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CULTURE AND GNR

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DOCTORAL RESEARCH AT TJI

“Re-Imagining Spaces for Representation in the Divided City: The cases of Urban Street Art in ‘Post’-Conflict Beirut and Belfast” – awarded December 2020

- Examine the motivations of street artists in cities emerging from conflict – to understand their **intentions**, I embarked on an immersive urban ethnography (direct and participant observations of the creative process of street art production; semi-structured interviews; and content analysis)
- Findings A: gifting artwork (**intentions** based on self-identification amid legacy of sectarianism, convivial interactions with the city and between inhabitants, enchantment)
- Findings B: small-‘p’ politics (**intentions**: pragmatic and rule-based, democratic – urban design on the street level, transient and transformative – sheds light on other ‘publics’, in-between spaces)





WHAT IS STREET ART? – ART ON THE STREET?

- Global phenomena since 1990s
- The author – signed, linked to individual social, cultural or political representations
- The style – spray can (stencils, grids, freehand), paint, yarn, stickers
- The location – why artists choose specific places
- The content – memories of artist; GIFT!
- Art on wall? Street art? What about billboards, stickers advertising corporate interests? Gentrification? Other image-making regimes
- How is Belfast's street art controlled/orchestrated? And Beirut? Culture as a resource to lubricate economic development? Strategy to pacify communities? Distraction or sub alternative communities who want to distance themselves?
- Who can paint murals, where, when and of what?





GUARANTEES OF NON-REPETITION: CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Pablo de Greiff, the first ever UN rapporteur on transitional justice issues, suggested that successful guarantees of non-repetition (GNR) require three different, and complementary, 'spheres of intervention': institutional; societal, and cultural and personal. His intentions were to broaden the discussion about prevention beyond the narrow focus on institutional reform that was often present in early transitional justice thinking, by emphasising the cultural and behavioural aspects of GNR.

What about 'conflicted democracies'? (Berastegi, 2017)

AND, culture as a resource to lubricate short-term economic development, and a symbolic act by state of 'legitimacy', to 'control' narrative of post-conflict life: (projects with 'Re' – regeneration, redevelopment, reimagining)

- Can the state 'engineer' cultural and behavioural change, as a GNR measure, or is this a sphere of action best left to civil society? – In short, they can try and have tried to impose, but I suggest looking at the little social worlds which exist for non-traditional forms of intervention and civic engagement (elevating discussions of art and culture)



CULTURE AND GNR – GLOBAL CONTEXTS

“THE DISAPPEARED ARE
APPEARING” – ARGENTINA
2014



CULTURE AND GNR – GLOBAL CONTEXTS

**MURAL PROJECT: ¿DONDE
ESTAN? – CHILE 2018**



Figure 4. 'Pedazos de vida mía' ('Pieces of my life'). Painted by Cuadernos Viajeros, 2014.



Figure 2. 'La siega. The mowing.' Painted by Nicasio Cañaveras and Juan Miguel Rodríguez, 2013.⁴²



Figure 3. Portrait of Miguel Hernández. Painted by Kike Payá (Kikelín), 2015.



CULTURE AND GNR – A ‘NEW’ NORTHERN IRELAND?

- State’s Re-imagining Communities Programme (Allen and White, 2012; Rolston, 2012)
- Public art, urban space and the symbolic landscapes (Hocking, 2015)
- Culture-led regeneration to lubricate economic development – regenerate and not re-invest (important distinction) because power and authority change the narrative (El Masri, 2020)
 - Conflict tourism – black cab taxi tour, mural tour of walls

The Great Reimagining

Public Art, Urban Space and the Symbolic Landscapes of a 'New' Northern Ireland



Bree T. Hocking



HOPEWELL CRESCENT



- Re-imagining Communities programme of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and delivered by Belfast City Council with the support of the Lower Shankill Community Association.

The Gold Rush mural replaces a paramilitary image of two silhouetted gunmen representing Scottish Brigade.

This new image by artist Tim McCarthy represents an event in July 1969 in Christopher Street when children digging in the rubble of the then demolished 'Scotch Flats' discovered a hoard of gold sovereigns. Word spread quickly and thus began 'the Gold Rush'

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