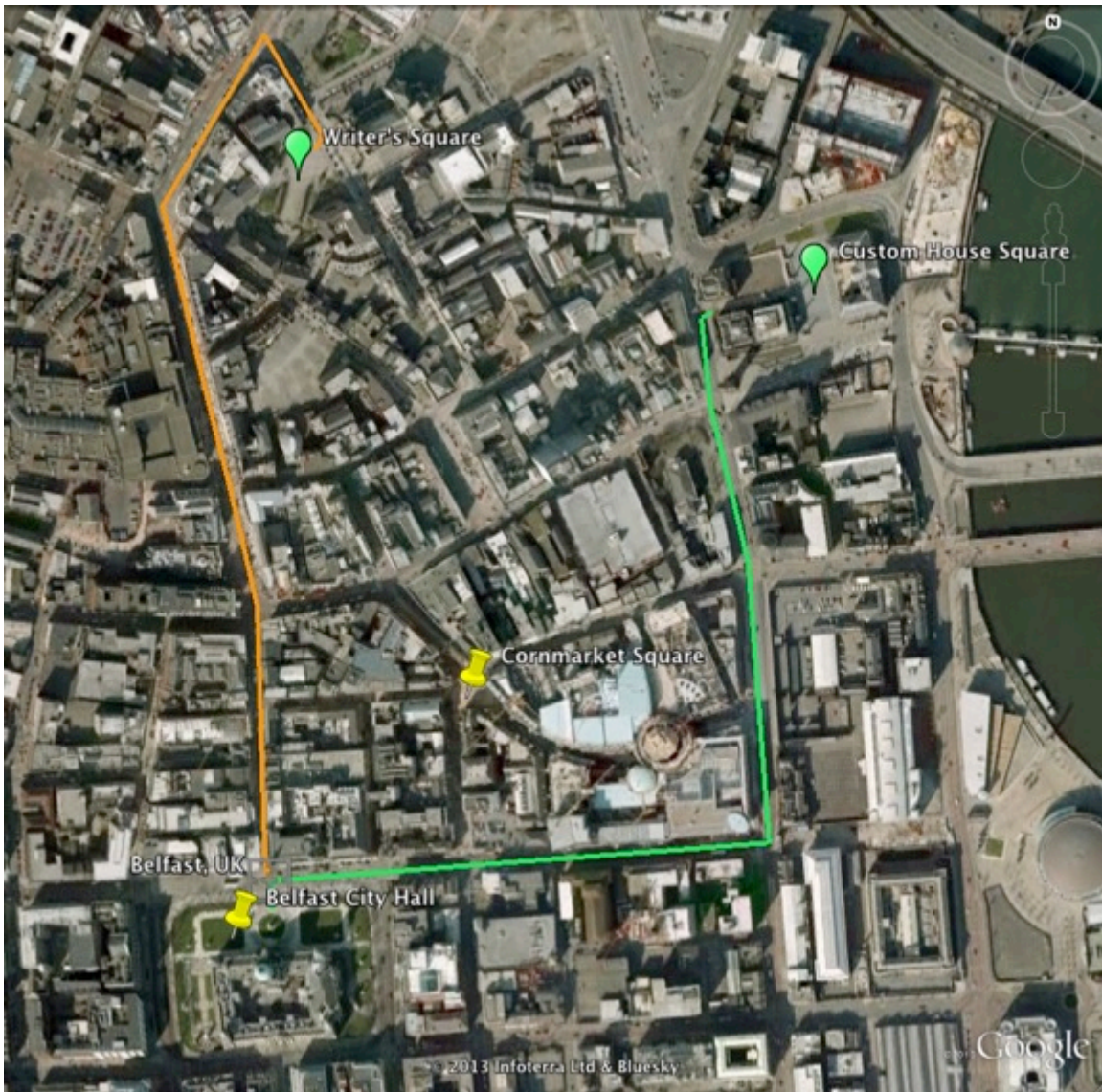
Appendix 2: "The Missing City"

The areas darkened with red indicate vacant or derelict buildings, empty lots or other fenced-off, unused space. Copyright Forum for Alternative Belfast, 2009.

Appendix 3: Map of Street Intercept Sites and Parade Routes

- Street Intercept Sites are indicated above with yellow pushpins.
- The green path indicates the route of the St. Patrick's Day Carnival parade, originating from the Belfast City Hall, and ending near Custom House Square, where the Council arranged a free concert.
- The orange path indicates the route of the Lord Mayor's Show parade, originating at Writer's Square and ending on the City Hall Lawn, where the Council again arranged a free concert and market stalls.

Detail of parade routes.