

Religious and secular places: understanding the  
changing geographies of religion in Ireland.

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# **Religious and secular places: understanding the changing geographies of religion in Ireland.**

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The secular and the sacred have long been placed in opposition to each other. This has been accompanied by a series of assumptions about the decline of religious faith and an increasing secularity. A re-evaluation of this is currently underway within human geography. This takes account of the fact that the secular does not so much replace the sacred as exist in relation to it. This is a productive relationship and is seen in distinctions made between private and public space. In her most recent review of the literature, Kong (2010) asks that geographers of religion go beyond the micropolitics of religious spatial expression to connect with broader political processes. I apply three examples from Ireland to show how a relational geography of religion can respond adequately to her call to move beyond the micropolitical. The boundaries between private and public space thus become more porous.

Firstly, I examine the geography of Marian statues on ostensibly public ground in Dublin city. Secondly, I outline how pilgrimage practice lies on the boundaries of tourism and religious devotion. Thirdly, I examine the discourses surrounding the re-creation of Catholic primary schools in Ireland as sites of the secular, within a broader political process. These examples show that distinctions between private and public space break down on some scales. However, in connecting the micropolitical with a broader spatial politics in these examples, how we conceive of scale remains important. The political significance of spatial practice on one scale is often subsumed within other scales. Using Marston et al.'s (2005) work on geographic scale, I propose a new set of relations between the religious and the secular. In this way, I draw the outlines of a map which reconfigures the relationship between religion and the secular as open-ended and contested.

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# Grounding the changing geographies of religion in Ireland

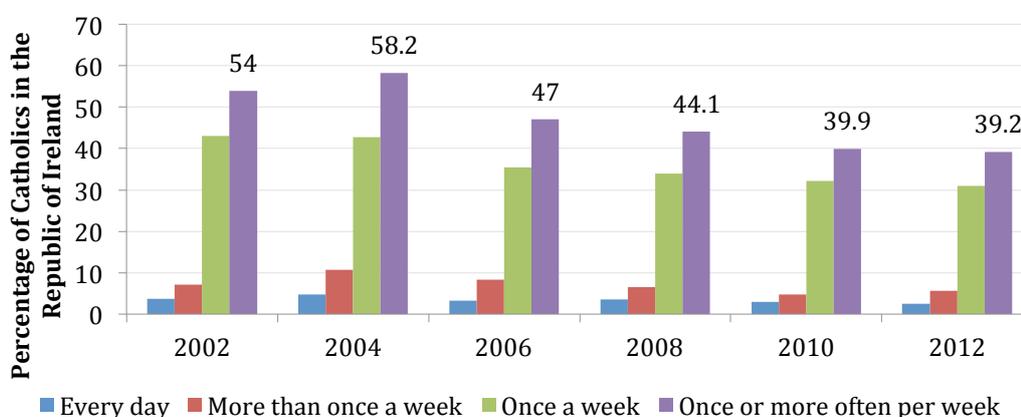
## Introduction

In May 2009, the report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse was published. The Irish Government set the Commission up following a public apology for decades of abuse in state run institutions for children. Its aim was to investigate all forms of abuse in these institutions from 1936 to the present. The report details the emotional, sexual and physical abuse of children in state care, often involving ordained and professed members of the Catholic Church. It stands as a damning indictment of the institutional forms of abuse and neglect perpetrated against children in the Irish state. Newspapers, government ministers, church leaders and members of the public condemned the practices detailed in the report of the Commission. There was broad consensus that the state, and the Catholic Church in particular, had grossly wronged the children in their care and that appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that justice should be served. The Commission's report is a record of abuse and neglect of children in Ireland, a country with a majority Catholic population and international recognition as a Catholic country.

At the time of the publication of the Commission's report in 2009, I was three years into a job as social researcher at the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. My job involved gathering data about Mass attendance in Ireland and comparing it internationally. I conducted research projects initiated by the Conference and its Commissions and Agencies. (The Conference is the collegiate structure of the Catholic Church in Ireland and its commissions and agencies exist to serve the pastoral, liturgical and administrative needs.) Meeting people across Ireland in parishes of various sizes and talk with them about experiences of their Church was an integral part of my work. When the report of the Commission was published, there was anger and frustrations at my own workplace about its contents. Some spoke of being personally hurt and being betrayed. Others were confused about who knew what and when. As a group of workers at the Conference, we gathered together and expressed sorrow and anger, sometimes openly directed at the Bishops themselves. The Church that some felt a part of seemed to be broken. There was a lot of silence and more than a little prayer. I closed my office

door for a few days. I could not reconcile the vitality of the Church I saw in my work around Ireland with the hurt caused by decades of abuse.

In Ireland, you do not have to look too hard to see Catholic religious practice in everyday life. The state broadcaster plays the Angelus at midday and again at six o'clock. Church bells ring out every day in the cities. The vast majority of the primary schools in Ireland operate under the patronage of a Catholic bishop. In Census 2011, 84% of people in the Republic of Ireland who chose a religion (98% of the total) stated that they are Roman Catholic (CSO, 2011). According to the European Social Survey (2013), approximately 48% of Catholics in Ireland attend Mass weekly, a halving since the 1970s (Inglis, 1998). According to Mac Gréil (2011), the European Values Survey in 1981 recorded a figure of 4.6% of the population never attending a religious service. By his study in 2007-08 this had almost trebled to 11.6% of the population (2011: 208). Over the last ten years in particular, the percentage of Catholics who attend weekly Mass has decreased significantly. The chart below shows the proportions of Catholics in the Republic of Ireland and their frequency of Mass attendance in the period 2002 to 2012.



**Graph 0.1 Percentage of Catholics in the Republic of Ireland by Mass attendance, 2002 – 2012.**  
Source: ESS.

Once per week or more often attendance has declined over this short period from 54% of Catholics in 2002 to just over 39% in 2012. There are also regional and gender differentiations evident in results of these surveys. Once understood as the moral centre of social life, the Catholic Church is being redefined as one institution among many. There are changes in people's view of the Church, same sex marriage rights are being considered by the Irish state and, since 1996, the state has allowed for civil divorce.

There is a changing geography of religion in Ireland.

After the publication of the Commission's report I became interested in the different ways that people thought about the Catholic Church in Ireland. The newspapers that I read and television reports I watched were about what Bishops did and did not do about those who committed acts of child abuse. Online, the Catholic Church was condemned for the years of cover-ups and denials. But in the course of my work, I saw people struggling to understand what their faith in god and the Church meant after the report's publication. In the parishes of Ireland, hundreds of thousands of people continue to live their Catholic faith everyday through small acts of prayer and devotion. While Catholic religious practice can be measured by footfall into churches there is also a broader geography of religion in Ireland. Tens of thousands of people from Ireland go on pilgrimage annually. They go to Lough Derg in Donegal for three days to kneel on stone in the rain in penitential routine. Thousands more climb one of Ireland's highest mountains on a Sunday in July, some barefoot. Shrines of the Virgin Mary dot Ireland with about forty in the Dublin city area alone. Most of these are still decorated by people with flowers and repainted. Marian devotion and pilgrimage were once more popular than they are. So what has brought about these changes? I wanted to understand the relationship between these small acts of practice and the changing politics of the Church as an institution in Irish society.

I needed a framework to understand these changing geographies of religion. Part of this framework to understand social and cultural change is about how things that are religious are contrasted with things that are not. In a broader social scientific framework, this is a theory of secularisation. This set of ideas has been accounted for within sociology and other disciplines as the loss of religious authority within institutional and inter-personal settings. It is described variably as a loss of religion, or that 'this world' becomes the focus of social action or when society becomes disengaged from religion (Hamilton, 1995: 166). Things, events and practices become less sacred and daily life is less connected to the sacred. This account of social and cultural change places religious practices in opposition to secular practices. It is an account of change that states people and the places they make become less religious over time. How the religious is defined has been the subject of extensive sociological and anthropological research (Weber, 1965; Berger, 1967; Davie, 2007). Included in this is the misidentification of a golden age of faith, before an age of reason (Hamilton,

1995: 169). Given this variability, I use secularisation here to refer to a set of ideas that identifies a change in the social significance of religious understandings of the world.

That fewer people attend weekly Catholic Mass compared to the 1970s is evidence of a secularisation process in an Irish context. As part of this process, religion becomes less important in people's lives and institutions like the Catholic Church are less powerful than they used to be. Religious references are less frequently used within daily life and the political significance of bishops and priests wanes (Inglis, 1998). In Ireland, we can see evidence for secularisation processes in the decline in the number of people in attending weekly Mass (O'Mahony, 2010). However, the majority of primary schools continue to be under the patronage of the local Catholic bishop. Secularisation as a decline in Mass practice is evident but where in this process of secularisation can we place primary schools in Ireland? The institutional Catholic Church maintains some control over these significant places. How do we understand secularisation as the lessening of religious feeling when some places remain religiously significant? In this way, the location of different social and cultural practices requires a geography that moves beyond secularisation in Ireland as a decline in attendance at Mass. In the practices of Catholics in Ireland, we can notice a change in the religious landscape of Ireland. In her most recent review of the geography of religion, Kong notes that experiences of secularisation in Europe have been over-generalised to other parts of the world and that within Europe. Secularisation is not as monolithic as first understood (Kong, 2010: 764). This is of particular interest from an Irish perspective because of the dominance of the Catholic Church. A strong identification of Irish identity with Catholicism arises from nineteenth century political movements and a longer political struggle with Britain. The institutional Catholic Church developed a strong local power base (Ó Broin & Kirby, 2009: 13-21; Daly, 1985) as it secured a significant cultural presence. Many of these changes have already been examined (Inglis, 1998; Andersen, 2010) but they have been done at an institutional level.

Such analyses point to a decline in the authority of the institutional Catholic Church in Ireland. However, they are often disconnected from the practices of people in different places and how these places are made religious. An analysis is needed that binds the practice, performance and politics of religion so that it can feed into broader political and geographical discussions. In her review, Kong goes on to state that:

Geographers do need to go beyond insightful analyses of the micropolitics of religious spatial expression to contribute to an understanding of larger social and political events confronting the contemporary world, including religious conflict and religious change. Thus, geographers might well be nudged to consider how the politics of mosque building, or conflicts arising from secular representations of religious community, or modifications to spaces of worship – as micro-geographies and micropolitics – contribute to an understanding of the more macro-scale conflicts in the world. (Kong, 2010: 763)

In this way, Kong provides a framework for me to locate both the daily practice of Catholics in Ireland and the institutional politics of the Catholic Church. This is why the geography of religion has paid a lot of attention to the practices and performance of religion. It has meant a focus on what goes on in churches, temples, mosques and other places. The research she reviews is concerned with religious places but notes that the change that occurs in these places is not always connected with broader political changes. In the Dublin city area, there are about thirty statues of the Virgin Mary. They generally stand on green spaces near housing estates built in the period 1930 to 1960. While public devotion at statues of the Virgin Mary has declined considerably from the time of their first erection, most of the statues are maintained in some way to the present day. What accounts for this change in devotional practice? What are the processes involved in these statues' maintenance? In what ways do changes in these kinds of practices affect a broader political change? The statues remain on public ground, even after the publication of the accounts of child abuse at the hands of priests, nuns and brothers.

## **Daily practice and political change**

More than just the decline of the social significance of religion, a geography implied by secularisation processes is about how some places continue to be religious while others are less so. To go beyond the “micropolitics of religious spatial expression to contribute to an understanding of larger social and political events” (Kong, 2010: 763) I explore the practices and performances in three Irish contexts to connect them to broader political contestations about the secular and the religious. The first of these are the maintenance practices at statues of the Virgin Mary sited on public land in Dublin city. The second set of religious places I examine are three sites of unique pilgrimage performance: a small island in a lake in the north west of Ireland called Lough Derg, a gentle walk around a Norman castle in Wexford and an arduous climb up a sacred

mountain where St Patrick preached. The third example is concerned with Catholic primary schools, places where children are made part of the community of the faithful. Together they make up the changing geography of religion in Ireland but, and in different ways, connect with larger political processes.

The first objective of the research is to explore the changing geography of religion in Ireland. It is an examination of how religious places are made significant and how place, far from being just an outcome of social action, is a central component of a religious understanding of the world. This brings forward the relationships between place, identity and belonging.

- My first question to meet this objective is: what are the changing geographies of religion in contemporary Ireland?

The second objective of the research is to take these practices and performances within the geography of religion and explore the relationship between the religious and the secular. A relational geography of religion sees place-making arising from competing and complimentary spatial relations (Pierce et al., 2011). Rather than seeing the secular replacing the religious, I argue instead that the co-productions of religious and secular places stand in relation with each other. Seeing the two as standing in relation to each other leads to a better understanding of the geography of religion.

- My second question is: how can religious spatial expression at these places in Ireland contribute to an understanding of larger contestations about religious place making in Ireland in particular and place making more generally?

In support of Kong's position, I argue that the relationship between the secular and the religious in Ireland produces different geographies than are found in other parts of Europe. There is more granularity in this relational geography of religion than is implied by stating that Ireland is undergoing a secularisation process. Kong (2001 & 2010) argues that looking for the sacred *in the secular* leads to a rich geography of place that currently remains underdeveloped.

- The first two questions prompt a third: what does an examination of the changing geography of religion in Ireland tell us about the place of religion in public life

today?

This is a question related in some measure to policy; it is about how we understand what 'the public' means. These questions support a way to seek the secular in the sacred. I argue for a relational geography where place is brought into being through conflict, negotiation and contestation. The tension between the religious and the secular in this relational geography is a productive one. It is productive because both the religious and the secular contribute to place making through different kinds of social practice.

## **Grounding the geography of religion**

The changing geographies of religion in Ireland can be seen in the three examples I provide here: in the maintenance of Marian statues, in pilgrimage and in primary school education. These are groundings in Ireland of the productive tension between religion and the secular. To understand this productive tension, an analysis where some places are made private while others are made public is useful. This is because in a secularisation theory, religious practice becomes a series of private actions, inadmissible in public (Casanova, 1994). More than just a description of changing religious landscapes, the theory creates a division between what is appropriate in public and in private. This way of thinking about secularisation comprehends religion being taken away in societies or, as Taylor (2007: 22) characterises it, a subtraction story. This subtraction story is examined in more detail later. Looking at the groundings of the tension between the sacred and the secular means moving beyond an understanding of secularisation as a subtraction. In this work, I want to examine the practice and performance of religion and relate it to the politics of religion in Ireland. This means working from a position where these practices and performances are not assumed to be private just because they are religious. I try to understand where in Ireland religion is sometimes grounded as private space and sometimes as public space. This means seeing the designation of public space as an explicitly political act. I argue that some religious practices and performances are made to be admissible in public space while others are excluded. To examine this, I look at two ideas about the deprivatisation of religion and an *a priori* understanding of religion. Casanova (1994) describes deprivatisation as the reintroduction of religion into the public sphere. For Asad (2003) however, the way religion is discursively maintained is important in understanding the secular. These two

ideas aid my analysis that the changing geography of religion in Ireland can contribute to a broader understanding of religious place making.

This broader understanding of place making is about how religious practice is related to processes operating at other scales. This means identifying the political context within which religious place making occurs. From this point of view, the continued presence of religious practice in public makes more sense. For some geographies of religion, the persistence of religion in European countries is best explained as the post-secular. As I will argue, and in support of Kong (2010), the rush to the post-secular is as much about geographic thought's blind spots as a sudden re-appearance of religion. The relationship between religious place making and our understanding of public space opens up a new way to think about place making more generally.

## **Structure**

To understand the changing geographies of religion in Ireland and to relate them to broader processes of change, a number of connecting ideas are brought forward. In the first chapter, I conduct a review of three connected and relevant ideas. Subsequent chapters outline the ways in which I conducted my research and the empirical work conducted. The first chapter has three sections. The first section is concerned with place and religious place making. It provides an examination of the ways that the geography of religion makes connections between place, belonging and identity. In the second section, I outline how the practice and performance of religion is related to the secular. These practices and performances co-produce a geography of religion that stands in relation to the secular. They are complimentary and not competing spatial relations. In the third section of the opening chapter I look at how the religious and the secular are related to broader processes, particularly how we understand private and public space. These groundings of religion and the secular assume a private space for religious practice, freeing up public space for the secular. I show how deprivatisation changes the way religious institutions interact with other processes and how religion is a discursive formation dependent upon an *a priori* understanding. Public and private space is one particular contestation where religion connects with other political processes.

In the second chapter, I explain and develop the methods that I have used to investigate sacred and secular space in Ireland. I use a mixture of methods to examine the three

groundings of the Marian statues, pilgrimage practice and primary schooling. In particular I have used archival, photographic and ethnographic methods as well as a discourse analysis to identify the ways in which the geography of religion in Ireland is changing. The methods rely on both contemporary and historical materials. The mixture of methods was required to examine the different contexts within which the relationship between the sacred and the secular can be brought forward. The methodologies employed reflect the embodied and contingent qualities of religious place making. My aim, through these methods, is to refocus attention on how religious practices draw people in to make places significant but that those places also draw them into larger relations.

The third chapter, and the first example of religious practice, is concerned with the placement and maintenance of the statues of the Virgin Mary found on public land in Dublin city. These statues are not located within church ground but provide a focus for religious devotion. They are, for the most part located in housing estates that were built in the middle of the twentieth century. These religious objects are located on what is understood to be ostensibly public space. These religious places are made and remade as significant through their usage and continuous maintenance. In their production, form and placement, a relational geography of religion and religious place making is evident. The chapter takes the existing material culture of a Catholic practice and shows how the statues have moved from being objects of religious veneration to that of art. I use photographic and archival methods to uncover a rich geography of Marian devotion that spans many decades and a now-redundant craftsmanship. This movement through time signifies an important part of understanding how religious place is made. As I show, religious time is not the same as secular time and this has consequences for how we think about place making more generally.

Pilgrimage is one of the world's largest movements of people annually. Tens of thousands of people from Ireland go on pilgrimage every year, both in Ireland and abroad. Ireland is also dotted with thousands of holy wells and other significant religious sites. The fourth chapter examines the data that I gathered while on pilgrimage in Ireland. Using an ethnographic method, the data presented describe a geography of religion that could be both religious and secular. At Our Lady's Island in Wexford on the far south east coast, Lough Derg in Donegal on the north west coast and Croagh Patrick, a mountain standing over seven hundred metres over Clew Bay, I show how

pilgrimage is changing. In these sites, pilgrimage is sometimes a communal spiritual exercise. At other times pilgrims pursue individual health and bodily care. In Ireland, where pilgrimage and patterns represent regular Christian practice, the boundaries between the spiritual and the immanent can be difficult to discern. The performance of pilgrimage in Ireland shows the relational qualities of the secular and the religious which in turn produces a changing geography of religion.

Earlier on, I noted how the vast majority of primary schools are vested within the management of the Catholic bishop. In recent years, changes in this management are being made to incorporate a greater diversity within the population. The fifth chapter is an account of how contestations over place making refer to broader political processes elsewhere. It is concerned with the changes taking place in primary school education in the Republic of Ireland. The chapter examines how the schools themselves have changed, and continue to change, from being a community-based resource to politically important at the national scale. Using policy and newspaper reports, some of the more salient elements of the history of educational provision are brought forward. Particular attention is drawn to the role of the institutional Catholic Church. I show how historically the school was a local resource through which a Catholic community expressed itself. In a changing geography, schools are now being connected to a network of Catholic educational mission, associated with other Catholics throughout the world. By analysing the public discourse about the changes currently underway, I show how schools are slowly moving from being locations of religious catechesis to producing secular citizens. This is done through an examination of newspaper and policy reports over a three-year period, 2010 - 2012. The primary school is being secularised but in ways that show how the secular and the religious exist relationally. The primary school is being made public through a negotiation of where religion and the secular ought to be located.

The sixth chapter brings together the material presented in the empirical chapters. In doing so, I want to show what a relational geography of the secular and the religious tells us about place making in Ireland and more generally. By mapping the religious and the secular on to private and public space, political processes on other scales can be examined. However, moving beyond the micropolitics of religious expression and into other relations can often mean that religion's political significance is lost. The deprivatisation of religion in public means that religious practice re-enters the public

sphere in new ways. But public space is not a neutral space governed by secular freedom. It is a network of places already replete with pre-existing social relations. The chapter discusses the ways in which the secular public sphere is understood and the politics that it gives rise to. Changing geographies of religion in this context means that religious place making on scales other than the micropolitical is engaging with a politics of deprivatisation. Practices and performances of religion are assigned a place as if places that were once religiously significant can now be made secular.

For people to whom religious practices matter greatly, going beyond the micropolitics of their religious spatial expression carries a risk. It can often mean being public in a way that does not recognise religious place making practices. Furthermore, how being public is practised excludes some religious places but not others. In the sixth chapter, I propose that religion is frequently assigned a tamed political space. Using Marston et al.'s (2005) more fluid and less vertical approach to geographic scale, I show how religious place making can maintain its political significance in broader processes of change by emphasising its contingent qualities. Place making then becomes less about closing spaces off, what I call tamed space, as secular and more about the indeterminacy of place making processes more broadly.

In conditions where deprivatised religious institutions and practices exist and where political power flows from immanent concerns, contingency and the local are made to be inadmissible. Religious publics are easily made the Other in this context. I argue for a decentred geography of the religious and the secular. In this multi-scalar way of looking at place making processes, the relationship between the form and content of the events, occurrences and practices that make up social action are reconfigured. It is an attempt to escape from a spatial politics where the secular inevitably replaces the religious over time. In Ireland, religious places persist alongside those emerging as secular. It is in the tensions of this relational geography that we find new agendas for research in the geography of religion.

# 1: The co-production of religious and secular places – a review of the literature

## Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined how the geographies of religion in Ireland are changing. Secularisation is a term generally given to this process of change, where religion's social significance declines and fewer people attend a church or other religious rite on a routine basis. A decline in institutional authority has many consequences. However, as pointed out by Kong (2010), there has been a tendency to over-generalise from the European experience of secularisation, including this decline, to other parts of the world. Additionally, within Europe, the experience of secularisation has not been as monolithic as first thought. In the practices and performances of Catholicism in Ireland, there is some evidence of secularisation where parts of the religious landscape have changed over time. Religious places draw people into relationships; they recreate identities and a sense of belonging. But this is not a uniform process; religious place making occurs unevenly. In this chapter, I want to review the literature on how religious place making occurs, how the religious and the secular are related and how these, in turn, are related to broader processes of change. I provide a theoretical basis for understanding how religious places are co-produced through practice and performance and how these can be connected with other political processes.

This chapter has three sections. The first of these is concerned with place and religion. It begins with an examination of how place is made religiously significant. There is a landscape of religious worship, ritual and practice in Ireland and, as I show in subsequent chapters, this is changing over time. While religious worship is intended toward the indefinable and the abstractions of a spiritual life, religious practice is grounded in place. The connections between religious places and the belonging and identity that they recreate cannot be abstracted from broader social relations. As will be made clear, it is the co-production of religious and secular places that allows for a way to understand changing religious landscapes in Ireland and elsewhere.

In the second section, I examine how the secular and the religious are contested and not competing spatial relations. The productive tension between the two means that secularisation is a dynamic process. It is more than the loss of authority of religious institutions or the decline of religious influence. For Taylor (2007), secularisation as loss is a subtraction story. These are understandings of secularisation that see disenchantment as a release from the confining horizons of a religious way of life. For Taylor, secularisation as subtraction means that societies move from being less to more advanced and this has come to be understood theoretically and empirically in a variety of ways. These subtraction stories involve the progressive replacement of religion by the secular. They assume that secularisation occurs across places uniformly, disallowing the significance of practice and performance. In distinction, religious landscapes are examined here in relation to contestations over how places are made as religious or as secular. The relationship between the two is a political one and is grounded in particular ways.

The third and final section outlines how the productive relationship between the religious and the secular has been understood as private and public space. If religion is privatised within a broader process of secularisation, where can we locate this privatised religion in Ireland today? I examine Casanova's (1994) deprivatisation thesis and Asad's (2003) idea that the secular is a discursive formation. Working through some conceptions of the development of a public sphere, I argue that ideas of what is private and what is public are the outcomes of political groundings of the religious and the secular. These formations show how the boundaries between private and public space are drawn and maintained. There are certain ways of being public. Relating religious and secular place making to distinctions between public and private space is a means by which to bring the micropolitics of spatial religious expression on to other geographic scales.

## **1. Place, place-making and religion**

The geography of religion in Ireland may seek to enumerate and map churches, mosques, mandirs and other temples. These are places of religious worship in the Irish landscape that concretise religious identities and a sense of belonging. The placing of a church, a temple or a mosque is important and is characterised as foundational and temporal (Naylor & Ryan, 2010; Dwyer et al., 2013). These buildings are nodes of

religious significance, bundled together in one particular place. But a geography of religion is more than what occurs in particular buildings. In looking beyond the locations of a church building, recent geographies of religion have concentrated on the material cultures of the religious. This allows a focus on the landscapes of the religious that includes buildings of significance as one part of this landscape. The material culture of religion consists, among other things, of domestic space, public rituals and other performances (MacKian, 2012; Taylor, 1995; Dwyer et al., 2013). The material culture of the religious includes statuary, pilgrimage sites, domestic shrine spaces, books, music, clothing and personal decoration among other objects and places. These are placed among the everyday spaces within which we all move. Religious space as material culture draws attention to what is considered not religious or is profane. As such, it is a way to draw boundaries and these landscapes become ways of seeing or an act of appropriation (Cosgrove, 1985). In this section, I want to focus attention on place as a central component of how people perform and practice religion. It draws out some of the ideas that link place, religion and belonging.

The geography of religion implies a spatial understanding of belonging (Trudeau, 2006: 423). Belonging in space is:

The discourses and practices that establish and maintain discursive and material boundaries that correspond to the imagined geographies of a polity and to the spaces that normatively embody the polity. (Trudeau, 2006: 421)

People are born, live their lives and die within religious landscapes: religious landscapes and places persist. People continue to pass on the ideas and practice of religious duty, their practices are embedded in wider social relations (Asad, 2003: 243). Embedding religious practice in this way critically interrogates the links between belonging, space and place. Particular ways of passing on ideas and practices contain within them scales of meaning and importance. These scales of meaning can often prioritise larger territories over the local (White & Gilmartin, 2008: 395-396). The links between belonging, identity and religion are made more complex again by a frequent insistence “that religion is primarily a matter of incorporation in a designated religious institution” (Woodhead, 2011: 129). The religious exists within places but these places are not always institutional.

How does religion maintain a presence in social life? Berger (1967) provides a useful point of departure for understanding how religious practices are passed on. Religious legitimations are external and agreed upon *social* constructions. In the creation of these legitimations, modes of governance and discipline are detectable. They are social objectifications, what “passes for ‘knowledge’ in a given collectivity” (Berger, 1967: 38).  
Legitimations:

Can be both cognitive and normative in character. They do not only tell people what *ought to be*. Often they merely propose what *is*. (Berger, 1967: 38; emphasis in original)

They are the answers to the ‘why’ questions about institutional arrangements. That Catholic Mass requires a priest to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is a legitimation. The self-evident nature of much human action and interaction as ‘normal’ is outlined as the necessity of “additional legitimations” (Berger, 1967: 39). This transmission of knowledge about what is right, just and normal between generations is a process of social control. Those who resist this control must not only be reminded of ‘the normal’ but also be reminded that other things legitimate the transgression of this normality:

Any exercise of social control also demands legitimation over and above the self-legitimizing facticity of the institutional arrangements – precisely because this facticity is put in question by the resisters who are to be controlled. (Berger, 1967: 40)

It is when the questioning of these higher-order legitimations takes place that crises occur within the institutional arrangements and controls are invoked to restore stability. Not only must rule breakers be condemned but also the authority of who judges this in the first instance needs to be reinforced. In a Catholic religious framework, the confession of a sin to God through a priest is reinforced by an act of penance. The authority of the institution must be reinforced in the rule’s exercise if the legitimation is to be preserved. But this is all too static.

How power is exercised through reinforcing legitimations implies a dynamic religious space. It is the dialectic between a social fact and its transgression that is important; it is a contest between crisis and stability. Religious legitimations (how to receive Communion, how to offer sacrifices appropriately) are thus social and spatial relations

about who belongs and who does not. Woodhead states that seeing religion as a relation is more useful than seeing religion as an identity. Identity draws attention to the boundaries between what is religious and what is secular. For religion as a social relation:

Attention is directed more to interconnections and networks than differences and boundaries, and what is of greater concern than how religion defines identity is how it relates people together, what gains and costs are involved, how they are distributed, and how they relate to other forms of social relation and stratification. (Woodhead, 2011: 130)

By focusing on the distributions of these “gains and costs” Woodhead implies a spatial understanding of religion. This draws us away from an excessive focus on church and temple buildings in social scientific accounts of the secular. The everyday experience of the religious is often diminished when thought of as identity. Furthermore, as MacKian (2012) has argued, religion as a social relation brings the spirituality-beyond-religion perspective back into play. I have found this approach helpful for outlining the geography of religion in contemporary Ireland. Religion as a social relation places a focus back on to everyday spatial practices. It aids an understanding of how the world remains enchanted to some extent (MacKian, 2012: 18). Within this, we see how religious legitimations are maintained and co-produced alongside the secular.

Emphasising that religion is a social relation is relatively new within geography. Kong divides earlier geographies of religion into mapping the politics and the poetics of religion and the interconnections between them (Kong, 2001: 212-213). For her, while the placement of this temple or that church is important politically, it is in the poetics (and consequent legitimations) of how this is maintained that we see the interconnections. This is, she argues, because the sacred draws meaning from social and political relationships. Crucially, the sacred cannot be defined on its own (Weber, 1965: 1). The intertwining of place, belonging and identity is no less political because it is inspired by the immaterial. Brace et al. (2006) argue that it is difficult to discern what the geography of religion might look like because of the intersection of bodily practices and the politics of institutional space and place. Again, like Kong, they identify a problem with relating the expression of religion with other processes. Whether examining bodily practices at the personal level or “unpicking the complex relationships and politics of institutional space and place” (Brace et al., 2006: 29), they refer to a tendency within the geography of religion toward an artificial distinction between

politics and poetics. Most importantly, they draw attention to the limitations of analysing religious landscapes as existing outside of social relations:

Religions of whatever kind demonstrate their legitimacy and establish their provenance by reference to specific histories and geographies, which are codified in cultic and banal texts, documents, devices, instruments, protocols and systems of discipline. (Brace et al., 2006: 30)

The things that give religion its legitimacy are the subjects of the geography of religion but their poetics are frequently denominated as ‘the religious’. The material culture of religion is more than what goes on inside a church or temple. This is because:

All religions construct space and time through their own specific ontological commitments, and so it follows that, in order to understand the nature of religious landscapes, representations and practices, work must be contextualized within a temporal and spatial framework that is cognizant of these commitments. (Brace et al., 2006: 31)

This codification of a religion’s “ontological commitments” situates the religious in time and in space. This is a relational understanding of the co-production of religious and secular places: it is the contestations over meanings, interpretations and practices over time that matter.

What are the relations between place and religious identity? Brace et al.’s (2006) account of the work done by Luker (1987) on Cornish Methodism points toward some of these relations. They contend that Luker holds onto the notion of an essential Cornish identity. However, Methodism became a central factor in the formation of this identity. Methodism became a mark of distinction by Cornish people in the nineteenth century as a buttress against an essentialised English identity. Brace et al. (2006) make an appeal for a multidimensional way of thinking about identity in place. Unlike in Wales, where Methodism did get linked to nationalism, Methodist practice forged ties with particular places and landscapes. Brace et al. seek an imaginative understanding of local structures of feeling. This involves the identification of “cultures of hybridity” where research can “recognize that places themselves are hybrid expressions that are always in a state of becoming” (Brace et al., 2006: 36). This helps to bring the everyday experience of religion back into religious place making. Rather than seeing secularisation as a series of events of loss (fewer adherents and priests, more state-sponsored regulation of personal behaviour), I am seeking the *becoming of the religious and secular in place* in

Ireland. The relational qualities of the religious and the secular and the hybridity of place itself point to a complexity for the examination of the location of religion (Knott, 2005: 61-77). If places in general are construed as hybrid, how can we construe the characteristics of religious places as distinct from others?

Identity and politics, whether in religious spaces or not, cannot be separated. The desire to separate religion from law, politics, art and aesthetics can be thought of as a European project (Ivakhiv, 2006: 169-171). This is dealt with in the final section of this chapter. To understand secularization as a top down process that happens *to* people negates the meanings inscribed on places and sites of significance. Following on from Holloway, the human body in space is not merely a surface upon which practices and representations are present but is “essential to the enactment of sacred space” (Holloway, 2003: 1963). The body’s spatial alignment with institutional forms of religion creates an opportunity for a reconsideration of secularisation theories that impose a schema from above. Relating practices and performances at particular sites to other processes becomes easier. There is a need to excavate specific meanings of beliefs and practice in their own contexts. It means “attending to different forms of secular place making, not just the production of ‘secular space’” (Howe, 2009: 641), as well as those moments that are delineated as religious.

Relating the religious and the secular in these ways is also important because it confers a dynamism to any analysis. Recent writings by Gökariksel and others have pointed to the reorganization of an ideology of secularism that has “not meant the disappearance of religion, but its redefinition and reorganisation” (Gökariksel, 2009: 659). The reorganisation has not always aided the development of geographies of religion because the places that have been examined define religion in a very particular way. Instead, Gökariksel appeals for us to look beyond the officially sacred because this “focus necessitates shifting our analytical register to consider different scales and geographies related to the fluid and mobile body” (Gökariksel, 2009: 658). An examination of embodied spatial practices means that change in a variety of contexts can be seen as a process that involves people in space. People move through space, reacting, changing and being reacted to. This echoes the dynamism drawn out above for the relationship between the religious and the secular.

For the geography of religion, people moving through space matters. But what kinds of external social constructions are agreed upon? Men and women, children and adults are regulated, and regulate themselves, in religious places. This necessarily means trying to understand new configurations of social and political power. Kong (2010) states that two facets of this power have made themselves present in the literature on space and religion. These are what is happening in the spaces of our own 'here and now' and how these spaces are affected by what happens in other places. She lists the Bali, New York and Madrid bombings in the first ten years of the twenty-first century as dramatic reminders of how things distant from us affect us in our own places. Secondly, power matters to the production and maintenance of sacred space because of the effects of migrations of large numbers of religious adherents across the world in recent decades. Contestations over meanings of sacred sites and their maintenance is providing a richer vein for the geography of religion at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century than it did at its beginning. In this way, religious spatial expressions are made part of a larger network of spatial politics. It is a contestation of religious space that is reflected in Kong's reviews (2001, 2010) and in Gökariksel's analysis of Islamic veiling practices (2009).

In her review of the literature on the geography of religion in 2001, Kong wrote that the:

Analysis of the politics in management and maintenance [of religious places] has not been given much attention by geographers and represents one avenue of research that should be opened up. (Kong, 2001: 214)

In her summary of the geographies of religion, research on the management and maintenance of sacred spaces is necessary but not adequate. By the end of the decade, Kong reported that many more areas for geographical enquiry had been developed (Kong, 2010: 756). Her review of the previous decade's literature charts the rise of a different awareness of the production and maintenance of religious and secular spaces than was evident in earlier decades. Sites of practice beyond the officially sacred had been examined. Part of this has been due to the two facets of power mentioned above: the foregrounding of political religion 'here' and how 'there' affects it. It is clear that religious practice and its performance in public space have profoundly challenged what gets denoted as secular and religious. What was once social space is being denominated as religious social space, standing in relation to a particular idea of the secular. Kong has also sought to operationalise this in her work. In her study of museums, it is not

only about what gets officially represented but also the ordinarily secular. For Kong (2005b: 510):

To understand religious life, identity and community in contemporary urban society, it is perhaps insufficient to focus only on a study of ‘officially sacred’ places. Ordinarily secular places also play important roles in contributing to the construction and contestation of religious identity and community.

Going beyond the officially sacred then takes a central place in the geography of religion. Contestations about the officially and unofficially sacred raise further questions about the boundaries often drawn between religious geographers and geographers of religion (Yorgason & della Dora, 2009: 632). Above all, the poetics of religious place need not blind an analysis to the political consequences of community identification (Kong, 2010: 763). Kong is asking that “sacred and secular spaces must be examined in tandem in order to understand the constitution of modern religious identity and community” (Kong, 2005b: 510). This is central to the argument here: drawing attention to the spaces of religious expression is important but drawing them into relations on other scales is another task. Furthermore, the geography of religion in Ireland produces different geographies than are found in other parts of Europe. Going beyond the tabulation of formal religious reservations is one way to recognise the unofficially sacred.

In this vein, Rose (2010) has conducted research with US ‘new age’ pilgrims to Egypt. For him, identity in place is something that beckons “from outside the subject, calling us into diverse modalities of being” (Rose, 2010: 508). The flow of one’s identity, never entirely a controllable presence, exhorts him as a researcher never “to close ones [*sic*] ears and rail against what presents itself, as if the world should only give us what we request of it” (Rose, 2010: 521). Dewsbury & Cloke (2009: 696) have suggested that:

The idea of *spiritual landscapes* provides a worthwhile avenue towards new understandings of how faith, belief, religion and phenomenology *can* (rather than must) illuminate the notion of being in the world. (emphasis in original)

These kinds of work done on spiritual landscapes draw attention to the differences between the spiritual and religion. Additionally, there is some value in exploring landscapes where religion is defined as inhabited space. However, they also point to a key deficiency in work done on the embodiment of the spiritual and the poetic up to this

point. Too much is made of the concrete institutional forms of religion and the theological underpinning of spirituality. It is as if only those forms of practice that adhere to an institutional scale matter. If a place is set apart as sacred or religious but this quality comes before its true meaning, it would imply that places have to be opened up to this meaning. An investigation of the religious *in the secular* avoids such confusion. Attempts to redraw the boundaries between the sacred and the profane serve to draw attention to the radical distance that has been maintained until now:

In the depiction of the profane as ‘formless’, ‘nonreal’, and ‘homogeneous’, the everyday becomes an inert force that has little impact upon sacred space other than through its denial. (Holloway, 2003: 1962)

Non-institutional spiritual understandings of the world and our place in it lose their sacredness. The relevance to phenomenology of the relationship between the sacred and the profane becomes clear. Devotion intended toward statues or relics (the materiality of the practice) is as important as the material conditions that permitted their existence in the first place. Religious beliefs are not beliefs with an immaterial presence. Instead, and against Wylie (2009), the meaning of these places does not have to be collected but can instead be revealed. If geographies of religion are to be more than a recuperation of affective landscapes, a formal gap between the poetics of place and political embodiment in space remains to be bridged. In being present in space, the meaning of religious place is evident but so is a reference to something larger and altogether less transcendent: religious spaces that are produced in a political context.

This process and embodiment of enchantment is that which is engendered in...the relational production of religious, spiritual, and sacred spaces. It is an affective register that informs the space of its realization and the wider processes of belief, society, and culture. (Holloway, 2006: 186).

At this stage, I have established a material basis for the changing geographies of religion. It situates belonging and identity formation as central to an understanding of place. Religious space, in as much as this is defined alongside the secular, is produced space with particular legitimations for its maintenance. Religious space is also produced in an everyday context, and not merely located in particular buildings. Religious place making is a relational process where change brings contestation about what is the ‘correct way’ to do things. It will inform my analysis through a focus on the generation of contested religious place making in Ireland.

## 2. The religious and the secular

As mentioned above, the geography of religion often accounts for the change in religious place making as a process of secularisation. In this process, there is a decline in religious ceremonial attendance and less adherence to principles legitimated by Christian religious institutions. Falling attendance at these Christian rites, seen first in Europe and North America, foresees a future where this process will have been completed and people no longer affiliate to a religion. In this framing of the secularisation process, religious belief is shed as disenchantment and a scientific framework take hold among a population. If religion is not practised by greater numbers of people, there is a smaller 'store of religion' in that political state (Casanova, 1994: 21-22). That this society is generally held to be in alignment with a state's boundaries is not an accident. The people in this state are said to be less religious than others where attendance at religious ceremonies is higher and can be routinely measured. In this section I want to provide an account of the secular standing in relation to the religious. Instead of the secular replacing the religious, I argue that the two are competing contestations about place making. This is to provide for a geography of religion in Ireland which includes many different forms of religious practice and performance.

An Irish example of the 'store of religion' account of secularisation is seen in the data compiled for the European Values Study (EVS), conducted for the first time in 1981. Rounds of this and the European Social Survey conducted to the present day have charted a steady decline in regular Mass attendance among Catholics in Ireland, north and south (Mac Gréil, 2011; O'Mahony, 2010). There are degrees of difference in this decline across areas, educational attainments and political affiliations. For example, older age cohorts tend to attend Catholic Mass more often than younger cohorts (O'Mahony, 2010). In this framework, fewer people attending Catholic Mass represents a loss of religion in Irish society. In the introduction, I laid out how the proportion of Catholics in the Republic attending regular Mass services has declined, particularly within the last decade or so (European Social Survey, online). In an Irish context, Mac Gréil has charted the decline in religious service attendance since the early 1980s (2011: 207-210). Norris & Inglehart (2004) have provided evidence from the EVS throughout the 1990s and 2000s for the decline of religion across the world. Their analysis posits that economic stability can be shown to lead to a decrease in religious fundamentalism and adherence (Wilford, 2010: 330). This stability and growth (and consequent declines

in religious fundamentalism) in the economy accompanies the generalised process of modernisation. They argue that existential threats to the well being of a community and people facilitate reference to something supernatural. In conditions of economic modernisation, these threats recede. They have suggested that because European states have created stronger welfare systems, insecurity has been minimised and so the religious becomes less and less tenable (Schultz, 2006: 176).

Norris & Inglehart's representation of the relationships between the religious and the secular is linked with the modernisation of a society's economy. In this there is a uniformity of secularisation, undifferentiated across space. For these accounts of secularisation, religion is a cultural value that is ascribed to the individual as a belief. This is then aggregated to the national scale. Against this, Bruce (2001: 191) states that secularisation is not so much a replacement of one value by another but a decline in demand for the formally religious over the course of the twentieth century. For example, in the analysis presented by Proctor & Hornsby-Smith (2003: 98-111) clusters of collectivist and permissive values are detectable across Europe. Political understandings of this Europe are sometimes differentiated but the values remain endogenous to those that reside within such political formations. These accounts reduce how religious meaning is created in, and is constitutive of, place.

Empirically at least, Norris & Inglehart and others are provide a model of change where declines in religious values are evident and so there is less of a need for institutions to 'supply' these feelings. A society undergoes change, the values of the people are altered across time and so there is less religious feeling in that society. But Bruce and Norris & Inglehart cannot account for the persistence of religious ideas in some places and not in others. Davie takes Bruce to task for this very point. Drawing on the 2001 Census data for England and Wales, she argues that the north of England adheres to a relatively traditional understanding of religion and the "figures for nominal attachment were unexpectedly high" (2007: 89-96). By nominal attachment, she means regular attendance and ritual. The alignment of the nation state with a coherent religious belief system, usually grounded as an established church, begins to break down when examined from a multi-scalar perspective.

If the geography of religion is to be unbound from micropolitical religious expression, the expressions need to be analysed as more than a residual value. Central to this is how

time is understood. Accounts of religion's decline that draw from a society's modernisation are concerned with explaining how an underlying human reason releases itself from "confining horizons" (Taylor, 2007: 22). This is a model of the constant loss of religious understandings of the world. For Taylor, this is the story of "subtraction". Stories of subtraction cohere around the idea of looking for alternatives to God. Taylor expresses this in terms of a search for new reference points for spiritual "fullness" (Taylor, 2007: 27). The "buffered self", one that saw itself as no longer "vulnerable to a world of spirits and powers" (Taylor, 2007: 27), forms a central component of the subtraction story. The buffered self is an understanding of one's self as "disengaging from everything outside the mind", my own purpose being derived only from within. The self "can see itself as invulnerable" to meanings that are not found inside (Taylor, 2007: 38). The rise of humanism and a drive to re-order society shorn of the magical elements of older idolatries (Taylor, 2007: 80-86) were two particular energies of a disenchantment of the world and a buffered self. Additionally, the buffered self was supported by two factors in particular: "the reconstructive stance in ethics, and an instrumental rather than a contemplative understanding of science [which] lent each other support" (Taylor, 2007: 113). This instrumentalism is important to the relationship between the secular and religion because it changes how people relate to time.

The radical secularity he outlines through his examination of modern social imaginaries re-founds time within a legal framework that has its own dynamic. It is a time of a new common action, an "exemplary time" that is different in quality from that of eternal time (Taylor, 2007: 193-196). In drawing together his imaginaries on to a secular space, Taylor is extending the work of Kantorowicz (1957). Kantorowicz's work relates to the present argument by showing how the Reformation of European Christianity is not the beginning of a process of secularisation, but its end. For Kantorowicz, the move from a Christ-centred kingship to a polity-centred one creates the conditions for a reformation of European understandings of social hierarchy. He shows how the continuity of Christ's presence in the world (as the Church) presented an acute theological quandary for early medieval Christianity. If a king's reign represents divine will, what happens to that will when the king's mortal body dies? Kantorowicz's lengthy account of the *corpus mysticum* (1957: 194-232) relocates divine will into a parallel body, developing as legal systems that exist outside of individual bodies, the king's included. The codification of law as external to the king's body arose as a response to this theological working out in the four centuries to about 1450. In this context, an account of

secularisation where religion stands in a defined relation to the secular world makes more sense. Europe’s ‘progress’ is both spatial and temporal: spatial because the law is made to exist outside of the monarch’s divine body and temporal because it outlasts individual reigns. It is the re-founding of legal, secular time that has become the principal basis for understanding practices like religion belonging to a past. (The recasting of secular time is also evident in Asad, pointing out that “secular history’s linear temporality has become the privileged measure of all time” (Asad, 2003: 43).) If religious authority gradually declines over across time, and it is ascribed to individual values, how is the subtraction story told in Ireland?

In the introduction, I mentioned that Mass attendance has been in decline in Ireland for some time. The table below is reproduced and adapted from Mac Gréil’s study (2011) of religious practice in Ireland. (I have added one more round of the European Social Study in 2012.) The table is to help illustrate the relative inadequacy of the ‘declining numbers approach’ laid out in the introduction.

	EVS 1981	Mac Gréil 1988-89	EVS 1990	EVS 1999	ESS 2002	ESS 2004	ESS 2006	Mac Gréil 2007-08	ESS 2012
Weekly or more often	82	79	81	65	54	56	47	42	39
Monthly or more often	88	85	88	75	67	70	60	54	53
Less frequently or more often	95	96	96	92	89	91	86	87	71
Never	5	4	4	8	11	9	14	12	17

**Table 1.1: Changes in religious practice of the total population in the Republic of Ireland since 1981. All partial percentages are rounded. Source: Mac Gréil (2011) and ESS.**

Studies such as these do not only measure attendance. They also measure an array of social and culture values across countries. These reside within the individual respondent and, aggregated to an imaginary called Irish society, constitute social values. In the following table, I lay out one such value as an illustration of the main point here: that surveys on this scale are inadequate to aid a better understanding of changing religious landscapes. In this example, respondents are asked to indicate how closely they identify

to the statement presented to them. In this case, that it is “Important to do what is told and follow rules”.

	Very much like me	Like me	Somewhat like me	A little like me	Not like me	Not like me at all	Total
2002	13.1	31.9	21.9	14.7	14.6	3.8	100
2012	11.8	26.8	23.8	15.8	17.5	4.3	100

**Table 1.2: Responses to the statement It Is Important To Do What is Told and Follow Rules, Republic of Ireland, 2002 and 2012. Source: ESS**

From this table, it can be seen that an increasing proportion of the representative sample believes that it is unimportant to do what one is told and to follow rules. Over the ten year period, fewer people think that it is important to be told what to do. This might be seen as a measurement of declining obedience to authority structures and an additional variable supporting a secularisation thesis. However, the values ascribed to people here cannot convey people’s practice and performance at specific sites and within landscapes. The subtlety of collective practice at particular locations is not amenable. Each individual is ascribed a religious (or obedience to authority) value and this is aggregated into a political imaginary called society. Seeing the geography of religion as a decline in religious authority cannot account for the continuation of and change within the dynamism of religious place making. These accounts of change in the relationship between the religious and the secular disallow a relational, hybridised sense of place. As noted above, Kong has observed how the granularity of practices at religious places is often confined to religious reservations, e.g. churches, temples and mosques (2010: 757). Local contexts are replaced by political imaginaries on larger scales. In the more dynamic model proposed here, religion being a matter of individual choice becomes problematic. If secularisation is about individual choice, then religion is uncoupled from the political and social relations. There is also an assumption that religious practice outside of these religious reservations is an ill-formed relationship to ‘real’ religion (Mahmood, 2006: 340-343). Secularisation as a subtraction story makes religion and the secular, the groups of people living in communities designating certain spaces and activities in their environment as sacred, a secondary consideration in how place is co-produced.

Secular values are said to replace those of the religions until such time as all of the territory is secularised. However, places are hybrid and they are crossed by many identities. Prayer and pilgrimage, and their continued popularity, from this abstracted view, appear like the residue of a former time. This teleological understanding of religious place making and its path through a modernisation process is unhelpful for understanding everyday practice *in its own context*. It denies the persistence of the spiritual in place as well as the continued production of religious places (Simonsen, 2007; Gökariksel, 2009). To understand what the secular means in Irish contexts, we have to look beyond an analysis that relies on a subtraction story.

Thinking about place making as a relational process, as well as place's production and maintenance, revises this teleological understanding. When summarising her approach for locating religion, Knott (2005: 125) talks about the relationship between the religious and the secular as one in which:

Knowledge-power is expressed and contested, and in which controversies between positions...reveal some of the deeply held views and values which constitute the field and mark out the territorial areas and lines of engagement within it.... [These controversies] occur in space and, as such, the places they occupy are amenable to spatial analysis.

The occurrence of these controversies between positions is a further way to understand a relational geography. Pierce et al. (2011) lay out the contingent, open-ended and networked ways in which place is bundled together. Physical, human and other landscapes are not separated from each other but work in combination to create and re-create places. For relational geographies, change itself is as durable as the seeming durability of places as concrete. Most significantly for my argument "the place-frames that receive the most attention are those that are the most hegemonic" (Pierce et al., 2011: 59). This informs my analysis by emphasising the negotiation that occurs over place making. A relational geography takes in a multi-scalar approach, one that allows both structural and agentic factors to be taken into account. In the relational place-making framework, research begins with the points of conflict over the negotiation about competing place-frames (Pierce et al., 2011: 61). The values, political strategies mobilised and the actors and institutions involved are engaged within a relational geography. Secular and religious place making occurs across temporal frames and scales. Religious place making, as well as having a geopolitical meaning, can also be assigned some geopoetical meanings (Crouch, 2010: 13; Kong, 2010: 757-758). It is in

the production of space and place between the religious and the secular that geography contributes to a re-assessment of the secular as a subtraction story. How do these political contestations over religious and secular place become grounded?

### **3. Who is private and who is public?**

In this final section, I want to examine how contestations about religious and secular place making are grounded as private and public space. In outlining a changing geography of religion in Ireland and relating it to broader political processes, it is the location of these contestations that matter. Religious and secular places coexist and they generate the meanings and identities of place making. What is deemed private space and what is public are the outcomes of specific political formations. I outlined above how the political imaginary of a secular society came into being. Such an imaginary can only make sense if a public can be identified. This is the public space where a secular self adheres to a new instrumentalism. I examine how the boundaries between private and public space are drawn and maintained. The public sphere, a space articulated by pre-existing social relations, is one of the places where the micropolitical spatial expressions of the religious can be found. If these expressions are changing, they are not left unchanged by their interactions with a public sphere. What is public about a public sphere?

#### ***3.1 The secular public sphere***

In Taylor's account of the rise of the secular age, the secular is an elite's "conception of the social world as constituted by individuals" (2007: 156). This way of understanding the social world retains its power to the present day. He maps the development of a social imaginary embodied in order and its regulation. This social imaginary encompassed an assumption of, and desire for, equality amongst individuals "where people stand outside of all relations of superiority and inferiority" (Taylor, 2007: 160) and Natural Law becomes the "founding contract" (Taylor, 2007: 162). This social imaginary of individualisation means that understandings of self are bound to both mutual service and respect. For Taylor, his argument's most compelling aspect, the organisation of modern society's imaginary is "judged not in its inherent form, but instrumentally" (Taylor, 2007: 166). Service to each other is no longer bound within a Platonic and idealised hierarchy. Instead, service to others provides security and "to

render our lives and property safe under law” (Taylor, 2007: 166). This is a process of juridification, enabled through the separation of the king’s mortal body from the King’s reign (Kantorowicz, 1957).

Where does this imaginary and orientation to self become institutionalised? It does not arise spontaneously but from what is already present (Bottici, 2009: 988-989).

Legitimate order is constituted in both religious belief and those who imagine something more immanent. Bottici (2009: 989) reminds us:

The instituting social imaginary is at the same time always also instituted by individuals. There are no individuals outside of it, but, likewise, no social imaginary can exist without the individuals that create, re-create and sustain it. In such a particular relationship ... we experience a unique relationship that cannot be reduced to a simple one such as between the whole and its parts, or even less between the universal and the particular.

In the transition from a world of naturalised order to a modern social imaginary, individualism is among the “evident residual ideas which remain after you have sloughed off the older religions” (Taylor, 2007: 169). This individualism is the inhabitation of a repertory of collective actions, from manners to how to behave in political space. It is the means by which a new public comes into existence (Taylor, 2007: 173). The formation of the imaginary of ‘the public’ as a real thing is important. It is through these imaginaries of a common understanding that political projects such as ‘the common good’ and the ‘integrity of the law’ come into being. In this new public, some are freed from particularities and yet can imagine commonalities; a secular space is created from which to look back at older forms. This new political imaginary takes a more central place because without it, society might as well be a “mere aggregation of bodies” (Bottici, 2009: 991). For Bottici, this secular space brings about a crisis for both religion and politics. She states that the religious provides endless legitimating cover for the chaotic (echoing Berger’s sacred canopy), something that the political cannot do. Boundaries are being continuously redrawn in order to distinguish between a disposition constituted by contingency and one imagined as freed from this contingency (Kantorowicz, 1957: 193-206). The public sphere is the space where we are freed from contingency.

The creation of a political imaginary called the public did not simply arise but was borne of existing material conditions. What kind of religious place making emerges from this understanding of the public sphere? This was a *Civitas Dei*, where a Roman

church with “real and significant worldly power...was of crucial importance” (Casanova, 1994: 50). This involves a transformation of the outer worldly individual through a commitment to inner discipline. The turn to the inner disciplining of the self and an attendant theology was led by the Protestant churches and later, reluctantly, followed by the Catholic Church (Casanova, 1994: 51). It is through the power of the political state that religious place making in a political imaginary called Europe is confined to its own disciplined space. Within secularisation, institutionalised churches become the “impotent community cults of the new nation-states” (Casanova, 1994: 51). The mysticism at the heart of religion thus becomes just one social space among many, no longer primary. The groundings of the religious and the secular become contestations arising from the delineation of some actions as private and others as public.

### ***3.2 Public law and private morality***

Outlining the divisions between the public and private on their own terms is not sufficient however. Howe (2009: 644) states that the boundaries between private and public tell us nothing because what matters “are the performances of inclusion and exclusion themselves, to whom they are addressed, by what means...within what framework of cultural meaning.” As I have shown in the previous section, religion is made visible through a delineation of a public sphere. Where the public and private are grounded is reflexively constituted in politico-legal systems. It is here that Asad’s analysis of the secular as a discourse is most useful. The secular state “seeks to regulate all aspects of individual life...[and] no one, whether religious or otherwise, can avoid encountering its ambitious powers” (Asad, 2003: 199). For Asad it is not that the state governs all social space but that “all social activity requires the consent of the law, and therefore of the nation-state” (Asad, 2003: 199). Like Asad, Taylor (2007: 153-154) acknowledges the role that the state plays in law formation and the regulation of organisation:

The very existence of state power entails some attempt to control and shape religious life and the social structures it requires, and hence undercuts the sense of intangibility surrounding this life and these structures.

Which places are made private and which public therefore becomes important in any geography of religion. The rule of law seeks to fix firm how we contest place making

through its work but, as it is argued here, this is a space *assigned* for religion. As Asad (2003: 138) points to in the case of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

[It] seems to assume a direct convergence of “the rule of law” (a notion that depends on the proper maintenance of rights by state institutions) with social justice (a vision of social life that logically presupposes *remedies* but not necessarily *rights*...). If that is the case, *the rule called law* in effect usurps the entire universe of moral discourse. (emphasis in original)

Performances of inclusion and exclusion and where these take place are rarely examined in the geography of religion. Earlier I pointed out how surveys like the European Values Survey frame religion in terms of the retention of belief in an increasingly risky world. Inglehart & Norris’s (2003) account of vulnerability and faith is perhaps the paramount example but other analyses include Fox (2006) and Höllinger et al. (2007). These analyses contain a central paradox: religion is to be kept separate from the practice and performance of state regulation but still allow the state to regulate what this means. Calhoun (2008: 11) provides a summary of this paradox:

Rather than a distinction of personal piety from more outward forms of religious practice, the “privacy” of religion has been bound up with (a) the notion that religious convictions were to be treated as matters of implicitly personal faith rather than publicly authoritative reason and (b) the idea of a separation from the state (which was as much a demand for states not to interfere as for particular religious views not to dominate states).

This paradox is grounded in places as a series of contestations over how they are made. Casanova’s work on public religions in the modern world seeks to understand this paradox. For him, the differentiation of secular lives into distinct institutional spheres leads to a suspicion of grand narratives. In these conditions of the secular, the Christian quest for salvation is withdrawn to the private sphere of the disciplined self:

Since the individual’s social existence becomes a series of unrelated performances of anonymous specialized social roles, institutional segmentation reproduces itself within the individual’s consciousness. (Casanova, 1994: 36)

This necessarily involves the separation of the secular from ecclesiastical control and the creation of one or more publics. While the European colonial process was partly an act of Christian evangelisation, an immanent perspective allowed for power in this world, not the next. In a world construed as immanent (with its specialisation of social roles) Casanova contends that markets and state bureaucracies can continue to function

as if God did not exist. Their legitimacy to continue as political entities is no longer dependent upon a presumed universal belief in a deity. In these conditions, where, for example, vocal requests for guidance from God for a successful outcome to a meeting would be inappropriate, the public is understood to be the realm of human action. There is a self-understanding (and an understanding in relation to others) that the intervention of the Holy Spirit will not steer action but an effective business strategy will. Casanova therefore builds on Berger's legitimation thesis reviewed earlier. Alongside the affective and the emotional, religious belief in conditions of secularism is something that one does not bring to bear on a professional or a public ethic. They provide no legitimation there. Drawing again on the relationality between these new moral orders, religion for Casanova accepts a new placing "as a protector of human rights and humanist values against the secular spheres and their absolute claims to internal functional autonomy" (Casanova, 1994: 39). It is the separation of law from morality that forms a basis for the state's power to delineate the secular from religion. This is the cultivation of an inner worldly attitude to religion. Law is external to us as members of the public but morality resides within us privately.

### ***3.3 The deprivatisation of religion***

If where religion can be located is drawn through state power, the public sphere provides a space into which it can 'return'. I have characterised the public sphere here as a political process and accommodative of an emergent individualism. It is politicised in state formation processes in the creation of a coherent public. I am representing public/private distinctions as part of the grounding of exclusionary state power across scales and over time and space. To aid my analysis of the changing geography of religion in Ireland, I draw on Casanova's (1994: 41) schema that captures the ways in which distinctions between the private and the public work analytically. The schema incorporates "the threefold distinction between the individual and group religiosity, religious and political community, and religious and worldly/secular spheres" (Casanova, 1994: 51-52). It sheds light on religion's role in a differentiated political context:

1. A liberal-economistic distinction between state administration and market economics

2. A republican-virtue approach where a public community and citizenship exist alongside each other but analytically distinct from the market *and* the administrative state
3. An approach (deriving from the work of Ariès) that sees the public realm as a “sphere of fluid polymorphous sociability”, and
4. An economic history and feminist approach that draws a distinction between the family and a market economy

Casanova’s schema is attractive because it does not begin with that *a priori* understanding of the secular (Asad, 2003: 256) that will be discussed later. The schema can also be applied in different geographic contexts and scales (Marston et al., 2005; Malesevic, 2010).

The work of Habermas offers a way to join state power in determining public place making with Casanova’s assertion that markets and state bureaucracies can continue to function as if God did not exist. For Habermas, the “assumption of a common human reason forms the basis of justification for a secular state that no longer depends on religious legitimation” (Habermas, 2006: 4). The divide between public and private institutional domains remains but, crucially, is disciplinary (Habermas, 2006: 9). Private lives are regulated both through mechanisms of public force and the practices of regulated individuals. However, as Casanova’s schema above shows, almost everything that is not relative to intimate relations between people or within domestic arrangements tends to be conflated into an amorphous category known as “the public”.

This understanding of “the public”, dominated by a market for the free exchange of goods, is a dialogue between those groups with dominance in that market. Restraint of one’s emotions is a key element of this dialogue (Taylor, 2007: 180). This has clear political implications for those who cannot show sufficient restraint and, in this way of understanding the public, exclude themselves. Over the last century for example, struggles over women’s political enfranchisement, the rights of disabled people and migrant groups have all questioned such restraint. This is Taylor’s accommodation to the public sphere as a disciplinary society. It is echoed in earlier theoretical accounts such as Foucault’s conception of biopolitical order and Weber’s iron cage of rationality. As Benhabib insists however such public order is not neutral as it leads “to the silencing of the concerns of certain excluded groups” (Benhabib, 1999: 82). The development of

a common human reason (grounded as a massed public) consequently comes to be identified with the practices of privileged groups (Mignolo, 2009: 160). In recognising the limitations of the liberal social-contract model of the public sphere, Habermas (2006: 13) also draws attention to this uneven distribution of human reason. What is central to this point through Foucault, Benhabib and Taylor is that the recognition of a process where the silencing of some to the advantage of others is one central to a relational geography of religion. In this way, pre-formed political and cultural relations beset the relationship between the religious and the secular (Asad, 2003: 184). There are political processes involved in these struggles to gain access to this understanding of the public sphere. They are not inherent to processes of differentiation.

Deprivatisation is the process whereby religion discards its place in the private sphere and enters the public sphere (Casanova, 1994: 65—66). Deprivatised religion re-enters the normatively constructed public sphere on new terms:

Public interventions of religion in the public sphere...can no longer be viewed simply as antimodern religious critiques of modernity...they are immanent critiques of particular forms of modernity from a modern religious point of view. (Casanova, 1994: 221-2)

The churches that come to be deprivatised are “counterfactual normative critiques of dominant historical trends” (Casanova, 1994: 43). This process of deprivatisation back into the public realm is not a reversal of the processes of secularization. The “voluntary acceptance of disestablishment by the Catholic Church” (Casanova, 1994: 72) and the acceptance of the legitimacy of modern forms of secularization mean that the Catholic Church enters the public realm anew. On its return, it does so as a church moving from being “a state-oriented to a society-oriented institution” (Casanova, 1994: 220). Such churches, in Casanova’s terms, are the most successful public religions in conditions of the liberal, orthodox public sphere. Deprivatisation is not counter-secularisation. It would be wrong to conclude from what I have said so far that the reinsertion of religious discourse into public life in Europe is a counter-secularising process. That would deny the importance of how space and place are produced under deprivatisation. However, the dynamics of this change are not what we might expect were we to apply liberal social-contract notions of the confinement of religious belief to the private sphere.

It has been shown above how the secular can be thought of as a series of self-supporting

political and spatial exclusions. Asad (2003) provides a basis for understanding this *a priori* understanding of the secular:

We do not understand the arrangements I have tried to describe if we begin with the common assumption that the essence of secularism is the protection of civil freedoms from the tyranny of religious discourse, that religious discourse seeks always to end discussion and secularism to create the conditions for its flourishing. (Asad, 2003: 255)

For Asad, only those religions that are willing and able to enter into the public sphere on the right terms will be allowed access. In a secularist framework “only religions that have accepted the assumptions of liberal discourse are being commended” as those that contain “the basis of a distinctive relation between law and morality” (Asad, 2003: 183). For Asad, Casanova’s description of deprivatised religions does not take sufficient account of the claim that *the secular continually produces the religious*. It is important therefore to examine where the secular and the religious are grounded in relation to each other. It helps to avoid the circularity of an *a priori* understanding of the secular. Ali Agrama explains how we can avoid this circularity of the secular, where a “scale of secularity, with the paradigm secular states at its pinnacle, thus sneaks back in” (Agrama, 2010: 500). Confusing the normative for the analytic remains a central contradiction within the liberal, social-contract conception of the public sphere. The state “cannot be other than coercive and exclusionary, taking upon itself the consequential task of enforcing what counts as being truly human” (McLennan, 2010: 5). Tolerance and diversity thus become important means by which the state grounds its power in different places. The collective representations of the secular see “a world of self-authenticating things in which we *really* live as social beings and a religious world that exists only in our imagination” (Asad, 2003: 194). The changing sense of what the public is can be seen as a grounding of political secularism. This is a series of orders and discourses within which religious place making is localised. The state becomes the authority of where, and on what scale, the religious can be grounded and where it cannot.

All of this is as much to state that if religion is returning to the public sphere, it does not do so on its own terms. What Casanova proposes is an analysis of religion in public life where public religion is not coextensive with political or societal communities. This puts the empirical occurrence of disestablishment (a decoupling of national churches from political communities) to work. Casanova moves religions that are deprivatised

away from their co-extensivity with political communities. This allows for a public religion that is “characterized by the public intervention of religion in the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society” (Casanova, 1994: 217). His argument then is that those religions at the level of civil society that are consistent with modern differentiated structures, e.g. polity, media, get to become deprivatised, public religions. It is the understanding of what *being public is* that matters to the current argument.

These understandings of the public, of an individualism supported by state power are present in our families and communities, in legal systems and within Catholic Church administration in Ireland. This is a geography of religion that moves beyond the reservations of the formally religious. Fraser’s (2005) work on the politics of the public sphere outlines this process. A public sphere is not just a way to chart communicative flows (as for Habermas) but is:

A space for the communicative generation of public opinion, in ways that are supposed to assure (at least some degree of) moral-political validity. Thus, it matters who participates and on what terms. (Fraser, 2005)

The codification of laws for how places are made is a further outcome of clearer divisions between the private and the public (De Londras, 2011). Fraser (1999) represents Habermasian public space as existing in this way, being in a dialectical relationship with what is not private. Charting the secular is more than showing declines in confessional, religious practices; it is also a desire for a coherent European Christian identity. Casanova (2004: 90), in addressing some of Asad’s criticisms, frames this desire for coherence well:

The most interesting issue sociologically is not the fact of progressive-religious decline among the European population, but the fact that this decline is interpreted through the lenses of the secularisation paradigm and is therefore accompanied by a ‘secularist’ self-understanding that interprets the decline as ‘normal’ and ‘progressive’, that is, as a quasi-normative consequence of being a ‘modern’ and ‘enlightened’ European. It is this ‘secular’ identity shared by European elites and ordinary people alike that paradoxically turns ‘religion’ and the barely submerged Christian European identity into a thorny and perplexing issue when it comes to delimiting the external geographic boundaries and to defining the internal cultural identity of a European Union.

The “barely submerged Christian European identity” of the over-generalised secular has become naturalised. I am arguing here that the secular is not a position from nowhere; it

cannot be construed as *real* social space. Secular self-understanding is itself a lens through which the European Union produces itself and is continually reproduced on other scales. Theories about secularisation that refuse to acknowledge the spatial exclusion of some cannot work because they desire a universalism; they require an ideal public sphere. In this understanding of the secular, some practices are *made to be* irrational because they cannot be explained by publicly verifiable action. They cannot be reduced to the individualized self. Because there are local complexities and local globalities, the secular must also be locally unfolding, not as an adhered-to abstraction that serves to obscure power relationships (Robinson, 2003: 274-276). This is an understanding of the secular as a political project with defined place making strategies. I carry this approach through to my analysis as a way to bring forward the relational aspects of this changing geography of Ireland. To begin to understand why there are differences between what a church means in *this* city, in *these* suburban and rural settings, a set of ideas about place making is needed that disavows a totalizing epistemology, one that is considerably less than a unified explanatory project.

## Conclusion

As a way to examine the changing geographies of religion in contemporary Ireland, I have outlined a number of points. Firstly, that religious place making takes place within and around churches and temples but also extends beyond the reservations of the religious. Religious place making has a material culture that derives from books and clothing, among other things. This draws the religious into a relationship with what it is not: the secular. Accounts of the changes in the relationship that occur are called secularisation theories. Secondly, I outlined how secularisation theories often take their basis from a subtraction story. This is how a political imaginary called society gradually frees itself from its confining horizons. Religious authority is described as in decline without reference to on-going practice. The creation of individualised subjectivity and an instrumentalism are important in this process. However, secular place making is less a vector of progress and more a way of describing the manner in which places are hybridised.

Finally, I offered three principal qualities of the grounding of religious and secular place making. How distinctions are made and maintained between private and public space is an outcome of particular political formations. The three qualities outlined in the

literature were the emergence of a secular public sphere, the separation of law from morality in this public sphere and the deprivatisation of religion. These are ways to think about contestations between the religious and the secular in the changing geography of religion in Ireland. It is recognition that the secular is a discourse that has particular self-understandings about religion's place in contemporary Europe. The geography of religion in Ireland is a dynamic process of political contestation when it does not begin from an *a priori* understanding of the secular. The public sphere is a space for the generation and development of these discourses of the secular. This allows the productive quality of the geography of religion to be put back into play. A secular imaginary of the public, self-defined and immanent, subsumes the practices and performances of religious place making into the local. It confines the religious to the realm of personal faith. When a global secular is invoked, it is a directly political action, one that has consequences for how the religious is spatialised. In the next chapter, I discuss the methods used to investigate the groundings of the relationship between the secular and the sacred in Ireland.

## 2: Detecting distributed intentions – the methods used to research

### Introduction

In the previous chapter, I noted that a relational geography of religion goes beyond the description and tabulation of religious places. Religious place making involves the making and remaking of identities and a sense of belonging and that this is co-produced alongside the secular. The secular stands in relation to the religious and both are grounded in different spaces, as public and private space. Declining numbers of people attending religious ceremonies signifies a lack of intention. The secular though is more than a loss of massed attendance or lack of intention toward the immaterial. It is people who create and recreate religious and secular places and the material culture that arises from them. The kinds of religious practices and performance that make up the geography of religion in Ireland implies an embodiment. It involves people intending toward objects and others. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology iterates that "the body is a natural self and...the subject of perception" (Merleau-Ponty, 1947: 206), not its object. This expressive unity means that our understandings of the world and of our selves interpenetrate. As expressive unities, our bodies are always with us and so experience of the world cannot take place outside of the body:

My body is the fabric into which all objects are woven, and it is, at least in relation to the perceived world, the general instrument of my 'comprehension'. (Merleau-Ponty, 1947: 235)

In this way, words and meanings in the world are connected to the bodily attitudes that are materialised. The spoken sentence 'There is no need for heating because it is warm enough' makes me appraise what warmth is for me at that point. It is relative to previous bodily understandings of warmth and cold. I need not question individual sensations of warmth or cold in relation to an objective condition but merely in that place. In Merleau-Ponty's terms, sensations are not phases of consciousness, "they are part of the constituted world" (Merleau-Ponty, 1947: 237). To advance a relational geography of religion in Ireland that allows for change, I examine Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological position that the expressive body retains its centrality. I also draw upon the resonances for geography in Lefebvre's spatial architectonics. Each in their

own way, both Merleau-Ponty and Lefebvre contributed to a theory of political action based on *Gestalt*. This is an attempt to overcome a Cartesian dualism where the mind and body are understood as separate ways to interact with the world. For Lefebvre (1991: 200-201), the body produces spaces and associated codes and messages in its practice:

The way for physical space, for the practico-sensory realm, to restore or constitute itself is therefore by struggling against the *ex post facto* projections of an accomplished intellect, against the reductionism to which knowledge is prone.

This stands against the characterisation or active reality of Cartesian legacies of knowledge production. The production of knowledge is not reduced to sensations in external environments. Our actions are not separate from the context, they are inherent in its composition. For both Lefebvre and Merleau-Ponty, we are not inserted in a pre-formed world but rather produce and reproduce this world through spatial practice. How does this aid a method for the investigation of the changing geography of religion in Ireland? In general, a method to examine the practice and performances of religion should resist a reductionism and naturalism. Finding a method that points to the contestations in different places matters. To resist being confined by reductionism and naturalism, I do not pretend to stand back from the religious to offer an objective view on these practices. The general instrument of my comprehension as a researcher is no less embodied than those with whom I spent time on pilgrimage or talked with about their practice. The relational geographies of the religious and the secular means secular place making is an expression of a contestation, not a natural progression out of religion.

## **Intentionality and its distribution**

Withers (2007: 63-76) argues that the practice of doing geography is related to the development of locally situated ideas. For him, to speak of a single Enlightenment is unhelpful because geographic ideas about people in places are the outcome of local processes of knowledge production. In any method used to examine a cultural practice in space therefore, distinctions made between ‘the field’ as external object and the researcher are unhelpful. This reframing constitutes a revision of what fieldwork means as a geographer (Till, 2001: 47). Just as Withers can state that “Enlightenment

knowledge was always the product of specific places” (Withers, 2007: 81), I recognise that the production of geographic knowledge on religious places is the product of specific discursive practices. It is concerned with the specific relationship between the secular and the religious and how they are co-produced in place. My own embodiment has consequences for both a geographer seeking to examine religious behaviours in place and for people embodying those behaviours in place through gesture (Lefebvre, 1991: 216). The embodiment of the religious in particular places bring about a number of points of conflict for research: no two places are the same and yet people embody religious practice in similar ways in different places. I will return to this particular point of conflict again in the final chapter. To accommodate this lack of specificity in religion, Ivakhiv charts a possible way to study religion as an “unstable signifier”. He does this by two means: we must study religions as (1) “ways of distributing significance across geographic spaces, and (2) as involving the distinction of different *kinds* of significance from among those being distributed” (Ivakhiv, 2006: 171). Ivakhiv’s suggestion has consequences for the geographer as researcher and as one who is co-present. He reviews the ways in which sacred space is reorganised, principally how the religious is spatialised because:

Meanings, rather than being imposed onto pre-existing external realities, emerge reciprocally with landscapes, cultures, and practices in dynamic historical constellations that, far from being semiotically flat homogeneous surfaces, turn out to be spread in thick layers that are heterogeneous all the way down. (Ivakhiv, 2006: 172)

Religious space is not homogeneous empty space, waiting to be filled with significance. To see religious space as empty space confers a power upon the secular, where the subtraction of religion means secularisation. Secularisation as a subtraction story means extracting both the religious and the secular from the relations they arise from. It is as if the secular is a loss from the perceived ideal of religiosity *into a new place*. As discussed in the opening chapter, the understanding of the secular as a subtraction story is often territorialised to the modern nation-state. Later in the same paper, Ivakhiv states that sacred space is territorialized and reterritorialized but these processes are discursive formations, not natural occurrences. Religious place making is the reorganisation of space around “this-worldly forms of desire” (Ivakhiv, 2006: 171). In this, his analysis has some parallels with that of Asad: he takes the secular to be a discursive political formation. In Ivakhiv’s frame for example, commercial opportunities available in and around pilgrimage sites are better thought of as typical for these places, not the irruption

of the secular world. On a site of Christian pilgrimage, the stand selling figurines and juice for thirsty pilgrims is no less religious because they too are “products of human labour” (Ivakhiv, 2006: 172). They are produced spaces. Being co-present with others points to the ways in which these forms and significance across places are distributed. In this manner, there is a politics to mapping the religious across spaces. Firstly, being co-present as a researcher necessarily requires my own representations of a politics of people in place. Secondly, distinguishing between kinds of significance means acknowledging the unique but similar embodiments of practices in their distribution. How does this relate to my own practice as a researcher?

## Methodological approach

In conducting research into religious practices in particular places, I cannot remain separated from the embodiment of these practices. I feel as one who is co-present. A pure and self-sufficient knowledge, evacuated of its objects and subjects is not possible (Lefebvre, 1991: 296) in this perspective. The social and the cultural can never be reduced to the formally mental, mediated as it is by my interests, the time dedicated to my research practice (and reflection upon it) and my pre-existing relationship to the sites of practice. I do not consider it a deficiency in the methods that my own cultural and spatial familiarity to the practices is present. I want to demonstrate that geographies of religion in relation to the secular are enhanced by the embodiment of the practice of geography and of similar religious practice *as an expressive unity*. The practice of geography cannot be realised through a detachment from sensation, least of all for a relational geography of religion. There is no closed vessel of critical knowledge known as geography. Practices, gestures and objects in space are not just things but relations, pointing to work in space:

Each work occupies a space: it also engenders and fashions that space. Each product too occupies a space, and circulates within it. (Lefebvre, 1991: 77)

This use of recursive methodologies to study the geography of religion is a defined part of my approach. The representation of the smells, sights and sounds of religious practice in place is not a way of filling ‘empty’ geographical, political or social space. Recalling Massey’s exhortation to see space as a “present [that] is not an achieved terminus” (Massey, 2005: 137), I do not wish to try to hold religion still, fixed in one place, determinable by its characteristics at one point in time-space. Formally distinguishing

the religious from the secular becomes an act of specific forms of activity in such spaces and times (Ivakhiv, 2006: 172) and is a political act. Holding the religious as a static form of time and space is part of a wider politics of cutting the secular off from the religious. This has implications for how my own empirical work was conducted.

I outline three forms of religious practice in space as a means through which to point to the relationship between the religious and the secular within Irish contexts. They point to how religious place making occurs in Ireland and more broadly. Each of them raises questions about how specific practices are grounded as public space and private space. These forms of practice represent different groundings of 'being religious' in Ireland. Relating micropolitical religious spatial expressions to broader processes is an easier task when the method reflects the relationship between the religious and the secular. As made clear in the previous chapter, they are not the entirety of the changing geography of religion in Ireland. They are three depictions of the discursive processes involved in recognising the secular in the sacred. The relationship between the religious and the secular become more permeable when they are grounded as an embodied practice. How these boundaries are drawn is an outcome of the distinction between the sacred and the secular, i.e. not as preformed spaces into which the geographer of religion can place practices. The process of boundary maintenance itself then becomes the subject of a more critical interrogation. More than this though, these ways of embodying the religious show how the religious and the secular are spatialised in political ways.

These three depictions are dealt with in some detail in the three empirical chapters. The data are collected in different ways, depending on the context. They come from different sources and are in need of a depth which choosing one method would have. In the argument laid out already, I provide a criticism of large-scale social surveys. Little would be gained by surveying another representative sample to test the idea that the secular stands in relation to the religious. By choosing a variety of methods, the research design places emphasis on the accretion of different kinds of data. Each part of the research design, when combined, gives a breadth to the project. In the sections that follow, I briefly discuss the advantages and limitations of each part of the research design. In combination, these parts provide a rigorous way in which the secular and the religious are found in relation to each other across different contexts. Each of the contexts in turn required a different method to be employed. No one method on its own could have yielded the information I sought.

Firstly, I examine the siting, maintenance and history of Marian statues in residential areas of Dublin city. These are decades-old sites of devotion, most of which are maintained to the present day. They remain in place on nominally public land, maintained through specific sets of meanings in these places. They are rarely defaced as other nominally public places are and their re-placement after a neighbourhood's renovation is uncontentious. They are rarely contested sites of Catholic religious practice in public.

Secondly, I look at the performance of pilgrimage at three sites in Ireland. Pilgrimage is a vital part of many formal religious practices and in the literature, it is often distinguished from forms of tourism. Pilgrimage is not seen as a leisure pursuit. The performance of pilgrimage at these places in Ireland retains a popularity that is largely acceptable in public, albeit arguably more contentious than most forms of privatised religious practice. The geographies of pilgrimage in Ireland tell us something about the contestations that arise between the religious and the secular as discourses. Thirdly, I examine the changing provision of primary schools in Ireland through an analysis of policy documents and newspaper reports. The vast majority of Irish primary schools are under the patronage of a Catholic bishop and yet are maintained financially by public taxation. From 2010 to 2012, the schools became the objects of an on-going political contestation as sites of religious catechesis. Caught between being local resources and national political imperatives, the primary schools show the relationship between the micropolitics of religious expression and other political processes of change.

The divisions between what is private and public space are made less clear if one examines these particular geographies of religion in contemporary Ireland. What is public is the site of political contestation over how religious places are made. The divisions are ways of seeing how the practice of the religious and the secular in Ireland are not natural processes. Political closure and the relegation of some forms of Catholic practice points to a contested relationship between the religious and the secular. Rather than seeing public religion as something monolithic, religious practice is spatialised one way in some places and another elsewhere.

## Notes on positionality

I wish to address briefly my position within the process of researching these practices. I was baptised a Roman Catholic in a country with a majority Catholic population. This Catholic majority population was positioned within a conflict for an incomplete republican nationalist project since 1922. I was confirmed as a Catholic in early adolescence. My formal education from ages four to eighteen was within schools operated by Catholic religious orders. I was raised in a family at a time when the principal issues following the emergence of New Right politics in the US were transposed to Ireland. I am not, as is popularly termed, a practicing Catholic in that I do not routinely attend to the rites of the faith I was raised in. I have little understanding of what it means to have a religious faith but likewise I struggle with the idea that being human is entirely amenable to self-knowledge. It is in the relationships with each other that we realise the human. My attendance at rituals associated with my fieldwork is mediated by this previous understanding of Catholicism, outside of which I cannot place myself. Over the course of some of my work in the field, I found myself dredging memories for the form of this prayer or that hymn.



**Plate 2.1: Extract from notes at a work meeting.**

I became interested in the geography of religion through my employment as a social researcher for the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Conference is the administrative structure for Roman Catholic bishops on the island of Ireland. The Conference has had a research function since 1973, which helps to support the corporate work of the Catholic bishops and dioceses in Ireland. (That a need for a research unit arose in the 1970s is of note, but not dealt with here.) I applied for a job advertisement

as researcher and was employed by them in 2006. While the job has pension rights, a decent leave entitlement and a safe working environment, I work in a building alongside others, in a space denominated by some as religious. My workplace is situated in a building formerly used as an infirmary for Ireland's (and once the world's) largest Catholic seminary. Mass is celebrated daily, pictures of Jesus teaching decorate the walls of meeting rooms and orthodox roles for clerical staff and lay remain in place. In short, many work meetings I attend begin with a prayer. While I do not begin data collection with people in focus groups with an appeal to the Holy Spirit, some of the places that I work in and the people I work with understand that this is important. Such practices helped me to disentangle my preconceptions of religious faith from examining it as cultural practice in space. I began asking myself if the rooms we met in were religious spaces. As the agenda of a meeting progressed, were the participants still blessed by God? Was the conversation about the latest TV series over lunch? It is from here that my interest in what constitutes secular and sacred places arose.

As I conducted my work for the Conference, it became clear that much discussion of religion and secularisation in Ireland was a 'thin' version of religion. Uses of terms like 'the secular', 'the faith' and religion remain largely unexamined in mass media and within the Conference itself. Neither the Conference as a workplace or the worlds that I encounter is separate from each other. I expressed this at the time as some process that makes religious faith to be made less politically significant. But this only occurs in some ways, surely determinable by a research project of some kind. This differential between places was made clear in work projects concerned with changing models of children's educational provision and in reactions to state-sponsored reports on clerical child sex abuse. How these places are produced and reproduced became interesting to me. At the same time, Church commentators spoke interchangeably of secularisation, secularism and how Catholic action can be seen as a bulwark against such processes. Undeniably, my work represents a way of being in the world that is bisected by many people's views of the Catholic Church as a multinational institution and as a powerful organisation within Irish cultural life.

Within the Catholic Church in Ireland there are conservatives and radicals, pietists and community activists, reactionaries and visionaries. I had to move from a position whereby I viewed the Catholic Church as composed of bishops, priests, sisters of communities and congregations to one where I see it as communities of people coming

together to worship through a historically justifiable hierarchy of being. This required a perceptual shift on my part. The former is a theological model put into place in Ireland and elsewhere since the middle of the nineteenth century. Some have asked me why there is no anti-clerical politics in Ireland; the answer I suspect might have more to do with geography than is commonly assumed. The Catholic Church is neither a community of people nor a hierarchy of ordained kings and princes. Above all, I have learned that there is no neutral position from which to examine Catholicism in Ireland.

When making initial contact with people with whom I wished to speak about Marian statues or pilgrimage experience, I did not inform them of my employment with the Catholic Bishops' Conference. To do so would have created the expectation that this may have been part of that work and that their understanding of their faith was being tested in some fashion. One of the outcomes of the long nineteenth century of Irish Catholicism (which might be said to have lasted from 1833 to 1970) is a model of being Catholic which relied on the surveillance of bodies by ordained and professed agents of the Church (Inglis, 1998; Taylor, 1995; Hynes, 2009). To avoid as much of this as possible, I did not inform people of my employment. Some of the people I spoke with in the course of my research or who provided accounts of pilgrimage would have been aware of my employment through online networks. At the same time, work that I have conducted on behalf of my employers has had a significant influence on my examination of changing models of educational provision. In 2008 and 2010, I carried out two substantial pieces of research on parental understandings of educational patronage in Ireland. Data derived for these projects will be referred to directly but no part of the conduct of these projects is being used for this thesis.

Finally, I want to note that my employers have financially supported a portion of this work through contributions to fees. My research benefits them to the extent that my examination and discussion of primary schools is intended to assist in a broader examination of changing models of provision in Irish local communities. At no time have I been asked to alter the content or method of investigation by anyone connected with my employment. The NUI Maynooth Social Research Ethics Sub-committee, following a small number of clarifications, approved the research programme in autumn 2011.

## Dublin's Marian statues

I have identified twenty four sites in the Dublin metropolitan area where statues of Mary, the mother of Jesus, are located. I have also identified three sites with a statue of the sacred heart of Jesus present. Almost all of these are placed within residential areas and form a centrepiece of (or a significant placing within) of open green space. As far as I can tell, this is almost the full complement of Catholic religious statues in the Dublin city area. The next chapter will outline the details of these sites and statues, their form and historical context. At this point, I wish to outline the basis for my research of these sites and its conduct. The method of investigation I used involved three distinct parts: collecting photographs and notes gathered at each site for landscape interpretation, consulting archival records about the sites and mapping.

Photographic representation has a long tradition in physical geography but is not as well established in human, and more particularly in cultural, geography. In the social sciences more generally, review boards and other legitimating organisations have been slow to adopt visual methods as a valid means by which to gather evidence. Institutional review boards and others have consequently drawn attention to the ethical considerations involved (Harper, 2005: 759) in photographing people in everyday situations. Geographies of physical landscapes and historical geographies have been unproblematically photographed sites for many years. As Lorimer (2003: 206) has pointed out however, the sensitive use of photography in demonstrating to others the detail of cultural practice has been dependent upon the availability of appropriate technology. This project does not involve a deconstruction of the photographs taken at each site. Instead the photographs taken are used to interpret the statues in their placement and form. The statues have not been catalogued in this manner before.

The ease of reproduction and relatively low cost of digital photography since the middle of the 1990s has blurred the boundaries between the private and the public. As Van House (2011: 128) has noted, the increasingly public nature of personal images has developed alongside the proliferation of more widely available technologies. In addition, as Brennan (2011) has emphasised, the ease with which images can be recorded has commodified a “future nostalgia for the present” where people record events on phones and cameras with the intention of showing them on some future date and looking back. During attendance at a summer school organised at NUI Maynooth, I

photographed (Plate 2.2) a statue of Our Lady of Fatima in the refurbished community centre at a residential area at Reuben Street, formerly known as Fatima Mansions.



**Plate 2.2: Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, Reuben Street (formerly Fatima Mansions), Dublin, in storage.**

I had worked in 2000 in this area before its refurbishment had commenced and noticed a Marian statue in a grotto against one of the high walls that the housing estate was then surrounded by. Now, in 2010 and with a very different interest in the statues of Dublin, I asked to be taken by our contact into the basement of the community centre where he showed me the statue. I followed this up a week later with a conversation with some community development workers. As O'Neill and Hubbard (2010: 52) have pointed out, features of a landscape can be become new following their pointing out by others for whom that feature attains significance:

[I]t was not simply registering the significance of landmarks or buildings for different communities that was crucial here, as walking encouraged a focus on detail, with normally mundane, ignored and relict features of the streetscape having considerable capacity to affect.

I noticed the statue as a significant marker in the area in 2010, but it held little significance for me in 2000. This prompted me to ask: why had I barely noticed this in 2000 and yet it formed a point for research ten years later? The focus on the detail in Reuben Street could now be easily photographed. This had consequences for how I gathered the remaining data.

Later in June of that year, I photographed a small number of Marian statues at sites that had become obvious to me. By gathering the evidence for this part of the project in this way, I was trying to understand some spatial relationship between the sites. I placed these pictures on the online photographic site *Flickr* because I wanted friends and others to comment on them, to use it as a resource to store my photos and relate the statue sites with each other. By placing them online in this way and asking other people to comment, the accretion of these photos is ‘mine’ only in the sense I took the majority of them (a small proportion was sent to me by others). Taking their photograph does not change them as features in a landscape as they persist in those places; their meaning to others and me does. Subsequent to their placement online, friends remarked to me how they had not previously noticed them before in these places but now they became salient. This was a gradual and iterative process in conjunction with other people. When I told people about my research, some let me know that they noticed one recently. All of the statue sites are in places accessible to almost everyone. However there is one additional quality of this initial photographic process that draws attention to the nature of their everyday qualities.

The statues remained largely hidden to me (and others) until such time as I wished to place them. The initial 130 or so images taken at fourteen separate sites were encoded with XY coordinates through my phone’s GPS software. Following this first set of visits, I revisited the sites and took notes as to their placement, the approximate heights, and their position relative to other features and any interactions I had. The everyday nature for those in these places became my object of study: they emerged from the landscape. As O’Neill and Hubbard remark (2010: 52) in their study of co-walking and memory, “the tendency for the environment to routinely provoke such moments and encounters allowed co-walkers to explore biographical issues”. Connecting what counted as here and there for these researchers during their research is also reflected in my own data collection process: a small number of people stopped and talked with me when they saw me taking photographs or taking notes near the statue site. In this way, I

am drawn into a relationship with others as part of the research. At this stage, I began asking questions about to what extent this research is my own. By taking the photographs and interpreting the landscape, I am gathering information for myself. But by talking with other people who see me conduct these activities (standing away from the statues and pointing with cameras), the information I am seeking to gather can only be produced in relation with others. These religious places, nominally on public land, are co-produced with others. Their investigation as sites of sacred significance is no less co-produced.

I did not intend to use the display of photographs to elicit memories or a broader narrative discussion brought about by their display (Rose-Redwood et al., 2008: 162). Instead I found that the act of taking notes and photographs for the interpretation of the sites brought about casual conversations. The co-production of these sites helped me to understand that it is not the statues themselves that are valuable but how people continue to relate to them, and with others. If people spoke with me it was to let me know where there were others nearby. In this sense the various parts of the statue fieldwork are intertwined. The three parts involved building up a picture of each site and relating them to build a landscape of Marian statues that had not previously existed, except in conversation. Later in 2010 and in 2011, I returned with my digital SLR camera to take more detailed photographs of all twenty seven sites.

In Appendix A, I tabulate the sites, their approximate location, the type of statue and the year of its dedication, if known. By tabulating them, I am, to some extent, creating a landscape of Dublin's Marian statues that diminishes the specificity at each place. In Appendix B, I have produced a map of the twenty seven sites across Dublin. This scaled representation of the statues acts as if it gives a bird's eye view of the sites. I did wonder if mapping them in this way makes any sense to each of the sites individually. A more detailed examination of these sites and the stories they yielded is presented in the following chapter.

Finally, I conducted some archival work at the Dublin City Archive. The purpose of this work was to try and identify a planning process for the installation of these statues. I wanted to know if appeals had been made to the Council about their erection or provision over this time. I examined Dublin City Council meeting minutes for the period 1930 to 1955. This period spanned the Eucharistic Congress of 1932, a period of

intense Catholic fervour and logistical preparation in Dublin as well as the lead up to the Marian year of 1954. Over this period, no mention is made of the statues' erection, planning or placement in the minutes of the Council. There is a small number of references to how preparations for the 1932 event should be paid for and if the Council is willing to cover some costs. However, there is no application by a residents group or parish group minuted by the Council. Evidently, the erection of the statues was not a formal concern of the meetings of the Council. These various means of data collection helped me to build an understanding about how public space is defined in Ireland. I used different ways to do this and each has their limitation. In particular, the archival work that I did was limited to official Council minutes in a specific time frame. Some official determination about the statues' placement may have been done and not recorded in the minutes directly.

The mapping of the landscape of the Marian statues of Dublin city engaged members of the public in a way that I had not expected. However, I did not record consistent data about the statues at each site, e.g. elevation, height, aspect. Because the research project was not specifically about the statues, I felt at an early stage that their cataloguing in various places across Dublin was sufficient.

## **Pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage at specific sites in Ireland involves bus drivers, merchandise vendors, parish coordinators, personal assistants to the disabled, parking attendants, broadcasters, shop owners, sometimes protestors, and pilgrims. While the religious part of the pilgrimage might be obvious to someone seeking the religious at a pilgrimage site, why would the experience of those for whom their comprehension of the scene is pilgrimage not also be included in the geographies of religion? In Ivakhiv's (2006: 173) terms:

[The] geography of religion cannot avoid dealing with any of these dimensions, in part because they affect the very meaning of "religion" and the changes it is and has been undergoing.

Any discussion of pilgrimage is often hidebound by a heightened concern for what is the religiously-motivated journey and what is the performativity associated with tourism. However, as discussed above, the features in a landscape are made more salient by the questions asked of it at particular times. And so it is with me and pilgrimage: I

had been walking across Ireland's hills and mountain paths for about ten years before asking geographically-specific questions. During my hill walking, it became clear to me that many people walking in the same direction toward a similar goal, usually a picturesque pass or peak, may have echoes of what might be pilgrimage. Hill walking, like pilgrimages, shares some characteristics: a journey made on foot toward some goal, with some level of physical exertion. A relationship with particular geomorphological forms was not just the consumption of a view, sought by alienated city workers on the weekend. It was a practice in space oriented toward a specific goal, not always agreed upon and often mediated by others' practices. The motivation for some was perhaps spiritual, if not religious, but I did know myself the embodied experience of viewing the peak ahead, knowing that sense of when to (negotiate to) stop to eat and being tired back at the car.

Methodologically, it is difficult to justify a separation between the practices of a tourist and a pilgrim. Digance (2006) notes some of these difficulties particularly around definitions of pilgrimage as a spiritual quest. She distinguishes between two groups of modern secular pilgrims: those who "claim traditional religious meaning" and those who can be "grouped under the broad 'New Age' banner" (2006: 37-41). Notwithstanding this distinction, she does admit that spirituality is often seen as the preserve of a formally known religion. Religious place making does not always occur on religious reservations. The experience where 'something special' occurs is often how these moments are characterised and this is resonant with Kong's (2001) appeal for a poetics of place, alongside its politics. Institutionalised religions cannot preserve the integrity of pilgrimage experiences because they are often experienced bodily in conjunction with others. As will be seen in chapter four, pilgrimage is a liminal practice as Turner & Turner (2011) have characterised it but the embodiment at particular sites is not easily controlled by institutional religions.

My research on pilgrimage consisted of two principal parts. Firstly, I engaged in participant observation at three sites to adequately record and attribute meaning to pilgrimage practice. As a set of practices at these three sites of pilgrimage my method might be loosely described as an ethnography of pilgrimage. I took extensive notes of my experiences of these sites, photographs at two of them and I recorded video and audio at one. Secondly, I sought narratives from people who had taken part in pilgrimage in Ireland. This was an attempt to understand the ways in which people think

about pilgrimage themselves and to codify the narratives. Through participant observation in the pilgrimage itself, I have made an attempt to faithfully record the sights and sounds of the sites and associated practices. It also meant that I interacted with people at these sites. This was often on the basis that they were not formal interviews. This has attendant risks as pointed out by Hammersley & Atkinson (1995: 140) including a tendency to only hold certain kinds of conversation in particular contexts. This can limit the understanding of these sites as distinctive. This is an acknowledged limitation of this part of my research design. However, my own participation was aided by these interactions and made me reflect upon how it was that I was sometimes a pilgrim and sometimes a researcher. The three sites that I have researched and presented are:

1. Lough Derg, Co. Donegal
2. Our Lady's Island, Co. Wexford
3. Croagh Patrick, Co. Mayo

Two of these are particularly well known sites of pilgrimage in Ireland with the Wexford site being less well known. At two of the three sites, I augmented the participation observation with photographic representation of the sites. At Lough Derg photography is prohibited for the duration of the pilgrimage. These sites offer a variety of pilgrimage experiences and practices and point to a number of salient and already-known features of pilgrimage in Europe. I conducted some fieldwork in Spain while walking on a portion of the Camino de Santiago. However, the account did not fit well with the Irish examples and would have required a chapter of its own. I wish to use each of these methodological approaches to draw out an understanding of pilgrimage that is not always institutionally governed. As public places, most pilgrimage sites are amenable to all but the places are made insignificant by their continued use outside of formal contexts. As a significant place of cultural and social practice, a pilgrimage site is both personal and relational but it provides an opportunity to rethink what the religious means geographically. The changing geography of religions in Ireland is evident in the approach taken by some people at some of the sites and very defined ways to make a place religious at other sites. As a very public expression of something religious, pilgrimage is a practice understood as relatively uncontentious. Tens of thousands undertake it in Ireland every year but little attention is paid to this particular set of spatial practices in broader political contexts.

At Lough Derg, I undertook the three day pilgrimage at which fasting takes place and overnight penitential exercises are conducted on an island in a lake. A pilgrimage to Lough Derg is undertaken as a distinct journey out of ordinary time. As I will outline in chapter four, despite its rigours, Lough Derg’s pilgrimage is a way to understand place making as both religious and secular. In Our Lady’s Island, visited twice in two years, I took photographs of the performance of pilgrimage, noted the sights and sounds and undertook the journey around the site itself. I recorded short fragments of video and some audio commentary of the pilgrimage. These were principally aids to memory of the experience. The Wexford pilgrimage is a less arduous undertaking but how the place is reproduced through a distinct pilgrimage season draws out its relational qualities. At Croagh Patrick, I spent three days walking toward the foot of the mountain along the route of an old railway line. I gathered photographic evidence of the pilgrimage on the one day dedicated to mass pilgrimage up and down the 764 metre high mountain.

Secondly, the fieldwork I carried out on pilgrimage sought to elicit how others understand and represent pilgrimage through written a written. This involved designing and distributing a postcard summarising my project, providing contact details and eliciting pilgrimage accounts. I also placed a summary of my work and my interest in pilgrimage in the pastoral magazine of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference, *Intercom*. The intention was to learn how people represented their journey recalled after their pilgrimage. From these narratives I might detect an underlying structure of what the place means for their own pilgrimage practice (Feldman, 1995: 21-30). These postcards contained the text below (Plate 2.3) on one side and a *Creative Commons* photograph of Croagh Patrick on the other. An attractive picture of a known pilgrimage site, I thought, would elicit some response from pilgrims.

<p>My name is Eoin O'Mahony and I am a doctoral student at the National University of Ireland Maynooth. I am investigating experiences of pilgrimage in Ireland and in Spain. I would like your help with this research. You can write to me about your personal experience on pilgrimage. You can write as little or as much as you want. Thank you for your help, which is voluntary.</p>	<p>Anything you send to me will be transcribed and included in my thesis (and some academic publications). Your name or any other identifying details will not be used in any of these publications. After that, these transcriptions will be kept on a secure computer only I have access to for five years. The principal supervisor is Prof. Mark Boyle at the Department of Geography, NUI Maynooth.</p>
<p><b>Postal address:</b>  Eoin O'Mahony  Department of Geography, NUI Maynooth  Maynooth  Co Kildare  Ireland</p> <p><b>Email address:</b> eoin.omahony.2010@nuim.ie</p>	

**Plate 2.3: Pilgrimage Site Research postcard text**

In all, I distributed three hundred double-sided postcards at the three sites. After visiting the three sites of pilgrimage, four people made contact subsequently. Two of these responses were by email and two by written letter. At Croagh Patrick I distributed these cards just below the first statue; in Our Lady's Island I distributed the cards near the coach and car park. (See chapter 4 for a description of these sites.) The choice of the locations for distribution took on greater significance in terms of my own conception of my role as a participant and as a researcher. At the Croagh Patrick site, I was at a place between the main car park and the first statue that was thronged with pilgrims and other visitors. It was Reek Sunday, the last Sunday in July, which is the day that tens of thousands take the mountain to climb it. I ensured to place myself before other stands handing out religious items and cold drinks. I did this because I did not want to be seen as handing out religious booklets or leaflets, like the nearby Legion of Mary and a US evangelical group. A man opposite was handing out rosary beads to pilgrims and others and I moved a little away from him because I did not want to be included in the same group by those passing.

At the Wexford site, I distributed the postcards at the coach parking bays on the main road between the pilgrimage site and the parish church. I felt that if I stood near the coaches I would hand people the card as they exited the pilgrimage site. To stand closer, within the boundary wall, to the pilgrimage site itself would intrude upon the devotions taking place. I want to return to this self-placement later but for now, I want to draw attention to my reflexivity as a practitioner at these sites. In particular, the Our Lady's Island pilgrimage was being led by one of the Catholic bishops of the Conference but I felt that I should maintain a distance so as not to negatively influence the research experience. Finally, at Lough Derg, I took a smaller number of postcards with me to distribute more discreetly and personally. Over the course of the three days on the island, I met and spoke with people, mostly on a one to one basis. Over the course of the first day I did not have an opportunity to introduce the project to anyone. After I got to know people a little better, I tentatively told some of them about my research project and asked them if they would participate. Individually people seemed interested in my research.

From these narratives, I wanted to see if there was any underlying structure to how people make places of pilgrimage meaningful to them. I saw any of these contributions

as co-authored. This is in two senses: the accounts provided are related to other people in interactions during the pilgrimage and they are accretions of formal social scientific data, a co-production with me as a pilgrim and as a geographer. In this sense I am using the text to augment my own experience of pilgrimage. However, as Chase (2005: 656-7) has pointed out, because narrative is “retrospective meaning making – the shaping or ordering of past experience” it organises objects and events into a whole. As such, time and space are ordered to frame the experience in the way that the contributor wishes it to be. In the framework that I provided to them the settings, contexts and personalities involved are within the control of the contributor, knowing that they are providing something for someone writing a thesis. Belhassan et al.’s (2008: 684) conceptual framework of theoplacity, the analysis of the authenticity of pilgrim experiences through a dialogue of place, belief and action (Belhassan et al., 2008: 669, 685), is of use. For them, authenticity in pilgrims’ experience is assured through geopiety (after Tuan, 1974):

If piety is defined as one’s desire to perform acts guided by one’s religious worldview, then geopiety is a cognitive and emotional attachment to a sacred place that is based on one’s faith or values. (Belhassan et al., 2008: 684)

They argue that existential authenticity and pilgrims’ experiences of it are the result of pilgrims’ understandings of the places (Belhassan, et al., 2008: 685). In their study of pilgrims to the Holy Land (Palestine / Israel) the authenticity of the experience is bound by the political dispensation in this place; geopiety is influenced by conditions in the places visited and not just the beliefs of those people who go on pilgrimage. Those who have contributed to this part of my research know this too which is why place making experiences at Croagh Patrick takes on one form of significance but Lough Derg quite another. This difference of approach at various sites of pilgrimage is central to my understanding of the relational geography of the religious and relating it to other processes. By distributing the same postcard at all three sites, I am using a method which homogenises pilgrimage experience and, like mapping the statues, I am assuming that the contexts are broadly the same. This is a limitation to this part of the research design, particularly with a low response rate. There were, however, only a handful of responses to the postcard that I distributed. I will return to this, and its failure as a method, in more detail in chapter six.

## **The politics of primary schools in the Republic of Ireland**

The third part of the research work that I have conducted involves an analysis of newspapers and policy documents of both the Department of Education and Skills and the Catholic Bishops' Conference. I have collated national newspaper articles over a three year period from 2010 to 2012. These newspaper articles reflect mainstream views on the role of the Catholic Church, and religious institutions more generally, in the provision of primary education in Ireland. Additionally, I reviewed recent developments in the provision of primary education in Ireland, in particular the report of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism. This was to investigate the geopolitical implications of this form of the relationship between the secular and the religious. Transpositions of an orthodox private-public dichotomy do not serve the complex spatial relations from which religious place making in these schools arises. This is influenced by the work that Casanova (1994) conducted on the deprivatisation of public religions in four contexts. Through this analysis of the discourse of primary education, I examine what is the emergent geography of the public and private in Ireland. I wanted to excavate the understandings of the secular as a process that can be enhanced through schools; as a grounding of a particular way of thinking about the secular public sphere. In public understandings of Church / state relations, primary schools have a particular significance but what is often present is the sense that local place does not matter in that significance. Religious place making in primary schools goes to the heart of contestations over community and citizenship in Ireland. Yet the politics of place are often erased in discourses on primary education by abstract conceptions of a system.

Casanova (1994) provides four country-based examples of the deprivatisation of religion in the public sphere. This is underpinned by a discussion of institutional autonomy and the incompatibility of established churches with a differentiated state (Casanova, 1994: 212-3). He wishes to show that the differential rate of secularisation processes is not a "modern structural trend but, rather, a historical option" (Casanova, 1994: 215). I argue here that it is not just a historical option but a geographical one too. The definably religious, the public sphere and privatisation are not universal goods but the result of discursive, open-ended practices arising from spatial differences and very distinct, geographically-bound, discourses. In the changing relationships between the Irish state and the Catholic Church, these discursive formations are evident. The

relationship between the religious and the secular is brought out through an examination of these newspaper and policy reports.

In chapter five, the report of the *Advisory Body of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector* (2012) and two documents published by the Catholic Schools Partnership are examined. The bulk of the discourse analysis is conducted on newspaper reports on the subject of patronage and changing provision. A search on the online database *ProQuest* using the string 'patronage<AND>school' during the period 01/01/2010 to 31/12/2012 on the *Irish Times* archive yielded 71 results. A similar search using the online *Irish Newspaper Archive* on the *Irish Independent* yielded 88 results. Local newspapers were not researched. In all, 33 newspaper reports were extracted from two these two national newspaper titles over this three year period. This is not an exhaustive search for particular terms, merely a survey of journalism on 'patronage' and 'school'. During 2011, the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism was announced by the Department of Education & Skills and began its work later that year. In addition, teachers' unions generally hold their annual conferences in the months of March and April meaning that commentary on educational issues are more frequent in this period. These newspaper reports (30) and press releases (3) reflect and frame the changing relations between the state's response to a defined need (diversity, resultant from reports on clerical sexual abuse etc.) and the deprivatisation of the Catholic Church more generally.

It is not that the schools are moving from being wholly private to being public. The degree to which the primary schools are becoming public is changing and part of this process can be partially explained by Casanova's thesis. Primary schools in Ireland are linked with the institutional Catholic Church. However, if the relationship between that church and the rest of society is changing, how is that change evident? Can these changes be thought of as part of a process of deprivatisation? That schools are represented as reflecting the wishes of parents locally is the vestigial remains of the patronage model established in the 1830s. While public discourse remains embedded within the 'ownership' of schools, the political meaning of the school in broader contestations of the role of the Church in society has been altered. Primary schools are unofficially sacred sites (Kong, 2005a) as they are beyond the reservation of the religious institution. They are therefore not amenable to an analysis based on religious belief moving from public to a private sphere, as a traditional secularisation process

would have it. They are part of a relational geography where the secular is related to the religious but grounded in a different sense of public than that seen on pilgrimage and for the statues.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	
2010			1								1		2
2011	3	1	2	7	2	1	1			1	4	2	24
2012	1	1		3			1			1			7

**Table 2.1: Distribution of newspaper articles under review**

The table above shows the distribution of the newspaper articles in the period under review. The bulk of the newspaper report on patronage and schools appeared in 2011. The second table shows the number of articles from the two newspapers chosen for the analysis. The Other category is composed of press releases from the Catholic Church in Ireland and other organisations. Over this period (2010 to 2012) public discourse on the role of churches on primary education was contested by a small number of individual organisations and commentators asked to respond to the Forum’s report.

	Occurrence
<i>The Irish Times</i>	24
<i>The Irish Independent</i>	6
Others	3

**Table 2.2: Source for articles under review**

This is a limited amount of data but by drawing these data out at such a critical time for primary school development allows for an analysis of official policy in conjunction with its public representation. Through this analysis, I hope to demonstrate that the Irish primary school is a physical site with a number of meanings. The scalar qualities of these sites are often seen as a key battleground in broader process of secularisation. I want to argue that the primary school has moved from being a local resource to being re-spatialised through understandings of citizenship, rights and civil society. By arguing this, it points to the changing geography of religion in Ireland where some practices and spaces are contested while others remain uncontested. As will become clear, primary schools represent a particular way that I want to understand the relationship between the

religious and the secular. Beginning with an *a priori* definition of the religious results in an unproductive analysis of both secular and religious place making. Butler (2008: 2) points to the politicised ways in which this occurs as competing minorities:

[T]he problem is not that there are different temporalities in different cultural locations...the distinct and wholistic [*sic*] framing for each of these so-called 'communities' and then poses an artificial question about how they might overcome their tensions. Rather, the problem is that certain notions of relevant geopolitical space - including the spatial boundedness of minority communities - are circumscribed by this story of a progressive modernity; certain notions of what 'this time' can and must be are similarly construed on the basis of circumscribing the 'where' of its happening.

By examining these discourses of the secular, I want to avoid configurations of secular change based on the assumption that whatever works 'there' works equally 'here' too. In this configuration, Ireland will become secular like France, the UK etc. but for the passage of sufficient amounts of time. This way of relating the secular to the religious reproduces secular as a subtraction story that was outlined in the first chapter. It is an understanding of the secular as an escape from the confining bounds of the religious. It does not account for the kinds of changing geographies of religion in Ireland today.

The analysis presented in this chapter will arise from themes drawn from these policy and newspaper reports over the period 2010, 2011 and 2012. Such an informal approach is best suited to where text analysis is not a central part of the overall thesis but is supplementary to it (Peräkylä, 2005: 870). The analysis of the discourse presented in these texts allows for a broader reading beyond individual discussions about this report on institutional abuse or the role of that priest in a school. In particular, I want to work outward from the idea that these texts show the unequal power relationships that exist and how power over who can say what is reproduced over time (Peräkylä, 2005: 871). Such an examination of these relationships uncover some crucial features of the geopolitics of primary schooling in Ireland and in particular, how the relationship between the secular and the religious is grounded in Ireland as distinct from other places.

By concentrating on the years 2011 to 2013 (from approximately the publication of report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse to the publication of the report on patronage and pluralism), the devices used to frame the secular and the religious can be

determined (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005: 829). Individual intentionality toward venerated objects, as I will show in the next chapter, is not of great significance in understanding this way of being secular. Instead it is the “close and systematic analytic attention to the *structures* of action” (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005: 829) that is important. The discourses produced and reproduced through the representation of primary schools reveal the changing geographies of religion in relation to the secular. They are presented as open-ended and dynamic.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have advanced the idea that the embodiment of religious practice is a discursive process. Following Lefebvre, I have tried to show how this has consequences for both the theorisation of the religious as well as what kinds of methods are best deployed when researching the geography of religion. Above all, I have presented the idea that the religious is grounded in embodied social relations *in place* and is related to groundings of the secular. Any method must take into account the material embodied conditions within which practice and performance are grounded. The methods I am using to gain access to these material conditions are outlined above.

There are limitations to each of the approaches. In particular, the limited recorded interaction with people at various sites. Some of the participant observation was augmented by research diaries and recorded digitally but they cannot be adequately placed into the research design as part of a wider argument. I have, at all times, sought to provide a wide breadth of data collection methods. I did this principally because I was interested in developing skills within human geography that I had not been able to develop before. This perhaps yielded data which is lacking in depth. In my defence, I organised the research on the basis that there would be a plurality of methods from the beginning. Each aspect of the research is a materialisation of experiences that are often abstract and ineffable. By choosing many different types of research method, I sought to provide a balance of data in the service of the research questions.

Religious place making involves the reorganisation of space around material objects, often oriented to abstract ideas of a deity. But they find meaning in the places around us. The statues of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Dublin are the products of labour. Pilgrims’ accounts and experiences recall the places they have been and how,

for them, these are as much about the car parks and rest facilities, as they are the spiritual practice. In the context of Irish primary schools, public understandings of concepts like community and civil society are grounded in a particular topography of the secular.

Social and cultural practices of religion cannot be reduced to the formally mental, mediated as they are by my interests, my time dedicated to research practice (and reflection upon it) and my own embodiment in sites of practice. There is no position from which I can step outside of these interests and represent a geography of 'the religious'. In this sense, the practice of geography and the spatial embodiment of the religious are closer than has been considered before now. A further significant challenge is that the embodiment of spiritual practice is a directly political act, amenable to material social conditions. In conceptions of the secular public sphere, the religious can be readily marginalised. My aim, through these methods, is to refocus upon the particular social conditions and relations that arise from groundings of the religious and the secular in Ireland.

## 3: The Marian statues of Dublin

### Introduction

At the eastern end of Botanic Avenue, in Dublin's suburb of Drumcondra, a small public park meets a busy road, the N1. Thousands of vehicles pass this park every day as it marks the beginning of the main road to Belfast, Ireland's second largest city. In this small park is an undecorated statue of the Virgin Mary facing east and toward the road. It is placed near the river Tolka as it finds its way toward the sea and is surrounded by a number of flower beds. There is nothing to let visitors know that this is a statue of Mary (the historical figure so central to Catholicism) other than a small inscription of the words *Ave Maria* at the base of the statue.



**Plate 3.1: Statue of Mary, Our Lady's Park, Dublin 9**

There are several park benches, two of which can be seen in the picture above. However, there is nothing unusual about a statue of Mary at this place in Dublin city. A small cluster of houses called Tolka Cottages is placed here on the historic 25 inch maps and it is near the site of an old confectionery factory, now demolished. There is also nothing unusual about the placement of a religious statue close by and facing a busy public road at the edge of a residential area. In July 2012, Dublin City Council parks services placed a new place sign near the statue, facing pedestrians as they leave the city to go north. It says Our Lady's Park. In the early years of the second decade of the twenty first century, a public body took the decision to spend money on a sign designating this as Our Lady's Park. Two features of this naming strike me after photographing this new sign shortly after its erection: firstly, the park is now named in distinction to Botanic Avenue to which it is adjacent. Secondly, the decision by the City Council to name this unassuming green space after the mother of Jesus means that someone had to decide what to call it. Why was it called Our Lady's Park now? The area is known for an older flour mill and a confectionery factory. Why not Mill Park, or Lemon's Park, after the name of the demolished factory? Public acts of devotion to Mary have waned significantly from the time of the statue's erection (although the focus of the decoration remains the statue). So why now?

In some email correspondence in July 2012, the parks department of the City Council responded to some questions that I posed:

**Researcher:** I recently noticed that the green space at the east end of Botanic Avenue Dublin 9 was renamed Our Lady's Park and marked as such with a new sign. ...could you point me in the direction of someone in the Council that I might speak to about this decision?

**Respondent:** This open space was never named, there is a statue of Our Lady in it and the locals wanted to name the park 'Our Lady's Park' so the City Council agreed. The statue is in this open space about 70 years and the residents would have put it there.

**Researcher:** Thanks for your swift reply to my enquiry. .... I have one final request: would it be possible to get a copy of some correspondence from the locals about requesting the designation of a name for the green space? Thanks again for your reply.

**Respondent:** This was not a formal renaming so no correspondence involved, it was just the locals who wanted it named.

What I find interesting here is the use of the words ‘locals’ and ‘residents’. It implies that there is a public to which this statue is oriented. The statues are, in most cases, tended to and maintained.

This chapter is about the placement, setting and meaning of twenty seven Christian statues as elements of a material culture still evident in Dublin city. In the past, these statues were sites of popular devotion at particular times of the year, for example May 1<sup>st</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup>. Aside from a few exceptions, they no longer are. This devotion often took the form of walking in procession from a church building to the site of a statue and touching the foot of the statue once arrived. Such an embodied practice gives these statues an agency, albeit one transferred from the devotee to the object in question (King, 2010: 11). They are not merely relics of past devotional practices. The statues are places in the city’s geography that resonate with present residents. The data presented here try to address a number of matters that foreground the principal idea presented throughout the thesis: where can the groundings of the relationship between the secular and the religious be placed? What are the politics of maintaining these statues and why does their presence remain uncontested? As produced spaces of historical interest, why are the statues now uncontentional objects? I answer these questions by looking at their form, distribution and their placement in ostensibly public space.

## **Form**

The statues of Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Dublin city take similar forms. The statues are raised off the ground, usually on some form of plinth approximately 1.5 metres in height. They are generally cast from plaster although a number of them are cast in concrete. The plaster statues are approximately 1.2 metres in height and generally take the form of Mary, clothed in white and blue, standing atop an orb or crescent moon and standing on a serpent. The form is not dissimilar to statuary of other figures that are found elsewhere in Dublin.



**Plate 3.2: Base of statue of Mary, Alexandra road, Dublin 3.**

Many of the statues examined are smaller than this and some are encased in glass. Standing on a serpent and the moon, while explicitly referring to the death of the symbol for Edenic sin, may also refer to what Carroll (1986: 32) discusses as one goddess under many names throughout human history. The picture above shows these representations of crushing sin and atop a globe on a statue in Dublin's north dockland area, Alexandra Road. In this case, Mary is also cast as near water's edge, perhaps reflecting the statue's proximity to residents working at the port. Foley (2010: 176-177) has written on the therapeutic power of place and has connected holy wells and other water sites with wider mental health issues. As will be seen in the next chapter, Mary's association with water extends beyond statuary representation.

These statues show a vernacular form and reflects the increasing use of statues within church buildings extending throughout the post-Famine period in Ireland (Lawless, 2010: 92-3). How the public statues differ from the church statues of Mary is in the use of the crown of stars within churches and the use of inscriptions to proclaim her status as the Immaculate Conception, Mother of all Graces etc. in public statues. This inscription is garlanded stylistically or placed directly on the plinth. In the case of the statue in Monkstown in Dublin's suburbs, it reads *Ave Maria*. If painted, Marian statues in Dublin are generally blue and white in colour, reflecting the characteristic of purity and perhaps Mary's association with water. The statues are never partially decorated.

The figures come in two poses: hands opened, greeting the devotee, or hands clasped in prayer at her chest. These poses may reflect the various titles given to Mary through the litany of Loreto but generally emphasize Mary's chastity and her role as mediator between God and humans.

Many of the plaster statues made in Dublin were cast by two companies based in the same area of the city, established by different migrant families. John Deghini and Sons were based in Lower Exchange Street and recorded as active between 1936 and 1951 (University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, 2011). However, information from his great grandson indicates that he started the business in 1880 having moved to Dublin in the 1860s but that the original family name was Quaradeghini (Bergin, 2013). The 1911 Census records the head of a second household, then aged 69 (National Archives of Ireland, 2012). This older man is the man who moved in the 1860s. He had three sons, one of whom is John. While searching online, I discovered that a member of the Deghini family was resident in Ireland. She presented me with the following information as part of a short correspondence:

That business closed in the late 70's, all the talent was never passed on as it was a dying trade, my Dad was the last in line and he died in 2000. Statues are all over Ireland with name John A Deghini & Son, the son was my dad (Deghini Gaffney, 2011).

This woman's grandfather was one of the three Deghini sons in the 1911 Census as he would have been born in Dublin in 1878 (aged 33 in 1911). The RTE Stills Library has an extensive collection of images from the workshops of Deghini and Son. She also indicated that another family from Italy were prominent statuary artisans, the Bassi family. Aurelio Bassi was the owner of a figure maker and moulding business which operated from a premises at 38a Wellington quay (about three hundred metres from Lower Exchange Street) from 1896 to 1951 (University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, 2011). The 1901 and 1911 Censuses do not record an A. Bassi resident in Ireland at this time. However, a plaster statue maker named Joseph Bassi resided in Wellington Quay, Dublin 2 in the 1911 Census. Family records (Bergin, 2013) show that:

On the 1901 census there are 10 men living at 38 Wellington Quay, 9 of whom are Italian and 7 of whom are figure makers. ... It is also quite likely that some or

all of the occupants at 38 Wellington Quay worked for Joseph Bassi who had a shop at No. 18 Wellington Quay or R. Bassi.

Joseph Bassi (b. Italy, 1831) came to Ireland in the 1860s after marrying an English-born Italian Maria Cassinella in Cork city. The sons and daughter of this family were all recorded as being born in Dublin. It must be assumed that this oldest son is the Aurelio Bassi of the Glasgow record. According to Bergin (2013) “on 30 April 1900, Aurelio Bassi married Annie Meaghan, both of 33 Upper Rathmines...His occupation is not recorded but he has the same parents as Louis Bassi”. In these two examples, there is evidence of how decisions taken by Italian migrants had a defined effect on the materiality of the Dublin landscape.

In response to Ivakhiv’s (2006: 172) call for an integrative understanding of the sacred, the story of Marian statuary should include some examination of the economy which produced these significant places. The migration of Deghini and Bassi from Italy to Dublin in the nineteenth century is as much a part of this story as their erection. Lawless (2010: 89-90) refers to several instances in the second half of the century when Irish sculptors and statue makers complained about the challenge presented by statuary made by migrants. She lays out how the mass production of statuary and other objects for churches allowed these tradesmen to meet a significant demand, particularly after the reporting of the Lourdes apparition in 1858. There is some evidence that by the beginning of the twentieth century, statue makers and sculptors comprised a significant number amongst tradesmen (Lawless, 2010). The moulding and appearance of statues outside church buildings in public areas should be seen in this context.

One statue in the public housing complex at O’Devaney Gardens, Dublin 8 is a simpler statue and not moulded in the same fashion as those found at Alexandra Road, for example. When visiting a site at Walkinstown Avenue, I spoke with a resident who told me that when the statue was erected in 1978, the people paid for a spur from the main electrical cable to light the halo at its head. However, the money ran out before it got as far as the plinth and the electrification was never completed. The cost of the statue and its erection was taken on by some of the people living in the neighbourhoods where the statues are found. The material reality of the choice of statue is evident too at the figure erected by residents in the working class area of Edenmore, Artane. As the picture below shows, this statue is placed on a large plinth out of proportion to the undecorated statue of Madonna and child on top. It is beyond the remit of this thesis to catalogue the

various forms in detail with regard to larger traditions of statuary in Dublin or across Ireland.



**Plate 3.3: Statue of Madonna and child, Artane, Dublin 5**

At this stage I would place the 28 statues examined for the thesis into two broad groups:

- decorated plaster, and
- undecorated concrete.

A minority of the statues of Mary or the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Dublin are encased in glass or other material. Most of the statues examined for this thesis are standalone pieces of sculpture, raised on a plinth and open to the weather. Where enclosed in casing, there is generally a lock on the case and so someone holds a key. At a majority of the sites, the statue is surrounded by some form of green space with railings, enclosed within a defined area. Sometimes these railings' gates are locked with a padlock. At some sites I was able to determine that an identified person held that key.

A further important characteristic of these statues is their human scale. These statues are not gargantuan abstract structures but are mostly of a human body scale. The statue and plinth are no taller than an average person. In this way they remain structures that can be related to by devotees. As Gökariksel (2009: 660 – 662) shows, religion is made corporeal where the body is a medium of faith, not merely a vessel. I argue here that the statues' bodily scale allows devotees to relate more directly to the figure of Mary as a visceral, life-bearing historical person. A relationship with the personhood of Mary is sought through these statues, otherwise a shapeless figure could represent her immaculate nature or her chastity.



**Plate 3.4: Statue of Madonna and child, Hardwicke Street, Dublin 1**

Devotion to Mary then becomes part of a series of spatial practices near to or distant from the statue in that neighbourhood (Gökariksel, 2009: 669). Many of the statues, particularly those north and south of the encircling canals are surrounded by a larger area of green space with low railings and a gate for access. This can be seen in the photograph here. The statues in each area do not mark the centre of that neighbourhood but instead mark the presence of a green space where other activities can be conducted, e.g. football or sitting on a bench. Their presence at each site is not imposing but they are visual focal points. Each site however confirms a kind of micro-prominence for the statue so that if one were thirty metres from the statue, it would not be a prominent feature in view.

This separation from the surrounding green space is an indication that this space is not the same as that around it. The (usually blue) railings are an indication that this is not space for children's play. It is space apart, neither residential 'private' space nor recreational 'public' space. In this way, the separated portion of ground might be considered neither the same as the surrounding space nor of another space (Göle, 2002: 189). Those statues that are closer to the city centre core are less likely to have this

separated ground with railings, possibly owing to the availability of cheaper land in the suburban locations. Instead, these statues are encased in a glass, concrete or wooden structure as depicted in the photograph above. This loose typology does not always hold across the 27 sites examined here as some are both encased and have railings. In both types however we can see the designation of the statues as something different from being both public and private space.

In June 2010, I met with the Heritage Officer of Dublin City Council. I had been told earlier in the year by the staff at the City Archive that the Council may have a list of the religious statuary of Dublin. Encouraged by this I made contact and in correspondence with the Officer, the following was received:

As you know from our previous discussions DCC has a database of public sculpture. This is of course official public sculpture in the public domain, and may not include all the informal religious works that often appear in housing estates and church grounds. (Duggan, 2010)

I was given access to the database where I ascertained that just one statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was in this database. As he had indicated, the database contained “official public sculpture in the public domain”. The database was a resource full of information about the age, characteristics and materials used for sculptural works across the city but none but one of the religious statues was contained within the database. This is highly significant: the Heritage Officer makes a distinction between official public sculpture and informal religious works. It was at this stage of the research that I began to ask questions about what is meant by public space. The statues of Mary and the Sacred Heart across Dublin are paid for from contributions given by some members of the public and benefactors to a local parish church. Some of the plinths are inscribed with the word ‘public’ or “residents of...” and in some sense, the statues are markers of neighbourhood districts which tells us something about place-making in a religious frame. However, for the City Council the statues are not public sculpture “in the public domain”. As I will show later, these statues have not yet been made part of public space.

In summer of 2010, I took some photographs of the statue at Loreto Road, Maryland, Dublin 8 with my camera phone. At the time, I spoke with the local Peace Commissioner about how the area around the statue is maintained. When I returned later that month to photograph the same statue with an SLR camera, the statue had been

painted. As I stood there taking the photograph, a woman (who I discovered was the wife of the Peace Commissioner) stopped and told me that the Council had given her husband some paint to “make her look beautiful”.



**Plate 3.5: Unpainted (left) and painted (right) statue of Mary, Maryland, Dublin 8**

The statue and its surrounds had been painted and a set of rosary beads had been placed on the statue itself. The railings and surrounding flowers had also been tended to. Pierce et al. (2011) theorise how places are made political through networks, large and small, and how a relational conceptualisation of actors in the theorisation of space can take place. In this they specify “how representations of space, representational space and spatial practice are situated and settled” (Pierce et al., 2011: 59). I find their use of relational place-framing (the negotiation of conflict and difference which helps to make places) useful when examining occurrences such as the use of Council paint to renovate this space. In this sense, this place is never settled as private space but remains open to negotiation about how we understand notions of private and public space. This place is never finalised and remains contingent upon many place-framing processes. This has implications across many scales: the local (the PC’s ideation of how important this site is), citywide (a nominal sum allocated to such renovation projects) and, perhaps, internationally (because Mary is venerated by Catholics worldwide). As Pierce et al. (2011: 60) outline:

There is no moment of resolution when place-frames are produced in any final, settled sense [fn. The same contingency applies to places as well; they are never settled, although they may seem fixed.]. Rather, place-contestation is always ongoing, as particular place-frames are tactically deployed toward strategic (though perhaps not always conscious) political aims. (Footnote text included in square brackets.)

The repainting of the statue in Maryland might be seen as a site of place-contestation which is always being made and remade. The Council, from the Heritage Officer’s point of view, does not consider these statues as public sculpture but the local Council workers are able to provide paint (and perhaps even the labour) to the peace commissioner for the site’s repainting. This way of looking at how places are remade and never settled is particularly fruitful when considering the contestation over holy places. In thinking about these particular holy places, Pierce et al.’s (2011: 66) appeal that “we need to attend especially to the ways that individuals or groups of actors simultaneously participate in networks that overlap but may also be contradictory” is appropriate. All places are relational, they argue, and furthermore are “always produced through networked politics” (Pierce et al., 2011: 67). When looking at how these particular relational places are recreated, it should be remembered that the statues are the material of such a strategic politics. At Hardwicke Street, the statue’s placement was

the result of a change in the housing complex to allow for more pedestrians and to prevent stolen cars from driving at speed through it. It was this speeding that killed the women commemorated by the statue. That time passes and their political negotiation has become less significant will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

## **Distribution**

One of the most significant characteristics of these twenty seven statues of Mary is their distribution within the residential areas of Dublin city. As I will show below, there is no distinct pattern to their distribution across the city but most are placed on green spaces adjacent to or near publicly-funded housing. Statues of Mary and of Mary and the infant Jesus are evident across Ireland in what would be colloquially called grottos but these are, to a large extent, features on their own outside of residential areas. These grottos are beyond the scope of the thesis but their maintenance is an elaboration of a popular devotion of perhaps no more than 80 years. Little has been written about these grottos and their material culture is not extensively researched. The statues of Dublin city however are more recent and were, for the most part, erected for the Marian Year 1954 (Freeman, 2010). This followed the publication of a Papal Encyclical the previous year and which marked the centenary of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary in 1854. In my examination of the distribution of the statues, it is public housing schemes that come into focus.

The list of statues, their address and known erection date and neighbourhood are tabulated in Appendix A. The outline map of the Dublin city area in Appendix B shows where statues of Mary and of the Sacred Heart of Jesus have been identified for the study. Others also exist but these mapped sites are the sites examined here. Across the city, three broad clusters of the statues can be identified:

- The Liberties
- Within the canals
- Suburbs

These are grouped according to their location but I am not implying here that there is a relationship between the individual statues in each cluster. In clustering the statues, I seek to develop Kong's call (2010: 763) to draw local forms of religious expression on to other scales so that they are "allowed to be drawn back onto a larger canvas to help understand some of the larger conflicts and tensions in the contemporary world".

And while these statues' presence in Dublin do not point directly to larger conflicts, I want to show in this section that their distribution in public housing estates in particular allows an analysis of how public space was constituted in Dublin in the 1950s. In this way, the statues of Mary and other figures are micropolitical with implications for how places are lived and experienced everyday across time and space. Mary's inscription on specific landscapes serves to bundle time and space for devotees in a very public sense. As I will show later in this chapter, Mary has a number of meanings while placed in these particular areas. However, the statues have meaning on another scale of Christianity that defies conventional borders and spans time.

Two statues are adjacent to large public buildings: at Broadstone *Dublin Bus* garage and at the building for Dublin port's administration. The statue at Broadstone is a large concrete statue, set above the main road and is part of the garage complex, although railed off. The pictures below show its position above the road but part of the bus garage grounds.



**Plate 3.6: Statue of Mary at Dublin Bus garage, Broadstone, Dublin 9**

This statue is inscribed on the plinth with the following text:

Erected by the Employees of *Córas Iompair Éireann* Broadstone to the Honour and Glory of Our Lady Queen of Peace May 1953. Pray for Us.

*Córas Iompair Éireann* or CIÉ is the state funded transport company formed in 1945. This was a major transport hub from the 1830s to the 1920s (Irish History Podcast, 2011). It is no longer a publicly accessible building although that did not bother the men who were street drinking there on my visit. When I explained to two of these men why I was taking photos, one of them approached me and took out a Marian medal from around his neck. I asked him why he wears it: he said his mother is important to him and that “she protects me”. At the other end of the city, the statue at Alexandra Road is situated outside the gate of a building which houses Dublin Port Company. What looks like an older weighbridge is alongside it on the road but is no longer in use. This would mean that trucks and other vehicles exiting the north docks would have stopped alongside the statue before their journey. The statue, while tucked into the corner of the building’s walls is visible as the vehicles exited the port before turning on to the main road. This is situated at a very busy road junction near the entrance to the Dublin Port Tunnel opened in the last number of years. The text on the plaque alongside the statue and visible as the white panel reads:

O Mary conceived without sin  
Pray for us who have recourse to thee  
This statue was erected  
The Marian Year 1954  
By the workers of the Alexandra Road and their Friends  
In honour of our blessed lady.



**Plate 3.7: Marian statue at Alexandra Road, Dublin 3**

In these two cases then the workers of the nearby factories and station erected them. CIÉ's employees are of the state and the workers of Alexandra Road cannot have been uniformly Catholic. In the Census of 1951, there were about 29,000 people employed in Transport and Communication in the Dublin area which represents almost 40% of the total number employed in this sector in the state at that time (CSO, 1954). These are both working class occupations (bus / train drivers and dock workers) and so the question remains why here and not elsewhere in the city? I hope to answer this later in this chapter.

Dublin's Liberties area is a district that has developed outside of the medieval city walls but now makes up part of the south inner city. An ill-defined area, the Liberties is bounded by Thomas Street to the north, the Grand Canal to the south, Patrick Street to the east and by the last portion of the South Circular Road to the west. According to Daly (1985: 279) this area was comprised almost exclusively of working class families and people adjacent as it was to the docks, the brewery, the canals and other "traditional city industries". Its housing stock was generally considered to be in poor condition and slum conditions persisted for much of its history. As it stands today, the Liberties is no longer the working class district of Dublin's industries but still contains large proportions of public housing tenants, e.g. Rialto, Pimlico.

I have recorded eight statues in the Liberties area including one in a small area called Maryland where the streets include names such as Loreto, Lourdes and Rosary. All but

one are statues of Mary. Their distribution across this area reflects a small number of clusters of housing. In the period 1926 to 1946, Dublin's public housing was rebuilt to clear the north inner city area of its slums. St Teresa's Gardens, Fatima Mansions (now Reuben Street) and Dolphin House are the three largest public housing schemes resulting from this rebuilding. These three areas consisted of large rectangular blocks of apartments in parallel across a small area to create a dense concentration of people in each neighbourhood. As McManus (2002) has outlined, such concentrations of housing were seen as a solution to the clearance of the slums. This form of housing was by no means confined to this part of the city. As the city's economy changed in the 1960s and 1970s, the basis of employment for both men and women resident in these apartments changed radically. Industries and markets which sustained these families declined and unemployment became a significant issue in the 1970s. The children of some of these families were housed in later public schemes further north (Coolock) and south (Crumlin).

Devotion to Mary as intercessor was a feature of both rural and urban working class religious culture in Ireland in the 1940s and 1950s. As King (2010: 68-73) has indicated, Mary represented a form of daily devotion that found resonances in the domestic sphere from the late part of the nineteenth century. With changes in family structures and the formation of households following the famine, Mary (through prayer and objects) became the focus of domestic devotion. May altars that were once common within homes reflected the prominence of Mary as part of family practice, pictorial representations of Mary were rare in preference to the image of the Sacred Heart. Prayer to Mary is generally in the form of interceding with 'God the Father' which would have mirrored the gender relations within households. Mary is a daily presence in the domestic setting in particular; she is quotidian. In these small places, Mary is not represented by a statue but through remembrance. Inglis (1998: 187-190) has shown how the domestication of priestly power through the woman in a household involved the taming of sexuality and a cultivation of helplessness. Mary's role was to help people internalise virtue and piety through the recitation of the Rosary at home. My sense is that Marian statues in the city in particular formed a counter-balance to this domestication of power into the locally public realm in the form of statuary. Statues of Mary reminded people living in a neighbourhood of these virtues while outside the home.

Dublin's Liberties were outside the old city walls until the walls' redundancy in the period after the late eighteenth century. In the recreation of the city that followed the establishment of the Wide Streets Commission in 1802 and the subsequent clearance of slums and cottages to form wider and brighter streets, the Liberties area was not part of the plan. As Kincaid (2006: xxvi) indicates, the purpose of the Wide Streets Commission was to place Dublin alongside London as the second city of the wider Empire. The Commission was a way to demonstrate to the people of Ireland that their suppression was not merely about violence but their own aesthetic welfare. The remaking of the city represented a new turn in the governance of Ireland by the government in London, only a part of which was the Act of Union. The Liberties area remained outside the purview of the Commission and later nineteenth century schemes. It was not until the 1970s, when Dublin Corporation ran a road linking the city's west side to the city's core that the Liberties was divided. Maintaining a public devotion to Mary in the Liberties may well have been easier to maintain over time than in other places. It is a long time between the establishment of the Wide Streets Commission and the Marian Year of 1954 but Marian devotion through statuary in public did not begin in that latter year. The table in Appendix A makes this clear. In the making and remaking of the city from the earlier period until the mid-twentieth century, the Liberties maintained its residential character where other areas across the older city were remodelled. It was in this area in particular that people maintained the statues to form the Liberties cluster that can now be identified.

Dublin's later suburban development comes from a post-independence phase of housing creation for a new republic. Cabra and Crumlin were designated areas for public housing in the 1930s. Walkinstown provided housing for an emergent middle class at about the same period. Kincaid (2006: 67-77) notes the shift in emphasis from early utopian projects of the immediate post-1922 period in housing developments which were influenced by European styles to functional housing development in the post-World War 2 period. This is reflected in the contrasting styles in housing projects in York street and the later developments at St Teresa's Gardens. In the first style, the apartment blocks are joined in a C-ring formation around a central court yard, now often converted to surface parking. The latter was composed of parallel blocks of smaller numbers of apartments where green space was more limited. One of the differences in these designs between the Garden City-influenced developments of the 1920s and the later functional design was the designation of common green space. In the former,

common areas are surrounded on three sides by buildings to enclose the residents to create some form of privacy; the latter has more common space that is more open to the public. These differences in style of course are not just accidents of design but reflect changes in the production of public space (McManus, 2002: 162-168). The later schemes, built from the 1940s, are more likely to have a religious statue present, i.e. Fatima Mansions as was, O'Devaney Gardens, Dolphin House.



**Plate 3.8: Marian statue at Fassaugh Road junction, Cabra, Dublin 7**

The housing schemes built further out in Cabra and Walkinstown consisted of larger green spaces still. The Cabra area, about five kilometres from the north west of the city centre core, is one such scheme. Such public housing schemes were built following the later, post-independence slum clearance in the 1940s. Family connections would have existed between those moving to Cabra and those already living in city centre housing complexes. Marian statuary was built directly into the landscape in Cabra, often in more

prominent positions. In the photo above we can see one such statue on a roundabout at the centre of Cabra at Quarry road. This differs from the two adjacent statues in Ventry road and St Attracta's road in its elaboration. It takes up the main part of the roundabout and faces toward the city centre, greeting travellers as they enter Cabra. It has a well-maintained kneeling area, a light above the statue and at the time of my visit, was surrounded by flowers. This statue of Mary is unpainted although the nails on the feet of the statue are painted in blue. This is the only statue that I have charted which makes reference to parishioners in its inscription. It reads:

*Bliain na Maidine* (Year of the Maiden)1954  
Erected by the parishioners and friends  
*A Mhuire A bhanríon Lourdes Guidh Orainn* (O Mary, O queen of Lourdes pray for us).

## *Marian shrine for Cabra*

Although the Marian Year ended on December 8 last, the members of Christ the King parish, Cabra East, plan to erect one of the most elaborate shrines in the city, in honour of Our Lady's Year.

They are now raising funds for the shrine, estimated to cost £1,500. In the past five weeks, collections in the parish have brought in £300.

Made of Irish limestone, the shrine will be constructed on a triangular site at the top of Quarry Road, where two other roads converge.

The statue of the Blessed Virgin will stand in the centre of the triangle and will be surrounded by trees, grass lawns and flower beds.

Plate 3.9: Cutting from Irish Press 23/02/1955 reporting on the plan to erect the shrine at Quarry Road, (Irish Press, 1955)

Nearby there are two further statues, both of which were erected by “the residents” at around the same time. There is a small cluster of three statues in this immediate area. People moved to this area following slum clearance may well have originated in the Liberties, although I did not gather any data that might support this. The later statues are built directly adjacent to housing on common ground in similar fashion to those found in Walkinstown, Ringsend and Harold’s Cross.



**Plate 3.10: enclosed Marian statue at St Attracta’s Road, Cabra, Dublin 7.**

As can be seen from the above photograph, the statue and its surrounds occupies the entire green space nearby to these houses. It is space apart and is marked as such using the white crosses on the railings. This cluster of three statues in Cabra suggests that the production of space in this suburb may have followed a pattern similar to where the residents would have lived prior to this. Only Artane, further to the east and north, has a similar cluster of two and these two were erected later than the Marian year of 1954. The distribution of these statues across the city area is not accidental but the result of specific settlement patterns and reflecting the interests of those responsible for the housing of the city’s poor. In the post-independence period, Dublin’s development became intimately bound with the development of the nation as a whole. The housing of Dublin’s workers formed an important part of this ideological project (Kincaid, 2006:

82-83). The distribution implies that there is a centre and a periphery, those areas that are of Dublin and those that are marginal to Dublin. As Withers (2007: 38-39) shows, the development of geographical thought is dependent upon such an Othering. The development of suburbs, uneven and mostly arising from developer-led policies, radiated from the central core of the city. This sense of the city being produced (population control, consent seeking, post-independence politics) disallows the statues to be seen as random occurrences on the landscape of Dublin. In the ways I have described above, the statues' production closes off an analysis which brackets 'religion' to its own domain. Instead, the distribution of the statues is related to the development of Dublin suburbs from the 1930s to the 1980s. The Marian Year of 1954 is a focal point for the production of this suburban space. The statues are a materialisation of what constitutes a decent life in the city and how working people are moved from a core to a peripheral location. In this context, the statues are a result of this politics and not separated from them.

## Placement

I have outlined how the statues are placed within their area and the variety of their placement across the city. Some important characteristics are visible at all of these sites. These relate to how they are enclosed, where they are sited and the position of the statues in relation to the surrounding landscape. In this section, I want to discuss the statues' placement. The site placement of the statues is significant because it points to the changing prominence in space of the statues over time. I have shown already where in the city these 27 statues are and how their distribution reflects the reproduction of political space across at least two scales, regionally and nationally. Locally, the statues have specific meanings and their placement within the sites points to that meaning. For example, the large statue at Broadstone bus garage is placed on the garage grounds but is separated from the grounds with a railing. It stands over one of the main entry routes to Dublin and at a turning point for a tramline now under construction. Its orientation facing the route out of and into the city suggests that the workers themselves wished to demonstrate their devotion to Mary to others not working in or using the garage. As I have shown, the statue was "Erected by the Employees of *Córas Iompair Éireann* Broadstone", a state company and using state land. However, it is erected neither on wholly private nor wholly public space. It stands over public space but is erected on land not deemed a private working area.

The development of Dublin's suburbs through the period 1930 to 1950 is marked by sets of overt and covert contradictions that often afflict modernisation. On the one hand, while the governments after the 1922 War of Independence sought to foster their authority through social housing provision, such provision was conducted against the backdrop of increasingly divisive politics in mainland Europe. In this way, the provision of public housing in Dublin and across the other cities of Ireland was a way to actively seek the consent of social classes whose political activity could have been channelled into further revolutionary foment. At the same time, the names ascribed to the new roads and avenues are not those of recently-killed national patriots but saints and lakes. Cabra is replete with roads named after saints and Crumlin with the names of lakes across Ireland (Whelan, 2003: 222). There is a desire here to be modern but not necessarily the kind of modernity seen in the UK or in the Netherlands, from where many working class housing schemes were copied (Kincaid, 2006: 81-84).

The clearance of the slums of Dublin city continued into the 1960s. Historians and others have depicted Ireland's modernisation as stemming from the 1959 Programme for National Expansion. Kincaid claims rightly that to pinpoint the 1960s as the decade of modernisation's beginnings in Ireland is flawed. Irish governments and local authorities had been engaged in housing and other social programmes since the 1930s. What is distinctive about the earlier suburban housing schemes however was that they afforded large green areas adjacent to clusters of houses, some of which now host statues of Mary. It is not immediately clear why this common green space was built into the design of these new suburbs (the extension of which is evident in later suburbs such as Killinarden in south west Dublin) other than to create a non-crowded environment in contrast to the tenements of the centre. These green spaces were only later converted to include playgrounds and sports clubs so in a sense, they remained dormant in some places for twenty years in the period 1934-54. Kincaid suggests that they might be seen as an echo of a pastoral past to attract rural workers to Dublin. Whatever their intended use or symbolic representation, some of these areas were later used to site Marian statues.

The photos below show examples of how the statues are railed off from the surrounding green space. As stated above, very often these railings are marked with small iron

crosses or painted blue to signify Mary's space, distinct from the rest of the nominally public area.



**Plate 3.11: Statues at Dominick Street (left) and Rialto Cottages (right), Dublin**

This space for Mary, bordered by railings or by flowers, was once conceived of as space for all of the people in this area. Over time, it has become space for Catholics and more recently space for some Catholics and not others, as public Marian devotion wanes. This is the creation of a set of practices called 'religion' (Asad, 2003: 22, 42, 106, 189; Howe, 2009: 641). The examples above provide some more detail. The statue at Dominick street flats in Dublin's north inner city commemorates the killing of three local people by car thieves through the area in 1980. Both the area around the statue as well as the statue of Mary and infant Jesus are enclosed. The high gates around the site would indicate that this remains a precious site – confirmed by the man who stopped to talk to me when he saw me taking pictures of it. The entry gate is locked and his family

holds the key because it was his wife who was one of those killed. The site takes up perhaps twenty per cent of the available public space in the centre of the housing development. There are no signs of damage to the railings or the site immediately around the statue.

The other site at Rialto cottages is placed on the kerbside of the green space contained by a three sided array of single storey cottages. While the space taken up by this site is considerably smaller, the enclosed statue is behind low railings, painted blue as can be seen in the picture above. The railings are locked with a padlock although it would be easy to climb over these low railings to gain access to the statue. The statue is adjacent to the newly-refurbished Fatima Mansions (now Reuben Street) public housing area. A community worker at this site, Deirdre, indicated to me that there was another statue aside from the one formerly sited at Fatima Mansions although this is “the Legion’s [of Mary] statue”.



**Plate 3.12: Locked gates at Rialto Cottages, Dublin 8**

The statue formerly at Fatima Mansions remains that of the people resident there but the one around the corner at Rialto cottages is one that belongs to the Legion of Mary, “a lay apostolic association of Catholics who...serve the Church and their neighbour on a voluntary basis” (Legion of Mary, 2011). Deirdre reiterated this in a discussion about the statue at Fatima Mansions. I spoke with Deirdre and two of her colleagues about the possibility of replacing the old statue with the new one in storage and how that might

happen. She was keen to point out that “this is Fatima’s statue, not the church’s” indicating that the Catholic priests would not receive any particular priority in this process. The statue at nearby Rialto cottages was erected in 1981 by “the people of Rialto” (inscription) and is in a distinct style where Mary is depicted with an uncovered head and long flowing hair.

I want to return to this place creation in the final section of this chapter. I have mentioned earlier how other statues make reference to people, parishioners or residents. For now, I want to foreground the placement of these statues on this nominally public green, and arguably recreational, space. The statues take up prominent positions in local green spaces and their placement would indicate that the maintenance of this prominence remained central to their function. At the scale of neighbourhoods, the statues provide definition to this green space in the way that playgrounds do at the present time. They are a focus for routine social action. In St Attracta’s road in Cabra, the statue is placed on the only green space among half a dozen rows of housing. In Walkinstown, the statue is away from the main road, embedded within the large green space which remains otherwise unused. In Oscar square, Dublin 8, the statue is at the centre of the green area as can be seen in plate 3.15.



**Plate 3.13: Statue of Our Lady of Fatima, Edenmore, Dublin 5**

In the site at Monkstown, the statue and site takes up the majority of the small green space at the apex of two roads in the village. The photo below is taken from the point of view of the statue and shows the walled-in area which the statue and site occupy. The statue’s centrality to the definition of the village is clear. I spoke at length with a man

who had recently bought a house adjacent to the site and asked him if he would rather see the space solely as a green area for the village; he did not express any particular dislike of the statue. This man had no connection with the regular Marian devotion here although he was given a small sum on an annual basis to pay for the electricity consumed by the statue's lights from his domestic supply.



**Plate 3.14: Monkstown village from inside the walled Marian statue site.**

This site is the only green space at the village and yet remains walled off and is maintained on a regular basis. From the photograph of the statue at Oscar Square, Dublin 8 above, we can see how the statue is placed centrally in the green space and provides the focus for the paths crossing that space. While the square was undergoing renovation in late 2010 to make it wheelchair accessible, there was no sign that the Council were removing the statue during that time other than some accommodation of the statue's base while the work was being done. The photograph below shows this as well as the centrality of the statue in the context of the green space.



**Plate 3.15: Statue at Oscar Square, Dublin 8**

What I want to draw out from this discussion of the placement of the statues is that across the sites examined, what is nominally public space and what is often considered to be private practice are deeply intertwined. What I mean by this is that these green spaces are drawn into the public over time. These spaces are made public under different conditions from the Dublin of the 1950s. The terms of the relationship between what is religious and what is now secular have changed. Oscar square (formerly part of Fairbrothers fields) was one of the first new suburbs to be developed by the Irish state in the 1930s (McManus, 2002: 112). The green space was laid out to create a neighbourhood for the people moving from nearby slums. The statue was dedicated in 1955 (presumably for the Marian year) and remains in place today. Those who exhorted for the Queen of Peace to Pray For Us in 1955 were concerned that the neighbourhood

come under the protection of Mary. It was part of the common sense at this time and in keeping with other statues dedicated to Mary in and around 1954. The statue remaining in this place in the public square across this span of time is not accidental, nor is it to be considered a natural object. Space is not closed off in distinct periods with people then being religious and now being secular. The space in Oscar Square has changed and this is due to the interactions necessary for changes to occur across time. The railings around the statue sites, their position within larger green spaces and their prominence within these same spaces are products of relations. Seen in this fashion, the statues do not belong in the past but remain both open to new meaning and yet closed to radical reinterpretation. The statue in Stillorgan, in a larger grotto and behind railings, and at the corner of a green space opposite Ireland's first shopping centre, was not dedicated until 1986. The inscription reads "Erected by the People of Stillorgan 1986".

At this stage, the shopping centre had been open for at least two decades. What kinds of relations produce this space? How can this space be produced at a time when broader narratives tell us that Ireland was modernising (Kincaid, 2006: 119-129)? The framing of such a question pitches space against time as if these were discrete categories.



**Plate 3.16: Statue at St Laurence's Park, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin**

To talk adequately about the placement of these statues in space across various parts of Dublin we must move beyond an inventory of things somehow dropped from the sky and seen to be here and not there (Howe, 2009: 640). Their placement draws forth other

issues within contemporary geographic thought: how we understand the role of place in memory, the diminution of how time effects place making and flatter theorisations of scale. In the next section I want to address the relations that produced and continues to produce the Marian sites.

## **Marian statuary and public space**

As I have shown above, the form, distribution and placement of the Marian and Sacred Heart statues across Dublin are the result of particular relationships between the reproduction of the city and religious practice. Their form is related to new techniques of plasterworking and the migration of skilled labour. They are of small, human scale and so relatable to haptic practices at these sites. Their distribution is related to the re-creation of specific forms of British domination in the built environment of the nineteenth century and the setting aside of an area known as the Liberties in this process. The expansion of the suburbs from the 1920s to the 1960s shows that haptic and extra-ecclesial practices remained relevant through the Marian year and as recently as the 1980s. Finally, their placement at various sites shows that they are set apart from recreational ground and in some places occupy the entirety of available public space. While separated from the remaining green space by railings, this remains symbolic rather than functional in most cases. In this final section, I want to draw out some larger themes arising from this and then relate the discussion to notions of how public space is recreated.

In doing this I am foregrounding Warner's (1999) argument about minoritising logics. As was noted in the review of literature, the framing of the terms of a public sphere in itself necessitates seeing oneself as self-abstracted and society as being an imaginary composed of competing minorities. How is this sense of the public produced in these Marian statues? How are certain forms of embodied religious devotion tolerated and universalised while others are appealed to for their lack of tolerance and universality? The answers to these kinds of questions can be found if we look at how these statues have lost their performative relevance for a majority of people in Ireland. The statues are produced in space in that they are not natural occurrences. They are not produced removed from specific contexts. It made sense for the Deghinis to produce so many statues for Dublin and Ireland in the 1920s and 1930s. This was the family trade. It seemed entirely understandable that people would wish to fundraise, order a statue and

have it erected by a contractor in some place near their neighbourhood. And, as laid out above, the cataloguing of these statues (and others) across Dublin is more than a mere historical project. It is the meaning of Mary in public space that I am concerned with here. When people inscribe Pray For Us on the plinth, what are the logics at work in the public sphere in Ireland? When “The Residents of St Attracta Road” erected the statue of Mary in 1954 what order of practices is established? More importantly, how does this exhortation cease to be relevant? Mary’s statue brings forward questions about the use of space and how these usages represent ‘the public’ at a particular point in time and how that public changes. I have recalled already how ‘the public’ now means referring to some forms of statuary in the city but not others. Clearly these are changes in the creation and re-creation of a sense of a public over these two time frames. In addition, it is not just open-ended, unfinished time I am talking about but ‘full’ space where the creation of a secular space is not emptied of meaning (Howe, 2009). The poetics of Mary in space means more than positioning her on a map and making isochronic representations of her temporal and gradual appearance.



**Plate 3.17: Statue of Mary at St Benedict’s Gardens, Dublin 1**

Firstly, part of the meaning of Mary in Dublin is the relative silence that is evident from my research. To be placed in public one is published or one speaks. Such an arrangement requires a place and, as Warner (1999: 387-391) outlines, this is a form of court, a court for display. Above all, it is a place rather than a mere speech act. Mary’s statues are such places to the extent that she is a representation of what is then made to

be public. There are prayers to Mary and there is the Loreto Litany which names Mary and her many titles (some of which are reproduced at these sites). Devotion requires more than mere speech acts; these are the plaster expressions in space of speech acts. This too is the creation of a public.

As part of my original research schedule I spoke to a small number of people identified as living in the area and with some knowledge of the statue. I wanted to know why they were maintained or why they themselves maintained the statues and the green space. In a small number of interviews, I found that people could not express this. Most often my question about the placement of statues was met with a silence. Following the publication of the Ryan and Murphy reports on sexual and institutionalised abuse there have been no public declarations for these statues to be taken down or for the space to be 'reclaimed' for the public. As I will show later, the places that are sites of contention are primary schools, not church buildings or statues. Why the schools but not the statues? There is also an 'official' silence about the statues. Dublin City Council maintains a database of public art and statuary across the city area but just one of the Christian statues is catalogued in the database. Many books and publications on Dublin's heritage, academic or popular, and there is no mention of Marian statues. In her study of Dublin's streetscape and the politics of identity, Whelan (2003: 158) does not tabulate the erection or removal of Marian statues. Liston (2000), in a book with the *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Dublin, does not list any of the statues in Dublin parishes in a book on sacred places and pilgrimage in Dublin. In his work with US pilgrims in Egypt, Rose's work (2010: 509) notes a silence evident in sacred places:

While the sacred appears to us in concrete forms (places, objects and events), these forms by definition do not speak for the mysterious origins they serve. Indeed, they are sacred precisely because they shelter a secret, a silence that must inhere at the heart of the visible thing.

He claims that a "standing capacity...pre-exists the relations it will encounter" (Rose, 2010: 508) and that this allows the performative to occur. For Rose, identity is ontologically responsive in that we are called to "diverse modalities of being". Sacredness is a way to listen to the silence "that solicit the subject to speak". I am referring here to two kinds of silence: the silence in the normatively-constituted public sphere about the statues and the silence of those who are drawn toward what cannot be directly observed. The sacredness of these sites is in the site itself, not external to it in

some other place of religion. The present meaning of Mary in Dublin is a recuperation of silence at the heart of a sacred object.

## Coombe Residents Association

Kieran Mc Namara  
Executive Manager  
Planning Dept.  
Dublin City Council  
Civic Offices  
Wood Quay  
Dublin 8.

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> July 2005

Planning Ref: 3167/05



Dear Kieran,

We would like to submit our observations and objections to the proposed Timberyard development which is to be built adjacent to Brabazon Street and Watkins Buildings, Dublin 8.

As residents of the area we are very unhappy with the lack of proper pre-planning consultation, which we were afforded. We were offered a brief meeting with officials of the local area office last week, which we must say is unacceptable. A public display of the Part 8 process in our local area was not carried out and this to is unacceptable. Below is a list of our concerns.

- We are fully opposed to the location of the entrance and exit of the underground car park via Brabazon Street. Given the existing level of traffic on and around Brabazon Street we feel that it will only make the traffic situation much worse. We are already in discussions with the local office to reduce the speed limit of our residential area. We are calling for the entrance to be relocated to the Cork Street Bypass. This precedence has already been set on Cork Street at the corner of Marrowbone Lane, where the proposed SPAR is located.
- We are unhappy that the space where our statue exists (Brabazon Street) will be lost and we are seeking a commitment from the City Council that they will compromise on this by providing a new play facility for the children of the Coombe in an alternative location.
- We are seeking a commitment that no heavy work vehicles will be allowed access to this site via Brabazon Street, Weaver Street or Watkins Buildings
- We are seeking a commitment from the City Council that construction staff will be permitted from parking on Brabazon Street/Weaver Street/Watkins Buildings any proposed construction commences.

**Plate 3.18: Screenshot of planning appeal for Timberyard development, Dublin 8. Source: Dublin City Council (2012)**

Secondly, there is the materialisation of a minoritising logic in the formal planning of spaces where the statues are present. At the Timberyard site, where a statue formerly on a derelict site was built into a new building completed into 2008, there was some concern expressed that the place for a statue would not be built in and so a play facility would be provided instead (Plate 3.18). I interviewed the chief architect for the project in August 2011. She spoke of the concerns of those already living in the Brabazon street

area at the planning stage of the development. These revolved around the noise and dust during construction, the access provided to Cork Street given the proximity of a drug treatment centre and the number of single bedroomed units in the new development. The architect told me that the concerns about the access to Cork Street were overcome by the placement of the statue at the corner of the site, as seen in the picture here. According to her, the building of a kneeling step at the recess for the statue “just happened” and that it is not a religious site but is “out in the community” in fulfilment of the role of architecture as more than just function. From the planning documents available however, the Coombe Residents Association were concerned by the statue’s exclusion and so instead sought a play facility elsewhere in lieu of an entrance on to Cork Street.



**Plate 3.19: Statue of Mary at new Timberyard development, Dublin 8 (left) and statue in original grotto before development (right). Old grotto photograph courtesy of O'Donnell & Tuomey Architects.**

The access to Cork Street was a point of contention and so the placement of the statue was seen as a compromise to the people currently living on the street. In this re-creation of public space at the Timberyard, a large dedicated shrine space was replaced with a small recess in the new building, which the project description states:

Claims local allies, taking cues from an industrial brick tower across the road and, on its eastern edge, giving shelter to a Marian grotto that previously stood outside the site. The Madonna is a surprise but she contributes graciously to the short pedestrian passage that is her new home. Locals have taken to placing a vase of cut flowers at her feet. (O'Donnell & Tuomey Architects, 2009)

This reproduction of space is an appeal to two very different publics. The first is the compromise made to the residents of the Coombe in the new development of a kneeling step and small grotto space in lieu of a play area. This was indicated to me by the architect during our discussion when she stated that a seating area might have had the same effect. The second is through the project description itself where “locals have taken to placing” flowers, as if this were a recent occurrence. This second kind of public appealed to recognises the statue as “a surprise” that “contributes graciously” to the overall aim of the building. The appeal in the project description is, in Warner’s terms, to the subjects of a self-abstracted mass public. The locals already live there but are not appealed to in the project’s description, they are allies. While buildings and the practice of architecture are more than just function, they also have meanings. At the Timberyard, Mary’s meaning in space-time is not closed. That “locals have taken to” placing flowers at the statue leaves the meaning of Mary open, as the peculiar remnant of a devotional past or as a submissive act to the imperatives of a new grammar. In the words of the architect, the statue was “beyond the brief”. The ascription of places as meaningful are never emptied of all content; not ‘once holy’ now merely ‘decorative’. As was evident from the Coombe Residents Association letter, some of the same people that kept the original grotto near Brabazon Street maintained in the 1980s insisted that the statue be replaced in 2008.

A third meaning of Mary in these Dublin statues is the creation of a public through the use of inscription on and near the statues. This is partly seen in the responses from Dublin City Council that I laid out at the beginning: ‘locals’ and ‘residents’ petitioned for it to occur. What is evident here is Warner’s (1999: 382) argument that readers of authorizing texts adopt a special rhetoric about their own subjecthood. People transcend

the material realities of their bodies and their social status and become part of ‘the public’. Those cultivating the appropriate response through such self-abstraction form that public, an auto-exclusionary intentionality. I want to argue here that the development of an Irish public sphere through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries encompassed, among other things, the public visibility of a definably female authority figure in Mary. Fraser (1999: 116) contends that there were competing counterpublics right from the beginnings of a normatively-constituted public sphere. Instead of seeing Marian statues as a representation of apparently past domestic patriarchy (men and women occupying only one space), the declaration of a statue being built by the residents or the community is an indication of the creation of such a mass public.



**Plate 3.20: Plaque on statue of Mary at Rialto Cottages, Dublin 8**

This idea allows for the creation of an abstracted people who erect such statues. As indicated on the plaque above from Rialto cottages, the people of Rialto erected these statues (and they announced as such). The ability to declare such a universalism depends on a sense of being and becoming a public. This is the creation of a public as ‘the people’ (as above), as ‘workers’ (at Broadstone) or as ‘residents’ (at Monkstown). The plaques and other inscriptions are texts which allow for their multiple meanings to be excavated. They are produced space, not merely in the sense as a series of objects but as relationships between meanings and people. This must occur within a pre-existing space, itself the result of other processes and layers of meaning (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 207). Mary only makes sense in statue form and declared as The Immaculate

Conception or as Queen of Peace if there is a public for whom the idea of an immaculate conception makes sense. The plaques and inscriptions are as much produced space as a sign warning people not to let their dog foul the path. Mary's statue is something both abstract and material and thus is a produced space. That the meaning of this space may change over time is an inherently political process which some have explained with a secularisation theory. To see Mary as meaningless is part of that political process; she is bracketed in space as a consequence of a 'past', itself the product of a minoritising spatial logic that was emphasised in the opening chapter. I take up this minoritising spatial logic again in chapter six. The declaration of her as Queen of Peace holds less validity in this logic than it used to. The criteria for this validity are carefully tended to; monitored in some places but not in others. That a statue of Mary could be a thing of beauty (within a broader poetic framework) and where definition of that beauty is itself tended to is as much secularisation than any purported decline of religion thesis. Kong (2005b: 496) examines the sacred and secular meanings of museums and claims that "the message of modernity and secularization is that 'religion is a thing of the past, but if there is anything sacred in society it is art'". Museums are "the haloed ground of the cultural elites" and feed into "contestations or reinforcements of religious community and identity". In July 2012, photographer Steve Ryan exhibited his photographs of Marian and other Christian statues in Dublin's South Studios as part of the PhotoIreland Festival. What might be emerging here is the transfer of the statues as public objects of devotion to artistic content. The photographic exhibition space may soon be an appropriate place for them.

Finally, there is the meaning of Mary in the spaces of housing and state policy. This extends from the positioning of statues of Mary in and around housing built and supported by the Irish state, through local authorities. In my research I have surveyed and photographed 27 sites across the Dublin city area (24 of Mary, 3 of Jesus). Of the total number, 17 of these statues are placed in and near to public housing projects built between the 1920s and 1950s. As I have already indicated, the building of lower density housing and apartment complexes resumed in the mid-1920s following independence. A significant factor in this resumption of activity was a fear that the new state could be threatened by civil dissent that would have undermined the legitimacy of that state (Kincaid, 2006: 44-45; McManus, 2002: 94). The earlier town planning efforts of the colonial administration had been to centralize power and to "persuade an increasingly restless population that they were better off in the empire" (Kincaid, 2006: 34).

Following the departure of the colonial administration in 1922, the new state implemented a proposal that had been around since the early 1880s: the consolidation of local authorities in Dublin from eight to two. This facilitated the ambitious re-housing and refurbishment programmes undertaken later. As McManus (2002: 92-93) points out, this was not entirely about appeasing a perceived threat from organised working class interests. Finance was also provided to lower middle class families to purchase their own homes. She ably demonstrates the role that a small number of Catholic clergy played in re-emphasising the right to ownership for some. McCabe (2011: 21-28) lays out the class fracturing evident in these newly-centralised local authorities in Dublin.

Following this period of housing activity across the Dublin city area, and later developments in private building in the expanding suburbs of Mount Merrion and Templeogue for example, defined class interests were reinforced in reasonably proximate neighbourhoods. In the 1970s and 1980s, more and more of the housing units built by Dublin Corporation were privately purchased. This was especially marked following the Surrender Grant Scheme introduced in late 1984. Under this scheme, public housing was privatised with the assistance of a government grant (McCabe, 2011: 37). As the 1990s went on, decreasing numbers of people lived in housing owned or controlled by the Dublin local authorities (at this stage constituted by four individual councils). Many of the units vacated by people in public housing units using this and other schemes made way for households at increasing risk of poverty, or residualisation (Norris, 2005: 173-175). What is important about these and many more complex policy developments during the twentieth century was the imprinting of public housing as working class housing. In this way, the placement of Marian and other statues from the period 1950 to 1990 in and around public housing areas can also be seen through a class lens. Public housing, housing for poorer people and their families, is built on land owned by the state. Private housing is built on speculative property developments and contestations over this produced space matter more. The secularisation of the public sphere can be discussed openly without threatening the residualist nature of public housing. Drawing from Asad (2003: 194), the secular is a partiality: some ideas are included while others are excluded. Leaving statues of Mary on public land remains outside of what gets drawn into the secular and what gets contested in Ireland.

*Marian Year Ceremonies*

**OUR LADY HONOURED  
THROUGHOUT IRELAND**

**Fidelity To  
Family  
Rosary Urged**

THE Marian Year was ushered in throughout Ireland yesterday with ceremonies in all the Dioceses and with pilgrimages to Marian shrines. Small altars were erected in the windows of private houses in many parts of the country and in some towns statues of Our Lady were placed in shop windows. There were crowded congregations in all the churches and the number of Communicants was exceptionally large.

An appeal to the Faithful for fidelity to the Family Rosary was made by His Eminence Cardinal DALTON during Pontifical High Mass in St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh. In Dublin, where there were Masses from 5 a.m. onwards, the Archbishop, Most Rev. Dr. McQuaid, presided at Solemn High Mass of the Immaculate Conception in the Pro-Cathedral at noon. Following are reports of ceremonies in a number of dioceses.

**Armagh** CARDINAL DALTON, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, presided at Solemn High Mass in the Cathedral.

**Kilmore** THE Bishop of Kilmore, Most Rev. Dr. Quinn, presided at Solemn High Mass in the Cathedral.

*Special Salute  
At Arbour Hill*



A special Salute to Our Lady, composed in the Army School of Music, and now officially included with the Royal Salutes and the Angelus Call in the Handbook of Army Salutes, being sounded for the first time by an Army trumpeter and drummer at Arbour Hill, at noon yesterday, after the commencement of the Quarant' Ore devotions held in connection with the opening of the Marian Year.

**Large Congregations**

**Plate 3.21: Cutting from the Irish Independent 9/12/1953. The picture shows the Army School of Music playing a “special salute to Our Lady”. Source: Irish Independent (1953).**

In this production of housing space across Dublin, residents of these areas created meaning in these places through statues of Mary. In their designation as public housing in particular, this form of faith was never brought into a logic of the secular. Furthermore, these statues could remain out of a process where a public was created and appealed to. This is the final sense of silence in the representation of Mary across Dublin: a silence arising from their exclusion from the developing logic of the secular. It is spatialised in very material ways and yet oriented toward something immaterial. Kong (2001: 214), when she writes about the production of sacred place and the politics contained within this process, states that “when the power of the state transcends, religious adherents find ways of coming to terms with the primacy of the secular order.” The statues are a way to come to terms with the primacy in this new order but this has direct political consequence.

### Conclusion

As I have shown in this chapter, the placement of Marian and Jesus’ Sacred Heart statues across Dublin’s neighbourhoods is not due to a random process, undetermined by the production processes that govern other symbols of memory and authority. In the past, people across Dublin’s neighbourhoods conceived of, raised funds for and dedicated their time to the erection of these statues. When Dublin’s main thoroughfare, O’Connell Street, was renovated in 2000, the taxi drivers on one of the street’s ranks

lobbied a public representative to have the Sacred Heart statue reinstated. Decisions that regulate this place were negotiated with Dublin City Council and the Irish Taxi Union. That the statue remains part of the street in spite of its positioning in a thoroughly secularised landscape shows that these statues matter. As a place, it is marked as religious by its reference to the principal figure of Christian belief. It is also a place of memory, a site of maintenance and a landmark.



**Plate 3.22: Statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, O'Connell Street, Dublin 1**

The statues catalogued here arose from a devotion to Mary that pre-existed the Marian Year of 1954. Their production by the Deghini family and others was already past its peak at this time. Their placement is the result of a set of material conditions oriented to the transcendent. Their placement near to residential areas constitutes a particular form of neighbourhood piety evident in public life in Ireland at the time. They are part of what defined public housing, which was known as public space at the time of their erection. They came from a distinct set of conditions that formed and were formed by Irish Catholic identity at this time, both official and vernacular. The everyday was not the realm of the profane; the places were the spaces of enchantment of the world that can only make sense in a broader context. Where the secular is to be found is not always easily discernible, as it may be in the UK or France. What defines the public, however, remains central to any geography of religion. Boundaries between the public and the private remain as fluid and open-ended within these places; for geographies of religion not to reflect this fluidity would constitute a failure.

## 4: The Performance of Pilgrimage in Ireland

### Introduction

I had been standing for about twenty minutes in the same spot, watching pilgrims go up and down the main passageway to the mountain, offering them my project's postcards. This is the only way for most pilgrims to get to and from the foot of the holy mountain, I reasoned, and so if I distributed the postcards here, they would be gone within a short time. My feet ached, I was very tired as I had just spent the last three days walking to this point. I was standing near to another man giving out leaflets about restoring Ireland's abortion-free status. From my right, pilgrims yet to take on the climb of the holy mountain, walked with energy and enthusiasm. Their pilgrimage was not done and yet done many times before. From my left, others stepped carefully down the rocky way to rest and refreshments. Mud caked their shoes and lower legs, red faced and looking pleased with themselves.

Some saw the picture of the holy mountain on one side of my postcard and politely whispered 'no thanks'. Others saw it and turned away while others still had a curiosity about this leaflet among all the others available to them. Out of the crowd, moving from left to right, came one man. He took the postcard that I offered him and he explained, without provocation, "I'll take it, but I don't want to get too deeply into it". We nodded at each other and before I could talk with him he was moving away and wishing me well. Here was a man who, committed to climbing Croagh Patrick on the day dedicated to the Christian pilgrimage (the last Sunday in July), took my card with the condition that he not get too deeply into it. For that short moment in time, to him, I was religious.

This chapter provides the second grounding for religious and secular place making in Ireland. By outlining my experience here and studying others', I want to determine if what happens here can be connected with broader political processes. Does the religious place making done at these three Irish pilgrimage sites inform a wider understanding of how places are made? In responding to and augmenting Kong's appeal to do this, there is a relational geography. Pilgrimage is an encounter with other people, a physical journey made alongside others. Ordained and professed people can take their journey toward God solely through contemplation but for most others, that journey of salvation

must be undertaken in the physical world (Turner & Turner, 2011: 6-7). Turner & Turner describe pilgrimage as one of the great liminal experiences of life. Those spaces that are kept apart as special or that require a different kind of sensory experience are often dubbed liminal, following work by van Gennep (1960). These sensory experiences are neither symbolically or materially of the home place nor of the other place but between both. They are generally considered transgressive, amorphous and apply to “all phases of decisive cultural change, in which previous orders of thought and behavior are subject to revision and criticism” (Turner & Turner, 2011: 2). Liminality is not only a state of transition but a state of potentiality. It is what may yet be; it is a becoming of the religious and the secular in place. The man who took my postcard at Croagh Patrick refers to the potentiality of his experience, that which is to come. The liminal state or otherwise of the experiences at these sites is not highlighted to any great extent. Instead it is the intention to draw out some of the features that are common to and different at three pilgrimage sites in Ireland.

Building on the previous chapter, I develop the notion how places are made private and public space is not always clearly defined. This lack of definition reflects the contestations that arise between the religious and the secular. Pilgrimage is undertaken generally in the outdoors, alongside others but it involves people moving toward something immaterial. The human body is thus an instrument of religious devotion, acting in landscapes that are removed from everyday practice. What is understood as the religious is often bracketed, made distinct from public space. It is not always seen as a political process, one that remains open to continuous negotiation. The three examples of pilgrimage provided here point toward a variation in the ways in that public space is defined. Some people attend the pilgrimage for nominally religious reasons, others conduct themselves at these for health reasons and others still for reasons of physical fitness. Some of these places are bound by institutional religious systems; others are largely unmediated by it. In what sense are these sites of pilgrimage about the exercise of private belief? What is the meaning of pilgrimage in people’s lives and how does it relate to religion anyway? How and where can sites of pilgrimage be understood as public space?

Religion, faith and belief are not separate from this world but an integral part of the embodiment of various, and sometimes connected, trajectories in space (MacKian, 2012). I have undertaken an ethnographic study and historical research at three sites in

Ireland to examine these trajectories. I want to show that the geographies of religion are in a unique position to provide a critique of the fixity of place. While particular places (their location, aspect, topography etc.) are central to an understanding of pilgrimage, it is in the meanings drawn out of these places that make a changing geography of religion. If the last chapter revealed an official silence about Marian statues, this chapter shows how the experiences of pilgrimage are inscribed with an ambiguity that exists at the heart of the practice of pilgrimage. This forms a kind of topology of space. Experiences of pilgrimage are a contestation of what is private belief and public space. The accounts of the places of pilgrimage and the performance of the pilgrims provided are neither wholly secular nor religious.

## **Our Lady's Island**

Our Lady's Island is a pilgrimage site located in the south east of Ireland, within county Wexford and the Catholic diocese of Ferns. It lays on the southern coast of the county, about 20km from the town of Wexford, itself a site of significant Norse and French settlement since the eighth century. The pilgrimage site is surrounded on three sides by *Loch Tóchair* (the lake of the causeway) but is not an island. The causeway connects the old settlement and pilgrimage site with the small village of the same name. Murphy (n.d.: 7) outlines the pre-Christian significance of the site as one trading post among many between Scandinavia and the Mediterranean and, more pointedly, a pagan shrine for the Celts. Our Lady's Island is not far from two pagan shrine sites at Ballytrent and Carne. Given its proximity to water, pre-Christian wells and its female druidic connections (Murphy, n.d.: 7-9), it is unsurprising that Christians rededicated this area as the island of Our Lady. Research by Nolan & Nolan (1989: 120) shows that 13% of shrines in Ireland show a devotion to Mary, placing Ireland at the lower end of a Western European list of this measure. This site in Wexford is known by many names from its Christianisation onward: Forth, the meadow of the women, the causeway, the island of Barry, Mary's island (Murphy, n.d.: 10). Its place on the circuit of pilgrimages conducted throughout the medieval period and following the Anglo-Norman conquest of Gaelic Ireland in the 1170s is well established. The site is not associated with any particular relic, as was the custom in many other pilgrimage sites of the pre-Reformation period. As a result, it did not undergo the same papal censuring as other sites did (e.g. see later at Lough Derg) following the Counter-Reformation. Pilgrims to Our Lady's Island and other pilgrimage sites were granted indulgences by

proclamations of popes Paul V in 1607 and Pius X in 1904. A period of relative stability persisted here on this site and the nearby holy well at the townland of Eardownes West until the persecution of Irish Catholics in the mid to late seventeenth century. Like many other holy sites in Ireland after the coming of Cromwell and until the repeal of the Penal Laws in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Our Lady's Island is held to be all the more powerful for its endurance (de Val, 2007: 5-8). This landscape now seems shorn of much of this longer term political contestation but its persistence to the present is not insignificant. Sites like Our Lady's Island do not connect with secular time, the privileged time of our age (Asad, 2003).

The present day narrative of the site's importance is given weight by its survival from these times. From de Val's account, there was a break in the pilgrimage for thirty years period until 1897, when a reported 1,500 people attended. The present day pilgrimage took its form from this later time. The pilgrimage's route is intimately denominated in the official Our Lady's Island brochure (n.d.). The Rosary is inscribed directly on to the landscape:

The **ROSARY** is the prayer of Our Lady's Island. Pilgrims say 15 (20) Decades of the Rosary while making the round of the island.

...

The **ROSARY** is the shape of Our Lady's Island. The Church is the crucifix, the causeway is the Creed and introductory prayers, the decades are the round of the island.

In the shape of the island we have the Rosary itself, the prayers signifying the rounding practice at this site. The practice of reciting the decades of the Rosary are built directly into the landscape, into the shape of the island. In the same brochure we see the site being extolled as "an unspoiled natural place" and "a veritable haven". De Val (2007: 22) dedicates a section of his booklet to the breeding seabirds and the deepening of the sense of one "being in a very special place". He also points out that the tidal lake is opened to the sea every few years so that the island is not inundated. The place making occurring now at Our Lady's Island stems both from its pre-Christian and Christian meanings and its natural beauty.

### ***The site and pilgrimage***

The site is a very quiet part of the surrounding area. Out of season, there is often only the sound of the waves lapping on the coast, the birds and the sound of the nearby electricity-generating windmills. The ruins of the Norman castle and an accompanying graveyard make up the bulk of the island. A holy well site devoted directly to Mary lies on the western side of the island; before that stands a statue of Mary. Directly in front of the Norman ruin is a covered Christian altar and accompanying votive lights. To the left of this is a statue of Mary and another ruined part of the Norman building. The photographs below show the relationship between these elements of the site. The pilgrimage season opens on August 15<sup>th</sup> annually, to mark the feast day of the Assumption of Mary into heaven and ends on September 8<sup>th</sup>, the day designated as Mary's birthday. Mass is celebrated twice daily during this period. On the opening and closing days, pilgrims are gathered near the enclosed altar in rows of temporary seats; the majority of the space of the causeway is used for car parking. The existing public address system is activated for the day to call pilgrims to the Holy Mass.



**Plate 4.1: Looking from the Norman ruins across the causeway to the Church of the Assumption (1864)**



**Plate 4.2: Statue of Mary (by Scallan, 1933) at Our Lady's Island**



**Plate 4.3: Preparation being made for Mass at Our Lady's Island**

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, as the crowd gathers for Mass, the causeway fills up with cars. The coaches leave more pilgrims from across the south-east of Ireland on the main road.

They walk the short distance from the road to the pilgrimage site, no more than three hundred metres for most. A few kilometres back, the police are controlling the incoming traffic ensuring that those passing through know of the events up the road. Mass starts at 3pm but most people are in place well before this. The pilgrimage at Our Lady's Island is a relatively informal gathering: some gather at the church beforehand (particularly wheelchair using pilgrims), others take the sacrament of reconciliation directly outside, others still browse the extensive collection of miraculous medals and ephemera available to buy at the gift shop. People seem to know the routine of the day: doing as much as they can before the rounding of the island.



**Plate 4.4: Statue of Christ and gift shop on the grounds of the Church of the Assumption, Our Lady's Island. The church building is visible in plate 4.1.**

A woman calling over the public address narrates pilgrims into place. She adds references to the gospel to provide authority while regulating pilgrims' behaviour:

We ask now that everyone becomes still and quiet in preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist. Jesus said: 'come spend a quiet hour with me'. In deference to His invitation, we switch off our mobile phones. (transcribed from recording)

The bishop of Ferns opens the Mass with a blessing and he prays that "we may find peace of mind and heart in this special place". The regulation at the main pilgrimage site is governed by the rows of seats but, as I discovered, some did not leave their cars on the causeway for the entire pilgrimage. Those who stayed in their car were asked to

turn on their car's hazard lights if they wished to receive the consecrated bread. Following Mass, the pilgrims are asked to hold up any objects ("aids to prayer") that they have and they blessed by the bishop. The same narration follows Mass when petals to guide the way of the procession are blessed and the order of the procession is formed: the cross and gospels are carried first, the priests are next and they are followed by ministers of the Eucharist, of the Word and then the bishop who walks under a canopy. The flowers and petals are borne by the girls who made their First Communion that year and these are strewn in advance of the monstrance within which the blessed sacrament is placed. Pilgrims are then called into the procession:

We ask that you follow the stewards' instructions as you go around the island.  
(transcribed from recording)

In a discussion with Fr. Brendan Nolan, parish priest of Our Lady's Island parish (July 2010), he emphasised that the opening of the pilgrimage season is a central part of catechesis for Catholics. In recent years he had made efforts to place more emphasis on the prominence of the gospels (the Word) ahead of the folk elements of the pilgrimage, by which he meant a carried and garlanded statue of Mary. While he did not object to the carrying in "from outside" of the Marian statue, he felt that his recent efforts to put the book of the gospels before the statues remains an important part of the "liturgical adjustment" that had to be carried out. He does not object to these elements but "he keeps a close eye" on them because he feels that the catechesis he desires may not be in the bearing of the statue:

We stress to everyone...from the point of view of weather, those hardy souls who wish to go around are very welcome to form into procession very shortly. If you don't wish to do so you're welcome to stay here, go to your cars, go to the community centre but we will process around the island. (transcribed from recording)

These orderings in this place are an attempt to formalise the relative informality of Our Lady's Island. The orderings are bound to the performance of the pilgrimage: Fr. Nolan draws attention to this. The rounding of the island consists of the Rosary, led by the narrator over the public address system which circles the route. In 2010, Dr Ronan Foley and I walked ahead of the procession to take some photographs. Significance is given to the place of the book of gospels in relation to the head of the procession.

Stewards ensure that no one gets ahead of this gap between book and cross. From this first photograph from 2010, the scale and order of the procession can be seen.



**Plate 4.5: Procession at Our Lady's Island, August 2010. Note the garlanded statue of Mary is well behind the front of the procession.**

In 2011, the crowd processing was considerably smaller because of the poor weather but followed the same ordering. The procession and pilgrims approach the Marian statue after the turn of the rounding, proceeding on to the western side of the island. At the Marian statue, which was not acknowledged by the head of the procession, some people stopped to leave offerings at its base or, like the woman photographed below, simply touched its base and blessed themselves.



**Plate 4.6: Haptic practice at the Marian statue on the west side of Our Lady's Island**

Rounding the site in 2011 as a pilgrim was very different from walking ahead of the procession in 2010. Being ahead of the procession meant that I was a spectator, not a pilgrim. Walking ahead of the procession means conducting ethnographic research and gathering data, being perceived and perceiving the events as they unfolded. In 2010, when the procession reached the Mary statue on the west side, I stopped to take photographs of people touching the statue and then walked on among them to the end. In 2011, I took no photographs but digitally recorded the recitation of the Rosary as I walked around with the pilgrims. I felt more comfortable in 2011 taking part than walking ahead in 2010. This practice, where the reflexivity of the research design as it unfolds, will be discussed also in the other sites.

### ***Performance of the pilgrimage***

At Our Lady's Island, pilgrimage consists of a rounding with liturgical celebration based on the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament at either end. As is evident from the account above, the role of the narrator is crucial to the calling of the pilgrims together and in maintaining a reverential tone at the site where the potential for transgression is significant. People arrive in their own time but know that Mass commences at 3pm. While people travel in their own cars and make the short walk to the rows of seats, many more arrive on buses (mostly older women) from the surrounding region. In all, there may have been about 5,000 people in August 2010 and fewer than that in the wetter opening day pilgrimage of 2011. Across the weeks of the pilgrimage season, and most particularly on the closing day on September the 8<sup>th</sup>, the pilgrimage is popular with Irish Travellers. This minority ethnic group maintains a devotion to Mary often considered stronger than settled Catholics in Ireland. At many Irish pilgrimage sites, particularly those devoted specifically to Mary, Travellers are the most visible minority grouping.

The elements of the pilgrimage that were de-emphasised in the official Church ritual were those associated with the cult of Mary. In my interview with Fr. Nolan, then parish priest, the pilgrimage at Our Lady's Island should have four elements:

- Christ's presence in the assembly
- In the person of the priest is the presence of Christ
- Christ's presence through the reading of the scripture, and

- The sacred spaces of the bread and wine.

There is no mention in this catechetical index of the performance of the walking that makes up the pilgrimage. In relegating the statue of Mary brought in “from outside”, Fr. Nolan did not wish to disrespect the pre-existing cult that was fostered by the Secular Franciscan Order from Wexford town. However, he felt that the symbol of the written word needed to take an eminence in this moment of catechesis. Notable too is the role for the priest, standing in for Christ. At this remove I am not sure if the eminence of the word for the priest was a way to dispel ambiguities surrounding the pre-Christian meaning of Mary. In the rounding of the island, pilgrims keep the water of the lake on their left, the side of the body associated with suspicion. Mary’s links with water (a substance that can take life as easily as it can sustain it) foregrounds her ambiguous place within Christianity as intercessor and as a woman who gave birth and yet retained her virginity. The front of the procession neither acknowledged or stopped at the Marian statue on the west of the island nor the holy well dedicated to Mary a little further on. Mary is known in the brochure produced by the Church as part of “a celtic tradition of devotion to the Mother of God”, as a figure through which pilgrims go to Christ. Fr. Nolan also spoke of how the Mariology of the site needs to be seen in “accordance with a healthy Christology”. Mary in this framework is the church in her non-legal and ambiguous personage, “a collective mother in the order of freedom” (Turner & Turner, 2011: 171). Older accounts of the pilgrimage retold in Murphy (n.d.) talk of the three stations or altars over the course of the pilgrimage. I am going to assume these to be at the castle ruin, at the western statue and the well. The recent liturgical changes have de-emphasised these elements.

It seems to me that Our Lady’s Island has been masculinised in recent years in as much as Mary’s ambiguous symbolism has been put into the background by Church authorities and the practices of devotees. The place making that is occurring emphasises the centrality of the word of God, in the person of Christ and echoed in the priest himself. This re-establishment of orthodoxy is not uncommon at pilgrimage sites (Turner & Turner, 2011: 140-144). Taylor (1995: 53-54) writes about the episcopal censuring of pilgrimages to well sites (“between the chapel and the well”) in the eighteenth century, principally for their excesses of drinking and sexual activity. It is unclear to me that the well at Our Lady’s Island was ever such a site (de Val, 2007: 9). These recent re-orderings of the place, to lay an emphasis on the sacraments received by Christians, would suggest that pilgrimage sites are subject to regulation (and the

reinterpretation of this) over different periods. The place of the seven sacraments has been materialised in Marian-blue banners carried during the procession (below). The significance of this place is being re-ordered for the present, arising out of a more ancient ritual.



**Plate 4.7: Banners bearing the seven sacraments in Marian blue, Our Lady's Island 2010**

Some but not all of the pilgrims touch the western statue of Mary as they pass while others leave votive offerings, this now being a minority practice at Our Lady's Island. On the two opening-day site visits, I noted three pilgrims conducting this pilgrimage in their bare feet. Conducting the pilgrimage in bare feet is often associated with doing an additional canonical penance, sometimes ordered directly by a priest; pilgrimage done on one's knees is an especially hard penance. Logan (1980: 154) cites a Cromwellian sceptic Col. Richards who states how in 1682 some people would "doe penance going bare-leg and bare-foote, dabbling in the water up to mid-leg round the Island". This practice of liminality (of a foot in both worlds) seems to have faded out over time; I could see no evidence of this on the two occasions of fieldwork. This is hardly surprising given the liturgical adjustments that have been made over the years since the revival in the late nineteenth century. It also shows a lessening of the pain involved in pilgrimage more generally.

The practices of pilgrimage at Our Lady's Island are considerably less onerous than at other sites in Ireland. In a sense the place made here is now more secular: informed by a different sense of performing pilgrimage. Pilgrims round the island once only and this is

bookended by defined Christian liturgy. As will become clear, the public that this appeals to is different from that seen on other pilgrimages. In contrast to the experience at Lough Derg, where cut knees and tiredness are the norm, Our Lady's Island is a gentle reminder of Catholic practice.

The rounding part of the pilgrimage is not physically difficult, the challenge is for pilgrims to maintain a prayerful disposition during the walk around the island. Very few undertook this pilgrimage with walking boots or specialist equipment. De Val (2007: 16) admits that the "pilgrimage of today may have lost much of its penitential quality" but it retains an emphasis on the Rosary. The narration provided over the public address seeks to organise pilgrim behaviour loosely, but organising it nonetheless. I would argue that Our Lady's Island defies the categorisation of pilgrimage places that extend into the periphery from some identifiable centre of their own lives (Nolan & Nolan, 1989: 7). In the past, the site would have required several days walk for a pilgrim from Waterford or Enniscorthy and no doubt this exteriorized faith journey would have come with its own risks. The site sits at the edge of a low-lying plain in the south of the county but is not difficult to reach. People come to the site to be pilgrims but choose which elements of the pilgrimage they wish to undertake: the "hardy souls" (recording) who round the island on the wet opening day of the 2011 season; others remain in their cars to receive the consecrated bread during Mass. Logan (1980: 154) tells of this form of prosthetic pilgrimage through earlier accounts which state:

If any Lady through indisposition be loath to wet her feete, there are women allowed to do it for them, they being present and paying half a crown for a fee...and this penance is effective enuffe.

Logan (in his 1978 fieldwork) does not report any bare foot pilgrims at the water's edge but does remark how people in small numbers rounded the island near the water. The practice of walking partially in water has been discarded. Outside of the pilgrimage season, Our Lady's Island is a popular place for recreational walking given its defined pathway and ample free parking. The demands on pilgrims' bodies are not great at Our Lady's Island but it is not just physical experience that is embodied here. This place is not separate from spiritual practice but an addition to it. It is not a place set apart, to which pilgrims endure a hardship to attend. Following MacKian (2012: 69-80), I want to locate everyday spiritualities in places like Our Lady's Island as well as in the 'home place' from which these pilgrims have come. There is nothing definably private about

these religious practices. MacKian outlines a spilling out into space of spiritual practice, one that is not confined to the church or the chapel. As I have shown, this is a regulated space, one that is negotiated through ecclesial and civil authority. She also follows Kong's call to examine the unofficially sacred space-times and in doing so, brings forward three ways to locate spiritual practice: examine the work of 'the professionals' or those accredited in the ways of a religion or spirituality; examine the practices of those who have immersed themselves in spirituality, those who took on 'alternative' lifestyles based on their faith; finally, examine the spiritual turn in "the wider culture, and here the picture is vast" (MacKian, 2012: 72). MacKian seeks to locate everyday spirituality as not solely being spatially and temporally bound but instead arising from situated experiences and practices. It is this way of understanding spirituality at sites like Our Lady's Island that is most useful. Pilgrims recall several parallel temporal logics by completing their pilgrimage: remembering past pilgrimages conducted here for many centuries, the time of the gospels through the Mass and their 'own' time through their walking at this place. This multi-temporal character adds to the complex relations and the becoming into place at this site. Pilgrims are not just present in 2011 but draw from a longer history of this place, some of the meanings of which may well be pre-Christian.

The pilgrimage at Our Lady's Island is a contested space between pilgrims and Church authority. While the narration proceeded before Mass, people continued to talk among themselves behind the rows of seats and others stood off to one side, taking shelter in the trees. As the gospels were brought from the church building out over the causeway to the altar, people carried on conversations. A small number of women with baby buggies went ahead of the procession and talked among themselves, not praying the Rosary. The place was negotiated into becoming a religious place. As Taylor (1995: 135) clarifies, to see people at religious missions, holy wells and prayer meetings as mere ciphers of institutional-structural power renders them invisible. It also adds to the mystification and, I would argue, the political bracketing of religion as empty and devoid of agency. However, later he argues (Taylor, 1995: 232) "'religious" experience of the prayer meeting took shape in the context of social and power relations". To record experiences of pilgrimage at Our Lady's Island solely as examples of institutional-structural power is to bracket out these contestations. It politically discounts the site of pilgrimage and in this discounting, I argue here that it becomes religious. It exists, and continues to do so, in a produced space for the pilgrims and is a

moment of catechesis for the Church as institution. Fr. Nolan seeks to change the order of the place over time. That such a catechetical moment is politically discounted elsewhere (as backward or irrelevant etc.) is not incidental to its practice. Were it not open to contestation and change through practice, it would be fixed fast in such relations. The social conditions prevailing on this site are produced and this production is tended to, by both the pilgrims and by the Church authority. No one stable meaning of this pilgrimage could be maintained in any way because of this negotiation over place making. This is a field of social relations, relatively open to a politics of gender, for example, brought to that place and at the same time closed by particular practices at that place.



**Plate 4.8: Women and men gather at the site of the holy well, opening day 2010 Our Lady's Island**

In the picture above, it is mostly Traveller women who stop and leave offerings at the well, itself dominated by a large cross towering over the statue of Mary below. A male pilgrim walks through the field of wheat in the background. This gendering of the well site within the context of the pilgrimage as a whole is significant because it remains outside the current ordering of the Church's understanding of the pilgrimage procession. The well is not officially acknowledged during the pilgrimage. Defined practices by the women have been 'ordered out' of the pilgrimage at this place. *Not* to find such an 'ordering out' would be surprising for it is in the relationship in the moment of transgression that we need an established order.

The site of Our Lady's Island is off the main road to Rosslare Europort and is on state land, managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. This is a site of pilgrimage in a place that is already crossed by many meanings. It is a hybridised place, continuously coming into being through religious performance. Through the bundling

of particular events (there is no relic or apparition here) at this place, sacredness is brought and maintained here. The meaning of the pagan or Norman significance to this place may be long forgotten but it retains its significance through practice. The geography of this pilgrimage crosses boundaries between what is public and what is private. The liturgical celebration is held in a space which is open to everyone but why would one come here unless it made sense in a broader set of practices and experiences? In the official brochure of the site, Our Lady's Island is drawn into a larger relation with Fatima, Lourdes and Lough Derg. Its liminal state between land and sea, Ireland and other places is brought to attention by this passage in the brochure:

Here, as in Lough Derg, beliefs keep faith with the celtic [*sic*] tradition of devotion to the Mother of God and, through her, to the love and veneration that place her Son, Jesus, firmly in the hearts of the Irish people and the Irish pilgrim. This same spirit draws them to other places of Marian devotion, like Lourdes and Fatima and Knock, but nowhere is the sense of mystery *more impenetrable and, at the same time, more tangible, than in the sanctuary of Our Lady's Island.* (emphasis added)

Our Lady's Island is embodied by the pilgrim but is also networked with other places of devotion elsewhere. They are in communion with others in this place and with other Christians across the world.

## **Croagh Patrick**

Place making at Croagh Patrick is more contested than at Our Lady's Island. It is a site of annual pilgrimage for some and a life goal for others. It is the site of Patrick's own pilgrimage of the fifth century where he was tormented by flocks of crows for a period of forty days and nights, localising Christ's desert wanderings of the gospels. It is the site of Mayo county pride and the Catholic Church's National Pilgrimage which takes place annually on Reek Sunday, the last Sunday in July. It is a county Mayo mountain 764 metres in height, towering above Clew bay, with as many islands as there are days in the calendar. It is a challenge for Matt Loughrey, local photographer, who ascended and descended the mountain every day for one entire year to raise funds for the Catholic charity, the Society of St Vincent de Paul. It is a site of pagan and Celtic mysticism where the mountain takes on a sacred character. On Reek Sunday in particular, it is a site of the management of almost twenty thousand people. Business and principles of local development mix headily to produce the experience of 'doing the Reek'.

### ***The site and pilgrimage***

My fieldwork at this site took place in late July 2011 with a three day walk from Achill head on the north of Clew bay. I had left Dublin on July 27<sup>th</sup>, making my way via train and bus to Achill head, at the western edge of Ireland. I stayed in a tent for three nights at Achill, Mulranney and Newport, intending to arrive on the eve of Reek Sunday. The mountain was distant but always present on this walk. The routine of pitching the tent, eating and moving on along the Greenway track became responses to places, not planned events like work meetings or the timetables of others' imperatives. If there are similarities between tourism and pilgrimage, I did not feel them at the twelve kilometre point on day three as I came to the outskirts of Westport. In this way, my fieldwork at Croagh Patrick represented a personal journey away from a centre (Dublin) to a periphery of my own making (Achill) and walking toward what became a new centre (Croagh Patrick) a few miles outside of Westport. This was an exercise in auto-ethnography, note-taking, personal accommodation and physical compromise.

Croagh Patrick is situated between the small towns of Murrisk and Lecanvey on the south side of Clew Bay, county Mayo. The entry point for most pilgrims on Reek Sunday is at a point between the towns. Hill walkers and others can approach the mountain's east side from the saddle of the adjacent Crott Mountain and Patrick's Well. For at least two kilometres on the Westport side of the road, the police place bollards to prevent parking on the road, local pubs and traders set up temporary car parks and stalls selling drinks and roughly hewn walking sticks. The photographs that follow show the scene near to the main car park and on the roadside.



**Plate 4.9: Road into Murrisk near to pedestrian entrance to Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo**



**Plate 4.10: Fast-food outlet, main car park, Croagh Patrick Co Mayo. The pathway to the saddle of the mountain is visible in the background, middle right. The fast food chain pictured here pays €100 per annum in fees to the considerably less busy Community Development Association café across the car park.**

The car park area adjacent to the entrance to the pilgrimage site is very busy on the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup> of July. I arrived a little after 9am and I heard people talking about “locals who were coming down already”. People from the surrounding area ascend the mountain under cover of darkness and on the day / Sunday before (Garland Sunday). The walkway leading from the car park to the first statue of St Patrick is about five hundred metres long and quite narrow. I intended to take up a position somewhere here for about two hours and distribute my postcards seeking narratives from pilgrims. After I picked my point on this passageway, I was told by several pilgrims that they would not take my flyer because they had “got one already”, indicating, like the man at the start of the chapter, that several groups had tried to solicit attention along this narrow space. To those I wanted to research I was another person trying to get their attention for one reason or another.

The area around the car park has a Marian shrine, exhorting silence and petitions, and is inspired by the Medjugorje apparition (connecting it with the broader network of pilgrimage sites) as well as temporary stalls selling devotional objects and a marquee on behalf of the Catholic Archdiocese of Tuam. The photograph below shows a section of this walkway. The men on the left of the photograph are handing out juice for the pilgrims.



**Plate 4.11: Evangelical groups providing refreshments for pilgrims at Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo.**

One of the men above offered me a drink, thinking that I was a pilgrim. I explained to him “that I didn’t deserve one as I am only taking photographs”. To him I was a pilgrim because I was there and dressed like one, boots, shorts, etc. For some reason I wanted to distinguish myself from the others around me: I am researching, they are pilgrims. At what point does this cease to be place in formal geographic terms and at what point am I a researcher and not just someone taking photographs? I tried to hand the postcard to many different kinds of people and tried to compensate for those that I thought were dressed as pilgrims as opposed to those dressed as hill-walkers. My postcard was competing for the pilgrims’ attention with many other groups.

The mountain is a religious place, inscribed by both the meaning that the pilgrims bring to it in late July and the ways in which the Catholic Church creates a landscape of memory and history there as the place of National Pilgrimage. But it is a place of political contestation, networked with broader political processes. In the 1980s, the mountain was investigated and prospected as a possible source of gold. At pilgrimage sites more generally, the religious remains relatively confined but at Croagh Patrick, this confinement is not total. As I will show, place making here at Croagh Patrick is not confined to religious place making, grounded as private belief.



**Plate 4.12:** The statue of St Patrick at the base of Croagh Patrick. Note the rounding practice on the right and the photographic opportunity on the left.

### ***Performance of the pilgrimage***

I approach my work at Croagh Patrick through the clothing styles visible on a day like Reek Sunday. In contrast to Our Lady's Island, this is a much more demanding terrain. Pilgrims ascend over seven hundred meters in a part of Ireland where rainfall is higher than average. There are some marked differences in the clothing of the pilgrims. Younger men and women generally wore specialised walking clothes and boots, brandished walking poles and used water carriers built into their clothing to hydrate. Men and women from the Travelling community wore clothing more suited to regular work, with the younger men sometimes stripped down to a vest. It was not a cold day and the exertion of the climb would make you sweat. The differences in the clothing indicate a variation in disposition toward what this places means: for some it is a leisure pursuit. Photographs are taken at the statue of St Patrick as above, for others it is an annual devotional exercise to be undertaken in quotidian clothing (Plate 4.12). The picture above shows this variation: the woman and child partially obscured on the left

are posing for a photograph with Clew Bay on their right. Others round, touch the statue of St Patrick and pray the Rosary, not two metres from the people getting their photo taken. The picture captures the multiple ways that place is made at the pilgrimage site. Croagh Patrick has three stations where rounding exercises are conducted (this statue is not one of them). Many of the older men I saw descending were wearing regular black street shoes, perhaps unprepared for the climb. In a simplistic dichotomy, the picture above represents tourism and religious pilgrimage in the same place. But I do not know the motivations for those on the left of the photograph in the same way as I do not know the motivations of those rounding the statue. Holloway (2003: 1964-1965) brings forward this non-representational way of writing about belief in place and in particular:

The body as a signifying and meaning-creating materiality without necessarily recourse to discursive inscription of textualised explication. In other words, the sanctity of space is corporeally enacted and physically sensed *as* enacted. (Holloway, 2003: 1964-1965)

This produced space is multiply re-produced, based on differing intentions toward objects and other people in place here. This is achieved corporeally. Both Nolan & Nolan (1989) and Turner & Turner (2011) systematised pilgrimage, using dichotomies of religious tourism and pilgrimage, sacred and secular etc. Nolan (1983: 422) went on to criticise Turner & Turner for homogenising the differences in pilgrimage practice across regions, particularly when it came to Ireland. But how do I theorise the evident multiplicity? The many understandings brought to bear by pilgrims at this site differ from those at Our Lady's Island.

On the opening day of the Wexford pilgrimage for example, people tend not to arrive after the Mass to walk behind the gospels as a leisure pursuit. For some here in Mayo, this is a site of Christian heritage, spatialised by the institutional Catholic Church in very particular ways. The Archdiocese of Tuam cannot control the spaces at the car park but it controls many of the meanings at the summit where St Patrick's bed and a small chapel are laid out. Mass is continuously celebrated on the summit from before dawn and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is given from early morning to early afternoon on July 31<sup>st</sup>. The penitential aspects of the pilgrimage are emphasised in the press releases sent by the Catholic Communications Office in advance and the text of the Archbishop's homilies fix this place with a Christian tradition stretching back to Patrick himself to leave no one in doubt of the mountain's holiness. For others however, it is a

physiological challenge, something that is ‘done’, signifying another mark on the list of things to do before one gets too old. As Holloway (2003: 1962) points out certain practices (classed as either sacred or profane) are the labour of the division between the sacred and the profane; such a division is not yet achieved. It is not as if on this day and at this place, the institutional Catholic Church in Ireland makes the site sacred; it is produced space. Pilgrimage is conducted here and could not be transferred to a secular, other place. Maddrell (2009: 676) in her study of the Witness Cairn at Galloway, reminds us that “evidence of secularisation is not synonymous with the elimination of beliefs”. The practice at Croagh Patrick makes sense of the religiousness in this place; but pilgrims are not merely the receiving vessel of sense. Thought of in this way, pilgrimage is less about the profane ‘here’ and the sacred ‘there’ but about how certain practices of people make religious places. Attempts to officially codify the motivations and beliefs of pilgrims have largely failed (Frey, 1998: 33-37) and the sincerity of motivation by the granting of the Camino stamp for example is sometimes challenged through ‘public’ adjudication (Frey, 1998: 160). Motivations in coming to a pilgrim’s starting point cannot be codified even if such a point could be identified. Instead, pilgrimage draws on different temporalities and seeks to overcome the present-ness of pilgrims’ lives.



**Plate 4.13: The pilgrims' way on Reek Sunday with the mountain top clearing.**

A significant cultural memory of this place is a tradition of doing it bare foot. When I mention to others that I have been at Croagh Patrick they tell me in the past people used to do it bare foot, a major component of the memory of this place. I noted only four or five people in my two hours at the site who were walking bare foot. One younger man,

dressed only in a t-shirt with a charity logo and jeans was descending bare foot as I approached the statue of St Patrick. He was audibly and frequently panting with a look of pain on his face. He was on his own at this point. Because of the year round traffic on the mountain path to the summit, Mayo County Council has to replenish the rocks on the path in order to minimise erosion. The peak is steep only for the last one hundred metres but it is the descent which provides the greatest challenge to pilgrims. Pilgrims slip on the rocks on their descent and can crash into other pilgrims. This occurred during my (2009) descent and I ended up coming down for some of the way on all fours as the rock slipped. Men (many in street shoes) twice my own age took their time and the rocks did not seem to bother them. Because of the risks involved, a unit of the Civil Defence ascends mid-morning on Reek Sunday and, as can be seen from plate 4.12, a helicopter is on standby to airlift pilgrims from the mountain.

Celebration of the Eucharist is not obligatory on the summit on Reek Sunday. The chapel is generally not open for the rest of the year but the site of St Patrick's bed remains present as it has done for some time. There are many other mountains to climb across the region, particularly to the south but to 'do the Reek' calls together several bundles of meaning, chief among these that it is a holy mountain. As with Our Lady's Island, the institutional Catholic Church can inform pilgrims of the right and proper relationship between their penance and Christ's forgiveness but there is a call to a specific identity related to this place. This is constituted by the socio-political conditions within which it operates as well as by the exertions necessary to walk on the physical landscape. In the same way as the police mediate the traffic conditions at a distance from Our Lady's Island, Croagh Patrick as a place of meaning is made as much by the fee charged at the car park below as it is by the Mass on the summit (after Ivakhiv, 2006). This is a dynamic and relational process which draws on a sense of place not determined either by the constructed meanings given to it or the experience in this place (Belhassan et al., 2008: 671-673). This can often start before arriving at the site of pilgrimage. Nearby Ballintubber Abbey is seen as a starting point for a longer pilgrimage to the Reek. This is drawn out in the approach to the site in Croagh Patrick and reflected in the signage in advance of the main pathway.



**Plate 4.14: Signage near the statue of St Patrick, Croagh Patrick. The text on the paper sign reads “:) Happy Feet :) Free Foot Washing... This Way. “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet.” John Chapter 13 Verse 14.”**

Pilgrims may keep strictly to the path but the appeal for people not to climb on wet or foggy days is ignored: this particular Sunday was both wet and foggy. The signage placed temporarily underneath spans both formal Christian evangelisation and usage of SMS emoticons. There is no means to judge the authentic way in which to ‘do Croagh Patrick’, either as pilgrim or tourist. In trying to analyse the meaning of this place, the question of authenticity remains important because the performance at this place is framed by what people bring to the site and what they find when they get here. Both the bodily experience of pilgrims on this day and many others at a site like Croagh Patrick and the properties of the place itself are invoked:

Social constructions help to shape not only the meaning of toured objects for pilgrims, but also the meaning of their own activities and experiences in the visited space. Thus, pilgrims’ experiences of existential authenticity are the result of socially constructed understandings about the places they are touring and the actions they are undertaking in those places, combined with their own direct, empirical encounters (Belhassan et al., 2008: 684-685).

Those with the strongest faith in God and the power of St Patrick’s intercession will find the approach to the summit no less physically challenging than an avowed atheist. The pilgrim may pray for divine assistance and the experienced hill walker may try to gauge the ascent by the conditions around her. Meanings of this place are drawn out

from the place and cannot be contained by their nomination as part of secular or religious logics. This space is being dynamically re-produced, an outcome of which is the production of the religious and the secular in relation each other. The contestation over religious and secular place making is heightened because no one institution fixes the meaning making at this site. It is crossed by competing meanings of the place as a location for health maintenance, leisure and religious devotion.

There is no closed off meaning for pilgrimage at Croagh Patrick, the relations for which remain contested. The pilgrimage appeals to many publics, neither of which could be determined as part of a defined public sphere. The pilgrims find these relational ways of being in this place through its production. The links made between these produced spaces and other social relations require foregrounding for a better understanding of religious place making. The 'there' of the pilgrims' experiences (including my own flow through the spaces) is also a produced space, not something ineffable, distinct from another part of human experience. The people attending to pilgrimage at Croagh Patrick on this day are not all 'religious' people. To construe all of the practices and senses of belonging on this morning of the fieldwork as religious does a disservice to both geographic thought on place making and to the intentionality of all those who undertake it.

## **Lough Derg**

If Croagh Patrick shows the contestations over religious and secular place making, Lough Derg in county Donegal is a place struggling with competing logics of penitence and self-care. The third grounding of the secular and the religious through pilgrimage is about the negotiation over these competing logics at Lough Derg. Pilgrimage at Lough Derg (formally known as St Patrick's Purgatory) spans across several timeframes, depending on the commitment undertaken by the pilgrim. Pilgrimages last from half a day to three days in duration with pilgrims following prescribed timetables of prayer, reflection, Mass and stations. The emphasis at St Patrick's Purgatory is just that: purgation by the penitent of the outside world. By purging oneself, pilgrims attune themselves to receiving God's grace and, in the words of the Lough Derg Season Guide "connect with St Patrick and the Celtic Church in Ireland". Lough Derg offers Quiet Days ("ideal for busy professionals craving time out"), mother and daughter retreats and an Introduction to Angels courses. This suite of options has emerged in response to

making Lough Derg speak to a changing geography of religion in Ireland. But it was not always so.

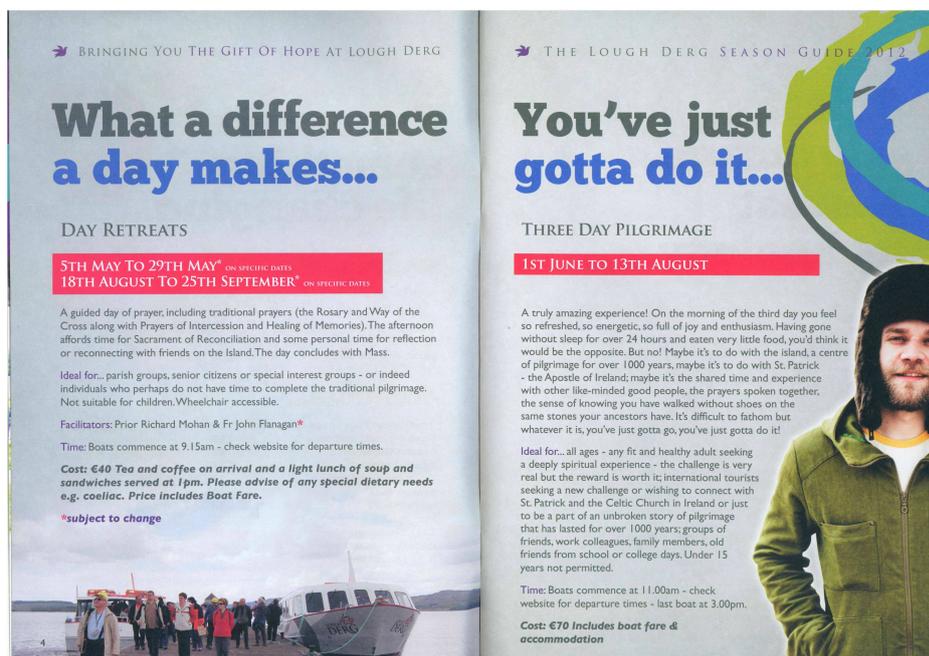


Plate 4.15: Scan of the Lough Derg Season Guide, 2012

St Patrick's Purgatory lies on an island within a lake called Lough Derg and is enclosed within the Catholic parish of Pettigo in the diocese of Clogher. According to Duffy (1993: 27) the word Pettigo is derived from the Latin *protectio* or church sanctuary. This may partly explain why Lough Derg maintained its significance through the years of the Reformation and the anti-Catholic Penal Laws of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lough Derg is situated about six kilometres north of Pettigo, a town that is situated on the border between counties Donegal and Fermanagh. The town straddles the political boundary between the Republic and Northern Ireland. Pettigo's economy is linked intimately with this boundary and was the site of a large customs station until the early 1990s. Much of what follows comes from McGuinness's (2000) study of Lough Derg, itself a condensation of earlier studies including significant portions of Haren (1988) and de Pontfarcy (1988).

There are many islands within Lough Derg but a monastic settlement on Saints' Island is thought to provide the ecclesial basis for the area's sacredness. There is no evidence of St Patrick having been near this island or indeed this general area. Like Croagh Patrick, it is now associated with the foundational tale of Patrick, the man who is

credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland. St Davog's monastery was founded on Saints' Island in the sixth century but a further retreat to nearby Station Island now provides the material location of the pilgrimage at St Patrick's Purgatory. Station Island is home to the ruins of stone beehive huts (known now as 'the beds') proximate to a constructed 'cave' that forms the basis of current practices. Ireland's relative isolation from post-Roman Europe meant that a monastic church survived later in Ireland than on mainland Europe (McGuinness, 2000: 16). When diocesan control was being established through the twelfth century, control of the land within which the Purgatory lay was important because it provided a steady stream of income for the resident bishop. The lake stands at a termon site, a marker of the conjuncture of three administrative units, those of the king, a bishop and the people (Turner & Turner, 2011: 108). As De Pontfarcy reminds us, monasteries also tend to be built on political boundaries (1988: 33). Augustinian control in this part of Ireland remained strong through this time and the preservation of several written tracts on the purgatorial exercise is due in no small part to the order's prominence.

The notoriety of the purgatory on Station Island was aided by the Augustinian network across Europe but more so by the popularity of penitential pilgrimages in the period 1000-1500. In this sense, Lough Derg's popularity as a site of pilgrimage owes much to this period of pilgrimage activity across Europe as a whole. McGuinness (2000: 20-22) characterises this as an age of visions where the seclusion of the senses in dark spaces allowed access to the liminal experience of Purgatory. The theology of the time supported the notion that Christian souls were cleansed in this liminal space before entering heaven or hell. The seclusion and physical pain in the accounts provided by H of Saltrey and Knight Owein helped to popularise Lough Derg as a destination, an isolated outpost of Christendom where visions of hell could be readily accessed (McGuinness, 2000: 34-37). However, as De Pontfarcy (1988: 46) states, these medieval accounts are more mundane than theological in that:

Tortures of the sexual organs, torments of heat and cold and excruciating pain caused by sharp objects inserted into the flesh are part of the paraphernalia of the torments of hell. There is however a big difference. The unnamed hero [H of Saltrey] does not expiate any sins but appears like an innocent fool who has not learned to distrust his host and willingly gives himself into the hands of his torturers. The spirit of this story is totally secular. (De Pontfarcy, 1988: 46)

With the Reformation and Counter-reformation, colonial and papal censure for visions of hell in secluded places came under increasing scrutiny resulting in the formal closure of the 'cave' on Station Island. The medieval purgatorial exercise consisted of being locked for a number of days into the cave space, probably a souterrain of no more than a few metres long (McGuinness, 2000: 32). As the fifteenth century ended, the emphasis on visions and bodily mortification became unsupportable and, as Haren (1988: 200-201) states:

Penitential exercises came to replace otherworldly visions as its principal focus. The age of visionary literature was long over. ...the fascination exercised for several centuries by the Purgatory on the European imagination was passing...this quietism merged with a sceptical reserve in the face of all extravagance.

Seclusion with others in a defined space resonates in the form of the present three day pilgrimage. The change in the forms of mortification and penance is something I will return to in chapter six. The pilgrimage retained its regional popularity right down to the middle of the eighteenth century, including a nine day fast and a twenty four hour period locked in the cave which ends with release and dipping one's head in the water nearby. The regulation of the boats to take pilgrims from the shore caused considerable displeasure to the ecclesial authorities, particularly after the drowning of 1795. The poor condition of boats used on this July morning led to the drowning of all but three of 93 pilgrims. There are no other recorded deaths on the boats since this time. It was not until 1917 that the Church authorities bought out the rights to the ferries that local practices of extortion were quashed once and for all (McGuinness, 2000: 50-52). Lough Derg reflects many of the features of medieval pilgrimage, lying as it does in a north-western corner of Ireland on the western edge of Europe. Pilgrimage has been characterised by Turner & Turner (2011: 112-113) as a journey from the centre in Rome or Jerusalem to the edge, reflecting a journey to death and where the sun sets. However, like the earlier case studies, I would question this analysis where pilgrims move to the periphery from some centre. Does someone from rural Tipperary move to the centre when she goes to Lough Derg? Religious place making on some scales questions this mobility from centre to periphery.

### ***Performance at St Patrick's Purgatory***

Movement through and on the course of the three day pilgrimage is a regulated practice. This is impressed upon pilgrims as they wait for the boat onshore. Each of the three days is laid out on a timetable (reproduced below) and the order of each station is clearly delineated on laminated cards given to each pilgrim on entry. Following check in at the reception on the island, pilgrims remove all footwear and proceed to the single sex dormitories to deposit their belongings. The removal of footwear is a significant act in itself: pilgrims refer to it both literally and figuratively throughout the three days of pilgrimage. On the final day, a retired policeman from Kildare told me “watch now, all the shoes will go on and airs and graces come back”. In this he was drawing attention to the supposed levelling of status that occurred on arrival. It is true that removal of footwear allowed a vulnerability to emerge but in our barefoot condition, those who had been many times already distinguished themselves in the dormitories by donning ankle warmers and poked gentle fun of the first-timers, a source of distinction among pilgrims (Turner & Turner, 2011: 8-9). Pilgrims go to the basilica for a short briefing before completing the first three stations (one complete set of ‘beds’) by 9.20pm of the first day. It might be noted that the order of exercises has no Second Day as pilgrims are keeping vigil throughout the first night on the island, in keeping with the pre-Reformation exercise of abstaining from sleep. Pilgrims, who have been fasting since midnight on the day of arrival, are allowed black tea / coffee and bread / toast following one station. This will be the last food taken until 1.15pm on the afternoon of the ‘second day’ on the island.

**THE VIGIL** (10.00pm Day One to 10.00pm Day Two)  
This central penitential exercise of the Pilgrimage involves each pilgrim staying completely and continuously awake for 24 hours.

**LOUGH DERG – PLACE OF PRAYER**  
The atmosphere of peace and quiet, particularly near the Basilica and Penitential Beds, is a precious part of the pilgrimage experience.

**COUNSELLING**  
Professional Counsellors are available on the Island to offer a listening ear in a compassionate, Christian way. If you have any worry or concern that you would like to talk about you are welcome to avail of this service; times are displayed at Reception.

**DORMITORIES**

Day 1	Closed 4.00pm-7.30pm	Open 7.30pm-9.00pm (for pre-vigil rest & extra clothing)
Day 2	Open 7.30am-11.00am (for wash & change)	Closed 11.00am-7.30pm

**FACILITIES**

- Basilica – Public Worship, Stations, Vigil
- St Mary's Chapel – Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, Stations of the Cross, petitions
- Davog House – Group work & prayer guidance
- Quiet Room – A space to be by yourself
- Scripture Room – A place to honour the Sacred Scriptures
- Labyrinth – Reflection, meditation
- Shop – books, audio & video material, religious objects, souvenirs and basic toiletries
- First Aid Station – Medical assistance

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**  
Note position of fire alarms and observe fire-safety regulations in the event of an emergency. Smoking is permitted only in certain areas outside. Ashtrays are provided, as are bins for recyclable material and litter.

**ORDER OF EXERCISES**

**FIRST DAY**

12.00	Begin fast
midnight	Pilgrims arrive as early as possible (any day from 1st June to 13th August) register and await boat. Boats run regularly between 10.30am and 3.00pm.
11.00am	Begin Station - Complete 3 Stations before 9.15pm
6.30pm	Opening Mass
9.20pm	Night Prayer and Benediction

**THE VIGIL**

10.15pm	Introduction to Vigil
11.45pm	Rosary
12.30am	Fourth Station
2.00am	Fifth Station
3.30am	Sixth Station
5.00am	Seventh Station
6.30am	Morning Mass
8.30am	Sacrament of Reconciliation followed by Eighth Station
12.00 noon	Renewal of Baptismal Promises
3.00pm	Way of the Cross
6.30pm	Evening Mass
9.20pm	Night Prayer and Benediction
10.00pm	Conclusion of Vigil

**THIRD DAY**

6.00am	Bell for rising
6.30am	Closing Mass
7.30am	Ninth Station
9.45am	Departure of boats

Approved by ✠ Liam Mac Daid, Bishop of Clogher, 2012.

**Plate 4.16: Summary of the pilgrimage and order of exercises, Lough Derg.**

The order of the station, for me as a first time pilgrim to Lough Derg, is quite hard to remember. Over the course of the pilgrimage, each pilgrim completes nine stations in all, three before 9.20pm, four more completed together during the overnight vigil with the last two done on the second and third days. Each component of the station imports a specific meaning for the pilgrim but none is more spatially significant than ‘the beds’. The beds are the spaces around which pilgrims walk, kneel and pray in an order internal to the beds section of each station. They are the roofless remains of small prayer houses, about two metres in diameter. There is a small entrance to each bed and are more than likely those used by monks secluding themselves further from nearby Saints’ Island and form the centrepiece of Station Island’s topography. They are adjacent to the now-closed souterrain structure, on top of which stands a bell tower and bell. (The photograph below (Plate 4.17) shows the beds and the bell tower.) There are seven beds in all, six of which are rounded. Before the beds are reached in each station, pilgrims attend to the Blessed Sacrament in the basilica, kneel at St Patrick’s and St Brigid’s stone crosses and round the basilica itself four times, reciting seven decades of the Rosary as we round. A further rounding component is added at the early stage of each station where the basilica is rounded externally for the first three as well as the eighth and ninth stations. The silence when the stations begin following arrival is striking.

During these stations and around the beds, where people walk and kneel silently in close proximity, the sound of the wind dominates.

Behaviour at each station is highly regulated as space between the beds is limited. When rounding the basilica, pilgrims stretch their arms (to form a cross with their body) to “renounce the world, the flesh and the devil”, one walks slowly rounding the basilica, one queues near bed number one to await your turn and so on. These are not requests made of the pilgrims but demands. One man, who had been over twenty times, said to me later when I suggested that I might not renew my baptismal promise: “you don’t do what you want here, you do what they want you to do.” This is the key to its attraction for the men that I met over the course of the pilgrimage: its highly routinised spatial arrangement. By the second rounding of the station on the first day I thought that it was impossible to maintain a position of researcher. To this point I had not said each and every prayer of the first station and tried to observe the others conducting them.



**Plate 4.17: A view over the penitential beds, Lough Derg. Source: Lough Derg.**

The beds themselves shattered any pretence of detachment. I was kneeling on rock repeatedly, the existential discomfort and injury jarred me out of my assumed position as researcher. (Cameras and recording devices are not allowed on the pilgrimage at St Patrick’s Purgatory and so I rely on the photographs provided to me by the island’s administration.) The photo above shows the rounding of the beds that compose each station. These are the most significant and best known feature of the penitential practice at Lough Derg. Each of these beds is named after saints, local and international, and the

names are inscribed on bronze crosses found at the centre of each bed. There were about thirty people beginning the pilgrimage on the day that I arrived and so the beds were not crowded. Each bed consists of a ritual practice that required me to read the brochure on arrival. Pilgrims walk and pray around the outside, at the entrance to, inside and at the cross within each bed. Each bed is completed by kissing the cross at the centre. This complex rounding practice facilitates patterns of prayer and resonates with the practice of rounding at the mountain pass at *Máméan* and at other holy well sites (Foley, 2010: 20-21). For the unpractised at Lough Derg and for those like me without Rosary beads, keeping count is itself a task. The routine of counting takes second place to the ritual of prayer.

The descriptions of Lough Derg provided by Turner & Turner (2011: 108-112) are now out of date as much of the current Station Island is built on reclaimed land. They are correct however when they state that there is a layering of locations at Lough Derg with one object in space meaning many things, it is symbolically dense (Turner & Turner, 2011: 114). From the photograph below, the layout of the island is clear, with the larger portions of reclaimed land lying on the left of this image. The penitential core of the island is between the jetty and the octagonal basilica on the right.



**Plate 4.18: Station Island, Lough Derg. Source: Lough Derg.**

The rounding of the beds is followed by prayer at the water's edge that recalls the dipping of one's head in the water of the older pilgrimage practice. The alteration of the

practice is as much a secularisation as the declining practice of walking in the water in Our Lady's Island. From here, one has a view of Saints' Island. Further prayer at the cross of St Patrick and a final visit to the basilica completes one station. The living and the dead are connected through the living praying for the expurgation of the dead in the afterlife. The more prayer attended to in this life limits the suffering of those in Purgatory, itself a liminal spatial arrangement, being the space between paradise and hell. Following evening Mass and a night prayer (which means welcomed sleep for those here one day before us), our group is introduced to the vigil. We are reminded at this point why a vigil is necessary through the priest's preaching on forgiveness. Each station constitutes a kind of flowing through space, although this is undoubtedly more of a flow for repeat pilgrims than for new pilgrims like me. My knee injuries reminded me of my first time pilgrim status. Between 1 in 5 and 1 in 6 pilgrims annually are first time pilgrims (Lough Derg, 2012).

The beginning of the fourth station inside the basilica reflects the outdoor stations but not before the symbolic release by the priests' duties right beforehand. Following the anchoritic tradition, pilgrims are left to complete the vigil (stations four through seven) within the basilica building. At the end of the Rosary before midnight, I detected a slight release of tension as the four priests of the island stood at the rear of the building and pilgrims shook hands, laughed with and greeted us. Their task has so far been completed; it is over now to the pilgrims to keep vigil overnight. The doors of the basilica were closed behind us with some ceremony, only to be opened again for us to wait in the adjacent room for the vigil to commence.

Staying awake all night changes a routine. My movement through the first three stations was also changed. The first three stations for me were about accommodating myself to the routine established early on; from the fourth, the order and prayers themselves were called from the altar: kneeling at St Brigid's cross, walking around 'the outside', kneeling at the cross on 'the inside' etc. Here, what is inside and outside is confused: we are inside the basilica but urged to walk around the outside by the caller from the altar. Being inside the basilica compelled us pilgrims to complete the stations and memorialised the relative freedom of the self-completed first three stations. By calling these four stations from the altar, I was brought back outside, a time earlier today when I was rounding on my own. This is both a communal activity and an act of bodily compulsion. The same kneeling at particular points took place, the same stretching of

the arms occurred and we rounded the basilica four times saying our seven decades just as we did earlier. I did not hear a single pilgrim ask why we did this in this place; the place had drawn our authority from us. The rhythm was within my body, call and response, kneel and stand, stop and start. I noted the relentless nature of the stations within the basilica for the vigil: it seems endless, with hundreds of Hail Marys and scores of Our Fathers. The call and response meant that my own prayers were left half completed as others moved on; the Hail Mary part of the prayer blended into the Holy Mary part.

During the sixth station, from 3am, the audible prayers of those around me and within my head blended into each other and I began to hear a language other than English. Two other pilgrims later told me, unprompted, that they heard a language other than English being spoken from the altar during the vigil. One used the phrase ‘speaking in tongues’. Here was the movement of tired people within a confined space, recalling the use of the cave structure before its closure in 1780. The lack of food was not as much a problem for me as a lack of sleep. By this time, tiredness was catching up with me. I thought to myself that this pilgrimage, compared to Our Lady’s Island in particular, is intense. Some of the pilgrims who had been here repeatedly (generally men) did not circuit the entire basilica during the night. Instead they took to rounding small portions adjacent to the altar rails or at the front of the basilica. Some pilgrims walked in straight lines across the pews, others simply succumbed to the tiredness and the swarming *Diptera* and sat down for periods of time. There was more improvisation by the pilgrims of the interior spaces when compared to the relative rigidity of the exterior spaces. It is the non-verbal communication that made the biggest impression on me: on the beds outside, people moved around each other, accommodating to each other’s pace and stumbles. This movement through the circuits and prayer was relational. I did this with others, not on my own.

The eighth station follows the Sacrament of Reconciliation at which I was, in the words of the priest at 6.30am Mass, “broken down”. What I did confess to the priest made me very upset, a combination of a genuine weariness about something in my life and physical tiredness. The vigil formally concludes at 10pm on the second (long) day following several other rites. This period includes several long periods of time out from formal ritual and during this time I was able to speak with other pilgrims about the vigil. Those, like me, that were undertaking this for the first time stated that they found the

overnight stations difficult. The more experienced pilgrims among my cohort were keen to heap praise on us first timers: “of the new ones here today, you’re the second best...after that lady there.”

### ***Gender and pilgrimage at Lough Derg***

I stated earlier how more experienced pilgrims at Lough Derg distinguished themselves in several ways. The older men in particular tended to act as self-appointed interpreters for those willing to listen. Firstly, a small number of these men would stand at the rear of the basilica at the end of the interior stations and mutter about how those prayers were called “too slowly” from the altar. Those who had been selected to call from the altar were being appraised of their suitability to the task. Slight mistakes were noted and remarked upon and how some station “wasn’t well done at all”. This enactment of authority could have been and was only noted during the interior stations as the exterior stations were self-led. The authority to declare the quality of the station, in the absence of the priest, was taken on by a small number of these older men. Data provided by Lough Derg (2012a) shows that about 70% of total pilgrims are women.

	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total (n)
2007	29.6	70.4	7,872
2008	29.7	70.3	7,761
2009	28.6	71.4	8,414
2010	29.5	70.5	8,223
2011	28.8	70.2	8,311

**Table 4.1: Total number of pilgrims to Lough Derg by sex (%) 2007 - 2011. Source: Lough Derg, 2012a.**

Secondly, the same men were keen to impress upon the newcomers like me how many times they had done it and how it used to be very different ‘back then’. During my time there, there were no long queues waiting to attend to the beds portion of each station. The male pilgrims I spoke with would recall how far the queues would stretch fifteen or twenty years ago. I did not hear anything similar from the older female pilgrims. The men’s experience of Lough Derg was not a wholly present moment of experience but the importation of an older wisdom when perhaps they felt people were more willing to undergo the penance. In some ways, this talk might be seen as a way in which a liminal

experience (between night and day, waking and sleep) can be sutured. It seemed to me that the complexity and counting rituals were more important to these men than the spirituality in the experience itself. When eating with a small group of women later in the second day, the conversation was about the mystery of the place and how peaceful it was. We drew comparisons between the busyness of our weekly lives and the tranquillity of this place. Some of the women admitted that they did not know why they were here other than they wanted to come back.

During the basilica-based stations, the island in a sense becomes 'ours' in as much as we are allowed here at all. We had elected to come here ourselves, although repetition of the pilgrimage by many suggests to me a partially involuntary movement. The sense of ourselves is given over in the routine of the stations but we are constantly reminded of the presence of an authority in this place (Turner & Turner, 2011: 128-129), particularly within the confines of the basilica itself where the institutional Catholic Church is presented to us as internally coherent. Perhaps this explains the actions of the final and ninth station where pilgrims are given a choice to conduct it internally (called from the altar) or externally (self-led). I noted many more women doing the final station outside the basilica, where I and other men stayed for it. The *Diptera* midges were swarming that morning of the third day but that did not stop the women from completing the final station outside. They were with the pilgrim saints outside and not with the stained glass representations of the apostles inside.

### ***Periphery re-centred***

Finally, some remarks about marketing Lough Derg. Although some of the cohort I was with complained about the €70 fee for the three days of pilgrimage, each of us had decided to make the journey from Dublin, Tipperary or Enniskillen. As such, we were constitutive of a wider public (Warner, 2002: 56-57). McGuinness (2000) and the Turner & Turner study (2011) each draw from a historical perspective to fix Lough Derg in a place and sets of traditions. Taylor (1995: 191) rightly draws attention to Turner & Turner's use of the term 'archaic pilgrimage' but this belies the changes that have occurred there over the centuries. To dwell on the anchoritic tradition of the place or its popularity based on the efforts of medieval Augustinian monks is to downplay the materiality of this place as it is constituted today. Many academic descriptions of Lough Derg rely on imposing the older traditions on top of current practice, a kind of square

hole being pushed onto a round peg. Lough Derg is currently operating between a competing logic of penitential obligation and an ethic of individualised self-care. This competition may be borne from the relative decline in numbers attending Lough Derg since the early 1990s. There have not been over 10,000 pilgrims annually to Lough Derg since 2001 but the last time there were just over 8,000 pilgrims per annum was in the period following the 1923-24 civil war. The graph in Appendix C shows the trends in numbers of pilgrims in the 150-year period 1861 to 2011.

In the last number of years, Lough Derg has altered its public image, moving from a place of bodily discipline and control (Taylor, 1995: 195) to a place where reflection is facilitated and inner peace is developed. One day retreats are currently advertised as suitable for those “individuals who perhaps do not have the time to complete the traditional pilgrimage” (Lough Derg, 2012b: 4). The three day pilgrimage is framed as “a truly amazing experience” and not as a sacrifice or penitential exercise:

On the morning of the third day you will feel so refreshed, so energetic, so full of joy and enthusiasm. Having gone without sleep for over 24 hours and eaten very little food, you’d think it would be the opposite. But no! (2012b: 5)

The oldest pilgrimage employs the “newest technology” and the Season Guide makes reference to not being able to survive without adapting to the changing needs of pilgrims. It boasts a new web-based booking system and encouraging people to sign up for social media updates where “the many challenges people encounter on a daily basis...are just a click away...” (Lough Derg, 2012b: 6-7). A suite of reflection, senior days, retreats and mother and daughter days are offered which is reflective of a logic of self-care and not denial. The mother and daughter retreat is “ideal for an early gift for Mother’s Day or a special birthday treat...much more therapeutic than shopping” (Lough Derg, 2012b: 13). Lunches for the parent and child retreat are described as tasty and there is enough time for shopping afterward. On my own pilgrimage I could find no evidence of people coming to Lough Derg to relax or being given as a gift but I was with a particular cohort of three day pilgrims. These logics of self-care and therapy are attempts to recast Lough Derg as a site of rest and relaxation, invigoration and inner peace. It appeals to a variety of different publics simultaneously, knowing that it competes in a regional and national context where religious orders and congregations offer similar retreats from secular time.

Lough Derg is offering a series of products based on the analysis of its own data, the very use of which is informed by the creation of a mass public. Use of period data like that in Appendix C, is part of the contestation with a sense of these new publics. That Lough Derg is slowly becoming an attraction shows up a contestation with another way of being. Such a public is differentiated, nuanced and reflected back to these audiences as aspirational. In this process, the place itself is de-emphasised. The three day pilgrimage's penitential power is no longer legitimated by its seclusion from public space but is re-created as leisure space. Lough Derg is being renegotiated from being a place of spiritual and physical isolation to a place of social re-centring. On one level this is consistent with post-Conciliar theology that concentrates on a building up of the Catholic Church rather than individual mystification and institutional wholeness. Lough Derg is becoming a public space; it re-enters the public sphere on new terms. In the final section, I draw together some of the principal themes identified here. In doing so, I want to draw attention to both the practice and meaning of these sites of pilgrimage in Ireland. Their common features are of a spatial fluidity, one that questions the boundaries between private and public space.

## **Pilgrimage and religious place making**

In the changing geography of religion in Ireland, an examination of pilgrimage is important. It involves the movement of tens of thousands of people, their transport, accommodation and sustenance. It shows how people create places with the meanings they bring with them as well as find in those places. Pilgrimage sites are difficult for an institution like the Catholic Church to control, set as they are outside the reservations of religion that secularisation theories typically focus on. Additionally, formal catechesis at these pilgrimage sites is not possible because they are connected to other places not made religious. Because they remain contested spaces of the religious, their poetical qualities lend them to the kinds of analysis that Kong (2010) is asking us to examine in the 'unofficially' sacred.

Rather than seeing pilgrimages sites as places that fix meaning as religious, the sites outlined here offer a different kind of geography. These sites (or nodes of meaning) are neither places of private devotion nor public displays of the religious. The penitence at Lough Derg is related to that place's elements and history, that penitence is framed within meanings brought to and taken from that place. At Our Lady's Island, some

stopped at the holy well and the Marian statue, regardless of what the official practice was. In Croagh Patrick, the physical exertion of the pilgrimage is alongside others, whose motivations may not be the same as your own. Place making in these sites is open-ended, it is not fixed to one meaning. These sites are not storehouses for the religious. They have changed over time with the practice of walking bare foot waning and the loosening of the rules about eating at Lough Derg. At this site, the administration has tried to attract pilgrims rather than just waiting for people to come.

These places are made through a sense of holiness that pilgrims already relate to but may struggle with in other parts of their lives. But that sense of holiness is itself subject to change. The physical, human and other landscapes are not separate from each other. They work in combination to create and re-create places over time and sometimes on a time scale that cannot be related as individuals. To create a relational geography of religion, there is a need to see change being as durable as the seeming durability of places as concrete. This stands against a simplistic distinction made between religious and secular place making. At Croagh Patrick, the performance of pilgrimage is linked with other health practices, food and drink and taking photographs on a day out. This process of place making is not deemed religious as such. The Catholic Church cannot delimit pilgrims' experiences here (although it might be said that the summit's chapel makes a decent attempt to do so). The decline of bare foot practice here and in other pilgrimage sites can be seen as the secularisation of the practice over time where the notion of penance as suffering changes over time.

The religious practice in Croagh Patrick, at Lough Derg and in other places is not incidental to being religious. The practice is at these places because they lend themselves to an on-going performance of what pilgrimage is becoming. It refers back to their constant potentiality. They cannot be closed off as places where religion resides. Croagh Patrick is located less than two hundred kilometres from Lough Derg but each space creates different geographies of the religious. This is related to the physical layout of the landscape and their accessibility but is also related to the different publics they appeal to. This will be dealt with again in the analytic chapter. A changing geography of religion in contemporary Ireland needs to reflect this dynamism in place making and not begin with an assumption that the religious is set apart.

# 5: Primary Schools as Sites of the Emerging Secular

## Introduction

In early October 2012, newspapers in Ireland reported that the material excess associated with the celebration of the Catholic sacrament of First Communion was being criticised (Pope & McGarry, 2012). The source of the criticism was not an anti-poverty organisation but the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin. In times of straitened economic and social policies, parents were spending an average of €573 on their 8-year-old child on the occasion (EBS, 2013). In the press release that accompanied a new diocesan policy on the celebration of the sacrament he emphasised that:

In the current economic situation, parishes should work to ensure that the celebration of First Communion not be accompanied as sometimes has been the case, by extravagant expense. He said, “Parishes should encourage people to celebrate the Sacrament with the simplicity and authenticity which will help the child to fully understand the mystery of the Eucharist.” (Pope & McGarry, 2012)

In the newspaper reports that followed, the focus was firmly on the extravagance of the parents’ spending. The content of the new diocesan policy was reported cursorily because it is the manner in which the sacrament is celebrated that causes most parental concern. Catechetical formation and its content was not a subject that the editor of the *Irish Independent* felt was important for the paper’s readers on October 1:

Under the plan, parents across the capital will have a greater role in their child's communion, taking part in the preparations instead of just signing a consent form and leaving teachings to the classroom. It is hoped smaller groups of children will eventually receive the sacrament during Sunday Mass with their local parish community and not in private celebrations. (*Irish Independent*, 2012)

The new diocesan preparation policy was reported as promoting “a greater role” for parents. What is noteworthy about this report is the use of the words ‘private’ and ‘community’. The journalist was drawing attention to some important features of primary schools in the Republic of Ireland. The notion of a private celebration of the

sacrament of First Eucharist arises from an understanding of the parish community as a particular kind of public. In this chapter, I want to foreground some of the features of this public. This is done through a discourse analysis of the reporting of the changing system of primary schooling in Ireland. These discourses provide the third grounding of contestations over the secular and the religious in Ireland and contribute to a changing geography of religion. I also review the historical development of the primary school system in Ireland. Using Casanova's (1994: 211-234) deprivatisation thesis, I aim to show that the site of the primary school is being drawn into relations that make the school "coextensive with the political or societal community". In his terms, liberal distinctions between public and private hinder an understanding of the role of public religions in differentiated societies. Deprivatisation needs to be differentiated spatially, that is, occurring in different ways in different places. In this way, the relationship between the religious and the secular is grounded in how we understand the private and the public. Primary schools in Ireland are a key site of contestation over what is private and what is public.

In Ireland, the spatial imaginary of the parish is used interchangeably with a spatial imaginary of community. In a changing educational context, the contradictions and continuities between the imaginaries of parish and community have become more evident. Primary schooling in Ireland has been provided largely as a private good since its inception, based as it was on a model of local patronage through a bishop. Parents also subsidise to the cost of running schools through financial contributions. Recent changes have sought to make public that which is local and private. In tracking these changes, secular place making is outlined in an Irish context as one step removed from the religious and systematic. Secular place making is seen through its material outcomes, its flows and how place is made in relation to the religious. Furthermore, the Catholic Church is altering its self-conception through a longer process of deprivatisation. At the same time, there is a reconfiguration of the spatial imaginary of community in Ireland. Schools are being brought into what is constituted as 'the public' albeit within a particular historical context. In seeking to apply Casanova's deprivatisation of religion argument, primary schools in Ireland are being reconstituted as public space. The forms under which this is taking place are not completely clear. In conditions of deprivatisation, Casanova (1994: 220) states, churches:

Transfer the defense of their particularistic privilege...to the human person and accept the principle of religious freedom as a universal human right, they are for the first time in a position to enter the public sphere anew, this time to defend the institutionalization of modern universal rights, the creation of a modern public sphere, and the establishment of democratic regimes.

Through an analysis of the content of newspaper and policy reports, as well as historical narrative, this chapter shows how the primary school is becoming a site where this entry is occurring in Ireland. The school is a site of political contestation between parents, the patrons and an increasingly self-abstracted public. Primary schools are spaces of significant place-making processes with important consequences for broader political processes. Because the majority of primary schools are under the patronage of a Catholic bishop, sacramental preparation (i.e. First Communion and Confirmation) has been a relatively uncontentious process within the school day. With the reconstitution of a new and more varied public, the location of these preparations has become a source of political contestation. I want to characterise this as an example of Casanova's deprivatisation thesis in which the schools are a "nexus of place-making, identity and conflict" (Pierce et al., 2011: 56). With reference to the opening chapter, belonging, identity and place are linked in this particular grounding.

While schools are changing from being places of religious catechesis into ones of a more varied public, who forms this public becomes an important question. The discussion cuts across the educational policy of the Irish state, understandings of the imaginary of community, Church-state relationships, child protection and a geopolitics of the current economic crisis. For the Catholic Church, a parish community is the context in which Christian lives are realised in recognition of the universal nature of its mission. It is spatialised both as a bounded parish area and, at one and the same time, a universal body. For the state, concerned with maintaining the monopoly of its legitimacy, a community of people is spatialised differently, generally as a town or suburban neighbourhood. In both cases, it is who constitutes the public that matters. Casanova states that, in secularisation, we are not talking about a move from private to public but "a change in the type of publicity" (1994: 221). The form of publicity that schools in Ireland are taking is now changing. In the first section, I provide a brief overview of the development of the primary school network in Ireland and how patronage came to be important.

## Patronage and Irish primary schools

Ireland has perhaps one of the world's oldest networks of primary schooling, conceived through colonial British politics in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This was placed within a broader series of struggles for the recognition of Catholicism in a territory with an established church (the Anglican Church of Ireland). Ireland was the subject of many evangelical Protestant efforts in the twenty year period preceding 1831 (Inglis, 1998: 107, 123). Each Protestant church offered teachings of its religious doctrine to children in their own settings. The earlier emergence of the hedge schools for Catholic children (who made up the majority of the inhabitants of the island) meant that by the 1830s, the institutional Catholic Church was also a significant actor in this field (Akenson, 1970: 384-385). Inglis (1998: 105n) has characterized the hedge schools as an example of Foucault's resistant discourse within the context of a state-sponsored and colonial church. But by the 1820s, the Catholic hierarchy felt confident enough to declare that the principle of a national school system was agreeable. Catholic schools needed to be headed by a Catholic, thus establishing an important sectarian practice. This declaration occurred in 1826, three years before formal Catholic Emancipation in Britain and Ireland.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the institutional Catholic Church developed an infrastructure of educational control despite the initial wishes of the British government to create a school system for all children, irrespective of religious background (Coolahan, 2003: 133; Inglis, 1998: 122-125). By the end of that century, bishops, both Catholic and Protestant, were the patrons of a large network of the schools within their respective dioceses, consistent with the 1831 provisions. Alongside a change in Catholic practice that is described as 'a devotional revolution' (Larkin, 1972: 636-638) and with a firm emphasis on bodily and social control, Inglis (1998: 140 – 151) charts the development of a Catholic habitus characterised by individual piety and regular attendance to the sacraments. Larkin makes reference to the spatialisation of this devotional change when he remarks that, prior to 1850:

Baptism and marriage were also frequently celebrated in private houses rather than in churches. These practices were generally frowned on by those who were attempting to reform both clergy and laity and increase devotional zeal. The complaints of the reformers, who were concerned about the abuses attendant on the system, had mainly to do with the exorbitant "offerings" extracted by the

clergy for the administration of the sacraments and the undignified if not unholy celebration of sacred rites in profane places. (Larkin, 1972: 636)

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Catholic practice was not everywhere placed within formal church buildings, mostly explained by the official censure on Catholicism. A network of Catholic run schools for Catholic children makes more sense in this regard: it is consistent with an educational practice where instruction is offered for money. Adherence to the church is confirmed through the payment of a fee for education. The offerings for the clergy, as a network of Catholic Church buildings developed, cemented a relationship between social practice and a parish community across the nineteenth century. Beyond this though, Larkin's and Inglis's analyses do not account for the spatial relations in this devotional revolution. According to their accounts, schools played a significant part in this mass civilisation of a Catholic population and the alliance of a Catholic faith with one of being Irish:

It was a transformation, by way of confinement, of the space in which children operated. Given the space, the next requirement was to issue a set of regulations which governed behaviour in that space (Inglis, 1998: 152).

Inglis is correct to draw attention to the new spaces and networks of civilisation in the nineteenth century national school system, numerically dominated by Catholics. The change in farming practices following the series of famines from 1842 substantially changed the basis upon which households could support themselves leading to a greater emphasis on education as a means of class reproduction (Fahey, 1995: 215-223). Why, however, did it make sense for parents to align their material interests and those of their children to these denominational places in the first half of the nineteenth century? Confinement and civilisation cannot occur without some meaning given to how schools operated in a parish or other area. In discussing the control mechanisms of domestic civilisation, educational confinement and routinised sacramental practice, Inglis overemphasizes the authority of the Episcopal and clerical agents. He neglects the practices of community formation and reproduction throughout the nineteenth century.

This tension between structure and agency is a feature of studies of education and schooling more generally (Cook & Hemming, 2011: 1-2). Furthermore, there is little sense in these accounts that these changes toward daily practice and routinisation take place within a broader European context where state bureaucracies were taking more and more authority from the daily practice of the everyday world (Habermas, 1992:

306-312). For many commentators on the development of schools in Ireland, it is as if the post-1831 changes took place in Ireland alone. The alliance of religious affiliation and national identity, facilitated by a new schooling network, seems only to have occurred in this way in Ireland. Historical, sociological and other social scientific narratives on Irish education focus on its non-spatial and exceptional qualities. In this chapter I want to counter this tendency to note how schools are part of broader contestations over place making seen elsewhere. How are patterns of reproductive, civilising and constraining educational practices given political significance in making place? What kinds of political contestations are mobilised?

The present model of educational provision is grounded in a series of intersecting place frames. These are the bundles of social and political meaning that arise from sharing place (Pierce et al., 2011: 60). Places are never finally settled and so contestations over place making are on-going. The patron, bishop or otherwise, in whom the authority of school governance lies, is the political agent through which these contestations flow. I aim to show how these flows of contestations are also grounded in different understandings of who constitutes the public. As Mac Giolla Phádraig (2010: 75) outlines, the role of the patron in relation to individual school managers is central. The state (first British and then Irish) provided financial support to local patrons, subject to specific and agreed school regulations. Since 1831, patronage has been the underlying relationship between, first the British state and then, the Irish state to patron bodies. How this relationship makes sense to people and how it is made in place as a means to authority is important. In this way, contestation over the location for preparation for sacraments, i.e. First Eucharist and Confirmation, is a lens through which we can examine these differing ideas of who constitutes 'the public'.

The deployment of political authority in different places is ignored in many analyses because there is an understanding of educational provision in Ireland as a self-enclosed system. The composition of local educational structures, with a master at the helm of each school, was not significantly altered in the Republic until 1975. By 1997, Boards of Management, generally one board per school, were revised by virtue of government legislation and led to a rebalancing of power toward parents through the National Parents Council – Primary (Mac Giolla Phádraig, 2010: 76). The relatively stable quality of a patron's power and how this is spatialised allows educational practices to be revealed across time. If micropolitical spatial religious expression is to be drawn into

other processes, how in Irish education does this occur? Primary educational provision in the Republic of Ireland is grounded in a practical working out of who constitutes various communities and how these publics self-constitute. In Ireland, a community of interest in the educational field and its political authority is spatialised through local patronage (Farren, 1995: 12; Drudy & Lynch, 1993: 16). At base are questions about ‘who lives here’ and how their political claims can be verified. Without an understanding of how these issues unfold, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Irish state in regard to education walks into a series of analytical and political cul-de-sacs.

In seeking to outline the changing geography of religion in schools, it is useful to be familiar with the broad outlines of this landscape of provision. The most recent and comprehensive overview of patronage and the Irish national school system is provided by the report of the *Advisory Body of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector* (Department of Education & Skills, 2012), established in 2011 by the Minister for Education & Skills. This body was charged with reporting to the Minister on how best to facilitate other models of school ownership in light of changing political imperatives. The report places religion in schools as a matter of beliefs and observance:

While indications of changing belief systems and religious practice do not automatically convert into citizens’ opposition to denominational primary schooling, they do tell a message about the shift from a largely denominationally committed population with a high level of religious observance in former times to a much more varied public. (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 41)

Schools, in this frame, are distinct sites and not necessarily part of an educational system. High levels of religious observance implies that the current context is due to a much more varied public. This is a subtraction story without naming it as such. It is the creation and legitimation of this “more varied public” that is of interest here. The report is clear that this move from communities of interest to a more varied public requires policy change. At this stage, there is some evidence that a deprivatisation of the Catholic Church taking place. As an institution it is getting involved with the principle of universalism. In the introduction to its report, the advisory body states that those educated in a denominational school (one with a religious patron) that did not share the religious beliefs of the patron were protected through the regulations agreed centrally. However, with increasing numbers of parents seeking a multi-denominational education for their children and parents declaring No Religion, the report states that these

regulations were becoming harder to enforce. Educational provision is understood as an enforcement of regulation and not a system to facilitate educational needs. Additionally, it should be noted that the report does not have a clear sense of who its public is. The report writes about hearings in public and public ownership but refers principally to the Irish state accepting or not accepting recommendations of other reports. The report (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 1) sums these changes up as:

A mis-match between the inherited pattern of denominational school patronage and the rights of citizens in the much more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society.

Inheritance and rights are set in opposition in the above summary, where the former relates to denominationalism as narrowly-defined interests and rights as more diverse. The site of the school itself is the place where this is contested. The report provides a good oversight of primary schooling in Ireland as well as a basis upon which to recognise the forms of deprivatisation that I wish to outline later. The report is written against the background of providing schools in areas of high population growth, demands for a diversity of school models in areas of population stability and where it is not possible to provide a school for every stated need in areas of low density (called Stand Alone schools). It states, however, that the school needs to respond to the rights of the majority of pupils attending. It refers to the public status of religious organisations such as congregations as being affected by reports on abuse in institutions within their control:

These developments have affected the public status of the churches, have alienated many believers and have led to a diminishing role of the institutional churches in people's everyday lives. (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 21)

The report's analysis reframes who the public consists of but also specifically distinguishes between believers and an institutional Catholic Church. This kind of public is very different from one used to describe ownership earlier. This signifies the privatisation of the institutional Catholic Church and its standing within a particular kind of public sphere. The report works within the confines of a majoritarianism that has been structured into the network since the middle of the nineteenth century. The focus of the report remains on schools as a community resource. Communities of Catholics and increasing numbers of others are linked with schools, unproblematically representative of the area that the schools serve. There is a direct acknowledgement in

the Forum's report of the religious belief of the parents in local communities and recognition of the symbolic power of successive generations attending the same school. There is also a use of the phrase "public regard" (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 2) for education that is subsumed within this recognition and that acknowledgment.

The report goes on to outline a history of the patronage system in Irish education from the early part of the nineteenth century, through independence in 1922, developments in the 1960s and 1970s to the present time (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 9-21). Pre-independence, schools were asked to abide by declarations that:

When religious instruction was being given it was essential that the time be publicly notified in advance and that a large notice with the words 'Religious Instruction' be publicly displayed. At all other times, the other side of the notice which read 'Secular Instruction' should be on display. (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 11)

It is not clear to what extent this was practiced. However, a formal delineation between religious and secular instruction in defined spaces of discipline did not survive the period after 1922. The post-independence school regulations issued after a conference called by the minister (but chaired by a Jesuit priest) held that:

While the rule concerning the display of the Religious Instruction notice was dropped, the clauses concerning the conscience clause, and not losing out educationally through opting out of Religious Instruction, were retained. (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 12)

The inherited tradition of the British denominational model, and not a post-independence change, is the most striking feature in the 1920s. Schools could drop the pretence that the school day was divided into secular and religious instruction and nominal recognition was given to those not adhering to a particular faith. In this sense then, post-independence primary schools retained their status as locations of denominational control and resistance. Subsequent Catholic Church teaching and the Catholic subsidiarist influence on the newly-enacted 1937 constitution further concretized this. This binding of denominationalism to hundreds of locations suited a state still unresolved in its purpose, with six counties remaining outside its jurisdiction. Church of Ireland children would be educated within Church of Ireland schools, Catholics in Catholic schools. The Catholic Episcopate was working with many publics:

local management through school managers *and* patrons to deal with issues as they arose alongside the reiteration of the 1831 model. A formal recognition of the denominational nature of primary schooling by the state was made in 1965, in revised school regulations. That it took forty years from independence for the state to give recognition to the denominational nature of the school is not insignificant. It was unnecessary for the state to nominate a specific school-going public as such because such a public ran counter to those already in place through parish communities. The state's understanding of schools as places of class reproduction and discipline began to emerge only after this time (Drudy & Lynch, 1993: 113-120). Although patrons still appointed and oversaw the appointment of new teachers and appointed the chairs of Boards, the state was responsible for the pay of appointed teachers (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 77). After this time, primary schools were obliged to teach a centrally agreed curriculum but the religious socialisation of children was within the control of religious authority (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 123).

A curriculum for primary schools was published by the Department of Education in 1971 (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 14) and this expressed a policy shift toward the integration of religious thought into the school day. Subjects were to be animated by a "religious and civic spirit" (cited in Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 14n) reflecting both an emergent post-Conciliar thought and the realisation by the hierarchy of their declining political influence. That this had to be stated shows the emergence of a recognisable public. In his study of industrial viability and the factors that influenced the globalization of the Irish economy since the 1940s, Murray (2009: 158-160) presents an analysis of an emergent discourse of the importance of science and technology in Irish educational systems. In a section on the decisions that led to the state's changing policies of investment for education as a driver of economic development, he notes that by the mid-1960s, Archbishop McQuaid was expressing reservations on the increasing focus on science and technology. But a process of reauthorizing a public had already begun. At secondary level in particular, the role of Vocational Educational Committees began to grow thereby increasing the state's role and using education as a function of labour market policy. At the same time, the role of parents in the management of education was stated but limited in practicality. Parents were involved in the amalgamation of one and two teacher schools in the 1960s but this was always achieved within the understanding that Catholics managed Catholic schools. This more "varied public" began to be created at this time. The creation of this self-

abstracted and varied public (Warner, 1999: 378-379) brings a new space into being, as outlined in chapter one. The exposure to Christian values would have been significant in these new regulations but there was no specific recognition given to a new diversity within expanding primary and secondary schools networks. The table below shows the numbers and percentages of each type of school in the Republic in 2013:

	Number	Percentage of total number
Catholic	2,857	90.6
Church of Ireland	179	5.7
Multi Denominational	82	2.6
Inter Denominational	15	0.5
Presbyterian	14	0.4
Muslim	2	0.1
Jewish	1	0.0
Methodist	1	0.0
Quaker	1	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,152</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 5.1: Number and percentage of total number of ordinary national schools in the Republic of Ireland, 2012/2013. Source: Department of Education & Skills.**

Changes in occupational structure and the non-availability of ordained and professed personnel from the 1970s facilitated the development of such a self-abstracted public (Inglis, 1998: 223-225). Smaller numbers of these personnel allowed for a greater contestation about religious and secular place making

By 1975, the formation of management boards addressed the increasing role for parents evident by this time. By then, the authority of the patron has been diluted somewhat by the establishment of Boards of Management, parents councils and teachers. Through the 1970s and into the 1980s, it became clear that management boards were not reflecting the wishes of all parents (a means through which this new public is manifested) in the same way. The report introduces the formation of a school management project in Dalkey, Dublin in 1984 (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 15-16). This was to become the *Educate Together* patron body that today acts as a multi-denominational patron in approximately sixty of over 3,100 primary schools. The greater inclusion of parental consent in the local educational process equally serves the power of denominations. My research for the Catholic Bishops' Conference indicates that parents do not pay very much attention to management structures but instead place a high value on a good level of education for their child and, crucially, the local availability of such an education (O'Mahony, 2011b: 40-44). Even with the establishment of the

*Gaelscoileanna* (education through the Irish language) the Advisory Body's report states that:

Agencies such as Educate Together and *Gaelscoileanna* have brought more diversity to the provision of primary schools, but they still only form a very small percentage of the overall number of national schools, at less than 4 per cent. (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 16)

The patronage model persists in this new dispensation involving parents on Boards but the school as a distinct place frame, controlled by a patron, is retained. Patrons retain an option to mobilise politically at a local scale. The Catholic parish community is still spatialised through a self-understanding of where that parish exists in different places. At this stage, I argue that contestations about other publics are becoming clearer. The schools are being deprivatised. The Catholic Church is being brought into play as one agent among many, albeit with considerable power. In Casanova's terms:

The national churches stopped viewing themselves as integrative community cults of the national state and adopted a new transnational, global identity which permitted them to confront prophetically both the national state and the given social order...It is the new tension between a global orientation to human civil society and public involvement in the public sphere of a particular civil society that best explains the new dynamics of deprivatisation. (Casanova, 1994: 225-226)

The Catholic Schools Partnership (a body of the Irish Bishops' Conference) has placed the number of schools per capita in an international perspective to demonstrate that Ireland's network of primary schools is particularly dense (Catholic Schools Partnership, 2011: 18). The body explicitly links the work conducted in Catholic schools in Ireland with those elsewhere in the English-speaking world. The invocation of the comparative density argument serves to bolster the politics of the local community. It does this by supporting the notion that Ireland does not have an excessive number of schools per head of population, thus making the case for primary schools as a community resource.

The Advisory Body report goes on to lay out the more recent developments in primary schooling, many of which do not impinge upon the model of provision involving patrons, boards of management and the funding from central government. In the 1990s, there was a rebalancing of the composition of management boards toward greater parental involvement as well as institutional entropy over greater democratic control

over these boards (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 16-18). However, ownership of sites for schools as well as buildings, from 1995, was to be vested in the Department of Education itself and leased to the patrons. Renegotiated deeds for these leases were to allow for school management along the lines of specific denominational instruction. Thus, by the 1990s, the focus for Catholic patrons is firmly on the matter of the ethos of the school, an ambiguous and politically contestable term that represents the combined wishes of the parents and the patron. The report concludes this section by stating that these changes meant that:

The State facilitated the strengthening of the responsibility of boards of management to sustain the ethos of the existing patron bodies in the schools, but it did not take action to protect the rights of citizens who did not belong to a group which owned or managed schools. (Department of Education & Skills, 2012: 19)

To the present time, the Catholic hierarchy maintains a focus on a historical patronage model, albeit with the awareness that demographics are changing (O'Mahony, 2008b). In this sense then, Ireland does not have a school system for all of the children of the parents who reside in it, e.g. citizens of a self-understood republic. Instead, it has a series of school networks which serve the interests of those parents aligned to a patron body which enshrines the ethos of that school. Clearly, not all children in schools under the patronage of a Catholic bishop are Catholic. In fact, the Catholic Church authorities continue to emphasise the inclusive nature of their provision. Instead, the syllabus is "vivified" by the ethos of the school but this model relies on local characteristics. The tables overleaf show two ways in which these new demographic realities are made evident in the primary school system:

	Number of residents aged 0 - 14	Proportion of total number of residents aged 0 - 14
Ireland	880,170	90.7
EU27 excluding Ireland	61,775	6.4
Africa	7,202	0.7
Asia	11,172	1.2
America	8,848	0.9
Australasia	1,530	0.2

**Table 5.2: 2011 Population Aged 0-14 Usually Resident and Present in the State Number and Percentage of Total. Source: CSO, Table CD610 (categories collapsed).**

	Number of entrants from outside Ireland
2003	4,463
2004	4,505
2005	4,623
2006	6,089
2007	8,115
2008	8,357
2009	6,342
2010	4,043
2011	3,631
2012	3,251
2013	3,270

**Table 5.3: Entrants from schools outside of Ireland to Mainstream Classes in National School, 2003 – 2013. Source: CSO, Table EDA52.**

The patronage model recognises the importance of the local but conflates the political and educational imperatives of groups of parents and patrons with national policy concerns. This is a central point of contestation between the global Church (with all of the theological shortcomings that this implies) and its intervention in civil society on a national scale. The Catholic Church in Ireland is involved in a process of deprivatisation, albeit with an ability to invoke the schools as a community resource. The geography of primary education in Ireland shows that there is little sense (beyond one emerging at Departmental level) of an educational public sphere, one that looks back on itself through a secular self-understanding and a defined purpose of state action. Ireland does not have a public education system, although teachers are paid from central government funds. The represented and (largely) unexpressed wishes of parents are displaced through several organisations each placed locally. These wishes of parents (variously emergent as ethos or characteristic spirit) are grounded in particular discourses. In the next section I trace the ways in which these contestations are

grounded in several themes detected in newspaper and policy reports.

## **Rescaling primary schools 2010 - 2012**

In the chapter on methods, I outlined how I researched the ways that religious and secular place making are grounded in schools. Across the thirty three articles reviewed a small number of themes emerge. They are the reflections of contestations grounded within the context set out above, where patrons, the Department of Education and parental wishes are the significant agents of change. Broadly speaking these themes are: place making as community and as the public; denominationalism versus diversity, and; deprivatisation.

### ***Place making as community and as the public***

In a lecture on the subject of the relationship between Church and state given at the Catholic third level institute, Mater Dei College, in March 2011, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin drew attention to different forms of community. For him, the Catholic Church is the:

Community of the baptised, who live as true disciples of Jesus Christ, formed by the word of God and the teaching of Christian tradition, which gathers in prayer and for the Eucharist and which emerges from the celebration of the Eucharist with a characteristic life-style of charity and sharing. (Martin, 2011)

A little later, he draws a distinction between the community of baptized and the ways in which:

Schools have been rooted in the local community and have been supported by the local community and have strengthened the local community. They have been dedicated to education in a manner detached from narrow political interest. (Martin, 2011)

In making this distinction, Martin is drawing attention to the differences between the interests of a local community and those within the Catholic Church. They do not always overlap. He was requesting that the local community make themselves aware of their responsibilities in Church community. This lecture was given just as the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism was commencing its work. The Archbishop calls attention to a distinction to be drawn between a faith community and a local community. They

overlap in schools and other places. How are these places of overlap made? Kong (2005a: 615) has recognized that “‘unofficially sacred’ sites...provide significant insights in the construction of religious identity and community” and that sites like schools need as much attention as formally religious places. She states, drawing on Dwyer, that:

‘Communities’ need to be understood as “always constructed or imagined, produced within particular discursive and historical moments” (Dwyer 1999, page 64). (Kong, 2005a: 617)

We can see this recognition in Martin’s lecture: community can be rooted in place and also where people “gather” (without a specific time in mind) to celebrate religious events. Primary schools in Ireland are one such unofficially sacred place: they are a form of material space within which religious socialisation takes place. It is in these conceptions of place that the relationship between the religious and the secular become clearer. Kong (2005a: 617) puts spatialisations to work in a very particular way, drawing out their importance to an understanding of geographic scale:

How global forces are mediated by local contexts as well as how pan-religious identities and communities...conflict with local and national affiliations. Simultaneously, scalar analysis demands that the politics and poetics of the local in religious community construction – the school, the communal hall, the pilgrimage site – are not neglected.

It is within this scalar analysis that I place my understanding of a new “varied public”. Primary schools in Ireland have been brought to some of these global forces, particularly within the current economic crisis. The preparation of children for Holy Communion and Confirmation within school hours is the practice that has been at the forefront of contested place making of the secular and the religious. Sacramental preparation’s meaning is being brought to bear on local and national scales, represented by the Catholic Church as the “wishes of the parents” (Kelly, 2013). The forms of discourse that have emerged from this rescaling are evident from the ways in which such preparations are being reported in newspapers and policy reports.

Archbishop Martin’s lecture refers to how the “Church lives and acts within the cultural situation of time and place” (Martin, 2011). In laying out his terms of the discussion that was to come with the election of a new government earlier that year he states that:

The Church is not just a sociological reality which can be renewed simply by the application of sociological models of consultation and change management. The Church is the community of the baptised, who live as true disciples of Jesus Christ, formed by the word of God and the teaching of Christian tradition. (Martin, 2011)

In saying that the Church is the community of baptized Christians, he is again referring to the location of a parish community. This form of community is, however, both placed and unplaced. Placed in that it is a sociological reality but unplaced in that the word of God and the teaching of the Church “gathers in prayer” a community. The faith community is not grounded to a particular geographic scale. Conscious that the Church cannot be run on prayer alone, Martin states that:

If the Church wishes to be involved in questions regarding the future of society, it will be said to me, then it must enter into the political world using the language of politics and accept the gives and takes and the blows of the political battlefield. (Martin, 2011)

This is some evidence that the Catholic Church in Ireland is becoming the civil religion that Casanova talks about. However, the bishop states this indirectly, in that it would be said to him. Here is Martin locating the role of the Christian in that political life more forcefully:

The Christian in political life cannot deposit his or her commitment to the truth about the human person with the priest in the sacristy and embrace a different set of values as he goes into the public square. The committed Christian must always have the internal freedom to take up that which is culturally unpopular. (Martin, 2011)

As the Forum on Pluralism and Patronage began its work, this statement of political definition also took in the notion that believers cannot leave behind their faith and that this charges the state with responsibility toward their convictions. In particular, Martin draws on the example of education to illustrate the location of religious belief and its role in public life. Schools are rooted on community and are strengthened by it. His use of “the local community” (2011) reverts back to uncontested view of the community, not distinguishing between the faith community and all others. In this sense, his framing of primary education relies upon an uncontested characterization of community as all those present. At the same time, narrow political interest is placed against the dedication to education. The Catholic contribution to that dedication is that it brings “a special contribution to the development of a healthy society” and that its

absence would diminish such a development. In this way, pluralism is thought of as both churches and state working together and located within the interests of each. The institutional Catholic Church can only recall this contribution from a position of considerable political power, and its own awareness of this. He places greater emphasis then on parents who wish to see the continuation of the Catholic contribution to education as a responsibility:

For parents to make their choice in this area they need however to have clear information about what precisely the alternative models of patronage are. (Martin, 2011)

This, in simple terms, echoes the mainstream Catholic requirement for an informed conscience. The responsibility for parents then, as both citizens and Catholics, is to take part in the mechanisms through which the state seeks to alter relationships within the provision of primary schooling. Devolving it to the place of parents puts responsibility on a parish, with parents themselves making the decisions on behalf of their children and against “social reform [not being attained] by social engineering but by enabling greater participation of citizens and the voluntary sector”. For the institutional Catholic Church, and at least for this bishop, Catholic education is placed within a parish context where the development of society is best suited. In this sense, the representations of the parish and of the school that such a parish is served by, is an unofficially sacred place. Kong’s (2005a: 622) scalar analysis demands that “the politics and poetics of the local in religious community construction” are examined. Here we have such a poetic: the representations of the Catholic parish as a local community. In framing such a politic and a poetic, the bishop’s discussion is included because it grounds both political and poetical needs.

The contestation of who governs the sacred space of the primary school comes back into focus. These are the inseparable politics and poetics of schools as unofficially sacred places. Devine (2011) supports this in an analysis in the *Irish Times* by stating:

The importance of schools as sites for inclusion, recognition and equality in the local community and in the wider society. This of course is why the governance and control of education has been a controversial and sensitive issue in Ireland. (Devine, 2011)

By situating inclusion and equality, state political imperatives, in the local community, Devine identifies the “sensitive issue” of patronage. In May 2011, Fr. Michael Drumm (Catholic Schools Partnership) was identified as “spokesman for the side that stands to lose in the proposed patronage shake-up” (Faller, 2011), the boundaries of this process being identified through the pages of the *Irish Times* and others. In a biographical profile, the *Irish Times* identifies that the real battle is not between one group of bishops and another but “what will happen when communities and parents have to discuss the transfer of patronage as it applies to their schools.” Aside from power and control, this is the localisation of a discourse, simultaneously portrayed as being locally important to protect choice and nationally so, for inclusion and diversity. The terrain of these contested politics takes place at the site of the school itself. Daly, in a column later that month, identifies this as:

The recent discourse has instead centred on the rather conservative notion that the ethos of the schools the State supports must simply be adjusted so as to reflect social and demographic change to cater to a more diverse Ireland as if there were ever a notional past era in which the perfect homogeneity of the citizens beliefs made it acceptable to devolve the public education to a near-monopoly of religious provision. *The imperative of religious freedom must transcend the arrival of diversity as an imagined historical novelty.* (Daly 2011; emphasis added)

Daly’s insistence that religious freedom transcends the arrival of diversity is an attempt to resolve the contestation between the positions of a hierarchy re-entering an altered terrain without a universal principle of freedom. States guarantee the freedom of their citizens and this alone is a way in which the contestation can be resolved. Catholics can be Catholics but they are first to be citizens, counterpoising a Catholic community with a new public. Daly is correct to state that “suggestions of reform have been limited to readjustments within the logic and form of the patronage model” but he does not account for the politics of how places are made relationally. The creation of a new and more varied public depends on the restatement of an abstracted principle of equality, something that only the state can guarantee for its citizens. This is also evident in a later analysis published in the *Irish Times*, a newspaper within which new publics are refined over time:

It is widely accepted that the current arrangement – where Catholic patrons run more than 90 per cent of primary schools – is inappropriate. (Hickey, 2011)

The wide acceptance mentioned in the above is a reflection of a discourse which seeks the (re)creation of a more diverse public. Hickey explicitly lays out the purpose of a republic later on in this opinion article and he explains what a ‘common’ school may look like. One feature for such a common school should be the development of “good child citizens” who:

Must be capable of critically assessing their own inherited religious or non-religious commitments, for instance, so that they are not permanently in thrall to those of their parents. (Hickey, 2011)

In order to make such a call, Hickey is implying that denominational schools are incapable of producing such a citizenry because, he states:

The State must educate child citizens towards an awareness of how their own private good – and the good of their families and localities – is contingent on the common good. (Hickey, 2011)

Such a distinction between the private good and the public good serves to strengthen the creation of a new public, calling itself into existence on its own terms. Finally Hickey asks that child citizens “must develop skills of “public reason”” concretizing the *Educate Together* position into a public good. What is evident here is a state compulsive programme of regulation for religious faith. Courses of study, for Hickey, are to be independent of religious doctrine, that doctrine being apparently unamenable to public reason. This is a universalizing public reason that “demands the provision of non-denominational common schooling all across the State” (Hickey, 2011). How is diversity versus denominationalism made evident in the newspapers in this period?

### ***Diversity versus denominationalism***

In commentary, *Irish Times* columnist Fintan O’Toole (2010) writes that in Ireland we appear to live in both the 19th and the 21st centuries. The reflections of our collective past, of institutionalised abuse charted in the Murphy and Ryan reports, tell stories of a memory. These memories say O’Toole “exist, not as a sealed-off past, but as current affairs” (O’Toole, 2010). His question in this commentary is “What is our now? It may be globalisation and lattes, cybersex and property prices, but it is also the revelation of the past” (O’Toole, 2010). The Ryan and Murphy reports among others are not distant memories but inform the present. O’Toole speculates that what is seen as the distant

past “elsewhere” is still a part of our reality. O’Toole’s comments on the tracing of the past into the present creates a distinction between the way Ireland talks and writes about its past and the ways these occur elsewhere, as if we are stuck in some proto-modern form of politics.

We knew that *the industrial schools* were institutions of organised cruelty but somehow remained detached from this knowledge. And we knew that much of boomtime Ireland was delusional, but allowed this knowledge to remain entirely inert. (O’Toole, 2010; emphasis added)

We knew and did not know that abuse took place. For O’Toole, our collective reality was not presented through the vision of wealth during the economic boom because that wasn’t quite reality either. It is as if there is a background reality we suspend while events occur. His distinction between here and elsewhere is instructive: it frames culture in Ireland as hanging on to a past within its own present. This distinction also serves up a way in which to discuss the influence of patron bodies on educational policy. The patronage model used in Ireland is a policy intervention from a time past where a colonising state believed sectarianism was overcome through separating time for religious instruction from other forms of instruction. It has been modified of course since the 1830s and yet it is retained with importance. In a case brought by a teacher, supported by her union, against a school in Cavan, the limitations of these systems were exposed. Michelle McKeever graduated from a teacher training college and like all other graduates from these colleges, was awarded a certificate of competence in teaching religion. Her training was received in a college run by a Catholic diocese. Certification is not essential to graduation, as is explained by Sean Flynn in the *Irish Times* (November 17, 2010) but is sought by individual schools during an application for employment at a school. McKeever’s offer of employment with the school in Cavan was withdrawn following being:

Told by the chair of the school board that her failure to produce a certificate would not be a problem as “she would be teaching fourth class, which was not involved in Communion or Confirmation”. (Flynn, 2010)

The Equality Tribunal found discrimination on the basis of religion because the board had discussed McKeever’s religion (Church of Ireland) in withdrawing their earlier offer. The school’s board had not seen a problem with the teacher’s religion, as she would not be preparing children for the sacraments, despite holding the required

certification. As the school is one of the places where preparation occurs, the site itself had to be protected from McKeever's religious beliefs. Taking a case against the school, rather than the Department of Education, demonstrates the ways in which individual schools seek to determine their own employment practices. Its status as a school under the patronage of a Catholic bishop would, presumably, have been negatively affected by the employment of McKeever. The Equality Tribunal could not uphold that presumption and awarded her compensation for discrimination. The location of contestation for this form of diversity was the school itself.

## Small rural schools facing the axe



Principal Bhd Flanagan in Coac Dubois national school, a two-teacher primary at Coac Dubois, Co. Clare. (BHM/ART/IRISH/11)

Hundreds of primaries are threatened in bid to cut costs

**Michael Brennan**  
Deputy Editor

SOME of the country's smallest rural schools could be shut down as part of a drive to save millions of euro in the education budget, it has been learned.

The closure of some of the country's 870 two-teacher schools - one in 11 of the nation's primary schools - will be examined in a wide-ranging value-for-money review.

Some of these schools have as few as seven pupils on their roll books, while the highest number in pupils or fewer classes have 20.

Many are located close to other schools, raising questions about whether they can be amalgamated to save money.

The Department of Education last night announced it was commencing a value-for-money review of small primary schools and explicitly referred to the possibility of school closures.

The *Redd Stip Nua* group estimated merging the 600 primary schools would save €18m in teachers' wages, due to the grouping of children into standard class sizes which would require 200 fewer teachers.

Many of the two-teacher schools are grants of at least €30,000 annually for their running costs alone - bringing the total bill to in excess of €20m.

The Department of Education said there were no plans to carry out large-scale school closures "at this time".

However, it says the government will be left with the task of implementing the recommendations of the review once it is completed.

Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act revealed there were 870 primary schools with two teachers, out of around 3,200 primary schools in the country.

**Highest**  
Galway has 87 two-teacher schools - the highest number in the country - followed by Mayo (86), Donegal (87), Co. Wick (46) and Kerry (40).

In total, there are 17,413 pupils being taught in two-teacher schools.

An *Irish Independent* investigation has uncovered several examples of two-teacher schools with small pupil numbers which are located close to other schools.

There are three two-teacher schools in the parish of Causeway in Kerry.

The smallest is Rattinorell (eight pupils), followed by Scoil Christ Ri (41 pupils) and Cill Ioragh national school (41 pupils).

The An Gleann Mhair national school in Crossmolina, Co. Mayo, has two teachers and just nine pupils. But it is located

on the outskirts of the town, which also has two other large schools nearby - Crossmolina national school (160 plus pupils) and Cill Mhuirigh national school (105 plus pupils).

The two-teacher Scoil na n-Óg national school in Mullagh, Co. Clare, has just seven pupils due to rural depopulation. Yet there are four other national schools in the same Killymarry-Elrick parish.

Labour education spokesman Ruairi Quinn welcomed the review, saying the country was not getting "value for money" from the current set-up.

Mr Quinn said he favoured clustering small schools together, so they could look at options as having all the children in junior classes taught in one school and those in senior classes taught in another nearby.

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Plate 5.1: Brennan article (2011) from the Irish Independent, 17/01/2011. Source: Irish News Archive

In January 2011, the *Irish Times* reported that a new Teaching Council report (a statutory regulator of the teaching profession) stated that "the time allocated for religion in the [teacher training] college was four times that for science" (January 12, 2011). Flynn's report goes on to state that the Council's report was:

Concerned at the amount of time allocated to religious education within the Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) programme, in the context of the overall number of contact hours available. (Flynn, 2011)

The remainder of his report is concerned with more general matters of concern to the Teaching Council in its report. It would seem that the McKeever case (referred to later in this January article) and the time given to religious education in the training of teachers is of central concern. The implication of the article is that the Teaching Council is concerned with the weighting given to religious education in conjunction with the

visual arts and the teaching of the Irish language. The prominence of the teaching of religion in the report is consistent with a broader narrative about the changing nature of schooling. In particular Flynn notes that “some... have questioned whether State-funded teacher-training colleges should still require all students to complete a course in religion” (Flynn, 2011). They are state-funded colleges but in large part owned by trustees on behalf of the Catholic or Church of Ireland bishops.

Later that same month, the *Irish Independent* reported that dozens of small schools will face closure under a cost review. In the report (January 17, 2011) it is stated that “the Irish National Teachers' Organisation said small schools were a central part of life in rural Ireland” (Brennan, 2011). As the union responsible for the vast majority of primary school teachers, the INTO’s strategy is to equate the part played by small schools with rural Ireland. Approximately one sixth of the 3,152 primary schools in Ireland are of this kind. In the context of an on-going global economic crisis, amalgamating small schools is seen as a way to save public money. This is not a subject that is worthy of comment from individual patrons however. This is a way to frame a new diversity against a denominationalism found in schools. In recent research published by the Catholic Schools Partnership (O’Mahony, 2011b), rural schools are seen only in the context of the “provision of school choice [which] was perceived to be achievable in urban areas, whereas this was not considered to be the case for rural areas.” Given that schools are the representation of the local parents’ wishes, the closure of smaller schools in rural areas on the basis of economic cost is not yet an imperative for a deprivatised Catholic Church.

# Is there a place for God in the Irish classroom?

As Catholic Bishops defend their influence in schools, reformers wonder whether the curriculum has too much religion



**THE BIG ISSUE**  
KIM BIELENBERG

The place of religion in schools is likely to be a hot issue for a new Education Minister when he or she takes up their post after the election. With the Catholic Church set to give up control of many of its primary schools, there is likely to be controversy about how religion is taught.

At the recent Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education, Labour's education spokesman Ruairi Quinn, one of the front-runners to be the next minister, hinted that too much time was being spent on religion in schools.

He asked whether it was time to reconsider the 2.5 hours spent on religion every week following Ireland's recent poor scores in literacy and maths in the international PISA survey.

Ireland spends the highest percentage of class time on religion in the OECD table of developed countries at both primary and second levels.

At second level, the amount of instruction time devoted to matters of the spirit is 9% — three times the OECD average.

As reported in *Irish Independent*, 16/02/2011



Moving on: Martin Leenheer removed his son Finn from a primary school when he discovered he was reciting prayers. Photo by James Conroy

**Plate 5.2: Bielenberg feature (2011) from the *Irish Independent*, 16/02/2011. Source: Irish News Archive**

In an opinion article in February 2011, Bielenberg conflates the Teaching Council report on time allocated to training teachers about religious education with the amount of time allocated to prayer in classrooms at primary level. In the article he compares the amount of time given to prayer in classrooms in Ireland with those of other OECD countries. While schools are operated under the patronage of the local Catholic bishop, the curriculum is informed by the ethos (sometimes phrased as ‘characteristic spirit’) of that school. Bielenberg reports that the man who became the current Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn, sought clarity on how much time was given to religious education when compared with mathematics or literacy. Those two particular areas of education are deemed to be more important to children’s education than religious education and (occasionally) the Irish language. There is an instrumentalism underlying Bielenberg’s argument: one that frames a specific time for which children are in school and the necessity for them to receive religious education. Furthermore, Bielenberg states that:

The Catholic Church has agreed that it will have to give up control of many of its primary schools. But there is still likely to be controversy about how religion will be taught in the new types of multi-denominational school that are likely to emerge. The key question is: should children be given religious instruction inside

school hours as part of the curriculum, or outside school hours? (Bielenberg, 2011)

The school itself remains the site of political contention and a proposal is made to extract “religious instruction” from school hours. At the moment, religious education is given as part of the school day and so the framing of something being given outside those hours remains a narrative of those seeking changes to the provision of primary schooling. The Catholic Church’s control of the school is seen in the divisions of the school day, some parts of which are designated as religious. It is an attempt to privatise something that occurs already within a nominally public space. In this way, for Bielenberg and for others, taking religious education out of school hours conforms to a private / public distinction that sees schools as newly reclassified public space. For all but one of the teacher training colleges to be “organised along religious lines” is a problem for the columnist as there is no other framework in which teachers can be trained. In this narrative, being public requires recognition of a new diversity, deficiencies in which are found in teacher training. Michael Moriarty, the General Secretary of Irish Vocational Education Association, is quoted as saying that:

We need to take into account the changing mores of society. When teachers are being trained, there needs to be a much more integrated approach so that they are prepared for different types of schools. (Bielenberg, 2011)

In this way, society’s needs are seen to be diverse which requires an integration that the current teacher training process cannot provide. Understood in this way, contestation over what the primary schools is for is a problem to be solved by politics. The contestation over primary schooling in this frame is integrated from individual schools all the way as far as the training of teachers at third level. Diversity is responded to by the calling into being of a system, a broader political process that refers to OECD metrics.

In the weeks preceding the teachers’ unions’ conferences in 2011, the Department of Education and Skills announced that five new schools would be built in the Dublin region that year and in 2012. As the *Irish Independent* reported (March 9 2011), “none of five new primary schools opening in the next two years will be under the control of the Catholic Church” (Donnelly, 2011a). These schools were to cater for the “fast-growing communities of west Dublin” and south Meath. The article laid out the nature of the patronage for these proposed schools and explained that:

In multi-denominational schools, parents arrange for the teaching of religion outside school hours, while an inter-denominational school provides religious teaching for children of more than one denomination during the school day. (Donnelly, 2011a)

Alongside immigration in the 1990s, the article explains, the decline in the number of practising Catholics has created a “demand for greater diversity.” The characterisation of multi- and inter-denominational education in terms of the location and timing refers specifically to the ways in which the school building is used to educate and then teach religion. The contested place making occurring at schools is represented here as the location of the preparation for the sacraments and where religion is located.

### ***Deprivatisation and schools***

As March 2011 turned to April and the teachers’ conferences began, focus turned again to the location of religious education and sacramental preparation within schools. Following a launch of a research report on the meanings of patronage, the Catholic Schools’ Partnership was reported to have “softened its view that the religious instruction of pupils must be part of the school curriculum” (Donnelly, 2011b). Preparation for sacraments could be an option with a parish context. It was reported by the *Irish Times* that:

Fr. Drumm said the 50 per cent figure [of transfer to other patrons] had destabilised school communities, raising fears that change might be imposed from the top down. He said the process would be a bottom-up exercise which could only begin in response to local demand on the ground. (Flynn, 2011b)

By ensuring that local demand is the criterion upon which transfer of patronage can take place, the Catholic Schools’ Partnership and the Church are designating schools as the site of place making, the location where parents are thought to have greater decision-making power. The Department of Education’s plan for a transfer of perhaps 50% of the schools to other patrons is thus deemed not be in keeping with their interests, and drawn in distinction with the poetics of locally scaled community interests. In his analysis of the report, Flynn (2011b) refers again to these poetics where the views of the school community remain central:

As anyone in education will tell you, the process of divesting schools is a huge

logistical challenge, raising all sorts of awkward questions. How should the views of the school community be assessed in the first instance? Which schools in which areas should be transferred? How might Catholic schools be compensated for their investment over the years? How should faith formation be addressed in the newly divested schools? (Flynn, 2011b)

The location of faith formation is also referred to by Flynn in his presentation of the questions following the report's publication. He concludes by stating that:

It seems certain the church can rely on strong local support as it moves to oppose any change to school patronage seen as being imposed on communities. But the Minister is correct when he says the current system of largely Catholic-controlled school patronage is out of kilter with modern Ireland. (Flynn, 2011b)

Such "strong local support" needs little evidence as the newspaper reports make no reference to the information presented in the CSP paper. The CSP's paper (2011) presents a weak understanding of patronage among parents in several contexts. The politics of the public discussion on the future of the provision of primary schooling depends on the continuation of the needs of local communities. It refuses to be brought on to a broader political process where the system as a whole falls within the influence of state provision. Flynn's counterpoise of "modern Ireland" and "Catholic-controlled school patronage" is hardly adequate to describe the range of intersecting scales that the current network of provision implies.

# Bishops want parents to take classes in being Catholic

Weekly religious instruction proposed

**Katherine Donnelly**

PARENTS will be asked to accompany their children to weekend religious classes, under plans drawn up by the Catholic bishops.

The Sunday school-type classes are on the way for Catholic families who don't send their children to church schools but still want them to get religious instruction.

In a move that will test their commitment, parents will also be encouraged to get involved in the preparation of the classes and even join their children for the weekly sessions.

The bishops have drawn up a blueprint for parish-based religious education, although planning is still at the early stages.

A new policy document - 'Religious Education of Catholic Children Not Attending Catholic Schools' - takes account of the changing educational landscape in Ireland.

"Not all the children of Catholic families attend Catholic schools," states the document by the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference.

It adds that there is a need for

more parish-based programmes to minister to these children and their families.

While the proposed model wouldn't necessarily replicate the Church of Ireland's Sunday school, the bishops' document suggests classes should be held weekly during term time.

Saturday would be another obvious day for the sessions, which would be run by trained catechism teachers, who would have to be paid.

It is the first time the bishops

The bishops' document states the purpose of the parish-based sacramental programmes is to support and guide parents in their task as prime religious educators

have published a formal policy on the provision of religious education outside school.

Traditionally, Catholic religious education and preparation for the sacraments, such as First Communion and Confirmation, has been entrusted to schools.

The Catholic Church controls 92pc of primary schools, but there is growing diversity, and further change is expected as talks begin on the handover of some schools to other patron organisations.

**Support**

By choice, many parents raised as Catholic send their children to a growing number of multi-denominational Educate Together schools, where there is no religious instruction.

However, some of these parents also send their children to religious education and preparation classes for the sacraments, which are classes organised within the parish, paying perhaps €100 a year.

These have been established on an ad hoc basis, and the new document is the first step towards an official framework.

The bishops' document states that the purpose of the parish-based sacramental programmes

**Plate 5.3: Donnelly article (2011c) from the *Irish Independent* 14/04/2011. Source: Irish News Archive**

Analysis and opinion articles in the following days (O'Brien, 2011) and Donnelly (2011c) focused on the location of sacramental preparation and continued mention is made of a "changing educational landscape" at the present time. O'Brien (a member of a Catholic lobby group, *The Iona Institute*) makes critical reference to the Minister's recent pronouncements that:

Would radically undermine the rights of parents to have their child educated in a way which respects their religious beliefs. It seems that he only understands one aspect of religious freedom, the right to freedom from religion. (O'Brien, 2011)

Central to this is her belief that "faith formation is not indoctrination" and so the focus shifts back to the location of the school as the site of contestation. She admonishes the Minister for focusing too much on the patronage issue and not enough on the cutbacks being placed on education as a whole in economically straitened times. In contrast,

Donnelly (2011c) reports on a policy document concerned with the religious socialisation of Catholic children in non-Catholic schools and:

Adds that local circumstances will dictate matters such as frequency, length of [faith formation] sessions and who is involved in the delivery of the [catechetical] programme. (Donnelly, 2011c)

The discussion in public is about the site of the school itself and the location for the religious socialisation of Catholic children, be that inside school time or outside of it. The focus on both the school as the location, and the parents as those most knowledgeable of the religious needs of their children, reiterates the politics of parish as local community. This politics invokes the power of a community, unquestioned and in the absence of any firm understanding of the relationship between home, school and parish central to Catholic teaching in Ireland. In the absence of such an understanding, the poetics of these unofficially sacred sites forms a politics of patronage.

These ways of framing place means that principles such as inclusion and equality are used to convey meaning on a national scale, the worthy principles of a formed republic. On the other scales, particularly at what are deemed to be local scales, community is what matters. In the discussion seen so far in this chapter, each politics, at its respective scale, appeals to two differing conceptions of the community. Echoing Casanova's distinction between community cults and religious communities (1994: 45-48), it is the ways in which they are coextensive that matters to the analysis here. Without dealing exhaustively with this, the coextensive nature of the community cult in Catholicism in Ireland (with an emphasis on religious community imperatives) is seen in Casanova's analysis as having a historical precedence in earlier times where:

Christian religious community itself adopted the political machinery and the administrative and legal structure of the imperial state, becoming in the process a salvation religion with the political structure of an imperial state. (Casanova, 1994: 47)

In this kind of ideal type, stemming from Weber's earlier work, Casanova is drawing attention to how territorial national churches cease being churches in the original sense. A "differentiation of religious community and community cult re-emerges" (Casanova, 1994: 47) where integration can rely instead on purely political authority; religiously-derived integrative community cults are no longer required. This is especially true of

established churches (both Catholic and Protestant churches). He states finally, notwithstanding normatively conceived 'religion':

The more religion wants to transform the world in a religious direction, the more religion becomes entangled in "worldly" affairs and is transformed by the world. (Casanova, 1994: 49)

Casanova captures the point at which the Catholic Church in Ireland now finds itself: re-entering a political terrain altered by its own imperial excess. Against this background, Devine (2011) can talk about segregation by faith in the emergent political contestation over primary schools and the role that the Catholic Church ought to play. As a lecturer in education at UCD, she states:

Especially concerned "choice" will result in the division of our schools into "immigrant schools" and non-immigrant schools by virtue of the differing faith backgrounds. And faith, we know, is connected with ethnicity. (Devine, 2011)

The connection between faith and ethnicity that she draws attention to can only make sense where one is separated from the other in the first instance. Faith and ethnicity are separable because spatialisations such as states distinguish between them. Faith and ethnicity are grounded as state's categories. She correctly poses the question "how is the child of minority faith to be catered for in a locality too small to offer a range of school choices?" which again locates the catechetical imperatives of an established church in the site of the school. The 'where' of the preparation for sacraments arises at this point as the school curriculum is "vivified" by Catholic teaching throughout the day, not just at one point:

Attending the local Catholic school can be problematic given the integration of Catholic faith formation throughout the school day. Sitting at the back of the class during "religion" time can be challenging when the class is intensively preparing for First Communion, or celebrating religious feast days. How is inclusion and recognition of diversity to be understood here? (Devine, 2011)

Inclusion and integration, desirable political imperatives of a state which cannot be attained locally, are scaled 'up'.

Later in 2011, a Dublin school was reported to have changed its name. It dropped the name of a previous Archbishop of Dublin to become St Columbanus school following

Archbishop McQuaid's role laid out in the Murphy report earlier that year. As McGarry reported:

[The] parish priest at Loughlinstown Fr Eddie Griffin, who is on the school's board of management, said yesterday that when staff and parents at the school expressed a desire to change its name, he said he would not stand in their way. (McGarry, 2011)

While not evidence of a redefinition of a public, the name change reflects the concerns of parents and the relationship between parish structures and schools. The priest not standing in their way would suggest that he stands apart from the parish itself. Later that month, in a speech to the theology graduation in St Patrick's College Maynooth, Cardinal Séan Brady laid out the terms of a relationship between the Irish state and the Catholic Church criticizing:

A form of secularism which says religion is fine so long as it keeps to its place as a private belief and does not intrude into the public arena or a person's approach to their civic duties. This is often justified in the name of tolerance and freedom....We need Christians in every arena of life who respectfully present their views as equals and without compromise to the whole truth of who they are. You cannot compartmentalise faith and life. (Brady, 2011)

Brady asks Christians to bring their understanding of faith with them into the public world, not to be privatized. His definition of freedom is one in which the person is not compartmentalized. This might be seen to be against the kind of freedom that I outlined above by both Daly and Hickey.

By April 2012, the teachers' annual conferences were again reported widely with patronage making up the bulk of the commentary available through newspapers. An editorial in the *Irish Times* on April 11 gives a brief summary of the report on Patronage and Pluralism indicating that it "placed the wishes of parents at the centre of a reform agenda", an agenda which might be subject to frustrating delays. The editorial goes on to suggest that:

Delay is the great enemy of reform. The longer the delay, the more likely it is that political energy will drain away and little will change. (*Irish Times*, 2012)

In this case, reform is necessary because of the trends indicated by recent census returns and this demands an "integration at all levels [which] is the key to an open and tolerant

society”. The creation of a public which is framed as open and tolerant shows how public discourse at least has moved since 2010. The understanding of the purpose of education at primary levels is the creation of a tolerant society, inhabited by citizens who invest in a publicly knowable reason. The discussion becomes less about individual areas and more about the administration of change to a system, itself a novel discursive form. The focus by later that month became Rule 68, which, as the *Irish Independent* reminds its readers:

Does not confine the teaching of religion to a daily half-hour class, but allows for religious teaching to be brought into all situations. For example, a teacher in a Catholic school could invoke one of the Ten Commandments such as “thou shalt not steal” to deal with a behavioural issue. (Donnelly, 2012)

The school is the site of the contestation over the location of religious education once more but on a more generalized basis through the Forum’s report and an emphasis on the Rules for Primary Schools. Secular place making at the schools is now occurring on other scales. How is this reflected in the broader changes taking place within Irish education? A report on the same day in the *Irish Times* places broader emphasis on the amalgamation of smaller schools in the context of on-going economic stringency:

The Minister defended his position, saying many small schools were built at a time when pupils walked to school but now the “face of Ireland had changed” and the education system needs to reflect that change. (*Irish Times*, 2012)

In an analysis later that week, the chief executive of *Educate Together*, Paul Rowe reflects on the publication of the Forum’s report. The emphasis in this analysis is on choice again although this choice is framed in terms of equality of access. The report, for Rowe, provides:

Long overdue hope for the thousands of parents all over the country who want their children to attend Educate Together schools but who either do not have a school in their locality or if they do, find there are insufficient spaces available. (Rowe, 2012)

Equality of access to a quality education becomes the focus for *Educate Together*. Respecting the identity of all children is a central aim of their methodology. Because religious education takes place outside of the school day “no child is isolated as a result of the religion of their family and no teacher has to teach as religious truth a faith that they may not hold” (Rowe, 2012). In the current system, children whose parents do not

wish them to be religiously socialized are sometimes asked to go somewhere else within the school during the school day itself. Rowe argues that:

Despite the best efforts of the dedicated and caring teachers involved in the system, there is no appropriate place for them to go during such class content. Even today, lack of spaces in schools place immense pressure on parents to make religious declarations they otherwise would not be inclined to do. (Rowe, 2012)

At the heart of the issue then for *Educate Together* is the site of the school itself as the location of the protection of the rights of all. This is also part of the deprivatisation of public religions in Ireland: the local is recuperated as a place of universalism for all, irrespective of denominational allegiance. For Rowe and for *Educate Together*, the local is not just the terrain of denominationalism as he concludes that:

It must be acknowledged that the future health and vibrancy of the denominational option requires that such a choice be available in as many locations as there is viable parental demand. (Rowe, 2012)

It is not that the local belongs to denominationalism in this analysis but that sufficient local recognition is accorded to those who seek another type of provision. The Catholic Church's connection of universalism with the local scale is being altered. Later that month, the *Irish Times* returned to the Teaching Council's report on the content of the education of teachers at Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick. Reporting on a speech by its new president:

The professor mentioned children, teaching and teachers 16 times. He said the word Catholic 28 times. It caused consternation among many of those present and was seen as a pointed shot across the Minister's bow. (Faller & McGuire, 2012)

The contestation over the control of primary education has moved on to the denomination of the five teacher education colleges in the Republic, four of which are under Catholic control. The report details some of the voices of trainee teachers who attended colleges like MIC. An unnamed teacher found it:

Astonishing that, in order to get a job as a public servant, you have to espouse or pretend to espouse beliefs that are not your own or you endorse yourself. The cert [certificate in Religious Education granted on graduation] is nominally optional, but it is strongly implied that if you don't study it you will not get a job in a Catholic school. (Faller & McGuire, 2012)

By the middle of 2012, the Forum's Report is no longer the subject of significant newspaper reports, there being only two more relevant articles in July and October of that year. In the three year period under examination here, with the report of the advisory body of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism as its axis, newspaper reporting and discussion moved from schools as being the location of political contestation to the slow emergence of a new and self-defined public. In this, universal principles of equality and fairness became valorised over a local and particularized denominationalism. In the period examined, the public discourse about primary schooling moved from being community resource to a location of problematic socialisation. Contestations over where religion and education are located are moving from being a broad-based community resource to a system of competing patron bodies. Making places both religious and secular is occurring in primary schools. This is taking place not only on the scale of the micropolitical but at the scale where the needs of a system find legitimation in the nationally political.

## Conclusion

In the newspaper reports and press releases catalogued here, I have shown the reporting of a changing geography of religion. Schools are becoming unofficially sacred places, the basis for which is becoming detached from a longer-held understanding of the place of the school in Catholic parish life. The statements by bishops and other Catholic Church spokespersons and supporters have been based on a narrative of localism. It is the parents of children, and their right to educate their children in a way that they see as appropriate, who form the foundation of a Catholic community. These ideas are rhetorically mobilised in order to bolster the schools as places that are being made more secular. The Department of Education & Skills mobilised this localism in an online survey of 'local parents' conducted from late 2012 to early 2013. The discourses in opposition to this localism are founded on appeals to justice, equality of access and competing rights. For an increasingly secular public sphere, these universal ideals make more sense. For *Educate Together*, the location of contestations over assisting children with religious needs is in their provision as a patron body, not local contingency. It is reported as a problem of separation of children following school time, and that this is resolved with parents. Their approved curriculum is taught according to national school regulations with parents becoming involved after regular school hours if preparation for

religious rituals is planned. In their understanding of relational geographies, Pierce et al. (2011: 56) propose that:

Scholars must also examine the connections through which these forces [of urban capital] are applied if they are to empirically expose the mechanics of urban place politics. The foundational concepts of place as location, locale and sense of place that inform scholarship on the politics of place are essential to any integration of place and networks...

The school as an unofficially sacred space is being redefined; a new public is being formed and brought into being through contestations over where the school is placed. Newspaper reports and opinion articles over this three year period focus on the contested site of the school and not on education as a social good. In this way, the place making at primary schools in Ireland is not performed as a system, as a national social imaginary. How new publics are formed is the subject of continuous political negotiation. They are made and remade in trajectories (Massey, 2005: 119-120); they emerge out of the impermanence of our lives. Secularisation processes are not static processes imposed on a population from above, they are evident in the contestations about where and how children are educated.

How a spatial politics of the secular and of public religion is brought into these place-frames is not yet clear; no definitive conclusion or solution to political contestation can be found. This is because of the competing and overlapping interests involved being continuously mobilised (Pierce et al., 2011: 66). The secular is conceived and operationalised here as a set of discursive formations, seen in trajectories of relational place making. In the next chapter, I bring together the three groundings of secular and religious place making (statues, pilgrimage and schools) in Ireland and review how religious spatial expressions can be brought to bear on broader political processes.

# 6: The Spatial Politics of the Secular and the Religious

## Introduction

In the preceding chapters, I have gathered data to show how the geography of religion in Ireland is changing. The data that has been gathered through these three chapters – using photographs, pilgrimage diaries, newspaper reports, archival work – point to the ways in which religious place making occurs in Ireland. They provide a way to respond to the appeal made by Kong (2010) to take the research on religious practice beyond micropolitical expression and make it more relevant to larger geopolitical processes. Focus on the micropolitical spatial expression of religion is well established within human geography. While much of this geography has been confined to established sites of the religious, recent developments have seen moves toward an analysis of the material culture of religion and its consequences for place making more generally. Adding to this, I argue that religious and secular places in Ireland are co-produced. Secular places and practices do not replace religious places and practices; they stand in relation to each other. Place making is then the continued contestation of objects, practices and performances as secular or as religious. The geography of religion in Ireland shows that religious place making is contested with the making of secular place. Because of this contestation, religious place making retains an open-ended quality that continues to produce the religious.

The first part of this chapter draws together the evidence I have gathered about the changing geography of religion and religious place making in Ireland. It begins with an examination of how deprivatisation is occurring in Ireland. Casanova (1994) has provided a way into understanding the re-entry of religion into the public sphere. As I discussed in chapter one, deprivatisation is the process whereby religion discards its place in the private sphere and enters the public sphere. However, it does so on new terms. Deprivatisation is not the reversal of a secularisation process but it is an accommodation for religious justifications within the secular public sphere. In this part, I outline how contested place making occurs at the statues, on pilgrimage and in primary schools in Ireland. It shows how deprivatisation remains a series of inclusions and exclusions and is replete with pre-existing social relations. If deprivatisation occurs,

the terms of the contestation over place making matters. I want to see if Kong's appeal can be applied in an Irish context. Kong's (2010) work on unofficially sacred places, e.g. museums and schools, shows that place making has consequences for broader political struggles. Furthermore, contestation about how places are made is a political process. However, religious practices are not simply aggregated together to produce massed religious practice. If religious and secular place making occurs in a relationship and these are grounded in various ways in Ireland, then this grounding occurs in a new context. Religious place making is constitutive of a more fluid geography. The changing geography of religion in Ireland shows that religious place making is both a part of the exclusion of the public sphere as well as an adjustment to it. The public sphere is articulated by power and so groundings of the religious and the secular are not static. What is understood as *religion in public* is an important consideration.

Bringing micropolitical religious spatial expression to bear on broader political processes is not unproblematic. When religious practice and performance is connected with other processes, the micropolitical expression of these practices becomes a site of greater contestation. Religious beliefs may well be one of the few parts of geographic research that:

Problematizes common assumptions and spatialities. It blurs geographical scales and conceptual boundaries: those between the self and the world, life and death, the local and the universal, the private and the public. (Yorgason & della Dora, 2009: 631)

This blurring of boundaries is a problem for the secular because outside of the reservations of religion, what is included and excluded in the understandings of religion in public need to be controlled. Changes in how religious place making occur are regulated and this regulation often discounts the social relations from which these practices arise. In the secular public sphere, the institutional relations of the global are prioritised over other scales. The specific complexities of local contestations are smoothed over to make them global concerns. To become public, religious place making is subjected to boundaries that make it public. In this way, hybridised place making processes involving both secular and religious identities and senses of belonging are diminished. The complexity of the attendant social processes and practices is lessened. To resolve this problem, in the final part of this chapter I examine how scale is theorised and the consequences this has for a relational geography of the

religious. There is a way to more successfully bring the micropolitical to broader processes so that the significance of practices and performances at local scales is not diminished.

## **Relational geographies of deprivatised religions**

Religious subjectivity is relational to secular subjectivity. The creation of the religious is necessary for secularisation to maintain its status as the pre-eminent form of the public. I have shown how this relation between the secular and the religious is grounded in three contexts in Ireland. How religion is experienced and practiced in different places is shown to be relational to an understanding of the secular. This is to provide for a critique of the notion of a singular public with a common human reason. This notion of a common human reason supports a vertical and hierarchical understanding of how place is made; social action moves from the personal up to the global. In the development of a common human reason, the state and the legal practices it creates have been central to the secular's pre-eminence. The assumption of a common human reason that Habermas (2006) has outlined creates a political imaginary that no longer requires religious legitimation. Casanova (1994) contends that states begin to function and continue as if God does not exist. And, as I have shown through Kantorowicz (1957), processes of ecclesial and state juristic structures developed alongside each other as state territorialisation unfolded. The embodiment of a public shifted decisively in the period 1350 to 1480, from the mystical body of Christ to the mystical body of the public, the *res-publica* (Kantorowicz, 1957: 259-272). To avoid an amorphous category of 'the public' and loosen the endless circularity of state territory and the secular, a further legitimation is necessary. It is necessary to inscribe social and political control. Recalling Agrama (2010), how can we understand a space for religious belief when the primary understanding for these beliefs is through the lens of secularism itself? Kantorowicz (1957: 283) discusses this as a problem of continuity. In a secular way of being:

One presupposed continuities where continuity had been neither noticed nor visualized before; and one was ready to modify, revise, and repress, though not to abandon, the traditional feelings about limitations in Time and about the transitoriness of human institutions and actions. (Kantorowicz, 1957: 283)

That the separation of Church and state became the means in Europe by which continuity could be established is not dealt with here. As I have shown through my three examples, being part of the public demands that the religious conforms to its place. As Asad (2003) states, the detection of what is the private sphere is necessary for the creation of a public sphere.

In Ireland, the Catholic Church is functioning as a newly deprivatised institution in the public sphere. Deprivatised religion, says Asad, becomes “a site of conflict over nonnegotiable rights” (Asad, 2003: 184), not just an enrichment of public debate. However, my argument is more than an institutional analysis of the Catholic Church versus the Irish state. Deprivatisation doesn’t take place only at an institutional setting. The practices and performances of religious place making are a critical part of the geography of religion. Much of Casanova’s work has been conducted on the various contexts within which Catholicism has re-engaged as a public religion. Specifically, this re-engagement has been about contestation which:

Is a dual interrelated process of repoliticization of the private religious and moral spheres and re-normativization of the public economic and political spheres. Such a process may rightly be termed the “deprivatization” of modern religion in a dual sense. It simultaneously introduces publicity - that is, intersubjective norms - into the private sphere and morality into the public sphere of state and economy. (Casanova, 1996: 350).

He accepts a differentiated concept of secularisation where the private and the public bisect these differentiated domains (Hann, 2009: 14). A distinction is drawn between law and morality but he does not spatialise the distinctions adequately. In delineating this distinction, Casanova draws a schema for the private and the public. Each sheds light on religion’s role in a differentiated political context:

1. A liberal-economistic distinction between state administration and market economics
2. A republican-virtue approach where a public community and citizenship exist alongside each other but analytically distinct from the market *and* the administrative state
3. An approach that sees the public realm as a “sphere of fluid polymorphous sociability”, and

4. An economic history and feminist approach that draws a distinction between the family and a market economy

The most ambiguous place for religion in the modern world, states Casanova, is drawn from the “distinction between “public” work and “private” home” (Casanova, 1994: 64). It is the last of these that yields the most power for my argument here. The process whereby religion discards its place in the private sphere and enters the public sphere to redraw boundaries is called deprivatisation (Casanova, 1994: 65-66). However, differentiation and institutional autonomy take a central role in Casanova’s argument. This is because secularisation as decline and as on-going privatisation of religion fails to account for the rise of public religions (Speers, 2008: 2n). Casanova also accords significance to the differential rates at which this process of deprivatisation occurs. Those public religions that do not accept the terms of differentiation evident in modernity cope least well with various forms of disestablishment (Wilford, 2009: 508). For the present argument, he uses a frame which examines sites and not hierarchies. Four cases (Spain, Poland, Brazil and the US) illuminate the central thesis to avoid the “temptation to impose any homogenizing interpretive scheme upon them” as they were meant to illuminate different contexts of action (Casanova, 1994: 217-218). His account of deprivatisation leaves room for the differences in how places are made across contexts. While the institutional Catholic Church engages with the terms of this public sphere, Casanova argues that the episcopate of the church have not accepted that the faithful have adopted the teachings on freedom of conscience of the Second Vatican Council much more readily than first thought (Casanova, 1996: 368). The consciences and activities of the faithful of the Church are no more controllable in public than they are in private. In this analysis, Casanova does not problematise either the private or the public. The private could be taken to mean the domestic domain of privatised morality (and its attendant, acknowledged patriarchal assumptions). This echoes Asad’s view that it is the state that facilitates a redefinition of religion’s competence (Asad, 2003: 190 – 191). From the geography of religion outlined in the previous chapters, where do we find deprivatisation in an Irish context?

Through my analysis of the newspaper reports I have shown that secular place making in schools is occurring through demands that the space of the primary school reflects the needs of the community as a whole. This is a way to make it more public, to deprivatise the primary school as an unofficially sacred site, on particular terms. The place-frames

that compete are the schools as sites of denominational education and of a citizenship based on a notion of diversity. That the Catholic Church in Ireland is now engaging from a deprivatised position through appeals to individual liberty (the wishes of parents) and not church liberty (as generalised persecution) is also significant. There is an acceptance of differentiation and recognition that to be public, the Church in Ireland must appeal to its differentiated part of the public. It does not appeal to a universalist principle. As I showed in chapter five, the Catholic Church maintains significant political and administrative roles in the education of children and teacher training in Ireland. This is reflected in the rhetorical devise of the Catholic parish's wishes, where parishes are understood as Catholic families, schools and churches. It is not of individual citizens but of a community, ill-defined and diffuse. This is a significant territorialisation because it establishes the right for the Church to a form of being public that is politically legitimate. It resonates with other place-frames of political activity. Bishops speak in public about Catholic education reflecting the wishes of the parents but rarely in terms that refer to the vindication of individual human rights. The right and duty to this form of address a public arises from bishops' waning power to coerce the population as a whole (Casanova, 1994: 224). However, and this is perhaps where the next shift in primary schools will occur, the public in Ireland they appeal to is changed by relations outside of the Church's formal control. Bishops and their spokespersons invoke place-frames that are cross-national in that they connect local site contestation with processes of Catholic education happening in other parts of the world. Recalling the history of Irish missionaries abroad through the work of the orders in the nineteenth and twentieth century is an example of this. (These addresses are immanent, not transcendent: they do not refer to education as God's wish for his people.) But this is not necessarily the adoption of a transnational, global identity, which allows them to comment publicly on matters of Irish politics (Casanova, 1994: 226).

In contrast, pilgrimage practice at Croagh Patrick or at Our Lady's Island is less contested because the pilgrimage sites make no direct address to power. Some people climb the holy mountain as hill walkers, others as pilgrims. The place making that occurs at these sites is not such a threat to the continuity of state power. This threat is lesser still in the statues of Mary in Dublin: they are becoming objects of heritage, representations of a past with religiously displaced subjects, which no longer makes sense. The deprivatisation of the Catholic Church in Ireland has occurred at specific sites that arise from a set of relations between the state bureaucratic mechanisms and the

institution. As it re-enters the reformed public sphere anew, the Church can no longer rely on the compliance of agents within the bureaucracy. Public exhortations for the privatisation of religious belief are taking place in Ireland alongside statements from bishops on their right to speak on other matters in the public domain. The deprivatisation of the Catholic Church in Ireland takes place on terms that assumes an already-existing public role. Deprivatisation is the re-entry (albeit on new terms) of the religious into the public sphere. Deprivatisation is a lens through which the seeming 'return of religion' (the institutional religious organisation re-engaging with civil society following disestablishment) can be analysed. As the examples of the Marian statues and the continuing struggles over school patronage have shown, it is difficult to detect where in Ireland the religious was privatised in the past. Common human reason (as problematic as this abstraction is) is not interpenetrated by a sense of the social being distinct from the personally private in Ireland. Distinctions between a private faith and public reason break down across the three contexts that I have outlined. Pilgrimage at Croagh Patrick draws on the resources mobilised for mountain rescue teams, part-funded by the state. Here and in Our Lady's Island, police overtime is arranged for traffic direction. Arrangements for the maintenance of Marian statues are negotiated on a site-specific basis with the City Council but, crucially, with little reference to larger discursive formations about religion's rightful place in public. Particular sites do not rely on a strict division between morality in the private domain and legal determination in the public domain. It is time devoted to religious catechesis in schools that is *religiously* contested, not the upkeep of statues or the management of pilgrimage sites. Casanova sees "the revitalisation of the modern public sphere" taking place only when religious traditions reformulate their relationship "to modernity by incorporating reflexively the three dimensions of the Enlightenment critique of religion" (Casanova, 1994: 233). Understanding the Catholic Church in Ireland as a deprivatised religious tradition needs considerably more empirical work, for example on where the social relations of the Church to the market are found. This work will prove difficult if that understanding of a deprivatised Catholic Church in Ireland begins with an assumption that the secular defines the ground to which religious practices and performances are confined.

Civil society in Ireland (as an identifiable domain with institutional autonomy) is infused with the Catholic Church's role in other domains: healthcare, education, migrant welfare, homelessness, anti-poverty politics. Acting as a bulwark against the excesses of

private enterprise or providing “immanent critiques of particularly forms of modernity from a modern religious point of view” (Casanova, 1994: 222) may also become an aim of these bodies within the Catholic Church in Ireland. Institutionally, the Catholic Church in Ireland retains political and financial power while *at the same time* the practices associated with a state-compulsory religious tradition persist in some places. Some practices can be confined to private space while the institution retains some of its power. Designation as a public religion involves addresses to this power: its inscription in some places and an authorisation to address in the first instance. Deprivatised religions are brought into a relationship with a secular politics that defines what religion is in very particular ways. To connect micropolitical spatial religious expression to broader processes in this way means losing the granularity of the practices and the places in which they are made. As I will argue in the final part of this chapter, there is a way to represent those practices and performances of the local so that they do not lose their broader significance.

The haptic practices at Our Lady’s Island or the physical pain rounding the beds at Lough Derg do not make much sense if scaled up to an institutional level. They are the practices in a broader analysis of Catholicism more generally. If the primary school in Ireland is a site of contested place-frames involving state power and not parish community, the deprivatisation thesis works spatially. Through its engagement with the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism as well as the on-going divestment programme, the Catholic Schools Partnership (CSP) has shown a willingness to accept the contestations on certain scales. The allocation of such a role for the CSP implies it has control over these domains too. It does not directly do so; each bishop retains the right to deliberate on decisions at every school site about Boards of Management and the appointment of teachers. Decisions on curriculum content and teacher training are however reviewed by the CSP and other, associated bodies. There are both vertical and horizontal networks of power at play in how the schools are contested. The CSP is the deprivatised interface for a particular set of contested places. The daily celebration of the Eucharist is not mobilised in these contestations over secular and religious place making. The public meetings of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism did not begin with a prayer for the Holy Spirit’s guidance. But the absence of prayer does not make it a secular space just as the absence of a crucifix at the top of a classroom does not make it a secular space.

Formal distinctions between private religious practice and public deliberation are aided by an understanding of this deprivatisation process. What then of the practices and performances that I have examined in my empirical work? Deprivatisation adequately describes the political re-entry of the religious into secular space but frames it within an *a priori* understanding of the secular. Changing this understanding requires a greater emphasis on religious place making. It requires a focus on everyday practice and going beyond the officially sacred. Everyday spaces are “implicated in religious meaning-making, legitimating, maintaining and enhancing, but also challenging religious life, beliefs, practices and identities” (Kong, 2010: 757). In recognising the everyday, Kong points to an important political problem: despite juridical or constitutional rhetoric defining what is acceptably religious in public, religious sites are constantly changing. The thinking and feeling body retains an importance although she contends that this has not always been examined in the research conducted in recent years (Kong, 2010: 758). Kong’s work on the unofficially sacred helps to refocus everyday and local practices on to the politics of the secular in the religious landscape. Her work on the creation of a national identity in schools in Singapore shows that the construction of a minority Islam population works through scales, from the body through to the state. She concludes that:

Both the scale of the global and that of the body are drawn in intimately to the issues surrounding six local madrasahs and their continued existence and role in a secular Singapore. (2005a: 629)

Schools are considered to be a sacred site for the state as an educative force. The main tensions are between an understanding of a school reflecting pluralism and multiculturalism and the placed-as-sectarian *madrasah*. At the site of nation building, and the construction of an identity for all Singaporeans, Kong contends that schools are beyond the officially sacred. Furthermore, her discussion of schools reflects many of the concerns I have brought forward about the discursive division between secular and religious space. Formal distinctions between where religion can and cannot be in public are a way to re-make the boundaries of the global. The distinctions drawn diminish the significance of the content of other practices and obscure the relationship between places as locale and the global. Such a hierarchy assumes a view from nowhere, whether at the easily-knowable local or all-seeing global scales.

In Ireland, where the place-frame of the primary school is contested, the Catholic Church invokes the global scale and the domestic scale simultaneously. Bishops and

their spokesperson will make reference to the needs of parents and to the mission of the Church to educate. From the empirical evidence presented, where the lived experience of Marian devotion, pilgrims, tourists and school managers is foregrounded, boundary maintenance exists. But this boundary maintenance is more fluid than often analysed. That these sites and the place making that occurs there is open-ended and contingent is neglected by those who see only the decline of religious significance across national territories. The haptic and the experiential of Marian devotion and pilgrimage practice are represented as referring only to pre-formed categories of the religious. The institutional folds the embodied into its own politics thereby erasing the significance of those practices deemed to be local. Addressing spiritual landscapes requires us to “think beyond intentionality, cast off certainty, and embrace [our] suspicion” (Dewsbury & Cloke, 2009: 701-702). The meaning of these experiences is closed off for fear of it contaminating the objectivity of the occurrence as object. Place draws us in, often in ways that involves the physical and spiritual. That places reflect both and more is evident from the data gathered.

Kong’s study of sea burial, woodland and online memorialisation (2011) points toward the need for continuity between the local and the global to retain the locatedness of rituals. The micro-politics of these places is present in the resistance to changing regulatory burial and funeral practices. But how are they scaled up if the need to objectify the world looks quickly beyond the everyday feeling of being close to the transcendent? The orders of the relations far from us can only be related to by the order nearest to us, in the body (Lefebvre, 1991: 405; Knott, 2005: 18-25). The relations that this implies are synchronous with other relations: the past is contained in any living present in space. The past is made real in the spaces in front of us everyday. In this way, the haptic practices at Our Lady’s Island or the rounding at Lough Derg are not parochial manifestations of the institutionally religious, evacuated of any agency brought to that place. Instead, like the burial practices outlined by Kong, they are the content of the poetic in the act of making place. Contestations over what kind of place making occurs at the primary school makes its address to an immanent power: an emerging discourse of equality and exchange-value in markets. This emerging discourse is also adopted within the institutional Catholic Church. The resistance to a change in a school’s ethos then should not be thought of as coming from a religious orientation to the world. This way of examining the schools and other sites does not mean a victory for the secular along some vector. The geography of religion in Ireland, such as the site

of the school, is not wiped clean as a space in which secular freedom flourishes. Contested place-frames like the schools are themselves the outcome of a political struggle. This is not strongly evident in the politics of the Marian statues. But both are nonetheless under constant renegotiation.

To understand religious identity and community, states Kong (2005a), religious and secular spaces must be examined alongside each other. Her studies in museums and schools as unofficially sacred places demonstrate the viability of the relational quality of the religious and the secular. In seeking to go beyond the micro-political, she is emphasising the importance of the content of social space over its forms. I am arguing here however that one of the significant barriers to connecting the micropolitical to other processes is the foreclosure of what is meant by the public. In this frame, the content of social space must fit into an order for it to be made amenable to politics on a larger scale. As I have tried to show in my empirical work across multiple sites, the spatial politics at different sites have to be brought into being as more than local.

The secular and the religious exist in a relationship that is discursively drawn across different spaces. At the present time, this is grounded as a public sphere that relies on certain exclusions and an *a priori* understanding of religion. There is, additionally, a desire for a unified way of being that excludes the local. Above, I have identified some terms upon which relegated religious traditions engage in conditions of institutional differentiation. A deprivatisation thesis partially accounts for some of the practices and performances outlined here. These engagements with the secular public sphere are politically immanent, not oriented to the transcendent. Church spokespeople invoke scales other than the national scale to bolster their argument for retaining their management over most primary schools. Even if coming from a confessional standpoint, this is an intervention in secular place making, not an appeal to the strength of God's will in the face of opposition. The problem set by Kong, to adequately represent micro-spatial religious expression on other scales, remains. It is a problem about representing the content of certain social spaces. These spaces of the religious are discursively defined as an outcome of previous contestations.

To take account of changes in the geography of religion in Ireland, I am proposing a schema that draws on work by Jones et al. (2007). This is an analytic that can "reject transcendental imaginaries that circulate in scalar thought and to reposition analytics at

the sites of doings and sayings, events and orders” (Jones et al., 2007: 268-272). Lough Derg is made and remade every pilgrimage season by those who attend and purge themselves. The maintenance of the statues in Dublin involves people taking decisions about resources and events. If the practices and performances of religious place making in Ireland are partially diminished in their aggregation, what does this mean for wider ideas about place making? How and where political power is grounded in making places is only partially accounted for if the actions of some are discounted. The data that I have gathered show that a relational understanding in how people make places, drawing on both the secular and religious, involves continuous negotiation. In this process of making place, the political qualities of people’s everyday life is drawn on to other scales. In support of a more fluid understanding of scale we need geographical practice that is, as sought by Marston et al. (2005), engaged, self-reflexive and politically enabling.

## **The secular ‘here’ and the religious ‘there’**

Freedom, no matter how it is constituted, is never distinct from being in the world. We can, says Merleau-Ponty, “fly from being only into being” (1962: 360). To treat the world we live in and our inhabitation of it as objects would be a mistake because “the social does not exist as a third person object” (1962: 362). Secularisation as freedom from religion in public is always conducted by power exerting itself. One of the ways that a secular public legitimates itself is naming events, processes and practices as religion in the first place. In a global context, this means that:

The complex, unequal relations between Western and non-Western locations... must be understood centrally in terms of a great historical transformation of people's ways of living through which the West has hegemonized the non-European world. (Asad et al., 1997: 720)

Globalization for Asad is not the elimination of boundaries but of making and re-making them. So for Asad, the Western anthropological paradigm of ‘cultures’ is an account of “unequally displaced practices” (Asad, 2003: 153) whereby some discourses and practices can be outlawed, proscribed and penalized leading to the “cultivation of different kinds of human” (Asad, 2003: 154). The emergence of a secular public sphere made it possible to redefine religion’s competence (Asad, 2003: 191). In the same manner as his analysis places a Christian Europe in relation to an external Islamic other,

the “objects, sites, practices, words, representations – even the minds and bodies of worshippers – cannot be confined within... what secularists *name* “religion”” (Asad, 2003: 201). The relational geography of religion that I am outlining is an attempt to avoid the confinement of religious place making within the boundaries set for it.

If globalisation is about making and re-making boundaries, what does the geography of religion in Ireland that I have examined tell us about place making more generally? In seeking the becoming of the religious and the secular, in what locations is it found? A relational geography of the religious and the secular is not simply that there are religious places here and secular places there. It requires that we take account of the legitimations for power that occur in contestations across space and time. In their review of the literature on, and a proposal for relational place making, Pierce et al. (2011: 59) ask that:

We need to fully interrogate a rich and variegated set of place-frames and unpack the particulars of their intersections simultaneously at scales ranging from individual place experiences through the urban and supra-urban.

While place is produced and bundled by people, it is when these are oriented toward social and political ends that “rough consensus among groups can emerge about which bundles have shared importance” (Pierce et al., 2011: 59). In a relational geography, the political qualities of these contestations over different places are emphasized to give primacy to the strategic sharing of space. This dynamic model of place making is attractive for the geography of religion because it implies no spatial resolution. It resists the confinement of the religious within the terms of the secular. This unresolved way of thinking about place making is concurrent with Massey’s challenge for the open-endedness of place. Religious places do not need the coherence that is all too often given to them (Massey, 2005; Yorgason & della Dora, 2009). There is no one location where religious places are made and then fixed in those places. Massey is avoiding the early closure of space. Castree (2003: 173) outlines how the literatures in an Anglo conception of place overcame unhelpful dualisms of here and there:

The result was a conception of *place as locale*...the scale at which people’s daily life was typically lived. It was at once the objective arena for everyday action and face-to-face interaction *and* the subjective setting in which people developed and expressed themselves emotionally. (Castree, 2003: 173; italics in original)

Place as locale means that places are both unique and share features of other locales. Castree characterises this as the Marxist and humanistic geographers' approach to place. Till (2004: 75) captures the fluidity of place as mosaics. She recognises the underdeveloped theorisation of the temporal where place is "narrated according to a modernist ideal of (progressive) change, and place is mapped as a stable material (and hence knowable Cartesian) location of continuity and decline (or any other temporal category classified as epochal)..." (Till, 2004: 74). In her frame, time intersects with place such that what we might see individually as unique is part of something we cannot see. But geographies of memory are often used to support a specific kind of domination often connected with colonialism (Hoelscher & Alderman, 2004: 350). In this approach Hoelscher & Alderman connect the distant and the proximate in a way that obviates the need for a redefinition of place itself. These two ways of thinking about place, as locale and as open-ended, are particularly fruitful for the geographies of religion because they account for the temporal in the spatial. In the empirical work that I have conducted, it is evident that people make places religiously meaningful through the locales they inhabit but also in their relationship to time in these locales. The making of these places as religious requires us to think about how the temporal and the spatial interact. It is the blending of the subjective here and objective there that is productive for bringing the micropolitical into broader political processes. Concluding their theoretical exposition, Pierce et al. state that "individuals (and institutions) may have strong relational ties to multiple communities that allow them to strongly experience and potentially shape competing place-frames simultaneously" (Pierce et al., 2011: 60). From here, I draw upon these three linked ideas (globalisation as boundary maintenance, place as open-ended and relational geographies) alongside my empirical material to understand the changing geographies of religion in Ireland. This is explained in two ways: in terms of tamed space and the interaction between time and space.

### ***Tamed space***

Firstly, what is the understanding of who constitutes 'the public' in these places? How a public is constituted involves addressing specific forms of power. This is a process of inclusion and exclusion, a set of orders about what is correct in these places. On a longer pilgrimage like Lough Derg, there is a particular spatial politics at work. There are men's and women's sleeping blocks, the separation of which is formally and informally enforced. Pilgrims are assigned a bunk in open but gendered rooms. For the

three day pilgrimage, members of a public confine themselves voluntarily. But people come to Lough Derg understanding that it is a place of confinement for a period of time and submit to the meaning of the place. Religion as a private space is reinforced here but there is a negotiation that occurs in this place. It is a process of negotiation that confines the body of a pilgrim but is purgatorial for the spiritual part of their lives. This confinement and purgation is only done with others in this place, it cannot be achieved individually. The related spaces of the secular and the religious point to varying degrees of political negotiation and renegotiation; they are contested spaces. At Croagh Patrick, on Reek Sunday, there is no specific address made to political power. People can climb the mountain as a religious undertaking or as someone seeking physical fitness. The place making done at this location has many meanings; no one meaning is drawn from, or inscribed on, the landscape. In the changing place of the primary school in Ireland, that they belong to the community as a resource is one of the ways that this negotiation of place is occurring presently. The schools are an open-ended place frame that generates the secular and the religious in relation to each other. The contestation done in these places is strategic in that they will not finally become secular once religion is removed. While the removal of religious symbols is an important consideration, there is no one meaning of the school in community life in Ireland. The schools will continue to be contested places even if significant divestment by the Catholic Church occurs.

Schools are places where relational ties to multiple communities exist in that they are places where there is a conflict over competing place-frames (Pierce et al., 2011: 60). In the Irish context, the schools are sites of both denominational education and a citizenship based on a new diversity. This occurs within a context of deprivatisation. Deprivatisation in the Irish context means that contestations continue to occur but where the competition for place-frames is more intense. For the Catholic Church in particular, deprivatisation means that it:

Abandons the private sphere assigned to religion and enters the undifferentiated public sphere of civil society to take part in ongoing processes of normative contestation, discursive legitimation, and redrawing of the boundaries between private and public, religious and secular, morality and legality, justice and the good life, a tension between catholic universality and Roman Catholic particularity often becomes evident. (Casanova, 1996: 367)

The primary school is the site of one such tension in Ireland between catholic universality and Roman Catholic particularity. Small c catholic universality in this sense

refers to the global sense of communion with other churches and with a sense of the 'whole person' that the Catholic school seeks to develop. Roman Catholic particularity is how the place making is done in, for example, Rathcormac, Ballylongford and Naas. This particularity extends, within Church terms, through the spatialisation of a community of faithful in the parish or through dioceses' sense of themselves. Continual reference is made in the public sphere to the rights of parents to educate their children in line with their beliefs. How is the space of the school different from that of the Marian statue in this context? In this section, I want to explain what I mean by tamed space.

In its contestation with a deprivatised Catholic Church, the Department of Education has not sought to redraw the boundary between the private and the public. This is because the basis upon which the school is being contested does not require taming. In contrast, the statues exist in a space that is tamed. The identities confirmed at, and the sense of belonging attributable to, the statues does not call into question the legitimacy of public space as secular. As place-frames, the statues are uncontested as religious places. Those that maintain the statues do not understand them as religious places, set apart from all other parts of their lives or their locales. The community worker at Reuben Street drew attention to the planned re-dedication ceremony as one that would draw together all of the people in the neighbourhood, not just for the Church. The project architect for the Timberyard development called attention to the folk meaning of the Marian statue that pre-existed any formal reproduction of the space. These local sites are not engaged in a wider struggle about competing place-frames in the same way as schools are. Pilgrimage sites exist in differentially tamed space, places that do not challenge the power of the public to confine religion. Our Lady's Island is a tamed space where the meaning of how to be public is not challenged. It is internally contested by the parish priest through the different practices seen in the rounding of the island on the opening day. Croagh Patrick is less of a tamed space in as much as people climb the mountain on all days of the year, not necessarily as a place of pilgrimage. Tamed spaces are spaces within which specific religious place-frames continue without challenging the divisions made between the religious and the secular.

Appeals to state power to regulate the religious, across various sites, are not merely appeals to an abstraction. They are an appeal for more tamed space. They obscure the deprivatised engagement of institutional church organisations. They also obscure a reconfigured, on-going power relation to the discursively secular. A conception of the

public sphere that does not take account of the power relations from which it arises commits itself to an abstracted secular subject. This is seen in Casanova's change in *the form* of being public. As public religions deprivatise into a secular public sphere, their immanent power is noted. Religious place making is thus made political through appeals for additional legitimations to accommodate the unfolding secular. The politics of secular place making arises from calls for more secularisation. The tamed space created by a secularisation process assigns the religious is not a dismissal from 'a somewhere' into 'a nowhere'; it is an active political process. The statues are tamed precisely because the law is not used to define where they can and cannot exist. Pilgrimage practice is partially regulated through parking measures, the safety of pilgrims in some places but not others. As I have shown, the law is the instrument used to define where and how the boundaries between the religious and the secular can be maintained. However, the exclusion of the law is still an inclusion in the sight of the law:

The difference between exclusion and abandonment turns on the fact that abandonment is an active, relational process. The one who is abandoned remains in a relationship with sovereign power: included through exclusion. (Pratt, 2005: 1054)

The secular public sphere, in its acts of exclusion, is where some are made the subject of contingency but others are freed from such contingency. Appeals for some religious practice to be privatised are thereby an exhortation to power and for the creation of more tamed space. The secular subject wishes for religion to be held in place so that the mobility of progressive secularism is not impeded (Massey, 2005). Tamed space is the assignation of particular roles for deprivatised churches in specific settings, e.g. within churches. Tamed space draws attention to the power of the institutional structure of the deprivatised Catholic Church in Ireland while simultaneously encompassing all other spatial practices deemed to be religious at other sites and scales. This form of space means defining when and where that which is included in the bracket of the religious in Ireland. In Ireland, where the Catholic Church is re-entering the public sphere under new conditions, the Department of Education is now trying to regulate primary schools' time but in the past has shown no interest in regulating the placement of statues.

### ***Religious time and secular place***

Secondly, as I showed in chapter three, the more religious time of the past co-exists within the identifiable present in the material culture of Marian statuary. They refer to a time of greater devotion; practices that belong to a more religious past but which materially persist in a more secular time. The replacement of the statue of Mary at the former Fatima Mansions public housing scheme following renovation shows that the meanings held by Mary in this place change. Her classification as a statue that belongs to the residents and not the Church brings forward how the religious can be contested within its own terms, without reference to the formally secular. Like the well practices at Our Lady's Island, the statue is internally contested. The statue was an important part of that new space that had been so comprehensively renovated in formal planning terms. At Monkstown, the people who were drawn to the Marian statue almost every Saturday maintained the surrounding area. At Maryland in Dublin, the Council provided paint for a resident to maintain the statue of Mary on a corner site despite the fact that the Heritage Officer of the Council did not see the same statue as worthy of inclusion in the database of public art. The statues of Mary continue to exist in the present and yet reference the past. In these terms, the secular stands in relation to a sense of these places being religious in the past, but not now. They are places of contemporary devotion and meaning for the residents but places of the past for the Council and to others. For the Timberyards' architect, the recess created for the statue was to become a focal point, despite the best attempts of the planners to de-emphasise its position. The way in which these places are produced and reproduced is in their re-placement, their upkeep and in their re-ordering. The sites of the statues can be seen as resisting closure by a reference back to the time of historical Mary as the mother of Jesus in the present day. This is alongside the attendant, ambiguous meanings of purity referred to in chapter three.

If places are locales which dynamically link past and present, represented in material form and performative repetition, what becomes of places which are actively bracketed to appear culturally irrelevant / insignificant? The statues of Mary are places of memory in two senses. Firstly, they are memory places of the Marian Year of 1954, only one of two proclaimed (the other being in the 1980s). As such, they might be considered by some as remembrance of a Catholic Ireland, a time when family, community and Church seemed synchronically attuned. I have said already how the symbol of the Mary statue is beginning to be made into the sacred art of the cultural elites (Adams, 1998; Freeman, 2010). They are being made into artefacts, an active and definably political

process. Secondly, the statues are places of memory in that they transcend what Taylor (2007: 712) calls secular time. Secular time is distinguished from the time of our forebears in that it is no longer multiple or hierarchically related. Taylor lays out how higher time, or eternity, gathers and reorders secular time (Taylor, 2007: 54-60). Mary statues (as present objects of devotion) call into being a placed memory of this higher time. The physical presence of a Mary statue reminds devotees that Mary was a woman chosen by God to give birth to his son. While the significance of the theo-anthropology of this heightened birth moment is lost to the present Catholic Church, Mary statues remind devotees that Mary remains as much a historical figure as a devotional one.

At Lough Derg, the principal means by which people talked about their experience there was that it was like nowhere else. Additionally, and this was particularly the case for the men I spoke with, the repetition of the pilgrimage pattern across years was of significance. Comparing the current experience with how much harsher it was in the past seemed important in the making of this place. The men I spoke with re-created an authority in this place by talking about their past experiences. In this way, the hardship of the present pilgrimage can be mitigated in a way that I did not hear from the women I spoke with. At Our Lady's Island, an important part of the rites conducted on the opening day of the month long pilgrimage is recognition of its duration over centuries. While the present pilgrimage practice was re-initiated in the late nineteenth century, eternal time was recalled repeatedly. Secular time, Asad's "privileged measure of all time" (2003: 43), is set aside to recall how Mary responded to God's call. Pilgrims round the site behind a monstrance in recognition of the power of the Blessed Sacrament in preparation for the month long pilgrimage season. The place is made holy for the time period by its consecration every August. For the entire year, it is a place for prayer or walking the dog. As I noted, not everyone touched the Mary statue during the rounding nor did everyone stop at the holy well. This would imply not just a set of practices but a set of ordered practices. The main body of pilgrims did not stop at the well to recognise its place within the order of the pilgrimage. There is contestation at this site about the right way to do the pilgrimage.

Primary schools maintain an ethos that is bound to a sense of tradition of being a Catholic school. This tradition invokes the interest of a community that pre-exists any new terms of negotiation for this place. Within this contestation, *Educate Together* has begun working within the patronage model as a local resource in use since the 1830s. In

this manner, Catholic primary schools do not just exist in the present time but draw from a longer time frame. Primary schools in Ireland more generally do not sit neatly within a hierarchy of scalar politics where each administrative level relates directly to the other. However, the changing geography of education provision at primary level is drawing the sites of the primary school into a national scale. By drawing attention to what portions of the school day are given to religious instruction and for other subjects, it seeks to create a boundary. The Church's response to this is that a school's curriculum is informed by its Catholic ethos. No one subject contains the religious as the curriculum as a whole is vivified by the ethos. This is a resistive strategy and is coordinated through the reference to the ethos of the school and it serving a 'community'. These are two indeterminable frames of space and time for the secular logic of state policy. The notion of 'parental wishes' draws upon indistinct boundaries between whom the school serves and whom it does not. In this sense, the schools conceived of as part of the Catholic parish are sites resistant to being made secular.

Space is full of power, in both hegemonic and resistive forms. These two ways of thinking about place making (as tamed space and incorporating the temporal) allows for an approach to the secular in the religious, as a relational geography. There is no resolution to these places, despite the tendencies toward taming the space of the religious in secularism. By deploying a relational geography of religion to understand the changing qualities of the religious in Ireland, we can avoid the idea that some places need to be brought 'up to date' by a secularisation process. As an act of inclusion and exclusion, secularisation demands that some religious practices are placed outside the secular. However, these practices are still subjected to the orders of the secular public sphere. From this perspective, it is easy to identify a 'Catholic Ireland' as if all those bound by such a political formation are in various stages of an incomplete secularisation process. Agrama (2010: 498) identifies this as the circularity of secularisation, one that:

Too readily accepts secularism's own criteria for judging its failure or success, without carefully looking into the characteristic practices in which they are historically embedded, and their consequences for social life. (Agrama, 2010: 498)

This is a circularity that cannot recognise the contestations between the religious and the secular in specific places. It also seeks to evacuate the points at which political power was brought to bear and can be identified in the public sphere.

Marian statues, schools and pilgrimage sites are made and re-made through practice and performance. The religious is neither confined to a religious past nor can it always be bound by a privileged time of the secular. Both the past and the present exist in these places; they defy closure. Pilgrimage at Our Lady's Island is not the same as that at the Croagh Patrick because the latter has been re-inscribed as both health practice and religious practice. The statues of Mary do not feature in the Dublin City Council database because they are not public art; they have not been named as such. To do so, the statues would have to be addressed as something other than Catholic religious artefact. They may be on their way to being addressed as this. They may eventually become designated heritage: made something public from a collective and imagined past. Primary schools are currently being renegotiated as secular places; their authority to make religious place is being renegotiated. In a relational geography, rounding pilgrimage practices cannot be dismissed as remnants of a former time. The granularity of these practices in this space (the here) and this time (the now) is lost when spaces are closed to the political significance of those who continue to make them religious places. How can this granularity be regained? In the final section, I outline how a more fluid understanding of scale can aid this process.

## **Flatter religious landscapes**

I have shown above how secular continuity relies on a tamed religious space and a temporal bracketing of some religious practices. The taming of specific practices as religious confirms a political confinement; local practices are set in opposition to the structural. They are excluded from a larger understanding of what the religious is because they are local instances. This form of spatial politics encourages the formation of religious subjectivities for a particular public culture (Asad, 2003: 183-184). That some are designated as local and contingent while others are not is the content of the contestations of secular place making. How do these specific practices that are confined and bracketed connect with broader political processes, in response to my research questions? One way to do this would be to see the three sites as operating vertically in a nested fashion. It implies that Marian statues exist on the lowest point on a vertical scale with the primary schools on the highest. It might be inferred from this that Marian statues are completely secularised sites (as heritage) and that the primary schools are still undergoing a process of secularisation. They are sites of on-going contestation.

However, this accords too little explanatory power to the secular; in this frame the secular is merely a discourse. The verticality between local and global also perpetuates a scaffold imaginary that Marston et al. (2005: 419) say facilitates an entry from below, an entry that proceeds from an apparent nowhere. Theorising scale differently allows the micropolitical spatial expression of religious to be connected with broader processes. Moving beyond the reservations of the geographically religious means thinking about the content of the practices themselves and not just the preconfigured forms of secular place making.

A changing geography of religion in Ireland, through a post-structuralist analysis, seeks not to create an overarching theory for all forms of religious place making found elsewhere. There is no position from which I can stand back to provide an analysis of the secular and the religious (Knott, 2005: 89). In the exploration of a poststructuralist rendering of scale, Marston et al. (2005) want to avoid the reproduction of a small-large imaginary by discarding the “centring essentialism that infuses not only the up–down vertical imaginary but also the radiating (out from here) spatiality of horizontality” (Marston et al., 2005: 422). In this final section, I want to make the case for the importance of the content of the geography of religious place making, not just its form. This is using Marston et al.’s (2005) theorisation of scale as flat ontology. They call theirs a flat ontology for scale:

Because it neither incorporates a priori transcendental forms nor deploys ‘axiomatic’ or typological analytics that pre-ordain a series of solutions to critical inquiry. ...[T]hese too often characterize the analytic procedure of scale theory. Sites must be approached problematically through analysis conditioned by the compositional specificities particular to each. (Jones et al., 2007: 265)

In this thesis, I have sought to involve each site in the politicisation of its own compositional specificity. The sites examined here, statues, pilgrimage places and schools cannot be subsumed within a unified explanatory schematic. It might be easy to state that pilgrimage and the Marian statues are just not amenable to a broader political analysis. They are but curiosities of these Irish places. Primary schools are amenable to broader political analyses because they interact with state policy on the diversity of communities across Ireland. This is a scaling of these practices in official and semi-official sacred places that reflect a hierarchy of places. Within this hierarchy, some places are more politically important than others. This is minimally recognised by Kong (2010) when discussing places that take on the functions and meanings of the religious

because “the ways in which religion is experienced and negotiated are also multifaceted and multiscaled, from the body to the neighbourhood, city, nation, and across nations” (Kong, 2010: 769).

To avoid the limitations of assuming a nested hierarchy of scales identified by Marston et al. (2005), the form of social space need no longer determine the content and its analysis. An analysis that relies on hierarchical scale is one where “objects, events and processes come pre-sorted, ready to be inserted into the scalar apparatus at hand” (Marston et al., 2005: 422). To deliver the kinds of engaged and self-reflexive accounts sought by Marston et al., I see congruence between the ways in which religious places are often separated from secular places *and* the reconfigured politics of the site existing within a neighbourhood of practices:

A social site is not roped off, but rather that it inhabits a ‘neighbourhood’ of practices, events and orders that are folded variously into other unfolding sites. Thus, its complexity arises as the result of a number of different interacting practices – each potentially connected to other contemporary sites – and orders. (Marston et al., 2005: 426)

This complexity is at the analytical level however. To operationalise a flat ontology of scale, I am recognising the potential for an “unfolding of intermeshed sites” in the sites that I have examined. I am doing this because I want firstly, to provide for a changing geography of religion that does not rely on a hierarchical scale of pre-formed categories of experience. Secondly, I want to know if the geography of religion in Ireland that I have brought together here can be connected with broader processes elsewhere and to do so without the notion that there is a secular ‘here’ and a religious ‘there’. Differences exist across space but the religious and the secular are co-produced; they are in a constant state of *becoming* secular and religious places. I want to remove the circularity of a secularisation that identifies some places at their secular peak and others lagging behind (Agrama, 2010). In this, both time and space are important. Ansell (2008: 194) has made an attempt operationalise a flat ontology of scale and to move beyond the parochial in relation to children’s geographies. She argues that examinations of children’s lives have tended to be confined to the home and private space. Children’s agency is often confined to the local and set in opposition to the structural. She points out that recent work has brought the body and emotion more to the forefront. It is not that existing accounts of scale have to be thrown out entirely. It is Ansell’s intention to

bring a flat ontology to bear so that the form of social space determining the content of social space can be looked at differently.

Scale is taken here to mean an ontological series of orderings (Cox, 1998). It is the ways in which material social products are ordered in the world. It is not just a way of categorising what is global and what is local. An idealist account of scale would hold that local social relations are reflections of what is produced sub-regionally or national relations sub-globally. In a materialist conception of scale, the active creation of the global or the local take place through processes of struggle and processes of compromise (Herod, 2003: 230-231). The global scale does not simply wait around to be brought into play, in some grand political narrative waiting in the wings of history. The global must be brought into being; processes and political struggles must *become* global. The materialist conception of scale resonates with Asad's spatialisation of the secular and the religious. In acting in the world, we do not start out being local and slowly realise that we are enmeshed within interlocking scales, ending in 'the global'. The global is often invoked across scales to settle contestations over place making. A more fluid way of thinking about scale is necessary to reorder power relations across space. Instead of focusing on how social spaces are reorganised through *this* regulation or *that* law, Marston et al.'s ideas bring the contested concept of geographic scale into a non-representational frame. Marston et al. revisit contemporary literature on the "scaffold" of scale (Marston et al., 2005: 418). They find that mainstream accounts of scale inadequate are because they seek "a foundational hierarchy" (Marston et al., 2005: 419) within which social practice is placed. Such accounts prioritise the institutional relations of the global over the multinational, the regional and the local. Marston et al. (2005) argue that in hierarchical understandings of scale, the local is always subsumed into the relations and the practices of the next scale up. The specific complexities of local place contestations are smoothed over for the sake of representing them as global concerns. Hierarchical understandings of place, even when combined with network analyses, are:

Bound to reproduce a small-large imaginary and with that, pre-configured accounts of social life that hierarchize spaces of economy and culture, structure and agency, objectivity and subjectivity, and cosmopolitanism and parochialism; and it cannot deliver engaged and self-reflexive accounts of social life. (Marston et al., 2005: 422)

For Marston et al., the hierarchical conceptualization of scale is a “classic case of form determining content.” They propose instead a flat ontology of scale, which can “replace [a] structuralist calculus with the language of flows and fluidity” (Marston et al., 2005: 423). This replacement with the language of fluidity has value for constructing a relational geography of the secular and the religious and in response to the central questions of this research. Marston et al. wish to simplify the structural constraints of political action which “focuses on both material composition and decomposition, maintaining that complex systems generate both systematic orderings and open, creative events” (Marston et al., 2005: 423-4). If religious places are spaces of contingency and agency, they are reflective of actions and orderings that are not sealed. Relational place making is bundled, the changes in which are as durable as the institutions that support that durability. Both systematic orderings (established practices like the rounding of the basilica at Lough Derg) and open events (contingencies like a school dismissing a Church of Ireland teacher) are encompassed within their multi-scalar approach.

By employing this more fluid way of theorising geographic scale, I am connecting Kong’s request to bring the micropolitics of religious practice into contact larger political processes and Asad’s “questions about the internal temporal structure of tradition” (Asad, 2003: 222). I have shown how pitching tradition against modernity is based on religion being a static social relation. This is an unproductive spatial analysis however. It is as if the more modern way of being is outside of contested social relations, looking back on former times:

Hegemonic conceptions of progress define themselves over and against a pre-modern temporality that they produce for the purposes of their own self-legitimation. (Butler, 2008: 1).

Marston et al. are trying to avoid pre-configured accounts of social life. How some religious practices, such as at the statue in commemoration of the women killed at Hardwicke Street, are kept local is one such preconfigured account. It has religious significance in this place and for these people but is often framed as another death at the hands of car thieves. Seeing religious practices and performances as something apart from the social and spatial relations from which it arose is to detach them from the significance of the interior, the contingent messiness of the lived. Marston et al. (2005) reflect upon the problems associated with ‘scale jumping’, the tendency for political claims made at one level of scale to be extended to another. Their review suggests “how

we might better view the politics of scale through networks of associations that are uneven in their areal extent” (Marston et al., 2005: 419) In current theorisations, they find a problematic “verticality that structures the nesting so central to the concept of scale, and with it, the local-to-global paradigm” (Marston et al., 2005: 419). Why is this verticality problematic?

Conceiving of scale as a series of vertical hierarchies produces a “macro-mystification” (Marston et al., 2005: 427) where, for example, reified conceptions of what are religious experiences become part of a totalizing discourse of the secular. In their terms, a failure to assign a politics to globalisation allows “the imaginary transposition from board-room to global corporation [which] obscures those sites of ordering practices” (Marston et al., 2005: 427). In this way, prioritising the practices and institutional relations of the global over the multinational, the regional, and the local obscures power relationships. It is here that the political reorganisation brought about by secularisation processes can engage with the fluidity of religious ways of being. By looking at the ordering of creative events *as well as* systematic orderings, religious and secular ways of being can be understood as active processes. Being religious in the secular public sphere is an interpenetration of the local *and* the global. This interpenetration implies a reflexive self-understanding on the part of people in their own places and their reference to the cultural and political processes around them. For them, fluidity is something more than just a metaphor that conceives of globalisation as “horizontally radiating ‘out theres’ that fly over the materialities of the in-between in order to find themselves in the space of the ‘in here’” (Marston et al., 2007: 50-51). Space is more than extension. Moore (2008) makes a distinction between scale as a mode of analysis and as practice. Scale as practice places unhelpful dualisms in a broader philosophical frame because “as embodied beings our reasoning is not purely conscious and literal...but largely cognitively unconscious, metaphorical and imaginative” (Moore, 2008: 216). This more fluid way of examining scale is productive because it seeks out the neighbourhood of practices in a relational geography of religion and focuses on the content of social space.

A multi-scalar approach is the lens through which the dominance of secular place making can be critically assessed. Contestations over the Marian statues of Dublin, the performance of pilgrimage and primary schools cannot be planed out of their peculiarity for the purpose of constructing some new large explanatory. There is an anxiety within

Kong's appeal: it is a desire to seek a metropolitan logic in the local and the regional. What if the changing burial practices in Hong Kong mean that they change for those who materialise their meaning? They connect with other articulations of power in the designation of cemeteries as wasteful plots that might be used for property development, as Kong (2011: 416) shows. The haptic practices at Lough Derg or at Our Lady's Island do not connect with these ways of making secular place. They are only part of a global imaginary of religious practice. I argue in the final chapter that the content of the changing geography of religion in Ireland are constitutive of its form. They are not local orderings served up to global imperatives. Any rearrangement of the content and form of social space that prioritises the latter would repeat the teleological errors present in the idea of the secular as uniform progress.

## 7: Overlapping boundaries and political agency – some conclusions

The lake at Lough Derg stands at a termon site. The termon (from the Irish *tearmann*) denotes a conjuncture of spatial units; those of a king, a bishop and people (Turner & Turner, 2011: 108). As a landscape of the overlapping spaces of ecclesial, regal and civil power, Lough Derg provides a peculiar example. It lies on the north west of Ireland, which is located on the north west fringe of the European continent. Lough Derg is away from the noise of cities and towns but for many pilgrims is as quiet as their own townland. It is neither a centre nor on the periphery. Travelling to this part of the island to spend three days repeating prayers, staying up overnight and kneeling on stone beds takes effort. In this place, food and sleep are periodically deprived of those who take the short journey across the lake to Station Island. Pilgrims enter willingly but are drawn to the place, some of them annually. The place has a meaning to the pilgrims before they arrive but it is also changed by their presence. In the site of Lough Derg, the contestation between the religious and the secular is right in front of the pilgrims. It is a practice of the body oriented to the immaterial. But it also defies fixity by an institutional church. Where boundaries between the religious and the secular are drawn, they overlap in places like these.

In the previous chapter, I showed a differential in how religious places in Ireland are grounded as public and private space. I introduced the idea of tamed space. Tamed space is an active process of inclusion and exclusion inherent to understandings of the secular public sphere. They are spaces within which specific religious place-frames can continue without challenging divisions made between the religious and the secular. These processes of inclusion and exclusion produce places that do not question the legitimacy of public space as secular. It holds some practices and performances still so that they do not challenge the continuity of a secular public sphere.

Through this thesis I have tried to include the temporal in my examination of the changing geography of religion in contemporary Ireland. This is an attempt to provide some dynamism for a relational geography of the religious and the secular, one which does not place space and time in opposition (Massey, 2005: 47). Secularisation as a subtraction story, where societies move from being more to less religious, emphasises

the temporal progression of some at the expense of others. In geographical terms, some places are left in the past so that progress can be recognised. The kind of relational geography of religion I have outlined here seeks to develop the religious and the secular as co-produced. It yields a richer geography of place where the past and the present co-exist. With geographic thought and research of course, there is also a politics. It is a politics of time and space; this way of thinking about place making is impossible to avoid.

A relational geography of religion means recognizing the centrality of people's experience in place and how this is folded into various neighbourhoods of practice. Neighbourhoods of practice, orderings at sites that fold in different ways into other sites, disallow the kinds of rigid boundary maintenance that insists on a clear division between the secular and the religious. By de-emphasising the peculiarity of some practices as religious, a neighbourhood of practices approach allows the discourses, practices and performances of the secular to become more evident. I have provided a response to the appeal by Kong (2010): that a connection can be made between the meaning of religious place making at some scales and larger political processes on other scales. That connection however, cannot be made on the basis of a contestation with the secular that refuses to acknowledge how places are made relationally. The people who attend the three day pilgrimage in Lough Derg find a sense of belonging in that place but through the meanings that they have brought with them about that place. Religious practice and performance continues to draw from ancient traditions but it also alters itself to new conditions. These conditions are social, political and spatial in character. They are under continuous negotiation, just not on a time scale privileged by secular time. Social space is a series of potentialities, places being brought into relations and where place making is hybridised. The social space of the religious is in a state of *becoming*; it is not closed off. This state of becoming is more than an abstraction; it is composed of dynamic forces that allow for, and accommodate, sites of ordering practices.

Marian statues, formerly public sites of a particular devotion to the Virgin Mary and protector under conditions of suburban change, are places of hybridised place making. They exist as objects of devotion of a type that was never brought within the walls of the church. They retain their presence in specific landscapes in their maintenance and replacement over time. They appeal to one particular public but that public is not

recognisable within the law, the state's instrument for delineating what is made public and what is kept private. In the contestation over primary schools in Ireland, there is a claim to make schools more reflective of a new diversity. The schools, whose teachers are paid by the state, are being divested as places where the Catholic Church insists they are one part of the parish. The schools are highly contested places of the religious and the secular and recognised as such by the state. In Ireland, the boundaries between private space and public space are opaque and diffuse. The content of making place a *religious* place (kneeling, fasting, rounding, prayer) is smoothed over into a coherence called religion. Secular place making thus becomes the rejection of social space that has already been closed off, where ongoing practices are fastened down and made known as religious. There is a prioritisation in this: the practices of the global stand over the regional and the local. Such a prioritisation obscures power relationships. A relational geography that is multi-scalar would reflect the hybrid ways that places are made. It would make the social relations of these contestations more visible.

In the theorisation of scale that draws on this multi-scalar approach, no priority is accorded to the content of practices in one scale over another. It resists the creation of a radically different Other. This approach has been criticised (MacKinnon, 2011) but the criticism disconnects the epistemological constructions of scale from its material production. This reinforces the sense that there are two understandings of space: one of analysis (form) and another of practice (content). I argue here, in support of Marston et al. (2005), that a flat ontology of scale bridges the gap between analysis and practice. Within this there is the generation of new orderings and the accommodation of the contingency of everyday life.

Among the practices that I have outlined, being outside of privileged secular time is one way in which a critical gaze is directed toward the 'outside over there' (chapter 3). In distinction to this, a neighbourhood of practices places the sacred and the secular in each other's neighbourhood. The secular, as currently conceived as human beings freed from contingency, is a dominant neighbour. Its practices are produced as *real* social space, all those that are amenable to aggregation which then constitutes social reality. Freedom from religion is the currency of this secularism: some places have more of it than others. But this thin conception of freedom is to misconstrue the interpenetrations of social and political relations in which politics unfolds within and between sites. The interpenetration of the relations of the school as a site of religious catechesis and as

social reproduction is already present. Into what space does the free subject of the secular move? The persistence of religion, in a secularist framework, defies the reproduction of real social space. For Benhabib (1999), there is a fundamental ambiguity within the understanding of the 'private' of the liberal social-contract model of the public sphere. This is the principle of non-interference, present in many other parts of an institutionally differentiated and self-consciously modern society. I would extend this and argue that the confinement of religious affect to a tamed and private space seeks the weakening of the intersubjective and the moral. Moral reasoning takes place, and is increasingly represented, as a matter of individual choice. In this way, and in support of Asad (2003), only the practices of Catholic faith in Ireland that are willing and able to enter into the public sphere on the right terms will be allowed access. It may take the Marian statues to become public art for example.

At the beginning of the thesis I asked: what does the geography of religion in Ireland tell us about the place of religion in public? This final question is concerned not with the maintenance of a clear division between private and public space. Instead, it responds to Kong's (2010) wish to make geographic ideas about religion more accessible to those studying religion more generally. It is a call to multidisciplinary. In compiling this research, I have been asked if my questions are theological, not geographical ones. What might be the valid approach to the study of geographies of religion is also subject to boundary maintenance. It appears to me now that the objective seeks to erase the contingent and to re-assert the power of its own boundaries. Recently, Tse (2013) has begun work on an examination of place making practices informed by transcendence. Tse's grounded theologies may take hold empirically in time. However, those for whom the advancement of geography as a discipline is important may balk at the multidisciplinary that both he and I imply. A grounded theology may be seen first as a theology; registered as something inadmissible in a secular present.

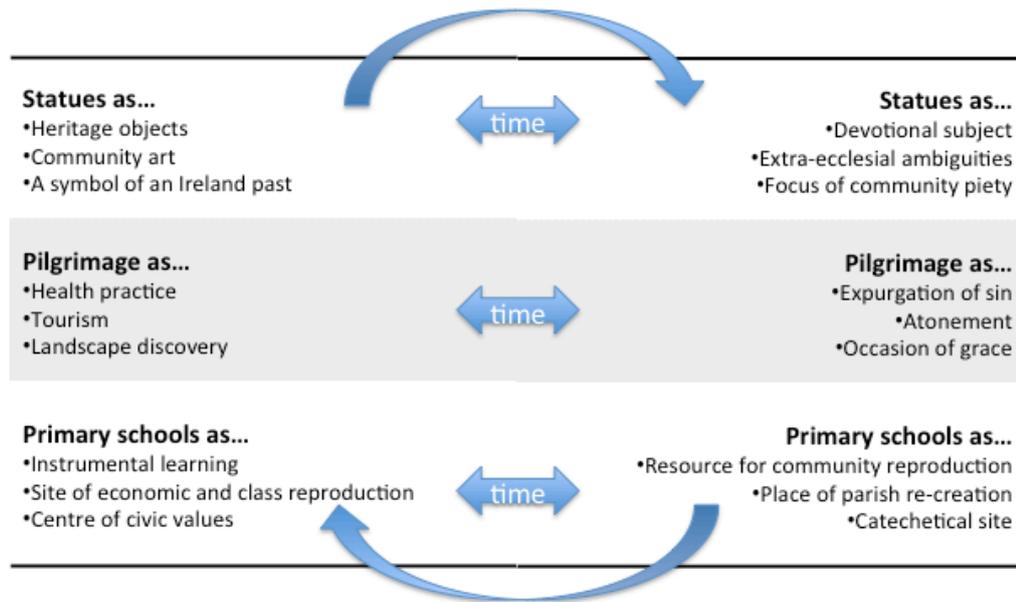
There are defined political outcomes for place making when examining the deprivatisation of religion into such a public sphere. Within the secular is a tendency to create a series of minorities, defined against a sense of the normal, always under threat from compromising political demands. Butler (2008: 2) has argued that conceptions of radical public freedom need a protection against the orthodox commitments of sectional communities. For her, communities are constructed by states with the express aim of developing this undifferentiated and essentialised quality of public space. But minorities

are minorities because of the hierarchical qualities of power relations. This then becomes a relationship whereby all that Muslims in France, for example, have to do to become French is shed their those practices that makes them Muslim. This is similar to the appeal made to Catholic schools in Ireland to leave behind the daily thirty minutes of religious education. The contestation of place-frames in Irish primary schools is grounded as a self-identifying minority position. This derives new geographies of where the secular and the religious are contested. This conjoining of the temporal and the spatial aids a relational geography. Butler (2008) has questioned the basis for who constitutes the progressive politics at any particular point. This teleology of the secular brackets some discourses and practices as unnecessary for progress. Secularism does more than relegate the religious; it constructs the very conception of the human (Asad, 2003). In an unfolding secularisation process, some bodies are massed at particular times while others are individualised. In Ireland, a change in where religion is placed in relation to time and space is made evident in the differentials between the statues and the schools. In other places, similar cultural and social formations can be examined from this relational perspective, where the progressively secular is not the pre-eminent lens of analysis.

The kinds of place making that I have outlined here show the overlapping boundaries between the religious and the secular (chapters 4 and 5). They point to the practice of people's lives, an analysis of which demands that we connect the religiously expressive, the affective, with real social space. This real space is the space of commonality, a political imaginary called society. Kong seeks a connection between the broader political processes and religious spatial expression. However, these broader political processes often understand these expressions as a deficiency in some quality. In the composition of this real social space in Ireland, like many other places, some people's experiences are valorised, others neglected. For example, the pain involved in pilgrimage is sometimes understood as wasteful pain (Asad, 2003: 109-113). Pilgrimage pain is so if judged solely by those means by which bodies are *for something* other than the instrumental. This politics defines an instrumentalism for some forms of embodied action and casts others as wasteful action, reflected in the banishment of the medieval mortifications of Lough Derg. The adjustments made in the promotional material to attract pilgrims to this place would be further evidence (chapter 4). A relational geography of religion does not begin from a position of assuming that some human experiences are a diminution in some quality.

I have argued here that real social space is placed nowhere and yet desired to be universal (Mignolo, 2009). Analyses of religion in place that refuse to acknowledge these acts of inclusion and exclusion do not work because they seek uniformity; such analyses require an idealised public sphere into which the real humanity proclaims its way into being. They seek a view from nowhere from which religion, and other actively minoritised political positions, can be examined objectively. That which cannot be explained by externally verifiable action and reducible to the individualized self is *made to be* irrational. In Ireland today a new public is being formed around the idea of the right place of education in a republic. In such a formation, the school becomes the most visible location of the on-going and composing contestation over space. We see very little demand for a common understanding of Marian statues as places of the public. The kinds of identities and sense of belonging the statues produce are not understood as secular (chapter 3). The religious the secular stand in relation to each other, co-producing new places of significance and forming new identities that defy orderly categorisation.

In plate 7.1, I have provided an outline schematic to illustrate the co-production of place making contestations that are evident in the three groundings. It takes account of a more fluid understanding of scale as well as the relationship over time between the secular and the religious. The horizontal arrows represent the circulation of meanings across space and time. The circulating arrows above and below represent the fluidity of hybridised place making across scales.



**Plate 7.1: An outline schema for the relational geographies of religion in Ireland.**

Throughout this work, I have sought to avoid a post-secular analysis. Secularisation processes already over-identify with what has occurred to Christianity in European political space. A movement to the post-secular allows the European geographic imagination to (once again) set itself apart from transformations and differentiations seen elsewhere (Mignolo, 2009). In support of this, Kong (2010: 764) advises caution when implying the arrival of this analysis, geographies of the post-secular are problematic. The over-generalisation of the European model of the secular denies the compositional specificities of sites. It recreates a static sense of being religious. Instead, in the content of the practices delineated here, I wanted to avoid a Eurocentric understanding of secular space set in opposition to a defined-from-outside religion. Secular space is not freely disputed across scales and times. Building on Asad's genealogy of secularism (2003), I show that notions of the religious as a universal are the result of specific configurations of power (chapter 1). The secular is a discursive practice that arises in relation to other places. Part of this practice is a rejection of those places' location in space. There is no checklist against which a process of secularisation in Ireland can be compared. *There is no measure of its success or failure at becoming free from religion. This is not to say that these practices and performances are politically irrelevant. They are the groundings of social space at this time, in these places. More significantly, the three groundings are not local occurrences of practice*

*that serve to produce the outline of a form found elsewhere. They are continuities in the flow of space, not a disjuncture in real social space.*

Religious place making in public means that geographic thought cannot rely on a clear division between a ‘secular here and now’ on the one hand and a ‘religious there and then’ on the other. Sites with their own specificities are not a landscape acquired in the service of a larger, objective explanatory. The content of the social space supersedes and transforms the form of other social spaces. In a more fluid and multi-scalar approach to these changing geographies, the desire for knowing the form of social space does not need to know all the other content in places that might match that form. A relational geography of religion means not only examining the contestations between secular and religious place frames but also an evacuation of the disabling politics of a European apex for the secular. One of the outcomes of this disabling politics is that the identities of secular place making value a freedom from contingency. Freedom from the events, places and practices that take away our capacity to be fully human is often the content of the state’s power to delineate what is legal and what is moral. It is in the juridical and incarcerating capabilities of the state that we see the realisation of the fully (secular) human. The negotiation by some over the capacity and capabilities of other people as to their freedom to pursue their full humanity is politics. The domination by some over others is evident in the power of state-legal systems. Like Tse (2013), I seek to refocus the geography of religion on to the complexities of various contexts and negotiations of identity in place. This takes into account the agency of those involved in the religious practice as well as the material outcomes of these practices. To accord agency in this manner is to include the kinds of religious place making beyond the reservations of the publicly religious.

If the secular stands as a movement away from contingency and into freedom, that freedom is a value held by individuals. More particularly, values that stand in the way of this freedom are things that one can afford to leave behind in its pursuit. Religious belief is thus designated a value, one among many within the individual. Religious belief becomes a matter of personal choice. The insistence on the removal of headscarves and other head covering for Muslim women can be seen in this context. As an expressive unity, the item of clothing is not a religious symbol in as much as symbols stand for something else. Where religion is seen as a public display of these values, the veil is a marker of particular peoples’ inflexibility in the face of many

opportunities to make themselves free. It is a marker of the outsider, as someone different in the European space. Their agency to decide what makes the most sense connects with processes that view the veil as an obstruction; its removal will grant them more freedom. A central contradiction of the secular as a subtraction story is that agency, often homogenised as the religious, is the only thing that can make them free.

The inclusion of new practices in these understandings means drawing distinctions between what the law can tolerate now and where morality was placed before this point. The acceptance of the state's right to arbitrate between law and morality in this way is a new reality for a deprivatised religious institution. The Catholic Church in Ireland, emerging into deprivatisation, accepts the right of the Health Services Executive to validate internal audits of child protection. It recognises that marriages between men and women can take place outside sacramental occasions. *The places made by these changes, how they change and the forms of identity and belonging is where we now find the religious in public in Ireland. A changing geography of religion would try and understand the location of practices associated with state arbitrations over religious identity and belonging under conditions of deprivatisation.*

As one of Europe's tourist destinations, Dublin does not utilise images of the Marian statues as a point of interest. The statues are important for some people in Dublin because they act as points of practice, reminders of Mary's role as intercessor, among other things. They are representations of a guide to moral decision-making and a model for piety. Because they do not connect with other places elsewhere, where space is an extension, do they provide less valuable geographic knowledge? A relational geography of the statues of Mary in Monkstown and at the Timbryard that relies on a more fluid approach to scale does not have to recognise them as being like the form of religious statues elsewhere (chapter 3). They would not be used to empower a universal understanding for all other forms of this religious expression.

The relational geography outlined in chapter six leads me to ask questions about the origins of the secular in Ireland. There is no beginning point from which the secular in Ireland can be measured. Arising from the example of Our Lady's Park in Drumcondra, public space in Ireland is not empty to begin with. The location of the confectionery factory near the site was because of its proximity to the river Tolka. The factory is the product of several other layers of political reasoning about where to put manufacturing.

With the changing nature of city planning and the development of speculative house buildings in the 1980s, the site changed. Toward the end of the twentieth century, and with the confectionery industry changing in ways unknown to the people who lived here, the factory closed and Tolka Cottages was made a public park. It is not that the factory merely disappeared without the knowledge of the people who worked there. It is connected with a broader network of politics decided elsewhere but the site still changes. The content of social space changes but it lingers to the present. From this point there is an opening for a relational geography of the religious and the secular that examines sites and places already saturated with meaning, identities and significance.

The sites of the statues are never emptied of meaning but re-inscribed, *called into being local* by practices that are made sense of by a massed public. The declaration of a statue being built in the 1950s by the residents or the community is as strong an indication of the creation of a mass public as one provided by the chief architect at the Timberyard. Crucially, however, the declaration is not one that finds adequate legitimation in the present. The statues are bracketed in space as a consequence of a past; a past that has an appeal to another massed public. If the public sphere is a space necessarily articulated by power, then it is not empty space to be filled but is filled with the hopes and fears of those who bring that power to bear. For Asad (2003) deprivatised religion becomes a site of conflict over rights that are non-negotiable. Less forcefully argued, Casanova (1994: 65-66) works along similar lines for the place-making potential for deprivatised religious traditions. The public sphere is *already imbued* by a politics before the articulation of what one considers being a public speech act.

It would be naïve to argue that where religious places are made in Ireland do not connect with processes elsewhere. People draw from other places to identify what is advantageous about schools that do not have a religious ethos. Ideas and ways to imagine places becoming something else arise from other places. It does interest me however how some processes are utilised in the co-production of the secular and the religious and others are not. Contested understandings of the place of the primary schools of Ireland thus take their meaning from processes and mobilisations that are required for that to succeed. Some ideas are strategically mobilised in the contestation between the religious and the secular. The spatial politics of place making in schools in Ireland does not serve some homogenised form of secularism that continues to shoe horn whatever content is necessary for it to become important.

In Ireland, the state is beginning to guarantee freedoms for identified and fracturing minorities. Other states ground the secular differentially through neo-colonial projections of power and by connecting domestic interests with international militarisation. However, the domestic fulfilment of secular freedom (a social good conferred by states on its citizenry through law) is variably connected with broader geopolitical aims. An identifiable minority religion at home (e.g. British Muslims) may connect with territories within which resources are also contested and where religious freedom will not be guaranteed. It seems that some people elsewhere do not need to be made free. A relational geography of the religious, one that wishes to link sites and their specificities, concerns itself with these kinds of projections. The social relations in the familiar place are incompletely reproduced in the Other's place. Within Ireland, work might be conducted on how rights conferred to some minoritised publics are denied to others. This may arise from their coming into the view of the law on specific terms, e.g. same sex marriage, civilly prescribed burial practices. The recognition by state systems of disability rights, sex working and LGBTQI identities are three examples of work that would benefit from this analysis. This work would expose some of the ways in which broader networks of place making persist across scales.

After all of this analysis, there is one remaining difficulty of drawing the micropolitics of religious expression on to a larger canvas. This is about joining the practical and the analytical in ways that 'being in public' currently does not recognise. The rounding practice at Lough Derg, walked overnight within the basilica, means little if seen only as *a practice* of something else. The expression of some religious affect is drawn into and out of places produced as religious. What about those that are not? They are constitutive of, not additional to, those religious places. These more permeable bodies (Maddrell & della Dora, 2013) make places that do not rely on authentication from a real social space of the secular. They are tamed but the processes of exclusion that this requires are not punitive. I believe that within the practice of rounding or the replacement of the statue at Fatima Mansions are elements of an analysis of these places: a unity with others, a communion with God or as penance. *They are not drawn on to other scales because they do not need to be. Religious expression is not a thing, external to a mental process seen from elsewhere. It is a relation to pre-existing networks and nodes of significance, some of which are not formalised in institutions.*

Among those who are found to be contravening the regulation of social life in secular place making in Ireland are other rights-bearing people. Some people in these conditions will draw from spaces and practices that are demonstrably not immanent but nonetheless materialised in this world. The spaces they produce and their expressions tell us this. They may be based on a hitherto limited conception of freedom. Marian devotees recall times and places that are distant and unknowable (chapter 3). The role of pilgrimage in religious catechesis is not firmly defined by the Catholic Church but is an encouraged practice that requires engagement with the immaterial (chapter 4). Earlier in the thesis I asked if the Holy Spirit guides meetings that begin with prayer right until the last agenda item is dealt with. Those who invoke its power in their lives must believe so. A persistent problem for an engaged and reflexive geography of the religious is in trying to assure others that the production of secular space is through wholly secular means. In short, there is no assurance that can be given that the social spaces of the secular are secular all the way down. In trying to redefine the meaning and content of secularism Bilgrami (2011: 13) advises that:

The right thing to do is not to ask that secularism be redefined, but to demand that one should *drop* talk of secularism and focus instead on trying to improve matters on what is really at stake: the effects of a colonial past, a commercially exploitative present, unjust wars and embargos, racial discrimination against migrants in Europe, and so on. (Bilgrami, 2011: 13)

These kinds of geographies need to produce knowledge that is engaged with places in their own context; that need not refer to any other forms of the secular found elsewhere. In the last chapter, I noted Kong's anxiety to connect religious expression with broader processes of the politics of place making. In showing where the changing geographies of officially and unofficially sacred places are in Ireland, I argue that the local is where the most significant acts of religious place making occur. This way of understanding the local actively refuses the rewards of the seemingly objective. It holds at bay a hierarchical schema in which practices in Wexford or Donegal are but the smallest constituents of a mystifying array of unknown out-there.

The local I have extended out of the haptic practices at Our Lady's Island and resource of the primary school are already imbued with a politics of that place. They are some of the places where all of us know how space is produced and reproduced. *Geographies of religion and of the secular should pay some attention to the relations brought into these places. An understanding of the secular that builds on distinctions between private and*

*public space reproduces a hierarchical understanding of place.* The form of that space is scaled up to obscure the content of our lives. Furthermore, there is an understanding of individual human sovereignty that stands in distinction to the kinds of hybrid and relational place making found at the statue in Monkstown and at Our Lady's Island. The reproduction of supposed real social space, the secular moment arising out of a critique of the religious, accords a reality to social space that restricts the expressive unity of social life.

I am left with the question of the location of agonistic public space in Ireland. If it is not empty and secular space, what and where is it? The regulation of public life in Ireland now is based on logics other than those supposed in the past. Into these spaces moves the imaginary of the individualised, rationalised subject, free from the orthodoxies that have kept him back all these years. The public sphere is still replete with power: a power that defines human happiness as bound to material satisfaction and external validation. This too composes other forms of political authority and attendant place-making practices.

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### Appendix A – List of statues examined in chapter 3

Site number	Site name	Type of statue	Year of dedication
1	Botanic Avenue, Dublin 9	Ave Maria	Unknown
2	St Benedict's Gardens, Dublin 9	Immaculate Conception	Unknown
3	Hardwicke Street, Dublin 1	Mary and Jesus	1980
4	O'Connell Street, Dublin 1	Sacred Heart of Jesus	Rededicated 2008
5	Broadstone bus garage, Dublin 7	Mary Queen of Peace	1953
6	Fassaugh Road, Dublin 7	Blessed Virgin Mary	1954
7	St Attracta's Road, Dublin 7	Blessed Virgin Mary	Unknown
8	The Timberyard, Dublin 8	Blessed Virgin Mary	Reopened 1993; replaced in 2009
9	Grey St., Dublin 8	Sacred Heart of Jesus	1929; restored 1979
10	Loreto Road, Dublin 8	Blessed Virgin Mary	Unknown
11	St Teresa's Gardens, Donore Avenue, Dublin 8	Blessed Virgin Mary	1978
12	Mount Drummond Avenue, Dublin 6w	Blessed Virgin Mary	Unknown
13	Bremen Road, Dublin 4	Blessed Virgin Mary	Unknown
14	Park Lane, Dublin 5	Our Lady of Fatima	Unknown
15	Reuben Street, Dublin 8	Our Lady of Fatima	1954
16	South Circular Road, Dublin 8	Sacred Heart of Jesus	1990
17	Oliver Plunkett Road, Dun Laoghaire	Blessed Virgin Mary	1953
18	Walkinstown Avenue, Dublin 12	Blessed Virgin Mary	1978
19	Oscar Square, Dublin	Mary Queen of Peace	1953
20	Ventry Road, Dublin 7	Mary Queen of Peace	1962
21	Lein Park, Dublin 5	Our Lady of Fatima	1979
22	Foley Street, Dublin 1	Blessed Virgin Mary	1989
23	O'Devaney Gardens, Dublin 7	Blessed Virgin Mary	Unknown
24	Alexandra Road, Dublin 1	Blessed Virgin Mary	1954
25	St Laurence's Park, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin	Blessed Virgin Mary	1986
26	Marian Park, Blackrock, Co. Dublin	Blessed Virgin Mary	1972
27	Rialto Cottages, Dublin 8	Blessed Virgin Mary	1981

**Figure A1: List of statues examined in chapter 3**

## Appendix B – Map of statues examined in chapter 3

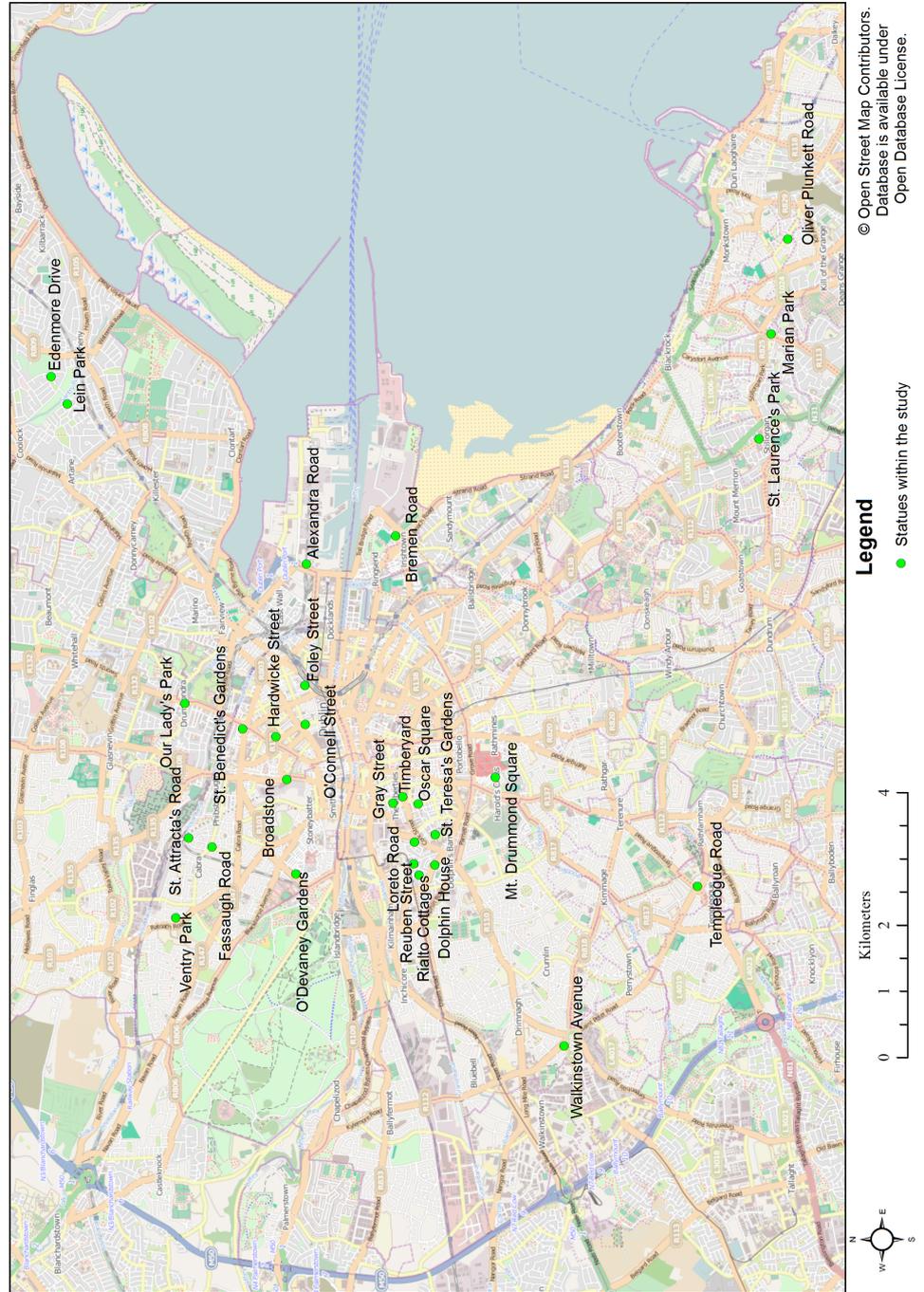
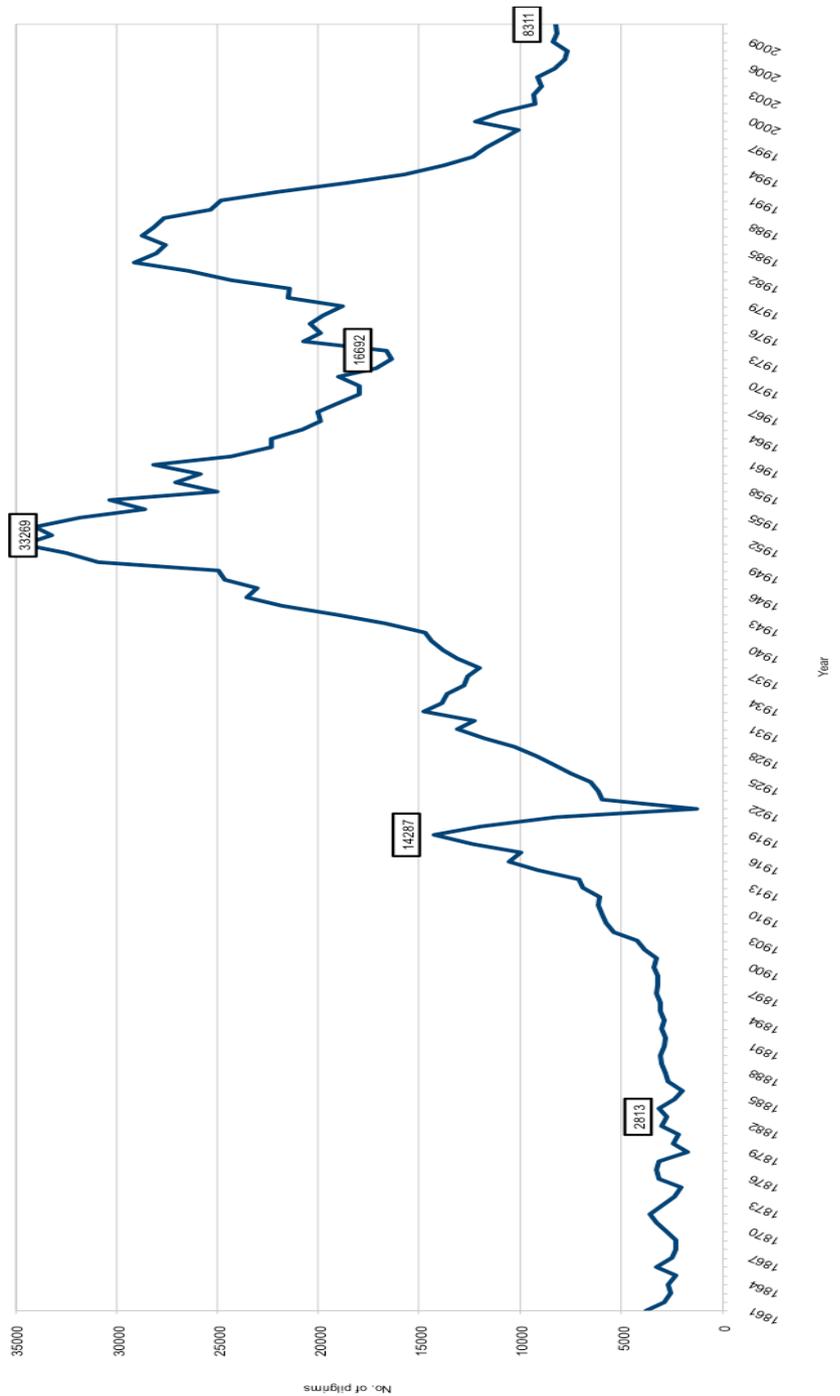


Figure A2: Map of statues examined in chapter 3

**Appendix C – Numbers of pilgrims to Lough Derg 1861 to 2011.  
Source: Lough Derg.**



**Figure A3: Numbers of pilgrims to Lough Derg 1861 to 2011. Note: No data is available for the period 1904-07.**

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