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THE COMMUNITIES OF MODERNS

A sociology of political ambivalence in Northern Ireland

Under the supervision of Yannick BARTHE, Colin COULTER and Dominique LINHARDT

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General Introduction

How the paradoxes of peace put communities and their interdependencies to the test

'Ardoyne has always experienced violence and used violence to resolve arguments'[1]. This is a quote from a resident of Ardoyne, a deprived neighbourhood of North Belfast. It features prominently in a report published by the Northern Irish Executive Office in August 2018, looking at ways to 'build capacity to support transition' in the 'Greater Ardoyne'. But from what and towards what was this small area, with a total of around seven thousand residents, needed to 'transition'?

For two centuries, the population of Ireland has been politically divided between groups of 'unionists' and 'nationalists'. The former have historically been affiliated with the Protestant community, and are attached to the British State and to the United Kingdom. The latter are linked to the Catholic community and see the region of Northern Ireland as being part of Ireland. Since 1921 and the independence of Ireland, the northern region of the island has remained a part of the United Kingdom. In the 1960s, members of the Catholic community denounced the discrimination upheld by a State group deemed too favourable to the Protestant community. These protests escalated into a violent opposition with the British State and a violent opposition between unionist and nationalist communities in areas where they lived close to one another. The Greater Ardoyne was amongst the main sites of conflict. Continuous low-level violence

[1] Communities in Transition Consortium, *Building capacity to support transition in the New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne – Fieldwork Report from Phase 1*, Belfast, The Executive Office, 2018, p. 16.

between urban communities led to a civil conflict from the end of the 1960s to 1998, called the Troubles. Since then, the region has been considered as being in a period of 'post-conflict' marked by the ongoing pacification of inter-communal relations.

Figure 3 - Northern Ireland

Figure 3 - The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Figure 3 - The Island of Ireland

Yet, the two decades following the 1998's Good Friday Agreement slowly produced the impression that the 'long war' was giving way to the 'long peace'[1]. In 2021, Northern Ireland, having been acted into existence on the 3rd of May 1921, reached its centenary. Its oldest residents are still older than the region. They were born at a time when the island was still part of the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland'. For those who are younger, those events are still two generations or so away. Those are not just trivial facts. They mean that the organisation of the Northern Irish political society is still highly dependent on the cogent will of its social groups to see in each other the actors of a same unit. That the pacific integration of a political society is so heavily dependent on social groups' continuous coaffection and renewed interdependencies is not so consciously present to the minds of French or Italians citizens. By contrast, at least, Northern Irish residents consider that they must renew this experience of living increasingly in common in order for their society to hold. That some of them still turn distinct memory into present reasons not to do so continues to have a diffuse impact on Northern Ireland. It continues to be perceived as an obstacle to its 'pacification'. The problem is only made more acute by the fact that the province was not simply acted into existence a hundred years ago. Its coming into being took the form of long and still-ongoing process. The establishment of the Irish State in 1922 manifested, to a hitherto unprecedented level of formalisation, the constitutive dilemma of Belfast's Catholic and Protestant communities: as

[1] Colin Coulter and Peter Shirlow, 'From the "Long War" to the "Long Peace": An introduction to the special edition', *Capital & Class*, 1 March 2019, vol. 43, no. 1, p. 3–21.

both the British and Irish States became involved in the management of Belfast's affairs, albeit to differing degrees, this reinforced supports for the expression of divergent national and communal feelings. In 1925, the final draft of the border between the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland was implemented. In 1948, Ireland dissolved its last statutory ties with the United Kingdom by proclaiming itself a Republic, reinforcing the peculiar status of Northern Ireland. In 1998, the Agreement paved the way for a new devolved power-sharing government within the region. At each period, the same distressing tune could be heard amongst supporters of those changes: who would rise to state, at best their doubts, at worst, their refusal? At each step, reasons not to do so could be invoked, and fears of resistance reappear.

These fears certainly materialised. Each of those moments in Northern Ireland's increasing solidification, as an ideal entity and a political society, came with subsequent and sometimes repeated collapses. Each of those marked the increasingly explicit manifestation of the fact that the region's stabilisation arose from the parallel transformations of Irish and British societies, a condition whose contradictions would emerge more and more clearly amongst Northern Irish social groups. The civil conflict is an obvious case of such political collapse. So are the two periods during which, after 1998, Northern Ireland found itself without functioning executive and legislative bodies. Attention would then turn towards specific areas where those suspicions of resistance were deemed most likely to materialise. Nowadays, only specific deprived areas continue to be seen as sustaining communal conflict. It is now well documented that those urban communities have been the most marked by the stark opposition between the Catholic nationalist republican (CNR) community and the Protestant unionist loyalist (PUL) community over the years[1]. Areas akin to the Greater Ardoyne are most often singled out by other detached observers, as if they had failed to stop 'using violence to resolve arguments', their arguments with each other as much as their arguments with the society surrounding them. It is in that regard that this thesis will be concerned with the internal and intercommunal life of the Catholic and Protestant residents of Greater Ardoyne. But are those deprived areas really the place of a specific resistance to peace?

[1] Victor Mesev et al., 'Measuring and Mapping Conflict-Related Deaths and Segregation: Lessons from the Belfast "Troubles"' in Daniel Z. Sui (ed.), *Geospatial Technologies and Homeland Security: Research Frontiers and Future Challenges*, Dordrecht, Springer Netherlands, 2008, p. 83–101.

1. Is the conflict between communities really harder to 'pacify' in North Belfast?

A first example may help us seize the problem at hand: the re-emergence of organised fights between groups of young people from each community. Since 2018, residents, local organisation and the media have been condemning the return of this form of public violence in Ardoyne. It had seemed to slowly disappear after the end of the conflict. Yet, by the early 2018, every other weekend and increasingly as summertime approached, dozens of teenagers would gather in the streets and in parks within the Greater Ardoyne to fight with one another[1]. Those prearranged encounters were deemed to take place mostly at 'interfaces', spaces at the junctions between unionist and nationalist residential areas. But whilst some were considering them as arranged sectarian fights, others were denouncing and focusing on what they saw as 'simple' antisocial behaviours within the parks. From that point on, inhabitants, youth workers, the police, a restorative justice group, local elected representatives and civil servants all mobilised to manage these problems. How much of this related to the conflict between communities? How much was just a problem pertaining to underage drinking and summertime violence? In turn, how much of the young people's behaviour could be attributed to their supposed tendencies to resist the expected pacification of their relations?

1.1 Irrational or stigmatised individuals?

The discussions first centred on teenagers. At that point, I had been conducting a period of fieldwork in Ardoyne for several months. In June 2018, I asked a member of the Residents' Association of a neighbouring area, George, if he had noticed an upsurge. The community worker did not believe those who saw the 'organised fight between the two communities' as related with the fact that the local youth had nothing to do in the area. He thought there were plenty of parks and courtyards, and that 'it's just that you have to realise that young people don't want to use it'. Instead, he stressed that they were 'a different breed now' as 'they have no interest in the Troubles, they don't know anything about it, but they will look for a fight with the other community if they want to'. Here, George was putting the blame on irresponsible and irrational young people. The situation appears even more problematic than sectarianism. Young people would be meeting and fighting on the basis of their community belonging, but without

[1] Michael Sheils McNamee, '30 youths take part in organised fighting in north Belfast for second night', *Belfast Telegraph*, 14 August 2018.

any actual care for what their relation entails, at least not in any way other than a good set of practical reasons to fight amongst others.

Could the incidents then be acceptably explained by the irrational behaviour of violent teenagers, driven by community opposition? Not only was this worker's view far from being the most common, but it was also blamed by other local actors as being, in and of itself, part of the problem faced by the area. At the same period, I had been chatting with a youth worker in the area. Compared to some of his colleagues, I had been surprised to hear that the club he was working for was less involved in addressing those issues than other, more politicised, youth clubs. The young man then told me:

> 'Generally speaking, what you'll find in Ardoyne… I find that people are a bit overplaying the dark side of the area, the Troubles and all that. They overdo it when they present Ardoyne under that line. It's just that it helps with the funding. It will do you good if you say that "You need the fundings otherwise the kids are in danger". *Et cetera*. I mean… Ardoyne has really changed drastically in the last 10 years. And you don't have the issues, and the riots, that I would have been involved in. It's just that people overdo it to keep the flavour. Attract people.'

The charge is turned around. Individuals who would have interests in presenting the violence as 'community conflicts' or as an issue related to the Troubles are accused of stigmatising the teenagers. Indeed, as we will see, in offering financial incentives to programmes tackling the conflict between communities, the State and the European Union have been increasingly blamed for encouraging the local community workers to exaggerate the problem of 'sectarianism'. On one hand, the young people are accused of being individually responsible for maintaining irrational forms of violence between communities. On the other, the people accusing them are blamed for being dishonestly alarmist and guided by strategic interests. Moreover, the type of reasons that we start to see mobilised by actors when it comes to the origins of ongoing disputes appear more complex than simple resistance to peace, as they attempt to unveil forms of unsaid interests and aspirations.

1.2 Reactionary or cautious communities?

Would that mean that we could simply explain those issues not at the scale of irrational individuals, but at the scale of reactionary communities? Here again, local actors already engaged in debates surrounding a more contextual account of the teenagers' behaviour. For example, both elected representatives of the nationalist community and of the unionist community were highly vocal on the issues. One of them regularly intervened in the media to comment the events. He often attempted to contextualise them in order to show that they were

not just a matter of angry teenagers, but a problem related to the conflictual organisation of the community. This is what he put forward when I interviewed him in June 2018 in the local community centre:

> ‘Down there (He points his finger in the direction of the nationalist area of Ardoyne) we have dissidents you know, people opposing the peace process, who give kids knives, bats and metal bars and then send them around here to cause trouble. That’s bad enough. But if they start sending adults in, then it’s gonna be a real mess. It’s gonna causes a lot of trouble and we’ll start seeing some real big issues flourishing, and the interface will quickly become unstable.’

The local representative then gave a more complex set of reasons for the violent behaviour of teenagers, by stressing the role of social media and of the weather. If they are still being held accountable for some form of irrational behaviour, the prime reason put forward by this actor is that the radical members of the other community, the ‘people opposing the peace process’, are deemed responsible for making sure that the young teenagers engage in some way or another in violent conflictual behaviours with members of the Protestant community.

However, that approach to the resistance of a reactionary community is also contested by many residents, who see undue accusation in these comments. They are blamed as being alarmist and unfounded indictment, which reduced the other community and its sometimes moderate members to a group of warmongers. In addition, some other community workers engaged in the professional management of those Interface areas consider that this type of behaviour is a partial way to handle the potential incidents between communities. According to one of them, Daniel, it ensures that ‘there is always that type of atmosphere, about, “something is going to happen”, and then you those stories coming out, and no one really know if it’s reliable or not […] and then more and more people would tell you that tensions are rising’.

Local actors question the process by which people stabilise a certain view of communities as ‘resisting to peace’, ‘unstable’, or ‘ready to revert back to violence’. The obstacle that they have to overcome to regulate those problems of public violence then becomes more intractable. These tensions, in turn, put actors in difficult position. Though he is responsible for keeping an eye on interface tensions, Daniel is often highly critical of actors who denounce tensions at the interface, which causes incomprehension with some residents. Instead of a resisting community, we discover actors who struggle to partly denounce the violent members of their community and partly oppose those who claim that the area remains ‘unstable’.

1.3 Paradoxical interdependencies?

Regardless, the difficulty of policing the issue inevitably brings back another dimension into the picture: it displaces the issues to yet another level, that of the relationship between the members of those urban communities with surrounding social groups and with the State. After several months trying to handle the problem of organised fights, it appeared to local workers that their poor relationships with State and city agents were partly to blame for the renewed tensions within the area, causing 'tension between those trying to keep the peace'[1]. Some worker's task was precisely to manage those difficult relations. That is the case of Declan, who runs inter-agency meetings with various statutory bodies on community safety. During the summer of 2018, he explained that tensions were running high as the Police was increasingly asking youth workers to intervene and speak with young people, whilst youth workers said that the 'police have to handle dangerous kids at night, they can't take responsibility for that'. As Declan added 'in the middle of all that you have the community, with its wee voice, saying "Well, could someone please do something?"'. In that regard, communities are deemed to blame professionals for not sustaining them enough in their own attempts at countering their excesses, including violent organised fights between communities.

One member of a local youth organisation, Judith, nuanced the situation by stressing that youth workers were not so uniformly ready to discharge themselves from this responsibility concerning local forms of violence. When I mentioned how some representatives were asking for more police officers, she said "Well … everyone knows that if we do that, then it's just a vicious circle, 'cause the police will come in, there will be a stronger presence in the area, and the dissidents are going to step up to say that there is police brutality, and it's just going to slowly increase the … young people getting involved". Not only was Judith indicating how the solutions to the problem seem paralysed by a form of vicious circle, she also stressed that organised fight may also, after some investigation, have a paradoxical origin. She mentioned:

> 'The young people said they used to take part in organised fights, before ending up in the Youth Club. [She stops for a second then laughs] But what I found really funny, well sadly ironic, was how the fights started in the first place. Well I don't know, you'd have to check, but they were saying that everything started with young people meeting in cross community group. Kids who had been part of cross community groups, they got on quite well, so they started to hang out, party together, and so on, but then their pals would come, and then their pals' pals. And one night, so they say, it got out of hand when one of them started to play traditional music. I don't know if it was Up the Ra, or Kill All taigs or what, but that's how it all started, allegedly, and I find it cracking [she laughs].'

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[1] Bimpe Archer, 'Teenagers risking their futures taking part in organised fights', *The Irish News*, 4 March 2019.

Not only is Judith asking for a better regulation of the control of violence between local workers and State agents, she also considers that the behaviour of young teenagers is better understood if one detaches oneself from a reading in terms of local community to understand the engagement of teenagers in a wider web of relations at the scale of Belfast as a whole.

The problem becomes somewhat incomprehensible in terms of community resistance if one considers the fact that young people had been strongly invested in cross-community work, that members of the community were strongly invested in working with and criticising the agents of the State, and that they asked for a better regulation at the scale of their community but also at the scale of the city to prevent domino effects. Rather, actors themselves start to stress the increasing sensitivity to violence, the problematic division of labour and the paradoxical effects of the positive increase in contact between young people from both communities, and the interdependencies between different areas of Belfast. As a matter of course, the political consequence of this situation is increasingly complex to manage. For instance, as Declan also stressed that the organised fights had increased since teenagers were now using a new more efficient bus system to get across town, he added ‘you know, I’d still rather have that, it’s better that young people are able to get across town safely and meet, and have services available, now it’s up to us to deal with those issues’.

How come that increasing pacified contacts between urban communities reinforced their conflictual relations? How come this happened even when local actors or detached agents tried to acknowledge and mitigate the forms of resistance that they expected to encounter? It becomes difficult to argue that the obstacles faced by Ardoyne boil down to residents’ aspirations of opposition, as if they were simply countering their integration within the rest of society and with one another, Catholic and Protestant, in the area. Yet, it is also impossible to neglect that these volitions are still at the origins of conflictual forms of opposition, and unstable forms of excesses. We simply do not know exactly where the balance stands, and how it stands.

Hence the question that will guide our work: **whilst one might have expected that the state’s consideration for Ardoyne communities’ ‘resistance’ to integrating together and into a peaceful society, as well as of their origins, would be seen as facilitating the pacification of North Belfast, how come this has not been the case?** The answer put forward in this thesis is that local actors have experienced an increasingly ambivalent condition by increasingly experiencing double aspirations towards attachment and distancing from their communities, whilst having difficulties to voice it, regulate it, and to understand it as the proper result of the transformation of Northern Irish society. These characteristics define the threshold condition of North Belfast communities.

2. Renewing work on the peace process by focusing on political ambivalence

Analysing what lies behind those apparently paradoxical situations demands that we displace our approach of communities and of the peace process. That a lot has already been said on Northern Irish social conflicts is a euphemism. Yet, the irony stressed by John Brewer at the turn of the century may still stand: this large body of work overly focused on Northern Ireland's political turmoil[1], leaving other social issues unattended, hence not getting us 'nearer convincing people in the street that Northern Ireland can be understood sociologically'[2]. The situation has evolved significantly since 2001, but there have been few attempts to empirically study how a given community comes to terms with the public issues that it experiences, and in so doing clarifies its internal tensions and its ties with other social groups. There have been past examples of such studies, but they were either centred on rural areas[3], or led during the Troubles[4]. Those who do study the formation of public problems, sometimes reaching the point of addressing how the intractable disputes over the definition of public problems proves to be a problematic part of the peace process, do so by remaining at the political level of 'representations'[5]. All those works encounter obstacles that we need to stress here.

2.1 From resistance to ambivalence

First, works which have observed the difficulties of the peace process have tended to describe individuals and communities as simply 'resisting'. Identifying the main areas of resistance to change was seen as a way to sustain the good march of the peace process. But this objective ends up having non-negligible consequences on descriptive and analytical tools, particularly that of often reducing actors to monolithic reasons to act in order to explain their resistance. Thus, sociologists have tended to neglect the work that most actors do to make sure

[1] Brian Lambkin, 'Academic Antagonism and the "Resetting" of the Northern Ireland "Problem", 1969–1970: Owen Dudley Edwards vs. Hugh Trevor-Roper', *Irish Political Studies*, 2 April 2016, vol. 31, no. 2, p. 223–251.
[2] John D. Brewer, 'The Paradox of Northern Ireland', *Sociology*, 2001, vol. 35, no. 3, p. 779.
[3] Rosemary Harris, *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster*, Manchester, U.K. ; Dover, N.H., U.S.A, Manchester University Press, 1986, 206 p ; Elliott Leyton, 'Opposition and Integration in Ulster', *Man*, 1974, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 185–198.
[4] Frank Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy: Struggles in a Belfast Community*, London ; Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul Books, 1978, 220 p.
[5] Marysia Zalewski, 'Intervening in Northern Ireland: Critically re-thinking representations of the conflict', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 1 December 2006, vol. 9, no. 4, p. 479–497 ; Nick Vaughan-Williams, 'Towards a Problematisation of the Problematisations that Reduce Northern Ireland to a "Problem"', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 1 December 2006, vol. 9, no. 4, p. 513–526.

that their plurality of reasons to act is recognised in public. They have struggled to describe what we will call here the *double aspiration* of actors: the coexistence of mutually exclusive though mutually reinforcing social process which puts social actors in the position of following different codes of conduct. The balance that ensues is especially important in conflictual situations such as the one experienced by Ardoyne residents, and manifests itself in everyday political ambivalence. By this, we will mean a sociological situation in which actors find themselves as a result of the practical experience of this double aspiration, and which manifests itself in the possibility to actualise contradictory reasons to act in interactions.

On one hand, sociologists have sometimes reused the vocabulary which considers the traditionalism of communities as the main reason for the slow progress of the peace process. Their persistent 'resistances' when it comes to engaging with the police[1] and to the installation of 'community policing' [2] is a paradigmatic example. The same goes for how sociologists have explained the slow regeneration of urban areas in Belfast by the maintenance of territorial conflicts[3], or even the resistance of social groups to the 'honourable deception' practised by politicians in solidifying the peace process[4]. Yet, on the other hand, the type of sociology that has countered this approach and engaged in their critical reassessment also renew this trope, by revaluing positively the form of resistance that those local groups deploy in the face of the State[5]. They consider that 'bottom-up' resistance is welcomed in that it counters top-down forms of domination[6], and faces a hypocritical governmental organisation which institutionally supports community oppositions[7]. For example, they point out that the expectation of cooperation and compromise between groups which come with the State liberal project of peace has rendered local groups less able to produce coherent self-criticism[8]. However, even the authors and actors who argue that Interface residents are far more conscious of their interrelations, and are victims of forms of institutional and top-down neglects, end up renewing

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[1] John R. Topping, 'Community policing in Northern Ireland: a resistance narrative', *Policing and Society*, 1 December 2008, vol. 18, no. 4, p. 377–396.
[2] Jack R. Greene and Stephen D. Mastrofski, *Community Policing: Rhetoric Or Reality*, New York, Praeger, 1988, 304 p.
[3] Jenny Muir, 'Neoliberalising a divided society? The regeneration of Crumlin Road Gaol and Girdwood Park, North Belfast', *Local Economy*, 1 February 2014, vol. 29, no. 1–2, p. 52–64.
[4] Paul Dixon, *Performing the Northern Ireland Peace Process: In Defence of Politics*, New York, NY, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, p. 293.
[5] In line with the work of James C Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance.*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2008.
[6] Mark Brunger, 'Dispatches from the field: Developing community safety in Northern Ireland', *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 1 May 2012, vol. 14, no. 2, p. 140‑164.
[7] Cera Murtagh, 'Reaching across: institutional barriers to cross-ethnic parties in post-conflict societies and the case of Northern Ireland', *Nations & Nationalism*, July 2015, vol. 21, no. 3, p. 544–565.
[8] Ciaran Hughes, 'Resisting or enabling? The roll-out of neoliberal values through the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland', *Critical Policy Studies*, 2 January 2019, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 61–80.

the resistance approach. They just show us the other side of the coin, by making explicit the 'good reasons' that local actors have to resist a form of institutional change which does not account for their experience.

Either the habitus of communities are seen as barriers to political transformation, or the institutional inertia is seen as a barrier to the transformation and emancipation of local communities. Those were some very important results. However, we will show here that we would benefit in moving from an analysis in terms of resistance towards one in terms of ambivalence. Some scholars have already managed to detach themselves from this opposition by describing the complex relations between 'local and national citizenships'[1], the limits of the pacifying discourse which sees the reinforcement of interactions between communities as the be-all and end-all of the peace process[2], and avoid presenting given 'communities' as homogeneous social groups[3]. As such, they have managed to study the 'ambiguities of pluralism'[4] and the 'everyday emotional tension' experienced by social actors[5]. In return, they have also avoided the academic tendencies of either hailing the success of the Northern Irish peace process[6], or undermining it by focusing on local conflictual communities.

2.2 From conflict to conflictualisation

As a direct consequence, most works have also failed to be symmetrical. By symmetry, we mean something more than a methodological effort to engage 'fairly' in the description of social situations. It does not mean, far from it, that the sociologist denies the profound asymmetry of the social world and of the events which take place in it. But it forces us, as soon as description takes place, to study *how* those asymmetries are made, without limiting ourselves to the idea that 'inequalities have the power to explain by themselves their own reproduction'[7]. By this, the study of conflicted communities in North Belfast gains greatly from not

[1] Allen R. Hays, 'The Evolution of Citizenship in a Divided Urban Community: Local Citizen Engagement in Belfast, Northern Ireland', *Urban Affairs Review*, 1 January 2010, vol. 45, no. 3, p. 336–376.
[2] Colin Knox and Seamus McCrory, 'Consolidating peace: Rethinking the community relations model in Northern Ireland', *Administration*, 2018, vol. 66, no. 3, p. 7–31.
[3] Peter Shirlow and Brendan Murtagh, 'Capacity-building, Representation and Intracommunity Conflict', *Urban Studies*, 1 January 2004, vol. 41, no. 1, p. 57–70.
[4] Chris Gilligan, Paul Hainsworth and Aidan McGarry, 'Fractures, Foreigners and Fitting In: Exploring Attitudes towards Immigration and Integration in "Post-Conflict" Northern Ireland', *Ethnopolitics*, 1 June 2011, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 253–269.
[5] Lisa Smyth, 'Non-sectarian mothering in Belfast. The emotional quality of normative change' in *The 'Irish' Family*, Florence, United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014, p. 224–257.
[6] For a critical summary of those tendencies, see Colin Coulter et al., *Northern Ireland a generation after Good Friday: Lost futures and new horizons in the 'long peace'*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2021.
[7] Cyril Lemieux, *La sociologie pragmatique*, Paris, La Découverte, 2018, p. 28.

presupposing who is right and who is wrong, who is dominating and who is dominated, who is advocating conflict and who is defending peace. Several efforts ultimately lead us to avoid a supposed objective study of conflict, its forms, its variables, and its structural dynamics, to prefer a study of conflictualisation processes and the continuous production of reflexive knowledge on the state of a society and of the social groups which compose it.

The first effort is to avoid asymmetries pertaining to the Protestant and Catholic communities spilling into the description of the disputes which opposes them. We have attempted, as much as possible, to investigate the PUL and CNR communities to the same extent, to account for both their views of common public problems, to account equally for their internal tensions, and to devote the same amount of scrutiny to both. The second effort is to pay the same amount of attention to the actors who give meaning and solidify those PUL and CNR categories and those who criticise and refuse them. Again, we should honour this balance in the constitution of descriptive and analytical tools themselves. Most authors have attempted either to renew the relevance of those terms, or to denounce them for their invisibilisation of other, in their eyes, more important affiliations. Therefore, by the very construction of their analytical apparatus, they were taking part in this critical dispute on social order before opening the analysis of its workings. Finally, symmetrical efforts should avoid renewing a binary opposition between ‘communities’ and ‘society’ in the description of actors’ aspiration and of their tendencies to engage or detach themselves from their groups of affiliation. On the one hand, some authors renew the ‘archaic communities / modern society’ couple, leading to a criticism of the current conflicts between the urban communities and their ‘archaic’ character with respect to the rest of the ‘pacified’ society[1]. On the other hand, some sociologists renew the ‘solidary communities / anomic society’ duality, leading to a criticism of their ‘stigmatisation’ by the State.

Those are not *ex nihilo* rules. They come from the fact that every time they have struggled to pay attention to those efforts, social scientists studying Northern Ireland have tended to become trapped in binary oppositions and vicious antagonistic circles. They have made ‘meta-conflicts’ on the Northern Irish conflict famous[2]. Authors who took an interest in urban communities and their problems have been divided between those who resolutely argued that

[1] Louise Mallinder, *Metaconflict and International Human Rights Law in Dealing With Northern Ireland’s Past*, Rochester, NY, Social Science Research Network, 2019.

[2] John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland: Broken Images*, Oxford, Wiley, 1995, 548 p. ; Brian Lambkin, ‘The historiography of the conflict in Northern Ireland and the reception of Andrew Boyd’s Holy war in Belfast (1969)’, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, 2014, vol. 114 C, p. 327–358.

we still needed to focus on 'the conflict' precisely to undo our common sense understanding of it[1], and those who resolutely argued that we need to focus on 'other normal issues' that had been concealed by the Troubles, for whom it became a political necessity to avoid focusing on conflict[2]. The two bodies of works were kept in an exaggerated antinomy. Such works then failed to account for the social phenomenon whereby actors themselves engage in the same dispute, and the practical process by which conflictual and normal problems are distinguished. Notable exceptions include those who studied the metaconflict itself, though rarely empirically[3]. This thesis thus intends to extend and exceed those studies by rooting its analysis in the practical process of blaming and conflictualisation.

2.3 The need for a holistic look at isolated communities

Finally, they have been limited in their attempts at following the web of interdependencies on which actors were actively involved. The problems of supposed resistance to the changes of the peace process have been studied either at the scale of the State, of communities, or of individuals, but rarely by taking into accounts the interplay between those figurations.

When social sciences tackle the difficulties faced by the Northern Irish State, they often do so by exploring the history of public policies and political events, failing to connect them with empirical description – despite often reaching the conclusion that public policies are indeed disconnected from local community innovations. The divide denounced between the Northern Irish Executive, the regional Stormont parliament and the social group of North Belfast is replayed in the divide between an analysis of political transformations and a proper description of social phenomena. The important exceptions to this notable trend have been

[1] Kevin Hearty, *Critical engagement : Irish republicanism, memory politics and policing*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2017, 328 p.

[2] This was the case with new works on domestic violence, suicides or the rediscovery of 'new communities' after the agreement, such as Monica McWilliams and Joan McKiernan, *Bringing it out in the open: domestic violence in Northern Ireland : a study commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland)*, Belfast, HMSO, 1993 ; Niall Gilmartin, 'Gendering the "post-conflict" narrative in Northern Ireland's peace process', *Capital & Class*, March 2019, vol. 43, no. 1, p. 89 ; Stefanie Doebler, Ruth McAreavey and Sally Shortall, 'Is racism the new sectarianism? Negativity towards immigrants and ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland from 2004 to 2015', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 14 November 2018, vol. 41, no. 14, p. 2426–2444.

[3] L. Mallinder, *Metaconflict and International Human Rights Law in Dealing With Northern Ireland's Past*, *op. cit.* ; Jamie Pickering, *Communicating Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding: How does storytelling challenge the meta-conflict in Northern Ireland?*, PhD in Sociology, University of Essex, Essex, 2020, 322 p.

based by the interests of social scientists in specific affairs. By their local nature, they have allowed empirical investigation into the making of public problems at different scales[1].

On the other hand, because of the tendencies for urban communities marked by conflict to be considered as autarkic, they have often been observed as if in isolation[2], sometimes by focusing on one ethno-political community[3]. It allows to reach the internal norms of a given social group, accessing interactions otherwise unreachable. Yet, as we have seen in our example, the collective formation of public issues implies the readjustment of relations between various social groups. It is then problematic to suggest 'that one can study the relations between groups by analyzing only one of the groups concerned'[4] instead of making of their changing interdependencies the terrain of the sociological work[5]. By doing that, those works have missed the ambiguity of 'sticking to one's communities' which emerges for social actors living in an increasingly plural city[6]. Finally, some of the works which have attempted to tackle the forms of ambivalence we have described in our example have tended to analyse them through the prism of individuals' experience of post-conflict trauma, apprehension of inter-group contact[7], tendencies towards sectarianism, reducing these apparent discrepancies to individual contradictions. They did study the transformation of group relations, and have made ample use of the 'Contact Hypothesis'[8]. But they consider those relations as an aggregate of individual transformation in attitudes, and in strategies mobilised to accommodate conflict[9].

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[1] Katy Hayward and Milena Komarova, 'The Limits of Local Accommodation: Why Contentious Events Remain Prone to Conflict in Northern Ireland', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2 September 2014, vol. 37, no. 9, p. 777–791 ; Paul Reilly, 'Tweeting for peace? Twitter and the Ardoyne parade dispute in Belfast, July 2014', *First Monday*, 24 October 2016 ; Donna Halliday and Neil Ferguson, 'When Peace is Not Enough: The Flag Protests, the Politics of Identity & Belonging in East Belfast', *Irish Political Studies*, 2016, vol. 31, no. 4, p. 525–540.

[2] For example Robbie McVeigh, 'Book Review: Being Unemployed in Northern Ireland: An Ethnographic Study', *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 1 May 1991, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 176–178.

[3] Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern, 'Habitus, Identity, and Post Conflict Transition, in a Catholic Working Class Community in Northern Ireland', *Contemporary Ireland: A Sociological Map*, 2007, p. 370–389 ; Michael Liggett, *Social capital's imagined benefits in Ardoyne electoral ward*,University of Liverpool, Liverpool, 2017, 330 p.

[4] Everett C. Hughes, 'The Study of Ethnic Relations', *The Dalhousie Review*, 1948, vol. 27, no. 4, p. 479.

[5] Norbert Elias, *The Society of Individuals*, New York, Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2001, 258 p ; Mustafa Emirbayer, 'Manifesto for a Relational Sociology', *American Journal of Sociology*, 1997, vol. 103, no. 2, p. 281–317.

[6] Some noticeable counter-example have analyzed the increasing use of public space by both communities, such as Peter Shirlow, '"Who fears to speak": Fear, mobility, and ethno-sectarianism in the two "ardoynes"', *Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 1 September 2003, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 76–91 ; Brendan Sturgeon et al., *Mobility, Sharing and Segregation in Belfast: Policy Report*, Belfast, Institute for Conflict Research, 2020.

[7] Antonio S. Silva and Ruth Mace, 'Inter-Group Conflict and Cooperation: Field Experiments Before, During and After Sectarian Riots in Northern Ireland', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2015, vol. 0 ; Shelley McKeown and Laura K. Taylor, 'Perceived peer and school norm effects on youth antisocial and prosocial behaviours through intergroup contact in Northern Ireland', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 1 July 2018, vol. 57, no. 3, p. 652–665.

[8] Gordon W. Allport, *The nature of prejudice*, Oxford, England, Addison-Wesley, 1954, xviii, 537 p.

[9] David Dickson and Owen Hargie, 'Sectarianism in the Northern Ireland workplace', *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 1 January 2006, vol. 17, no. 1, p. 45–65.

In light of those three drawbacks, a holistic approach demands that we follow the thread of actors' engagement in those various configurations. This also means going beyond a form of description which sees in 'communities' and in 'the State' entirely separate entities, becoming unable to describe the communal foundations of the State apparatus and the statist aspirations of communities. Instead, it allows us to see them refracted within one another, as the action of individuals always have the community and the overall society as a normative horizon.

IN THE THESIS, we follow a central ambivalence: that between attachment and distancing from local urban communities. It puts local actors as well as agents of the State in the situation of having to respect rules related to one or the other of these opposites. A tendency, on the one hand, to adopt a committed posture with regard to the expectations, rules and judgements of the local community. This leads to a justification of the differentiation allowed by the existence of the community, and to apprehension concerning exchanges with other communities or exchanges with the rest of society. On the other hand, it cohabits with a tendency to adopt a detached posture towards the local urban community. This leads to expectations of integration with the rest of political society and a tendency to engage in intercommunity exchanges or exchanges between communities and institutions of the British State.

Every time sociologists speak in terms of uniform resistance or adhesion to peace, they reduce social actors to either one of those aspirations. By contrast, we consider that the two tendencies are not exclusive. Rather, they are in constant tension in the way actors assert, describe and sanction themselves daily. This concerns both residents of Ardoyne and outside observers. Starting from this polarity and the resulting ambivalence allows us to understand the existence of a double aspiration, but also of a double risk in the constitution of each local public problem today, that of seeing one or the other aspiration neglected.

This effort will ultimately lead us to another step. Having seen how local and apparently contingent forms of resistance should be brought back to the experience of an ambivalence, we will see how this practical ambivalence should be brought back to the historical tension between two social processes which are equally part of the increasing interdependencies of the Northern Irish society: centralisation forces and decentralisation, often describes as forms of 'unity' and 'separation' in the British Isles, and which have been formalised since the 19th century as increasingly opposed political ideals.

3. A sociology fitted for political ambivalence

3.1 A pragmatic process sociology of public problems

In turn, the delimitation of this problematic subject has demanded that we engage with a specific type of sociological tools to describe and analyse this ambivalence. In following the conundrum faced by social actors in their daily urban life, the thesis will stand at the crossroad of three main theoretical traditions. First, a sociology of public problems and public controversies. Second, what has also come to be called 'pragmatic sociology' in francophone academia. Third, what has come to be called 'process sociology' in anglophone academia. Rather than doing bricolage, we believe that those different theoretical approach can merge together coherently if bridges are well identified.

By studying the process during which 'phenomena become real'[1], the sociology of public problem analyses how social groups constitute situations as problems of a societal order whilst redefining, in the same process, the actors and groups surrounding them. Following how actors' attempts at 'naming, blaming, claming'[2] allow them to turn their personal troubles into public issues[3], it has profoundly renewed the study of risk managements in the field of health, technical innovation or environmental studies[4]. Inserted in the study of the collective life of a community, this leads us to study how social groups 'define' their own situations and engage themselves in struggles to be recognised as legitimate claimants in that regard. As such, how actors frame[5] and translate[6] the issues they experience from one context to another, and from one era to another, will be central here.

However, the sociology of public problems has repeatedly been criticised for a recurring limitation: its excessive relativism. In the light of those criticisms, the sociology of controversies has attempted to find methodological and epistemological solutions to these shortcomings, by anchoring its analysis of disputes in the description of actors' adjustment in

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[1] Joseph R. Gusfield, *The Culture of Public Problems: Drinking-Driving and the Symbolic Order*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 2.
[2] William L.F. Felstiner, Richard L. Abel and Austin Sarat, 'The Emergence and Transformation of Disputes: Naming, Blaming, Claiming …', *Law & Society Review*, 1980, vol. 15, no. 3/4, p. 631–654.
[3] Charles Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, 256 p, see Chapter 1: The Promise.
[4] Professor Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1982, 224 p ; Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London, SAGE Publications Ltd, 1992, 272 p ; Yannick Barthe, *Le pouvoir d'indécision. La mise en politique des déchets nucléaires*, Paris, Economica, 2005.
[5] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2000, vol. 26, p. 611–639.
[6] Bruno Latour, *Science in action : how to follow scientists and engineers through society*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1987, 274 p.

the face of reality tests and resistance[1]. This has led to a proliferation of works dedicated to the analysis of scandals, controversies and affairs[2]. More generally, pragmatic sociology was born out of the attempts to overcome oppositions between Bourdieu's critical sociology and currents attached to methodological individualism, by using what the anthropology of science and technology and the sociology of action regimes had in common: an approach of social life in terms of trials. In that, pragmatic sociology has obvious links with the sociology of public problems, since it takes public disputes as means to study the renewed performed of social order and the disputed production of knowledge on society. But by its focus on empiricism, it pays more attention to precise descriptions of social phenomena. It is by observing interaction that the sociologists may be able to sense the tensions, the trials, the justifications, the critiques, the hesitation and the support which constitutes actors constant relations to the rules and grammars guiding their social life[3]. As such, pragmatic sociology allows us to study the blames, the blessings, the negative and positive sanction that actors give to one another and which reinforces or puts to the test the social rules that they are deemed to follow. Hence, far from considering that actors are oblivious to their reasons to act, or are guided by strategic interests in most situations and moral rules in others, pragmatic sociology considers that reflexivity is inherent to every social practice. Hence, when we mention the debates on organised fights, we do not intend to unveil the motive of teenagers, or the form of dominations which guides the analysis of the actors surrounding them. Rather, we should wonder how actors apprehend those problematic situations, legitimise and delegitimise forms of knowledge on those issues, and may find support or obstacles in institutional devices or in reality tests.

Yet, again, this faces another risk: that of re naturalising the social world. This is where the processual and holistic analysis of Norbert Elias comes into play. One should remember that Elias was highly influenced by the work of Karl Mannheim, and notably by his attempt to fund a sociology of knowledge able to overcome the wanderings of historical relativism. The whole of Elias's work consisted in working in this direction by reinstating reality in its sociality, and by finding in sociality and in its processual transformation the criteria of its non-arbitrary – though necessarily changing – character. It is then difficult to summarise how we use the theoretical apparatus proposed by Elias, given that presenting one aspect of the system

[1] Dominique Pestre, *Introduction aux science studies*, Paris, La Découverte, 2006.
[2] Dominique Linhardt, 'Epreuve terroriste et forme affaire : Allemagne, 1964-1982' in *Affaires, scandales et grandes causes. De Socrate à Pinochet*, Paris, Stock, 2007, p. 307–327 ; Damien de Blic and Cyril Lemieux, "The Scandal as Test: Elements of Pragmatic Sociology'', *Politix*, 2005, vol. 71, no. 3, p. 9.
[3] Cyril Lemieux, *Le Devoir et la Grâce. Pour une analyse grammaticale de l'action*, Paris, Economica, 2009, 246 p.

inevitably demands presenting the numerous concepts related to it[1]. We can nevertheless present some central aspects.

First, process sociology, or figurational sociology, relies on a certain way to consider what we name 'political society'. It can be considered properly holistic in the sense that Elias famously attempted to overcome the false opposition between individuals and society by studying figurations as the complex web of relationships which give substance to those two categories. Passing from a substantivist perspective to a relational holistic perspective is particularly important in studying the constitution of public problems in North Belfast, and the interplay between ambivalent individuals, communities and States. Rather than deciding *ex nihilo* what the social units of interests would be, Eliasian sociology allows us to study the forms of figurations which constitute a given political society, whilst always bringing them back to the same background: the processual transformation of webs of interdependencies. But behind this apparently wide frame of analysis, we also get out of Eliasian theory a coherent theory of codes of conduct and actions which relates the tensions experienced by actors with the organisation of the social space of which they are part of. It is this which allows us to understand the 'ambivalence' of ongoing social processes, both at the scale of their long-term changes and of their manifestation in the psychogenesis of individuals. Elias has repeatedly stressed the importance of polarities[2], tensions, ambivalence between contradictory social processes and 'double bind' between reinforced constraints in the understanding of social phenomena. This is of particular importance to us as some of the public problems we will study take us over one or two decades, and this approach allows us to relate tensions experienced by local actors with short-term and long-term's evolution in the relation between local groups in North Belfast.

ALL IN ALL, Elias process sociology brings a coherent theory of history to the coherent theory of action that stems from pragmatic sociology. It sustains a non-deterministic analysis of long-term historical transformation and of the always-ongoing ordering phenomenon of social life, which takes 'habitus' as a performance to be explained rather than an explanatory

[1] Here, his most important works will be Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Wiley – Blackwell, 2000, 592 p ; Norbert Elias, 'Towards a Theory of Communities' in Colin Bell and Howard Newby (eds.), *The Sociology of Community: A Selection of Readings*, London, Frank Cass, 1974, p. ix – xli.

[2] Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for excitement : sport and leisure in the civilizing process*, Oxford & New York, Blackwell, 1986, 334 p.

variable. This implies a theory of reflexivity, and an analysis of the knowledge produced by social groups on the tensions which affect them in transitional times.

But what justifies, foremost, that line of enquiry, is the contemporaneous sociological problems which present themselves to us when one precisely investigates the social life of deprived areas of North Belfast. The sociology of public problems appears necessary to study communities which have been leading a highly public and disputed life over the past two decades, one that has been scrutinised by many observers and sparkled debates in which social scientists have regularly appeared. Pragmatic sociology comes to solidify this project by ensuring that the same adequate precautions are taken in the analysis of social actions, social interactions and actors' reasons to act. As seen with organised fights, a sociology which reifies reasons to act, brings them back either to strategic interests or to embodied dispositions, would fail to recognise the tensions, adjustments and highly plural aspirations which constitute social life in Ardoyne. Finally, Eliasian sociology gives its background to this empirical apparatus, by providing a framework to processually understand the renewal of political practical ambivalence.

3.2 An ambivalence tying individuals, communities, and society

As we said, our guiding thread will be the ambivalence of actors regarding their aspirations towards attachment and distancing from their community and its rules. When urban incidents are reduced to an intractable problem – just like organised fights are deemed to be a problem that has always existed and will always exist – the ambivalence of social actors tends to be publicly reduced to one side or the other. As we will see in the first part of this thesis, the fact that actors are then reduced to one form of aspirations often becomes describable in the fact that unexpected forms of resistance manifest themselves during debates. In the case of organised fights, this happens when the interface worker, despite the fact that we could have expected him to encourage the denunciation of tensions between communities given that it is his professional ideal, is actually highly critical of actors who tend to denounce tensions at the interface. Similarly, several actors are surprised when realising that the teenagers engaged in organised fights are not simply sectarian, but are young teenagers involved in cross-community groups. The same goes for the fact that some teenagers surprisingly support the intervention of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in the area.

But if those resistance appear unexpected to observers or actors, they are the product of increasingly conscious efforts to manage double aspirations. Second, in this work, we also study

how some actors are already attempting to regulate this ambivalence and to be more reflexive about it, notably by being more conscious of the fact that it finds its origins in the interdependencies that bind them. This is what we have seen in the example given by Declan and his attempts at organising the local Inter-Agency meeting, as he appears to trace the origins of the double aspiration in which youth workers are taken regarding the violence of their community, not wanting to stigmatise young teenagers, but also not wanting to overlook their violence which could lead the PSNI to make them responsible for its regulation. Declan, by relaying the disputes he has observed in the area, sees that tension as originating in an insufficiently regulated division of labour and an insufficient cooperation between neighbouring administrative areas. This is also the sense of Judith's comments when she states that the communities' suspicion towards the police turns into a 'vicious circle'. This account puts into words the ambivalence of the community and, without reducing them to one or the other resistance, sees them as potential vicious circles to be cautiously regulated.

Hence, to be relevant, a study of a contemporaneous community should strive to analyse its continuous interdependence with wider social groups and societies, and the forms taken by those changing interdependencies for actors involved in it[1]. It requires observing actors' continual attempts at clarifying the relationships between communities and political society. As it turns out, the prevalence of this problem in Northern Ireland has meant that this issue was already central in several studies of rural and urban communities[2].

This demands a slightly different notion of community than that which has prevailed in the 'community studies' which emerged in English-speaking academia in the middle of the 20th century[3]. This body of work already went through a severe crisis during the 1960s, being criticised for its 'lack and rigour and comparability'[4], their vagueness regarding what 'community' meant, or their difficulties to account for the progressive globalisation of social life[5]. As such, community studies remained mostly marginalised until the 1990s, when they

[1] N. Elias, 'Towards a Theory of Communities', art cit ; Joseph R. Gusfield, *Community: A Critical Response*, New York, Harper & Row, 1975, 162 p.
[2] E. Leyton, 'Opposition and Integration in Ulster', art cit.; Frank Burton, 'Ideological Social Relations in Northern Ireland', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1979, vol. 30, no. 1, p. 61–80.; Richard Jenkins, *Hightown Rules: Growing Up in a Belfast Housing Estate*, Leicester, National Youth Agency, 1982, 96 p.; Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*, Chicago, University Of Chicago Press, 1991, 327 p.
[3] For a similar approach of public problems focusing around the handling of a central practical tension, see Mischa J. T. Decker, *Politicizing Street Harassment. The Constitution of a Public Problem in the Netherlands and France*, Thesis for the grade of Doctor in Sociology, EHESS and University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 2021.
[4] Chris Phillipson, 'Community Studies and Re-Studies in the 21st Century: Methodological Challenges and Strategies for the Future', *The Sociological Review*, 1 August 2012, vol. 60, no. 3, p. 537.
[5] Graham Allan and Chris Phillipson, 'Community studies today: urban perspectives', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 1 April 2008, vol. 11, no. 2, p. 163–173.

would return with a more subtle approach of the role of locality in globalised societies[1]. Still, most of those studies fell short of explaining what exactly was at the heart of their common assessment: that community ties still had relevance for social actors in post-industrial modern societies[2]. As it happens, the problem of why exactly it is, and of the type of tensions it produces amongst actors who become highly conscious of this coexistence and of its desired or repelling nature, has become a major characteristic of the Northern Irish peace process. This was manifest when Declan mentioned the 'wee voice' of the community, as if residents had spoken all at once to reflect upon the tensions which agitated the configuration they formed. That there exists an entity called the 'community' which is deemed capable of raising its voice as a public is a fundamental characteristic of the formation of public problems in North Belfast. That there exist *several* entities called 'community' is yet another even more defining trait. We will see how those type of boundaries, and the characteristics of communities which have come to be used by sociologists to define a conflictual and pacified society[3] depends on the outcome of the contested formation of the internal public problems of this human figuration.

Therefore, wondering how the actors of Ardoyne communities are able to frame the public issues that they face, how external actors are engaged in that process, and how they blame each other for the ills of conflictualisation and pacification, is wondering how well all of those actors are able to reflect their interrelations by means of a coherent reflexive apparatus[4]. In Northern Ireland, the question of where the institutional form of this reflexive apparatus should stabilise in order for Northern Irish social groups to manifest a clearer vision of themselves and of their interdependencies as a part of a common political society remains famously open to debate: the British State, the Irish State, the Northern Irish State, the City Council or other units of lower or higher level of integration are all ambiguously taking part in the aspiration of this society to stabilise a certain view of itself.

This was particularly true during our fieldwork in North Belfast as our enquiry arrived at a time when neither the province's executive nor the assembly were functioning. Lots of international and regional attention has been paid to Brexit. However, in this thesis, we have seen the effect of a more profound institutional situation which is, when put into a wider perspective, strongly related: the breakdown of the Northern Irish executive and legislative

[1] Roland Robertson, 'Glocalization. Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity' in Roland Robertson, Scott Lash and Mike Featherstone (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London; Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1995, p. 25–44.
[2] G. Allan and C. Phillipson, 'Community studies today', art cit., p. 163.
[3] With unified social relations on one hand and a loosened form of communal ties on the other, as if pacification meant the unstoppable dissolution of communal ties.
[4] A conception of the State developped by Durkheim throughout his work. See Émile Durkheim, *Leçons de sociologie*, 6th ed., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2015, 364 p.

apparatus that occurred from 2017 to 2020. During that time, the city council was effectively the highest form of democratic government in place. It happened to be significantly more involved with the urban representation of communities, as the people sitting at the council were elected on the basis of urban neighbourhoods. At that point, there were more debates regarding the interpenetration between the constitution of public problems at the local level and at the regional level came into being. This context offered a fertile background for counter-sentiments regarding the problem of community's integration and community's autarky to be voiced. And, in turns, to study increasing detachment on these double aspirations.

4. Observing the ambivalence and its manifestations

4.1 Studying increasing detachment from competing ideals

The question then becomes how to observe this ambivalence and how those interdependencies are refracted in it. From the point of view of social interactions, we will gain from stressing three different ways in which actors experience this ambivalence. Those three ways are actually three different postures in which actors become increasingly reflexive on the ambivalence at hand. They do not attain a higher consciousness by virtue of their own intellect or of their own efforts in a given situation, but because those forms of reflexivity are the results of social and collective processes which we will study in this dissertation.

Some situations are guided by what we could call an involvement with the ambivalence, whereby actors reaffirm one or the other of their aspirations by blaming or praising each other. One aspiration then takes precedence upon the other. They can blame or praise each other for defending their engagement with their community, and the forms of differentiation it allows. They can also blame or praise each other for maintaining an increasing distance with their community, and the forms of integration between social groups it sustains. At this scale, actors simply invest the ambivalence by complementarily and competitively reinforcing each of the aspirations and resistance which constitute it. When they blame each other in that regard, they accuse one another of being at the origins of the 'conflictualisation' of their relations.

But some of the cases we have already mentioned could be described as moments of primary detachment and secondary detachment. *Primary detachment* from their ambivalence is that which allows actors to appreciate that they are not opposed to each other by simple resistance but that they are traversed by common aspirations to union and separation, to

community attachment and distancing. Through the realisation of their interdependencies, these give a more ambivalent form to their opposition. By this, actors investigate on what causes one aspiration to take precedence over the other, or are simply able to voice the coexistence of plural aspirations. In turn, *secondary detachment* is that by which actors can anticipate, delimit and even regulate the contradictory effects and vicious circles that emerge from this condition. Contradictory effects which, if not made sufficiently conscious to all, always raise the danger of bringing them back to forms of double binds which would facilitate a return to violence. At this level, we have examples such as Judith's comment, in which not only are actors capable of voicing the ambivalence they experience, but they manage to situate and criticise the form of 'vicious circles' that come out of it.

4.2 An empirical fieldwork

Just like the theoretical approach we have mobilised, our methodology was guided by North Belfast communities and their problems. As Robbie McVeigh once put it, this thesis falls into the 'particularly inglorious paradigm', that of the 'outsider does ethnography in Ireland and allow other outsiders access to Irish authenticity'[1]. However, our approach of public problems through the eye of various local actors was meant to avoid the negative consequence of such an approach, by including disputes surrounding the relations between outsiders and 'locals' within the sociological problem at hand.

First, this work is based on an ethnographic investigation. Like we stressed earlier, this allowed us to ensure an empirical approach of local interaction and trials, whilst our focus on different parts of the local communities and on surrounding actors allowed us to retain a holistic sense of social phenomena described. This was reinforced by the attempts at remaining focused on a sociology of justification and blaming in the observation of social exchanges between the residents of Ardoyne, local workers, and more detached actors. This empirical approach and the continual observations which constituted it were guided by the imperative to 'follow the actors'. Second, we organised semi-directive interviews with actors met throughout fieldwork. They allowed us to observe actors composing more detached accounts of their experience. Finally, in line with the necessity to study public issues in relations with short-term and long-term transformations in human figurations, we also relied on the analysis of newspapers,

[1] R. McVeigh, 'Book Review', art cit., p. 176.

reports, recorded documents and public archives. Though present in all case studies, this has been of particular importance to our opening and concluding historical chapters.

The reader will find a summary of collected data in the Appendices (see p. 397). The entirety of those data was recorded and gathered within the MaxQDA software. They were coded a first time during the months of fieldwork, and a second time during the period of drafting of the thesis and of the chapters' redaction. Coding was based on a total of 262 text documents, 219 PDF documents, 58 images, 82 videos and 223 audio recordings. In total, 557 segments were coded using 101 coding categories that were formulated throughout the analysis. Outside of MaxQDA, dozens of physical documents were collected and appear too numerous to count, including newspapers, community organisations' reports, projects reports, statutory body reports and 6 non-fictional books that have been written on the area.

4.3 The methodological experience of political ambivalence

The only methodological contribution of this work comes out of the application of the principle of symmetry. Presenting it may help to specify how I was introduced to the ambivalence. This is what we would like to call the methodological anxiety or uneasiness of the ethnographer, that by which discomfort and miscommunication on the field as an entry point into its ambivalence.

However, this only stands as a methodological comment if the ethnographer is able to relate this discomfort in presenting a social object – in this case, Ardoyne's relation with its internal conflict – with the social organisation of the configurations studied by the sociologists. Indeed, this idea of a methodological experience of anxiety, as the maladjustment in plural codes of conduct is the methodological parallel of an Eliasian analysis of what interdependencies do to actors' codes of conduct. By this, we would like to argue for a need to focus on one type of ethnographer's uneasiness during research. It is the one that relates to the circulation of the ethnographer between specific social groups, including – but not limited to – the social groups they study. This experience of uneasiness results from contradictory expectations that come to be felt more strongly when the ethnographer circulates between the groups that he 'observes', the groups of his peer 'observers', and all the 'publics' who are deemed to be witnessing this exchange. More than just a professional reflexive tool, it is an insight in the moral forms of detachment that emerges from social groups, both on norms themselves, and on the rules that guide the statement and circulation of statements regarding rules. This proves to be of particular importance in cases such as inter-group conflicts or 'taboo'

professional practices[1], where the circulation of group rules is a matter of explicit carefulness. As such, most chapters will refer to the process by which I came to experience a series of apparently contradictory expectations which made me feel uneasy, until I was able to use them as 'keys' in decoding the moral implicit rules of the social groups at hand.

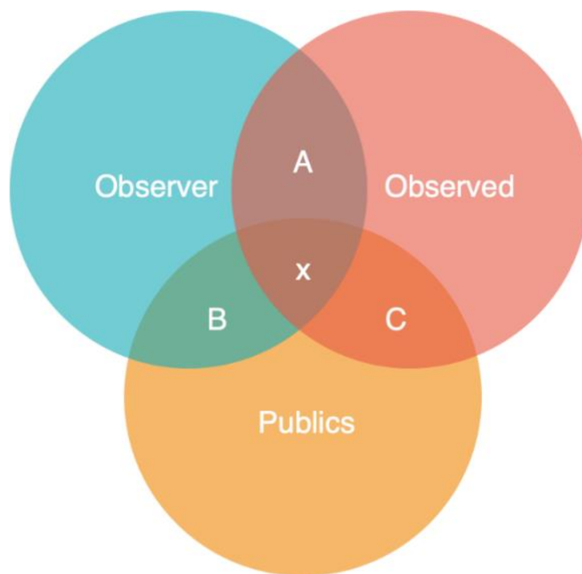

Figure 4 – Observer, Observed and Publics as social groups in which the ethnographer is engaged

Hence, the three groups we mention – Observer, Observed, Publics – are the ones which constrains the circulation of the ethnographer in his analysis of the field. Between each of those is a social distance which can turn into a gap, a possibility that is more acutely felt when one attempts to respect the principle of symmetry. As such, the methodological use of uneasiness in gaining a better knowledge of the field comes from the identification and the management of those three gaps by the ethnographers. Those three social distances, and the peculiar forms of social relations that the ethnographer sediments there, risk being transformed into gaps if the ethnographer does not handle a specific tension which goes with each of them. In fact, each of the relation A, B and C has to be managed, and the varying uneasiness x is the result of that. In A is the relations between the Ethnographer and the groups they work with, which opens up the experience of contradictory expectation between the group to which is attached the ethnographer – either his primary social group or his professional group – and the social groups he observes. The uneasiness coming out of those expectations in the relation A is reinforced when, as is most often the case, the ethnographers circulate within different social groups in the field, and different 'parts' of the community which often amounts to changing footing. The relation B is the relation between the ethnographer and the public of his analysis, be it their peers or the more general readers of their monograph. This relation has the characteristics of encapsulating what the ethnographer believes, before his investigation, to be the 'detached' point of view on his field. Here for example, every time I engaged in the management of relation

[1] See for instance Catherine Rémy, 'Regarder ceux qui donnent la mort aux animaux. Réflexions autour d'un malaise ethnographique', *Prétentaine*, 2014, vol. 29–30, p. 499–509 ; Marine J. Boisson, *Mourir en Moderne. Une sociologie de la délégation*, Thèse de Doctorat en Sociologie, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 2020, 585 p.

A, I experience more strongly what I would later come to conceive as the expectation of detachment regarding the ethno-political and ‘conflictual’ communities of Ardoyne. Finally, the relation C is the link between the greater public and the social groups at the heart of the ethnographer’s analysis. This, by definition, may be the widest of the three gaps. That this distance may be shortened is the political horizon of the ethnographer’s work.

It is in circulating between all those social groups during their fieldwork that the ethnographer comes to manage those three relations. In turn, it is in clarifying and gaining a stronger sense of the expectations which comes with this intermediary position between different groups that the ethnographers come to feel a relative uneasiness in realising how they have already started to follow a plurality of rules. For example, presenting Ardoyne as a very conflictual area to some actors, and as a very pacified area to some other actors. This uneasiness is, in fact, a gateway into the better description of the ambivalence experienced by all local actors who are, too, taken in attempts to respect potentially contradictory sets of expectations which appear to them by virtue of their integration in plural web of interdependencies.

All of those have been of particular importance in the studies of conflicted and controversial communities. The experience of uneasiness was a fundamental characteristic of my fieldwork in a deprived, working-class area of North Beflast often deemed either ‘highly segregated and conflictual’ or ‘highly cohesive and stigmatised’. I repeatedly experienced difficulties in talking about the area or about my work to people in the field. I also experienced difficulties in giving the same account to different people, a morally prejudicial condition which I in part related to the varying expectations of interpretation that I experienced by being integrated in different spheres – in Catholic Ardoyne, in Protestant Ardoyne, in other more distant areas of Belfast, in the Irish academic world, in the French academic world. Similarly, the discomfort I experienced in trying to reach and exchange with ‘radical’ members of each community allowed me to reveal the internal tensions, the suspicion, and the outreach problems which traversed each community. In each case, the uneasiness appearing when internally and symmetrically studying intense controversial topics and communities is a sentiment not to be dismissed. It is a social cue which can often serve as a starting point for comprehension tasks. It is the attention we paid to this dynamic that allowed us to put the idea of ambivalence at the heart of this thesis.

5. Outline of the thesis

To guide our discussions, we will attempt to answer the following question: **whilst one might have expected that the state's consideration of Ardoyne communities' 'resistance' to integration into a peaceful society, as well as of their origins, would be seen as facilitating the pacification of North Belfast, how come this has not been the case?**

We will first see that it comes from the fact that there have been unforeseen reactions coming from groups of actors which could have initially been considered as inclined to a certain pacification, that which required their distancing from their urban community: actors then engaged in their mutual reduction to 'resistance' (**Part I**). But a close look at those tensions reveals that all social actors involved are experiencing an ambivalence which they already attempt, with some difficulty, to regulate (**Part II**). Finally, we will suggest that this local ambivalence comes out of wider constitutive social tensions which are linked to the long-term increasing interdependencies between social groups within the British Isles.

Chapter 1 is an introductory historical chapter. We present some of the great public changes that have taken place in Ardoyne, from the 19th century to the present, and in which various actors have already attempted to establish the neighbourhood's degree of 'communitarianism' and 'conflictuality'. Those problems resurfaced when actors realise that the peace process generated new tensions, as neither peace nor conflict settled the ambivalence of Catholic and Protestant groups to confront or cooperate with the neighbouring community. **Chapter 2** opens the first part of the thesis by presenting our first case study. Here we examine the evolution of the public problem of juvenile suicides since 2003. We follow the debates between residents and outside observers to find the origins of this problem. We will attempt to explain why, over the years, these debates turned into confrontations based on mutual accusations of resistance, included on the parts of local actors who have been affected by the wave of suicides but who did not condemn their local community. In **Chapter 3**, we turn towards the contrasting cohabitation of various types of 'women's groups' in the area. Several women's groups were set up in Ardoyne during the conflict, first to enable local women to support their communities, and then to emancipate them from their dependence on their communities. The former were created by local women, the latter by women from outside the neighbourhood. We will explain why the liberal peace process did not take hold within the first groups nor strengthen the second groups, and left a group of women judged as isolated, sectarian, and invested in maintaining traditional community roles, alone in attempting to find way to express their aspirations towards detachment.

The second part of the thesis shows us the difficulties faced by actors who already attempt to detach themselves from the ambivalence and to regulate it. Here again, we take two paradigmatic cases to discuss this. They show us how some groups that we would have expected to be completely ‘resistant’ to peace are already engaged in the management of ambivalent aspirations, whilst still having difficulties to regulate their infamous excesses.

With **Chapter 4**, we observe the transformation of urban civilities in North Belfast. To do that, we will analyse how social actors manage to adjust the implicit code by which Catholics and Protestants claim to be able to tell one from another during everyday encounters in the city. We study the forms which take the code, how actors are initiated to it and how one of the reasons for its maintenance is the will to respect a ‘common’ use of the code. Yet, we also show that most actors also aspire to forsake the code. The cohabitation of the two is at the origins of a paradox. Finally, we study how different institutional devices and third parties have managed to take this paradox into account. In **Chapter 5,** we analyse how the supporters of the Glasgow Rangers and Celtic, followers of a sporting rivalry which overlaps with the ethno-political conflict, attempt to rediscover antagonism in the form of leisure. We then turn towards the dynamics that are tied to this process, those of ‘sportisation’, by discussing the various ways sportisation has been related to pacification: those various ways reveal, here again, the presence of an ambivalence whereby pacification takes different portrait based on his attachment either to greater integration or to greater differentiation. Finally, we realise that all those examples which involve the practical management of potentially contradictory expectations rely on the same phenomena: that of ritualisation. **Chapter 6,** after summarising the dynamics studied in Part I and II, aims at taking seriously the secondary form of detachment shown by actors in order to see how this ambivalence is the result of historical transformations in Northern Irish society. We suggest that the aspirations which constitute this ambivalence have aggregated in actors’ tendency to emphasise either the reinforcement of their integration to the rest of the political society, or the reinforcement of their differentiation from the rest of political society. Then, we suggest the sketch some first basis for an analysis of the long-term functional democratisation of Northern Irish society, one that has been accompanied by an increasing detachment from the ambivalent complementarity of integration and differentiation, which have manifested as volition to ‘union’ and ‘separation’, within the British isles.

Finally, we **conclude** with reflections on the possible continuation of this work. They revolve around how sociological work can sustain secondary forms of detachment from the ambivalence, how this understanding of political ambivalence leads us to reconsider the question of emancipation, the State and conflicts of integration.

CHAPTER 1

How peace shed light on North Belfast's old problems

'What's not remembered is half the mortal lecture'

Dylan Thomas ,*This is remembered*

MUCH AS ANY OTHER NEIGHBOURHOOD IN THE CITY, Ardoyne is a small series of streets with tight houses and a few back alleys, all comprised between two the of biggest arteries of Belfast. In appearance, it looks like a traditional working-class neighbourhood with all the marks of a post-industrial city of the United Kingdom. North Belfast is full of areas just like that. Yet, Ardoyne is notorious in Belfast and in the region. However precise or vague, most people would be able to present the district in a word or two if they were asked to state what comes to their mind when 'Ardoyne' is mentioned. It has a reputation, one that is the result of its troubled history. In return, that reputation leads many people to discuss, comment or mobilise that history in present time. It is that recent history that we should introduce briefly.

However, this introductory presentation should not be viewed as a historical background meant to provide some basic information before diving into the analysis. Not only is this sometime tiresome for the reader, but it also goes against the methodological principle of symmetry we have underscored. Indeed, presenting the historical background of a social situation before having addressed its sociological issue can become an obstacle to the analysis instead of a support. It may answer questions that haven't been set yet, and take position in arguments and disputes that haven't been presented yet. Every historical proposition is meant for a present-time purpose. This one is no different. But exposing the recent history of the Greater Ardoyne, if done without care, would lead us to include, under the form of explicit or

implicit preconception, the elements that we consider necessary to understand in the present situation of the area. In particular, this is a problem in a study such as this one, which focus on knowledge and more importantly on the knowledge composed by social groups on a given social situation. This knowledge includes historical propositions.

Does this mean that we should just get rid of a historical perspective, or a general description of the origins of the area? No, but we should take adequate care. First, it means it will be an overview of the recent history of Ardoyne that makes the effort to indicate its settled and contested territories. The agreed part of history and the contested part of history will be presented as such. Second, we will select the elements that are relevant in that history by basing ourselves on how people today make them relevant – debated or not: we will only mention the parts of history that are used in some way by some contemporaneous actors. Those are the parts of history that are still maintained as history, even by just a few locals, whatever their use[1]. Finally, we will trace Ardoyne's history by focusing on how successive public debates and tensions have repeatedly led to attempts at clarifying the state of the area: they lead to a tendency to see its communities as 'isolated' which went with seeing the area as monolithic, instead of seeing it as plural and interconnected. Several trials reinforced that tendency during the Troubles. They would progressively become supports for the type of 'resistance' blaming we will study in the first part of the thesis.

1. The expanse of Belfast: an interdependent autonomisation

Some residents would trace the early history of the settlement as far back as the 16th century. Notably, the *Ard Eoin* village would have been on the way of the Farset river. The river gave its name to Belfast, but was called Rosehead in Ardoyne. It has since then been covered by urban expansion, but older residents still recall a time when the river was visibly crossing the area, during the 1950s, before going underground until reaching the mouth of the river Lagan. If this river still appears to be associated with the early days of the area, it is notably because it certainly played an important role in industrialisation of this rural area. This went with the seminal transition from a rural settlement to a residential neighbourhood.

[1] For a similar move, see Nancy Scheper–Hughes, *Saints, Scholars & Schizophrenics – Mental Illness in rural Ireland*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2001, 418 p.

1.1 A Professional Settlement

The neighbourhood appeared on the hills north of Belfast in the middle of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 1800s, the few houses and fields which constitute the village of Ardoyne are 1,6 miles away from the edge of Belfast, situated near Carrick Hill. Whilst this was still the case at the middle of the century, by 1900, the city had extended all the way to the edge of Ardoyne's cottages. As it turns out, both this isolated location and this increasing integration within the city were instrumental in the evolution of the area.

At that time, Belfast was undergoing spectacular demographic growth. By the end of the 1790s, it had fewer than 10,000 residents. At the beginning of the 20th century, Belfast's population reached 400,000[1]. This densification is closely linked to the role played by the city in the industrial expansion of the British Empire, favoured by its geographical location and its semi-colonial status. The first phase of industrialisation, in the 1830s, was driven by the booming textile industry. During this period, poor and predominantly Catholic rural residents flocked to the city. This abundant workforce in turn attracted new investors from the English and Scottish industrial bourgeoisie, but also members of the Irish 'landed gentry'[2].

It is this dynamic which is deemed to have accelerated Ardoyne's expansion. In 1815, a Presbyterian business owner decided to open a new factory there, on the outskirts of the city, having already established the Edenderry factory a few hundred metres away. He had a mansion built there[3]. The factory produced damask, and the mansion was renamed Ardoyne House. The settlement was progressively accompanied by a series of cottages for his employees. The whole enterprise rapidly flourished. As more employees were contracted, more houses were built, paving the way for the company settlement transforming into a community. Orders were piling up, and the mill obtained royal patronage, thus securing a safer position on the market with the help of the State. In 1848 the factory's workmen addressed a message to the Crown. This message needs to be put back in the context of a national famine that had been plaguing the country since 1845, wider political upheaval in most of Europe[4], and the Young Ireland Rebellion that would happen just the month after that. The paper had a pretty unusual aim for anyone who is accustomed to handling 'messages of popular demand'. The employees of

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[1] Stephen Royle, *Portrait of an Industrial City: Clanging Belfast 1750–1914*, Belfast, Ulster Historical Foundation, 2011, p. 12.

[2] Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Ireland*, London, Harrison & sons, 1899, 594 p.

[3] Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd (ed.), *Burke's Irish family records*, 5th ed., London, Burke's Peerage, 1976, p. 23.

[4] Indeed, those are two implicit elements of the feelings voiced by the inhabitants.

Ardoyne were offering their services to the Crown, if ever help was needed to maintain peace in the country. After stressing the 'sound judgement' of the employees, and noting that the contingent of workers is mixed, an English weekly intellectual paper described their missive as follows:

> 'The workmen, who hold various religious and political opinions, express their firm attachment to the throne and constitution of this empire, under which they have become accustomed to habits of industry, order, and peace. "These blessings," they add, we are most desirous to retain, and we will, so far as in our power, uphold the laws and institutions by which we have so long enjoyed them. We deprecate all sedition and all treasonable schemes, the agitation of which generates distrust, retards enterprise, and paralyses industry, and the accomplishment of which would lead to anarchy and confusion, and even to bloodshed, thereby annihilating every social happiness to which our hearts have become so much attached.'[1]

To which the Lord-Lieutenant[2] replied by thanking the workmen for their support. He ensured that the government's attention was directed to the condition of Ireland. Yet:

> 'The social evils of a country are, however, beyond the reach of political remedies. No Act of Parliament could confer the three great principles in which the operatives of Ardoyne take so just a pride; no law could give industry to the indolent, a love of peace to the turbulent, or a reverence for order to the seditious.'[3]

The declaration from the mixed workmen and this admission of the State's powerlesness is of particular importance. This situation *will be made to appear* in stark contrast with the relation that would develop in the following century. Especially the 'principles of the operatives of Ardoyne', and the orientation of the States towards social engineering. Similarly, at the time, residents were supposedly holding the local linen baron in high esteem. He was respected by the employees for his good treatment and for his attention. At his death, commentators from the Newsletter considered that he had turned Ardoyne into a village if not a small town[4]. More importantly, the feeling was that this transformation was mainly due to the insertion of the neighbourhood in a booming economic system oriented towards exportation[5].

Yet, this understanding of Ardoyne's origin is sometimes contested[6]. Other accounts tend to dismiss the importance of this urbanisation period. Rather, they have Ardoyne's history start at its pre-industrial settlement. This primarily goes with criticising the idea that the area would

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[1] Hunt Leigh, John Forster and Albany William Fonblaque, 'Ireland – Address To The Lord-Lieutenant', *The Examiner*, 1848, p. 342.

[2] The representant of the king and the head of the Irish Government from 1171 to 1922.

[3] H. Leigh, J. Forster and A.W. Fonblaque, 'Ireland – Address To The Lord-Lieutenant', art cit., p. 342. Again, it could be read with the famine in mind and the debated non-intervention policy of the Crown.

[4] *Holy Cross Parish, Belfast, Diocese of Down and Connor*, http://www.holycrossparishbelfast.com/history.htm, (retrieved 25 February 2019). The village had not net yet been reached by the growth of the city.

[5] Samuel Lewis, 'Belfast Linen Trade in the Nineteenth Century' in *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, London, S. Lewis, 1837.

[6] Joe Graham, *Old Belfast Districts : A Place Called Ardoyne*, http://oldbelfastdistricts.rushlightmagazine.com/ardoyne.html , 2001.

have been shaped by the will of a mill owner. Instead, those accounts emphasise that the 'original Ardoyne', the 'ancient townland of Ardoyne' goes back to the early 1500s and covered a wider area including several other contemporaneous neighbourhoods in North Belfast[1]. In so doing, the old 'Ard Eoin' area is also put in relation with the O'Neill family, one which is particularly renowned in Gaelic history. It is a different type of pre-existing interdependencies that is being put forward, one that situates Ardoyne in the ancient Parish of Shankill, and criticise the 'historians' who consider that Ardoyne appeared with the arrival of mills: 'do they think they can have us believe there was nothing in this region of Ireland before the plantation of Ulster?'[2] Hence, even the early days of Ardoyne encapsulate growing tensions around how one can describe the interdependencies in which this small area was embedded.

1.2 The Parish at the Centre of the New Village

The story of the factory continued as years went by, but another institution would progressively come to join it at the heart of this still rural community. A new mill was built in 1863, and even more houses were adjoined to it. Other landowners acquired several buildings and various plots in the Ardoyne area. In July 1868, a group of Passionist priests settled at Ardoyne. After occupying a temporary house, they built a temporary church which opened in January 1869. They funded the parish that remains central to Catholic residents today. At that time, a village started appearing on the ground and complemented the 'rows of houses' that had been built to go along the mill. It was the birth of what used to be known as the 'Old Ardoyne' up until the 1980s. Situated at the southern part of the modern area, it had a more intricate mix of streets and alley which did not bear the mark of urban planning. It stood at the feet of the massive church. By the end of the century, the small area sheltered seven mills and factories. The vast majority of residents were employed there[3] and frequented the church. In emphasising the importance of the parish in the area, it is also the 'commitment of the Passionists to education in the parish' wish is put forward, one which started with the opening of a local school in December 1869, and which has remained a tradition up until the present[4]. This link is central to the idea that Ardoyne residents represent a community able to sustain itself, notably in terms of education. And here again, the arrival of the Passionists would be put in relation not only

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Michael Liggett, *Social capital's imagined benefits in Ardoyne electoral ward*, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, 2017, p. 18.
[4] *Holy Cross Parish, Belfast, Diocese of Down and Connor*, http://www.holycrossparishbelfast.com/history.htm, art cit.

with the autonomisation of the neighbourhood as a parish, but with its increasing links with surrounding areas, notably because of the fact that Ligoniel residents were attached to the Passionists' pastoral care as they had no parish of their own at the time. Just like with the industrialisation movement brought by new factories, the two trends – the autonomisation of the area and its greater interdependencies with surrounding networks – are still, for historical events of the end of the 19th century, understood as going hand in hand.

All of this is also worth mentioning because it sustains recurrent exchanges in contemporaneous Ardoyne. Many residents will mention that their families, or the local families around them, have been living here for three or four generations, 'born and bred'. This allows, in turns, a certain number of those events – notably the increasing importance of the local church – to be mobilised by residents in discussion of residence, territory, community, and else.

2. Ardoyne From the 1930s to the 1960s: a contested integration

The end of the 19th century passed, then came the First World War. This political crisis and its lot of agitation somehow put the social and political transformation happening through the Island on hold, only to see them restart in full force soon after. As presented previously, the independence and the civil wars would strike Ireland shortly after that. But the political disputes which occurred in North Belfast around the 1920s were occasions to voice more general increasing tensions.

As we have already mentioned, during the 19th century, the rural exodus from the Irish countryside, coupled with the increasing immigration of workers from English and Scottish industrial cities, considerably increased the number of Catholics and Protestants neighbours in a rapidly expanding Belfast city. The settlement of newcomers fostered a spontaneous form of community regrouping. Moreover, in Belfast, as in most Anglo-Saxon cities during the Industrial Revolution, entire neighbourhoods were built to accommodate the workers so that they could be close enough to the production sites. The creation of such traditional residential areas, combined with the distribution of members of the Protestant and Catholic communities by occupation, had the effect of reinforcing spontaneous trends towards residential homogenisation.

Indeed, a second wave of industrialisation had come to reinforce the development and the polarisation of North Belfast. After textiles, in the late nineteenth century, shipyards became

Belfast's flagship industry[1]. This second phase of industrialisation led to the arrival of Protestant workers in Belfast. They formed the majority of workers in this booming sector of activity in which denominational homogeneity was manifested by a succession mechanism by which positions were transmitted from generation to generation within families[2].

Under these conditions, it is not surprising that residential segregation emerged not only as a cause, but also as a result of conflicts between the Protestant and Catholic urban communities in the 20th century. They were 'a cause' since residential evictions quickly became a practice that was consubstantial to the clashes. For example, the intercommunal violence which unfolded from 1920 to 1922, which resulted in 453 deaths, led to over five thousand residential evictions[3]. But those residential crises were also the direct result of the transformation of the professional landscape. It was those transformations which led to crisis within factories, and mostly East Belfast's shipyards. There too, the famous shipyards expulsion of workers in July 1920 was understood as a forced eviction of Catholics meant to preserve a homogeneous professional sector[4].

This dynamic was far from clear-cut. Though the events were rapidly understood as a 'Protestant against Catholic' conflict, they had also and primarily been unfolding due to the worries of the business owners in the face of the growing influence of trade unions and socialism amongst their workers. It so appeared that the first were predominantly Protestants and the representatives of trade unions were mostly Catholics. Hence, even if 1920s violence have mostly been remembered as sectarian violence from Protestant workers 'in terms of bigotry and the defence of economic privilege'[5], some have argued that the trade unions and labourist movement which led to the unrest aimed at sedimenting solidarity between workers of different denominations. As such, the expulsion concerned 'all Catholics and hundreds of Protestant socialists and trade unionists'[6].

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[1] Stephen Royle, 'Workshop of the empire, 1820–1914', *Belfast 400 People, Place and History*, 2012, p. 207.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 211 and p. 235 ; S. J. Connolly, *Belfast 400: People, Place and History*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2012, p. 250 ; Pete Hodson, 'Titanic Struggle: Memory, Heritage and Shipyard Deindustrialization in Belfast', *History Workshop Journal*, 1 April 2019, vol. 87, p. 228.

[3] Ian Budge and Cornelius O'Leary, *Belfast: Approach to Crisis: A Study of Belfast Politics 1613–1970*, London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1973, p. 89 ; A. C. Hepburn, 'The Belfast riots of 1935∗', *Social History*, January 1990, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 75.

[4] Robert Lynch, 'The People's Protectors? The Irish Republican Army and the "Belfast Pogrom," 1920–1922', *Journal of British Studies*, 2008, vol. 47, no. 2, p. 375–391.

[5] Christopher Norton, 'Worker Response to the 1920 Belfast Shipyard Expulsions : Solidarity or Sectarianism ?', *Etudes irlandaises*, 1996, vol. 21, no. 1, p. 153.

[6] Henry Patterson, *The Belfast Shipyard Expulsions*, https://www.creativecenturies.com/blog/the-belfast-shipyard-expulsions , 29 March 2021, (retrieved 28 July 2021).

But it was the overall political context which would give those events their defining colours. The civil unrest for independence, which had agitated the island since the First World War, was having a growing influence on Ulster. In that regard too, the shipyards and factories of Belfast were deemed to be a privileged theatre for those tensions. There was 'a widespread loyalist belief that the war years had seen the peaceful penetration of Ulster by Catholics from the south, who had taken the jobs left by Protestants who had enlisted'[1]. The increasing role of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) in the fight for independence, partition and the start of the civil war would only sediment this divide further. As such, the 'stories of the year 1922, 1935 and 1969, all extensive periods of political violence in Belfast, remain cornerstones of republican mythology'[2].

Of course, the partition of Ireland was now transforming the populations' sentiments of attachment on each side of a new border. There was now an unclear but institutionalised frontier between the Republic of Ireland and the region of Northern Ireland, still part of the United Kingdom, which retained an overall majority of unionist and Protestant inhabitants. But as we rapidly exposed, it is mainly because of the long-term professional and residential social transformation which had been occurring in North Belfast for several decades that those political events had such effects there. The century-old pattern of division between Catholic and Protestant had been becoming more visible than in the past decades. It was forcing its way back home in the local neighbourhoods, and in the factories where workers were now facing a more definite imperative to situate themselves in that regard.

2.1 New and Old Residents

Belfast was hit hard by the reduction in trade during and after the First World War, and then by the economic crisis of the 1920s and 1930s. From 1926 to 1935, there was a 25% drop in employment in the linen industry and 36% in the shipbuilding industry[3]. The still predominantly Protestant employees in the naval sector often had no choice but to migrate to England and Scotland where they were able to take advantage of an influx of new orders from 1935 onwards. In comparison, the textile industry, whose employees were poorly paid, poorly educated and predominantly Catholic, was never able to regain its place in international competition and settled into decline[4]. This context further reinforced occupational

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] R. Lynch, 'The People's Protectors?', art cit., p. 376.
[3] A. C. Hepburn, 'The Belfast riots of 1935*', art cit., p. 76.
[4] Edmund A. Aunger, 'Religion and occupational class in Northern Ireland', 1975.

segmentation. Thus, during this period, the Prime Minister Viscount Craigavon and the Minister of Agriculture Sir Brooke publicly called on employers to favour the recruitment of 'good Protestants' to the detriment of Catholics[1]. The creation of the Ulster Protestant League in 1931 was openly motivated by Protestants' concern that 'their jobs' might be given to Catholics[2]. For Catholics, this period was also marked by the experience of discrimination that would nourish their sense of injustice for a long time: the near monopoly of Protestants on higher position, those in the civil service and in the technical professions[3], was fuelling public grievance. These tensions were central to the urban and sectarian conflicts that erupted again in the 1930s[4].

The changes in Ardoyne's configuration were no different. In 1935, the Ardoyne factory and the village were demolished in order to establish a new housing estate. Now this gets us into a set of events that will resurface in later years: the appearance of the 'Glenard Estate' in the middle of the 'Ardoyne village'. According to locals, the birth of this area is marked by a series of housing disputes that were more or less erased from recorded history[5]. Uncertainty remains regarding what exactly motivated that social and housing initiative. It is generally said that new houses were built to shelter new 'Protestant middle-class employees'[6]. In accordance with the tensions defining the evolution of the 1920s and 1930s, observers then stress one or the other factor, depending on whether they see that as a sectarian event or an example of class struggle. The neighbourhood was planned without any pubs or gambling services, as public planners deemed it to be at the root of the popular classes' poverty.

A housing crisis affecting the rest of North Belfast erupted and infringed any chance to see this plan completed. Indeed, the 'York Street riots' led mostly Catholic families to flee their houses a few miles south, and to head for the North Belfast area. The new buildings were rapidly overcrowding with Catholics refugees, working-class and middle-class. Premises that were yet to be finished were now occupied. The few 'middle-class' and 'Protestant' inhabitants that were already present in the Ardoyne village started voicing their discontent, and ultimately left under, once again, debated circumstances. The whole situation led to several protests and strikes

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[1] Alan Ryan, *The reader's companion to Ireland*, San Diego, CA, Harcourt Brace & Co., 1999, p. 226 ; Tim Pat Coogan, *Ireland in the twentieth century*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 299.
[2] Brian Walker, *A Political History of the Two Irelands: From Partition to Peace*, Londres, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 1985.
[3] A. C. Hepburn, 'The Belfast riots of 1935∗', art cit.
[4] Ronnie Munck and Bill Rolston, 'Belfast in the 1930's: An Oral History Project', *Oral History*, 1984, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 15–19.
[5] Michael Liggett, *Glenard : Surviving Fear*, Belfast, Sásta, 2004, 177 p.
[6] Though this is the generally accepted turn of events, other sources also quote the precise project of W.McKibbin. This private housing agent would have set out to build '1477 houses of "superior working-class type" intended to form a '100 Per Cent Protestant colony.' In A. C. Hepburn, *A Past Apart: Studies in the History of Catholic Belfast, 1850–1950*, Belfast, Ulster Historical Foundation, 1996, p. 188.

amongst the poor tenants over the years, and to sectarian issues[1]. The local Catholic church bought a large piece of land to accommodate for some of the refugees. For proponents of the local Holy Cross parish, this was both a way to sediment the presence of Catholics, to help its community and to pacify the tense relations in the neighbourhood. For its local critique, this move was mostly due to the Catholic Church fearing the rise of socialism and 'Bolshevism' that was accompanying the arrival of working-class workers in such poor conditions[2]. This would later be mobilised in the discussion of internal division that would occur during the Troubles on the role of the church in the area. But more generally, this series of events set the scene for the emergence of categorisation based on Ardoyne's 'old residents' and 'newcomers', or the famous dynamics of the 'established and the outsiders'[3].

Because of the transformation which occurred in the 1930s, some residents still argue that there exists no such thing as the overall area of Ardoyne. Instead, it should be clearly divided in three smaller areas that people tend to oversee, namely Glenard, Ardoyne and Marrowbone. This, in turn, makes sense of the 'geographical common sense' nurtured by inhabitants[4]. As mentioned in a local history book published in 2004, not only was this divide resulting from 1930s displacement still uncertain, but it would be the precursor of the new division that would settle in the 1960s:

> 'Whether or not Glenard is part of Ardoyne or Ardoyne is part of Glenard will be the subject of debate for many years to come. Just as we had become accustomed to referring to Glenard as Ardoyne, we have been faced with an even greater debate about Upper Ardoyne.'[5]

Hence, as we will see, if the internal difference between Glenard and Ardoyne marked the communal crisis of the 1930s, the internal difference between Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne would become a defining feature of the communal crisis of the 1960s up to the present.

According to the history we suggested, the neighbourhood in itself did not seem divided on any communal basis so far. Yet, there existed different views on the issue at that time[6]: for some residents, the events of the early 1930s did not lead to a divide between Catholic and Protestant residents, which would only occur in the mid-1960s. For others, the 1930s did lead to a housing division, but it was a tolerant one which did not cause substantial issues until the

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[1] M. Liggett, *Glenard : Surviving Fear*, *op. cit.*
[2] A. C. Hepburn, 'The Belfast riots of 1935*', art cit., p. 87.
[3] Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders*, 2nd ed., London, SAGE, 1994, 256 p.
[4] Like the clear-cut frequentation of certain types of clubs or pubs for certain parts of the area.
[5] M. Liggett, *Glenard : Surviving Fear*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[6] Second contested part of the history.

incidents of 1969[1]. For yet some others, the 1930s did lead to a housing division, and it was based on a serious opposition and animosity from the outset. As presented by some inhabitants of the Protestant part of Ardoyne in the early 2000s:

> 'When civil disturbances erupted in 1935 Glenard was so affected that the estate was largely divided in two with Protestants in the upper, and Roman Catholics in the lower part while Berwick Road marked the "border". Where Protestants stayed in the lower Glenard they were often pressurised by the republicans so that they had to move to be with their co-religionists in the upper end for peace and safety.'[2]

So, depending on the strand mobilised, one locates the 'installation of offensive division' somewhen between the 1930s and the 1970s, with varying clarity, as a more or less continuous process. Regardless, the name Glenard was scrapped altogether in 1938, the street names were changed, and the geographical traces of those events were effaced. Yet, this progressive reorganisation of the area would sediment in the many local organisations and local networks flourishing during those decades: the workmen's organisations and the cohesion coming from the factory employment, the local trade unions in the 1930s[3], the Gaelic Football club created in 1907, the Orange lodge and the local flute band were all important institutions in the autonomisation of the area.

Hence, overall, rather than purely political process, the increasing divide between ethno-political communities and their increasing isolation as local urban communities is to be understood in how local actors politically framed the numerous crises caused by the rapid yet oscillating industrialisation and professional diversification of the city, and the accompanying transformation in residential cohabitations.

2.2 'Communities' and Disputed Unrest

After the Second World War, during which much of the city had been destroyed, the State promoted a policy of urban regeneration. It resulted in numerous public housing projects which explicitly aimed to encourage 'mixing' between Catholic and Protestant residents. However, this policy of mixed population relocation in the new large-scale housing estates came up

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[1] As mentioned in Anne Cadwallader, *Holy Cross: The Untold Story*, Belfast, Brehon Press Ltd, 2004, p. 18. And 'For thirty years there was very little trouble between Protestants and Roman Catholics', see Hugh Stockman, *The Ardoyne Interface : The History of Glenbryn*, Belfast, Progressive Unionist Party, 2001, p. 2. It should be noted that this has been described as a work of historicisation organised by the Progressist Unionist Party in 2001, in order to generalise the testimonies that republicans had been aggressively putting loyalists out from their residential area since the year 1969. See the discussion of this point in Catherine McGlynn, *How New is New Loyalism ?*, University of Salford, Salford, 2004, p. 243.

[2] H. Stockman, *The Ardoyne Interface : The History of Glenbryn*, *op. cit.*

[3] M. Liggett, *Social capital's imagined benefits in Ardoyne electoral ward*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

against avoidance strategies at work in the communities. If it failed to transform residential patterns, the post-war period had drastic effects on professional sectors. By the 1960s the linen industry was crumbling. In the neighbourhood, all the mills and the employers would stop production before the end of the 1970s. As explained by historian and sociologist Michael Liggett, the impact 'was particularly severe in Ardoyne where many of the local mill employees lived', especially in terms of 'social connections forged within the workplace'[1]. Some services, like the local cinema, disappeared. Soon the shipbuilding industry would enter a lasting and fatal crisis as well[2]. Though Ardoyne is not amongst the area closest to the quays, a good share of the Protestant population still had some kin or relations working on the docks. Those shutdowns ended up causing another wave of socio-economic hardship and a drastic change in patterns of employment.

Though one tends to view this as a reduction of social connections, other have emphasised how this contributed to the reinforcement of interdependencies of another nature. With the economic crisis of the 1970s, combined with the effects of the Troubles, unemployment soared in Belfast, reaching a rate of 26% for Catholics and 15% for Protestants in the mid-1980s[3]. In these conditions, the Northern Irish economy began a painful shift towards service activities. Throughout the conflict, Belfast's city centre would gradually transform into an urban area dominated by services[4]. The most fortunate find employment in the civil service. The others worked in the commercial services. If the crisis of manufacturing sectors in the 1960s and 1970s are taken as such, they are deemed to reinforce the withdrawal of each ethno-political community within their residential area. If those crises are considered in lights of longer trends and with the rearrangement of new professional sectors, Catholics and Protestants who belong to the world of workers and employees actually started to increasingly cohabit in the same professions and often work together in the same administrations and companies.

This apparent contradiction is in fact heavily related to the increase in residential tensions and the need for political differentiation which became clearer than ever in Ardoyne. Hence, at around that time, the issue of 'communal interaction' comes back on the scene. Most people agree that the 1930s incidents represented a general shift within Ardoyne's organisation, but until the 1960s there were still some Catholic families living in Protestant areas and some

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Dominic Bryan, 'Titanic Town: Living in a Landscape of Conflict', *Belfast 400: People Place and History*, November 2012, p. 335 ; F. Geary and W. Johnson, 'Shipbuilding in Belfast, 1861–1986', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 1 May 1989, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 42‑64.
[3] R. D. Osborne and R. J. Cormack, 'Unemployment and religion in Northern Ireland', 1986, p. 219.
[4] Bob Rowthorn, 'Northern Ireland: an economy in crisis', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1 March 1981, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 10. Table 4.

Protestant living in Catholic areas. Regardless of how peaceful or problematic each strand makes it seem to be. As remembered by the Protestant residents in 2001, 'at this time the community living between Cranbrook Gardens and Glenbryn Gardens was 90% Protestant and 10% Roman Catholic[1]'. Similarly, as presented by an investigative journalist in 2004:

> 'Although what is now called Ardoyne was, until the late 1960s, mostly Catholic, Protestants still numbered around 15% of its population […]. Conversely, Upper Ardoyne, or Glenbryn, said to be built slightly later than Glenard, was mainly Protestant with a sprinkling of Catholics. In the 1950s and 1960s, Protestant families moved into Glenbryn from the Shankill Road, seeking larger homes with gardens.'[2]

Again, it should be noted that compared to the Glenard and Ardoyne area, information on the building of the Upper-Ardoyne area remains close to non-existent today. Still, even though the population increased and separated, the coexistence of the two communities was not seen as a problem.

That changed in 1969. Various events are mentioned by different actors to account for the progressively tense atmosphere that appeared at the end of the 1960s. For residents, these echoed the 1935 events, which in turn echoed the displacements of 1922[3]. According to former unionist residents of the area:

> 'Disharmony began to be created when in 1966 rumours went the rounds that there would be no "Twelfth" celebrations where the Roman Catholic 10 percent were concerned[4]. Republic pressures prevented RC children from joining in the "Twelfth" revelry of 1969. Later in [July] verbal abuse, window breaking, and the destruction of gardens at night were the evidence of the republican intimidation of Protestants which was to cause older residents to flee their homes. The vacated houses were immediately occupied by Roman Catholics, many of them militant republicans.'[5]

The events are described as the violent reinforcement of residential segregation based on the increasing need to maintain a higher form of differentiation between the two communities, even in leisure. This is only one aspect of the pivotal and still controversial events of 1969. The political incidents of 1969 are now widely considered as the period opening a 'conflict' between the Protestant and Catholics, with large scale and long-term forms of antagonism settling in urban areas where the two communities cohabited.

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[1] H. Stockman, *The Ardoyne Interface : The History of Glenbryn*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
[2] Anne Cadwallader, *Holy Cross: The Untold Story*, Belfast, Brehon Press Ltd, 2004, p. 15.
[3] A reaction recorded in traces such as 'Riots worst since 1935', *The Irish Times*, 1969, p. 11.
[4] Again, to every point its counterpoint: around 1966, the local nationalists would usually argue that local tensions were caused by 'the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising [which] led to street clashes. These were largely fomented by a young fundamentalist Protestant preacher called Ian Paisley.' Which in turns is accused of leading to the formation of a unionist paramilitary group near Ardoyne and the assassination of several civilians between 1966 and 1969. See Ardoyne Commemoration Project, *Ardoyne The Untold Truth*, Belfast, Beyond the Pale Publications, 2003, p. 19.
[5] H. Stockman, *The Ardoyne Interface : The History of Glenbryn*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

A series of riots happening in August 1969 are usually considered the opening moments of the conflict. After protests in Derry, riots burst out in Belfast. They mainly occurred at the border between West and North Belfast, and at the border of the Catholic part of Ardoyne, just a few hundred metres away. Catholics have their version of the story. Protestants have their own, which contradicts Catholics in many ways. The British State has its official version of the events – told in the first Scarman Report[1] – which is criticised by both Catholics and Protestants.

In Ardoyne, things had been 'heating up' since the heights of the parading season in July. By August, it had led groups of residents to permanently barricade some of the streets leading into the area[2]. A wide Catholic protest – called by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association – was organised on the 13th of August in West Belfast. It degenerated, notably because of aggression caused by some youths amongst the parades, which started a massive fight between Catholics and the police. Barricades were built up, and by the 14th of August the clashes between Catholics and Police had led to confrontations between Catholics and Protestants.

This is what is said to have happened in the south of Ardoyne. The events that followed are deemed by observers and residents to be the turning point of the conflict, and are a paradigmatic example of the 'vicious circles' mentioned by Judith in our introduction. There was unrest amongst Catholics, then loyalist residents targeted their neighbours whilst the police were trying to dismantle the barricades. Nationalists hijacked several buses from a nearby depot. With their burning carcasses they set up more efficient barricades, which led to a heavier response from the police forces, the, to several deaths amongst nationalists. This triggered the setting on fires of both Protestant and Catholic-owned houses. This in turn led to the makeshift defence of the area by small groups of Catholic men. Police officers were shot, Catholic civilians were killed.

Yet, the more general dynamics surrounding those riots were, there again, met with contested forms of 'sense-making narratives'. We can find the two sides of the coin in proposition such as this one, in the words of a researcher quoted by a journalist:

> 'There was a Protestant nervousness also, he says, about the impending fiftieth anniversary of the Easter Rising. It all amounted to a perception that things were slipping from the relative psychological comfort of the previous 50 years. In 1969, that 'nervousness' expressed itself in the onslaught on Catholic homes in Ardoyne. Two years later, in August 1971, when scores of local Catholics were arrested and interned, Protestants saw the writing on the wall, packed up and left. In

[1] Leslie Scarman, G.K.G Lavery and William Marshall, *Violence and civil disturbances in Northern Ireland in 1969: report of tribunal of inquiry*, Belfast, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1972, 360 p.

[2] Ardoyne Commemoration Project, *Ardoyne*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

a 'scorched earth' operation, rather than leave behind intact homes for Catholics to occupy, those leaving ripped out gas-pipes and burnt the houses.'[1]

Added to precision such as:

'The cataclysmic events of 1969, when loyalist mobs attacked Catholic Hooker and Brookfield streets, burning most homes to the ground. nationalists, already suspicious of the over 90% Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), felt they provided no protection from the mobs.'[2]

Here, the idea is that loyalists burnt houses to the ground. Whereas another narrative puts the blame on the CNR community:

'After August 1969, the republican campaign of intimidation to force Protestants from their homes gained momentum and people were constantly being threatened with being burnt out. […]The republican guns came into use 7–10 August 1971, when the unprotected Protestant people were driven from their homes […]. The republican arsonists burnt out the empty houses.'[3]

Several official reports also mentioned how, in August 1971, a 'van with a loudspeaker toured warning [Protestants] if they did not leave they would be burnt out'[4]. Similarly, as presented by a unionist resident who was evicted in 1969:

'Before 1969, relations were quite good between Protestants and Roman Catholics. We often organised bus outings for the children of both sides. Indeed, on occasions we had joint outings with the mothers. However, as the troubles in Hooker Street got worse the situation in our estate also deteriorated until we were all caught up in a wave of terror and intimidation. The windows of our homes were smashed, my son, who at that time was 16 years of age, was attacked, then my young boy, who was 9 years of age, was beaten up as he was going to church. […] The republicans threatened to shave our heads and were constantly calling us "Soldier Lovers". […] Of one thing I am sure – I will never go back to live beside those people again.'[5]

Many unionist residents say they suffered a tremendous amount of intimidation from 1969 to 1971. It pushed those who remained in Catholic streets to move out a few streets north. There, *republicans* burnt houses to the ground. The two narratives do not seem that contradictory if we remember that each 'side' describes the evictions that have taken places in streets occupied at 90% by the other community[6]. Similarly, in following decades, radical members of each community would be increasingly ready to accept responsibility for the events. They even defended it via controversial songs. These residents were now committed to evicting or fighting the other community. On its part, the British government would conclude that there were 'communal disturbances erupting without plan or premeditation during a summer when the traditional Protestant marches and ceremonies, following immediately after

[1] Pete Shirlow, quoted by A. Cadwallader, *Holy Cross*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[3] H. Stockman, *The Ardoyne Interface : The History of Glenbryn*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
[4] Luke Moffett et al., *'No Longer Neighbours'. The Impact of Violence on Land, Housing and Redress in the Northern Ireland Conflict*, Belfast, Queen's University Belfast, 2020, p. 9.
[5] H. Stockman, *The Ardoyne Interface : The History of Glenbryn*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[6] Here, there is a methodological problem in *making it seem like all* the Protestant and *all* the Catholic group *always* defend the same kind of framing, but we'll have to expend on that later on and rely on simplifications for now.

the massively publicised and vividly remembered events of the period August 1968 to April 1969, provided a series of occasions for the eruption of violence which neither the political leaders nor the forces available to the NI Government could prevent or suppress'[1].

The issue is still being debated today, and we will see that this ingrained the apprehension of 'eviction' movement amongst most residents. It would resurface a few decades later. In any case, Ardoyne was now fully changing, and the oppositions between 'Oranges and Greens', shaking the country, played out in the neighbourhood. The consciousness that those forms of contestation had been repeating since the beginning of the century already had some central effects on how actors understood their potential cohabitation. As Gerry Fit, a labour representative for West Belfast, said in the House of Commons in 1971:

> 'In 1969 [500 homes were burned to the ground and eight lives lost]. Those people will not forget that and neither will their sons or daughters. Almost everyone in Northern Ireland has memories if not of last week's or last year's troubles, then of troubles in the '20s, '30s, '40s, '50s and '60s. How can a State, built upon such a shaky foundation, ever hope to continue and to emerge as a just society, bringing together warring sections within it? I believe that it is an utter impossibility. In Northern Ireland at present we have 48,000 unemployed. A civil rights meeting in Belfast yesterday was addressed by a prominent member, he is either the chairman or deputy-chairman of the Irish Congress of Trades Unions. He is quoted in the Press this morning as saying that there were still basic discriminations taking place in Belfast shipyards and engineering works.'[2]

The form of integration and autonomisation that had been witnessed in the early days of the area were now severely put to the test.

3. Ardoyne During 'the Troubles': a conflictual differentiation

Soon, the spread of violence triggered a heavier investment of the British army in the area. In Ardoyne, the old mill was requisitioned to stand as their base[3]. From now on, the area would become referred to as a 'Catholic Ghetto', a term *en vogue* at the time[4], especially amongst British or foreign commentators. In the next few months, Ardoyne was also gathering

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[1] L. Scarman, G.K. Lavery and W. Marshall, *Violence and civil disturbances in Northern Ireland in 1969*, *op. cit.*, p. 14. As a side-note, in a perfect example of how we can follow how groups figure out what's going on, see how Paul Drew used conversational analysis to study interviews of the Scarman Tribunal. Paul Drew, 'Accusations: The Occasioned Use of Members' Knowledge of `Religious Geography' in Describing Events', *Sociology*, 1978, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 1-22.

[2] Gerry Fitt, *Debates in the House of Common,* London, 15 February 1971, c1232 https://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=1971-02-15a.1221.3#g1232.1

[3] J. Nagle and M. Clancy, *Shared Society or Benign Apartheid?: Understanding Peace-Building in Divided Societies*, Springer, 2010, p. 205.

[4] A term only paralleled by the use of a 'the' to talk about 'The Ardoyne' which had the knack of annoying residents.

the reputation of becoming a stronghold of republican armed groups. The IRA had had a relatively small presence in the area until then. The British army established a recruitment post there in 1973, which was reportedly burned by residents in less than a week. If the republicans were fighting a government, it became indistinguishable from their oppositions to unionists, who had also formed several defence groups. For instance, most Catholics were criticising the unequal distribution of housing in the area. Some amongst the Protestant population retaliated violently in order to preserve a territory that they considered 'constantly threatened'. The local residents were now voicing their disagreement with the image of inter-communal harmony that used to be promoted by the 'modernising' Prime Minister Terrence O'Neill[1]. It was now considered to be in blatant contrast with what people were experiencing on a daily basis.

3.1 Closure and Division

The army was to settle in Northern Ireland. To allow for the installation of military posts, several vacant houses in Ardoyne were razed to the ground. They would not be rebuilt. Initially left undisturbed, the barracks were equipped with protective fences. They took the form of a long metallic barrier along one street, with some watchtowers rapidly put up to accompany it. This marked the beginning of an 'interface' within Ardoyne. In the middle of Glenard, now Ardoyne, a grid came to separate the streets where the Catholic and the Protestant communities had withdrawn. This was on top of the interfaces and 'flashpoints' that surrounded the area. They delimited between Ardoyne and adjacent neighbourhoods, which were now considered mostly unionists. The road running south of Ardoyne, where violence had erupted in 1969, was one of the hardest borders. Several streets were permanently closed down, and most other entry points in the area were now marked by army check points. The houses and business situated at the Crumlin interface vacated then disappeared. The famous road became an empty artery. Over a few hundred metres, it looked like a cemented moat.

August 1971 marked a new wave of incidents, leading to even more evictions. Nationalists argued that it all followed the introduction of internment without trial. Unionists refused that chronology[2]. The army got more invested in the area, again, offering a support for residents to realise and denounce a new form of vicious circle. The same year, the killing of three young Scottish soldiers would leave a mark in everyone's mind and bring about a change

[1] See Paul Dixon, 'European Integration, Modernisation and Northern Ireland 1961–1975', *Etudes irlandaises*, 1994, vol. 19, no. 1, p. 167‑182.
[2] H. Stockman, *The Ardoyne Interface : The History of Glenbryn*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

in the overall position of British soldiers in the area. Residents had reinforced their opposition due to their increasing presence; the army would reinforce its presence in the face of increasing resistance. As recalled by a soldier in an interview in 1997:

> 'We stayed at the Flax Mill in the Ardoyne, North Belfast. Conditions were rough there, but not as bad as they had been for the regiment that had been there before us. The changed circumstances were brought tragically home to us in March 1971. Three members of my platoon were found shot dead in Ligoniel. It is believed that the three off duty soldiers had been invited to a "party" by some girls that they had met. […] I was working in reconnaissance at the time and I know the names of those responsible for the killings.'[1]

Nowadays, issues of commemorations and vandalism regularly lead the Protestant community in Ardoyne to mobilise those events. From this period onwards, the district gradually acquired the status of a 'no-go area' with the British police and army. On their part, the inhabitants were starting to consider their neighbourhood as an 'open-air prison'[2]. The two diagnoses convey the fact that all actors were now stressing the 'gradual isolation' of the district as years went by. It seemed to become more and more separated from the rest of North Belfast, developing its own internal community life. At the same time, a more permanent internal division was set up. The military barriers in the area turned into a tall and long wall, now separating the north from the south of the district:

> 'A narrow street of just over 100 houses is the dividing line between the republican Ardoyne estate and the small loyalist enclave of Glenbryn. […] Now exclusively Catholic it was, until the Troubles began, a mixed street. In 1971 the British Army had erected a makeshift peace line to separate Alliance Avenue from Glenbryn. By the late 1980's the peace line stood 40 foot high and was a permanent feature of life for residents on both sides, with dialogue between the Catholics and Protestants who live within touching distance of the peace line virtually non-existent.'[3]

Meanwhile, successive governments were taking office and the status of the province remained blur. Living conditions were deteriorating. As mentioned, unemployment across the region exploded before 1979 and would double again before 1982[4]. The 'low-intensity war[5]' continued, but as parties were considered to be weakening, the inhabitants had in turn developed what some called an 'island mentality'[6]. The human cost of the conflict was giving the population of the area a new reason to close in on itself. Residents now seemed to be facing the

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[1] See chapter 'Peter – Royal Highland Fusiliers' in John Lindsay, *Brits Speak Out: British Soldier's Impressions of the Northern Ireland Conflict*, L'Derry, Northern Ireland, Guildhall Press, 1998, 160 p.
[2] Interview Robert, 24/02/2016, Upper Ardoyne residential home.
[3] Colm Heatley, 'Alliance Avenue and Holy Cross Dispute' in *Interface: Flashpoints in Northern Ireland'*, Belfast, Lagan Books, 2004, Chapter 1.
[4] Thomas Hennessey, *Northern Ireland: The Origins of the Troubles*, Dublin, Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 2005, p. 237.
[5] For an analysis of the link between those low-intensity forms of violence and the interface areas in particular, see Laia Balcells, Lesley-Ann Daniels and Abel Escribà-Folch, 'The determinants of low-intensity intergroup violence: The case of Northern Ireland', *Journal of Peace Research*, 2016, vol. 53, no. 1, p. 33-48.
[6] Local Worker, quoted in Raphaëlle Boland and Natalie Mayne, *Boys of '69 – True North – Series 5 – Episodes 3*, Belfast, BBC Northern Ireland, 2015. 3:25.

'constant fear and tension that is a normal part of life and the culture of terror in these ghettos'[1]. The rest of the 1970s was marked by the appearance of roadblocks on the streets that marked entry points into Ardoyne. For Catholics, who already felt surrounded, there was also a growing fear of assassinations and civilian killings, which were perceived as getting more and more common – especially with loyalist gangs such as 'The Shankill Butchers' on the south and the constitution of 'The Murder Mile' to the north. Yet, similar impressions also appeared amongst Protestant residents. They also felt surrounded at the scale of what was deemed to be their part of neighbourhood. They also saw their services – like the sole social club in the area – disappear, and they too were losing civilians to republicans and army shootouts or to sectarian killings.

3.2 Two governmental attempts at clarifying the state of the Area

Yet, when one pays attention to ongoing debates, it appears that actors had a hard time dissociating the effects and causes of walls, communal oppositions, the presence of the British army, republican or loyalist armed groups. And so were more detached agents of the Irish and British State. It was appearing increasingly obvious that the state of the area, its degree of autonomy and of internal division were becoming a 'problem' worthy of attention. Not one, but two administrations would take up the effort. In 1973, two members of the Irish department of foreign affairs travelled to Belfast to meet with residents of Ardoyne. The envoys were there to hear the residents' concerns about the IRA and the army. Their confidential report stated:

> 'Some of the group, though not all, actually welcomed the presence of the Paratroopers in the Ardoyne, because they are more effective than other regiments in controlling the IRA. All presents saw IRA terror, intimidation and control as at least as bad as that of the Army. […] They made the point that moderate like themselves, having different views on many topics, being untrained in the use of information media and having a less emotional and one-sided approach to political problems, find it difficult to achieve adequate publicity.'[2]

As discussed in the report, the purpose of the visit was to be able to put forward a more balanced view of residents' position with regard to their community and to the intervention of the British army. A view that accepted moderate statements and arrays of uncertainty. Yet, the agents' first concern was to assess how representative of Ardoyne their opinion may be. How moderate could the population of Ardoyne actually be? Those agents, as representative of the Irish State, were also trying to officially assess what was happening in the area, and to produce

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[1] Jeffrey A. Sluka, *Death Squad: The Anthropology of State Terror*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000, p. 129.

[2] John Swift, *Points arising out of meeting with Ardoyne group, led by T.Lovette and M.McLoughlin*, Belfast, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1973, p. 1.

a reliable picture of its social dynamics. Under that light, establishing the influence of local armed groups and to what extent were the residents supporting them was an enigma shared by many social actors, including those agents of the State. In their approach, the issue was to know which group would accept to corroborate 'statistical facts' about the area – notably the number of paratroopers, the number of incidents, number of people at specific public events, etc.

The agents reported that all present attempted to organise a way for the residents' representatives to keep track of those events which the Irish State failed to grasp. This included 'Protestant' attacks which were unaddressed by the Army, IRA attacks and intimidation, and aimed at making explicit the difference between 'the truth' and what was reported to the government. This shows the variety of events that people in and outside the area were trying to assess, but also how those agents played an instrumental role in bringing to the fore internal dissension within the local community. They would then commit to pass that 'information' to officials from the government of Ireland, or to newspapers. Synthesising, the internal reports concluded:

> 'The value of meeting a number of people like these is that it gives us a more balanced view of the variety of outlooks on the Catholic side in Northern Ireland. It is difficult to accept their "facts" as any more valid or deserving of belief than those of others; their representative character, as indicated above, is subject to some doubts. Nevertheless […] Mr. Lovett sees the Ardoyne representatives as an embryonic peace group. We should obviously do as much as we can to help a strong peace movement emerge in the Ardoyne; it is hard to see, however, what more we can do to help it emerge other than meeting its representatives, guaranteeing them access to Ministers, etc.'[1]

The State agents explicitly indicated their interest and their difficulties in giving a more balanced view of that local area. One that would help prevent the area from sinking into a complicated relationship with local republican armed groups, which for the most part were unsupported by the Irish government and parliamentarians. Those moments are of particular importance as they put to the test the tendency of the State to provide a reflexive apparatus for its social groups, whilst always being potentially reduced either to the strategic interests of its agents, or to the impersonal role of third-party. Some would say that this was a strategically motivated form of support meant to politically weaken the community, others that it was the State playing its role in sustaining the emergence of internal pluralism and alternative forms of community attachment. This uncertainty and the relative indetermination surrounding the establishment of information on Ardoyne were central to those events. This sort of enquiry accompanies everyday life and the constitution of public issues. It is often forgotten in the records of history, yet it made up much of the activities of residents, local representatives and

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

state agents when it came to knowing what was happening in the neighbourhood, what people thought and what should be done. A work that involves 'assembling documentary materials into coherent historical accounts [and] producing documents, withholding details, and collecting them into files'[1]. This would be a continuous effort throughout the conflict, one which went with many debates surrounding the intervention or lack of intervention from statutory bodies. This paints a picture full of uncertainty and moderate interpretation, which is in stark contrast with the image of Ardoyne that prevailed outside of the area at the time, and which prevails today, but also with the picture of Ardoyne which prevails within the area.

At the same time, the internal organisation of the neighbourhood was densifying, as local actors increasingly relied on local networks and localised intermediary bodies. The Ardoyne Association was set up, several Women's Group appeared in both areas, the activities surrounding the local church became more important, a local trust was organised, and alternative forms of policing – most notably under the influence of armed groups – were flourishing. Similarly, a local 'Fleádh' was set up and would get more popular until the end of the 1980s. A famous Irish festival of traditional music, it was meant to be a new way for people to express their identity, as much as a way to keep the youth off the streets in troubled months. Some of those elements are also worth for the Protestant part of the area. Yet, apparently because of the small number of residents in the area, fewer organisations came into existence. The neighbourhood relied more on the traditional flute band and the Orange lodge, which provided strong social networks. Similarly, the small local community centre was growing larger by relying on a steady number of volunteers. The role of the local church became more ambivalent over the years, due to difficult relations between residents and reverends.

Meanwhile, the British State attempts at regulating and, before anything else, stabilising information on the local webs of interdependencies which constituted Ardoyne's communities were getting even more ambiguous. In 1980, two British State officials exchanged on the matter. They also witnessed the cohabitation of different diagnoses. In March, a minister of state from the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) wrote a confidential letter to two government officers. Meaning to provide an overall summary of Ardoyne's living conditions, the written report mentioned that:

> '2. [A RUC officer and the Parish priest] told me that the unemployment level in the area is between 50% (according to the Parish priest) and a staggering 70% (according to the RUC figure). At varying times only between 20% and 50% of the school leavers find jobs.

[1] Michael Lynch, 'Ethnomethodology and History: Documents and the Production of History', *Ethnographic Study*, 2009, no. 11, p. 96.

3. The Ardoyne contains some 20,000 Catholics completely surrounded by hard Protestant areas and in the past has suffered from extreme fear. In consequence even today there is a mental block against going outside the area to look for a job or even to the nearest recreation ground.

4. Physically the urban environment has all the hall-marks of a deprived ghetto – a heavily built-up area of inner city urban decay where the only open spaces are semi-cleared bomb sites. […] It is not surprising that the Ardoyne is regarded as a "dangerous" area where a strong and, I would add, a distasteful army presence has to be maintained.

5. It strikes me that if we wish to display any good intentions towards the minority community and to tackle urban and social deprivation, the Ardoyne by its compact nature is a good place in which to start.'[1]

Here is yet another effort to assess the increasing isolation of this urban community but also the wider socio-economic origins of this trend. It should be noted that all the figures given here differed from other late official documents, even though the Irish State agents, on their hands, had insisted on the need to produce better statistics. The problem is not to examine the figures given by the agent when quoting the local priest and the local officer – even though the 20 000 residents figure when the official census established that the Ardoyne ward was populated by 9547 persons in 1971[2] tells us about the uncertainty surrounding quantitative and qualitative estimations in North Belfast. It is rather to see how the British State agent framed the issue by insisting on the isolation of the area, by emphasising how he operated a translation of local accounts of local social issues, and in so doing, how this *actes d'État* embodies the ambivalence of the State group regarding the area. One which is far from limiting itself to attempts at maintaining the legitimate monopoly of violence through the intervention of the British army. The author then officially requested drastic efforts to improve the urban environment. He wanted to involve the unemployed inhabitants in community life, and to support the trust funded by locals to help the formation of small ventures. For the writer of this note, this would only serve to alleviate 'sixty years of obvious Government neglect'.

On April, the two officers answered. Their answer reveals the type of disputes which agitated even distanced actors regarding Ardoyne's diagnosis. After thanking the minister for his 'thoughts on Ardoyne', they reminded him of the following:

'To widen the perspective outlined in paragraphs 3 and 4 or your minute it is worth remembering that during the past decade there has been intensive Provisional IRA activity in Ardoyne. Attempts made by the Provisional IRA to build up an alternative system of civil administration included their own "policing" arrangements and "punishment" shootings. In the late 70s the security forces assessed that the Provisional IRA probably derived a total annual income of some £90,000 in protection payments and revenue from clubs, Black Taxis, businesses and the construction industry in the area. It is undoubtedly true that ordinary citizens in the Ardoyne have feared attack from outside but all this lawless activity within the area has created a fear of the area on the part of

[1] Hugh Rossi, *Work Preparation Unit in the Ardoyne*, Belfast, Northern Ireland Office (NIO), 1980.
[2] *Census of population 1971. Summary tables*, Belfast, Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland General Register Office, 1971. Table. 4.

> neighbouring communities and of those who have supplied services to the area. This has adversely affected efforts to ease the Ardoyne's problems.'[1]

Here we find a radical inversion of the minister's account of the area. It displaces where one should look for to find explanations. The emphasis on 'within' is part of the original text: rather than the growing isolation of the area being responsible for its turmoil, it is its internal tensions and its own incapacity to regulate its own violent and illegal excesses that are deemed to be at the origin of Ardoyne's troubles and of the troubles it causes to its neighbours. Only when those clarifications were made did the officers answer the other points raised. They recognised that the IRA's influence was wearing, and argued that the efforts of the civil authorities had been increasing over the years – notably in terms of housing. But for anything else, they referred the minister to various meeting groups at the scale of Belfast. The two officers intended to keep this matter at a low level, 'given the scale of Belfast's problems and the sectarian implications of selecting a single area for special treatment'. No further investment from the Secretary of State or the British State was deemed necessary. The exchange is an illuminating summary of conflicting positions on the area: in the midst of the transformation happening during the Troubles, it reveals how the residents were far from reducing themselves to a homogeneous group, and how the agents of the State were far from united when it came to the integration of the neighbourhood, its necessity and its means.

Those confidential papers were echoing efforts made by other NIO and institutional officials to assess the 'Civil activities of paramilitaries in the Ardoyne' just a year before that, in 1979[2]. A dozen people had created a meeting group. It had been set up to examine the civil activities of armed groups in Ardoyne, that is, their attempt at organising civil and political institutions in the area. Stabilising their diagnosis from one year to the other, the group argued that the PIRA was failing to organise an 'alternative system of civil administration in the Ardoyne […] despite particular efforts in the "policing" sphere'[3]. All those institutionalising efforts – like the creation of a disciplinary unit made of married men of Ardoyne – had not materialised. The officers considered that residents were progressively refusing this influence, and noticed that there had been no punishment shootings in the last 8 months. The British State committee had argued that it was time to support and consolidate the progress made in 'the process of normalisation in the Ardoyne [by] responding quickly and sensitively to the real

[1] Philip Goodhart, *Ardoyne*, Belfast, Northern Ireland Office (NIO), 1980.
[2] Stephen J. Leach, *Note of a Meeting on the Civil Activities of Paramilitaries in the Ardoyne*, Stormont House – Belfast, 1979.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

needs of the local population'[1]. If the account is far from matching what residents would remember nowadays, given how Ardoyne has kept its reputation as a PIRA stronghold during the whole conflict, this other example already shows that the tension between addressing the 'paramilitary' problems in Ardoyne and addressing the more mundane 'real needs' of the area – such as housing and unemployment – was already central in how the State would accompany the handling of local public problems throughout the years. The problem was then to either help shut down the conflictual manifestation of Ardoyne's plural senses of community, or to sustain the creation of another, 'real need' centred, sense of community. As such, the government would start to sustain several initiatives of that type. That was the idea behind the local trust mentioned earlier. In 1981, some residents also started a local magazine called the AIDA News, for the *Ardoyne Industrial Development Agency*[2]. Soon after that, the publication turned into the *Horizon Magazine*, a monthly publication which focuses on community news and community history. Yet, it should also be noted that in none of those official debates – or in those parallel diagnosis – do we find any mention of the Protestants residents of Ardoyne. Their isolation was growing even direr.

3.3 Two Decades and a Sense of Weariness

The economic situation of the area was still indubitably degrading. Both the Protestant and the Catholic communities were now amongst the most deprived population of the region. By now, people had lost track of any local division between middle-class or working-class. During the 1980s, the British government attempted to manage the manifestation of conflict in new ways. At the scale of the region, it put an end to internments without trials to introduce a global policy of 'Criminalisation' and containment. That removed any special category status to 'political prisoners' coming from local armed groups. This led to the famous Hunger strike of republican prisoners in 1981. Amongst them, several came from Ardoyne. In the area, it also led to a series of 'Supergrass trials'[3]: 25 informants testified and led to around 600 people getting arrested around North Belfast and 38 in Ardoyne[4]. To support this transition, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) police would become increasingly militarised. The neighbourhood continued to be the scene of regular clashes, such as a series of revenge killing involving the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[2] Horizon Magazine, '25 Years', January 2006, p. 1.
[3] A supergrass refers to an informant in the British policing system. To Grass means to give info on someone, often in exchange of protection or immunity.
[4] Ardoyne Commemoration Project, *Ardoyne*, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

Army, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and republicans in 1989. It should be noted that the UVF agent in question is now the subject of several unionist commemorations, which revolts nationalists[1]. Those events usually opened discussions on the local level of violence and its portrayals. As expressed by a local nationalist woman in 1984:

> 'Loyalist paramilitaries always pretend that they only resort to violence when they're provoked by the IRA, but that's nonsense. […] Loyalist violence always seems to flare up when they think the British are going to concede something to the "Taigs" or when they think the IRA are on the run. Besides, it suits the Brits to portray us as mad murdering bastards and themselves as the neutral go-between. The truth of the matter is that the Brits are here to back up the loyalists and their interests. […] I know where I live and I know how my area is surrounded by loyalists.'[2]

Again, the very process of officially describing what goes on in Ardoyne is unsettled during the conflict, as the British State is regularly blamed for being a part of the social and political troubles rather than a 'neutral go-between'. Still, from 1985 on, the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement seemed to open up a new period: the tiredness caused by recurrent violent events pushed all the governments involved and many actors on the ground to find new peaceful arrangement. But the armed groups were still out there, and the containment system was considered to be failing. In the eyes of republicans, this is seen as a period of high collusion between state forces and the Protestant communities. In Ardoyne, this only reinforced conviction that many Catholic residents had nurtured since the events of 1969. In 1991, the peace line was re-established. It grew higher and now extended into new streets.

Two years later, a republican 'active service unit' from Ardoyne – meaning a group of paramilitaries, as designated in an intentionally militarised vocabulary – carried a bomb into a shop on the Shankill Road. A meeting of loyalist paramilitaries was supposed to take place there. The bomb exploded prematurely. This resulted in the infamous Shankill Road bombing. To this day, it is still associated with some members of the Catholic community in Ardoyne. In Belfast, it reinforced the area's status as a 'republican nest'. A wave of retaliation followed from the unionists armed groups[3]. The Catholic population of Ardoyne was divided between outright blame for the bombing, an explicit support, or a vested support which invoked the adverse social condition faced by the bombers and which in part were seen as legitimising the sense of frustration at the root of this plan[4]. In the end, this would prove to reinforce the progressive formulation of aspirations to end the Troubles.

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[1] '20 years on, death of a UVF killer still looms large in loyalist memory', *Belfast Telegraph*, 8 November 2010.

[2] Eileen Fairweather, Roisín McDonough and Melanie McFadyean, *Only the rivers run free : Northern Ireland, the women's war*, London, Pluto Press, 1984, p. 233. Cited in J.A. Sluka, *Death Squad*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[3] Colin Crawford and Marie Smyth, *Inside the U D A: Volunteers and Violence*, London, Pluto Press, 2003, p. 193.

[4] Ardoyne Commemoration Project, *Ardoyne*, *op. cit.*, p. 490.

During the 1990s, at the regional level, the government and the various parties still engaged in paramilitary violence or communal opposition initiated secret discussions. In 1994, after a particularly deadly year, some paramilitary groups agreed to lay their arms down to facilitate improvement. This effort opened the Northern Irish peace process. Years of political negotiation at the level of party politics did pay off. The Good Friday Agreement was endorsed in 1998 through an unprecedented referendum in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. The agreement and this popular support were then ratified by members of Northern Irish, British and Irish governments. Down on the ground, in some respects, there wa*s* a sense that things were changing for the better. The number of police officers and militaries patrolling the streets was progressively reduced. The first playground was built in the nationalist part of Ardoyne. Some interface workers developed a mobile-phone network between communities to coherently nip local incidents in the bud. Residents 'too had begun to ease their vigil a little'[1]. But sporadic killings and incidents kept on reopening wounds and suspicions as residents considered every one of them to be a risk of returning to open conflict. Those 'signs' were also used to indicate that things remained tense in Ardoyne, and that the district was still highly divided:

> 'Even the peace process in the late 1990s does not appear to have reduced segregation; indeed tension at interface areas is arguably worse than ever. The management of this polarisation is a struggle for ordinary people and policy makers alike.'[2]

That is why, by the end of the 1990s, and after all they had been through since the 1930s and especially during the 1960s, few residents or observers attempted to guess what would happen of Ardoyne. What they could do, and did, was take the time offered by a cessation of violence to look back and start providing more reliable accounts of the events of the conflict. By then, a statistic started to be used locally: there had been 99 civilian deaths in the area between 1969 and 1998[3]. It was affected harshly. When quantitative tools became more common to describe the last thirty years in Ardoyne, they also came with a sense of comparability which prompted a recurring comment:

> 'Ardoyne suffered higher concentrations of trauma and violence than most other wards in Northern Ireland during the conflict where approximately 3,600 people died across a population of 1.6 million people. If the volume of conflict-related deaths and imprisonment experienced in Ardoyne ward was scaled across all 582 wards in Northern Ireland, it would equate to 46,560 dead and 233,800 million

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 504.

[2] Dominic Bryan, 'Belfast: Urban Space, "Policing" and Sectarian Polarization' in *Wounded Cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World*, Jane Schneider, Ida Susser (eds.), Oxford, Berg, 2003, p. 251.

[3] Ardoyne Commemoration Project, *Ardoyne*, *op. cit.* ; Brian McKee, *Ardoyne '69: Stories of Struggle and Hope*, Dublin, Red Stripe Press, 2020, 288 p.

imprisoned. Scaled to a UK level this would equate to 761,840 deaths and over 3.8 million UK residents imprisoned.'[1]

The ceasefire and the political negotiation between all hostile parties were officially putting an end to that. The infamous neighbourhood, on the other hand, was left with heavy yet blurry responsibilities. Residents now had to carve a way out of conflictual relations between neighbours and within local communities whilst also resolving daunting everyday socio-economic issues.

3.4 Aparté: a history in a seamless web of social interdependencies

We should now shed light on an important weakness in the way we have been discussing this 'history' up until now. We have renewed a sort of 'Galapagos Syndrome', a tendency for observers to tell the story of North Belfast communities as if they were isolated islands in the middle of the city. This renewed a common tendency in so far as, throughout the conflict, both residents and detached commentators have increasingly considered those areas in an atomistic way. Rather than renewing that standpoint, we should take it as an effect of a social process in itself. As we have seen, this trope rapidly become unsatisfying when you look at the events that marked its history, and it becomes properly unsustainable when you observe the resident's life that sustains those events.

Yet, it exists. Telling the story of Ardoyne as an isolated bubble rapidly appears contradictory with the seamless web of residents' interaction with Belfast and the rest of the area. But if it is such a contradiction, how come it became prevalent in the first place? And how come people in the area are still telling us of how isolated Ardoyne or Upper-Ardoyne still are, whilst at the same time invoking stories of how they worked all over Belfast, of the important ties of the community with nationalist areas of West Belfast or loyalist areas further North, or of their long-lasting opposition with their Shankill or Twaddell neighbours?

In each of those cases, the residents' activities, interactions, operations and exchanges didn't stop at the – flexible – borders of their neighbourhood. We have seen it in the 1930s and in the numerous waves of displacement that organised the area. We have seen it after the fall of the mills and the professional reorganisation of Ardoyne's workmen which widely exceeded the area. We have seen it particularly clearly in the exchanges between the two government officials in 1980. We can see it in the overall network of local organisations, local associations, families or frequentations, or even armed groups which operate in various neighbouring areas.

[1] M. Liggett, *Social capital's imagined benefits in Ardoyne electoral ward*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

As such, most of those events are only understandable – and are only understood by residents – if put in relation with the wider problem of Ardoyne's controversial interdependencies with surrounding neighbourhoods, something that most actors appear both to underline and to neglect.

What is more, those events get their full depth if the observer accounts for residents' common-sense understanding of what the North, East, West and South areas of Belfast are. Indeed, people have come up with a certain 'formal reading grid' to talk about Belfast. It is still mentioned by people to this day. Born out of segregation, it was even clearer in past decades. The city is cut in four. The West of Belfast is often seen as mostly nationalist with small pockets of unionist residents. The East of Belfast is seen as mostly unionist with small pockets of nationalist residents. Then come the more heterogeneous quarters. The South is a multicultural area that is marked by the cohabitation of various groups, notably because of the presence of the University and of more affluent sections of the population. Then, North Belfast is regularly presented as a 'patchwork' of multiple nationalist and unionist areas that are woven into each other. With that reading grid in mind, residents consider that the small 'isolated' areas in North Belfast nurture some relations with other small areas throughout North Belfast but also with wider groups in West and East Belfast. And, when they reach the citywide level, that grid often sustain the interpretation of events happening in parts of North Belfast. Of course, the simplification involved in the use of those categories is often the source of recurring critique. But it still serves an everyday purpose.

Under this light, the fact that the area has been increasingly presented as an 'insular community' during the Troubles, going counter to its earlier history, becomes a performance. Nowadays, it is a presentation of reality which increasingly runs the risk of being potentially denounceable as contradicting the basic social organisation of groups' interdependencies, or, more precisely, of neglecting some of its aspects. Of being too unrealistic.

4. The peace process: reconciliation and resentment

The consciousness that perpetuating this approach to the area would induce such hiccoughs would progressively grow throughout the peace process. The efforts displayed during the 1990s would prove to be continuously put to the test in the years that followed the GFA. This led to a latent difficulty for residents to understand where their numerous efforts of reconciliation were leading them. Inevitably, this also led to repeated disillusionment year after

year. New unexpected tensions were surfacing. People initially thought the local peace walls would come down after the ceasefire, then after the agreement, then after a few years. But none of that happened. Just as, for a short period of times in the 1970s, residents thought that a 'return to normal' was now on its way.

Progressively, several incidents came to disrupt the peace process. Several political crises broke out. The police were still not welcome in the neighbourhood, and the proposed local reforms were struggling to take root. The annual riots continued. In 2001, a famous dispute erupted in the area. It led the Catholic and Protestant neighbours to publicly confront each other for several months: the Holy Cross dispute. The whole series of incidents revolved around the local schools and issues of territory, intimidation, mistrust and protection of children. Those incidents displayed the sense of apprehension that was still prevalent amongst the Protestant residents of Ardoyne. The local community was getting more and more suspicious of their neighbours and of policy-makers. They felt their voices had never been heard and that, as evidenced by the sources mentioned here, their history had not been recorded. Their population was diminishing, and 'the slow decline of [the local school] and the re-stocking of the community with fewer homes provide a sense of cultural dissipation and betrayal[1]'. This sentiment followed series of local incidents, and also relied on the invocation of historical precedents we just discussed:

> 'Many of the older population in Upper Ardoyne today previously lived in the streets of the now exclusively Catholic lower Ardoyne […] and can tell the stories of being intimidated, attacked and burnt out of their homes predominately between 1969 and 1971. Even since then the apparent interface has been receding further into the streets where they had already moved to, so endorsing the siege mentality that 'they are out to get us out' and 'they want our houses.'[2]

Overall, it allowed the two communities to voice their worries on housing and territory, and then on the level of trust devoted to each other and to the State. More, it was a first reminder that issues of internal division and local complaints had not been addressed, on neither 'side' of the area. Some local actors were now trying to voice the damage they felt it was still causing, and its inevitably more complex causes, now that the antagonistic explanations of the conflict were more difficult to uphold:

> 'Protestants feel beleaguered and segregated into a patchwork of small minority communities throughout North Belfast, with common problems throughout them all i.e. lack of facilities, poor housing, low educational attainment, and high unemployment. These factors may appear to be

[1] Mapping the Spaces of Fear Research Team, *Fear, Mobility and Living in the Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne Communities*, Coleraine, University of Ulster, 2000.
[2] Anne E. Bill, *Beyond the Red Gauntlet: The Silent Voices of Upper Ardoyne, Amidst the Travesty of Holy Cross*, Belfast, Anne Bill, 2002, p. 1.

> "perceived", but no-one wanted to resolve or address those perceptions. Offer a means of listening or changing how the Protestant people felt. Instead the feelings were left to fester.'[1]

When the British army withdrew in 2002, a standardised police force had to deal with the exhaustion of the paramilitaries and their jolts. For the inhabitants, this ensuing 'disorganisation' was leaving Ardoyne helpless in the face of what they considered to be new problems: the increase in juvenile 'mental-health' issues and antisocial behaviour, the rise of a new drug market and the conversion of armed groups into criminal networks. And in effect, this was also a time when more social scientists could gather data, investigate and produce knowledge on the neighbourhood. This served both as a mean to underline those 'new' issues, and to put on the record that the 'old' ones had not vanished. As a team of researchers led by Shirlow in the early 2000s showed, this conflict between communities continued to influence the use of space of Ardoyne's residents:

Table 1 – How safe do you feel when walking through an area peopled by the opposite religion?
Mapping the Spaces of Fear Research Team, *Fear, Mobility and Living in the Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne Communities*, *op. cit.,* Table 26 and 27.

	During the day		After dark	
	Ardoyne	Upper-Ardoyne	Ardoyne	Upper-Ardoyne
Safe	3 %	9 %	1 %	3.4 %
Quite Safe	8 %	12.4 %	1 %	2.2 %
Unsafe	17 %	23.6 %	3 %	2. 2%
Scared	20 %	13.5 %	6 %	9 %
Wouldn't go	52 %	41.6 %	89 %	83.1 %

It should also be noted that, as mentioned in the report and indicated by residents during public disputes, the inhabitants of Upper-Ardoyne also displayed similar fear and wariness within their own area. This is due to an acute sense of isolation and threat: if the residents of Ardoyne felt isolated with regards to other neighbouring areas, Upper Ardoyne felt isolated within Ardoyne. On this opened the new millennium.

Paradoxically, these conditions and public controversies since 1998 led to a renewed tendency to conceive the area as one defined by its self-organisation. At the local level, many new residents' associations and local groups were created in each community[2]. It is in this context that residents' groups, sometimes assisted by researchers, produced research on local history. The fact that an increasing number of researchers would be involved in this type of reflexive look of an 'isolated' community on itself is one of the signs of the growing

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[2] Notably because of the large quantity of funding made available for local organisations in the peace agreement.

ambivalence which would characterise the peace process. Hence, in many ways, they tell us as much about the contemporaneous concerns of residents as about 1969 event. For example, in 2002, the Upper Ardoyne residents set up to fill the gap and to tell their own story of Ardoyne. It aimed at showing that Ardoyne is 'the story of Belfast in miniature', and to denounce the role or republicans in that story[1]. Yet, it derived this aim out a very particular situation, that of the Holy Cross Dispute and of its aftermath. As such, the local documents were attempting to put the problems of Upper Ardoyne in 2001 in relation with those of Upper Ardoyne in 1969:

> 'A campaign of local disturbance was mounted against the police in order to bring reaction from them so they could be accused of brutality. Then the great cry of discrimination went up followed by intimidation of unfortunate Protestants who happened to live in the Roman Catholic areas. […] So it was that tension between the two communities was deliberately raised to boiling point.'[2]

For residents, this description matched both 1969 and 2001 not only by the recurrence of events, but by the recurring feeling, for Protestants, that their story was misrepresented. That they did not get a chance to voice their understanding of what was going on. For them, 'problems and disputes presented on televisions or the papers do not attend to details and present an image to the world that is devoid of history and context. […] The situation is not unique as it is a widespread practice coordinated by republican elements in North Belfast, East Belfast and indeed all over Ulster.[3] By now, new questions of victimhood, legacy, trials, accountability, reinsertion, normalisation and reparation, were being put on the table. They were being addressed, first and foremost, by those new local organisations. The work of the Ardoyne Commemoration Project amongst members of the nationalist community, which led to the publication of a local book on the local victims of the Troubles in 2003, is another example of this trend.

Yet, somewhere, armed groups were still active in the area, and sometimes got people talking. A 2009 report from a residents' association in Upper Ardoyne tells us:

> 'The Upper Ardoyne area is a community surrounded by Catholic/nationalist/republican estates and as a result the residents of Upper Ardoyne have, over the years felt much isolation, intimidation and unrest. While the cross-community issues have caused many problems, it is the internal conflict and territorialism within the community that continues to have a significant impact on community development. The Upper Ardoyne community is made up of four smaller estates […]. Although the four estates present a united front when focusing on cross-community and strategic issues, at an inter-community level, the estates are still segregated by differing political and paramilitary strong holds.'[4]

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[1] E.A. Bill, *Beyond the Red Gauntlet*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[2] H. Stockman, *The Ardoyne Interface : The History of Glenbryn*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[4] Upper Ardoyne Community Partnership, *3 Year Strategic Development Plan: April 2009 – April 2012*, 2009, p. 3.

Indeed, in addition to the oppositions between communities, those who were ready to accept the compromise of peace are now in opposition with the sceptical, the combatants and the persistent, following a classic segmental problem. Those people are now called “dissidents”. The same applies to nationalists.

The other consequence of that internal turmoil was the fact that, slowly, the population was getting more publicly involved in peace work. Several intercommunity associations were set up, assisted by the city council, the government, the churches and some sports clubs. Services for youth, which represent a great proportion of the local population, flourished – even though they were sometimes short-lived. Over the years, the need for cross-community organisation seemed to become more apparent. Residents started to say that occasional unionist and republican commemorations were turning quieter. They were becoming less problematic – which did not mean that residents did not find them any less annoying, nor that they did not consider them relevant prejudicial explanations whenever tensions did rise. New local devices appeared to handle local policing, aiming at bringing it more in line with State policing. Some housing propositions were surfacing[1] yet they never really seemed to overcome the divided nature of the area. In 2016, one of the recent cross-community organisations presented a report to ‘Promote the positive change’ that occurred in the area:

> ‘It is evident that progress is being made and that many people are moving on from the overwhelming negativity of the past. Recent developments referred to by the contributors are evidence of a growing confidence within and between communities and have contributed to that positive change that they believe is taking place. [Contributors mentioned] things like getting on a bus that took them on a route they would normally have avoided; going for groceries in a shop they would not have previously used or taking the dog for a walk into an area that in the not too distant past they would have considered hostile – for them these are huge steps.’

Even though there were still efforts to be made, various organisations tried to disseminate that diagnosis within and beyond the neighbourhood. Still, important and recurring public issues kept on bringing Ardoyne back into the papers. Internal divisions were still on the table. For example, the rapid surge of new organisations and new services, favoured by peace and new funding opportunities, led to some excesses. If pockets of inter-communal violence and opposition remained, they manifested themselves around key events and issues. The yearly incidents during the parading seasons still made Ardoyne a national example of flashpoint, until the situation gradually normalised from 2011 to 2018. In 2004, a suicide epidemic amongst the youth of the area opened up a new kind of issue for residents – an issue that they’ve been trying to resolve ever since (see Chapter 2). In 2012, the local Protestant community was heavily

[1] J. Nagle and M. Clancy, *Shared Society or Benign Apartheid?*, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

invested in the Belfast City Hall flag protests, which followed a controversial decision to remove the Union flag from the institutional building. More importantly, from 2013 to 2016, the neighbourhood was at the heart of a new public dispute between the Protestant and the Catholic community. This time, a dispute around traditional unionist paraders and their infamous passage at the interface of the nationalist part of Ardoyne sparked new protests. A unionist protest camp was established, lasting for three years, and revealed new forms of tensions in each community.

THERE IS A REASON why this 1998–2018 period is left blurrier. It does not offer many holds for anyone willing to compose a clear progression, at least in the way we have presented it. It is because that work is still a subject of ongoing public debates. The lines are still being traced between the dots, and "public events" are still being made into "series and trends" that residents would have then witnessed in the last twenty years. 2018 was marked by the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. In Ardoyne, much as in the rest of the country, this has meant a revival of debates on the peace process and on local projects of community relations or community developments. The overall result was a return of pessimism and uncertainty. The case of Ardoyne was held as being both an example of cross-community work for some and a case of hopeless social division for others. In turn, what it revealed was a frustration amongst residents, who appeared to grow tired both of injunctions to 'move on' and to 'fix this'.

The area is still considered divided, in a drastic state of socio-economic deprivation, in a debated state of isolation. Brexit in 2016, and the collapse of the Northern Irish government in 2017, which followed a new type of discord between Unionists and Nationalists, have only worsened the regional atmosphere. Locally, those crises have been accused of rendering the work of local organisations and services harder by the month. At the end of 2018, the fifth *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report* was published. It put forward a diagnosis that only seemed to confirm that pessimism. It emphasised that "the lack of progress on everyday social policy issues is permeating every aspect of life and is disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable people in the society", "the culture war continues as the issues of contention evolve and mutate, and are exploited for political purposes" and that "twenty years on from the Belfast / Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland appears no closer to finding an acceptable way of dealing with the past"[1]. 'Social policy issues', 'culture war', and 'dealing with the past' are all

[1] Ann Marie Gray Gray et al., *The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report – Number Five*, Belfast, Ulster University, 2018, p. 10–14.

specific aspects of the collective constitution of public issues, a collective process which is increasingly considered impaired.

Conclusion: resistance or ambivalence, integrated or different?

The North Belfast settlement appeared with the arrival of a varied population, gathered around employment. It soon turned into a village and then into an urban neighbourhood. However, most of public discussions from the 1930s to the 1990s seem to emphasise the progressive installation of a form of division within the area, and the apparent isolation of the area from surrounding social groups. The motives of 'resistance' and 'isolation' thus appeared more present in public attempts to underline the state of the neighbourhood. This tendency is not contradicted by the inhabitants at first, as the conflict provide reasons to emphasise this unity, internally. Yet, that apparent trend relies on a series of uncertain moments during which actors witness conflict and the form it takes between groups and within groups.

An adequate and close look at all the period reveals that, far from a uniform diagnosis, opposition has run within the residents of Ardoyne and within the observers of Ardoyne, at each period, when it came to support each of those points. It i more apparent in that local history than in many other histories. Indeed, the state of conflict has led to a denaturalisation of the social order which has led people to be more and more explicitly exchanging at the level of a new intelligence of the social. Hence, the progression we observe in Ardoyne is a progression in how people assessed the state of their area, and collectively performed this assessment. What matters is that, despite noticing the appearance of the area and its evolution during moments where it was increasingly interdependent with the rest of the city, not only was it increasingly perceived as isolated, but even after the peace process, seemingly new types of tensions and increasingly contradictory expectations started to appear. The realisation of this situation, progressively becoming more obvious in decades following the peace-agreement, would participate in revealing unexpected resistance.

Before turning to the analysis of those unexpected cases, a word should be said about the status of the historical discussions we have conveyed in this opening historical chapter. Far from being explanatory, the historical cases we have presented here have served to illuminate the problem at hand. They have posed the enigmatic question of increasing tensions in the area. As such, this historical progression is to be explained rather that considered an explanation to

the following ethnographic chapter. This echoes the fact that disputes on this recent history are still ongoing in North Belfast: this history is still in the making, it has yet to settle. Rather than an *explanandum,* it demands that we consider it as an *explanans*[1] by turning towards how this unsettled past, for Ardoyne residents, is still a matter of debates and contradictory attempts at giving historical depths to their action. For those historical trends to be part of the *explanans* of social phenomena, they have to stabilise and settle within a less controversial *paysage* that can serve as a support for most social groups, social scientists included. This is the outcome of the management of public problems. It is an ongoing social process. It does not mean that, after observing those public problems throughout this thesis, we can come back to historical events and now consider them as *explanandum* as if we had filled the gap ourselves. This alternation is the stuff of public problems themselves.

Rather, what we will return to in order to avoid this sempiternal coming and going between history as a relativist *explanans* and a deterministic *explanandum* – a tension which caused the downfall of German historicism – , we will turn, in our last chapter, to a socio-processualism. Though it will look like the short history of our Chapter 1 and the socio-processualism of our Chapter 6 tackle the same events, we should make no mistake that they are radically different exercise: socio-processualism will have us explain by the same long-term social processes the stabilisation of history as an *explanandum* and the higher reflexivity on this stabilisation through the social manifestation of history as an *explanans*. This is the long-term process which explains the situations in which social actors stumble upon some historical events which they take to be unmovable – *explendandum* – and some which are to be tested – *explanans* – , a situation which can only be understood if it is reinserted in the processual increase of actors' reflexivity on their interdependencies. That will be the aim of our closing historical chapter. For now, let us turn to the difficult detachment from unexpected forms of resistance which have marked the peace process.

[1] This pair of concepts shine light on the movement required to stabilise the explanation of a phenomenon, and to clarify how social sciences may sometimes approach the same phenomena as something to be explained – explanandum – or as something that act as a support for explicative propositions – explanans. See François Tournier, 'L'explicitation d'un concept', *Philosophiques*, 1979, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 65–118.

PART I

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IMPAIRED DETACHMENT FROM ‘UNFORESEEN RESISTANCE’

How ambivalence is reduced to resistance

‘[Individuals], in uniting, in bonding with one another, become conscious of the groups that they form, from the simplest to the most elevated, and in so doing are spontaneously giving rise to social sentiments that the State expresses, precises and regulates, but which it presupposes. Its action finds support in individual consciousness, far from being met solely with resistance.’

É. Durkheim

L’Allemagne au-dessus de tout

INTRODUCTION

When detachment is impaired

'OPPRESSION BREEDS RESISTANCE'. This is what one could read in 2017 on one of the many placards put up by the dissident nationalist group *Saoradh* in Ardoyne Avenue, whilst, just next to it, a plaque commemorated the death of a resident. As we have seen, during the Troubles, local republican communities were accused of resisting the rule of law and order, and the overall modern transformation of an integrated society. The government and loyalist communities were accused of resisting the civil rights movement and the transformation of civil society. All would sometimes claim the positive aspects of this resistance. With the transition to peace, some local communities were blamed of resisting peace by remaining attached to a conflictual habitus, which in return could be described as a morally sound form of resistance to the deemed void promises of the peace process and its *doux commerce*. In Ardoyne, the local Catholic community would often blame the loyalist communities for resisting either demographic – in the numerous debates on public housing and waiting lists – or social change – on the numerous debates on an Irish language act, for example. Again, in all these cases, 'resisting' could be both an accusation and a source of pride[1]. It could be denounced as a form of irrationality or praised as a critique of power imbalance.

But the omnipresence of the issue of resistance was not limited to local observation. It has historically extended to formal public or political discourse at different distinct periods of Northern Irish history. Both the initial reaction of the unionist communities at Home Rule in the end of the 19th century, and the new waves of Irish nationalism emerging at the beginning

[1] Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto, 'Politics of place and resistance: the case of Northern Ireland' in Topi Antti Äikäs and Jani Vuolteenaho (eds.), *NGP yearbook 1999*, Oulu, Finland, Department of Geography, University of Oulu : Geographical Society of Northern Finland, 1999, vol. 2, no. 28.

of the 20th century were framed as wide movements of resistance[1]. In 1986, in reaction to the civil right movement and to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the loyalist communities set up a new paramilitary movement called 'Ulster Resistance'. Political unionist representatives supported 'the resistance' as it provided a group able to fight the growth of Irish republicanism. When the British government introduced internment without trial in August 1971, the nationalist communities and various political parties set up the Northern Resistance Movement. The role of paramilitaries, both within communities and when imprisoned, have repeatedly been portrayed by all actors involved as diverse forms of resistance[2].

Though those are only rapid and sketchy propositions, they suffice to stress what has already come out of our introductory historical chapter: as community conflict settled, the increasingly clearly defined demarcation between the local troubled areas of North Belfast and the rest of Norther-Irish society, translated in their isolated and autarchic reputation, installed resistance as a common way to describe relations between social groups in Northern Ireland and their tangible segmentation. But if it has shown that the resistance framing was common, our historical introduction has equally suggested that it has always been disputed.

Hence, this first part of this thesis will be concerned with two important aspects of this situation. First, it will discuss the limits of that framing of the situation in terms of 'resistance'. We will examine what is revealed and what is missed by sociological analyses which considers under this light the apparent defiance displayed by a local community to the transformation of Northern Irish society – both in the sense of *resisting* the rest of society, and *persisting* in the face of social transformation. Second, we will then be able to more accurately describe and account for the unsettling fact that social actors want peace, but not at all costs. Especially when they sense that they may lose touch with the specificities or the generalities of their situation.

1. The limits of analyses in terms of a 'culture of resistance'

As we have seen, the question of whether or not Ardoyne and its residents were resisting the transformation of Northern Irish society surrounding them was a matter of ongoing debates during the 20th century, during the Troubles, and during the peace process. As such, the idea

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[1] Anthony T. Q. Stewart, *The Ulster Crisis: Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-1914*, Belfast, Blackstaff Press, 1997, 300 p.

[2] Kieran McEvoy, *Paramilitary Imprisonment in Northern Ireland: Resistance, Management, and Release*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.

that Ardoyne was a resisting neighbourhood has come to dominate both in war time and during the peace process, both for local residents and for detached actors. In so doing, some authors have gone as far as arguing that Northern Ireland had recently witnessed the generalisation of a 'culture of resistance'[1] in deprived areas such as Ardoyne, generalising James C. Scott's analyses on technics of resistance[2]. Resistance has been one of the central concepts to emerge in the cultural analysis of conflict in the late 1980s and 1990s[3], despite remaining loosely defined, allowing it to become a general support for critical theories in social sciences.

As is well summarised by Hollander and Einwohner in their review of the literature on resistance, by the end of the 1990s, several authors had already stressed the complex and dual nature of resistance. What were they to do with the fact that resistance may sometimes presuppose a partial support of the structures that are being resisted? They have then talked of accommodation[4], ambiguity[5] or complicity. As such, 'the often-ignored complexity of resistance, the tension between resistance and accommodation, and the social and interactional nature of resistance are profoundly sociological issues, joining debates about power and control and the relationship between individuals and social context'[6]. Despite those comments, the approach in terms of resistance when it comes to describing positively or negatively the efforts of oppositions or counteraction of marginalised actors, minorities or outsiders are still central to the advance of social sciences[7]. In Foucaldian[8], post-Bourdieusian or feminist sociology, and even in monist and posthuman sociology[9], resistance operates as the logical partner of power. Though it has been particularly important in the evolution of gender studies, it has also been a

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[1] Jeff Sluka, 'Cultures of Terror and Resistance in Northern Ireland', *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 1995, vol. 18, no. 1, p. 97‑105.

[2] J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, *op. cit.*

[3] Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing Resistance', *Sociological Forum*, 2004, vol. 19, no. 4, p. 533‑554 ; Doug McAdam, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Dynamics of Contention*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 412 p ; Michael F. Brown, 'On Resisting Resistance', *American Anthropologist*, 1996, vol. 98, no. 4, p. 729‑735.

[4] Patty Sotirin and Heidi Gottfried, 'The Ambivalent Dynamics of Secretarial `Bitching': Control, Resistance, and the Construction of Identity', *Organization*, 1 February 1999, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 57‑80.

[5] Angela Trethewey, 'Resistance, identity, and empowerment: A postmodern feminist analysis of clients in a human service organization', *Communication Monographs*, 1 December 1997, vol. 64, no. 4, p. 281‑301 ; Lucy Healey, 'Gender, power and the ambiguities of resistance in a malay community of peninsular malaysia', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 2 January 1999, vol. 22, no. 1, p. 49‑61.

[6] J.A. Hollander and R.L. Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing Resistance', art cit., p. 550.

[7] Maria Hynes, 'Reconceptualizing resistance: sociology and the affective dimension of resistance', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 2013, vol. 64, no. 4, p. 559‑577.

[8] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, 1982, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 777‑795.

[9] Nick J. Fox and Pam Alldred, 'Social structures, power and resistance in monist sociology: (New) materialist insights', *Journal of Sociology*, 1 September 2018, vol. 54, no. 3, p. 315‑330.

kingpin in theorising with a new language the role of communities in the face of conflict[1] or at least social transformation of a large scale[2]. Despite apparently reopening the old debates of the links between traditional communities and modern societies, those debates could in fact relate on the underground thread that had been maintained since the first School of Chicago set out to study how poor communities resisted and accommodated to the rapid changes in the[3]. As such, these types of approach did not fail to influence social scientists' approach of the Northern Irish conflict and peace process, be they critical of the States' oppression or of communities' resistance. When valued positively, this still amounts to valuing the local knowledge of the community in the face of top-down peace. Hence, even in describing and analysing the peace process, stressing how communities could be a locus of resistance initially retained a certain sociological and political relevance.

There is, nonetheless, a problem. However congruent to reality the idea of 'resistance' may have been during the conflict, and however useful it may have been to approach the asymmetrical interdependencies constituting Northern Irish society, the transformations brought by the peace process are revealing some of the internal contradictions of depictions which frame social relations in terms of unilateral 'resistance'. The two social and public problems that we will study will help us explain why exactly that is the case.

It appears of the utmost importance to precise how this position does not undermine actors who spot and describe resistance in the social world in order to support a critique. To criticise the idea of 'resistance' and its use could be criticised for relativising the forms of domination experienced by minority groups, as if the fact that they may have a partial and strategic interest in maintaining their position, in engaging in interrelations with the State apparatus or with the rest of society could mean that their situations may not be describable as real forms of domination. By putting in perspective the Resistance frame, our aim is not to diminish the critiques contained in essence or indeed unleashed in tales of resistance, far from it. The stakes are too high, and the enterprise too risky, to leave any doubt on the matter. I simply propose that those critiques now demand to be formulated through more encompassing concepts if they want to live up to actors' plurality of expectations.

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[1] Oliver Kaplan, *Resisting War: How Communities Protect Themselves*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

[2] Jay Scherer, 'Resisting the World-Class City: Community Opposition and the Politics of a Local Arena Development', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 1 March 2016, vol. 33, no. 1, p. 39-53 ; Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain*, London, HarperCollins, 1991, 288 p.

[3] Stephen Duncombe, '(From) Cultural resistance to community development', *Community Development Journal*, 1 October 2007, vol. 42, no. 4, p. 490-500.

Hence, far from abandoning resistance, we hope to help setting a next step in the analysis of the conflictualisation and pacification of social relations, as well as in the renewal of social critique and its necessary adaptation to the complexification of social organisation. As we see it, this next step demands us to go further than the description in terms of resistance, and to embed it in a higher consciousness of the ambiguities and ambivalence of contemporaneous interdependencies. If there is such a need, it is because the tumultuous 20th century history of the region progressively rendered that ambivalence trendily harder to convey for social actors, whilst paradoxically confronting them to their most painful manifestation.

As time passes, if we fail to equip ourselves with a theory of double aspirations which may assist social actors in claiming their ambivalence, that ambivalence will remain a support for detached actors who aim at undermining and delegitimising claims of resistance or local dissatisfactions. They would do so by sending actors back to strategic interests, hypocrisy, irrationality, incoherence and contradictions. If social actors are deprived of the means to claim their ambivalence as theirs, especially in transitional era such as the peace process, we run the risk of adding momentum to the already swift pendulum of Northern Ireland's conflictual history. Rather than impeding critical theory or critical sociology, it is then an attempt at reinforcing it by means of complementary efforts of description, comprehension and explanation of public problems relating with conflictual communities.

2. Unexpected cases of resistance as impaired detachment

To do so, we will explore how the peace process affected how residents and institutional actors approached two public problems central to the life of the neighbourhood: the waves of juvenile suicides, and the institutionalisation of women's groups at the community level.

We will show why the notion of Resistance is increasingly inadequate to analyse modern social dynamics. It partially fails to account for the shift between constraints and self-constraints, and the blend of expected forms of conducts that comes with this shift. In so doing, authors focusing on resistance have reduced it to the supposed maintenance of uncontrolled impulses amongst traditionally oriented actors. Therefore, in conveying this idea of resistance and conflictuality, it is not surprising that, as we will show, those authors and detached actors have failed to predict and accompany the 'resistance' of groups of actors who are anything but traditional. Actors who were deemed to have more interests in emancipating from their local community, and who were expected to increasingly realise it with the pacification of Northern

Irish society. This is the case of the young people and of the local women we will mention in the two first chapters. Even though the teenagers who committed suicide in the area were initially considered as victims of the communities' violent excesses, and even though one could have expected the people around them to increasingly blame the local community for the loss of young lives, it was not to be the case. Even though local women were deemed by observers to have all the reasons to see peace as an occasion to emancipate from the gendered traditional Catholic and Protestant communities, this was not so simple. In both cases, the tendency not to commit to a distancing from communities and to the integration with other social groups was causing problems: observers were increasingly inclined to describe this tendency as a mode of resistance, whilst seeing quite well that those two cases did not fit the idea of a conflictual reactionary community resisting the peace process.

Hence, in studying the evolution of those public problems, and how they were treated both by attached and distanced actors, we will see how the liberal prospects of peace encountered obstacles which would progressively be judged as local resistances, but ones which could not simply be considered as the resistance of a traditional community in the face of social change. First, we wonder why did residents appear to resist the explanation of their juvenile suicides, and appear to resist blaming the paramilitaries? Second, we ask ourselves why did most of the women invested in local women's groups appear to resist the 'emancipation' that was supposed to come with peace? In both of those cases, the unexpected and plural nature of those resistances will have us and the actors involved in those public problems put to the test our common understanding of resistances to pacification, whilst renewing how we understand the nefarious consequences of top-down peace building.

CHAPTER 2

Between blaming an oppressive community and a careless State for juvenile suicides

IN JULY 2019, I am taking part in a cross-community visit to the Belfast City cemetery. It is organised by an association which aims at uniting Ardoyne and neighbouring areas. Involving residents deemed 'harder to reach', it takes members from both Catholic and Protestant communities onto a series of challenging conversations. By visiting the cemetery, our small group of visitors would learn about the lives of passed women and men, and of how the division between unionists and nationalists had impacted, sometimes unexpectedly, their lives. Yet, visitors also had their own stories to tell. After arriving by bus, the dozen of us stood in the cemetery passageway, chatting, waiting for the guide to arrive. I was paying attention to Magee, a retired 'nationalist woman' – a label regularly used by residents throughout the workshops – from Ardoyne. Venturing on her own, she was looking at something in the first rows of graves. She then turned and called Liz, a younger 'unionist woman' from Ballysillan. As Liz turned to listen, Magee pointed towards what she had been observing. It was a small square of graves at the entrance of the cemetery. Magee said it was the 'suicide plot', where all the teens who had committed suicide in Ardoyne were buried, 'the time we had them all at once'. Liz remained silent, then said it was terrible. Magee added that 'We knew them all … well, we didn't know them personally, but we knew their family, everyone always knew some relatives'. A few seconds after that, as the visit finally started, another woman from Ardoyne turned to me. She said she had never been here, despite members of her family being buried somewhere in this park. She then corrected herself and said she had been here once, for 'one of the Ardoyne kids' who died during 'one of those suicide waves'.

IN THIS CHAPTER, we focus on how various actors have attempted to explain some of the deaths occurring in Ardoyne, and more specifically, the juvenile suicides which have marked Magee and other residents since 2004. In this, we discuss the apparent resistance of some actors to mentioning elements related to the conflict in these explanations. This will be particularly important as it appears to go against the fact that the 2004 wave of suicides, mentioned by the visitors, has been closely related with the influence of paramilitaries in the neighbourhood.

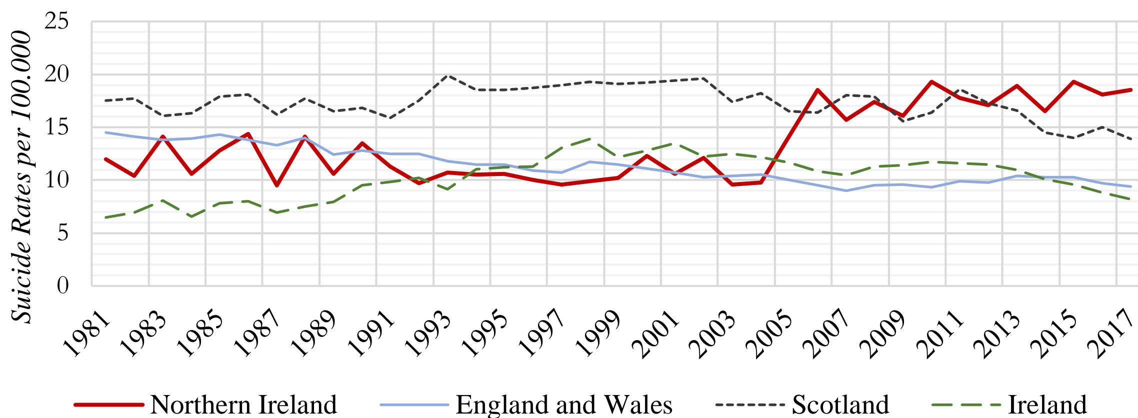
To this day, the level of suicide in Northern Ireland is considered alarmingly high by most institutions generating data on the issue. In 2017, 180 people per 100,000 (180 ppm) committed suicide – 291 ppm for males and 85 ppm for females. If we consider the most deprived areas in the country – of which Ardoyne is a prime example – 19.3% of suicides happen here, and if we examine the first 3 categories in the Multiple Deprivation Measure Decile – which also include Ardoyne – , 48.9% of suicides are registered there[1]. In contrast, for the period of 1981 to 1998 the suicide rate averaged exactly 110 ppm, reaching a maximum of 144 ppm in 1986[2]. On the other hand, England and Wales put together 'only' registered a suicide rate of 94 ppm in 2017, with 144 ppm for males and 46 ppm for females[3]. Similarly, the suicide rate in the Republic of Ireland has even hit its lowest level since 2000 in 2018, with a 72 ppm ratio[4]. Finally, Scotland has had even worse rates of suicides in the past decades – hitting 196 ppm in 2002 – but has been generally declining since then, with a 139 ppm rate in 2017. All of this leads to a comparatively drastic trend (see Table 1). In the Republic of Ireland, the overall suicide rate has been declining steadily for the last two decades – going from 128 ppm in 2000 to 72 ppm in 2019. In Northern Ireland, it has been increasing slowly, going from 123 ppm in 2000 to 193 ppm in 2015 and 185 ppm in 2017[5].

Those statistics render visible a surprising trend which, nowadays, reveals itself to most people who observe those statistics. But this social phenomenon can provoke surprise in different ways: the 'suicide waves' solemnly mentioned by Magee relate to events which

[1] From 'Table 12a – Number of Deaths From Suicide Registered in Northern Ireland by NI Multiple Deprivation Measure, 2001-2017' in Deborah Lyness, *Suicide Deaths 2017*, Belfast, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2018.
[2] From 'Table 6 – Age-standardised suicide rates (with 95 per cent confidence limits): by sex, Northern Ireland 1981 to 2017 registrations', in Mortality team, Health Analysis and Life Events Division, Beth Manders and Kaur Jasveer, *Suicides in the UK,1981 to 2018*, Newport, Office for National Statistics, 2019.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Kitty Holl, 'Suicide rate falls to lowest level in 20 years', *The Irish Times*, 3 September 2019 ; National Office For Suicide Prevention, *National Office for Suicide Prevention Annual Report 2018*, Dublin, Ireland, National Office For Suicide Prevention, 2019, p. 75. In Northern Ireland, Belfast put aside, a majority of suicides (74.4% in 2017), like in the Republic, happens in rural areas. See 'Table 11 - Number of Deaths From Suicide Registered in Northern Ireland by Urban Rural Classification 2001-2017' in D. Lyness, *Suicide Deaths 2017*, *op. cit.*
[5] 'Table 6', in Mortality team, Health Analysis and Life Events Division, *op. cit*.

occurred in Ardoyne in 2004, and which are the main reason for those startling curves in 2005 (see Table 2). At around that period, the fact that there were many suicides occurring became obvious for most of the residents on the ground and for a good number of civil servants and researchers on the matter. The surprise of statisticians or civil servants faced with this steep red line on the rate graph echoes that of the neighbouring residents faced with the rows of juvenile graves. They both bring their enigmatic nature of those numerous suicides back to mind. Yet, those different forms of knowledge on this issue are taken in different types of tension, which will play a central role in observers' tendency to assess the cause of this high number of suicides.

Table 2 – Comparison between suicide rates in provinces of the United Kingdom and in Ireland [1]



Unfortunately, Ardoyne is an ideal context for anyone who wants to discuss suicide and mental health issues. It is infamous for its high level of death by suicide. Residents regularly share their despair in the face of 'rising numbers' of self-inflicted deaths. As touched upon by Magee, during my fieldwork, it seemed almost impossible to find a resident without an acquaintance who had died by suicide, or lost a relative to suicide. Here, covering some central events from 2004 to 2019, we look at how this topic became an unavoidable issue for local people, one that progressively put them in front of a puzzle concerning the lives and death of members of their community. We will see the emergence of increasing difficulties in asserting the direct and indirect influences of the conflict on those juvenile death, turning the tension between involved and detached outlook on suicides into a divide riddled with blaming of resistance. This increasing divide went with a shift between different 'regimes of explanation'[2].

[1] Figures taken from Mortality team, Health Analysis and Life Events Division, B. Manders and K. Jasveer, *Suicides in the UK,1981 to 2018*, *op. cit.* ; 'Annex 1 - Number of suicides and unadjusted rate per 100,000 population classified by year and sex 1950-2013' in Carol A. Hennessy and Karen O'Shea, *Suicide Statistics 2011*, Dublin, Ireland, Central Statistics Office, 2014. Figures for Ireland from 2011 to 2017 taken from National Office For Suicide Prevention, *National Office for Suicide Prevention Annual Report 2018*, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[2] Luc Boltanski, *De la Critique : précis de sociologie de l'émancipation*, Paris, Gallimard, 2009, 312 p.

This trend and this surprising shift will comprise our central question here. In Ardoyne, in the early 2000s, local paramilitary punishments were openly blamed by most actors in explaining the juvenile suicides. In the late 2010s, both juvenile suicides and armed groups gathered public attention again. Yet, and despite a more peaceful setting which was proclaimed as enhancing the intolerance towards armed groups, there were now less unambiguous condemnations of the links between armed groups and juvenile suicides. Hence our problem. Whilst we could have expected that the gravity and the quantity of suicides, located specifically in their community, would lead the residents and workers of Ardoyne to increasingly criticise their community and some of its members, how come that they have instead found it necessary not to excessively blame those who had been, in the first place, designated as the origin of the issue – meaning, local armed groups willing to defend the community?

Rather than falling into accusations of resistance that this situation opened, we will argue that those changes are not explained by the incapacity of a group to see the 'real' causes of the events that affect them, nor the simple domination of critical actors. Rather, we will see that they find their roots in the evolution of regimes of causal imputations. More importantly, changes in the expected balance between community attachment and distancing when presenting the causes of juvenile suicides were so poorly accompanied that they resulted in the naturalisation and rigidification of a supposed divide between 'locals' and 'outsiders' in the production of knowledge on local issues. Hence, these evolutions crystallise how intentions already present in local communities and amongst all other social groups, including State agents, came to be reduced to their potential contradictions.

To answer that question, we will first look at how the 'suicide waves' of 2004 unfolded. It reveals the existence of different 'causal regimes' when it came to interpreting those suicides, and the reasons why the causal regime stressing the influence of a local armed group became dominant. Then, we stress an important evolution in the decade that followed, as the generalisation of the public issue of juvenile suicide progressively leads to an increasing tension between attached and distanced ways to look at the problem. Finally, we show how debates on juvenile suicides in 2018 and 2019 end up crystallising both a reversal in the dominant causal regime, and the point at which the tension between causal regimes come to constitute a contradictory opposition between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in defining the local issue of suicide. This is what undermines the ability and willingness of actors to address the role of conflict in public issues and to hold local actors responsible for it.

1. The 2004 ‘Suicide Epidemics’: blame the excesses of the community

Most Belfast residents will tell you that if you stand on the mountain, Divis, you can easily place Ardoyne by spotting the towering Holy Cross chapel[1]. At that spot, on a clear day of February 2004, a young man is being carried in a coffin, surrounding by numerous Catholic Ardoyne residents. The teenager had hanged himself a few days earlier. Only a few hours after the funeral, at the same chapel, his best friend hangs himself from the steeple. In weeks coming up to these events, several teenagers had already taken their lives in North Belfast. Yet, after this, this series of events would become considered a ‘suicide epidemic’. What ended up characterising public debates was that 13 deaths by suicide happened in the space of 6 weeks, all the victims were thought to be young, and there was a wide critique of the role played by local armed groups in those suicide.

1.1 Several deaths lead to the constitution of a public issue

It is the death of the two friends, Antony ‘Cheetah’ O’Neill and Bernard ‘Barney’ Cairns which triggered discussion on the matter. However, the ‘suicide wave’ had started at Christmas. Added to that, scattered talk on suicide had appeared even earlier. On the 27th of April 2003, a young man had already hanged himself on the grounds of the Holy Cross chapel. Having reportedly got into a heated argument hours before his death, his family first assumed that he had acted on an unforeseeable rush of blood to the head. Several months after the events, his father had declared:

> ‘I really believe he went up there in a state of anger, and was thinking “I’ll show them”, but had not intended to kill himself. To me, it was something that went horribly wrong. […] Taking his own life is something I will never accept. I will never know why until the day comes when I see him again.’[2]

Let us note that, nowadays, the sudden voluntary death of a person is a type of event that often leads the people surrounding them to investigate. This is mainly due to the place occupied by the individual’s capacity to justify their own actions in our modern occidental societies, a characteristic which facilitates and even sustains public exchanges surrounding interrogation such as ‘What were their reasons to act?’, ‘What type of causes prompted it?’ and ‘Who is

[1] Graham Spencer, *Forgiving and Remembering in Northern Ireland: Approaches to Conflict Resolution*, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011, p. 121.
[2] Stephanie Bell, ‘“We’ll never know why?” - Ulster dad’s torment over treasured son’s suicide’, *Belfast Telegraph*, 7 September 2003.

responsible?'. As such, one could say that knowledge about oneself in highly interdependent societies is mainly constituted through forms of practical justification of ones' action[1]. This does not mean, however, that this process is automatic, or even fluid. It is sedimented throughout contested public exchanges. We must consider the response given by the group of actors surrounding an individual's reason to act, or the 'proofs' used in so doing, as undetermined as long as they are disputed[2]. In this early case, prior to any exchange on the topic, the act was treated as having very simple reasons, mainly an uncontrollable impulse of anger, which is not considered as having any knowable origin[3]. It remained a personal trouble, and the paths for investigation were not yet clear.

Yet, in the following months, the father of this young man was mentioned in the local newspaper and invited on the radio. He was progressively asked to talk to each family affected by suicide. This turned him into a local informal advisor on the topic. In September 2003, he set up an association that would help grieving residents or those wishing to commit suicide. He decided to do so after realising that, like the families he had met, he had been left entirely on his own to handle the death of his son, either in the community or with the health services. By 2004, the infant association was gathering attention as suicides multiplied. A member then commented: 'I don't believe statutory bodies are doing enough to tackle the whole issue of suicide, but the community can pull together to try and put a stop to this, and start saving lives'[4]. Residents were voicing the lack of public services. Answers to the question surrounding local suicides, or even the actual questions, were not clarified. Residents relied mostly on their direct experience of the issue, which they were in the process of stabilising. As such, the local community then took the responsibility of creating a group of actors in charge of this work, after residents assumed that the occurrence of other suicides pushed them to establish commonalities.

This winter, Ardoyne suffered a high number of unnatural young deaths. Some were accidental, like the three teenagers dying in a car crash in January[5]. But most notably, suicides started to add up in the area, whilst not hitting the news. When another teenager killed himself, most residents stated that they recalled he had been tarred and feathered then shot, at the age of

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[1] Mary Douglas, 'La Connaissance de Soi' in *Comment pensent les institutions, suivi de La connaissance de soi, et Il n'y a pas de don gratuit*, Paris, La Découverte, 2008, p. 189-200.
[2] Indeed 'All situations that are experienced by people as painful do not become matters of public activity [, neither] are they given the same meaning at all times and by all peoples.' J.R.R. Gusfield, *The Culture of Public Problems*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[3] On using 'reasons' and 'tendencies *to act*' to describe whilst avoiding a mechanistic or mentalist take, see C. Lemieux, *Le Devoir et la Grâce*, *op. cit.*
[4] Quoted in Pauline Reynolds, 'Lifting dark cloud over north Belfast', *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 January 2003.
[5] Dan Keenan, 'Suicide watch', *The Irish Times*, 21 February 2003.

14, by local paramilitaries[1]. Then came the double suicide. On the 11th of February, Anthony O'Neill, eighteen, wrote a note then hanged himself in his home's attic. For the previous months he had been living home, scarcely going out. In his note, he supposedly wrote:

> 'Life is hard when people look down their nose at you. That life I've been thinking about ending for a long time. I'm sorry about the pain… At the end of the day I'll be with my Dad. Love, Cheeta.'[2]

On the 14th, Anthony is buried. The chapel is covered in scaffolding for renovation. Barney Cairns, also eighteen, joins the cortège following his friend's coffin. People noted he was not bearing it. A limp prevented him from doing so: some months prior, he had been kneecapped by paramilitaries[3]. Midafternoon, Barney went back to Holy Cross, climbed to the top of the tower, and hanged himself[4]. He was buried there a few days later, as sadness now mingled with incomprehension. Anthony and Barney were close friends with the teen who had died in 2003[5]. During the burial, the local association distributed leaflets. On the 17th and 18th, the Ardoyne Residents Association, their health board, the church and local workers organised a meeting to discuss the issue.

When residents stressed that the teenagers had been personally linked, this led to a multiplication of discussions in the area, then in the media. The prevailing feeling was well expressed by a local SDLP representative, who declared: 'We need to find out why so many young people feel they have to take their own lives', whilst the uncle of one of the teenagers said: 'People are very angry and wondering why this is happening so often in our area'[6]. Two sets of problems would emerge from ongoing enquiries: first, the local influence of paramilitaries, and second, the issue of 'copycat' suicides associated with local deprivation.

1.2. When competing explanations reveal internal dissents

1.2.1 Blaming the community's grip

As locals started to discuss the deaths, past events resurfaced as central leads. A year before, in February 2003, Anthony had been the victim of a paramilitary punishment. He had been beaten up by members of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and kept in a manhole for several hours. His sister told journalists that he had suffered anxiety attacks and

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Quoted in David McKittrick, 'Scared to death', *The Independent*, 25 February 2003.
[3] Carl O'Brien, 'Where the future meant only fear', *The Irish Times*, 22 February 2005.
[4] Michael Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', *The Herald*, 1 May 2003.
[5] C. O'Brien, 'Where the future meant only fear', art cit.
[6] Both quoted in Mary Fitzgerald, 'Teenage suicides: Priest in plea', *Belfast Telegraph*, 16 February 2003.

obsessed about suicide afterwards. Though he would not go out anymore, she said that INLA members would still taunt him through the windows[1]. From 15 to 18, he also suffered five overdoses and was taken into a psychiatric ward twice[2]. Rapidly, people came back to the fact that Barney too had been shot by the INLA more than 18 months before, after allegedly fighting with a 'volunteer'[3]. After his death, his father declared 'I think he killed himself, before the INLA did'[4]. A few months later, his mother said: 'They are just scumbags, the INLA tormented him [.] I'm not afraid of any of them'[5]. All retelling stressed both Barney's degraded health and a refusal to see in the INLA a legitimate institution in the community. With this new take on the double suicides, the death of the first teenager in 2003 was recalled in a new light. A few days before his death, he had smashed the window of an INLA member. He was yet to face any consequences for that[6], but his suicide was now partially attributed to the fact that the young man expected to be punished.

As residents recalled those events, the pressure grew on the local INLA. The two teenagers' mothers organised a march with 200 residents towards the house of one INLA member[7], as suspicions fell more precisely on him. He was identified as the one who had punished the young man the year prior, and also blamed for his role in drug trafficking. Soon, members of the Provisional IRA, the main local armed group, sent a message requesting that the INLA stop punishment attacks given the rise in suicides[8]. Residents themselves reportedly started to put pressure on the IRA to evict specific volunteers[9].

From that point, discussion on the events, used as leads to explain Anthony and Barney's death, turned into more general comments on the state of the neighbourhood. The local priest declared that there was 'a huge feeling in the community that there is a link being drawn between paramilitary beatings and the deterioration in the mental health of some of the young

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[1] D. McKittrick, 'Scared to death', art cit.
[2] C. O'Brien, 'Where the future meant only fear', art cit.
[3] M. Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', art cit.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Stefanie Marsh, 'On the streets where beatings are routine, terror is driving teenage boysto suicide: [Final 4 Edition]', *The Times*, 21 February 2003, p. 8.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] Stephen Breen, '"Dark cloud" hangs over Ardoyne area', *Belfast Telegraph*, 22 February 2003. The Provisional IRA was the main organisation controlling the area at the time. The INLA had less influence but was still well established.
[9] *Ibid.* Note that police could not clarify those 'punishments' since, at the time, PSNI were not keeping records of paramilitary punishments occurring in the same community. They did not keep track of paramilitary attacks on residents of their own community, but kept track of republican attacks on the unionist community, and vice versa. For the State, it turned out to be a strong lack of knowledge on a social phenomenon at a crucial moment.

ones who have taken their lives'[1]. He constantly reaffirmed that 'volunteers' had 'a mandate from no one in this community'[2], whilst also trying to stand as a mediator between residents and armed groups. The father who had founded the association did the same, but had a more ambivalent position. He commented that the presence of armed groups was caused by the police's failure to handle antisocial behaviour, though adding that he did not believe Barney nor Anthony were antisocial. Other parents would then open up about their own experience[3], and so would young people at the funeral, notably stating that 'the beatings have been getting worse and nearly everybody I know has had one'[4].

In a matter of weeks, the topic started drawing attention from areas outside of Belfast and outside of Northern Ireland, mainly through traditional media. It was gradually presented less ambiguously, as professional media acquainted observers to this local social phenomenon. The *Sunday Times* sent an investigator to explore the 'Suicidal heart of the Ardoyne'[5], introduced as 'the most bitterly divided area in Northern Ireland'[6] and blaming 'brutal punishment by local members of the INLA'[7]. In other reports, *The Times* explained how 'terror is driving teenage boy to suicide'[8], whilst *The Telegraph* titled 'The lawless society where terrorists are driving teenage boys to kill themselves'[9]. A few months later, a well-known Scottish reporter would conclude that 'the Troubles are far from over'[10]. Most detached actors now emphasised how the internal criticism of armed groups was becoming more publicly explicit in their area. They endorsed this explanation as an evident cause for suicides. In East Belfast, after a similar event, a resident told the news: 'It's obvious that no lessons have been learned by the Provos [*Provisional IRA*] around here after the suicides in Ardoyne'[11]. The next week, Mary McAleese, the president of the Republic of Ireland, said that it did not "take rocket science to work out the reason for these suicides" as people in Northern Ireland faced sectarianism and were "stuck in a time wrap" in front of change[12]. The point of view which came to dominate public discussion,

[1] Ted Oliver, 'OUT OF CONTROL ; Terror gangs blamed for driving teens to suicide [ULSTER Edition]', *The Daily Mirror*, 2003. 9p.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] See quotes in Angelique Chrisafis, 'Teenage suicides bring new fear to Ardoyne', *The Guardian*, 17 February 2004.
[4] T. Oliver, 'OUT OF CONTROL ; Terror gangs blamed for driving teens to suicide', art cit.
[5] Stuart Wavell, 'Suicidal heart of the Ardoyne', *The Sunday Times*, 22 February 2003.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] S. Marsh, 'On the streets where beatings are routine, terror is driving teenage boys to suicide', art cit.
[9] Thomas Harding, 'The lawless society where terrorists are driving teenage boys to kill themselves', *The Telegraph*, 18 February 2003.
[10] M. Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', art cit.
[11] Maurice Fitzmaurice, 'IRA's Sick Apology ; Exclusive : Provos "sorry" for beating 3 kids [ULSTER Edition]', *The Daily Mirror*, 26 February 2003, p. 1.
[12] Brian Walker, 'President McAleese heartache at suicides', *Belfast Telegraph*, 20 February 2003.

bringing together both involved and detached actors, was that the area was stuck in conflict. Manifested in the ongoing influence of armed groups in the life of the local community, this was to be the reason for the recent spites in suicide.

1.2.2 Blaming a social vacuum or irrational individuals

This main explanation did not go unequivocally. There were still actors invested in opposing it. As a member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), the political wing of the INLA, put it: "If you're asking the question directly, do I believe that the INLA is directly responsible for these young men's deaths, I'm telling you I don't believe that they are"[1]. As to the volunteer blamed for the punishments, another spokesman added that he was a "committed republican socialist […] working at the behest of the community, who are up in arms at antisocial behaviour in the area"[2]. Indeed, members of the INLA paradoxically blamed the absence of the State in Ardoyne both for the young people's behaviour and for their helplessness:

> 'It doesn't take a social worker to see that there is a serious problem [with suicides] in this area. The question is what are the health services doing for these people? … It is not the fault of the republican socialist movement that the people in these communities see them as a legitimate recourse against criminal and antisocial behaviour, rather than the PSNI. When people go to the INLA about antisocial behaviour, they have a good idea of what is going to happen.' [3]

This position was shared, at the time, by some residents, who agreed that the suicides were the collateral consequence of the fact that the area needed a local form of policing to prevent teenagers' violent behaviour[4]. A few months later, a Scottish reporter managed to interview four local members of the INLA. They stressed even more explicitly that their punishment came in response to local demands from residents worried about the youth antisocial behaviour, after a relative had asked them 'to threaten to burn his own businesses if Cheetah didn't stop,' says B, stressing the request was not acted upon. When the youngster was later 'arrested' it was, allegedly, for further 'anti-community behaviour'[5]. the INLA response was to defend the impartial mandate that the community had presumably bestowed upon them to maintain order in the area, and to regulate the excesses of its members. Doing so, they blamed

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[1] 'Funeral of suicide teenager', *BBC News*, 17 February 2003.
[2] Quoted in S. Breen, '"Dark cloud" hangs over Ardoyne area', art cit.
[3] Quoted in Angelique Chrisafis, 'Teenage suicides bring new fear to Ardoyne', *The Guardian*, 17 February 2004.
[4] As quoted in a paper at the time, a local shop-owner said: 'The hoods have been targeting people here for years - nine, ten and 11-year-olds, full of drink, terrorising people. […] I lived through the Troubles and we never had these problems. Just now we need the likes of the INLA. […] We need someone to keep an eye on the hoods." In M. Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', art cit. See also the various criticisms of the 'Hoods'.
[5] *Ibid.*

back the community for their supposed hypocritical complaints, whilst the armed groups claimed to have been left with 'no option' to police the area.

Hence, actors who attempted to counter the first wave of blaming put forward several types of explanation, which went hand in hand. They blamed the State for leaving the area in a social vacuum, they blamed 'irrational' individuals either for committing suicides or for behaving incoherently, and they blamed the community for not taking public responsibility for the role they had asked the paramilitary to play. The INLA were not the only actors mobilising those causal regimes. During the residents' meeting organised in the week following the two suicides, the people present blamed the armed groups but also concluded that 'drugs, alcohol and lack of social amenities' were a major part of the problem[1]. Most teenagers were repeating that 'There's nothing to do' in the area[2]. In 2004, the mother of a teenager who had committed suicide in November 2003 also stressed that:

> 'It's harder growing up now for the young ones than at the height of the Troubles. When the rioting was going on, that was exciting for them. When it stopped there was nothing to do. Children have been raised to rebel here, so how were they supposed to change overnight?'[3]

The nascent diagnosis was that the neighbourhood was also stuck in a transitional vacuum which left the youth of this deprived area isolate, without any service to rely on, even though the State's demands of 'changing overnight' was weighing upon them. It is also this vacuum that would lead the paramilitaries to cling on to their influence.

In line with how some residents blamed youths' violent behaviour for being at the origin of their 'punishment', other actors also held the youths responsible for their suicide. By the end of the week of the double suicides, word started to spread that the two boys had planned to commit suicide together. Residents present at Anthony's funeral reported that they had heard Barney whisper 'We were supposed to do this together… I'll be with you soon'[4]. Barney's sister then declared that 'Barney told me that he and Anthony had decided to highlight what was going on by killing themselves in a pact'[5]. This idea also went with more actors stressing the fact that Phillips, Anthony, Barney and the teenagers who had died in a car-crash earlier this year were all close friends[6]. In this light, the suicide epidemic was partly presented as a more personal tragedy containing 'an element of the young ones following each other'[7] in 'copycat

[1] T. Oliver, 'OUT OF CONTROL ; Terror gangs blamed for driving teens to suicide', art cit.
[2] M. Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', art cit.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] S. Marsh, 'On the streets where beatings are routine, terror is driving teenage boys to suicide', art cit.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] M. Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', art cit.
[7] *Ibid.*

suicides'. The few residents who considered the recurring suicides as the result of a wilful 'pact' used it both to describe it as a personal tragedy, which neglected the influence of the INLA, or as a desperate attempt at publicly voicing the influence of the INLA in the area.

The fact remains that all those secondary explanations appeared to mitigate the INLA's responsibility in the suicides. But they did not overturn the now widespread scandal of those juvenile suicides[1]. For example, in the week prior to the suicide of the first teenager in 2004, he had also been subject to an overdose and had been interned in a psychiatric ward, but could not be offered further services because of the lack of facilities in his area and of the waiting list in the north of the city. Yet, neither of those two elements were mentioned in the discussion between residents, in the local or national newspapers – until an interview with his mother a year later – nor are they remembered by the vast majority of residents retelling 'Cheetah's' story to this day. They were probably mentioned on the ground but were in the minority when it came to being voiced publicly, and to meeting the adequate condition for dominating public debates.

These dynamics reveal the cohabitation of competing explanations which have rapidly settled as primary and secondary explanations. It also means that we should see this situation as the translation of a specific balance of power within this figuration. Competing explanations translate competing social groups within the community, and their differentiated capacities to find allies outside of their 'community'. Hence, whilst some local members had managed to publicly blame the community's grip for juvenile suicides, others were disagreeing. But the fact that some would rapidly dominate in the description of the public problem whilst the others would be brought back to a scandalous position lead another phenomenon to be sent back even further into the shadows: the fact that most of the actors we have quoted were highly ambivalent in their will to sustain both of those emerging diagnosis on their community. Rather than conveying this situation, several factors led to the solidification of explanations which effectively blamed the conflictual organisation of the community.

1.3. Recurring causal regime and a recurring problem

1.3.1 To blame or not to blame the community and its excesses

Those waves of accusation and justification matter because they are the practical manifestation of normative ideals. It is through those exchanges that actors collectively reaffirm

[1] Cyril Lemieux, 'L'accusation tolérante. Remarques sur les rapports entre commérage, scandale et affaire' in *Affaires, scandales et grandes causes*, L. Boltanski, E. Claverie, N. Offenstadt, S. Van Damme, Paris, Stock, 2007, p. 367-394.

the rules they ought to follow, and the roles they ought to occupy in specific situations. As such, those are also political attempts at defining the causes of events, who should be blamed for it, and who should be held politically responsible for finding a solution. At the level of local exchange of blames, actors already express a potential critique of their social organisation.

As we have seen, one causal regime came to dominate in 2004: it was the idea of blaming the local paramilitary groups, and the fact that they represented the grip of an oppressive community on its teenagers. Armed groups and their punishments were considered as the undue remnants of the past conflictual organisation of the community. One contender to the role of third-party in the Catholic community – the INLA – was blamed for weighing too heavily on the young people of the area. The latter faced the actual 'punishment' of this fringe of the community, or the anxiety of being faced with it, and those two factors were considered to be the main cause of juvenile suicide. Actors who engage in this form of blaming put the causal responsibility on the armed groups and individual volunteers, but also tend to assign the political responsibility to 'the community', the social groups formed by residents and local workers. When actors stress this set of causes, there is a sense that the community is supposed to act and make explicit that those individuals are not representing the community, and to clarify the issue and what can be done about it. Indeed, after the INLA become seen as responsible for the suicides, the community progressively narrowed down the few individuals responsible for the attack, protested against them and asked the Provisionnal IRA to deal with them.

On the other hand, it is the fact that residents were at first trying to find common ways to express their reaction to the increasing local suicides which prompted them to take the matter into their own hands. The local suicide prevention group was created in 2003, and in 2004 the church and local social workers took the lead to organise a public meeting on the event and to set up a local helpline for residents. Only a few days after the suicides, an article in the Irish Time described this by saying that 'the Ardoyne community, as always, has turned to its own resources'[1]. This framing of the tragedies and of their consequences was indeed reinforcing Ardoyne's reputation. As we have seen, the self-sufficiency and highly integrative nature of the area increasingly became a central feature of the area's reputation in the second half of the 20th century. It acted as a support for how more distanced observers tended to comment the suicide crisis and its link with the internal pressure in the area[2]. This is central. As both the causes and

[1] D. Keenan, 'Suicide watch', art cit.
[2] In 2004, the suicide crisis was rapidly put in parallel with the events of the Holy Cross dispute. Many residents and observers saw them as the two public events that really cemented the nationalist community at the beginning of the century. Their retelling always mentions the sense of support and cohesion that they both allegedly nurtured.

the consequences of this public crisis were initially understood mainly through blaming the community, this went with more reflexivity on the excesses and benefit of communal integration. These were the excess of a community life that had led to pathological integration because of the influence of a partially unwanted third party, and the favours of a community life that allowed residents to draw those conclusions by themselves, to request and administrate changes, and to solidify their reaction in the form of new local institutions.

EMPHASISING THE SOCIAL VACUUM of the area and the individual excesses of the young people – one often going hand in hand with the other – did not meet such a resounding response. It was certainly presented, but it was not at the heart of the ongoing scandal: this causal regime was rarely accepted on its own, or as a completely persuasive explanation. In short, it was always at the source of secondary forms of explanation. In particular, if it could be used to provide a more complex view on the primary forms of explanations, it was the only causal regime which sustained actors' attempts at diminishing the responsibility of local armed groups in juvenile suicides. This is what we see in the comments made by members of the INLA on the suicide pact: here the 'deranged youth' took the decision to commit suicide together, and it is these interpersonal dynamics that sustained their decision to commit suicide. The idea of a social vacuum is also used to say that there is a need for control in the area, and a need for young people to be handled by some type of third-party forces. This is found in the comments made by a high-school student the week after the suicides, about the two deaths – along, again, the idea of suicidal imitation:

> 'I know punishing young people is wrong, but someone has to stop them wrecking people's houses and stealing cars. I can see where the INLA are coming from. [The teenagers] see one doing it [*suicide*] and they think it's a quick way out. It's selfish, because they don't think of those they leave behind.'[1]

Similarly, the armed group refuse the idea that they are in part responsible for the other socio-economic issues in the area – such as the high level of alcohol or drug consumption – and deny any indirect role in the poor state of the neighbourhood. On the contrary 'the INLA [claims] that two years ago it arrested 36 people over a period of weeks who were involved in drugs'[2].

As such, the State is held responsible for the blighted state of the area – often by those who, paradoxically, have long attempted to keep the agents of the State out of the area – whilst

[1] S. Wavell, 'Suicidal heart of the Ardoyne', art cit.
[2] M. Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', art cit.

the youth is blamed for its violent behaviour and for their 'selfish' suicides. Hence, an important difference separates this framing from blaming the armed group. Though they can imply different causal responsibilities – the young people themselves for or a variety of more detached actors – they both claim that the State should be responsible for the clarification and the handling of such situations. This is what marks the paradox of how the public problem was constituted in 2004. It was the group of actors who were more radically attached to the community who, often in order to defend themselves from community blaming, ended up making the more convincing case for a more holistic view of the community, of its interdependencies with other social groups and of how their insufficiencies manifested themselves in the despair of teenagers. They ironically reinforced a will to provide better knowledge regarding the state of deprivation of the area, which would prove central in years to come.

1.3.2 Involvement in specific cases, detachment through generality

the emergence of those competing two causal regimes is inseparable from the increasing manifestation of a tension. One which would become increasingly important throughout the peace process. This tension is especially visible when actors voice their difficulties to put forward a multifactorial view of the event and of people's reasons to act. As stated by two members of the local health trust in their discussion with a journalist:

> 'Every suicide has its unique causal factors, and they are complex,' McGeown says. 'It is very difficult to say which is the primary one [.]' When he speaks of Ardoyne, he speaks of poverty, unemployment and low educational attainment, all exacerbated by the impact of conflict. [.] Callers to the Samaritans mention trauma, fear and distress due to the Troubles, O'Hare says, in addition to more universal problems, such as relationships and money.'[1]

This attempt at stressing specific and universal causes, though giving the feeling of respecting the variety of factors behind each suicide, leaves residents and local workers with no real hold in this causal landscape. As the issue has only recently been brought upon the public scene, a variety of third-party contenders struggle for the legitimacy of setting a causal hierarchy. But the mention of 'the Troubles' on one hand and 'more universal problems' on the other brings us back to the opposition between the two causal regime we mentioned.

What becomes visible here is the emergence of a tension between making those suicides a problem that is specific to Ardoyne as an area marked by conflict or a problem that concerns the rest of Northern Irish society, or indeed an even wider group. It is because authors handle

[1] D. McKittrick, 'Scared to death', art cit.

this tension differently that they end up holding different actors causally and politically responsible for this wave of juvenile suicides. In short, when the problem emerges, the tension between specifying and despecifying it emerges. For example, the Scottish reporter who went on to investigate the suicides in Ardoyne put them in a more general context:

> 'The deaths of O'Neill and Cairns brought the total number of suicides in north Belfast since Christmas 2003 to at least 13, yet contrary to media reports not all have been INLA-related and not all the deaths have been in the Catholic community. Four suicides have been in the Protestant community, two of which were young girls. The rest are nationalists, one of whom was in his sixties. And it's not just north Belfast that is suffering: in the past few weeks, there have been at least four more suicides in west Belfast. For many people around here, often too inured to violence to be shocked, the recent suicides have highlighted a post-ceasefire epidemic, a long, painful disembowelment, where guns and violence remain at the heart of Ulster politics […]. North Belfast has become a mute monument of misery, with little sign of any peace dividend.'[1]

Here, the journalist takes the time to explain that those suicides are not specific to Ardoyne[2], but also that they are not specific to Catholics, to young men, or even to young people, and are not even specific to North Belfast. This actor displays a form of detachment in inserting the specific cases of suicides observed in the area in more general trends, and by connecting different events with one another. But this extract is also a good example of the ambivalence of those despecification efforts. The suicides in North Belfast are not specific, yet North Belfast is presented as a 'monument of misery'. The suicides are not all related to the INLA yet these areas are still full of 'guns and violence'. This unclear handling of specification and despecification is characteristic of the framing efforts surrounding an issue that is only recently constituted as such. More importantly, in our case, this tension is amplified by the stark reputation of Ardoyne and North Belfast as a '*bande à part*'.

It is mostly because of the wish not to turn those juvenile suicides into a problem specific to Ardoyne and to the Catholic urban communities that some actors elaborated forms of explanation that prompted them to investigate and voice the 'social vacuum' and less specific problems that the area was facing. Shortly after the suicide, a journalist from a well-known nationalist republican newspaper, *An Phoblacht*, blamed the media for exaggerating the armed group's influence:

> 'Whether the INLA's involvement was a factor or not, the media focus on their involvement is a simplistic and sensationalist response. The fact is that the rising rate of suicide has been an ongoing problem in the Six Counties for several years now, with suicide now the leading killer of young men under 25, and little has been done about it. […] While the mainstream media is content to splash

[1] M. Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', art cit.

[2] In that sense, the confusion between the information put forward in 2004 is quite important, as the events were sometimes presented as '13 suicides in Ardoyne since Christmas' and '13 suicides in North Belfast since Christmas' which probably depended on the source of information and on who they were giving the number to.

photos of those who have been lost sitting in wheelchairs after punishment beatings, the real issue is being ignored.'[1]

One of the consequences of such a move is to shed light on the regional trend of suicides and to reintegrate Ardoyne within a wider context of which it is dependent. However, at the time, this more holistic view of the problem could hardly settle publicly given how it emerged from a partial defence of one community: that this more distanced nationalist generalise the issue amounts here to lessening the responsibility of the local armed group in the events, and to minimise the acknowledgement of an oppressive community in order to stress the lack of investment from the British State. Hence why, in the early days of the public problem, this zero-sum dynamic meant that a despecified view of the public problems had little chance to be publicly politicised within the area and with more distanced observers, whereas local actors were seizing an occasion to voice specific critiques of their community.

This is what the local priest, working in the parish at the time, told me when I conducted an interview with him in 2016:

> 'I don't think suicide at the time could have been seen as having the implication that the whole world knows now. I mean you see it in France, you see it everywhere. But at that stage we were getting something, and it was being connected with the Troubles, it was being connected to deprivation, to sectarianism and all that. It very quickly became clear to me and to anybody, to all sorts of people on the Shankill and the Woodvale, that this was a *human* problem. Nothing to do with incomes. And the sooner we got that across the better. […] People got to the stage where they were terrified if their children, teenage, or early adult were out after the time they thought they'd be out. First thing they thought was not drugs, not drink: suicide. So I mean it was terrifying times, far more terrifying that people could have realised from outside you know.'

The priest reiterates that the 2004 events were perceived as the first instances of debates on suicides, which meant that actors exchanged first on causes specific to Northern Ireland and to Ardoyne. Hence why it became 'connected with the Troubles'. Local residents could not rely on any prior generalisation on the matter, any prior institutional network towards which they could turn to engage with accepted accounts and explanations of juvenile suicide. As such, it was not connected to incomes, and was considered different from the wider issues of suicides or incomes that the rest of the world knows. A specific human environment that was deemed to cause those suicides, and which meant that people had a hard time 'realising it from outside'. In that sense, it was deemed a very specific issue.

If it is the case, how come those attempts at specifying the issue, and in this case linking it with the community's grip and the role of local armed groups, gathered so much attention and public weight outside of the area during the early days of this public problem? In 2004, as

[1] Áine Ní Bhriain, *Suicide tragedy in Ardoyne | An Phoblacht*, [http://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/11254], 19 February 2004, (retrieved 1 May 2016).

we have seen with the rapid mobilisation of residents and local actors was based mostly on their direct experiences of the problem and of the oppressive members of their community. In this regard, and in their attempts at criticising their own community, they benefited from the momentum of denaturalisation of the social world allowed by the regional peace agreement, and the fact that members of the community had experienced the ills of excessive radical groups for several decades. This situation still allowed local actors to feel like they carried the thematisation of the issue and fitted well with external comments. There were no scholars or formal form of knowledge to compete with, so the tension was not clearly noticeable.

Table 3 – Specifying and Despeifying Causes of Juvenile Suicides

	CAUSES
Specifying	Community Grip
Despecifying	Social vacuum Individual Imitation

Actors attempting to detach themselves from the issue in order to stress more general factors could not yet rest on generalised and ‘scientific’ knowledge of the issue and its causes. They were still discovering the effects of the peace process on local communities, and were confronted with a general tendency to view Ardoyne as an exceptional and disorganised area – even though, at the time, several other areas in Northern Ireland could still be considered to be as marked by the communal conflict as Ardoyne was. For all those reasons, actors who specified the issue and blamed the community’s grip were prone to dominate both internally and externally, which explains its rapid settlement as an accepted explanation for the events and for juvenile suicides as a whole. For now, commenting on the social vacuum and individual’s responsibility were still in the minority. Not necessarily because there were fewer residents and social actors who framed incidents this way, but because they did not have the means nor the institutional devices to bear the tests that allowed this framing to settle as a local or wide accepted set of causes, including amongst newspapers.

However, as we will now see, the more pronounced arrival of detached actors in the following years will have an effect on the ‘invisibilised’ minority in the area. It will provide more and more spaces of discussions which will, in turn, have the effect of rendering more and more explicit the tension between specifying and despecifying, and reducing it to a tension between insiders and outsiders, as if only outsiders had the means to generalise the issue.

2. The emergence of indirect causes: blaming a lack of social integration

2.1 How tensions between specifying and despecifying the issue intensified

A year later, Irish and Danish journalists returned to Ardoyne to interview those who had lived through the 2004 suicides wave[1]. Now, another local priest was stressing how the tensions associated with the events differed from the usual 'interface tensions', whilst 'some blamed the deaths on copycat behaviour, the lack of leisure or sports facilities for young people and the rise in the abuse of drink and drugs'[2]. The head of the local association was now blaming the combination of all these factors and a lack of preventive measures. As the idea of lack of social amenities becomes more and more prevalent in discussing the area, it is used both as a direct cause of the issue and as a cause for the lack of mitigation efforts. But the father of the first deceased teenager also saw in the absence of British State services in Ardoyne the origins of the local paramilitaries' influence[3], hence considering this as an indirect cause of juvenile suicides. Similarly, the families reaffirmed the role of the INLA, yet they were now also stressing the responsibility of their son in their behaviour, their mental state during months leading to their death, and the lack of coherent response from the State health services.

For all who had already expressed their position a year before and were doing it again, blaming the social vacuum tended to be more common[4]. So were an emphasis on the mental health of young people, their need to talk to someone and handle their issues, and the important role of doctors and counsellors in that regard. Moreover, the internal criticism of armed groups was toned down: it became increasingly viewed as a 'trigger'. As a result, the tension between specifying and despecifying the issue would become more visible.

2.1.1 Do intercommunity groups mean an inter-community problem ?

Unfortunately, suicides would continue to add up over the months. Residents, local workers, civil servants and researchers would become more accustomed with the phenomenon.

[1] C. O'Brien, 'Where the future meant only fear', art cit ; Henrik Kastenkov, Poul Madsen and Brigitte Lausten Kroll, 'The Ardoyne Suicides'.
[2] C. O'Brien, 'Where the future meant only fear', art cit.
[3] H. Kastenkov, P. Madsen and B. Lausten Kroll, 'The Ardoyne Suicides', art cit.
[4] Phillip displays the same move, Philip McTaggart and Claire McNeilley, 'In the name of my son...', *Belfast Telegraph*, 6 December 2006.

Although the events were initially linked with characteristics of Ardoyne's nationalist community, organising support groups rapidly took the form of an inter-community effort. Indeed, in order to discuss the issue, the small nationalist community had to involve a high enough number of people to get heard. In turn, this would lead actors to readjust their understanding of the origins of the suicide*s*. The involvement of new actors, first from neighbouring areas, provoked more efforts of despecification. By this, residents were progressively generalising the events they had faced by turning them into a problem which increasingly seemed to concern them all. In the words of the local priest:

> 'In the beginning the whole community that was affected did not know where to turn for help or for hope. In meetings with my colleagues from the other churches, I learned that their communities were also suffering from such loss of life by suicide. As suicide prevention and support groups began to take shape, it was clear that this was not going to be along sectarian lines[1]. These groups were very much embedded in their own community but were not exclusive to the local people there […] A few years earlier this would not have been foreseen.'[2]

For the priest, and contrary to his initial comments, the issue of suicide is now precisely not bounded to the public realm of local urban community or the ethno-political community. Local community groups, whilst rooting their diagnosis in their own legitimate experience and institutions, had to extend the group of people they worked with to include groups in other local communities, including across the 'divide' between Catholics and Protestants. The fact that the priest mentions both the inter-communal nature *and* the communal root of this effort is characteristic of the ambivalence that would colour the following years.

This need for a wider approach was not the only effect of the multiplication of cases. It also moved public debates from a focus on directly responsible actors to a discussion centred on indirect causes. In turn, this increasingly supported tendencies to despecify the issue. As the founder of the local counselling association commented sometime after the double suicide:

> 'We don't just believe it was the case of paramilitary involvement. […] There are other issues involved here. A young person doesn't just go off and take his life for one specific reason. We've had over 100 cases since Christmas of people trying to kill themselves and there is little or no funding to deal with the crisis.'[3]

Months after the initial discussions of the events, stressing the idea of a social vacuum and of a lack of funding was now more openly used to dampen the importance of paramilitary

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[1] The role of local priests reached a high point in the 2000 – 2005 period. Before that, the priests had the reputation of being more concerned with religious condemnation of suicides than with family support. They then progressively transitioned, in Ardoyne, to a more 'down to earth' approach favouring pastoral care over criticisms. The strength of the church network then gave them a prominent role. In the years after that, however, the arrival of specialised support groups, the investment of statutory bodies, the reluctance of church members to stereotype the issue and the cooperation between neighbourhoods meant that church members became less and less involved.
[2] G. Spencer, *Forgiving and Remembering in Northern Ireland*, *op. cit.*, p. 121–122.
[3] M. Tierney, 'The Troubles are far from over', art cit.

groups. This may seem paradoxical. Yet, it was only possible now that the initial critical move of the armed groups had been led to its full extent, and it only appeared necessary now that the wider tackling of the public issues required a generalisation on the part of local actors. Stopping at blaming the local community armed groups was increasingly judged insufficient in accounting for the 'specific reasons' behind juvenile suicides. Those reasons were increasingly defined as multifactorial. Here again, in that process, this counselling association progressively became inter-communal. More and more actors, including those who were not defending armed groups in the first place, increasingly put the community causal regime to the test, as it allowed a despecification of the issue and a look at more indirect causes of juvenile suicides. This would help constitute the public issue of suicide and solidify the urban community's attempts at addressing it by requesting more State funding.

Yet, turning this into a problem which was not specific to Ardoyne did not go without tension. For the traditional 12th of July celebrations in 2005, the residents of the unionist Upper-Ardoyne set up a bonfire. This has always been a tense event as loyalists sometimes use bonfires to burn Irish flags, effigies of Catholic and nationalist public figures. This year, the bonfire was bearing a slogan 'Up the Ardoyne bungee jumpers'[1] to mock the high number of juvenile suicides in the nationalist area. Residents of Ardoyne and from the neighbourhood unionist areas of Shankill publicly stated their disgust. We would need to know what the Upper-Ardoyne residents, held collectively responsible for the bonfire, had to say about this slogan. Yet, it is impossible to find traces of their positions on the matter, or of efforts to reach it in any private or public records. What we know is that, over the years, the nationalist residents have felt the installation of a stereotype around 'bungee jumping' used by members of other communities, mostly unionists, to provoke them. In November 2017, a web user rewrote the 'Sport' section of Ardoyne's Wikipedia page to ridicule the 2004 suicides by referring to bungee-jumping as a local tradition[2]. Again, this mockery has the effect of specifying the issue of suicides as an entirely nationalist and Catholic issue if not an Ardoyne issue. This relates to what the head of the local counselling association told me in an interview in 2016. I had asked him if, after trying to use suicide as a common ground between communities, he had seen a common response:

> 'No, the problem is, unionist politicians have been very slow to deal with this issue. [And] in fact when you're doing training, when I'm sometime over at the Protestant community, if I ask "Where do suicides take place?", they'll always say "In the Catholic community". Because there is this belief that it only happens in one community. It doesn't. [When they mocked the "Ardoyne bungee

[1]Anonymous, 'Loyalists condemned over Ardoyne suicides slogan', *BreakingNews.ie*, 15 July 2005.

[2] User 82.26.10.66, *Ardoyne: Difference between revisions - Removed disgusting reference to suicides in Ardoyne, disguised as ref to bungee jumping*, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?diff=871041417&oldid=810798026 &title=Ardoyne , 17 November 2017, (retrieved 20 November 2019).

> jumpers", that] was not only hurtful to people from our community, but it was also hurtful to people within their own community because there is as many people in the Protestant community dying from suicide as there is in the Catholic community.'

Here, more than ten years after the first crisis, this community worker explained that it had been very difficult to get observers as well as members of political parties to consider the issues as anything else but a Catholic issue. This is what manifested itself in the use of suicides as a vessel for insults. Moreover, having engaged in despecifying the issue, he now argued that reducing suicides to a local problem end up hurting the other urban communities who mock Ardoyne, because they do not allow themselves to address their own deaths by suicides.

The idea that 'juvenile suicide is a Catholic problem' was becoming an obstacle after 2004. Yet, it was a collateral consequence of the fact that suicides were initially linked with the pathological organisation of the urban Catholic community in which the suicides were taking place. Actors also started to mobilise the idea that Catholic and Protestant communities were not equal in the face of suicides, as Catholic communities were deemed strongly integrated with strong ties between their members, whereas unionists were thought to be poorly integrated and present looser ties between their members. This conception is not shared all around Belfast, but is a taken-for-granted view regarding Ardoyne, Twaddell and Upper-Ardoyne[1]. However, as the passage from a collective public slogan in 2005 to an anonymous internet comment in 2017 still seems to indicate, the multiplication of cases would make it less and less permissible to see in those suicide something entirely explained by the conflictual specificities of Ardoyne.

2.1.2 How new cases provided increasing support for despecification

In 2006, two brothers took their lives three weeks apart[2], and a young man had killed himself not long before. The priest tried to reassure residents and observers, conscious that there was 'obviously a fear in this community, borne out of the tragic spate of suicides we had a number of years ago, that this could be happening again'[3]. By now, it was accepted that there was a suicide issue in the area, so much that residents tended to apprehend the consequences of someone committing a 'first' suicide[4]. In December 2006, both the father of the two brothers

[1] This is mainly explained by residents through the differences between the churches and between the political organisations which operated in those areas.
[2] The two brothers were not teenagers, however, as they were both in their thirties.
[3] Staff Reporter, 'Belfast family hit by double tragedy', *Belfast Telegraph*, 20 September 2006.
[4] A change in thematisation mentioned by the priest in our interview about the 2004 events.

and the founder of the local prevention group published testimonies in a regional newspaper[1]. The father still emphasised the difficulty of finding a series of causes of the events:

> 'Both of them loved life. Both loved watching football matches and going to discos. They weren't big drinkers. After Patrick hanged himself, Mark became very depressed and I was extremely worried about him. […] Later, I found out that Mark had texted his brother [the night before]. The text read: "Why am I enjoying this wedding when my brother is dead?" Since Patrick and Mark took their own lives, I must admit that I have contemplated killing myself; but I couldn't do it to the rest of my family. And to be honest, I'm a bit angry with both of them, especially Patrick. Sometimes I think "you set the ball rolling".'

Though they are used as a precedent, the discussion surrounding the death of the two brothers contrasts with the investigations surrounding Anthony and Barney's death. The father invokes his sons' personal relationships and characteristics, solidifying a view of the suicide as a family-related breakdown based on two sets of individual decisions. This is exemplified by the fact that the father blames both of his sons, in person, for reopening the risk of suicide by imitation. Then comes a more general comment:

> 'I have friends whose children have also taken their own lives and I'm convinced the problem is a lot more serious than people realise. Especially since the Troubles ended. Suicide seems to be getting out of control, but we only hear about our own areas; it seldom gets much newspaper or TV coverage. There are definitely very limited provisions to deal with the problem, whereas there should be formal counselling bodies in place – all over Northern Ireland […] to allow anyone who feels like ending their life to share their problems and maybe ease the burden.'

The first extract barely mentioned the socio-economic difficulties of the area, and made no mention of anything relating specifically to Ardoyne. But the father now generalises further the issue faced by his sons. A less specific version of the problem seems to settle, that of how State institutions may assist the autonomisation of individuals[2]. As such, residents, families and local workers compare these events with the 2004 suicides mainly because of the idea of individual imitation linking different suicides with one another. New suicides happening in Ardoyne were not presented as 'Ardoyne suicides' like the 2004 crisis was.

In following months, a realisation shocked local worker as much as researchers and civil servants. In 2006, almost 300 people had committed suicide in the province[3]. This was the highest number ever recorded. The NISRA reported that most deaths were concentrated in the Catholic areas of North and West Belfast and amongst young males[4]. Discussions about

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[1]Patrick Mailey and Claire McNeilley, 'How do you begin to understand something like this? Every second of every day, it's a real struggle just to keep on going', *Belfast Telegraph*, 6 December 2006 ; P. McTaggart and C. McNeilley, 'In the name of my son...', art cit.

[2] This does not prevent him, though, saying that the problem got more important 'since the end of the Troubles', but this remains a general comment on trends whose link with those two cases is unaddressed.

[3]National Office for Suicide Prevention, *National Office for Suicide Prevention Annual Report 2018*, Dublin, Ireland, National Office For Suicide Prevention, 2019.

[4]Kevin Spurgaitis, 'Northern Ireland's troubled generation', *The United Church Observer*, 1 September 2008.

Ardoyne became an important support for debates of a regional importance, including more and more diverse actors. The *Protect Life Suicide Strategy* was launched by the government in 2006 as a response. Still, residents appeared suspicious of this, considering that the 'government was embarrassed into doing something', and 'you have to remember there was no government here, it was operated from Britain'[1]. As mentioned by a major nationalist politician:

> 'Part of the problem is that here in the north of Ireland, with the war over and people coming out from the trenches, there is less cohesion in particular communities. No longer facing threats and heavy militarisation, neighbourhoods aren't as tightly knit together as they were before [.] Those affected directly by suicide, and those who work with people at risk and bereaved families have a great deal of experience to share with others. Groups like PIPS [.].'[2]

Ardoyne is mentioned for the experience the community may now share with others. Yet, again, this progressively displaced discussion towards more general problems of deprivation, individual imitations, or lack of resilience. More importantly, we can see even more clearly how opposing those who blame the 'heavy militarisation' of local communities now meant denouncing, almost symmetrically, the fact that fading communal cohesion was not yet balanced by an increasing social integration. In return, this transformed again how the 2004 suicides were convoked in the area. By now, journalists and locals were talking of the 'troubled generations' that had been revealed by suicide crises over the years, first in 2004. A generation that was deemed to suffer from new problems caused by rapid social changes in the region. This even implied wider change, as indicated by a social worker of the Presbyterian church, who indicated that 'young adults today reach crisis an awful lot sooner than in previous generations [,] e-mails and texts until their thumbs wear out, but they're not talking'[3]. The problem now indirectly relates to modern day dissatisfactions with school, work, relationships and sexuality who far exceed the specificities of Ardoyne and Northern Ireland.

As such, after 2006, both local events and wider trends would push actors to stress how the issue concerned not only Ardoyne but the rest of Northern Ireland, and not only young residents of Ardoyne but an entire problematic generation. Even though the reputation of the neighbourhood remained unchanged, only foreign observers now maintained a strong focus on paramilitaries and blamed suicides on conflictual communities.

[1] Interview Cormac, 28/01/2016, Houben Centre Ardoyne.
[2] K. Spurgaitis, 'Northern Ireland's troubled generation', art cit.
[3] *Ibid.*

2.2 The arrival of a double enigma with indirect causes

With passing years, actors increasingly aspired to formulate the precise problem that they were facing. This was only possible after despecification had had its effects. In 2008, 'grieving parents have been left to ask a question that is neither Protestant nor Catholic: why?' [1]. Two puzzling questions would now stem from the general comments we just mentioned. They appear clearly in a report on North Belfast written in 2016 by Lyra McKee, a renowned reporter from a nearby nationalist neighbourhood who went to school in Ardoyne. That year she published several pieces on the ever-growing issues of 'suicides' and 'mental health' in North Belfast[2]. Once again, McKee would use the case of North Belfast to illustrate Northern Ireland's 'sad irony', the increasing instability of 'the Good Friday Agreement generation, destined to never witness the horrors of war but to reap the spoils of peace'[3]. To do so, Lyra McKee offered her personal account[4] of suicide amongst the 'ceasefire babies' and defended the importance of 'transferred trauma' in explaining the difficulties faced by teenagers. 'Ceasefire babies' is a term that older members of local communities forged to designate the people born after the ceasefire of 1997 and during the peace process[5]. On the other hand, 'Transferred trauma' was a notion forged by professional researchers in psychology. It is those two notions that had recently emerged in response to two growing problems.

First, that actors were not talking of specific young males but of a troubled generation, led to a first endemic enigma: how come teenagers were the ones taking their own lives even though they had not lived through the Troubles? As residents considered the Troubles as the most traumatic period they had lived, they increasingly voiced that this situation did not make sense to them. If teenagers committing suicide in the early 2000s had lived through some of the last years of the conflict, teenagers taking their lives in 2006, 2010 and later had lived most of their life after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. On the other hand, the fact that the issue was now widely seen as a regional epidemic concerning the whole of Northern Ireland led to a second enigma: how come there had been more suicides overall since the end of the Troubles than there had been violent deaths or suicides death during the Troubles, and how

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Lyra McKee, 'Suicide of the Ceasefire Babies', *Mosaic Science*, 19 January 2016.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

[4] She describes how several homosexual teenagers suffered their oppressive communities, wider teenagers feeling lost in peaceful empty times, and how depression maintains them in a dangerous state. This formulation encapsulates all the different framing.

[5] 'Those who survived the Troubles called us the Ceasefire Babies, as if resentful that we'd grown up unaccustomed to the sound of gunfire, assuming that we didn't have dead to mourn like they did'. See L. McKee, 'Suicide of the Ceasefire Babies', art cit., p. 6.

come the suicide rates kept on increasing? This would become a recurring question in most public discussion on the matter, either in regional media, in the government, or in research.

As it could arise from the aggregation of local experiences of individual cases, and from the look at direct causes, the first puzzling question was addressed by most actors, including Ardoyne residents. On the other hand, the second enigma would be mostly voiced by more detached actors who attempted to formalise quantitative or comparative knowledge on suicide trends and rates between different areas. Those were, first, statisticians, researchers or politicians.

The first periods of debate on juvenile suicides could easily revolve around direct causes as most actors attempted to find responsible social groups for the scandalous deaths of young people. But the increasing detachment coming with time, with the implication of more social groups and with the multiplication of cases meant the emergence of clearer attempts at finding indirect causes in addition to direct causes for those suicides. Hence, in the face of those two puzzling questions, most actors divided between establishing an indirect link between these suicides and distant past conflictual events, or saying that the two were not linked at all. A new division would then come to define debates around juvenile suicides. Actors were still debating whether the problem was specific to conflictual communities or not. Now, they were also in tension regarding whether to look for direct or indirect causes. Those who tended to look for present factors in explaining suicides often criticised the excessive detachment and obsessions of those who reopened enquiries into the past. In return, when invoking indirect causes, actors worked out how distant past events had influenced suicides, often criticising the 'short-sightedness' of those who stopped at present causes. It means that the framing which will be used to blame suicides on communal conflictual resistance would shift from specific direct causes – as we have seen in 2004 with the dominant criticism of a conflictual community – to specific indirect causes – as we will see in 2018 with the external criticism of an aggregate of individual trauma caused by past events.

Table 4 – Specifying and Despecifying Causes added to the increasing opposition between Direct and Indirect Causes of Juvenile Suicides.

	DIRECT CAUSES	INDIRECT CAUSES
Specifying	Community Grip	Transferred Trauma
Despecifying	Social vacuum Individual Imitation	Escheat

2.2.1 'PERIPHERAL' FORMS OF DETACHMENT

The main dynamic explaining the emergence of those questions between 2004 and 2016 is the growing implication of more detached actors in the controversy. Not because of their inherent qualities, but because their implication increased exchanges between social groups on the topic. 'Peripheral actors' were actors who were either completely disconnected or who were less attached to the local web of interdependencies of the area. The fact that McKee's report was mainly based not on residents' interviews – like all journalists had done between 2004 and 2010 – but on discussion with prominent sociologists and psychologists is paradigmatic in that regard. The implication of those peripheral actors in exchanges of blames regarding local juvenile suicides changed the dynamics of the controversy, starting by extending resident's address of the multifactorial nature of the issue. As the psychologist interviewed during McKee's report said:

> 'Many things can be involved: educational underachievement, poverty, poor parenting. But the Ceasefire Babies are also dealing with the added stress of the conflict – even though most of them never witnessed it directly […] When you're a child growing up in poverty, being parented by people who've been traumatised and everyone around you has been traumatised, you are going to be affected by that, even if you've never seen anything. Even if they never tell you the stories.'[1]

Not only are the various academics involved in those debates stressing the multifactorial nature of the problem, but more importantly, they mostly attempted to employ their social and temporal distance from the 'scene' to explain local issues in a way that locals 'could not'. By efforts of increasing detachment. In this case, as time went on, it meant revealing how conflictual events that had sometimes not even been lived by the individual victims of suicides could have indirectly affected them. if those efforts were a move towards indirect causes, they still came to reinforce the idea that there were some important causes specific to Ardoyne.

With this came the emergence of a new focus on 'mental health', which decisively influenced discussions on suicides. This trend, noticeable in Northern Ireland, was deeply embedded in the international development of scientific research on mental health, in researchers' demands for more government mental health policies[2], and in clearer controversies on the individual and social approach of mental health[3]. After the Bamford review of 2007, the first on the topic, the Northern Irish executive published a first action plan for Mental Health in

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[2] Rachel Jenkins, 'Supporting governments to adopt mental health policies', *World Psychiatry*, February 2003, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 14-19 ; Jennifer Betts and Janice Thompson, *Mental Health in Northern Ireland: Overview, Strategies, Policies, Care Pathways, CAMHS and Barriers to Accessing Services*, Belfast, Northern Ireland Assembly, 2017.
[3] Jim van Os, 'Mental disorder: a public health problem stuck in an individual-level brain disease perspective?', *World Psychiatry*, February 2015, vol. 14, no. 1, p. 47-48.

2009 and a second one in 2012[1]. The appearance of the idea of 'transferred trauma' is at the crossroad of those international and regional evolutions.

Indeed, the 2004 suicide waves had also led academic groups to further their knowledge on suicide, mostly in mental health disciplines. Yet, the overall trend differed. First in the minority, some researchers would progressively strive to reveal that the conflict had had and was still having effects on the 'level of suicide' and on 'cases of suicides'. They were 'in the minority' since, in 2004, researchers were mostly convoked to strengthen the depiction of the social vacuum and not that of the community's grip. Going with the first generalisation, early academic discussion on this appeared in 2005[2]. More data was gathered at the regional level to stabilise a formal knowledge of the phenomenon. Researchers in health, nursing and psychiatry wrote the first article investigating links between violent death and suicide during the Troubles[3]. Two years later, when the *International Association for Suicide Prevention* met in the Republic, one author of the first 2005 article said:

> 'Although others disagree, it is naive to argue that the Troubles had no impact. Anita Hunter, University of San Diego, reported in 1999 that children in the Ardoyne were exposed to violence daily. Surely we cannot accept that this would have no impact on them [...].' [4]

As such, academics were now either studying the indirect effects of the conflict itself, or the indirect effects of the fading of 'coping mechanisms' in place during the Troubles: the 'psychological mechanisms of habituation, denial and distancing'[5].

As such, this period meant a progressive dissociation between local and peripheral discussions on North Belfast suicides: as the discussion of local issues centred on the death of *young people* after the Troubles and the look at other sort of direct causes around them, those researchers based their discussion of the phenomenon of suicide on the fading of some social or psychological mechanisms amongst older people who had lived through the Troubles. Researchers in psychology who tried to specify the evolution of suicide in Northern Ireland rapidly multiplied experiments to validate the influence of past 'conflict-related trauma' on

[1] J. Betts and J. Thompson, *Mental Health in Northern Ireland: Overview, Strategies, Policies, Care Pathways, CAMHS and Barriers to Accessing Services*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[2]A paper was published in 2002, but its methods were ruled by other researchers as unclear. Still, it did argue that during the Troubles suicide rates and deaths from civil unrest were negatively associated. See David Lester, 'The 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland and Suicide', *Psychological Reports*, 1 June 2002, vol. 90, no. 3, p. 722-722.
[3]Iain W McGowan et al., 'Contrasting terrorist-related deaths with suicide trends over 34 years', *Journal of Mental Health*, August 2005, vol. 14, no. 4, p. 399-405. It was an open verification the proposition of Emile Durkheim on the links between civil war, social integration and suicide.
[4]Iain McGowan, 'Where now for suicide research?', *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 September 2007.
[5] Andrea Campbell, FBPsS Ed Cairns PhD and John Mallett, 'Northern Ireland. The Psychological Impact of "The Troubles"', *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 4 April 2004, vol. 9, no. 1-2, p. 175-184.

suicidal behaviour, and, minimally, the influence of transferred trauma[1]. Most sociologists and statisticians stood back, committed to a form of expert sociology and to gathering regional data. But some critical sociologists then strove to 'reveal' what politicians or residents' common sense would forget when comprehending present-day suicides: the unseen influence of conflict through the maintenance of specific forms of conflictual organisation or its indirect consequences. It became a desirable form of critique on the topic for this group as it was the most epistemologically disruptive. For example, in 2013, Tomlinson spoke to the regional assembly to argue that 'the most neglected explanation is that the surge in suicides post-1998 is associated in some way with the violent conflict of the past'[2]. He had measured that the cohort of children who had lived through the worst period of violence (1970-77) were experiencing the highest and most rapidly increasing suicide rates since 1998. All of this led him to say that 'experience of conflict and its consequences, the cohorts, occupational groups and communities most involved in the conflict, are all absent from current prevention strategies' and that their influence on suicide trends should be recognised to identify 'at-risk individuals, groups and communities'[3]. Those actors may not be dominant in their field, but they grew more and more efficient in the production of knowledge on the issue, and they are the one who increased the tensions with local actors: they were specifying the issue by identifying 'at-risk areas' or specifying the individual conditions that rendered those suicides different from mental-health characteristics presented by individuals in other contexts. This has progressively led them back to an account of the conflict through its indirect influence, either social or psychological.

This would only increase the dissociation between specifying and despecifying efforts at clarifying the problem of juvenile suicide in North Belfast. This would soon turn into a dividing opposition, by which local actors would be reduced to their attempts at despecifying the issue, and external actors would be reduced to their attempts at specifying the issue. The public problem would then soon be marked by a divide between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', supposedly defined by their resistance to either despecify or specify the issue of suicides.

[1] Michael Duffy, Kate Gillespie and David M. Clark, 'Post-traumatic stress disorder in the context of terrorism and other civil conflict in Northern Ireland: randomised controlled trial', *BMJ*, 31 May 2007, vol. 334, no. 7604, p. 1147 ; Chris Gilligan, 'Traumatised by peace? A critique of five assumptions in the theory and practice of conflict-related trauma policy in Northern Ireland', *Policy and Politics*, 2006, vol. 34, no. 2, p. 325–345.
[2] Mike Tomlinson, *Dealing with suicide: how does research help ?*, Belfast, Queen's University Belfast / Northern Ireland Assembly, 2013, p. 9.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

2.2.2 ‘Local’ forms of detachment

These external evolutions have had, in return, some influence on local actors over the years. As such, some local actors also continued to embody the will to generalise the issue, whilst, at the same time, accounting for some of Ardoyne’s specifics. In 2016, I interviewed Cormac, the person who created the first local counselling association in 2003, and who commented on the suicide crisis in 2004, in 2006, and who had engaged in continuous work on suicide ever since. As we have seen, this association became notorious in the entire region, got advertised by numerous politicians and journalists, and led him to engage repeatedly in training all over the region, in panels and working groups with various local workers, civil servants, researchers and residents from other areas. He had strongly criticised the role of armed groups and the state of the community in the early waves of suicides. In 2005, he later reiterated the assessment of the armed group’s influence, but more dubiously. In 2006, he saw the double suicide in Ardoyne as a personal issue and called for more interventions from the State. In 2016, when Cormac tackled the maintenance of the juvenile suicide issue and the 2004 events, he made great use of the idea of transferred trauma. It had become the link between the indirect cause of conflict and the various direct causes for ‘suicidal ideas’, seen as individual psychological state, and mostly contextualised with the direct family:

> ‘What you also find is that for many parents, children have … for many parents the mistakes or the difficulties of the past are *turns* in their life so they try to cover it up by going out and taking drinks. Alcohol. Many people try to cover it up by taking drugs. And so therefore there is an impact there. There is an impact on the children. […] My wee lad for instance. He was only 17. But he had my trauma. He had his mum’s trauma. And then he had what was going on, because it was… He died just after the Holy Cross stuff. Hmm… And then you had young people who were brutalised and beat up by the IRA and other organisations, put down manholes, all that sort of stuff.’[1]

Cormac provided yet another framing for the death of his son. Now, the importance of the ‘transferred trauma’ inherited from his family is put at the forefront. Then comes the general state of the neighbourhood and the ‘Holy Cross stuff’ which could be seen as a way to mention the overall changing state of the neighbourhood in the years following the agreement. Then, finally, comes the mention of the aggressive role of paramilitaries at the time – which is a reference Barney and Anthony’s deaths[2]. In a very simple sense, the overall balance in causal regime has shifted.

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[1] Interview with Cormac, 28/06/2016, Houben Centre Ardoyne.

[2] He then detailed : ‘*Question*: [In 2004] there would have been discourses that link a few suicides in the area with the actions of dissidents group, or the INLA. How close do you think … ---- *Cormac*: There is some truth in it. It's basically putting the people under the pressure. I've had people held out, lots, lots of young people, who are being threatened, have been asked for money, and the problem is they don't know why they're being targeted. And then they tell me they've now become depressed and feel like taking their life.’

This overall shift is also noticeable in the evolution of the association itself. The association set up in 2004 was a local community counselling services for people who had suicidal feelings and relatives of suicide victims. At the time of the interview, Cormac and other local workers had just started another association, which was orientated towards individual training helping young people – as well as pedagogical teams in schools – to 'perceive, identify and manage emotions', and to face the pressure of social life on individuals. A drastic change from the approach held in the early 2000s[1], which went with the fact that the association became more popular at the regional level.

Finally, this leads Cormac to making some more comments on the impact of another factor and on the 'general picture', that can now be discussed:

> 'If you want to take it a bit further, the Good Friday Agreement was twenty years ago, the conflict lasted for thirty-five to near forty years. And yet, more people have died by suicide than have died during the conflict… There are six times more people, and I know those are just statistics, but there are six times more people that died by suicide than down our roads. And see in this small island that we live in, 21 people take their lives every week. And that's sad.'

Cormac now reiterates the fact that has been formulated by external actors: there are more people dying by suicide now than during the conflict. By quoting more statistical forms of knowledge on the issue, and by putting it in contrast with other similar public problems at the scale of Northern Ireland – something that local commentators repeatedly did in my presence to 'introduce' me to the gravity of juvenile suicides – he also provides a view of the issue that appears more conscious of the interdependencies of the area with the rest of Northern Irish society. This allows him, in turn, to make a more severe critique of the 'the health services and the government, you need to be forcing them along the line' since they tend to 'move it on to is the family… So the family have to try and deal with it'. It is by means of this critique of the State that the role of armed groups in juvenile suicide finds its new expression, at the level of an indirect, hollowed out, cause:

> 'When the IRA left, people went "How to I deal with this, Have I to do it? Who do I go to?" […] So many people got left behind. And when you get left behind it's like sitting in a classroom and everybody understand what's going on and you're getting left behind. How are you going to feel? You're gonna feel stupid. You're gonna feel down, depressed. […] There are people in our community today who are waiting for the conflict, because they don't know life without conflict.'

As such, the problem of armed groups is not so much that they would retain an influence in the community. It is deemed that, as time has passed, their lack of influence has now left communities with no other alternatives in terms of regulation. The State's lack of integration of those communities within the wider society becomes to blame. In these indirect forms of

[1] Philip McTaggart, 'Why emotional support is vital ?', *View*, 2016, no. 40, 2016, p. 30.

despecification, the problem is that local actors feel they have been left with no other form of social organisation to inherit instead of their communal form of conflictual integration. According to this vision, they are facing escheat. Still, Cormac goes further as he also criticises the members of the community who use this diagnosis of a lack of social integration to regain local power and 'do things by themselves'. Namely, the dissidents. Instead, he and other actors who have been increasingly affected by regional debate on suicides call for a clearer definition of the issue on the part of British State institutions. Cormac is then an actor who, because of his prolonged work of despecification over the years, because of his contact with external actors, and because of his progressive use of external forms of knowledge on the issue, has managed to settle his association in the area and gain in regional legitimacy. Yet, as we will see in the last part, this also accentuates the level of disagreement and counter accusations inside the area.

3. Dissents turn into mutual accusations between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'

After 2004, with the increasing publicisation of the issue, local actors were brought to despecify their take on juvenile suicides. Mentioning the social vacuum and getting a clearer sense of individual dynamics grew desirable for residents and workers, willing to democratise the issue. On the other hand, some more peripheral actors progressively took hold of it, often by studying the indirect causes which specifically related to Ardoyne's experience of the conflict. This evolution would, in turn, transform the necessary tension between specifying and specifying into an opposition between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in 2018 and 2019.

3.1 A new version of the problem emerges in public media

3.1.1 Who notices the increase in paramilitary punishments?

Before turning to this split, let us look at a question that seems to have been left on the side. By now, what had happened to armed groups? And what of paramilitary punishments, these events that were so important in the lives of the community's youth? In 2018 new annual figures on armed groups were published. 101 paramilitary shootings and beatings had been recorded regionally, which meant a 60% increase over the past four years[1]. Those were still

[1] Henry McDonald, 'Northern Ireland "punishment" attacks rise 60% in four years', *The Guardian*, 12 March 2018. This article comes from the same journalist who brought most of the news on suicides to the Guardian.

attacks on members of their own communities. Consequently, the head of the PSNI still blamed armed groups for the climate of fear they were imposing on local communities. In 2014, a report compiled past paramilitary beatings and shootings that had targeted children in working-class areas and concluded that from 1990 to 2014, this represented over 500 children[1]. It added that 'both loyalist and republican paramilitaries increased the level of repression against children in the decade after the paramilitary ceasefires of 1994'[2], whereas the years following 2004 showed a steady decline. Sadly, in 2018, the author was quoted saying that the trend was still "alarmingly upwards", and that "the victims are mainly young men from working-class areas, and not even children are immune"[3]. To corroborate that, in 2019, the Independent Report Commission[4] put out their first reports on paramilitarism in the region. They warned that the number of deaths and attacks from paramilitaries had increased between 2018 and 2019[5]. This also led to the development of regional awareness campaign – such as the *Stop Attacks* forum[6], or *Ending the Harm*[7], both focused on punishments involving young people. All of this shows that, from a statistical point of view, paramilitary-style punishments, though they displayed an overall reduction since 2004, remained a pressing issue for actors at the regional level.

The issue was still considered present in Ardoyne as well. In 2017, a local association conducted a survey with young people in the nationalist part of Ardoyne to see what their biggest issues were. 29% identified armed groups as a major issue[8]. In April 2019, a worker from a local youth club stated during an intercommunity event:

> "One of the things young people keep telling us is how there are certain armed groups who try to control them. Whether it's on the street, […] whether it's sucking them into crime, or whether they're young people doing things they shouldn't be doing, we need to listen when they're telling us when they're being assaulted in this way."[9]

Still, peripheral actors were the most focused on exposing the local issue. As mentioned in the introduction, August 2018 saw the publication of a first report from the *Building capacity to support transition in the New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne* group, which concluded that there were several "groups and individuals opposed to the peace and political process" in Ardoyne[10].

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[1] Compared to 4000 people of all age. See Chris Kilpatrick, 'A catalogue of brutality... by the thugs who shoot and beat children and then try to call it justice', *Belfast Telegraph*, 11 November 2014.
[2] Liam Kennedy, *They shoot children, don't they?*, Belfast, Queen's University Belfast, 2014.
[3] H. McDonald, 'Northern Ireland "punishment' attacks rise 60% in four years', art cit.
[4] A commission that was initially planned in the GFA in 1998 yet only set up in 2015.
[5] Independent Reporting Comission, *IRC Second Report*, Belfast, Independent Reporting Comission, 2019, p. 18.
[6] Stop Attacks Forum, *Stop Attacks*, https://www.stopattacks.org , 2019, (consulted on 01/12/2019).
[7] Department of Justice, *Ending The Harm*, https://www.endingtheharm.com/ , 2018, (consulted on 01/12/2019).
[8] Ardoyne Youth Entreprise, *Listen Up! AYE Youth Survey 2017*, Ardoyne, Belfast, 2017, p. 11.
[9] Ita Duncan, 'Good Morning Ulster, Report on "The Silence of the Ceasefire Generation"', 51 min 20s.
[10] Communities in Transition Consortium, *Building capacity to support transition in the New Lodge and Greater Ardoyne - Fieldwork Report from Phase 1*, *op. cit.*

During our own fieldwork, though incidents involving "paramilitaries" or "dissidents" were rare, their presence in the area was a live topic. It was discussed by residents and institutional actors, was criticised by residents' associations, was seen as desirable by some 'core residents' from central families, or was tackled by a 'conflict resolution' office in the area. Waves of recruitment were still monitored by the police, especially in 2019. These suspicions were still publicly mentioned regularly when a violent incident occurred in Ardoyne[1].

If armed groups were increasingly present in recent years, one could legitimately expect that they be increasingly mentioned in the framing of juvenile suicide, given the initial scandals which took place in 2004. If we consider the fact that 2015 was, again, the year with the highest number of suicides for Northern Ireland[2], and that we could expect the two decades passed since the agreement to have rendered more acceptable the public blaming of local armed groups, it would appear even more probable. Of course, one could argue that the increase in reported punishments is due not to punishments themselves but to the increasing intolerance towards these violent events. Regardless, in both cases, we could expect a return of blaming or questioning the role of paramilitary punishments in suicides. It was not the case. This is explained by the changes in how peripheral actors tackled the issue – favouring indirect causes rather than the direct presence of armed groups – , in how local actors tackled the issue – favouring general causes rather than the specific presence of armed groups in the area[3] – and in the crystallisation of an opposition between the two.

3.1.2 A controversial transfer

Indeed, in June 2018, an article in *The Independent* sparked new debates[4]. Centred on the research of a renowned psychologist, it was now taking for granted the social demands for public action regarding suicide. Moreover, this time, the reopening of the controversy started with peripheral actors commenting on local areas, and local professional activists responding. At this point, health workers had professionalised and were considered a group of specialised

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[1] In August 2019, paramilitaries shot a man in Ardoyne. A nationalist representative, ex-member of the IRA, said: 'Residents in Ardoyne and wider North Belfast have been shot dead in the recent past by various small armed groups masquerading as protectors. The community does not support such actions and it needs to stop." See Editor, 'Man shot in both legs in "paramilitary-style" attack in Ardoyne', *The Irish News*, 22 August 2019. The next day, the author of the 2014 report condemned the events and the lack of political actions. See Liam Kennedy: What we need now is a special taskforce to tackle scourge of paramilitaries', *Belfast Telegraph*, 23 August 2019.
[2] Mortality team, B. Manders and K. Jasveer, *Suicides in the UK, 1981 to 2018*, *op. cit.*
[3] In the local association survey, though 29% of the youth interrogated mentioned armed groups as one of the most important issues in the area, 31% mentioned 'lack of things to do', 62% mentioned drugs and 52% mentioned mental health. Ardoyne Youth Entreprise, *Listen Up! AYE Youth Survey 2017*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
[4] Joe Wallen, 'Northern Ireland is facing a suicide epidemic – but continues to be ignored in UK mental health funding', *The Independent*, 4 June 2018.

workers on the topic. This limited the reverberation of discussion in the area. Presenting statistics about rates, gender and geographical variations, the authors of the article expressed concerns about the ongoing suicide epidemic in Northern Ireland, and criticised the fact that it was still politically ignored. By now, the term 'epidemic' was being used to describe the long-term 'rapid increase in the annual number of suicides since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement' and the fact that more people 'have died by taking their own lives since the signing of the agreement than from violence during the Troubles'[1]. The whole explanation was now based on the work of the renowned psychologists, establishing that almost 40% of the Northern Irish population witnessed a traumatic event associated with the Troubles, 18% had seen someone dead or seriously injured. The psychologist then argued that:

> 'The most significant factor [in the suicide epidemic] is the legacy of the Troubles [.] We see a clear link between seeing trauma and then someone inflicting trauma on themselves. We have the issue now of living in a post-conflict society where people have to process what has been gained because of all the fighting. All the evidence we have show that people in Northern Ireland are re-interpreting what they have seen or even done and it re-traumatises them.'[2]

This author synthesises a new way of answering the enigma posed on the ground. It provides some indirect links between past violence and current events, links which have been touched upon before with issues of 'troubled generation', 'ceasefire baby', 'lack of resilience', 'trauma' and 'legacy'. The most significant factor remains the legacy of the Troubles. It is considered to have an impact on the levels of suicide and is explained mostly because of 'individualised traumas' and an aggregation of individual suicidal behaviours. Yet, the journalist and the scholar still invoke the lack of cohesion deemed characteristic of post-conflict situations. In view of what these comments render visible, this is the only factor that could help tackle juvenile suicides. Indeed, to their discussion of trauma, the psychologist adds that 'when a society goes through conflict, it actually causes social cohesion because it brings people together to fight against something. When that ends you see an increase in suicide rates because the connection that was there has gone… People have lost that power and a legacy of poverty and hopelessness returns'[3].

According to that view, on one hand, the effects of a past conflict specific to areas like Ardoyne are invisibly inscribed in individuals. Communities, on the other hand, suffer from a lack of integration which leads individuals to be faced with their own lack of social integration, which then amounts to saying that they are lost because of the transition to peace. Given those

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*

two readings, how could actors holding this position still argue for a relevance of conflict in answering the first enigma, ‘How come young people are the ones to commit suicide in those areas?’. How could they, given that teenagers cannot be included in that category of people who witnessed a traumatic event during the conflict? The idea of transferred trauma, mentioned by Cormac and developed by those researchers, is precisely meant to shed light on this part of the problem. By stressing, in most of their prior research, ‘the role of the conflict in explaining increased rate of suicide following the peace agreement’[1], those researchers established that people with ‘conflict-related trauma’ were more likely to consider suicide or plan it, more than people affected by other traumas or than non-traumatised respondents. ‘Conflict-related experience’[2] and how they affected individuals were then deemed central in understanding the surge in the issue. It is by addressing the paradoxical case of young people that the idea of transferred trauma comes to complete this apparatus.

This public effort at politicising the issue contained, in germ, several elements which could lead to a stiffening of the split between how attached residents understood juvenile suicide and how distanced observers understood it. They focused on the second enigma and on statistical observations. They argued that the origins of suicide could be indirectly linked with the conflict, via some indirect causes unseen by residents. It placed in individual ‘traumas’ the link between individual suicidal behaviours[3], whilst also criticising the lack of State regulation in the face of those traumatised communities and families. As mentioned before, all those efforts at providing new detached forms of knowledge on juvenile suicides were rightfully based on expectations shared by most social groups in Northern Ireland, and even more rightfully went through a test and trial process which solidified the accounts of the social world put forward. Yet, not only did the idea of ‘transferred trauma’ inherently put the blame on local members of the community, including those who are said to have unwillingly transmitted something to younger generation. It also reduces local actors to their will to ‘repress’ these effects of the conflict. Deprived of the means of a dialogical management of risks, the

[1] Siobhan O’Neill et al., ‘Patterns of Suicidal Ideation and Behavior in Northern Ireland and Associations with Conflict Related Trauma’, *PLOS ONE*, 19 March 2014, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 91532 ; Finola Ferry et al., ‘Exposure to Trauma and Mental Health Service Engagement Among Adults Who Were Children of the Northern Ireland Troubles of 1968 to 1998: Adults Who Were Children of the Northern Ireland “Troubles”’, *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, December 2017, vol. 30, no. 6, p. 593-601 ; See as well Rory C. O’Connor et Siobhan M O’Neill, ‘Mental health and suicide risk in Northern Ireland: a legacy of the Troubles?’, *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 1 July 2015, vol. 2, no. 7, p. 582-584.

[2] F. Ferry et al., ‘Exposure to Trauma and Mental Health Service Engagement Among Adults Who Were Children of the Northern Ireland Troubles of 1968 to 1998’, art cit.

[3] It is already a critical move compared to psychological approaches which stop at the idea of suicide being related to a form of medical and mental suffering of individuals.

publicisation of this causal regime now had all the chances of splitting local Ardoyne residents and workers from peripheral observers.

3.2 When community workers and residents seem to 'resist'

Mainly professional youth workers, community workers and volunteers reacted to this public move[1]. Whilst they put this interpretation to the test with regard to their local area, the precautions they took in so doing reveal the ambivalence that has failed to be voiced publicly.

3.2.1 Refusing to give precedence to the Troubles

In the week after this newspaper article, I would first talk about it with Charles. In his sixties, he is a community worker in the residents' association of a small unionist area, bordering Ardoyne. At this point, I have known Charles for two years. He is well known for his local work, his demeanour – 'outspoken' for some, 'deceitful' for others –, for being a unionist who works with the nationalist community, and for his activism on suicide prevention. He, too, lost a young son to suicide. That week, I stopped by for a coffee. Charles, tense, mentioned an article he had read about suicides. Realising we had read the same piece, the one from The Independent, he told me that he had invited the psychologist to show her what was 'actually going on' in North Belfast. He continued:

> 'She puts the young people's suicide on the legacy of the Troubles. She's living in fucking cuckoo's land, and I wanted to invite her to come in here to see what's really going on. She put that on the trauma people face after the Troubles, the legacy issue… What fucking trauma? She's full of shit. The people dying here, the youth, never had any involvement in the armed groups, have no recollection of what the Troubles are, 'cause they never lived it, they don't care about the Interface, they're into drugs and have big life issues… I ask the long question you see. The right question, not the simple one. But that's not the question people want to hear. Because of that, I get taken away. I've been trying to get to some of the people from the government regulating health issues for three years, and they're still refusing to meet me. Yes, we do have a suicide epidemic. But because we're way up in more poverty than the rest of the UK. We have 5 or 10 people concerned by suicide every week. And no one is batting an eye.'

Charles refuses both framings that would give the conflict any direct or indirect relevance in his juvenile suicides. He opposes the idea that individuals carry the personal trauma of past events. Over the years, he repeatedly stated that he did not believe every suicide was 'mental health related' by which he meant, more than psychological interpretations, the idea of natural mental preconditions[2]. But he also denies that urban communities would still directly enforce a

[1] Note that medical practitioners or local branches of regional institutionsdo have a different view on suicides. They strive to 'cure the individual' with psychological work or spirituality.

[2] Even though the core idea of 'transferred trauma' is not tackled, as it is not even considered by Charles.

pathological form of integration relying on an opposition between Catholic and Protestant communities. Charles tends to emphasise that 'the youth' are the victims of this scourge. His second refusal concerns the specification of the issues by external actors: suicides in deprived Belfast are deemed akin to suicides in deprived parts of Manchester and Liverpool. In so doing, he also blames all more detached actors for censoring him, and for avoiding his take on the issue as it would go against the 'simpler' conflictual explanations. According to Charles, they would not want to hear about factors for which the British State is directly responsible, nor his views as a local worker. All those points sustain a radical mistrust reduced to an opposition exemplified in Charles's conclusion: 'She's as wrong as I am the father of a dead son'[1].

Ray's position is slightly different. Ray is a community worker in the nationalist part of Ardoyne. He has been giving one-to-one advice to residents with mental-health problems for several years. He strove to counter the larger professional organisations, which, according to him, never fulfil the person's need as they are limited by local waiting lists. I would see him almost every Thursday morning in the local community centre, and he was also offering two more 'call-in' sessions in other parts of North Belfast. After the publication of the article, we took a bit more time to discuss the issue of suicide:

> I mention the discussion I had with Cormac two years back, as they are acquainted. I mention how I tackled the issue with other relatives of people who had committed suicide: they disagreed with linking suicide with the Troubles's legacy… Ray nods in discontent when I present this point. He then goes 'There's no link there, what I say to people is that the Troubles just suppressed it. There were too many things going on, so it was just kept under the carpet.'Ray proceeds to tell me the story of his meeting with a priest when he was working in Clonard in the 1980s. 'At the time the IRA was bombing the city. We talked about the issues there, how bad the community was having it, and the man said to us that we would have a ceasefire, and then suicide would go up, we would have a lot more incest, alcohol and drug abuse. On account that he had seen that in other countries torn out by the war. And all he said there turned out to be true. But it's always been there: it's just we hear of it now because the Troubles have disappeared. We had bigger issues to handle before that. But the overall problem was there and is still here: in areas like here, you're faced with great deprivation, money is not being spent, and that's no mystery where our problems come from'.

For Ray, whether or not there are remnants of the Troubles, either individually or at the communal level, is not the problem. Like Charles, he displayed a general annoyance with observers who used legacy issues to explain the rise in suicides and the issues faced by victims. Ray instead sees the peace process as a period which only revealed problems who had been, up until now, dissimulated by the conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Those are the deprivation of the area, and its isolation from the rest of society. Not that those issues were

[1] As stated by C. Lemieux and Y. Barthe on how the State handles risks faced by local populations: 'Generally, we can argue that professional expertise, every time it ignores or disqualifies the supports on which ordinary persons rely in their judgements and in their actions, takes the risks of being bypassed or relativised by them'. Cyril Lemieux and Yannick Barthe, 'Les risques collectifs sous le regard des sciences du politique. Nouveaux chantiers, vieilles questions', *Politix. Revue des sciences sociales du politique*, 1998, vol. 11, no. 44, p. 24.

reduced by violence and conflict. But he considers that they were underreported in the face of bigger issues. This time, this local worker tends to criticise how detached actors describe increasing rates, based on his experience of past specific characteristics of deprived urban communities: their tendencies to limit public discussions on specific problems. This increasing rate should be taken as an optical illusion rather than a delayed effect of the conflict. Here again, the British State is blamed for taking advantage of this optical illusion. Still, both actors openly rejected external specification: they openly blamed peripheral actors for neglecting general aspects of suicidal behaviour in any deprived area, in favour of specific features of transferred trauma in Ardoyne. Both renewed their efforts to despecify the issue of juvenile suicides, and none addressed the possible influence of paramilitary punishments.

The idea of an indirect link is far from absent amongst community workers. The same month, I also worked with Judith. She is a community worker with a local youth association which tries to coordinate the local youth offer and organises a regular 'outreach' in the neighbourhood[1]. Though a local worker, Judith is not from the area and has only been working here for a few months. One day during tea, as Judith tackled the issue of suicides, she considered that they were often linked with the consumption of drugs in the area. Then, in our exchange:

> I mention the people who told me that they did not agree with the various explanations put forward by scholars, in particular that juvenile suicides would be an effect of the war. Anne listens to me and nods attentively. She pauses, then she says 'Yes, but you know… Keep in mind that, instead we say "drugs and alcohol", but it doesn't come from nowhere. These problems do not come from nowhere. And often it can be related to a previous problem such as a family problem, which is related to an older trauma or previous events … and then, we stumble back upon the Troubles'.

Here, Judith temper Charles and Ray's comments by uncovering the different individual and social links that may lie behind apparently casual factors such as 'drugs and alcohol'. This effort is possible because of the now accepted multifactoriality of the issue. By taking this longer-term view, the effects of the Troubles can still be seen as indirect causes for suicidal behaviour amongst young people. One that would mainly go through the familial circle: it should be noted that this goes with a tendency, not expressed in this extract but mentioned throughout the fieldwork, to describe those problematic young people as 'hard to reach' and dramatically isolated from the community and from their surroundings. What allows local actors to make the same arguments is that families are blamed for the indirect maintenance of conflict and for preventing integration within the community.

[1] Two outreach workers walk the streets of Ardoyne at the end of the day. They engage with young people to discuss their days, their possible issues, and to let them know about what is available for them in the area.

Additionally, Judith's caveats actualise tendencies that are also present in Charles and Ray's take on the issue, but which can more openly be expressed in this context and interactional situation. Charles and Ray's position appeared tailored to the fact that they were talking to me, a peripheral researcher who had come to hear their views on their local areas. By contrast, we can see Judith's comment as a warning not to fall into an overly involved take of the issue, which may risk turning into a form of 'local short-sightedness'. But though these expectations are present, they are now mostly expressed as a secondary comment at the local level[1]. Even if Judith expresses this relativisation, she does so hesitantly, takes her time, and asks me to 'Keep those things in mind' as if they were supplementary details, not to invalidate the other dominant explanation that is deemed to prevail amongst workers around her.

3.2.2 Blaming a pathological division of labour

The relationship between these community workers points us towards another central aspect of the response of local workers: the problem was not so much to see who or what was to blame for suicides. Rather, it was to voice that one of the main reasons the public issue was still an issue was the inadequate forms of its regulation. By now, most attempts at handling the issues and at coordinating the public response had been deemed inefficient, and that was becoming a part of the problem in itself. It was now deemed to weigh as much as original causes in the continuation of the suicide epidemic.

Local actors then formulated two main criticisms. First, they blamed a lack of cooperation between different neighbourhoods. Second, they condemned both the 'lack' and the 'overwhelming offer' of services around suicides. If, in the 2000s, we saw complaints of a lack of awareness and services, those late 2010s critiques centred on the pathological organisation of existing services: this was yet another way to answer ongoing controversies on the handling of juvenile suicides. Over the year, Charles appeared increasingly critical of the lack of cooperation between neighbourhoods in North Belfast, including between Catholic and Protestant residents:

> 'See down south, they had massive protests around the water issue that they had[2], and they got their way. No one would ever do that, no one is having a campaign for suicide. If we had that amount of death because of road traffic, the government would be sending cops blocking every road corner of the city. But nothing for suicide. See that group you were at the other day. I was the only Protestant

[1] The reverse is true. We could show that the diagnosis of the community's grip over teenagers is still present amongst local workers. But 'drug dealers' are now blamed for oppressing isolated young people. Debates then revolve around whether or not the influence of the network of local drug dealers can be equated to that of the past network of armed groups. It is one of the reasons 'drugs' have become the new important factor in debating juvenile suicides. As such, it is still present, though at a secondary level, in the way local actors approach the issue.
[2] The Right2Water movement sparked by the introduction of water charges in the Republic of Ireland in 2014.

> attending that. But suicide has no religion. We have to support each other. Let's go down, take the street. But once again, my opinion on suicide is different from most people. I don't think that all suicides are mental health related.'

The lack of mobilisation on the issue was deemed frightening, compared to 'lesser' public issues such as water charges, or 'more classic' issues such as road deaths. There is an implicit comment behind that: the issue of suicide differs from water charges or road deaths, in that tackling those hardly meant overcoming a 'communal framing' that would have divided communities in acknowledging victimhood or responsibility. Instead, Charles now had to fight in order to see how suicides is a 'common denominator between the two communities', just as drugs and major unemployment. By 2016, most residents and local workers were putting suicide in the category of problem that allowed bridges between communities. As such, the institutional devices were increasingly blamed for not crossing the 'divide': not because people were still segmenting the issue of suicide – as was the case around 2004 – but because tackling the issue meant engaging a series of practical and institutional networks that were *still* embedded in a lack of cooperation between urban communities. For example, when Charles mentions the drug meeting, he is not saying that Protestants did not come because they did not feel affected by the issue of suicide. Rather, he is saying that they did not come because the centre in which the meeting is taking place is too close to the infamous Ardoyne interface and is still intimidating – a point that he has explicitly and repeatedly made elsewhere. As such, it did not allow them to address issues of integration and opposition between groups that would lead communities to have an internally coherent yet common aspiration to solve the problems that bind them. We should also note that this is sometimes blamed on the State, notably on the alleged asymmetrical funding between Catholics and Protestant communities that results from dominant conceptions of suicide, as exposed by this local unionist representative in an interview we did in 2017:

> 'We're almost reaching the point when we would need to start a community group here, because the justice system doesn't work. And Glenbryn definitely needs that, it needs a youth work because we don't have one anymore. It just comes from the vast disparity of funding between nationalist and unionist areas, and that's something I brought up to their attention, … but to no avail. It's also linked to the legacy of the conflict.'

This time, the representatives were not trying to get both communities to address the issue together. Rather, he called for a more balanced institutional support in each community. Though this is precisely what Charles criticised, we realise here that they *both* rely on a despecification of the issue. It is just another way to provide a political solution for the fact that both the Catholic and Protestant communities are deemed to have the same general type of problem. We find that the management of the public problem has become hindered by the fact that local

actors now take position on social and stately integration – as mentioned by Charles – and communal integration – as mentioned by Ian – by opposing peripheral actors.

This goes with a second, more perplexing, reason why the issue was deemed to be continuously renewing. Some people denounced both the fact that there were too many support groups in the area, and that there was a lack of support in the area. In all our examples, we have heard the latter. There would be no services available for young people to handle mental health and suicidal behaviour. On the other hand, it was frequent to hear that there are now *way too many* services and support groups available on the issue of suicide. They are said to be uncoordinated and end up offering similar services whilst leaving core aspect of the problem unaddressed[1]. As stated in the Care Zone report on health services in Belfast:

> 'Due to the many sectarian interfaces that evolved over the decades before and since the outbreak of "the Troubles", a "patchwork" of local communities that lack a common identity has developed in the Sacred Heart Parish area. The fragmented nature of communities has made it challenging for statutory, voluntary and community organisations to identify collectively agreed priorities. As a result, statutory agencies have not as yet developed a holistic area action plan with agreed outcomes to address the many health challenges faced by communities in the area.'[2]

This links the idea that there are not enough services available with the facts that local communities are not working on the issue, and that they are not getting involved with external third party to 'develop a holistic area action plan with agreed outcomes'. The local youth get lost amongst all those options, not knowing where to go, in the community or in the city. Communities would not need additional services, but a 'consortium'[3]. And indeed, the list of organisations in the greater Ardoyne area can be overwhelming. Three local advice groups, three branches of regional organisations, all the local Youth Clubs, Community Centres, boxing club, health trust, day centres, residents' association, women's group, individual counsellors, churches all offer services related to suicide prevention and mental health.

That some actors may say that there are 'not enough services' available to tackle suicides when other claim to be overwhelmed by them also comes from the fact that they deem available services to be mistaken on what the issue is. This is where the framing and enigmas come back into play. For example, Ray criticised the existing institutional framework by reaffirming his opposition to the journalist and the academic on legacy. He said:

[1] This pathological offer of services and representation *inside* the nationalist community of Ardoyne has been the subject of a recent sociological thesis, see Michael Liggett, *Social capital's imagined benefits in Ardoyne electoral ward*, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, 2017, 330 p.

[2] Care Zone Steering Group, *Care Zone Report*, Belfast, 2019, p. 15.

[3] Tara McLaughin, *Suicide Prevention Day: Grieving dad calls for multi-agency approach*, https://planetradio.co.uk/cool-fm/local/news/suicide-prevention-day-grieving-dad-calls-for-multi-agency-approach/ , 10 September 2019, (retrieved 28 November 2019).

> 'But, see, people got mixed up. After the agreement, people received a lot of money, because the Peace I and Peace II programmes were set up at the end of the Troubles. And then they set some budget for mental health: but their mistake was, they included suicide in this money umbrella without making any differences there, and, of course, at the time there were a lot of victims of the Troubles that were working in those programmes. Really, we should have had separate budgets. We ended up mixing the victims with all the rest, and then, even though it declined afterwards, it was still seen as the bulk of mental issues. But it certainly wasn't. The people needing help with suicide are people… 15 years old who started smoking blunts. The issue is not legacy. Their programme, it's not creating jobs, it's really a zero-hour contract who can make you work day-in day-out whenever them want. It's just pulling you into a scheme to get the figures down.'

Ray condemned external institutions which, when maintained without detachment from the categories they rest on, fail to see the evolution of the public issue. This reinforced the social optical illusion he had defended. For Ray, the confusion between victims meant that State agents both misunderstood the issue and offered inadequate services. Like Charles, Ray suspects it may be on purpose, to 'get the figures down': local workers often criticised the obsession of the government and of the European Union with solving the conflict, which would lead them to presuppose what problems need solved. Yet, the ambivalence is well exemplified in the fact that it also led local workers to use this tendency in order to obtain funding when necessary. This sometimes led them to be accused of dramatising their work, or of including sectarianism in the issues they reportedly tackle, even though they do not. Because of the contradictory natures of those aspirations, actors from Ardoyne alternatively blame each other for critiquing *and* complying to that tendency from the State and external third parties.

This paradoxical cohabitation went with a heavy professionalisation of the topic. It amplifies the fact that, as demonstrated in those discussions and in the new dynamic of the debate compared to 2004, community workers and residents now tend to feel like they have lost ownership of the local issue. It is noticeable with local workers, who become more aware of their ambivalence, but feel they lack the means to voice it and instead turn increasingly critical of more peripheral attempts at approaching the indirect causes of juvenile suicides. That is even more the case for residents, who now delegate discussions and opinions on the matter to a myriad of professionals, whilst still not having the means, in return, to rest on a clear view of what juvenile suicide is, how it works, and how it is being addressed in their local area.

3.3 When countercriticisms crystallise an opposition

This final moment in the controversy was defined by more comments on the local and peripheral production of knowledge on the local issue of suicides, which manifested in mutual criticism of resistance from 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

3.3.1 Peripheral criticisms of 'Insiders'

In April 2019, I got in touch with another renowned psychologists researching the issue, who had been working in North Belfast. After explaining my sociological take on suicide, I presented him with the reticence that I had witnessed amongst local workers and residents. He commented the relation between his work and the life of people affected on the ground:

> 'This morning I was talking with someone from a support group I know, and they had been contacted by people from MTV who wanted to make a piece on their programme, and they asked her "How many young people have problems that are related to the Troubles?" and they said "Well, we have nobody here having been affected". But then I was like "Yeah, but just take a moment and look at the parents, look at how the children have grown up … and look for the link." And I mean, sometimes, there is no link, sometimes it's just not related. But it's just that it's on the unseen, yet it's really here.'

That is a first way for the researcher to argue that actors on the ground do not really understand suicide, and the indirect causes that more detached actors want to put forward. They do not see them, even amongst professional local workers. Yet, the scholar also came back to the description of direct causes specifically related to conflictual communities:

> 'I'm one of the many people to turn out ok, but it's not as easy in deprived areas. And even, effectively you know, we still have kids who grow up who are directly affected by those issues, who are getting engaged in activities and who have to deal with all this. So, in some respects some things haven't changed a lot. It's just that during the Troubles that kind of atmosphere and of problems was everywhere, whereas now it is limited to small and specific areas.'

In the psychologist's view, the people in North Belfast are still 'directly affected by those issues'. Young people are still the victims of pathological communities and of the grip of some of their members. This went with an explicit specification of their issues, as what used to be a general issue is now limited to a set of specific urban areas. However, the ambivalence is palpable as the researcher repeatedly tried to explain how he apprehended blaming these communities as a whole when describing this social organisation, or the parents when he mentioned transferred trauma. When I replied that this notion was widely used but still critiqued or neglected, he said:

> 'The resistance is there. But actually, we see it on the ground when we work with community groups who work with people, they understand where trauma comes from. Most importantly, we really see it with groups working with kids. Because they are engaged with them every day, they work with them, they know, you know when a kid's response is not right, and when you uncover issues. […] But then it gets more complicated with groups of adults, because adults are harder to chat with, and they will come up with their different explanations of their mental illness.'

The scholar reiterated that local adults were difficult to work with as they came up with their own local explanations of events, whereas local groups working with children would realise the importance of transgenerational trauma. For this detached actor, even after reaching

that “level of discussion” with a counsellor, residents may be reluctant to recognise the influence of conflict on their lives through the influence of their parents. The psychologist blame them for not wanting to put their parents in question, which goes with a ‘tendency to dismiss that side of it when it is laid out for you on your case’. A tendency not to put the blame on locals who are directly or indirectly responsible for their suffering – and, in our case, juvenile suicides. But when I more precisely asked him about the groups who suggest alternative explanations, the psychologist replied extensively:

> ‘See, you need to be careful and always think about where do all those groups come from, and what they’re telling you… You’ll find that most of the community groups that hold this position are made up of participants of the conflict. Because they just never, ever, want to take responsibility for the problems laid out there. That’s what you’ll find. Think about what the goals are, of the people you’re talking to. It’s just that they’re part of community groups who need the money to function and to work in their area, so they don’t want transgenerational trauma to be the answer to the problem they’re facing locally, they want the answer to be what will land them money for their specific project […]. Whereas if you take a “Trauma-centred” approach, you uncover the different links that exist behind it. See, people adopt explanations because it suits their interest, but also because it suits their personal narratives. So that it doesn’t displace what they’ve organised. See, those people, they’ve been engaged in the conflict, they fought, they want to think that it was for a cause. […] But it is very interesting to see how the different explanation varies with people who have different levels of insight and then who have different interests. And I mean, this is worth for me as well you know! The research is funded and what I do depend on that as well. That leads me to take a specific approach on the issue, which does not always meet with what other people would say. […] Even worse, people will change *how they explain it* because of the funding. Whenever it becomes available, they will adjust. You’ll see that in two years when there’ll be offers of funding for more programmes around transgenerational trauma, they’ll be working on it. And that’s really what’s been happening for twenty years, especially at the beginning when we said that the people were former participants of the conflict, and it’s true that there was a period during which the “mental health” work was really used by community groups, and at the beginning it was just some groups set up and funded by governments just so that the boys would give up their weapons, that’s the reality of it. Even though it’d be very hard for you to find evidence of that. People in community groups have benefited from the mental health framework in that regard, just because it boiled down to “We’ll put money down if you stop killing each other”.’

In this comment, we find another explanation which blames the local resistance to admitting responsibility. Members of local community groups are deemed to be the very people responsible for the effects of conflict on young people. This detached actor judge that it would be too costly for them to address the pathological consequences of past decisions that were intended to affect positively their local areas. Either that, or the local community workers are deemed guided by their strategic interest. Both lead to severely delegitimising local interpretation of juvenile suicides, but also to blaming the hypocritical use of “mental health” theories by the State and to regret that the current state of the debate prevents actors, her included, from avoiding those accusations of situated interest.

This detached actor now attempted to explain the current state of the controversy by mobilising the idea of ‘locals’ and of their resistance. Yet, in so doing, they neglected how it had been, up until now and at least partially, desirable for local actors to accept and mobilise

interpretation proposed by peripheral actors on their own problems. This was particularly the case in the first period of despecification on the issue. If it had not been so, if they had only been resisting external interpretation for the sake of strategic interests, they would not have accepted an entirely new view on their issue.

3.3.2 Local criticisms of 'outsiders'

The same type of countercriticism operates from within the local urban communities. A year after the article, I am back with Charles. I see him quite regularly, but this time we are in a bus taking us to County Down for a community tour. After talking about his activism, and mentioning that I had met the psychologist he had mentioned to me a year before, he told me that he had also met her during a conference:

> Charles tells me that, at the end, he got up, during question time. Then, Charles, speaking hastily, recalls that he had told her "*Sorry we've never met but you may remember me from the email I sent you*" and she said she was really sorry, she had been terribly busy at the minute. At that point of his story Charles laughs sarcastically and tells me "Well, she wasn't terribly busy to give talks. But so, I told her that, from where I was coming from, this wasn't my experiences, and that after losing my child ten years ago and seeing other young kids committing suicide, I didn't believe her. My kid was fifteen and he had never seen the Troubles in his own life. See, she was all taking about the genes and changes in the gene, I don't believe it."Charles then turns to me and asks me why, "for God's sake", did she accept to meet with me and to try to explain all those things to me and not to him. I feel embarrassed and I laugh, simply saying that "I don't know". Charles doesn't mind as it was a rhetorical question. […] He adds that he told her that "This isn't what is going on, but people would believe you as an academic but they wouldn't believe me as a father!" And then Charles, with more conviction, tells me that he concluded with'If people who commit suicide are the ones affected by the Troubles, then why didn't I kill myself? Why wasn't I the one to kill himself? More than anything it's actually a class thing, because it's not a mystery if it happens all around North Belfast'. He pauses for a second and adds a long point about the exchange:
>
> 'And she didn't really know what to say, she just said there were different factors. But she was really quick, she didn't answer me or anything, she just said "*Thank you, yes, yes, I agree with you*" and then she said "*next question*". But if you agree with me, why did you write the exact opposite in the papers? It's all about those people going by fucking books. She just sidestepped me, because she's just used to talking in front of a room full of psychologists, because there, people don't know anything about it, they haven't lived it, so they look at you for answers. But it's not the same when you're talking to people who lived. And I'm not a "Yes dog", I raise my hand and I say what I think. But you see people, people came to see me at the end and said "*Fair play to you*", people told me, they were happy I was there to say it because they felt the same.'

Charles criticised the scholar for taking time to exchange on the issue of suicides in a public presentation but not with people who were affected by the local issues. Once again, he based his knowledge of suicide on his own experience of loss and reminded that his son never had to witness the conflict. Again, Charles used his case to put the scholar's position to the test, and to defend a position of lay expert on the topic[1]. He then blamed peripheral actors for regularly avoiding confronting their own forms of knowledge to local discourses as it would

[1] Harry Collins and Robert Evans, *Rethinking Expertise*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2007, 171 p.

presumably put them in a difficult position, in the current state of debates. Here, residents ended up blaming the resistance of peripheral actors, now denounced as outsiders and distanced experts, to local cases and to trends which contradict their interpretation of the issue, and their interest in the conflict.

At the end, curious, Charles turned to me and asked me what the psychologists had told me about people who did not believe him. I felt caught between a rock and a hard place. Rather than relating he had said they were hypocrites, and in order not to convey the personal information gathered in interview, I limited myself to reporting his comment that he was a 'Psychologist not a Sociologist and…'. Charles interrupted me sharply to say:

> 'Yes, well that's bullshit, the brain is too complicated, you can use it to say anything. Everyone is different because of it. People interpret texts differently, people interpret things, just have a look here at the Protestants and the Catholics with the Bible.'

Charles appears highly sceptical of the interpretations put forward by detached actors, reducing them to a supposed 'strategic' use of science to advocate an interpretation on juvenile suicides whose first aim would be to blame the local community and the conflict. But the way this very explicit opposition unfolded is also important. Throughout my ethnographic work, as mentioned in the introduction, situations of uneasiness that I have faced progressively made me more aware of the dichotomy between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' that had settled in the circulation of public problems. I came to feel regularly ill at ease with the fact that residents often saw in my presence an occasion to explain that they were portrayed in a pessimistic and stigmatising light by 'outsiders'. They did so either by appearing overly optimistic with me, to ensure that I did not fall in that category, or by shutting me out, as if already sure that I was falling in that category. These reactions were justified by a form of exhaustion in front of the many pieces of research conducted on Ardoyne by social scientists over the past two decades, without return-on-investment. This feeling of over-investigation nurtured a production of external knowledge increasingly devoid of bridges with local knowledge.

We said earlier that external experts who disqualified local supports for ordinary forms of knowledge often increase the chance of local actors bypassing or relativising their professional propositions[1]. Here, efforts of specification and despecification which were once mutually constitutive of the progressive composition of more detached knowledge on the issue were now associated in a reductive and stigmatising way with one or the other particular group.

[1] C. Lemieux et Y. Barthe, 'Les risques collectifs sous le regard des sciences du politique. Nouveaux chantiers, vieilles questions', art cit., p. 24.

External actors were reduced to their supposed tendency to specify the issue, blamed as 'know-it-all outsiders', whilst locals were reduced to their supposed tendency to despecify the issue and to resist any mention of the conflict, blamed as 'stubborn locals'. Residents then felt increasingly dispossessed of a public problem they had contributed to shape and constitute in 2004. Peripheral actors feel increasingly incapable of sustaining more detachment from the problem of juvenile suicides without stigmatising local communities, and without renouncing the denaturalisation allowed by the description of indirect causes. If some of those efforts were initially matching local aspirations, they were now turning into an opposition between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', either inside and outside the local communities or North Belfast, or inside and outside the sociotechnical networks which produce sociological and psychological interpretation of suicides[1]. A new form of segregation has settled in, in which the coherent circulation of knowledge on local issues between different social groups is rendered increasingly difficult, even though they share the same desire to attain a more pacific society that is more aware of its internal excesses, of which juvenile suicides are the painful manifestation.

3.3.3 A HARDLY SPEAKABLE AMBIVALENCE?

We now see why the relative absence of armed groups is explained by the changes in how peripheral actors tackled the issue – favouring indirect causes rather than the direct presence of armed groups – , in how local actors tackled the issue – favouring general causes rather than the specific presence of armed groups in the area[2]. The crystallisation of an opposition between the two prevents further detachment from occurring, by limiting the interrelations between local and peripheral social groups, hence limiting a more complete view of the problem, which takes into account not only the variety of factors at play but also the ambivalence of actors regarding blaming members of their own community.

To be more precise, it is not really that armed groups are never mentioned. It is that we rarely witness local actor talking about conflict or paramilitary punishments in the case of juvenile suicide when it comes to describing the situation to outsiders or to State agents. However, if this is not common in public, signs of the ambivalence are still regularly noticeable in private or at the local level. To discuss this final point, I turn to a conversation I had with

[1] See 'The trials of rationality' in B. Latour, *Science in action : how to follow scientists and engineers through society*, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

[2] In the local association survey, though 29% of the youth interrogated mentioned armed groups as one of the most important issues in the area, 31% mentioned 'lack of things to do', 62% mentioned drugs and 52% mentioned mental health. See Ardoyne Youth Entreprise, *Listen Up! AYE Youth Survey 2017*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

Aidan, another community worker, in May 2019. Aidan is Judith's boss, as he runs the youth provider association. Just like Judith, he does not come from Ardoyne. He is even more engaged with local young people and with external institutional actors. I had seen him in a *Stop Attacks* and a *Sectarianism* meeting the week before. I asked why no one else from Ardoyne was attending those. He first said it was a matter of mailing lists, and then added:

> 'But really we attend those things because I think we need to stick our head above the parapet. I really think every group in the area should be voicing clearly a position on paramilitary punishment and saying "There's no fucking way we'll let this go". We need to have that put out. And in a way *Stop Attacks* was actually great, even though the actual organisation of the day was a bit poor, it was a bit clicky, and it ended up synergising small groups chatting together and not interacting with each other during the day. Because initially you're left wondering "How are the youth workers tackling paramilitarism with B4, when we don't know how youth workers can tackle paramilitarism?' But the event really gave us a broader look at the picture, saying how you could focus on early intervention, last interventions, family support, etc. And all of those really clarified how you could do the difference, and now when I see the EA programmes on this and the Executive*'s* "Tackling paramilitarism", I'm beginning to understand how it works.'

Here, Aidan relied on his surprising experience with statutory bodies to explain how he is now able to bring armed groups back into his approach to youth work in the area. It is about providing a social alternative where youth workers participate in affecting the local milieu to prevent armed group incidents. In so doing, he is able to voice how his interdependencies with more detached actors, who regularly confront him with a different view of his area, allow him to propose an approach of youth work and mental work that appears more conscious of indirect causes. And in so doing, who openly tackles them and who becomes able to voice its position regarding those indirect causes without feeling reduced to community blaming[1]. He then added:

> 'We still need to have a mainstream address for some of the extraordinary characteristics that we have … you can offer all the service you want but then, 'Oh yeah, by the way, we're a post-conflict society, we have armed groups still active in our area.'But I think people are scared of having that conversation. There are no resources for that, either with the community infrastructure and B4, and yet we need to ask ourselves how we can deliver on those issues without the tail wagging the dog […] But there we simply need an organisation. Are we good enough for that? […] What about the policing context? And certainly, with AYE, I'd say, our administrative practices need to change, the way we organise projects need to change, I as a manager need to change.'

Aidan's comment now displays a second move provoked by this repeated interaction with external actors on armed groups and their continuous influence in the area. Aidan is now distancing himself, with humour, from the locals who try to render invisible the excess in their community. Even those who do so whilst attempting to solve the issue of juvenile suicides. In so doing, he is also able to comment on why they were unable to do so until now, and how

[1] As mentioned by Aidan, the obstacles which remain in the way of a collective increase in reflexivity caused by this interdependency with external social group is the pathological organisation of services in the area, which prevents youth workers from various organisations from efficiently working with one another.

moving beyond this opposition between 'insider' and 'outsider', and the resulting internal tension within each community, demands a transformation in the organisation of youth services.

Theoretically, *in fine*, and if adequately regulated, this confrontation would be an occasion for residents to claim victimhood in the full knowledge of this tension. In sum, it would be an occasion to remain the owner of the public problem, whilst both honouring their links to the community and assuming a critique of themselves, produced by 'outsiders', of their role in the perpetration of conflictual dynamics. It is not an easy task. At the current state of the divide between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', and because of how all group has been reduced to their longing for either specification or despecification, publicly making armed groups responsible as members of the community cannot be fully valued by residents. It would go against defending their capacity to detach themselves from the past and to willingly change their relations with one another, something that is already seldom recognised by observers who reduce them to their resistance.

Our examples show the mechanism in which they may find supports to get out of this status quo. It is the fact that local actors still demand, in return, and because of their prolonged and unavoidable exchanges with external actors, a controlled specification of their issue. It is this expectation that the interpretation in terms of mental health, by the very fact that it has come to dominate, ends up revealing. Sure, it had become a desirable way to frame the issue for Ardoyne residents who, at first, wanted to avoid specifying and stigmatising their issues too much. Now they start to demand, as Aidan, both from external actors and from their peers, a correct handling of the tension between specifying and despecifying the issue. This is still made difficult by the crystallisation of the 'insiders/outsiders' opposition.

Conclusion: a detachment impaired for fear of stigmatisation

We have followed the discussion of juvenile suicides amongst various actors, from the emergence of the problem in 2004 to discussions occurring in 2018 and 2019. We saw that the first wave of suicides led to internal mobilisation. At this point, both local and peripheral actors related those incidents to a conflictual organisation of the North Belfast urban communities. Just after the GFA, residents were prone to denaturalise the social order of urban communities, which notably led to a general denunciation of paramilitaries' role in those juvenile suicides.

This alignment would gradually turn into a disparity between local and peripheral actors. As the years passed, efforts would turn towards finding indirect specific causes to the issue,

whilst local actors were striving to despecifiy the problem of juvenile suicides. This could not be something that was only affecting Ardoyne. In recent years, local actors were increasingly reduced to their ‘attachment’ to the community and peripheral actors to their “distancing” from the community. This disparity turned into a schism between insiders and outsiders’ forms of knowledge on the issue. Residents faced the question of the community’s responsibility in its own difficult situation, which they had initially solved by finding a positive sense in denouncing the conflictual organisation of their area. But this progressively went against an aspiration to show to the rest of society that Ardoyne was not that specific, nor was the area blighted by war. For them, it was facing the social and psychological effect of its lack of integration to the rest of political society. It was being ‘left behind’.

This increasing double aspiration dramatically reinforced the disjunction between local and detached knowledge, as detached actors now attempted to make use of the increased historical distance and detachment to, precisely, specify how the issue of Ardoyne juvenile suicide related to direct and indirect effects of the conflict. Both groups of actors then radicalise the divide sitting between their understanding of the suicides, affiliating both the community blaming and the State blaming to position of ‘outsiders’ and ‘insiders’, rendering increasingly difficult to voice their ambivalence towards their community excesses. The current period now marks a crucial point if all actors want to allow a more common and stable production of knowledge on local issues.

This chapter made it seem as if only external actors blamed residents of the Protestant and Catholic areas of Ardoyne for their ‘resistance’, and as if we could only witness varying expectation regarding what peace and conflict entail by moving through time. Our next chapter will show that this is not the case, and that synchronic relations within each community, between actors apparently united by a common public problem, still reveal similar tensions.

CHAPTER 3

Making emancipation problematic

Women's Groups and their ambivalent relationships with communities

FOR SEVERAL DECADES, LOCAL WOMEN'S GROUPS have been the main institutional support for women's emancipation in North Belfast. There now exist numerous local mobilisation groups that are either constituted by or intended for 'women'. Those groups are diverse. Each has a distinct history, and residents set up those groups around different ideals of emancipation. By constituting themselves as women's groups, the conundrum these associations have faced is not new, and extends well beyond the Northern Irish case. It is that of balancing between the necessity to set a category of 'women' in order to criticise the forms of domination of which a specific social group is the victim of, and the equal necessity to denounce how the category of 'women' endorses and imprints a reductionist conception of individuals within the social interdependencies it aims to describe. Where one places the balance between the two necessities is the subject of everyday dilemmas as much as scholarly disputes. This equilibrium makes the very stuff of emancipation[1].

One problem to which residents are now confronted in deprived areas of North Belfast in their transition towards peace is to decide whether the 'local community' or the 'plural society'

[1] As worded by M. Nickerson, it is 'the careful balance between seemingly contradictory arguments for sameness and difference'. See Michelle Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism : women and the postwar right*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014, Conclusion. This resonates with the – overly fonctionalist – notion of 'functional ambiguity' proposed by Nancy Cott in analysing nineteenth-century women's mobilisation.

is best suited to supporting them in balancing their emancipation. In one case, residents would gain a higher consciousness of the group they form as 'women' and of the limits of such categorisation by engaging with their communities. In the other, residents would gain this higher consciousness by taking their distance from local communities and engaging with other more plural social groups. As such, actors envision an *emancipation through* and an *emancipation out of* [1]. Here, we will see how women's groups have faced obstacles and blame rendering them mostly unable to solve this problem, or to choose either one of those solutions. In turn, it rendered even more complicated to voice a desired balanced emancipation. Like in the case of juvenile suicides, our argument is that they cannot at present regulate this balance because they are always reduced to one or the other aspiration.

This difficult relationship between local communities and peripheral social groups in the Northern Irish peace process awakens a tension specific to the constitution of public problems. When emancipating, members of a marginalised group must constitute themselves as victims, and as a group. Yet, those mobilisations can be supported by actors who are not part of this marginalised group, and who follow different reasons to act. Just like we have seen in our first chapter, those are peripheral actors, and their intervention may provoke tensions[2]. Here, it happens when individuals detached from Ardoyne intend to reveal the ills caused by the maintenance of a conflictual and communitarian local organisations in relation to the emancipation of women. It may lead to a situation when, being victimised by others, for reasons that differ from their own emancipation and in ways that do not respect their community attachment, the victims in question claims to their 'victimisers' that they are not necessarily victims, and normalise the local social organisation which worry their interlocutors. In front of those competing ideals, the State is expected to participate in stating who are the real victims and the 'good victimisers'.

What does the cohabitation of emancipation's ideals mean, in practice, in Ardoyne? The history of women's groups relates to the gendered segregation of working-class neighbourhoods. In the late 19th century, with the industrialisation of Belfast, the increase in women's employment in specific professional sectors[3] paralleled the maintaining of traditional

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[1] A formulation of a similar problem can be found in Julia Christ, 'Sortie ou issue ? Ce que l'émancipation signifie', *L'Homme. Revue Française d'Anthropologie*, 10 March 2021, no. 237, p. 109-134.
[2] Yannick Barthe, *Les Retombées du passé. Le paradoxe de la victime*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2017, p. 37.
[3] See Olwen Purdue, 'Surviving the industrial city: the female poor and the workhouse in late nineteenth-century Belfast', *Urban History*, February 2017, vol. 44, no. 1, p. 4.

gendered roles in community life[1]. Both processes reinforced the gendered segregation of developing urban neighbourhoods. Whenever middle-class activists attempted to reveal how women from working-class area endured harsh professional conditions, they did so by pushing them back towards traditional community bonds. Still, the increase in trade unions and British-wide suffragism accompanied a feminist politicisation amongst the upper and middle classes. But with Home Rule, then the partition of Ireland in 1921, the renewed opposition between unionists and nationalists undermined politicisation efforts and practical advancement, as 'gender loyalties became subordinated to community loyalties, making alternative politics difficult to sustain'[2].

The 1960s' Catholic civil right campaigns led to a women's liberation movement, accompanying the global second wave of feminism. This mobilisation, mostly coming from students, was still struggling to gather working-class women in its wake. Moreover, the 'women's movement' of the 1960s was then heavily associated – and sometimes rendered indistinct – with the 'peace movement'[3]. It then faced difficulty in accounting for the experiences and reasons for acting of women facing violence first-hand, making it difficult to address events that were not fitting with the idea that 'women' had 'caring' and 'peaceful' tendencies to act. In addition, those mobilisations were yet again facing the obstacle of the ethno-religious divide – in addition to, this time, a stigmatisation linking feminism with the CNR community. This meant that, rather than a collateral emancipation of minorities, the Troubles led to a practical reorganisation of women's role in local communities under the effect of urban conflict and segregation. New community groups were organised and, in most cases, seen as ran and frequented by women. They were 'women's groups'[4]. Those mobilisation groups handled 'bread and butter' issues, giving relevance to their roles as mothers, grandmothers, wives and daughters. It relied on the positive defence of the local specialisation of women's occupation[5], reinforcing the perception of those persons as invested in familial

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[1] As an example, married women were forbidden from working in public services until 1975. See Sean O'Connel, 'An Age of Conservative Modernity, 1914–1968' in S. J. Connolly (ed.), *Belfast 400: People, Place and History*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2012, p. 297.

[2] Rosemary Sales, *Women Divided: Gender, Religion and Politics in Northern Ireland*, London, United Kingdom, Routledge, 1997, p. 3.

[3] It aligned itself with a view that had already reduced feminist movements of the early 20th century.

[4] See Amanda Donahoe, '"Wee Women's Work": Women and Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland', *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*, 1 August 2013, p. 167.

[5] It is the type of emancipation which, to put in a different context, was infamously described by Emile Durkheim in the *Division of Labor in Society* or by Norbert Elias in describing the specialising rebalancing of power between sexes in ancient Rome, and which more generally relates to the first wave of feminism, see Émile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, trans. by George Simpson, 2nd ed., New-York, Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1964, p. 56 ; Norbert Elias, 'The Changing Balance of Power between the Sexes – A Process-Sociological Study: The Example of the Ancient Roman State', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30 June 2016.

networks. Several women's 'drop-in centres' opened their doors during the 1980s, providing even stronger institutions and solidifying community life during the conflict[1].

The post-conflict period furthered this rise whilst also entrenching the multifaceted gendered segregation. New governmental funding supported community work. However, as we will see, the professionalisation of those groups meant that they were facing the difficulties of a community sector marked by lasting isolation and deprivation. In addition, the British State's support would sustain the essentialisation of those mobilisation groups and of their ideals. But some of those women's groups were now organising for themselves around women-related issues and solidifying the growth of a semi-professional sector. In 2001, there were '1,071 "traditional" groups and 423 "activist" women's organisations in the North, 68% of which were in areas defined as economically deprived'[2]. Since the 1970s, this ensemble has been known as the 'Women's Sector'[3]. Overall, this gendered segregation, and the evolution of women's groups sketch the coexistence of the two ideals: the emancipation through and the emancipation out of, manifested in the difference between traditional and activist groups. The first ideal seems to have been shaped in the first two historical periods, and is summarised in a quote often heard amongst local workers: 'If you educate a woman, you educate a family, and in fact you educate a community'[4]. The second ideal gathered momentum during the last two historical periods, and was often rotted in groups which gathered women from various areas and background.

Hence our problem : with the arrival of the peace process and the liberalisation that ensued, residents had increasing means to engage with plural social groups, and then to sustain a more form of individual autonomous emancipation. One could have expected the women from local communities to seize that opportunity to disengage themselves from their community and from the forms of violence it had sustained during the conflict. How come that this was not the case? We will see why the liberal peace process did not take hold within the groups who aimed to emancipate through, nor strengthen those who attempted to emancipate out of their community, paradoxically. In addition, it left groups of women judged as sectarian, and

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[1] See Cynthia Cockburn, 'What became of "frontline feminism"? a retroperspective on post-conflict Belfast', *Feminist Review*, 2013, no. 105, p. 106.

[2] Margaret Ward, 'Gender, Citizenship, and the Future of the Northern Ireland Peace Process', *Éire-Ireland*, 20 July 2006, vol. 41, no. 1, p. 9 ; Katy Radford, *Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and the Women's Sector : an overview of reports and programs*, Belfast, Institute for Conflict Research, 2016.

[3] For a description of the Women's Sector, see K. Radford, *Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and the Women's Sector : an overview of reports and programs*, *op cit.*, p. 11.

[4] Judith Hill, 'NI women share experiences at UN conference in NYC', *ITV News*, 28 March 2019.

invested in maintaining traditional community roles, alone in attempting to find way to express their tendencies to emancipate out of their community.

We start by looking at how local women's groups reacted to a British State led programme meant to support their emancipation, revealing its internal contradiction. Rather than explaining the failure of the programme by women's attachment to their communities, we show how it struggled to convey the aspirations towards *emancipation through* and *emancipation out of* shared by the women's groups involved, since it struggled to seize the local social dynamics on which those aspirations are based. Second, we then show that even women's groups who tend to locally defend the *emancipation out of* were faced with increasing difficulties to take ownership of their interdependencies with local communities. Finally, we then understand more fully the ideal of *emancipating through* defended by traditionalist women's group, including when it comes to defending both an ideal vision of the community and of its relationship with a State third party. This also shows us why a solidary collaboration between groups cannot happen yet, and why traditionalists group can neither disappear nor turn into something else.

1. Encouraging emancipation … or enforcing it?

During the peace process, the British State invested heavily in the community sector and the women's sector. This was meant to help local communities address and solve their local problems, whilst encouraging them to become more integrated into the rest of society[1]. However, the political project of the peace process implied a planned reorganisation of most sectors of this divided society. The transformation of familial, communal, and occupational dynamics seemed to merge. As such, public policies were often marked by plural expectations. A public programme that we will call W3, and its reception amongst women's group from Ardoyne and surrounding areas reveal the consequences of this plurality.

W3 aimed to reinforce the role of women in 'community development'. In the 2010s, reports had highlighted that women's representation had been poorly considered in the executive's implementation of the 1998 GFA and the 2015 'Fresh Start' agreement[2]. In 2016, independent reporters suggested that the government rely on the 'vital role that women can play in helping to move communities away from paramilitarism', sustain women's organisations 'transformative community development work' and allow women to be more invested in public

[1] *Expansion of Community Development Approaches*, HSC, May 2018, p.6.
[2] This was notably voiced by former actors of the Women's Coalition, in political parties and on the ground.

decision-making[1]. The Northern Irish Executive came up with W3, whereby enhancing the civic participation of women was meant to reduce the threats of alternative forms of policing. Running from October 2017 to March 2019, it involved 539 women from 25 areas[2] in long-term 'holistic' training – addressing addiction issues, family services, domestic and sexual violence and the impact of living in communities affected by paramilitarism. Ardoyne and an adjacent unionist area, that we will call Donington, were amongst those. There, the government funded local organisation to act as 'delivery partners' and coordinate local women's groups. The groups would organise the workshops and use their network to interest local women. By its rationale, the programme was already ambivalent: though aiming to allow more detachment from 'women's issues', W3 also reinforced the idea that 'women' maintained specialised tendencies towards pacification in their community[3]. By reinforcing their access to the management of their community's moral rules, women were expected to further pacify their community. The programme intended to reinforce both the integration of ethno-political communities in the political society and the local emancipation of gendered minorities by assuming how those two processes reinforced one another and, more importantly, neglecting the tensions that they could cause each other.

The problems posed by this plurality of aspirations appeared on the ground. The experience of Josh, the officer who linked the government and North Belfast women's groups, helped reveal them. A former city councillor from a nationalist party, he also worked as a 'neutral' employee in a cross-community mediation organisation. Josh encountered unanticipated obstacles in coordinating the women's groups in Ardoyne and Donington. When I met him in 2019, he explained:

> 'What happened in Ardoyne, […] I could probably have done it … a bit better. But, I mean, I just thought I had to deliver, hmm, the two areas in one, Ardoyne and Donington, we have a very good relationship on the loyalist side with Donington residents, and we have a very good relationship on the Ardoyne side with the ROSE Women's Centre. So, I went to those both first. In fairness, TWIN, for Women's Network, who was the lead partner, said to me "You can't do Ardoyne without doing Ardoyne Association", which was absolutely true, and very right, I should have thought about that before. So what I wanted to bring, like any area, I wanted to have the twenty [*women*] as a one unit cohort, but, a couple things happened. Well… essentially, what I ended up having was a joint cohort of ROSE and Ardoyne association, they worked together […] But, on the other hand, in Donington, hmm, … I wanted them to be in that cohort, but they decided to do theirs individually, they didn't want, they wanted single identity, they wanted just the one group.'

[1] Three Person Panel, *Tackling Paramilitary Activity, Criminality and Organised Crime – Executive Action Plan*, Belfast, The Executive Office, 2016. The Section B5 is based on *Fresh Start Agreement*, 2015, Section A, § 3.9.
[2] Independent Reporting Comission, *Second Report - November 2019*, Belfast, 2019, p. 84.
[3] This positive effect was considered not by arguing that the integration of minorities in local communities would stabilise a more coherent vision of the tension between 'local communities' and 'plural societies', which would be more congruent to reality, but by renewing positions essentialising the pacific nature of 'women'.

The employee realised that he had, according to another women's organisation, forgot to engage with a central women's group in Ardoyne. Then one women's group, the one from the mainly Protestant Donington, would not work with another group from the Catholic part of Ardoyne. There, the State agent explains those difficulties by two alleged dynamics: the internal cooperation between women's groups in Catholic Ardoyne, and the difficulty of getting women's groups from Ardoyne and Donington to work together due to community opposition. In return, those two interpretations would be blamed for being overly reductionist.

1.1 The plurality of women's groups neglected based on assumptions on internal resistance

Members of the ROSE women's centre also criticised the failure of the W3 programme whilst displacing the blame levelled by the officer. The forms of discontent at the heart of the officer's difficulties appear more polymorphous than expected.

1.1.1 Do not free us from our own community[1]

ROSE is hosted in a local community centre. Its support groups – the ADHD mother support group, Michelle's young women's group, the Crochet group – meet there. Fiona and Michelle coordinate them, secure funding, organise meetings, etc. Fiona claims institutional and management skills, whereas Michelle is an older public figure in Ardoyne who maintains contact with all the residents. In July 2019, I asked Fiona about their involvement in W3. Fiona explained that the initial presentation of the programme 'sounded like we finally had a programme for women in communities after many years, that we could actually rely on for three years […]: it was all for nothing in the end'. She continued:

> 'See, to be honest with you, our women only took part in the first phase of the programme. None of them continued during the second part, not that I'm aware. They were supposed to do community development, and all of those things, but not here.' She rapidly adds that she's not working for free, and that this is what she told herself along the way: 'It's quite an effort, you know yourself, to get women engaged in those types of programmes, there are a lot of fallouts through the months, even at the beginning. So, you chase them. Now, my motto was always that, if it got in, if it was helpful for the women, if they were getting something out of it, I could commit to it even though it wasn't in our favour. But that wasn't the case. Because lately, and I've told you that before, we really feel like we're becoming a recruiting agency for other projects.'

Fiona did not believe that the programme was helping local women in any way. Instead, she saw it as a lever for State agents to turn the women's group into a 'recruiting' agency for

[1] A paradigmatic formula borrowed from Bibia Pavard, Florence Rochefort and Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, *Ne nous libérez pas, on s'en charge*, Paris, La Découverte, 2020, 750 p.

external actors willing to work with people in Ardoyne. This critique is reinforced by the fact that the second phase of the programme did not take place. ROSE was charged with maintaining local women committed to the programme, something for which they did not have the resources. It is a recurring critique. In May 2019, Michelle was using her famous old mobile phone to recruit women for another cross-community programme. As I was attending it, I mentioned the ROSE's members whom I had seen there. Michelle told me that she had put them on the programme, and complained that she would have to do that again the following year:

> 'You know you have the four areas *[invested in this programme, Ardoyne and three other unionist areas]*, so I try to get women from each area, but at the same time to have at least two from each so they can get together, and not feel lonely, you know.' She continues 'But that's why Emma was with Anne, you see… Emma does, she probably wouldn't shut up you know. Whereas Anne wouldn't say a lot.' I say that she still participated quite a bit, and that Anne and Nancy were there as well [*two women from the Crochet Group*]. Michelle says 'Ok, ok, well Théo you see Nancy wouldn't say anything for fear of not knowing her stuff enough, Anne wouldn't say anything for fear of telling them off, Brenda wouldn't say anything because she couldn't give two fucks.'

To filter and recruit women, Michelle uses her knowledge of the women's group's members, but also, as a long-term Ardoyne resident, her knowledge of all the women in the Catholic area. In short, her strong integration within the community. Though hardly noticeable here, Michelle showed both satisfaction in this task – allowing her to strengthen her network with local women and as a 'family support officer' in the centre – and frustration. It meant doing this every few months, and trying to convince women, sometimes the same as before, to take part in governmental programmes. Including when the women themselves did not feel invested enough in the programme to 'say anything' and to overcome the possibility of instrumentalisation, reinforcing the sentiment of local lack of investment that the programme aimed to combat.

The women's group's coordinators denounce a three-pronged instrumentalisation. They feel like their intervention is demanded by the State to ensure the presence of *women,* coming from the *local area,* in programmes *related to the peace process*. Three domains in which they feel that the initial strive for emancipation has been reinvested by detached actors, up to a point where they do not feel the ownership nor the positive consequences of this gesture[1].

[1] Katherine Side has described this as a form of 'intentional recruitment' by statutory bodies, adding that feminist scholars and activists, in defending the inclusion of women and locals in institutional process, have missed those local deleterious consequences. This is challenged by authors for whom even constrained mobilisation help society's pacification and democratisation. See C. Roulston and K. Side, 'Review of Patching Peace', *art cit.*

HENCE, WORKERS EXPRESSED A 'PEACE FATIGUE' like that mentioned in the preceding chapter. When I exposed my surprise that the W3 programme was meant to support the '*Tackling paramilitarism*' plan of the Executive, Fiona said:

> 'Well the women here as well, you should have seen their faces, when we talked about it and it turned out that the whole thing was related to the "Fresh Start agreement", you were like, what the fuck. We didn't wait, we done that already. […] But what fucking difference is it going to make? We've done that before. And the way I see it, it's always the same people who end up in those programmes, always the same. And they're not moving. So really…'

The local exhaustion with peace-oriented programmes is furthered when they get in the way of gender oriented public policies. Then, local women reaffirm that those who changed 'didn't wait' for the government, and the 'regulars' who did attend are not moved by programmes. I heard the same frustration expressed by Nina, the woman who handled the delivery of W3 with the Ardoyne Association – the other women's group in Ardoyne – when she discussed it with a local resident. Nina had recruited younger women for the workshops, and both agreed that younger women didn't want to know anything about the Troubles, 'and who could blame them…'. For Fiona and Nina, both the older and younger generations of women are fed up with the constant attention given to the politicisation of community relations. Their investment in it is deemed to displace the objective of women's groups as mobilisation groups.

In parallel, the State officer reemphasised the need for areas like Ardoyne to be heavily invested in peace work. He maintained that 'Ardoyne and Donington is, and has been, the toughest part of North Belfast', and that in W3, 'if we're going to be serious about the work as a North Belfast organisation, then you have to be very, very serious about trying to do what you can to help Ardoyne and Donington.'Even if this goes against the reluctance of some residents. The latter denounce this as acting out investments in 'peace building' in front of even more distant outsiders – members of the government, the EU or American funders. It means local workers criticise both a lack of address of gender issues and an exaggerated and shallow peace work. As a result, both sets of actors find each other guilty of conflictualisation: Josh accuses residents of resisting the peace agenda, though he understands the 'peace fatigue'. Fiona and other women's groups argue that the constant focus on peace is a refusal to sustain local emancipation, as it gives less space to women's marginalisation in their community, and it reproduces the imbalance between peripheral and local description of Ardoyne public problems. Two problems partly inherited from the conflict.

In that regard, the State officer, by quoting the political work of Monica McWilliams[1], said that before the W3 programme was launched 'In loyalist areas, especially, the message coming through from, from women, was that there is a patriarchy there that it is extremely hard to penetrate, and that it, it, it is amongst the paramilitaries'. Which was a way to argue that tackling the conflictual excess of local communities was not just a strategic focus on conflict for the State, but a long-term transformation of community network which may ultimately favour gender emancipation. Not only that, but in criticising their resistance, this agent then stresses how residents tend to conceal the demand for emancipation coming from other residents – here in loyalist communities, usually deemed more conservative.

The local women's group, heavily invested in local community network, sees the focus on conflict as a hindrance towards their balanced emancipation through. The State agent sees the focus on conflict as a support for a balanced emancipation out of. This very disagreement shows us that, whilst the handling of that polarity causes tensions in the emancipation of minorities in all political societies, it takes a specific form here. It has become entangled with conflicts of integration[2]. the W3 programme, by presupposing a link between the politicisation of emancipation and community integration, fails to consider the women's group longing to stop focusing on communal opposition and their longing to emancipate through their own community. Instead, on these local emancipation efforts weighs the expectation of clarifying how gender emancipation help or hinder peace in a well-integrated society.

BUT EVEN WHEN IT COMES TO VOICING THEIR DISSATISFACTION with this situation, ROSE's criticisms take the form of sharing their 'peace fatigue' and denouncing 'instrumentalization', rather than difficulties surrounding gender emancipation as such. Why do women's groups who criticise the State for not supporting a correct politicisation of women's issues appear caught up in debates surrounding local communities and plural societies? For example, Fiona complained that, as she was consulted to suggest ideas for the programme, her advices for a more 'women oriented' programme were ignored by State agents and lead partners. She concluded :

[1] A prominent figure in generalising women's issue s through party politics in the 1990s, who authored the report which led to W3. Rather than stress the role of an individual, we stress that many local actors use 'Monica McWilliams' to actualise a certain ideal in women's politicisation, one that aims for a strong detachment from community affiliations, in favour of a universal defence of 'women's' conditions and role.

[2] If 'Some feminist discourses in Northern Ireland are couched in essentialist terms' by proposing generalising comments on women, '[Few] commentators, however, believe that there is a universal experience for women in Northern Ireland, given that different sources of identity cross-cut gender to individualise the condition of different women.' See Adrian Little, 'Feminism and the politics of difference in Northern Ireland', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1 June 2002, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 166.

> 'I was really invested in it at the beginning… But even then, you could see that the women had to come aboard later on, because the lead partners were all … none of them came from the Women Network, or from women's organisation, that's why Intercom got us in in the first place […] It's quite simple, because the people on the ground are never listened to, at any point. We deliver, they decide. We end up delivering training based on what they say we're going to do.'

That gender problems fade behind peace problems is presented as only a version of the wider problem. Local actors judge that they are losing the capacity to define their local problems and solutions, including how they want to engage with residents, in favour of programmes driven by State officials. It is on that dynamic that rests the criticism that none of the organisation working on W3 were from the Women's Network, and that the propositions made by the women's group were not considered. Not on gender dynamics. On his side, Josh was aware of this scepticism, but brushed it off by saying that every local actor engaged in the workshops knew that they had to do with peace. The ambiguities of the programme and its contradiction allowed both actors to position themselves in defining the programme under one light or the other.

Bringing the criticism back to the alleged opposition between Insiders and Outsiders leads Fiona and Michelle to defend their attachment to their community. But it would be renewing a misdescription to say that they 'are led' to defend the local community *instead* of defending their balanced emancipation. Rather that are defending the local community *as the means* of their balanced emancipation. That is why Fiona is so critical of the fact that the second phase of the programme did not take place, since 'community development meant that they were supposed to shadow someone from the community, a community leader; like an elected rep, the leader of a youth club, a school principal, something like that, and that was meant to get the women engaged in their own community'. Similarly, whilst we were talking about this, Ashley, a colleague of Fiona and Michelle invested in a local care organisation, came in. We talked about another programme that they had organised for local women a few years back to help them gain professional skills. For the women, one of the reasons for its success was that, at the end of the programme, the women were asked to volunteer for a *Community Health Day*: 'so that they know that it's not just only for their own personal benefits […] because there is still a sense of entitlement exists around here. And you, you have to nip it, to show that people have to give back to their community, that all that has been done for them is not automatic.' With ROSE, the emancipation gained by investing in State programmes is only judged positively in so far as it reinforces under a new light the women's integration in their local communities.

1.1.2 Do not reduce us to our community

When Josh contacted ROSE, the regional women's network advised him to reconsider and to work with another local women's group, from the Ardoyne Association (AA). Why had he not anticipated that? At first, we could believe that he had reduced the plurality of women's groups by assuming a monolithic view of the local community, as if the Catholic residents of Ardoyne were a united community, or of women's mobilisation, as if all women's groups were doing the same thing. Two common misconceptions. Yet, this is not the case. There is tacit knowledge at play here. As Josh explained when I asked why he did not think of that:

> 'Hmm… Ardoyne has its own dynamics, and so … […] our *raison d'être,* throughout our existence, from 1995, we've always gone for though issues, and tough … even tough solutions to some extent, we've no qualms about dealing with people who may be perceived as having paramilitary backgrounds. […] Ardoyne association, so … so I would do a lot of the work on the green end of North Belfast, and then some here would do it on the orange, and then we would do some of it together. But… I am a member of Sinn Féin. So there was a kind of internal Ardoyne lens … that… I learned from that, because I have had a very good experience with Ardoyne's Association. But I instinctively had already built up a relationship with ROSE […] On a personal basis, I think in the back of my head, and heart, I was probably a bit frightened to be, not "fear" as in, but probably a bit weary of being told no. Because, if they looked, I… wrongly assuming, that they would say "No I won't work with this guy". That was a wrong assumption. Hmm. [*Cough*].'

Josh hesitates between bluntness and restraint when disclosing this problematic issue. He describes his more radical approach – working on 'tough solutions' on the 'green end' – , and interrupts himself before describing the AA. The employee is trying to find ways of describing how his nationalist position allows him to be familiar with 'Ardoyne's own dynamics' without deviating too much from the neutrality that is expected of him. The idea is that, as someone willing to work with paramilitaries, he would have not worked with the AA or its women's group and expected them not to work with him. He describes himself as having learned from this readjustment. It is because he put to the test some implicit knowledge of Ardoyne's organisation – made discernible through ethnography – which sustain the relations between women's groups. Yet, the fact that they remain in the implicit reduce the chances to realise that this means reducing links between women's group to internal resistance.

If those dynamics remain tacit, and if internal community clusters are brought back to the implicit on an everyday basis, it is because using them explicitly would go against another actual and very real expectation for the local workers of these women's groups: that of displaying a professional form of detachment. Just like Josh. As such, the leaders of Ardoyne's women's groups say little about their relationships, precisely because they are embedded in interdependencies from which what is not professional may hardly be filtered out. As with most groups in Ardoyne, ROSE is inserted in tacit templates of community knowledge that situate

specific families or specific historical relations between persons. One knows the parents of such and such workers, their former schools, their political affiliations, etc. If they do not, they predict that information using what they know regarding the persons they work with, or the persons they are affiliated to. The groups are known not as impersonal institutions, but as groups mainly defined by the person who runs it: the Ardoyne Community Centre is run by Fiona, its women's group is known as Michelle's group, the AA is known through the figure of Rachel and its women's group is known as Jane's Group. However, in obtaining funding, organising projects, and getting invested with the municipality, ROSE also claim a detached and 'professional' identity. It is based on Fiona and Michelle's professional skills, something not common to all women's group. They anticipate that it would not appear legitimate, in the eyes of observers, to describe the relationship between organisations by invoking 'family' or 'community' relations … yet also defend a certain skill in the management of residents and of local knowledge – as shown with Michelle. In addition, the different women's groups do not talk of one another. This is an effect of competition, exemplified by the fact that, despite both being in place for more than a decade, the two groups only organised a collective event once in 2012. But it is also an upholding of the 'loyalty' of residents to one association or the other. When they do mention each other, they positively advertise their unity around community development. They leave the community background implicit[1].

1.1.3 DO NOT HARMONISE OUR COMMUNITY

The relation between them is then mentioned mainly through the comments they make on persons directly or indirectly related to the other groups. On the wider clusters tacitly known as constituting Ardoyne. This also fulfils a central role in the constitution of these women's groups, given their origins as movements of emancipation through the local community.

At the source of ROSE is the Ardoyne Women's Group, created in 1989[2]. It was a support and politicisation group for the wives of politically imprisoned nationalist residents, who were looking for a place to meet. In the 1990s, the women's group was invested in the traditional nationalist Fleadh and met in the GAA. It has progressively evolved into a more institutionalised organisation, ROSE, ran by a few volunteers, then by three employees. Over the years, it has been run by women who showed a strong affiliation with republican residents –

[1] Apart from Michelle whose professional style rests in being blunt and using this 'tacit knowledge' on the area.
[2] *Women's News*, Issue 85, 1997, p. 5. This is how the group was presented in the 1990s. Nowadays, most people place its origin someplace else, when some local women gathered in 1984 to try and relieve poverty and help the education of children in the area. Claiming one origin or the other depends of the opposition discussed here.

sometimes former paramilitaries or elected politicians – defending the nationalist identity of the local community and a relative opposition with the State. Describing this evolution, Fiona simply says that ‘a lot of those women were Sinn Féin back then’. Michelle is an ex-prisoner who never hides her contempt for the police. Still, this operates mostly at the level of reputation, and cohabit with a will to appear more tolerant[1]. This led them to rename the group ‘ROSE’. As they felt the mention of Ardoyne was putting some women off. It also means that the group try to nurture some relations with women’s group from ‘across the divide’, which proves to be rather difficult. Nowadays, ROSE is mostly chasing funding to keep the regular support groups afloat and invest women in ever-changing programmes and activities.

The AA women’s groups, a few streets away, share this flexible organisation. As a resident’s association, women’s groups are only a subsidiary activity. The association has good relations with the city council and the State, since it has been providing data on Ardoyne’s residents and their level of deprivation for several decades – doing surveys, presenting projects, etc. The recent AA’s women’s groups were in part impelled by external funding. They are closer to ‘collective courses’ organised by the association. In 2016, the leader of the association presented *‘Women and change’* and *‘Women in focus’* to me as two cross-community groups, working with women from Upper-Ardoyne and from Legoniel. She emphasised how residents had ‘chosen their own name’, and had ‘been established down 3 or 4 years, they’ve done various history courses, women through the ages, they have done politics, you know they have been to Wales for the assembly, Wales, Scotland, Westminster, they’ve been into Stormont, they’ve been into a lot of things’. This emphasises their autonomy, the numerous occasions to detach themselves from the community, and a clearer generalising view on women. As expressed by the agent and by the leader of the AA, this women’s group is more invested in regional networks and institutional consortium. The reason why TWIN contacted Josh to tell him to work with them is because the regional consortium had promised them a spot in W3. Paralleling all those links, the groups have a stronger investment in peace building.

IN TURN, THESE DIFFERENCES between the two groups are brought back to a supposed difference between ‘radical’ and ‘moderate’ residents of nationalist Ardoyne. Both radicals and moderates would defend the integration of residents in their local community. However, they would criticise one another for their conception of the problems and its solutions. This opposition has marked the institutional network of the neighbourhood since the Troubles. At

[1] The crochet group encourage silent pluralism, and the newest groups, like the ADHD support group, bring younger women in who show an increasing detachment from the community.

the time, it materialised as an opposition between organisations and residents who supported the local influence of the IRA, of republicans and of a violent opposition with the State – the 'radicals' – and those who supported the local influence of the Catholic Church and a redefinition of the community with the State – the 'moderates'[1]. Both had a strong historical claim in controlling the life of the area. This made them somewhat competing networks, and also rejoin a local opposition between the residents who supported the more radical nationalist party Sinn Féin or the moderate SDLP[2]. All this forms a general polar complex within members of the nationalist community between moderate and radical. Its roots go beyond Ardoyne[3].

The Ardoyne Association and its women's group, and the Ardoyne Community Centre and ROSE, are almost at the heart of each cluster. The AA is invested in networks that are related to a local institution known as the 'Flax Trust'. This trust was set up by a local priest in 1977 with money collected in the USA. It was meant to relieve the area of social deprivation during the Troubles, and was sustained by the government. Over the years, the trust sustained the construction of the local medical centre, shopping centre, housing association and a foyer. Residents credit it with bringing services to the area in times of greater isolation, notably by promoting cooperation with the State. Doing so, it set up the Ardoyne Association 'its footsoldiers[,] people living in the streets of Ardoyne, living in the homes'. In addition, several familial relations link the two, including some of the 'old families' of the area. All those organisations are judged to be affiliated with the 'moderate' and more religious members of the community. On the other hand, the leaders of the ROSE Women's Group disregard the current local priest for his tendency to exchange with outsiders and for the compromises he has made over the years in defending local residents during public disputes. Because of their relations with the State, the AA has developed a stronger investment with external networks, or in cross-community spaces whereas the leaders of the ROSE Women's Groups would not go there.

Those details are telling signs for local actors. They use them to map out their social environment and solidify the family resemblance which constitutes those clusters. For example, in 2018, I was exchanging with Conor, a community worker from the more radical clusters –

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[1] In describing these 'radicals' and 'moderate' ideals, actualised by different actors over time, we relate to the approach of B. van Stolk and C. Wouters which theorise the various categories of outsiders actors involved in efforts of emancipation from established groups. See Bram van Stolk and Cas Wouters, 'Power Changes and Self-Respect: A Comparison of Two Cases of Established-Outsider Relations', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1 June 1987, vol. 4, no. 2-3, p. 477-488.

[2] This has little to do with the opposition between political ideas. As already noted by Elias and Scotson, 'in the case of most people they formed part and parcel of a more general belief system primarily determined by communal and only secondarily by national issues and situations.' See Norbert Elias and John-L. Scotson, *Logiques de l'exclusion. Enquête sociologique au coeur des problèmes d'une communauté*, Paris, Fayard, 1997, p. 138.

[3] On oppositions and filiations between the church and armed movements, see David Berman, Stephen Lalor and Brian Torode, 'The Theology of the IRA', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 1983, vol. 72, no. 286, p. 137-144.

he is invested in the dissident network, refuses to work with the Police or to recognise the peace agreement, etc. He relates with members of the Ardoyne Community Centre and with leaders of the women's groups both by familial links and by personal relations in this area. When I mention that some of his ideas have been put in place by the AA and the trust, he says:

> 'See I was young at the time and I used to have a problem with them. I saw them as putting up some entertainments for the Brits. They were just a show, money movements. But over the years, I've come to realise that they achieved some good things for the community. That Fr Hyde has been doing good work. See, one thing happened back in 1998. At the time, the mill there, with the Ardoyne club and the Kickhams, there was a GAA bar there. I was there with my uncle, who's now passed, and we were having a few pints with Fr Hyde. And we were talking about the action we were taking, and what we wanted for the place. And my uncle and I we were for the Revolution. You know, being young, and all. And Fr Hyde said that we needed Evolution. Not Revolution. Evolution. But so, the Flax Trust was church originally. They owned a major part of the place, actually all the land belongs to the church, from here to Ballysillan.'

Conor manages to describe both clusters in a positive light, whilst explaining his initial different with the moderate residents willing to cooperate more fully with the State in organising the life of the area. Similar to how Fiona positively mentions the AA in some exchanges, the change displayed by Conor illustrate that the opposition between the two clusters is not as marked as before. Each has been traversed by the acknowledgement of the other position. This is found in the ambivalence between Fiona's rare mention of the work amongst women's groups and the women's sector, and her radical position when it comes to defending the rules of the community and criticising the investment of external third parties.

The problem of the relations with external third parties remains the crux of the dissents between the two clusters. For example, moderates have framed Ardoyne residents as victims mainly because of their socio-economic deprivation, whereas radicals have constituted Ardoyne residents as victims mainly because of the discrimination against Catholics and their unaddressed political will not to be governed by the British State[1]. Held in those types of opposition between the radical and moderate clusters and their different ideals of emancipation for the deprived Catholic community, the two women's group have not stabilised a working relationship to develop a 'we-ideal' and a movement of emancipation for another group of marginalised persons: local women. Rather, the different relations with the State claimed by the two clusters are deemed to influence the understanding of gender emancipation, and the tension between emancipation through and emancipation out of communities.

Hence, the officers 'feared' being pushed away by the moderate cluster in Ardoyne as he openly belongs to the more radical cluster, despite expectation of neutrality. Through the

[1] We do not assume that all residents are actively clarifying a position on the matter. Rather, these categories designate a small number of public actors who *do* take position in mobilisation efforts. Around them revolves actors who loosely support this vision of the world, allowing it to express itself in practice.

intervention of another worker, he realised that this has to do with the stigmatising division of the community between radical and moderate forms of emancipation, which vents chances to address the pluralities of groups regarding gender problematisation. It is this awareness that would now need to be shared more fully between all actors involved.

1.2 The specificity of women's groups neglected based on assumptions of inter-communal resistance

Josh also said that Donington's women's group refused to work with ROSE. He initially related the issue to the resistance between local Catholic and Protestant communities. Yet, again, a closer look revealed a more complex set of reasons. This only rendered more explicit the ambiguities of the W3 programme, which pushed for the emancipation of local women out of their community, whilst asking them to reinforce their involvement in it.

1.2.1 The deviation of the emancipation through

Women's Groups have a turbulent history in Donington. A women's group invested in cross-community work was formed in the early 2000s. It provided health training to local women and ran summer project to reduce tensions between young people at the interface, renewing a pacifying and caring role towards the local community and younger generation[1]. It turned into an Interface Group then promptly dissolved in 2016. All the members left, and a new group was set up, according to Margaret, a volunteer and informal leader of the group at the time. This time, a few women would meet every week to discuss and take part in activities such as painting, ceramics, or crafts. The group was incorporated into a larger residents' association. Margaret then left the group after finding a job in 2018. There were no women left to run it, as she had been trying to sustain it since the changes in 2016.

This led the male volunteers to run the group. I had first met the group in 2018, by luck. Trying to contact them in the following months, I was led to believe that a local resident, Edward, oversaw the group[2]. After giving me the (wrong) dates for their meeting, he told me that I should keep on contacting him to reach 'the women'. Some days later, without telling me what we were doing, he took me to Margaret's place of work, used his reputation to get me on the premises despite two employees telling us that she was working, and interrupted her to tell her that she should be in touch with me. She agreed. But when I showed up to meet the women,

[1] It is also how Michelle and other women from ROSE initially started volunteering during the Troubles.
[2] Though officially retired, he remains the informal leader of the resident association.

I also met Harold, the oldest volunteer of the association, who organises the group's activities with them. Though I had met them alone the year before, Harold was now handling the group, Margaret was not here, nor any of the women I had seen. None had told me about Harold nor Harold about me. Frustrated, he explained that neither Edward nor Margaret were coming to the group. He thought that I should not meet the women, since he deemed that their low level of confidence would make meeting a stranger difficult[1], and the people present agreed as they had not been told beforehand, I would come. We met with Harold again on our own. In describing this situation, he explained:

> 'See, some of the women we have here are very vulnerable, and I can only work with them because they trust me, because I've been building that trust for a long, long time. See, one of the women who comes here, she's been a victim of domestic abuse for a long time. She has problems of self-esteem. […] Well now, progressively she got to come with her two daughters, who are doing grand work, and they've been coming for a long time, doing all sorts of paintings. And now I engage with them two women a lot more […] And see the reason they [*the women's group*] get in here on a Friday morning is because that wee girl there [*He shows me the middle house in front of the association*] is not working on Friday morning… So that's why, and then you see how it starts to, to mix everything in with all sorts of community things overlapping. And now, one of the young women is about to go on two craft sessions with young people during the summer. You see, now that she has been through it herself, she gets to the next steps and she can pass it on.'

Harold justifies the closure of the group by the personal vulnerability of women, but also by the fragile embeddedness of the group in community networks and interpersonal relationships. But this involvement in the community is different from the specification of local women's needs allowed by groups of local women residents. It is closer to traditional networks of communal 'support' and control, where the needs of marginalised actors are in part handled by the established. In this, the communal links are sometimes judged less as a resource and more as a limit. This is exemplified by the fact that local women were progressively less and less invested in the group and had difficult relationships with the association, at least when I was there. During my first visit in 2018, I witnessed a silent incident. It was evening time, and one woman of the group had had an altercation with two men of the association during the day, as they had been unsatisfied with how she had helped them during a public event. When one man arrived unannounced at the association, this woman left the building by the backdoor after saying she felt too uncomfortable with the male volunteer being here. The male volunteer looked for her, and the other women silently changed topic after allowing her to leave.

As shown by Edward' actions and Harold's quote, this goes with the idea that this group is a 'support group' focused on the 'vulnerability' of local women[2]. When addressed by local

[1] This protection is closer to the difficulties of marginalised members of the community, but can still turn into controlled reclusion.

[2] Harold uses the training he himself received in workshops dedicated to ex-paramilitaries after he got out of prison.

men, this is both a sign of a rise of reflexivity on how marginalised persons experience life in the community – *i.e.* local men realising the importance of domestic abuse in the community – , and a risk of essentialising those persons to their 'vulnerability', possibly maintaining the group in an enclosed state – *i.e.* local men restraining the activities of local women in their stead by presupposing the degree of vulnerability induced from the ills of the community, possibly unduly victimising them. Where Edward and Harold sit on that balance, and whether their support should be judged in the light of one or the other interpretation, is not mine to say[1]. Indeed, in the absence of public manifestation of blame or praise, the critical subject remains open. However, we can still say that the return of male volunteers in the women's groups has changed its dynamics simply by the fact that they act as gatekeepers, that it has enacted the handling of this tension for local women.

1.2.2 Men's depiction of women's resistance

Still, limiting gatekeeping to thematising vulnerability essentialises women's position by neglecting expectations that they claim, including ones of community detachment. During my visit in 2018, the women presented their recent cross-community work very positively. They were enthused by discussion on the history of the Famine and by the fact that each women's group had presented a short film. Harold presented this event under a different light:

> 'Belfast City Council got funding, and, you know, they receive money from Europe with the Peace IV programme, and they actually receive a fair amount. So they had too much to spend, and programmes hadn't answered their open call. So they came over here, obviously [*he points at the Interface roundabout, just outside the building*] and they came to see, us, asked the community workers if we could pass them on to some of our residents and offer some programmes, and so the women ended up doing a big art project and a cross-community thing. But you see, there was no need for any of that. And that's how it works most of the time, […] big amounts of money sent from the top, that are supposed to go in a certain box, and then they just look for wherever they can put that. Even if that has no place here. That's just box ticking.'

Like Fiona and Michelle, Harold denounces external institutions who come to Ardoyne and surrounding areas to publicise their investment in community relations. Despite possible other expectations on the part of residents. Where Josh would describe this refusal as 'peace fatigue', Harold describes their constant investment on the matter as 'box ticking'.

Here, two dynamics show that this position held 'in appearance' reinforces the ambivalence and the risks in handling the male gatekeeper position. First, in this opposition with detached third party, there is a lag between what Harold says as a spokesperson and what the women from the women's group say. As a result, in W3, both Harold and Josh assumed that

[1] This judgement depends on interactional collective trials in which Charles, Harold and the women frame their interaction in one or the other way, depending on their resources they have and the space they are in.

the local women would not want, need or be able to engage in cross-community activities. Second, it is difficult to reconcile this position as a volunteer with the fact that the residents' association is heavily criticised by other Protestant residents and groups for their willingness to engage with government officials, and their complacency with this 'box ticking'. Holding that position increases contradictions between the internal 'cynic' position of male gatekeepers and the position that the women from the group would like to voice. But it also increases the contradiction between the public 'tolerant' position of those male gatekeepers and how other traditional members of the community depict them. The fact that residents, women and coordinators face those tensions hinder the women's group autonomous development[1].

This is unnoticed by Josh and State officials, who reduce the difficulties faced by the Donington Women's Group in W3 to communitarian discomfort. When I asked him if he had tried to convince the women later on during the programme, Josh answered 'No, I didn't. I mean, [...] we're in this game for twenty years I just knew it wasn't ... it wasn't going to happen. [*He stops*]'. In describing why the Donington group was not confident enough to engage, Josh falls back to the fatalistic/realist anticipation he has stabilised over the years. He then missed both the positive objectives and the obstacles that the Donington Group was facing. A positive sense was still transported in defending a slow involved emancipation which meant remaining attached to the integration into the Donington community. He also missed that this ideal, precisely because it depends on the integration within the community and its local institutions, was short-circuited by male gatekeepers in tension between accompanying the local women in their empowerment – risking reducing them to their vulnerable position – and using the group to further their relationship with external funders or institutions – risking presenting themselves as defenders of progressivism and lose touch with parts of the community. But if the actualisation of emancipatory ideal coming from the State causes many tensions, is the situation different when this ideal of emancipating 'out of' is defended by local women's group themselves?

[1] Like Fiona, Harold ends up denouncing those gender dynamics through blaming external institutions. He explains that 'we should be asking those women first if they need any help [...] but it's just that in community work you will have those buzzwords, "empower", 'community empowerment', and all those, that keep on driving the offers'. Harold expresses that if he is in the position of talking instead of local women, it is because the instrumentalization of communities by State programmes pushes workers to channel marginalised residents.

2. When an activist group struggle to assert its attachment to the community

The difficulties of women's group handling the *emancipation out of* and the *emancipation through* North Belfast's communities are particularly clear when State programmes carry with them contradictory expectations on the handling of that polarity, whilst also essentialising women's aspirations to one or the other aim. But how are those two polarities handled when it is the local women's group which explicitly bear that longing for an emancipation out of? This is what the *Empower, Venture and Enterprise (EVE)* women's group tells us.

2.1 A liberal form of emancipation 'out of'

In 2001, EVE started as a local support group in Glenbryn, a small Protestant area of Upper-Ardoyne. Residents set it up to assist a local mother who was handling a family of ten children, on her own, with scarce resources. This was taking a heavy toll on her mental health. The group helped her and other local women in similar situations, at a time when Upper Ardoyne had few services. In the first years, a local woman, Muriel, ran the group. Muriel was affiliated to the more radical residents of Upper Ardoyne, such as the traditional Holy Cross protesters. In the early 2010s, an obscure event prompted her to leave the area and the organisation without explanation. Two women, Carolyn and Lara, took over the organisation of the group. They were trained as community workers and were not natives nor residents of Glenbryn. They are still in charge today. In the following years, the group grew away from being a local support group towards being an institutionalised charity led by two workers, and organising occasional activities for residents[1]. In so doing, it has progressively installed a more detached form of emancipation for the women invested in the group. This story reflects the liberalisation of community groups that traversed the UK and Ireland in the 1990s, and was reinforced in Northern Ireland by the peace process. With it, 'voluntary community work became more formally organised, centrally regulated and depoliticised'[2]. This changed the form of emancipation defended by the group.

[1] Like in Donington, a non-publicised interpersonal event led to the dissolution of the group. In Donington, it was reorganised by the resident's association and local men, partly reinforcing the rules of the community. EVE was reorganised by external women who aimed at making it a detached and more professional institution.
[2] Patricia Neville, 'Organised Voluntarism in Ireland', *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 1 April 2016, vol. 27, no. 2, p. 724-745.

First, the group progressively extended to women from around North Belfast, and not just Upper-Ardoyne. People invested in the association were meeting more ‘outsiders’. When I interviewed one of the part-time employees, Julia, in 2017, she insisted that women participating in EVE were also coming from ‘Lower Ardoyne’, Cliftonville, the Shankill and other areas in North Belfast. Doing so, they reinforced their nature as a ‘women’s organisation’ rather than a ‘group’. They tried to interest women around North Belfast to individually get involved into professional workshops and training. They extended their ‘professional’ network with other organisations like *Women’s Tech*, a regional charity providing ‘non-traditional’ technical training for young women. In 2017 EVE then took the responsibility of organising a *Meet your neighbour* day in Upper-Ardoyne and Ardoyne. As all the local civil associations and the city council were there, residents from both communities could come and get information on their areas and the people who lived there. With those initiatives, EVE became the local voice for Upper Ardoyne’s women in all the working groups where local associations and statutory bodies met, such as the Upper Ardoyne Community Partnership, the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership, or the Urban Villages network.

Second, when tackling social issues, the group was now focusing on health issues. Most of the organisation’s activities now aim at improving the health of local residents. As presented in the charity regional portal, the organisation aims to:

> ‘Relieve poverty, sickness and the aged to promote the benefit of the women of the Upper Ardoyne, North Belfast, County Antrim and its environments (including Hesketh, Glenbryn, Alliance, Deerpark and Wheatfield, hereinafter described as the “area of benefit”) without distinction of age, race, political, religious or other opinion by common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interest of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation, with the object of improving the conditions of the life of the women and their families.’

Though the implication of women remained central, the overall projects have started to focus on improving ‘conditions of life’, ‘health’ and ‘well-being’ without categorising residents. In so doing, most of its activities have not been restricted to women anymore, and have started to involve all sorts of residents – such as the family summer scheme or the weekly handcraft sessions. EVE progressively evolved into describing its multiple activities as a ‘holistic therapy’ to improve residents’ mental health, ‘aligned with the social model of health towards long-term empowerment and development of the health, well-being and confidence of the local community’ and became the head of the Health subcommittee in the renewal partnership.

Through those two evolutions, the group then became more professional. This went with an increased form of detachment. This became its reputation. In 2016, one municipal agent who coordinates the organisations of the small Upper-Ardoyne area told me:

> 'EVE are a strong organisation that require very little support from me. I do, sometimes, fund some of their activities, you know their health days for example, hmm, but other than that I have to say I have actually referred people to their services you know […] They are very good, and I have been really really impressed in terms of the work that they do with ethnic minorities as well. You know those are, those are kind of … things that are not easy in, in … in areas like this, you know, where people are so nervous about territory, and about loss of territory.'

The employee ties that level of coordination with the progressivist outlook of the group and their ability to detach themselves from the reactionary tendencies of residents. The two employees became more competent in filling out application forms, being invested in wider association's network and obtaining State funding, whilst also remaining 'people persons'.

Third, to accompany individual residents, the group has progressively focused on 'personal skills' to 'empower local people and give them the skills and choices to improve on their current circumstances'. Most of its activities, such as support in smoking cessation, courses, training, advice on employability, monitoring of literacy, revolves around the idea of 'personal development'. It is also how they evaluate the success of their programme. I followed the weekly handcraft sessions for several months. Young, retired, disabled women but also young men were taking part. The coordinator underlined one person for which the programme had allowed 'improvement'. An unemployed young woman from the area had been coming to the group but was not talking to anyone. She progressively got involved in crafting over the weeks, getting to know the name and use of tools and materials. She then started to engage with other people there and sharing her life story. Lara and the gardener saw it as a result of the daily little steps, and the personal growth in self-confidence of that woman. This handcraft project allowed each resident to gain accreditation with regional *Open College Network* (OCN) credits to further their resume. Similarly, EVE has aligned itself with the public policies that support the residents of deprived areas by providing training and accreditation in beauty salons and hairdressing sectors[1]. They opened their own salon in the area and trained several residents to work there.

The openness to outsiders and non-woman residents, the participation to various external institutions, the approach of new social issues unrelated to gender and the focus on personal skills and self-development all boils down to the institutionalisation of a women's group that

[1]Other members of the community denounce those plans for focusing on individual professional courses with no opportunities, rather than addressing the lack of services in the community or its disconnection from the city.

implements liberal ideals of emancipation. Not only an emancipation out of the community, but one which emphasises the necessity of avoiding reducing 'individuals' to the category of 'women'. As a result, this group tends to situate itself at the end of both balances. It strongly tends to encourage detachment from the local community, and avoids generalising the type of support it offers, either around the thematization of 'gender' issues or else. It rather provides specific support for each personal empowerment. As such, it positively echoes the ideals of the local city council coordinator, Charlotte, who comments their success by saying:

> 'Lara and Carolyn are very good in terms of … well they're very nice people! And they're not political. I think maybe the trick is, you know, not to attach yourself to a political agenda. And they do exactly that. You know "We are about improving women's health', 'We are about improving education", "We're about integrating people from ethnic minorities", hmm, so they're very focused […], and I have never seen them being drawn into any political discussion. Not many organisations are as successful as they are in doing that. And I think women's groups are better at that.'

The group is judged positively for the neutrality of its organisers and their capacity to detach themselves from political affiliation. A tendency that this peripheral State agent considers to be linked with women's groups, reproducing specific gendered expectations. The discussions of W3 have shown how women's groups are not inherently producing detachment from the community and community politics. Rather, this idea is linked with one type of emancipation, one that has come to dominate amongst State officials, in public policies and in perception of the role of women in the peace process. Though they may be judged apolitical, it is indeed their political ideal and it resonates with the ideals of external officers, as presented in those extracts and in the increasing success of the group with State funding.

2.2 What is left of community

This women's organisation has progressively solidified a more detached emancipatory ideal, crystallised in the type of activities it offers and the relationships with women invested in the group. However, those aspirations remain continually affected by inconspicuous forms of community integration, ambiguously present within the ideals defended by its coordinators.

2.2.1 The role of tacit community clusters

First, the charity remains interdependent with the local area's traditional network. EVE is housed in the only professional complex of the area. The building is run by the resident association, still judged by the community to be composed of male former paramilitaries. Carolyn said to me in June 2019 that its leader 'will really do anything that possibly make things awkward… he really loves maintaining that aura of secrecy around him, you know'. When

handling community events, investments or decisions in working groups, this is still deemed an obstacle for EVE, both between them and state officials[1], and between them and local residents. In June 2018, the local DUP representative helped the residents' association create an Inter-Agency working group for Upper-Ardoyne. It was a way to give community groups a direct link with statutory bodies without having to sit with other areas, and to parallel the working group that had been set up in Ardoyne by members of Sinn Féin. Assuming that EVE would be involved, during a crafting session, I ask Lara if she would attend the first meeting:

> Lara says 'Oh no … no, definitely not, we've not been invited there.' Then she turns to the young lad here and ask him 'Have you heard of that?' and in order to explain why she asked him, she turns to me and adds that Louis is related to Andrew, 'You know Andrew who's from Scotland?', I confirm 'Yes, yes I know.' and she specifies 'That's his stepfather.' whilst Louis is here. I turn to him and say 'Ok then.' Louis tells me that he'll get in touch with him to ask him about it. He then tells Lara that it may be related to something he heard, since Andrew was asking residents on the Ardoyne Road their thoughts on front façades. Lara nods and says 'Yes it may be that'.

As being invited was not an option, Lara implies that the traditional spokespersons of the community were keeping them away from representing the area. But we see that they are nonetheless implicated in communal networks. Louis is a young unemployed resident who had been following the handcraft classes and volunteering with the local health centre. EVE supported him. He had become an informal help in organising projects. Andrew, his stepfather, is a central member of the residents' association. The coordinator of the women's group, through ideally more professional and detached, still relies on interpersonal dynamics[2]. Louis gives her information on the more traditional network of residents, which rarely publicises projects or positions. Second, Louis' help embodies the adjustments of the women's group in working with male residents, and in working with residents affiliated with the radical cluster. It exposes how both actors 'sit on the fence', since they do not feel like they can afford to assert this attachment to the community. Instead Lara sees me as an external actor in front of whom she can actualise a detached posture and 'decrypt' the area, talking to me in the name of Louis. On his part, Louis is progressively taking his distance from the community, something that I witnessed over several months, balancing between being involved with his uncle and radical residents and emancipating himself through personal projects[3]. But as a silent person judged 'less confident', he struggles to affirm one position over the other, leaving Lara some leverage to actualise either his longing for involvement or detachment when necessary. This need to invest tacit traditional dynamics was also mentioned by Julia, another EVE's worker: 'If you

[1] The government has supported their nomination in local position, first to help the pacification of paramilitaries by supporting their investment in community work, second to help ease the tensions of the Holy Cross dispute.
[2] As we have seen in the previous chapter, they are deemed necessary to conduct work there.
[3] He ended up getting a janitor's job in the public health centre and was visibly nurturing projects of moving away.

were coming [in Upper Ardoyne] without a background in community work, you may find yourself quite confused at the amount of groups that don't actually get on with each other's', hence why EVE 'does have to be careful that it doesn't walk on anybody's toes'.

In addition, the coordinators are still handling the fact that the 'old' EVE used to be more involved in the community. The first coordinator Muriel was more invested into the radical cluster of the community. She would defend the institutional network in which the women's group was embedded. In 2016, I was talking with an employee of the community centre who used to work with EVE about how the professional complex was built:

> 'Nancy tells me that Muriel explained to her, ten years ago, how those buildings were about to be built. Nancy, who at the time gave IT classes in a very small room, had asked Muriel from EVE if they could get more space. Muriel said they would have to wait, since Richard's centre had to be built first [*the Youth Club*], then William's [*the Complex*] then theirs [*EVE*]. Nancy adds "And that's exactly how all this happened, since EVE is only redoing theirs at the minute", and she concludes that everything is decided somewhere in the backstage.'

By reaffirming the positive role of local male ex-paramilitaries, the former coordinator of the women's group was renewing interpersonal community dynamics – the funding queue, the personalisation of institutions, etc. In openly criticising this heritage, EVE finds ways to handle the fact that they still rely on local political and economic dynamics. It remains understood both as an obstacle and a resource when seeking emancipation out of the community.

When attempting to represent the local area in working groups at the scale of North Belfast, EVE faces similar tensions. Again, they face more established groups with a solid basis in the radical clusters which monopolise the institutional space. I skip on EVE criticising the influence of community undercurrents in places, as it unsurprisingly reveals the same dynamics as in Upper-Ardoyne *per se*. However, what is more surprising is that the women also criticise those working groups because of the interaction with State officials. First, they find them to be too detached. They criticise them for their lack of interests in the area, their tendencies to rely too much on bureaucratic details, and their tendencies not to say anything during meetings. In which case Lara and Carolyn end up, in comparison, praising the community workers of the local community centre for their 'down-to-earth' character and the fact that they know everyone in the community. For example, in July 2019, Lara, Carolyn and Rosa were talking about how they attempted to expose a 'health action plan' to people in the Renewal Partnership, including a city council worker and dedicated State officers:

> 'Lara and Carolyn talk about how hard it was to come up with their yearly health action plan, and how they managed to rework it to a final draft just the day before. Now they want to fit with the government advices, and "more importantly", Carolyn explains that she wants to use the plan to get a bit of coherence in between all the different persons [*organisations*] in the area, so that they don't

> work with the same people on the same health issues. Rosa says "Of course, they [*the area officers in the working group*] should have done that already! But they didn't, 'cause it would have exposed all the people doing nothin' around here." Lara and Carolyn complain that they have to make sure information are passed on between the subgroup and the group, whereas Sam [*a state employee for the Neighbourhood Renewal partnership*] should do it.'

This blends the criticism for detached British State workers and for the tacitly accepted community network. The latter preserves community groups which, for those detached activists, are 'doing nothing around here' and are lacking 'a bit of coherence'. A second reason why they criticise the detached State workers even though they strive for the emancipation out of the community is because they, too, feel instrumentalised. On another occasion, Lara told me that because they are one of the only local women's groups willing to engage with State agents and statutory bodies, they 'are being put in partnership we know nothing about!' to fulfil state expectations.

As a result, the participation of this women's group in institutions meant to link communities with the State – the 'junction devices' –, instead of providing a space for solidifying their detachment from community dynamics and emancipation, actually proves to be twice as risky. In those junction devices, the actors present always run the risk of enforcing and being criticised for two types of 'lack of neutrality': either too influenced by the rules and interests of the community, or too influenced by the rules and interests of the State groups. Hence why EVE comes to criticise the working groups both for allowing community actors to be too 'involved' and to enforce community rules and networks, and for allowing State officials to be too 'detached' and to enforce bureaucratic aims. The women's group, already trying to get out of their position of marginalised members of the community and marginalised actors in community network, is more subject to the effects of each of those abuses in junction devices, since they lack resources to counter or absorb them[1]. This increased both the group's tendency to approach with care, if not distrust, other local groups in Upper Ardoyne – as the men in the area have better links with the government – , but also other women's groups – such as the one occupying a more central place in those junction devices.

IT IS ALSO A MATTER OF REPUTATION. EVE, because of its geographical situation, cannot do without handling the stigma bestowed upon Upper Ardoyne. In 2019, I had got well

[1] This double risk is reinforced by the liberal approach of community work. At the end of the Troubles, the State 'sought to instil 'connectionist' norms and practices, for at the local level different agencies would have to come together as 'partnerships'. However, simultaneously, government funding also sought to instil neoliberal competitive norms and practices, for partnerships would have to bid to receive funding in competition with other localities and sector organizations have increasingly had to compete for the privilege of being government's 'partner'.' In C. Hughes, 'Resisting or enabling?', art cit., p. 63-64.

acquainted with a group of retired women from the Catholic part of Ardoyne. They were amongst the few visible residents who took parts in activities in the community centre, at church, at local meetings, etc. Nancy and Linda were both regulars at the prayer group, but also at ROSE's crochet group. Denise often came to the prayer group but never to the crochet class. All three knew each other well, would go on trips together, and hold up to date on their personal lives, spending at least two hours twice a week together. In May 2019, they participated in the cross-community programme mentioned by Michelle and I (see Chapter 3 – p. 140). On the first session, all the twenty people from North Belfast introduced themselves. Nancy introduces herself as being from Ardoyne. Denise did too but added that she was 'with EVE', like another woman in the room, Stephanie, who came from Upper-Ardoyne. I was surprised as Denise had never mentioned that, neither had Nancy. I went and had a chat with the two women. Denise and Christine joked about the fact that Nancy and Stephanie had worked together when they were young. Denise knows that personal information, enough to tell me about it. However, Denise had kept from Nancy that she was seeing Stephanie regularly with the EVE group, and EVE was not mentioned. Later on, in June, we were waiting for the bus with the organisers of the workshop. As it turns out, one of them was William, the coordinator of CRUA in Upper-Ardoyne. As I knew those different persons from my fieldwork, but they did not know each other, my interaction with them proved to be an occasion for everyone to engage in more conversations about each other:

> We are in front of the Houben centre waiting in the courtyard, in small groups. William goes around with the attendance list to check that everyone is in. As he seems confused and looks at me, I help him with checking who the people are [*since I know Catholic residents he does not*]. And then I come back to Denise and Nancy, standing in front of the doors, who go 'Who's the fellow with the glasses?' and, whilst the other Nancy says 'It's The Baker', I repeat 'It's William, he comes from… Glenbryn' and Denise, still looking at him, says 'The Complex?' 'Yes yes' I answer. She nods, turns back to us, and add 'This is where I go.'And I say 'Oh yes, you know, I didn't know that you knew Lara and Carolyn!' Denise smiles and says 'Oh yes, they are lovely'. And then Nancy, surprised, ask her who they are. Denise turn to her and rapidly explains that 'It's the group I go to on the other side. [*There is a collective silence after that, which I fill by talking about Lara and Carolyn's dog, and we finish the discussion on that.*]

Denise, despite having been engaged with EVE for three years, whilst having known Nancy for a long time, did not share that information with her. Even now, she appeared ill at ease mentioning that she was going to a women's group in Upper Ardoyne, even though the group is not publicly distant from traditional residents. And even though Denise also refrained from engaging in the interpersonal dynamics of Upper-Ardoyne, as she did not know William, a most central figure[1]. The participant from the Catholic community seemed not to believe that

[1] Later on, Carolyn confirmed that Denise had been a member for a long time, and added that they started getting women from Catholic Ardoyne after the Protestant women befriended them during cross-community programmes.

they would be taken seriously in arguing that they take part in a detached and liberal women's group in Upper-Ardoyne, reputed to be radical and opposed to Catholics from Ardoyne.

2.2.2 Difficult interactions with groups attached to the community

These double aspirations are even harder to voice, and reduced to mutually exclusive resistance, by the fact that EVE public emancipatory ideals render them quite critical of involved members of the community. Yet, their will to sustain a form of plurality and tolerance prevent from publicly voicing this disapproval. They only do so when it relies on a criticism that appears easily acceptable for an outsider. For example, in July 2019, I was discussing with the coordinator of the group and one agent from the Executive Office. I had known all of them for several years, and the State agent had developed a close relationship with the two women. At some point, the agent asked me how I had found the traditional unionist celebrations of the 12th of July, which I had spent in a very loyalist part of Belfast:

> 'How was the night yesterday, was there trouble?'. I say there wasn't any trouble like last year, with burnt cars or anything like that. But I add that I found there was a lot of underage drinking. Rosa says 'It's crazy, isn't it?'. Carolyn says 'That's a good cultural event, isn't it?' And then I repeat, since they all made short comments on it, that I was impressed about seeing kids all along the Newtownards road, 'and there were all drunks, and on the ground and the parents weren't there'. Carolyn says 'It's because the parents were on the ditch on the other side of the road.'

Here, the coordinator answers my incomprehension by marking her distance from the traditional Twelfth of July, mocking the fact that it is presented as a cultural event by the more radical residents. In brief, she finds the traditional ways to celebrate the attachment to community irrational and links it with other 'irrational' behaviour such as underage drinking, irresponsible parenting, alcohol addiction and mocks the justification of residents.

In addition, it also means that the cross-community relationship nurtured by EVE with ROSE is not as fluid as portrayed. Both groups know that they must defend their cross-community investment in public. This led them to set up an 'Ardoyne Alliance Local Area Network' together to follow the life of interface residents.[1] However, ROSE is more involved with their community, whilst the women from EVE attempt to strive away from communal politicisation – as we have seen, one of the reasons they are praised by State agents. It makes it difficult for them to engage too overtly with the coordinators of ROSE. When Lara presented their summer scheme to me, during the first year, she never mentioned that it was a cross-community project, nor that they organised it with ROSE. Neither Lara nor Carolyn mentioned

[1]The network was short-lived but organised some trips, a music day, and produced a survey in 2014. It was mostly created to fit in the *Shared Community* programme ran by the Northern Irish Housing Executive at the time.

the course they ran with the Ardoyne Association. Whereas in both cases, this was amongst the first information mentioned by Fiona and Rachel. This also leads to criticisms in professional style. In 2018, another worker in the area told me that EVE was supposed to work with Fiona from ROSE on an interface project, but that she was not doing anything, lacked organisation, was not responding on the phone, and was exasperating Lara and Carolyn. This relates to recurring criticism against trendily involved or detached community groups. Involved community groups are reputed for their good links with residents but also for their inability to handle paperwork, accounting, planning, etc. Detached community groups are reputed for their professionalism, but also for being difficult to reach or less centred on interpersonal work.

Overall, this has two consequences. First, EVE's coordinator come to feel sceptical about cross-community work. In 2018, Julia exemplified the first point when saying 'we, you know, can work quite well with the other community, but it has to be in very, very slow … small steps, yeah'. Similarly, In July 2019, when I mentioned W3 to Lara and Carolyn, they had no idea of its existence and had two types of reaction: first, Lara told me that 'Sometimes, we get involved in stuff, we don't even know where they come from'. Then, when I specified what the programme was, and how it was related to the Tackling Paramilitarism plan, Carolyn told me, raising her eyebrows, 'Sure, in this country everything is related, everything has to be, in the end, if you want to get funding.'

Second, the women's group value cross-community work when it is inconspicuous. As indicated by Julia, cross-community is always 'projects' driven. In June 2018, Carolyn introduced me to the gardening programmes that they were running with the different local schools, where they took children gardening together. She concluded by saying that 'the different schools come together, and the kids have a bit of cross community like that, and it's great for them, they don't mind, they're so interested by the flowers!'. The cross-community work is organised around the idea that community involvement should not be mentioned. it is always presented as focusing on health, on children's daily schedules, and on side activities such as gardening, or on the technical skills learned in Women's Tech. It is considered efficient when all the residents engage with one another without realising or 'minding' their differences. This can be extended to their approach of gender, and to their progressive acceptance of men residents in their activities. This further complicates their relationship with ROSE, and more precisely with Fiona and Michelle who nurture a 'speak their mind' professional style valuing the making explicit of community differences and tensions.

The ambivalence lies in the fact that for professional groups such as EVE, a balanced emancipation is tied to the problem of communities, or at least to an 'urban community' as a

political unit meant to be represented. For example, most of the time, EVE defines its activities and its work in the community as ‘health-based’, related to ‘personal development’ or ‘mental health’. Yet, there are moments when the groups tend to present itself as a ‘women’s group’, and to value the category of ‘women’ in the politicisation of issues: almost only when they are interacting within a cross-community context, or with agents coming from outside the area. As shown by Charlotte’s comments when she compliments EVE’s work:

> ‘I think… I think EVE are so successful because, I mean they do a lot of cross-community work as well, I think they are so successful because they are a women’s group. And I do think that in Protestant areas, women are more progressive than men. And you know, it, it’s actually the men that sometimes try to hold areas back. Hmm.’

Similarly, after her presentation of the cross-community work, Julia said:

> ‘And we’re also in the process of getting funding for a Women’s Engagement project. What that is is really, it’s to empower women, that … this community is not great with the empowerment of women. Women don’t really have a voice as such, they’re always sort of behind men you know, so it’s to give women a voice, it’s to empower them, it’s capacity building. And you’re hoping then that they’ll take more of a role in civil society. Even down to public consultation about any issues, that they’ll talk at them, put views forward for the community.’

Successfully emancipating ‘as women’ appears to be assessed in terms of its effects in community relations, or in the relations between urban communities and the State. When seeking funding or when hoping that residents engage more during public consultations. It is the good relations with outsiders, and in cross-community work between Catholics and Protestants, which lead EVE members to present themselves as an efficient women’s group. This may seem surprising for a group which apparently aimed at emancipating out of local communities, by focusing on individuals. Especially since it reduces women to the alleged role of bearing pacification and progress in communities. But what could be seen as contradictions are simply attempts at voicing the other part of a balanced emancipation. That which would rarely be associated with EVE: defending the relevance of a common category of ‘women’ in politicisation, and emancipating through the community.

It is not a ‘strategic’ move from coordinators. Rather, it is the situation of the group in a tense community and its interdependencies with peripheral actors which saddle their capacity to demand a politicisation of ‘women’ as a group *to* their capacity to engage in the politicisation process at the level of the community, something that is seldom publicly desirable for groups defending an ‘emancipation out of’ ideal. Additionally, in participating to the civil life of the community, EVE and ROSE have to manage the risk of being turned into reconciliation groups led by women, rather than women’s group engaged in reconciliation.

2.2.3 UNCHALLENGED SOCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

The most unexpected consequence of this solicitation is that it relies on women's presumed propensity for change and dialogue. As soon as 'women' is reintroduced as a politicisation category, the risk of essentialisation that goes with it returns to the forefront.

When pushed towards providing a generalising view on women by other actors or by practical events, the coordinators of the group risk naturalising a division of gender roles where women care for the local community. When I asked Julia what local men thought about women being involved in a local organisation, she said: 'Would they be interested in, in what else we offer at EVE? I don't think so, I don't think they'd be interested in our therapies, our cookery [*laugh*] our smoke cessation, no, no [*laugh again*]!' This could be framed either as avoidance of gender dynamics, or as a form of realism regarding the socialisation received by Upper-Ardoyne's men, and where they stand in this problematisation process. But in both cases, it denotes of a posture that does not challenge either the conception that those persons have of their own gender role, or the organisation of the community. If not pushed to provide a generalising view on the persons they work with, they rely on individual and personal explanations:

> Théo – 'And for example, taking the key core of women empowerment, would you have seen any progress since the time you've been trying to do this or?'
> Julia – 'Yes we do yeah. Yeah, we see, first of all, with the empowerment, this group is, you know … this … society, community is very fractured. Even with you know the Protestant side, the, the [*bite her tongue in acknowledging a mistake*] nationalist side itself, we have seen some of the women that have gained confidence enough now, to start working with each other, you know that's a big thing, that's a new thing. So we have seen that happening, we've also seen the cross-community element now, hmm, where they're, you know they are working with people from another community, so, yes we do see empowerment. They attend events now, someone would give a speech at the event, yeah so confident has built as well.'

Here the emancipation of women is described as a mix between personal empowerment and a personal gain of confidence, which practical consequences are measured not in terms of emancipation regarding gender roles, but emancipation regarding the rules of the communities – since the "success" of their personal process is linked with the ability of women to talk with women from another community. But not a lot is said on what those empowerment processes mean for women as a group for itself, in their ability to consider, when deemed necessary, their experience as defined by gender. On the few comments we have seen made by coordinators on the matter, the experience of men and women always seem to be accompanied by an indelible shadow, the community. This is what is also perceptible with participants in EVE's classes. In the discussion I had with Denise and Nancy on the first class of the cross-community programme, Denise' criticism of the men's tendency to interrupt her was telling:

> 'Théo – Well … it was the first trial.
> Denise – Yes? Well… I found that man very aggressive.

> […] Nancy – Yes, the one from Tigers Bay?
> D – [*nods yes*] He was very bitter … and see, Théo, Protestants are always shouting at you, they always want to speak first! You watch. Whereas we won't have a say if we don't need to.
> T – Ah … yes, but see … they were also the only men here … so maybe them speaking a bit more had to do with that…
> D – No, but you know this goes for all Protestant you'll see Théo, and even Nancy, like, [*another Nancy was present, from a neighbouring Protestant area*], you've seen it.
> T – Yeah, well…
> D – Well, you're saying that because you're a man! [*they both laugh*]'

Despite her long-term engagement with EVE, Denise relies on another dynamic when her criticism of the situation. She emphasises that the imbalance in the meeting had to do with the other persons being Protestants, and not them being men. When I presented this possibility, Denise assumed that it was a form of support rather than a criticism. There is a coexistence of a lack of thematization of gender issues and a return to either conflicts of integration or to the generalising posture when force to actualise the category of 'women'[1].

This did not render it desirable for EVE to denounce the social structure of local communities, both because they aimed at emancipating 'out of' and expected personal investment from the local women in the group. This has led them to be criticised by other groups. For example, the leader of a neighbouring Women's Centre said about her work:

> '[*From one year to another*] Those are not the same [*women*], there is a circulation, because this is only viable way to organise group work. People need to come and go, we need to challenge them, have new exchanges, have new discussion, that's the only way we can progress and move on.' Then Eileen mention lots of other women's group that she knows, and emphasise the idea that those groups may be doing proper things, 'they may go to a lot of places but they really don't change. It's always the same person. How can you make progress?' She continues 'It's the difference, for me, between them groups and me. They are Community groups and I am a Community worker. […]. Cause, for example, the women from ROSE Women's, they go in the Houben, and the women from EVE also go to the Vine [*Meaning we have two groups engage in cross-community work in two different places around Ardoyne*]. But when you compare and triangulate, you end up with the same population of women. Never stay with a simple group. Cause see EVE and ROSE they have a wonderful relationship, they have known each other for a decade, but it's always the same thing.'

EVE is blamed by other groups of failing to interest new local women, or of failing to handle the community networks to do so. Meaning, they are deemed unable to spread the learning and the forms of reflexivity that individual residents would have acquired within courses throughout the rest of the community – the dynamic mentioned by Harold in Donington – in order to render the work meaningful *both* in the reorganisation of the community and in the diffusion on new perspectives on women's experience.

A such, EVE appears stuck in the situation of an activist groups – defined by an ideal of emancipation out of and a liberal form of personal empowerment – who cannot assert their

[1] This is also characteristic of the actors of the 'moderate' network of Upper-Ardoyne. As the local PUP representatives told me regarding gender dynamics in the area: ' In my view I just don't care what you have between your legs, or if you wear a short or a dress, it's just what you say or what you do.'

ambiguous aspirations towards being attached to a local community and towards the stabilisation of a category of 'women'. They encounter difficulties in interacting with members of local communities, women emancipating through, and detached members of the government.

3. When a traditionalist group struggle to assert its critique of the community

The failures of these two examples of 'ideals of detached emancipation', faced either with the tensions inherent to the relation between local residents and state workers or to the tensions inherent to traditional community dynamics, has given us clues as to why some women's groups may still strive for another form of emancipation, but without always being able to claim their roles in the local community. In which case, they ambiguously and unexpectedly reject encouragement to detach themselves from their community and to denounce women's marginalisation. But can emancipation through, which marked traditional women's groups of the early years of the conflict, really thrive given that context?

3.1 A group judged communitarian and isolated by observers

At first glance, what we'll call the Ocean Women's Group's origin had little to do with gender. It was set up by Protestant residents of an area we will call Newport, a small neighbouring area, who had met during public protests, notably the Flag Dispute of 2012[1] and the Twaddell Camp in 2013. After the dispute's and the camp's 'suspension', a partnership was set up. As part of it, some of the most vocal residents in the dispute established women's group. The discussion group would meet every week. It aimed at allowing collective self-help, notably in the face of public disavowal: because of the violence of the rallies, protesters were now stigmatised throughout the region. Those residents still felt the lack of safety that they had voiced in the dispute, feeling that they needed to defend their area and their unionist identity. This goes with the strong ties that these women nurture with another central institution in this unionist area, the male loyalist flute band, also criticised throughout the region for being one of the most provocative bands. Over the years, members of the Ocean Women's Group remained criticised for their sectarianism, and for an intolerable lack of concern for their neighbours,

[1] When the City Council voted to restrict the display of the Union Flag on the City Hall, unionists from different areas of Belfast engaged in regular protests to contest this decision.

including Catholic nationalists. It was judged harshly by members of Catholic women's groups, as women protesters deviated from a 'peaceful and caring' ideal.

In addition to that isolation from outsiders and Catholic neighbours, the women's group progressively encountered difficulty in their own area, Newport. Whilst the women were initially part of the local partnership between community groups, as explained by one community workers, the group 'left it because […] they felt there was nothing in it for them and that they weren't being listened to, or they weren't being heard'. Their relationship with the local residents' group grew colder as years went by. Despite competing for funding, the women's group depended of the leader of the local men's group. This emphasised the familial links that had held the group since the beginning. From my arrival in 2016 to my last visit in 2019, the ten women who constituted the group remained the same, were all former protesters, all linked to the oldest families in Newport. They remained some of the most conservative and traditional members of the community. For that reason, they would also isolate themselves from moderate members of the Protestant community. For example, they strongly opposed the local clergy or the Donington resident's association. They despise Edward as he 'spends his time in Ardoyne, he sure loves them Fenian'.

This also constrained their interaction with other women's groups. In 2014, facing that sense of isolation, the women followed a workshop to help them share their story with other communities and women's groups. They decided to stitch a quilt. The quilt would contain a variety of pictures, each representing a part of their history, culture and identity. This quilt was then presented to different women's group. On it, most picture represented elements from the Protestant unionist traditions – Orange parades, bonfires, etc. It also contained elements pertaining to the history of Newport, such as a picture of the eviction of Protestants from their home in 1969 (see Chapter 1 – p. 51), an element related to their past conflict with the Catholics of Greater Ardoyne. When the women from the group addressed gender, it was more to celebrate their local community than to provide grounds for generalisation: the quilt contained a picture of a linen mill with the word 'The Millies', a tribute to the local female workers employed in the linen industry. Hence, in representing their identity, they had strongly emphasised their local Unionism and Protestantism. On the other hand, the women's group they presented the quilt to were oriented towards thematising *women*'s experience. After that, a state agent tried to arrange another meeting between the women and the leader of this other women's group. She told me that went terribly, as 'the women were too conservative and did not want to listen to what she had to say'. One woman came to the agent and said: 'Get her out of here

before Jackie [one of the older women] chops her head off'. Hence an overall difficulty to interact with other women's group who are either Catholic, moderate or too progressive.

However, behind the group's activities we find the support of the State and the city council. Officially, the women fund their activities. But they rent a room in the local community centre and depend on the city council and the government for many organisational aspects. Three different city and state agents attempts to 'drive the women forward' — Mable, Charlotte and Rosa. Its status of 'women's group' legitimise their support. Charlotte meets the women once a year to plan activities – crafts, dance, classes, etc. The quilt programme was funded, organised and audited by Rosa and an external facilitator. Both pushed the women to engage further in workshops, travels and meetings with other women. Still, in 2016, when Rosa told me that the group was born out of the protest, she added 'that's why they feel very marginalised, very demonised, hmm… and there's probably a lot of folks would say, well… they deserve to be that way but, that's… that's not really helpful you know, there has to be another way, to look at it'. This supports the vision of an isolated group, whilst trying not to use that as a spring to reduce them to their exclusive and sectarian practices[1]. This view is reinforced by programmes such as the quilt. Additionally, whilst publicly trying to help them, officials were personally dubious on possibilities of success. Outside of the group, all reported being discouraged by the women's lack of investment and by the opaque personal relationship that seemed to structure the group. The group walked away from proposed programmes after the quilt. In 2016, after having secured funding for a trip to London with an Irish women's group met during the quilt project, Rosa said the women were now categorically refusing[2]. She added that she did not really know how to handle them since, as an accountant, she did not have the skills to supervise them. Officials hence stress their difficulties and obtuseness … even when interactions do occur with other women's groups. For a few months after the quilt, the group had tried to work with the facilitator to write their own local history book. In so doing, they had eventually met a Catholic Women's Group in Belfast, for one meeting: there, they temporarily bonded over the fact that both groups had been publicly stigmatised and both refused to engage in cross-community work.

These attempts reinforce members' retreat into daily activities focused on the community. In April 2018, after a year and a half of absence, I asked a member what they had been doing:

[1] The evaluator stressed : '[The women] feel their community has been unnecessarily victimised and stigmatised as a consequence of how the dispute was portrayed in the media.'

[2] She also mentioned that they had stopped working with the local unionist councillor: after the quilt, the local unionist councillors also decided to display it in the city council, and had sustained them in their book effort.

> She says 'not much since the quilt'. She pauses and repeats 'not much', but then adds that, at the time, they brought it to the Irish embassy 'because they wanted to see it, but that was all'. After a silence and a nod from me, Anne concludes that they don't really organise projects because they don't want to do cross-community. 'And now all the funding requires cross-community, and they don't want to help you if you don't have it their way. So we didn't do anything.' She says they had some other things going on with other women's group, but refused to do it.

The members of the group publicly express their will *not to* engage with the Catholic community, despite possible funding. They did go to London, but on their own, without the other group. Still, we can already sense that all these presentations reduce their activity to the 'excluding' side of it, and to a lack of mobilisation that reproduce the stigmata of unionist women as 'tea makers'[1]. None of the municipal agents mentioned to me that they had been to the Irish embassy or met with an official from Dublin, nor used the fact that they had been working with a Catholic women's group to adjust the understanding of that women's group. Neither did the women themselves, who also would rather emphasise their longing for community integration and not take responsibility for exchanging with the Irish Embassy.

Overall, distanced actors and group's members emphasise a history of increasing isolation, despite moments of exchanges – their outward efforts are described by emphasising the tensions and mismatches they provoke. It is judged as a reinforcement of their integration within their traditional community, compared to other members, and women, who distance themselves from it. This grouping would allow them to support one another, often putting aside the help of municipal agents and other groups. Officials do highlight the women's 'progress' in reports meant to secure funding, but these differ from their day-to-day view: they strongly criticise them for being fully oriented towards communal integration[2]. The women maintain that portrayal. Given the contemporaneous evolution of State expectation, and the rise in reflexivity regarding longed forms of emancipation coming with single identity 'women's groups', how is maintaining such a locally integrated form of emancipation possible?

3.2 A group which routinely manages internal tensions

Well, it is not possible. Or rather it is, but it goes with a certain number of tensions and ambivalences within the groups. The internal organisation shows the difficulties in maintaining a women's group which follows so heavily the rules of the community.

[1] Rachel J. Ward, ''It's Not Just Tea and Buns': Women and Pro-union Politics in Northern Ireland', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, November 2004, vol. 6, no. 4, p. 494-506.

[2] Regardless of whether they consider the women as accountable for or as victims of their isolation.

3.2.1 An apparent reinforcement of community integration?

In appearance, the group has a very stable and traditional organisation. It meets every week at the same time in the same room of the community centre for evening discussions. The same people sit around a central table on the same chairs and come and go at around the same time. A group of three women – Jackie, Anne and Wendy – usually arrives first and prepare tea. Then, three other women – Morgan, Katie, and Megan – arrive after playing bingo with members of the community. Then, two women usually come in later. One is Susan, a worker from the community centre, who organises the Bingo and cleans the centre before its closure. The other one is Amy, the youngest woman in the group, who comes and goes more freely than the others. Two other women – Yvonne and Bertha – come on an irregular basis. This goes with a familial organisation, often mentioned during the meetings: Jackie, Anne and Wendy are all aged between 55 and 70, and so are Yvonne, Bertha and Susan. The other women are close to their forties. Anne, Jackie, and Susan are sisters. Morgan and Katie are Anne's daughters, Megan is her daughter-in-law, and Amy is Jackie's granddaughter. The older generation sits on the left, and the younger generation on the right. I sit between them, near the younger generation, and so does Susan, near the older generation. This organisation reinforces the stability of the elders who are central in the life of the group. When all is well, the group has fluid discussions on subjects that allow women to mutually reinforce their understanding of their community and of their role. The exchanges are internationally negotiated in a very ritualised manner. Topics are covered rapidly, often no longer than a few minutes, and concluded by a routine saying – 'This is wild', 'God Love him', 'Alright then', 'Well that's them for you', etc. There are typical topics which allow women to reinforce their understanding of a community-oriented group, such as elements of their unionist identities, or criticisms of moderate members of the community. For example, in 2019, in a common discussion on the Royal Family:

> Based on the discussion on rich people, one woman transitions into a discussion on the name of the new royal baby. One of the women mentions that he is 'not a Royal Baby!': 'Archie' is the baby's name, and the women say they're not too sure about it, and add that 'people' say it's related to America. I ask them 'How is it related to America?', and they tell me it's probably due to the second name 'Harrison, and that type of thing you know.' Jackie says 'Harrison Ford, certainly'. […] Then Yvonne tackles another controversy by saying that everyone has been complaining about Meghan's selection of the hospital, and explains that 'the journalists were furious about the fact that they didn't have any information on her whereabouts, and didn't know where she was going to have the baby.' The women nod, and Morgan says 'Well she's American and she wanted to avoid these things, but that's protocol, whether she likes it or not.' and then Yvonne says 'Yes, but she just pretended until now, you know, she's playing a role, and she's a very good actress like'. Which leads them to discuss a theory that Megan heard, according to which Meghan wasn't even pregnant, and someone else had the baby: 'That's why she wouldn't say where she was going to the hospital.' […] Hellen adds 'That's also why William carried the baby, and we couldn't see his face…' Anne says 'Yes, they

> hid it!' […] They make a last comment criticising Meghan for talking inappropriately to the guards during the ceremony, and Anne finishes by saying 'This is America and royalty, because they don't know anything about it, they haven't any of it'.

All the controversial subtopics on royal names, genealogies, protocol and communication allow the women to reinforce the expected rules of 'conservative women from a unionist working-class community'. Topics like that allow the members to collectively display a strong sense of conservatism towards the rules of their urban community and of the Protestant unionist community, whilst mutually sustaining one another. If this includes the unionist admiration for royalty, it also goes with a sense of suspicion towards media and the information provided by those 'high ups'. Other notable subjects such as this one include TV shows from the previous day, male relatives, or news from the neighbours. But some more ambivalent topics also appear, just as some more ambivalent interactions render exchanges more tense.

3.2.2 Tense relations with detached third parties

As an example, the relations that the group nurtures with third parties, and the fact that these actualise a will to distance oneself from the integration in the community, are difficult to handle. In May 2019, the following discussion exemplifies some of the tensions raised as soon as the group has to interact with outsiders, or even distanced members of their own community. The women were curious about how the summer scheme was going, in their community centre:

> Someone asks Susan how the collection for the summer scheme has been going. She says that they 'haven't received any funding from the City Council, so…' and leaves a blank. 'Is that so?' asks Yvonne, surprised. 'Yes' says Susan, 'and there used to be a fund for special learning as well, but we didn't get it. And, see, we passed the pot around for the summer scheme at the Bingo and they didn't give anything…' Mary says 'Well the Women's group said it would, if you give me a form, I would be moving around houses with it and see if we could get something', whilst Katie says 'Of course we could give a tenner.' Then Susan, seeming to jump on the occasion after nodding, asks Jackie about some form that she had been handing her in prior weeks, but that Jackie never brought back. She asks the question whilst pretending to take a berating tone. Jackie replies 'Fuck if I know where it is, and don't you talk to me like that, who do you think you are!', also mocking her tone by reemphasising it herself. The women laugh.'

Here, the women are taking position on outsiders through the intervention of Susan, who is both a member of the group, and a worker in the community centre employed by the City Council. When it appears that the council is not going to support activities, and neither other members of the community, the older women insist that the women's group mobilise. It reinforces their understanding of their role in the community, their suspicion towards the willingness of the city council or outsiders to help them, and their criticism of divested residents. When hearing the women positively mentioning 'form filling', Susan tries to mention the city council form. However, as she is uncomfortable doing that and expects their refusal,

she 'plays pretend' to sustain her request. This time, the women explicitly present their lack of regard for the council's demands. Susan is reprimanded. She then decides to fetch a new form and, rather than Jackie, gives it to Anne. The form is about the annual meeting that gathers all the groups of the centre, the manager, council representatives and members of the Newport Partnership. The women's group must give annual reports and decide who will represent them:

> Anne turns to Susan and says 'But what groups are going to be there?' Susan says 'Well, all the groups', and Anne answers 'Yes, but I don't know all the groups, who is going to be there?' and Susan says 'Well the people from the Complex[1] and from round here […]' Anne says she doesn't really want to go, but asks around the room to see who could, and then asks Katie. Katie says she could, perhaps, but she would have to be out of work and school at the right time. That's not sure. Then Anne turns to Jackie. Before she has the time to ask her, Jackie says 'Oh no, I did it, I did it when fuckin wee Desmond was here the wee pig. Oh I hated him.' 'What was his name?' ask one of the younger women. 'It was Desmond … Oliver.' [*a mediator in the protest and in the Partnership*] says Anne. 'Is he still living in that house up there?' asks another one. 'Oh no, no…' says Jackie, and then she continues 'He really was a wee pig, if a woman was talking, he couldn't handle that. Now when all the paramilitaries and the politician were around, he was always chatting, but he would never let a woman speak. You could see him react.' Susan says, 'He didn't like us', Anne confirms 'Yes he really never liked the women's group'.

No-one wants to go. However, learning it involves other community groups, Anne takes over in convincing the women to go: it has become a community problem rather than a city problem. This is also an occasion to retell how badly their past interaction with outsiders, like Desmond the former pastor, went. The women criticise him both for his tendency to dismiss local members of the community, and to dismiss women in public. This allows the older generation to pass that on to the younger women who enquired about him, and Susan to switch back into her role as a women's group's member and to oppose 'outsiders'. For that, she finds a hold in the criticism of gender stigmatisation that has emerged. Similarly, this is one of the only examples of strong gender thematisation that I have witnessed in this group: it is easier for the women's group to employ a criticism of gender stigmatisation when it is adjoint with a criticism of a distant outsider. It is when members are brought back to the conflictual origin of the group that they are brought back to a trial during which they were framed as 'women' due to their deviant 'women' behaviour: the moment when it has been thematised has been adjoint to the conditions of their mobilisation against the other community.

3.2.3 Tense differences within the group

If the mention of outsiders seems problematic, it more importantly reveals differences between members, from very firm defences of community integration to more fluid positions.

[1] The other activity centre in the small area, where the men's group and other activities take place.

FIRST, it reveals the differences between old and young generation of women. The young generation is not simply following the ideal of community integration reinforced by their elders. As mentioned, Katie accepted to go to the meeting. When attending, she remained silent, except when she muttered 'It's pointless, don't get me started on this' to me. When the leader of the community centre revealed the amount of money collected for the summer scheme, Katie was the first to applaud, ostensibly forcing other people to do so. Finally, the municipal agent explained that someone who was absent was going to be elected as a representative, since they had mentioned their interest before. I turned to Katie to say 'Funny enough, people who aren't here will end up on the committee'. She then said: 'We should put Jackie up for it!', and we both laughed. Here Katie's position is more ambivalent: if she did agree to represent the women at the meeting, she used it to display her contempt for the agents and her defence of the group. However, she also uses humour to caricature Jackie's refusal to engage outside of the community, showing a practical distance and a certain reflexivity about the limits of a *too* integrative position.

Humour is the main way for younger women to express their differences with older women. This includes the humorous remarks about the older women they shared with me, and the way they reacted to the elders' humorous remarks about me. For example, Anne once described the time she was at a concert, and shouted at the singer to take his shirt off. Morgan rapidly turns to me and says 'I don't know her, that's not my mother!', whilst Wendy asks Anne 'How many drinks did you have?', Anne turns to her and says 'None, none, I was sober, but I know how to have a laugh!'. This is followed by a more serious discussion in which Jackie is surprised that the younger women do not drink alcohol when attending concerts. Morgan jokes to distance herself from the outspoken and expansive character of the older women: the lack of self-control that the elders claim, just like they pride themselves in 'saying it like it is' in less playful situations, can make the younger generation uneasy. Another case is even more telling. In June 2019, there is a long discussion on the reform of pensions:

> I mention that, in France, train drivers can get their pension at 50 for health and safety reasons. Jackie laughs and then proceeds to make a lot of fun of the French by saying that she would probably go there with a bunch of onions, her baguette on the shoulder and a bunch of cheese on her back if only she could get that pension at that age. I smile. Katie smiles, but turns to me, and say, still smiling, 'Well, that was quite offensive, Théo, you should say something!' and laughing. And I say 'Ach, but that's only the truth, I would love my baguette and cheese'. By answering that, I also avoid answering another comment coming from Susan at exactly the same time, which was 'Well Théo, by now, what would *you* say about *us*?'. There is a pause and before I have the time to think of an answer, Anne answers by saying 'He would probably describe us with guns and balaclavas!' and all the women laugh.

This is an ever more public form of disapproval towards traditional tendencies to act: Katie intervenes to explain that I have a right to be offended by the remark made by the older woman. But she could not explicitly support my readjustment. She shows that Jackie's behaviour was inappropriate, but also that it has a cost to support me in this claim, a cost in the embarrassment that the other women may make her feel for interrupting the situation, which Katie absorbs with humour. On the other hand, as shown by Anne, the older women laugh and nurture their reputation of extremism and conservatism by displaying it with humour, even in situations which might be occasions to display a more balanced profile of themselves.

In accordance with their ambivalent position – between being officially neutral and supportive, and officiously critical and pessimistic about the group – the state agents tend not to stress that generational dynamics. When they do, they reduce them. In my discussion with the state agent Rosa and a Catholic resident in 2016, I mentioned that the group has been frequented by the same people for a long time. The resident jumps on the occasion and says that we should fire them all to put young people back in their place and start from scratch. Rosa reminds him that young people are already there, since this women's group 'is like a family thing, and the young'uns are following the same path'. She reduces the younger generation to simple followers of the integrative tendencies of the group, whilst the residents idealise the young generation as completely distanced from the rules of their community.

SECOND, it reveals the difference within the generation of older women. As outlined by some examples, there are differences between Anne and Jackie, which are described by members of the groups and by state agents as its 'leaders'. Jackie is the most present, as she seems to direct most interaction and most criticisms within the group. She is the most vocal. She is an open ex-paramilitary, has gone to prison, and is one the most prominent defender of the Protestant and unionist position, *but* also of issues relating to the group or to women. She takes stances on almost every topic covered by the women in the group, and weighs heavily on all things related to Belfast's or regional politics. However, her arrival in the group remains unclear as she lives in an affluent area north of Newport. It is presumed by distanced actors that she started to follow the group in one of the previous mobilisations underwent by women. Anne is internationally less present in the group. However, the group rests on her influence in the community. She is related to most of the women of the group and has held an important position amongst the protesters. Her husband and her son are amongst the lead members of local flute band. She resides at the heart of the area. Because of that, she is judged to hold a centre position in a familial network in the area, which extends beyond the women's group. Both women had

heavy influence in the women's group, but used those resources to emphasise different points. Anne rules over interactions that have to do with integrating the local urban community, whereas Jackie rules over interactions that have to do either with integrating with the ethno-political Unionist community, or reaffirming a traditional general sense of humour. This led the other women of the group to support one or the other, notably with mockery, stressing the tension between those two forms of belongings and integration with women from the groups.

Similarly, Wendy is the shyest of the oldest women, and had a habit of looking at me whenever something funny or offensive happened in the group. She would watch out for my reaction, and then comment on it with a wink, a smile, or even a good laugh. In this, she often took the position of distancing herself from Jackie and Anne. For example, when Jackie goes on a tangent about a provocative TV Show that demands competitors evaluate naked people based on their physics, she shares degrading jokes about sex, 'black people' and prostitution. As the women laugh, Wendy interrupts whilst still laughing, nods at me then say to the women 'Here's Théo noting that down!' then to me, straight away, 'Jackie is boring us all!'. As I answer that this is not the worst I've heard them say, everyone laughs, and Jackie concludes 'Well, you know us by now'. The increasingly racist and sexist jokes were interrupted by Wendy, as her jokes about my presence and my observations had the collateral effects of reminding the women of what their behaviour may cause if it was judged from a distance. In turns, her comments about Jackie also had the effect of allowing her to distance herself from Jackie by attributing those comments to her personal tendencies. Jackie positively endorses that role of someone who 'tells it like it is', and allow that balance to be maintained when other members of the group start to feel tense about displaying such conservative views, especially in front of strangers[1]. Humour allows this readjustment without the differences between women coming too obviously to light. The interventions of this 'shy' member of the group allow members of the older generation to readjust themselves when they feel like they have an occasion to incorporate some of the criticisms of the younger generation without losing face.

FINALLY, it reveals the peculiar position of Susan. As we mentioned she is a member of the group but also a worker from the community centre, linked with the city council. Though Anne's sister, she lived most of her life somewhere else in North Belfast. Because of that, she has difficulty being a full member of the group: she is often not listened to, and has difficulty not expressing her doubts or hesitations, which are heavily criticised by other members. But

[1] She also maintains a personal balance, often using idioms such as 'Don't get me wrong' or 'God forgive me'.

she also has difficulty being a full worker of the council, as she shares some of the women's reluctance, based on community spirit. Susan was often quick to comment on the behaviour of the women's group to me. For example, she would often turn to me and say 'Well, we're just bitching now' when they were engaging in complex community gossip or demeaning comments.

We have seen in the previous example how she used a humorous tone to ask Jackie, her elder, to accept the demands of the city council and of municipal agents. For example, in June 2019, all the groups using the centre were supposed to fill out a survey for the city council, meant to evaluate how well the association were handling their money. Susan was in charge of submitting that to the group of women, only a few weeks after their last discussion (see Chapter 3 – p. 172). When I had seen her two days before, she had told me that she had 'to show it to the women on Wednesday, can you imagine that! Jackie will be raging, she will', and she repeated the same position to a man from the flute band, both criticising how the city council only used the form to gather impersonal numbers, and criticising the women from the group for not completing it. I had read the form and told Susan that some of the questions there were interesting and that I was interested to see what the women would say. At some point during the session, then:

> Susan intervenes and tells them that I was waiting for them to open their envelope to see what they think of that paper that they have to fill for the city council. 'What paper?' Jackie and Anne suddenly ask, in unison. Susan tells them [about the survey], and Katie gets up to go and search for the envelopes that have remained in the office. She brings the papers back and puts them on the table in front of Jackie and Anne. Anne opens it. Jackie as well, and Jackie start reading it out in a soft voice that is unusual for her, mimicking an office worker reading an official paper. After having read a few lines, she stops and says 'Why the hell do they want to know about that' in reaction to the question 'How much do you pay to use the facilities'. None answers. She goes silently through a few more questions, and then the women give the paper back to Susan and say 'Well, no, we won't be filling these out. Why would they need to know that.' I smile and turn to Morgan and say 'Well that was quick' and she says 'Wasn't it?' laughing.

Susan uses my interest as an outsider to mention the city council survey, as she knows the topic is problematic. This allows her to avoid bearing the role of the city council and to remain attached to her role in the community. However, this does not suffice as the women still react with suspicion to the questions, and refuse to commit to this sharing of information that would formalise their links with the city council and with official outsiders. Susan did not insist. The younger women are not going through the papers but are looking at Anne and Jackie reading it. However, they do react with humour when I comment this behaviour, as they see this as a typical move coming from Jackie and Anne.

In addition to that professional role, Susan also has a peculiar position in the community. She did not live here most of her life, moved in and out of it, and has to handle a specific family

history that keeps her caught between the rules of community integration and the liberal aspirations of her work with the council and of her life experience. As she told me in April 2019, when we were chatting one afternoon in the community centre:

> ‘You see I’ve never hated anybody, even at the heights of our troubles. The only thing I did hate was the IRA and how they justified what they were doing. When you seen how they treated the three Scottish soldiers that are buried up there, or when they killed the two soldiers down at the cemetery. That made me angry. But I’ve never hated any Catholics you know, and I never brought up my children to hate Catholics. See now my son Ian he went on to marry a girl from the New Lodge, and same for my daughter, she married someone from the New Lodge.’ She goes on about how Ian found a girl he liked in New Lodge and they got together and Susan never said anything about it because she had raised them as ‘responsible adults’, and they were able to decide what they wanted to do, and how they wanted to judge people. Susan adds that this would have got her out of the neighbourhood at one point.

Compared with some of the older women, and helped by the context of an individual conversation, Susan shows that she is strongly attached to the need to show tolerance and distance from community affiliation, which led her to face criticism and even exclusion from her local community. This also led her to handle the situation in which her offspring have engaged with members of other urban communities, situation that she has encouraged but for which she still feels heavily ambivalent:

> ‘And he moved out here, so they got married then… And at the time there was a lot going on here with the protests and all that, so, we were known. They had a mixed marriage in the big church over there, and it was a fine wedding, don’t get me wrong, the priest was there, he said he had always wanted to do some work in the area. They were married at the big church of Ireland on Ballysilan up there. And so when she came here for the first time, I remember she was sitting there and all, and there was Margaret, even, and, of course, at the time we were already well known, and I said that it was all fine, but jokingly you know, because of the events, but I said “It’s fine and all, the only thing I don’t want is for the children, if you have children, is for them to go to a Catholic school”. And here she was “Oh no my children, no I wouldn’t do that, my children would be going to an integrated school”.’

This time, after asserting detachment with the rules of the community, her retelling progressively shows how she still finds it necessary to reaffirm – both with me and with members of her family – her engagement. First by the reputation harvested during the dispute, then by her demands to maintain traditional affiliations with her grandchildren. Exemplifying her ambivalence, her comments on the ‘jokes’ about the Catholic school leaves doubt as to whether the humour in saying ‘it’s all fine’ is situated in (a) saying that there was no need to take the rules of the community so seriously, when in fact there was, or (b) saying that there was no need to reaffirm distancing from the community, when in fact there was. Yet, more than her personal ambivalence, her position also relates to collective tensions:

> ‘They had their daughter, and then, straight away, she was baptised. I called Ian and said “So what will you do now?”. He said “What do you mean ma?”, so I said “Here’s what I mean, remember what I said before, you had a wedding and we talked about children, and now here we are, and she’s only two weeks old and she’s getting baptised. But see Ian, you’re from a Protestant background,

> and she will be brought up in an entirely Catholic way if this keeps up." he said "Ach stop it". He's a man of few words you see my son. It's always "Right ma, right ma, right ma". Ma, ma, ma, that's it. But they didn't. And now he just doesn't have his word to say, Lily has been going to a Catholic school, she's always over at the chapel, and what age is she now… […] But I really didn't understand it, I mean I still don't, but so the grandparents were giving money, and Ian said "It's up to you" well I said "Yeah I won't be giving money for that." […] And she's [*her son's partner*] always saying "But sure they can make up their own mind when they grow up", but of course they can't, not with what they're being taught at the minute, and all being raised one way. But you know, this will be problematic, at some point, when they will be old enough to understand that they have Protestant parents and grandparents, and that they will hear everyone tell them about the part of the world they live in, it will just flood in, all at once, and they won't know what to do. But that's been coming up a long time in the family you know, and those things will just keep on being passed out.'

Susan's ambivalent position regarding attachment to and distancing from her community has led to a situation when she has to claim, now unsatisfied, her actual involvement with the community with actors who have 'used', as she sees it, her tendencies to be tolerant to neglect her contained, but very real, need to engage and defend her community. As it turns out, this leads to generational difficulties in her family, and to a clearer reaffirmation of her position: a demand for a transmission process that takes into account both aspirations to distance oneself from the community and to defend one's integration into it. Yet, as we have seen within the group, the condition she finds herself in rarely allow her to explicitly claim this, and often pushes her to either drastically oppose the other women – often humorously – or drastically join them, whilst being visibly embarrassed by both positions.

3.2.4 Tense defence of community integration

Finally, those differences between members reveal very real differences in the propensity to defend the integration to their local community. If we come back to the humorous interaction about French characteristics, its immediate follow-up revealed more tensions. Displaying the generational difference, Morgan intervenes to tackle the question more seriously:

> Anne answers by saying 'He would probably describe us with guns and balaclavas!' and all the women laugh. Then when it becomes silent again Morgan asks me 'Théo, did you see the tv show that was done here the Holy Cross? You know all the troubles that happened back then in Ardoyne?'. I am surprised, and say 'No, when was it?', and she says, 'It was done only a few years after that'. She nods and says I should watch it, because I'll see that 'I was there as well, with my family, and they all showed us as drunk on sofas on the road and all the Ardoyne people were ex IRA men defending their family.' I ask her if it was on the BBC. She says it was, then pauses, and adds that she isn't really sure. She turns to ask the other women, but they don't seem to listen: when Morgan asked that question to me, they started to foster other discussions. I ask her 'Did they do interviews at the time?' and she says 'Well mommy did one or two interviews, yes she did.' And then I turn to Anne and I see that she is listening to us, and she says 'But see this was between two riots, you know, Théo.' And before I have time to answer she says 'See Théo, would you be involved in riots?' I say 'Protests or riots?' She says 'Riots, to defend what you believe in.' I say 'I've been in protest you know…' she cuts me to add 'Well sure I've been in dozens of protests as well' and I continue '… but you know I don't think I would throw a brick at someone.' Anne says 'No you wouldn't love.' I say 'Though we French people are not afraid of a protest, and we'll stand up for workers' rights, but I, I wouldn't condone violence.' Then Anne leans in and says 'Sometimes it's not condoning, sometimes it's the circumstances, Théo; when you feel like it's fight or flight, you do

> what you have to do. When the peelers are falling upon you.' And then she sits back in her chair. Then Morgan repeats that I should definitely watch it. She shows me her phone, as she has been looking for the video during my exchange with Anne. She has found it on Youtube and says it's available there, and that if I had a look at it I would see how one sided it is, even for someone who doesn't know about the event.

At that point, I still had not answered the question asked by Susan, 'What would you say about us', but the two women, Anne and Morgan, were both internationally proposing a way to collectively answer that question. Whilst the older generation had claimed their inclination to violently defend their community, the younger woman comes back seriously on the subject and tries to continue the conversation with me[1]. After her mother's joke, Morgan discusses how they were misrepresented by journalists: on her end, and whilst the other women are not listening, she tries to reemphasise the fact that they are not as violent or as 'sinful' as the other actors tried to portray them. But she is interrupted again by the older woman, who continues, now seriously as well, to develop another portrayal of the women's group. She contextualises the need to engage in a violent defence of the community, and tries to find common ground with me to ensure that I comprehend their line of action. Though she reemphasises the view that she had first put forward as a jest, she has been affected by the fact that Morgan and I are continuing to discuss this topic. She comes back to seriousness. But again, in parallel, this pushes the younger women to go further in her presentation of the women as being misrepresented by outsiders, and to evacuate this propensity for violence. She presents the actual document to me, and implicitly asks me to corroborate what she judges as certain: even someone who doesn't know about the event, or about them, would know that the document is misguiding and that they are not like that. In this example, it is both the difference between the two generations, and the use of an external actor that brings to the surface a tension between championing the specific integration to the community and refusing it.

If the tense balanced of these polarities – between younger and older generation, between defending community integration or distancing oneself from it – are even more visible when members of the group can rely on an external third party to express different positions, how come they still appear to be monolithic to those external third parties? In addition to the distanced point of view of the latter, there is also the fact that effervescent moments, like moments when it is a matter of reclaiming elements of the unionist 'culture', or claim to be victims of an injustice, often lead the women to mutually reinforce their position as defenders of 'community integration', displacing the tensions and the polarities outside of the group. In

[1] It is also what Susan tried to do, but the fact that she was cut by Anne, and that I was 'allowed' to be impolite and not to answer her question, are witnesses to the difficulty for her to maintain an engaged position in the group.

July 2019, five minutes into the session, a discussion starts about the local flute band. The Parades Commission, a regional institution which regulates the parades, has decided to impose restriction on the local Unionist Band in an upcoming parade:

> Yvonne turns to the other women and asks them 'Did you see the decision from the parade commission?' 'Which one?' the other women asks. 'The one about the band down at the Whiterock' […] Yvonne explains that they will forbid them to get that banner up the road, with the Whiterock there, past the [*inaudible*]. Anne and Jackie say 'It's terrible…' Megan says that it's because they're classing them as a UVF band. All the other women say that it's stupid, only former members were in the UVF, 'there's none of that here now.' And then Yvonne adds that 'they're not allowed to wear the shirt either!' Jackie sighs, and says that it doesn't make any sense as they did all of that over at Easter. Susan asks everyone if they know who complained. And Anne says 'Well, a Fenian, your man Seamus who's on the parades commission.' Jackie asks what the Orange Order says about all that. Anne explains that Dean and Marc [*her son and husband, members of the flute band*] are meeting them up tonight… Susan asks her if they're meeting the Parades Commission, and Anne says 'No no, they're meeting the Orange Order.' She adds that Michael says he doesn't think there's any use going to the parades commissions anyway, as 'you can appeal but it takes forever and the whole commission is entirely made of Sinn Féin people anyway.' Susan says 'Well, you may just go on and take the fine here and now. […] Katie says 'They should be neutral, but it won't happen', Mary adds 'It's the same story with the head of the Police!', and Yvonne says 'It's the same with the people of the equality commission as well!' Jackie repeats 'They should be neutral… but it never happens.'

The overall conversation is oriented towards defending the community. The older women discuss the 'unjust' decision to restrict male members of the community, and the younger women who are related to some of those members join in. Again, they criticise the states institution for constraining them, and state agents for pretending to be neutral in handling the members of their community. When Megan repeats that the decision relies on the fact that an ex-member of the band was a paramilitary, Anne is appalled and says 'Sure, the other ones don't bother, they always parade with pictures of their dead ones, the real problem is our ones don't fight their corners, but their ones fight their corners'. Again, the position of detaching oneself from the community is pushed out of the women's group, attributed to other members of the community, and heavily criticised. Which, here, leads the groups to praise the members of the Catholic community who maintain rituals of heavy community integration. And this time, the discussion relies on all the information that is passed on by the male members of the flute band to the members of the women's group: the community integration collateral reinforces the upholding of 'complementary' links between women and men's role in their community.

In return, when some members take position on issues related to community integration, external actors always reduce their description of the group to the 'isolated and excluding' polarity of their tendencies to act. Their sectarian behaviour often suggests contempt and disappointment with the municipal managers and the state agent. Yet, when their behaviour strives away from that display of sectarianism, those detached actors react with doubts or by emphasising that this will not last, because it will not be accepted by the rest of the group. For

example, when I got back in touch with the women's group in April 2018, I mentioned to Rosa that I encountered Susan in Newport a few days back:

> I mentioned to Rosa that I had gone down the community centre, and that Susan was on the phone when I came in today, but that I would come to see her again the following week. Rosa said that she may come down with me. Then she paused and started to say that Susan, in the end, wasn't really part of the group. She's part of the group but not really, she's somewhat on her own. Rosa added that they were talking behind her back. The other women. Then Brian intervened and said that her sons and her daughters are hanging about on the Catholic side, that his son is hanging down in the New Lodge. And that this may be why she is on her own. Rosa tells me that I shouldn't try to understand.

Susan is not described as someone moving the group, but by her position of an aside, incapable of handling the communal integration of the group. Then, one explains the difficult position of Susan by reducing the situation to one that may simply be explained by the sectarian dynamics at hand here, whereas the other reduces it by saying that the women are irrational, and that one should not strive to look into their reasons to act, which is mainly a way to emphasise that she, personally, condemns any community behaviour. The year after that, the state agent was not following the women's group anymore. However, she would still ask me news about them when I saw her, and so would the women. At some point in June 2019, we exchanged about them:

> I ask her how [Jackie and Amy] got in together into the group. She says she doesn't know, then adds 'Plus, Jackie leaves in a nice house over on the Cliftonville road…' and adds a small 'Hmm' of mystery. She adds that she really doesn't understand everything about that group, it remains obscure. I'm saying that 'Anyway, it's staying the same over the years.' She says 'Yes they're not letting anyone in, like when they don't want people from a nationalist area coming into the Complex to work with them. They're all so defensive, but yet again, I can understand why the people of Glenbryn are like that, you know, they cannot show any lack of cohesion, as soon as they do, they will start to lose services and facilities, and then … then they would be asked to relocate, but they can't, can't relocate, I can never see them relocate anywhere because it wouldn't feel natural for them anywhere else.' She adds that 'Perhaps this is why Kim is less involved up there, she sees the reluctance…', 'I don't know' says I.

Again, she reaffirms the 'obscure' nature of their motivations and activities, brushing over the fact that Jackie is not from the area and hence does not really fit in the 'extreme and isolated' view of the women's group. Yet, trying to be comprehensive, this detached actor reinforces the description of those actors' action as guided by an irrepressible need to defend the community, reconducting their local and very real – but not ever-present – outcry. This leads to simplify their understanding of their actions, but it also leads those state and municipal agents to restrain themselves in what they offer to the group or in what they think the group is capable of accepting – they wouldn't 'relocate anywhere'. Even though, in the same discussion, she had mentioned the internal dissent of the group – with one woman living in a very 'nice house' outside of the area, whilst in this working-class community-oriented group. This leads her to

suggest that this ‘defensive’ position is one of the reasons why the administrative agent of the community centre spends less time and energy trying to make it work, as she would be too exhausted by their reluctance. All of which reinforces the strong propensity of the women *not to show* any sign of disavowal of community integration, of opening to the other community, of letting go of community tradition, especially when it amounts to publicly accounting for the presence of minorities or simply of plural actors, including women.

Instead, the group lessens its own difficulties by reassuring itself in reinforcing their understanding of themselves as women defending their community, whenever conflictual subjects arise and allow them to experience their cohesion, and the emancipated status of their group which ‘surpasses’ other members of the community in sustaining it – and, again, displace the polarity outside of the women’s group. For example, in May 2019:

> After discussing the case of the Ballymurphy massacre, the women start to talk about the new Belfast mayor, John Finucane. Jackie is wondering ‘What about that new city council, why is he here?’ And Susan also adds to this that she thought ‘it [the mayor’s position] was supposed to alternate between Prods and Catholics at the council, what happened?’ Anne says ‘No, no, that didn’t happen this time,’ and another woman says that it stopped. […] And then Jackie says ‘So we’ve lost the council but yet again, we’ve been saying that for a long long time by now, but no one gives a fiddler’s, the prods just couldn’t be bothered.’ And Anne adds that Sinn Féin has also taken over the Lisburn City Hall as well. Then Jackie adds ‘But see, we’ve heard all about Finycane getting death threats from loyalists, but I don’t think they did really. I think Sinn Féin were good, Sinn Féin played their best trick saying that Finucane got the threats, because now that’s all the publicity he would need, before the election, even though he’s only been standing for a couple of days.’ Wendy says ‘And he said that he would work for everybody’, to which Anne answers ‘Well if you believe that you’ll believe anything’.

The women recall their lack of trust in the institution, their lack of trust in the neutrality of state agents, and their lack of trust in the other members of the unionist community. Just like in the preceding example, they restate that they have been conscious of that for a long time, and have publicly mobilised for that. Finally, their lack of trust in the neutrality of British State representatives, and even in the possibility for them to be neutral, means that they criticise the desired loss of relevance of ‘Protestant’ and ‘Catholics’ as political categories: they perceive it as being a step backward, notably a step backward in the defence of their community. That is why, in those situations which reinforce their cohesion and their understanding of what the group is and where its emancipating power lies for those members of the community, the group is continuously trying to understand why other ‘Protestants’ are not as defensive as they are, but never why they’re not as defensive as other ‘women’.

Conclusion: a detachment impaired for lack of a holistic emancipatory ideal

In W3, the State attempted to tackle both the subject of women's emancipation out of their community and the role of paramilitaries in local communities, which led to collaterally reinforcing different ideals of emancipation without providing the means of a balance. The delivery officer and local women exchanged criticisms on the programme. In Ardoyne, it led to debates on instrumentalization and integration. Detached actors reduced women's groups' positions to their different role in the community based on the 'moderate' and 'radical' opposition within Catholic Ardoyne. In Donington, it led to a misunderstanding of the local issues and to a reinforcement of local tensions preventing the mobilisation of women in an autonomous politicising group. But the situation was not easier when local women's group were holding the *emancipation out of* ideal for themselves. Though promoting a very liberal and professional approach, the women's organisation in Ardoyne's Protestant area had difficulties which were in part related to the difficulty to assert an attachment to the community, conscious of the risk of being accused of resisting emancipation or preventing emancipation. The integration into community networks continues to be both an obstacle and a resource it is necessary to master, and their ideal does not facilitate their relationship with State agents.

Given those two examples, what is the positive sense of defending an allegedly traditional emancipatory ideal, an emancipation through the community? We have seen with the other women's group in Newport that it provided a strong sense of support in the face of progressive isolation, but also that it could not be reduced to this description. Instead, both the women and the State agents supporting a group with a strong traditional position were traversed by ambivalence and had found collective solutions to actualise a will to detach themselves from their community. Yet, again, by sustaining one another in this difficult balance, this reinforces the vision that this women's group has of itself, inhibiting the type of contact that would allow them to rise in reflexivity on the position that they, as a women's group, occupy regarding the experience as gender minorities. Instead, they crystallise forms of resistance.

The study of those groups shows us that mobilisation in the local community and the upholding of traditional roles still represents a solid ideal of *emancipation through* – despite being ignored or misrepresented by the State – , which coexists in each group with the more detached ideal of *emancipation out of*. In addition, for the women who have experienced the positive actualisation of this 'involved' ideal during the conflict, the emergence of a more detached ideal which somehow minimise the role played by women in their communities as

pertaining to their emancipation, feels like a painful ‘collective amnesia as to what women did all those years’[1]. The State, in turns, wishes to support a form of gender emancipation out of local communities but either neglect or essentialise the will of women residents to maintain some forms of community affiliation. The conservative groups react by maintaining communal solidarity and to emancipate themselves as ‘women with a role in their community’, disregarding – but sensing internally – how the State group could be – and is – favourable to them. The liberal groups seek to distance themselves from their community, but also struggle to voice the communal interdependencies that still affect them. As such they are blamed by other women’s groups, who are not from those areas for not enforcing enough reflexivity on women’s conditions. Both types of groups, for their own reasons, have grown tired of being ‘instrumentalised’ by the State – either because they feel like they are being used for peace-oriented programmes, or because they are constrained in women-oriented programmes.

Women’s groups, by the fact that they uphold a blend of emancipatory ideals[2] are central example of the tension between community attachment and distancing that structures mobilisation of groups through peace. The omnipresence of this balance and its reduction to resistance has, in turn, not only been an obstacle to a fully comprehensive approach to the issue of gender in Northern Irish communities, but also an obstacle to a proper sociological imagination on gender relations[3]. In a word, most women groups seem to be stuck either in the ‘communitarian critique of liberalism’[4] or in the liberal critique of communitarianism, without realising that each group of actors has in common to strive for a certain vision of the State apparatus, which may differ in some point, but which rejoin in demanding a higher form of reflexivity on the most desirable emancipatory balance. We would suggest that various groups may break out of this situation when they have resolved this question together, but in the solidary confrontation of defending different ideals of emancipation. It would be an emancipation by which their ideals to emancipate through and out of the communities are held together. It would form a holistic and collective ideal of autonomous emancipation, which concerns societies as a whole, and assists actors in seeing how communities and surrounding social groups are all affected in their interdependencies by the greater emancipation of local women.

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[1] As expressed by a speaker in the Women’s Place in Society event which took place in Ardoyne in 2019.
[2] Based on the prolonged segregation of its members, their status of marginalised members of their community, their mobilisation throughout the years and the implication of the State.
[3] This relates to the difficulties, described by Sally Shortall, to categorise the type of emancipation and autonomy defended by ‘Farm women’s groups’ in Canada. See Sally Shortall, ‘Farm Women’s Groups: Feminist or Farming or Community Groups, or New Social Movements?’, *Sociology*, 1 February 1994, vol. 28, no. 1, p. 287.
[4] Michael Walzer, ‘The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism’, *Political Theory*, 1990, vol. 18, no. 1, p. 6-23.

PART II

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REGULATING POLITICAL AMBIVALENCE

A higher reflexivity on the double aspiration of the peace process

‘This principle of bearing, bearing up and bearing out, just having to balance the intolerable in others against our own, having to abide whatever we settled for and settled into against our better judgement. Passive suffering makes the world go round. Peace on earth, men of good will, all that holds good only as long as the balance holds […].’

S. Heaney,
Weighin In

INTRODUCTION

Preventing double aspirations from turning into double binds

> 'In societies above a specific level of differentiation, inherently contradictory codes of norms can coexist in varying degrees of amalgamation and separation. Each may be activated in different situations and at different times. [...] However, many situations activate both at the same time. The inter-state tensions and conflicts of the twentieth century appear in most cases, though perhaps not in all, to be of this type. They lead easily to struggles for dominance, tensions and conflicts between the two codes and can express themselves in tensions and struggles between different sections of a state population or in struggles of the same individuals with themselves.'
>
> Norbert Elias, *The Germans,* p. 158

THE FIRST PART OF THIS THESIS led us to see how liberal peace policies were deemed to face unexpected resistance as a result of ambivalent situations. In the chapter on juvenile suicide, we saw that the first wave of suicides led to mobilisation. At this point in time, both involved and detached actors tended to relate those incidents to a pathological and conflictual organisation of North Belfast urban communities. Just after the GFA, attached actors were prone to denaturalise the social order of urban communities, which notably led to a general denunciation of paramilitaries' role in those juvenile suicides. However, this alignment would gradually turn into a disparity between involved and detached actors, then into a schism between insiders and outsiders' forms of knowledge on the issue. Residents were now facing the question of the community's responsibility in its own difficult situation. They had initially managed it by finding a positive sense in denouncing the conflictual organisation of their area, but this was now going increasingly counter their aspiration to show to the rest of society that Ardoyne's case was not

that specific, nor was the area blighted by war. For them, it was mostly facing the social and psychological effect of its lack of integration to the rest of political society. This dramatically reinforced the disjunction between local and detached knowledge, as detached actors now attempted to make use of the increased historical distance to specify how the issue of Ardoyne juvenile suicide related to direct and indirect effects of the conflict.

In the chapter on women's groups, we saw how internal tensions within groups aiming at women's emancipation collided with the tensions inherent to the conflict between communities and to their integration to the Northern-Irish state. This strife limited the actual materialisation of emancipatory ideals. Detached actors reduced women's groups' positions regarding their 'moderate' and 'radical' forms on communalism within Catholic Ardoyne. This contributed to concealing the pluralism of gender emancipation. In Donington, it led to a misunderstanding of the local issues and to a reinforcement of local tensions preventing the mobilisation of women in an autonomous politicising group. It was not easier for women's groups which did show public aspiration to liberal emancipation from their community. Yet, we saw that, even within the most apparently isolated and conflictual community groups, the local women were traversed by ambivalence and had developed collective ways to actualise a will to detach themselves from their community without breaking the cohesion of the women's group. In so doing, we saw that the mobilisation within the local community and the upholding of traditional roles still represents a solid ideal of emancipation, co-constituted by the handling of community conflicts. In this situation, and faced with its own double aspiration towards gender emancipation and community empowerment, the State's agents' influence only grows more fragile. In both cases, it ends up being denounced by women's group as a form of instrumentalization. We concluded that, because of an impaired detachment over those tensions, women's groups now have to balance between the communitarian critique of liberalism and the liberal critique of communitarianism.

Both cases crystallise the idea that some local actors were willing to accept peace, but not at any cost. They often denounced the risks of that process, especially in cases where they felt that Ardoyne and its residents were stigmatised and reduced to conflictual particularities. Walking this uneasy road meant that people often went astray, in the eye of pacifiers. Hence, by now, our readers may be expecting the thesis to underpin a common sociological observation: the peace imposed from the 'top' by political elites, accompanied by expectations of reconciliation and community detachment, fell short of satisfying residents of troubled areas.

However, to stop here would be the source of many shortcomings. The idea that 'peace imposed from the top fails due to intestinal forms of resistance at the local level' has a long

history. It has participated in the politicisation of numerous political crises in Ireland and in the United Kingdom. Hence, this statement carries a certain presupposition on what binds social groups together and how exactly they are bound with one another.

1. The increasing limitations of the resistance motif

As we mentioned in the general introduction, there are some fundamental issues with the renewal of this 'resistance motif' in analysing the Northern-Irish peace process, as it proves to be increasingly inadequate to describe the social processes at hand. Something which social actors and practical disputes have already shown. The historical and contemporaneous cases we have already mentioned seem to indicate that some Northern Irish actors have come to consider the political problems of their interdependencies, of their integration or separation, of the role of traditional communities and liberal societies under a new light.

One of the main reasons, as we will see, is that it becomes increasingly difficult to relate to interdependencies between communities in terms of clear-cut dyadic opposition and uniform resistance. They now appear enmeshed in such complex and layered networks of interdependencies that actors regularly attempt to find new ways to formalise their aspirations towards one another, which neither 'peaceful cooperation' nor 'conflictual rivalry' adequately transcribe. In contrast, the insistence on 'resistance' in understanding political phenomenon having to do with integration and segregation goes with the underlying assumption that 'resisting' actors aim at avoiding being integrated with one another, and because of that aim at remaining outside of the speeding network of interdependencies that represents entities such as the British empire, the United Kingdom or the Northern Irish society. However, as we have seen, this is a reduction of the plural aspirations that actors, most notably residents of deprived Catholic and Protestant communities, have come to experience given their interdependencies with one another. This appears to lead social relations to be increasingly describable in terms of ambivalence – which suppose that social actors are taken in ambivalent tendencies to cooperation and conflict – rather than one-way resistance – which supposes that actors are wholeheartedly tending towards withdrawal and would break away if they were given the means[1]. Hence the problem: residents of North Belfast do not really know how to go about

[1] Some authors, in describing 'attitudinal ambivalence' or 'structural ambivalence', argue that actors are ambivalent because of contradictions between their aspirations and their structural possibility to realise them. But this still suggests that people would voice unilateral aspiration without external obstacles, instead of accounting for the fact that they do have positive reasons to follow contradictory ideals. See for example Ola Sjöberg,

being attached to their society, or to their community. Or rather, they know, but as part of this knowledge they also inevitably trip on a higher consciousness of all that can go wrong in their attachment to their society, their community, their people or their State. They can only afford to be carefully, and in some way paradoxically, attached to social groups. They make the experience of a double aspiration, which is sometimes reduced to the description of a one-way resistance.

Indeed, in the cases where the ambivalence of social actors is pointed out, it is often used as a way to ridicule and blame forms or contradictions on individuals or to simply disregard those critiques. Ambivalence, ever since it emerged in the terminology of psychoanalysis during the early 20th century[1], suffers from a bad reputation. And rightly so: at its origin, not only did this idea highly individualise and psychologise the situations it aimed to describe, but it tended to associate them with unsustainable pathological states, or, at best, uncertain and discomforting dilemmas open to interpretation. Hence, as some authors have recently argued[2], we aim to provide a more sociological understanding of ambivalence and to how social actors approach them. By bringing back some of the difficulties we described to 'incompatible normative expectations incorporated in a *single* role of a *single* social status'[3], we reinsert them in the complex web of interdependencies in which actors make the experience of varying codes of conduct. All the authors who have attempted this throughout the decades owe a debt to Simmel, his understanding of the ambivalence of social relations and, consequently, of social conflicts[4]. He discussed extensively how typical figures such as 'the stranger' or 'the poor', whose integration into social networks was based on an ever-changing dosage of simultaneous 'nearness and remoteness'[5], similarity and difference. It is in this light, and because of the increasing detachment of actors regarding those dynamics, that we need to tackle inherently political ambivalence.

'Ambivalent Attitudes, Contradictory Institutions: Ambivalence in Gender-Role Attitudes in Comparative Perspective', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 1 February 2010, vol. 51, no. 1-2, p. 33-57.

[1] Véronique Beretta et al., 'Ambivalence According to Bleuler: New Trajectories for a Forgotten Symptom', *Psychotherapies*, 2 April 2015, Vol. 35, no. 1, p. 5-19.

[2] See for example Ian Burkitt, 'Civilization and Ambivalence', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1996, vol. 47, no. 1, p. 135-150 ; Melanie White, 'An Ambivalent Civility', *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 2006, vol. 31, no. 4, p. 445-460 ; Simonetta Tabboni, 'De l'ambivalence sociale à l'ambivalence culturelle', *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 2007, n° 123, no. 2, p. 269-288 ; Sarah Hillcoat-Nallétamby and Judith E. Phillips, 'Sociological Ambivalence Revisited', *Sociology*, 2011, vol. 45, no. 2, p. 202-217.

[3] Robert King Merton, *Sociological Ambivalence and Other Essays*, London, Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1976, p. 6.

[4] Georg Simmel, 'The Stranger' in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. by Kurt Wolff, New York, Free Press, 1950, p. 402-408 ; Georg Simmel, *Conflict And The Web Of Group Affiliations*, New York, Free Press, 1964, 196 p ; Georg Simmel, 'Bridge and Door', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1 February 1994, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 5-10.

[5] G. Simmel, 'The Stranger', art cit.

Hence the central aim of the second part of this thesis: if the first part showed us that ambivalence was to be found where social relations were being reduced to uniform resistance or adhesion, the second part shows us that actors are already engaged in expressing, delimiting and regulating this political ambivalence. They are becoming increasingly conscious of the need to prevent their double aspiration from turning into a *double bind* between two ills which would only have them going back and forth from bad to worse. Indeed, by double bind, we mean a situation in which the double aspiration turns into a vicious circle whereby the difficulties to voice and regulate both aspirations mutually reinforce one another. It is opposed to the 'virtuous circles' by which actors become able, by means of secondary detachment, to mutually reinforce the more conscious regulation of both aspirations and of their ambivalence.

2. Investigating secondary detachment

In the first part of the thesis, we have observed moments when actors limited their depiction of one another to one or the other aspiration regarding their community, hence reducing their reaction to unilateral 'resistance' or 'adhesion'. This was the source of several tensions. At the end of each chapter, we have also seen that it sometimes led actors to realise and voice their ambivalence towards ideals of integration and distancing from their community.

However, this ambivalence remains hardly comprehensible and even less controllable for the actors concerned. Although they publicly try to detach themselves from them and investigate the increasingly common tensions that are the signs of their ambivalence, they struggle to comprehend and take responsibility for them as long as they are reduced to unambiguous resistance. Residents then struggle to see the various political aspirations that actors and communities may alternatively endorse in the organisation of their political life. Especially since these aspirations continually affect each other, despite the fact that they are always liable to manifest themselves in uncontrolled, violent and contradictory ways. The two public problems we studied encountered 'impasse' as every time an actor tried to voice this ambivalent relationship to an ideal of communal distancing, he was accused of conflictualisation. In the same way, every time an actor recalled the need for community distancing, he was accused of a pacifying imposition.

Yet, far from being intractable, the impasse and tensions caused by those situations are sometime mitigated when this ambivalence is taken into account by a third party. Ardoyne residents have sometimes attempted to do this on their own by voicing their ambivalence to

each other, through a greater understanding of some of the paradoxical and perverse results of their respective tendencies. These are the forms of secondary distancing that we mentioned in the introduction. This involves a central sociological argument: the perverse results that increasingly tend to come out of those situations of double aspirations are not unexpected consequences. They are not unexpected, precisely because social actors become increasingly conscious and apprehensive of those perverse results which have more chances to manifest themselves if residents live up to potentially contradictory double aspirations.

For example, we mentioned the case of organised fights and several local actors who realised that the local teenagers could not be described as sectarians since they were increasingly spending time with one another, yet they were also increasingly fighting along community lines. Their comments on this surprising situation led them not only to voice the ambivalence, but also to open investigation on its origins. For instance, during a discussion between residents from North Belfast and a local Interface community worker in June 2019, people were exchanging on organised fights. One of the women there related it with the separation between the two youths from an early age:

> The unionist woman said: 'See that Hazelwood integrated school, we had to fight to get our granddaughter in there … all our other ones, they are in Everton, with all the other kids in the area. And the grandson was 10, in Ballysillan, and he didn't get in Boys' Model so… You don't really know.' But then Daniel [the community worker] says 'Another thing as well that is complicated is that, all the kids we see in interface area, the one who raise troubles or who organise fights, they come from Hazelwood: it's just that they can meet up at the interface, since, because they all go to the integrated school, they all know each other. So, we went to Hazelwood, and asked them what they would do, and they said "Nothing…", they didn't know how to deal with it. Because the problem, inside the school in itself, is that they tend to avoid history, they don't talk about modern history or the Troubles to the kids, they avoid it'.

Not only were actors exchanging both on how the lack of contact between teenagers and their increasing contact could both be seen as origins for their ongoing conflict, therefore turning an assessment of unexpected resistance into the description of a vicious circle. They were also relating it to the lack historical reflexivity that social groups have on their relations. The existence of those higher forms of reflexivity and regulation of their political ambivalence will be the centre of our attention in this second part. We will see how, in order to detach themselves from these situations, actors engage in the difficult task of claiming, in some shape or form, a positive role to conflict between communities in a post-conflict society. But not any form of conflict. This is already a sociological enigma in stabilised political society, it becomes an almost unjustifiable enterprise in the early years of a post-conflict transitional process.

To explore those complex dynamics, we will turn towards two new case studies. First, we will observe the transformation of urban civilities in North Belfast, and see how social actors

manage to adjust the implicit code by which Catholics and Protestants are able to tell one from another during everyday encounters in the city (**Chapter 4**). Second, we will observe how groups of football fans, followers of a sporting rivalry which overlaps with ethno-political conflict, attempts to rediscover antagonism in the form of leisure. A transformation that relies, at its core, on the mastering of ritualisation (**Chapter 5**). Those two case studies will have us become more familiar with the steps by which social actors of a post-conflict society try to regain familiarity with the positive role of conflict in the manifestation of interactional carefulness, and in the longing of playful and leisure moments of rivalry. This is only possible by becoming increasingly reflexive on their ambivalence, and striving for forms of regulation which support them in taking it into account in their interaction. Hence, in all of those social situations, the ambivalence remains open to transformation: it can either fall back into a double bind in which the two aspirations which constitute it reinforces one another in an opposition, or lead to a better regulation of their ambivalent nature.

Clarifying this situation is the aim of our last chapter, which shows that this ambivalence, far from being the result of contextual or situated caracteristics, is the effect of a processual dynamic which currently puts the residents of North Belfast in a threshold condition (**Chapter 6).** By threshold conditions, we mean this: if the interdependencies between communities and with other social groups have become increasingly ambivalent, and if actors have become increasingly reflexive on the need to handle their double aspirations, it is the effect of a threshold period in the process of increasing interdependencies. In that sense, political ambivalence is related to a liminal effect in the transformation of social organisation, which gives it its full depth. To make this point, we depart from ethnography to sketch a processual analysis.

CHAPTER 4

Using the code to regulate its forsaking.
Urban sociability and community distinction in North Belfast

THE FACT THAT SOCIAL ACTORS MASTER 'PRINCIPLES THAT GENERATE DISTINCT AND DISTINCTIVE PRACTICES'[1] is now a commonplace in sociological analysis. Analyses of how these principles mark and notice individuals' membership of distributed and hierarchical groups in social space are numerous[2]. So are those that have conceived the concealment of such markers as acts of resistance[3]. However, we are less used to dealing with situations in which distinctive practices are the object of conscious efforts of categorisation from social actors, and even less so with those in which these efforts lead them to question the validity of these principles of distinctions. This is now the case in Belfast, where members of the Catholic and Protestant communities are increasingly questioning the ways in which they differentiate themselves from one another.

As already mentioned, the Troubles were a low intensity guerrilla conflict. From then on, far from separating, the two communities were brought to live alongside each other in a conflictual manner. They became entrenched in separate neighbourhoods in close proximity to each other. As a result of this, and based on previously diffuse knowledge, the residents of North Belfast have established a particularly clear set of markers, signs and clues which allegedly allow them to establish the community belonging of a stranger without having to

[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1994, p. 23 and p. 25.
[2] Jean-Claude Chamboredon and Madeleine Lemaire, 'Proximité spatiale et distance sociale. Les grands ensembles et leur peuplement', *Revue française de sociologie*, 1970, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 3-33 ; Eleonora Elguezabal, 'Que nul n'entre si...', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 6 October 2014, vol. 204, no. 4, p. 10-23.
[3] J.C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, *op. cit.*

venture asking. This can lead to avoidance or interactional exchanges, both conflictual and peaceful. However, since the signing of the agreement in 1998 and with the increasing expectations of cohabitation between neighbouring communities, these habits of implicitly establishing community belonging have been inevitably challenged. In a time of reconciliation, would it still be appropriate to use 'old' categories and an old 'code' of civility to establish the community belonging and the political sides of the people we meet on a daily basis?

Nowadays, urban areas of North Belfast are marked by the fact that these everyday practices of differentiation and distinction are problematic. It is a particularly interesting case for a fresh look at the social phenomena of distinction, their readjustments and their testing. Far from considering the practical norms of differentiation as 'fixed' or 'unnoticed', this situation reveals the moments of initiation, exposition and collective readjustments of these norms.

Interactionist sociology has particularly denaturalised these practices of self-presentation and the know-how involved in identifying others. Its main contributors have noted both the role of identity markers in the proper conduct of interaction[1] and, conversely, the importance of civil inattention in the copresence of social groups[2]. Their analyses have made it possible to highlight the negotiation of identity boundaries[3] and moments of passage from one group to another, in which concealing information about oneself whilst investigating on the other is central[4]. Ethnomethodologists, on the other hand, have emphasised how the circulation of knowledge on an implicit code for identifying, marking and recognising political identities can structure exchanges between one group and another[5] without invading social situations, leaving this work in 'minor mode'[6]. These interactionists and ethnomethodological works agree on the fact that, in most situations, there are implicit norms by which actors, more or less consciously or under constraint, refer to signs, markers and tendencies to act which define the social characteristics and identities of people, based on which certain actions are expected.

[1] Erving Goffman, *La Mise en scène de la vie quotidienne. Tome 2, Les Relations en public*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1973, p. 55.

[2] Claudine Haroche, 'La Civilité et la politesse : des objets "négligés" de la sociologie politique', *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, 1993, vol. 94, p. 97-120 ; Ulf Hannerz, *Exploring the city. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1980.

[3] Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Long Grove, Waveland Press, 1998, 156 p.

[4] Erving Goffman, 'Expression Games : an analysis of Doubts at Play' in *Strategic Interaction*, Philadelphia, Pa, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970, p. 1-81 ; E. Goffman, *La Mise en scène de la vie quotidienne. Tome 2, Les Relations en public*, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

[5] D. Lawrence Wieder, 'Telling the Code' in Roy Turner (ed.), *Ethnomethodology; selected readings*, Middlesex, England, Penguin, 1974, p. 144-172 ; Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1967, 288 p.

[6] Catherine Rémy, *La Fin des bêtes. Une ethnographie de la mise a mort des animaux*, Paris, Economica, 2009.

In order to consider the problems faced by actors when they are confronted with the need to readjust these norms, we shall refer to them here as a ‘code’. The code like status of this set of distinction rules, and their resulting actions, is particularly justified by the fact that these norms stem from a specialised or relatively closed group. To consider this set of distinction norms as a code is also to take seriously Norbert Elias’s analysis of the duality of normative codes that hold social groups in highly differentiated and interdependent societies together, and which turn out to be the product of their historical transformations, while being subject in practice to forms of self-constraint and relaxation that appear far more complex than a mechanical reproduction of the code[1]. Moreover, Eliasian theory forces us to anchor the conception of codes of conduct in the longer process of increasing chains of interdependencies and transformations of political societies. The evolution of the code of distinction between Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland, during a long period of war and later during the peace process, must be understood in those terms.

Civil conflicts are indeed situations where actors constantly rely on practical habits of distinction and exclusion. People can no longer be distinguised from each other in a multidimensional way or in civil indifference. In these contexts, since they can no longer trust the order of the social world[2], actors are more intensely concerned with identifying political boundaries between groups and their members. Social categorisation returns to the forefront of interaction. Actors’ social positioning gathers more weight as a practical indicator of how to behave in their presence[3]. This undermines a State’s ability to ensure that members of different social groups do not have to rely on a permanent one-dimensional social categorisation game. They thus transmit the ‘code’ of distinction more intensively to each other, while at the same time relegating it even more to the level of the implicit in front of non-members of their groups. Consequently, sociologists have often portrayed these situations as marked by widespread mistrust[4], or even the inability to rely on institutions to ‘situate’ the other when the adversary to be avoided is considered ‘inside’ the political society – such as civil wars or religious wars[5].

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[1] Norbert Elias, *Studies on the Germans*, Dublin, University College Dublin Press, 2013, 560 p.
[2] Niklas Luhmann, *La Confiance : Un mécanisme de réduction de la complexité sociale*, Paris, Economica, 2006, 123 p.
[3] Michel Dobry, *Sociologie des crises politiques*, Paris, Les Presses de Sciences Po, 2009, 383 p.
[4] Olivier Allard, Matthew Carey and Rachel Renault, ‘De l’art de se méfier’, *Tracés. Revue de Sciences humaines*, 15 November 2016, no. 31, p. 7-20.
[5] Natalia Suarez Bonilla, *La Compétence du savoir-(sur)vivre : épreuves d’identité dans la guerre civile colombienne*, Thèse de Doctorat en Sociologie, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 2010; Jérémie Foa, ‘Who Goes There? To Live and Survive during the Wars of Religion, 1562–1598’, *French Historical Studies*, 1 August 2017, vol. 40, no. 3, p. 425-438.

These studies prevent us from considering the use of codes in peacetime as anything other than a reactionary attachment of communities to forms of mistrust and intolerance towards each other. They do not allow us to capture instances where actors, aware of being subject to a plurality of expectations, can reflexively engage with the expectations that guide whether or not they rely on such codes of social categorisation in order to act. The question then becomes: while the code of distinction is reputed to be a legacy of communal conflict, and is seen as less and less admissible in a peaceful plural society, how can residents of North Belfast make it a lever for peace in order to overcome the contradictions they experience in practice? How can moments of explicit reference to the practice of distinction, inherited from conflict, sustain the pacification of community relation?

It is therefore towards a pragmatic sociology of action, influenced by the ethnomethodological conception of the 'code' but also by Eliasian analyses of the duality of normative codes, that we propose to turn. The latter sees the peace process as a moment in which actors increasingly experience a plurality of ways of referring to or abandoning the code, and not simply as one in which some actors in working-class neighbourhoods are still concerned with distinguishing a Catholic from a Protestant, while most members of that society no longer pay any attention to it. This would be applying the scheme of unilateral resistance and adhesion to the problem of civility. Rather, we now argue that these actors may debate whether to abandon or reaffirm this 'social expertise' on themselves, inherited from the past and sometimes judged too exclusionary, discriminating, and one-dimensional in times of civil peace. In this chapter we analyse moments when actors from the various communities of the Greater Ardoyne area exchange, educate and sanction each other in the use of such a code. We point out that these forms of detachment occur when expectations of distinction and indistinction become too contradictory to maintain a controlled sociability between different groups. They allow actors to sense that the use of the code is not based on the simple perpetuation of warlike practices in times of peace, but on the need to overcome a paradox: when seeking to integrate the official rules of pacific civil indifference, actors are sometimes led to reaffirm distinction and classifying practices amongst themselves in order to claim differences and desired forms of exclusion that are already operative in practices. In the chapter, we first discuss the contemporaneous initiation to the implicit code and the ambiguous expectations that it carries. Secondly, we present the aspirations to forsake the code and the paradox they entail. Finally, we focus on rises in reflexivity on this paradox, and on the importance of third parties in more regulated invitation to the code when actors attempt to overcome its contradictions.

1. Using an implicit code of social distinction in public

1.1. Ardoyne and the experience of identity markers

1.1.1 Between segregated area and cohabitation locus

In North Belfast, the problem of identity markers and of their daily use is intricately linked with the use of urban space. Today, North Belfast has the reputation of being an area where Catholic and Protestant live together yet remain at a distance from each other in residential areas that residents and observers – including civil servants and scholars – identify as 'Protestant', 'Catholic' or 'Mixed'. We have already summarised the installation of a territorial antagonism (Chapter 1). During the early years of the conflict, Ardoyne was considered one of the most divided areas of Belfast, one where residents would become more aware of the growing division between communities. In a series of autobiographical interviews compiled by a local community worker in 2019, a resident recalled his arrival in Ardoyne in 1963:

> 'My memory of Ardoyne at that stage was of beginning to become much clearer that there was "them and us", or some sense of "them and us" than there ever had been in Andersonstown, which was just one big homogeneous Catholic block. I began to discover there were places which were defined as Protestant, other places that were defined as Catholic, and that some were mixed. […] Living in Ardoyne you became aware of "cautionary tales" and you absorbed them almost by osmosis. We became aware of the need to be careful of who you met, and of what you said in front of them. Then we got all these stories of fellas being stopped and asked what school they went to, or asked to say the alphabet. Strange how even the way you pronounced the letter "h" indicated your religion! […] So all that became part of growing up in Ardoyne.'[1]

Since the Good Friday Agreement, as we have presented, Ardoyne has remained an 'interface'[2]. High fences and walls still separate residential areas. Residents still consider that Ardoyne harbours an 'insular mentality'[3]. They are reportedly confined to different areas of the neighbourhood and remain particularly attentive to their movements, the people they meet and the strangers who walk through these housing areas, regularly. Like the rest of North Belfast, Ardoyne and Upper-Ardoyne contain several dead-end-street. Built at a time when segregation was a political response to conflict[4], they still encourage 'networks of (dis) connection through which social divisions are expressed via everyday mobility practices'[5]. In 2019, in conducting

[1] B. McKee, *Ardoyne '69*, *op. cit.*, p. 218–220.
[2] P. Shirlow, ''Who fears to speak'', art cit., p. 78.
[3] R. Boland and N. Mayne, *Boys of '69*, *op. cit.*
[4] Frederick W. Boal, 'Integration and Division: Sharing and segregating in Belfast', *Planning Practice & Research*, 1 May 1996, vol. 11, no. 2, p. 151-158. In Ardoyne, the most important walls were built in the 1980s by either the Department of Justice or the Housing Executives. Most smaller walls were built after the GFA due to incidents.
[5] Gemma Davies et al., 'Networks of (Dis)connection: Mobility Practices, Tertiary Streets, and Sectarian Divisions in North Belfast', *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 2019, vol. 109, no. 6, p. 1729–1747.

research with urban interface areas in North, the *Belfast mobility project* found that 30% of Protestant and '44% of Catholics indicated that they were sometimes afraid of being identified as a member of their community'[1], when they walked through an area. In 2016, a local cross-community association had organised group conversations between residents from Ardoyne and neighbouring areas, both Catholics and Protestants. They discussed the changes they had witnessed in neighbourhoods in recent years. One of the Catholic residents said:

> 'There are people from here walking down to Tesco's [*situated near Ardoyne but in a Protestant area*] but I don't – I still got to Yorkgate [*situated far from Ardoyne but in a strong Catholic area*], or into the town. I still have a fear of walking in places that I'm not familiar with. I would love to say I feel different now but I still niggling fears. It still sticks in my mind about Catholics walking into areas where they thought they'd be OK and ended up murdered.'[2]

During my fieldwork, I would often be referred to those geographical guidelines by people I worked with, and rapidly learned that their places of interest and their use of services respected a certain number of unsaid rules. This included people who, in professional settings, would have been engaged in cross-community work.

However, some of Ardoyne's residents, associations, local representatives from the city council and the government have also put this segregated vision to the test since the 2000s. Just like Sturgeon et al. noted in 2019 North Belfast is both a 'divided landscape' and a 'shared landscape'[3]. On the ground, those who have participated in establishing peace agreements and who oppose armed groups, defend a more inclusive urban life. For several neighbourhood associations, the facts that moments of violence – such as the summer interface riots – and public confrontation have become less intense from year to year has meant the possibility of setting up cross-community projects supported by the Northern Irish authorities. This led to the construction of 'shared' activity centres in the area, to joint projects between youth clubs, and to a long-term cross-community partnership between primary and secondary schools from both communities. As such, Ardoyne has often been heralded throughout Belfast for groundbreaking cross-community work. Mostly, this also meant that the use of space is far from being as fixated as described by tenants of the 'segregated' portrait of Ardoyne. As years pass, parts of the neighbourhood evolve towards a more generic urban space which, 'an environment where there are many and varied ways of making oneself known to others, and one where a great deal of manipulation of backstage information is possible'[4]. Around Ardoyne, more spaces have been

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[1] B. Sturgeon et al., *Mobility, Sharing and Segregation in Belfast: Policy Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 20. See https://belfastmobilityproject.org/maps.html.
[2] Tascit : Twaddell, Ardoyne, Shankill, Communities in Transition, *Promoting Positive Change*, Belfast, Urban Villages Initiative, and International Fund for Ireland Peacewalls Programme, 2018, p. 11.
[3] B. Sturgeon et al., *Mobility, Sharing and Segregation in Belfast: Policy Report*, *op. cit.*
[4] U. Hannerz, *Exploring the city. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

defined as 'mixed', even though 'most of the mixing between the two main communities happens during the afternoon (12 pm-6 pm) and is based around need (i.e. shopping)'[1]. In 2016, in the same group discussions where a resident indicated her wariness about going to Tesco's whilst saying they would 'love to say they feel different', another resident also said:

> 'I have seen people from the Shankill turn left and walk their dogs up the road towards the Ardoyne shops in recent months – rather than down to the "safe" loyalist part of the road. I have also seen young lads in GAA tops happily walking down from the Ardoyne shops as far as Hillview. These things would not have happened in the past. It's a huge thing. The invisible wall has been coming down, though. The gates are open at various places. At least it is a start.'[2]

The last twenty years have meant a return to more diverse forms of cohabitation for residents, without clearly refuting the segregated and divisive apprehensions. Even more: in addition to arguing that some forms of integration and reconciliation have come to counter segregation and provide a more complex view of Ardoyne, one could also argue that in the very process of urban segregation, and in the experience of continuous avoidance and adjustments, residents have deployed skills and aspirations of cohabitation. The unexpected nature of those practices of distinction and cohabitation is what we will discuss here.

Hence, there is a continuous ambivalence in describing the area, between a place marked by segregation and a locus of contact and cohabitation. This reminds us that 'if the groups in question have enough relations to be a nuisance to each other it is because they form a part of a whole, that they are in some sense and in some measure members of the same body'[3]. It is important to understand this ambivalence, as it is at the origin of plural expectations regarding residents, strangers, and the use of space. With increasing contacts, one can only expect the reinforcement of practical adjustment that help residents dealing with this ambiguous situation. Indeed, as the two visions of the area coexists, there exists an implicit code which allows one to act in an orderly manner in grey areas, when expectations are uncertain, categories unclear and the need to distinguish a stranger become as important as that of maintaining civil indifference. Since those two diagnostics coexist, residents do engage in areas belonging to the other community or with residents from the other side but under certain interactional conditions, and residents do avoid spaces and interactions but based on certain common adjustments. Both conditions and adjustments are part of the same tacit code.

[1] B. Sturgeon et al., *Mobility, Sharing and Segregation in Belfast: Policy Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
[2] Tascit : Twaddell, Ardoyne, Shankill, Communities in Transition, *Promoting Positive Change*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
[3] E.C. Hughes, 'The Study of Ethnic Relations', art cit., p. 481.

1.1.2 The ethnographic introduction to an ambivalent sociability

Those contradictory expectations become progressively clearer for the ethnographer during fieldwork. Over the years, my experience of the urban space became marked by the recurrence of new flags, murals, graffiti, and kerbs painted with the colour of one or the other community, which are all signs that reinforce a segregated use of space[1]. I too came to learn that it was necessary to manage the signs of community belonging during interactions, and that this necessity would affect some interactions more than others depending on where they were taking place. Let us take an ethnographic example from July 2019:

> I am going through Glenbryn at around 5 pm, and the weather is dull. I am walking on foot in the middle of the road up the hill, with a loaf of bread in my hand. I am on my way to pay a visit to one of the employees of the local business centre. As I reach a crossroad, I see a child sitting in the first front garden on the left. He is on his own, next to a bicycle lying in the grass and a football. As I pass in front of him, he stares at me. I smile without stopping. He addresses me without moving: 'Him – Have you seen a girl on a bike?', 'Me – No', 'Him – She has blonde hair, tied in the back, she's eight', 'Me – Well (I turn to look at and to indicate the path where I come from) she's not down there'. The child does not answer and remains silent whilst looking at me. As I now feel somehow worried about the situation, I wait for a few seconds, but as he remains silent I ask 'Have you seen her parents?', and the child answers 'No… But she's not home and her bike is not there, so that must mean she's taken the bike, right?', to which I answer 'Yes, I think so'. I consider that there's not much more I can do without doing more than what would be expected of a stranger, and the child remains silent. I decide to wave goodbye and to move on. However, he gets up, walks out of the garden and follows me. He runs up to my level on the foot path and starts a new discussion, whilst I stop: 'Him – What's your name?', 'Me – Theo', 'Him – Theo?', 'Me – Yes, what's your name?', 'Him – Jimmy'. I nod and decide to keep on walking. He follows me with his ball. Feeling more uncomfortable about him leaving his house, I decide to continue the conversation:
> T – What age are you?
> J – Five, what age are you?
> T – Twenty-three.
> J – Do you know what age is my da'?
> T – No … let me guess… Thirty?
> J – Thirty-one.
> T – Close.
> J – He's going to be bigger than you.
> T – Yes, I guess.
> J – He can cook.
> T – That's great!
> J – He has a BMW; do you have a BMW?
> T – No, I don't … that's a fancy car you know…
> We stop in front of a woman smoking in the garden on the left. She looks at us as Jimmy asks another question, I look at her and smiles and raise my eyebrows, so to say 'This kid is talkative', and she smiles back. Jimmy continues:
> J – Where are you going?
> T – Up the road, I was down the shop, I'm going back.
> J – Where do you live?
> T – Ballysillan [*At that point I lived even further north, but intuitively gave this direction north of Ardoyne, as a major unionist area*]
> J – What's your door number?
> T – My what?

[1] Joanne Hughes et al., 'Segregation in Northern Ireland', *Policy Studies*, 1 March 2007, vol. 28, no. 1, p. 33-53 ; Ralf Brand, 'Urban Artifacts and Social Practices in a Contested City', *Journal of Urban Technology*, 1 December 2009, vol. 16, no. 2-3, p. 35-60.

J – Your door number.
T – 43.
J – My door number is 13.
There is a short silence and we're still in front of the woman in the garden. As I am feeling highly embarrassed about the situation, and despite the fact that the woman watching us is part of this embarrassment, I instinctively decide to stay here under her gaze to finish this discussion.

At that point, another child, older than Jimmy, joined us from the other side of the road and told him that the girl was a few streets away, after what they both left running without further ado. I also left after smiling at the people looking at me. This ethnographic scene bothered me for a few days, as I reflected on being ill-at-ease during that exchange, and felt even more uncomfortable realising that I had intuitively given an intentionally imprecise answer when feeling worried by questions concerning my whereabouts. This led me to mention the event to several residents. It first reveals the maintenance of a habit of addressing, or at the very least noticing, the passers-by and the strangers walking up and down the roads in front of local houses. Something that I did not know how to handle. This is still very much an everyday expectation in the small urban community, especially in the Protestant Upper-Ardoyne: over the last twenty years, the residents have sustained the idea that their area was under siege, and that the few Protestant residents were being pushed away by their Catholic neighbours. But the subtle street surveillance displayed by both adults and children in this scene is of particular importance in the grapevine, and the network of gossip that runs through urban communities in general[1]. It became a crucial part of the fieldwork as, in most of my formal and informal meetings in this area, the people I met would often say that they had noticed me walking up or down the road at some point in the past days. Some youth would even notify it on the spot, 'posting' the person who uses the street[2].

This dynamic contextualises the numerous uneasy exchanges I have had with children of residents who would talk to me in the street, after what I would often find adults mentioning the information I had given to the children in our later exchanges. When I recounted this interaction with Jimmy to a local community worker, I mentioned I had difficulty interacting with him as everyone was looking at me. Rosa and I had already talked about this since she often commented on the fact that many children were playing in the streets, and that it was a long-held tradition in the area. She was critical of it, since it meant parents were not looking after their children. Local elders such as Claire from the local crochet group, on the other hand, were nostalgic of that time when this was the norm. She explained to me that in her youth, in

[1] N. Elias, 'Towards a Theory of Communities', art cit.
[2] On this dynamic of 'posting', '*affichage'* between passers-by and the youth occupying urban space in residential urban areas, see David Lepoutre, *Coeur de banlieue: Codes, rites et langages*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2001, 460 p.

the 1950s, the size of Catholics family, and the small size of houses in this deprived area, meant that there were no other ways for children to spend the day than going outside. Hence a strong early socialisation to urban sociability.

When I mentioned to Rosa that the other residents were closely following my interaction with Jimmy, she said: 'Of course they would, and if you speak to kids, people are suspicious, and if you avoid the questions the kids are asking, people are suspicious … it's a catch-22 situation'. In that sense, she put into words my wariness both of interacting with him – as I was a lone adult with a child I did not know who seemed in distress – and of avoiding the interaction – which could have led residents using the implicit code of urban sociability to conclude that I was trying to hide something, most probably the fact that I did not belong to the local community. And indeed, this 'catch-22' situation, a literary term for a double bind[1] or an ambivalent situation, led us both to rely on a manipulation of identity markers. Jimmy progressed towards questions regarding my itinerary and my place of residence, to which I answered with imprecise information for fear of being seen as a threat.

On the one hand, my continuous presence in this district has enabled me to observe the inhabitants' continuous initiation into mistrust and the reinforcement of community exclusion through the transmission of know-how about the identity markers of non-members, in the form of an implicit code. Our exchange with Jimmy was an example of using the code to gather information on a stranger. Other ethnographers such as Frank Burton and Andrew Finlay have already noted the recurrence of the code and how it affected them[2]. This initiation also involved the transmission of compartmentalisation and occultation skills that I gradually learned to respect in my own daily interactions with residents, in my trips between 'Lower Ardoyne' and 'Upper-Ardoyne'. On the other hand, I was also able to realise that these expectations were far from being monolithic: by introducing a third-party actor into the residents' interactions, my presence facilitated the verbalisation of expectations of integration and civil inattention claimed by residents, revealing the existence of debates on the matter. Those various expectations – excluding mistrust and civil indifference – were all at the basis of moments of initiation.

[1] G. Bateson et al., 'A note on the double bind: 1962', *Family Process*, 1963, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 154-161.

[2] Frank Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy: Struggles in a Belfast Community*, London, Jimmy, Routledge & Kegan Paul Books, 1978, 220 p ; Andrew Robert Finlay, '"Whatever You Say Say Nothing": an Ethnographic Encounter in Northern Ireland and its Sequel', *Sociological Research Online*, 1999, vol. 4, no. 3. The case presented by Burton when he realised he had started using the code is particularly relevant (see p. 68).

1.2 How one is initiated to the distinguishing use of the code

How is the implicit code of distinction between members of the two communities used? To identify it, we need to look at moments when residents implicitly teach each other how to use the code, but also when they sanction one another for misusing the code. These include all the situations in which residents introduce a third party to the code to make life in the neighbourhood more fluid, to protect one of its residents or to fully integrate this third party.

1.2.1 CAREFULNESS AS A BASIC RULE OF THE CODE

In April 2019, I was heading to the cross-community centre sitting on the interface between Ardoyne and a neighbouring Protestant area. Supposed to attend the prayer group there, I was early and wandered idly in the front door. Soon, a man came out of the building to wait with me in the parking lot. As we did not know each other, he asked me if I was there for the Addiction Support Group. Almost disappointed to hear me say that I was not, he told me that no one had come. We discussed the reason for this non-attendance:

> I turn to him and ask 'It's not on then?', and the man says 'Oh it is, it is, I'm the one doing it, but I'm just waiting to see if people will turn up.' I ask him 'Ok … and so what is it exactly, NI… what?' He says 'It's for people who are narcotic addicts you know, who have trouble with drugs and can't seem to get out of it'. I say 'Great, good stuff', look around, and ask him if the people who come to those meetings tend to stay for long. He says 'Well some of them, yeah, but you know most of the time they always end up leaving and relapsing … they would stay for something like 6 months, and then go away… And they just get back to it, because they're on their own, they think they're OK when they leave but they're not, and it's just that they come back to… Their environment and *(He does a gesture miming having people around him*), they don't hold. But they don't come back, then, because they don't want to say they relapsed, since they left saying they were OK.' I nod, and ask him if the group is just for the local areas or not, and he says 'Yeah, well, initially we decided to set it up for this area but you know there are groups everywhere, all over the country, there are groups like that in France as well, and then we have some people coming from East Belfast, a good deal from West Belfast.' I nod and say 'Aye … generally for people it's easier to join them things if it's out of their area?' (*I re-use one of the most common sentences that people from advice groups and councillors have told me in presenting their work*). He says 'Well yes … but here, well… I always tell them it's on the Crumlin Road because some people still are a bit hesitant to come around these parts, you know, even in the Houben … it's just once they've come here for the first time they're OK, but at first…' I say 'Yeah, because the Houben is making its name progressively … but people are still worried when they hear that it's Ardoyne or the Shankill?' The man says 'Well I just don't mention Ardoyne at all because, arf, I just talk about the Crumlin you know. I say that it's at the top of it and that's it. And let alone the Shankill, I know they have stuff happening there, but *I* 'm not even going there, still, you know … you have to have faith to go down there, I haven't, I 'm still...'. He lowers his hand down to the ground to pretend that he is searching for stability, and go back and forth to the side as to mimic someone who is about to jump but hesitates. I say 'Aye … it'll take time'. He doesn't say anything. Then we both stare somewhere else for a good twenty seconds, and I say 'I'm going to head off'. He says yes 'Alright', and we wave each other goodbye.

In this exchange, the man becomes gradually more explicit about the role of carefulness in handling identity markers in everyday interaction. In the first part of the discussion, he explains that if no one came to the meeting, it is in part due to the nature of addiction. It prevents

people from sticking to the support group. We then mentioned another problem: people coming to those groups are also afraid of revealing their personal troubles to residents from their local community, and of 'losing the face'. The fact that people do not attend, and his attempts at making them attend, are hindered by those two general problems. As our respective intentions are settled after this first exchange, however, he provides another reason. He finally explains how his interactions with the people coming to the group are characterised by his carefulness in using geographical markers. His exchanges are characterised by his use of the code. As a resident of Ardoyne, he 'admits' first to being careful and hiding the name of certain places to his co-interactionist for fear that they may consider them as 'Catholic' and use those signs in their decision, and second to being himself careful by avoiding going through areas that are judged 'Protestant'. I use the term 'admits' not only because of the apparent embarrassment that he displayed through his gesture, but also because the man voiced at least two contradictions which are contradictions in his own views of urban sociability. First, as a professional care worker, he 'officially' intends the support group to be accessible to everyone regardless of community belonging and to be officially neutral, though in order to do so he 'officiously' has to use the code to hide identity markers. Second, he would like to prevent people refraining from coming to the groups because they judge that an area belongs to one community, though his own carefulness leads him to do just that. We will expand on this later. For now, let us say that the management of those two contradictions is at the basis of the carefulness that he describes when setting out his use of identity markers, and of the code: carefulness in hiding and controlling markers, and carefulness in noticing and avoiding markers.

This initiation to the code is an initiation to carefulness in one last sense. By making explicit this rule of the code through the example of his own action[1], the man was making explicit an identity that he would have otherwise tried to conceal by the very use of the code. Our exchange itself, in which he progressively introduces me to the code, is also marked by carefulness: starting by general comments on addiction, we progressively discussed the role of places of residence in the attendance to support groups, then the role of markers linking places of residence to a community. Just as carefulness is key to the use of the code, it is also key in how one exposes their interpretation of others' reasons to act. The initiation here lies not so much in the use of a marker, but in explaining how carefulness is the basic rule of the code.

[1] Examples and sanctions, rather than definition, being the main way any social actor ever teach or learn a social rule. See Cyril Lemieux, 'Les règles sont-elles des prescriptions ? Exercices conversionnistes' in *Le Social à l'esprit. Dialogues avec Vincent Descombes.*, Paris, Éditions de l'EHESS, 2020, p. 147-168.

1.2.2 Giving an origin to the code

In other everyday situations, moments when the code is uncovered are often followed by forms of justification during which the code is given an origin. Though this origin rarely differs from conflict, segregation and violence, it is how the code is presented through the presentation of its origins that matters, as it is a more reflexive form of induction to the code. Let us take another example, taken from an interview I realised with a former Catholic priest of Ardoyne in 2016, Odhràn. We talked both of the mistrust that had settled between the residents of the neighbourhood, and of the difficulties he faced when arriving in the parish in 2001, in the middle of an intercommunity crisis he had to mediate. Odhràn then put things into perspective:

> And see after the … after the terrible pogroms in ’69 where they burned streets, see Ardoyne was a mixed area, you had Protestant, Catholics, a whole lot living together (*he makes hands gesture on the table to mimic the partition of the area*), and then it became … the wall went up, the same as Peace walls, a funny name but, went up. Now they [the Protestant residents] told me that they were sure that there would come a time where, bit by bit, or else in a … in a sort of concentrated effort, that the nationalists in Ardoyne would want their houses. Now I understood that, and once you believe that – even though I don’t think it was true – but it was utterly true for them, and therefore we had to respect it. Therefore that’s why they wanted a wall, because they felt like ‘At least if we can lock ourselves in at night’. But I, I, I had spent some time in South Africa, and I had seen Soweto, and I had seen apartheid, and I had seen complete, sort of, separate development (*he knocks the table with his hand*) and this was… I couldn’t say this because it would be racist, the only difference was in South Africa you could tell by the colour of their skin who was on what side. Problem was, we were all white. And that was the problem. [When I arrived], you know in the North you’ll hear the phrase, Catholics will often say ‘Oh he’s from the Free State’… And so, it was almost like I was from a foreign country, even though that was the country they’re supposed to want to unite with (*he laughs*). But funny they would say that ‘Oh you’re a free stater so you don’t understand us!’. And I said: ‘Of course no, I don’t want to understand you’, you know what I mean. But that was yeah ‘Oh well you’re an outsider’. And people there, and you’ll find that and I’m sure you have found it, people, particularly in the North, in place likes Ardoyne, are very very slow to accept and meet you. I was kind of … whereas you’d look at a cosmopolitan like Paris or even living in Dublin where I lived when I was young, you know, you don’t ask people who they are or what they are. Whereas in Ardoyne, when you walk down the streets you'll see ‘Hmm that fellow…’ You know.

Odhràn’s comment is another initiation to the code. He tries to explain why the residents of ‘places like Ardoyne’, in a way that differs from ‘normal’ cosmopolitan cities, put as much care into evaluating and categorising persons they meet and strangers they notice in the street. This means rooting the code in a specific origin, with the historical ‘separate development’ of the areas. In this presentation and in many others, the code is said to exist since it has become necessary to spot an outsider, and since it has become difficult to spot an outsider. It has become necessary to spot outsiders and non-members of the community because of the increasing division between the Catholic and the Protestant community, and the traumatic events that opened and marked the conflict between the two communities. Using an implicit code, in turn, was deemed necessary as the differences between members of the two communities were not deemed ‘visible’. This idea that members of both communities looked ‘just alike’ whilst

members needed to be able to 'tell the difference' remained for a long time one of the raisons d'être put forward for the strong presence of an implicit code of distinction between communities. We will see that there are alternate 'reasons to use the code' that residents put forward, but this tale of origins is a second important part of the initiation to the code that goes with its making explicit. The need to present its origin is, here again, a result of the contradictions felt by actors when revealing an implicit code.

1.2.3 Listing the most typical markers of the code

If carefulness is a rule 'of' the code, and if exposing it sometimes leads to mentioning the origin 'of' the code, everyday initiation most often relies on stressing the markers 'in' the code. The most common initiations are moments when actors 'list' the signs that residents learn to notice when they use the code. In 2016, Charles introduced me to the use of community markers when I asked him about the role of the association in the area:

> What you'll find, the Irish people are the most friendliest people in the world, but they can't get on with each other. They can't. I mean, we all look the same, we all talk the same, we all get on the same, but … whether you're called Seamus or Billy, can tell whether you're a Catholic or a Protestant. That road out there, whatever side you walk on will determine whether you're… It's like Alabama, when the Blacks walked on one side and the white walked on this, the Catholic will walk on the shopfronts end, the Protestant will walk on this side. […] I don't know …', Théo 'So, you know how to tell the…' Charles 'If you say the alphabet, the word H, H, "Haitch" is a Catholic… But English people say "Aitch" [/ˈeɪtʃ/], we say "Aitch", the Catholics say "Haitch" [/ˈheɪtʃ/]. Something so small could distinguish what you are. To me, Belfast is still a sectarian city. If you go with a red, white and blue Rangers top on, or a Celtic top, it will distinguish what you are. That coat, that I bought for the Euro, because that badge is on it [*He shows me a coat with the logo of the Northern Irish football team*] … see when I walk through the town, the looks that I was getting… "He's a Prod", I may as well have had a "I'm a Prod" banner on my head. But I don't care, because I'm one of the ones that's been accused by my community of being too close to the other side. Right. And I go "Sure, how do you know you've never met them", "Don't want to fuckin' meet them!', 'Well see until you've met them, how can you hate somebody you don't know?', you can't hate somebody you don't know, you have to make your mind up. Somebody comes in here and says 'See him [*pointing at me*], I fuckin' hate him!' I'd go 'Well that's up to you, 'cause I don't, I just met him and he's alright' so I'm not one of the ones who follows what people say. Too long in Northern Ireland … too long in Northern Ireland the tail wags the dog. The dog's already forgone, but the tail wags the dog.

Charles stresses the ever-present notification of certain 'identity markers' that accompany the implicit code of public interaction. These are signals based on which members of both communities will adjust their judgements and their ways of behaving towards another person. Like Odhràn, he in part attributes the existence of this code to the fact that people from each community are deemed 'hard to tell' from one another. Following the code means both identifying, paying attention to those markers, and using them as reasons to act. Yet, on a more individual basis, Charles too seeks to get rid of them. He is himself judged as a turncoat and as

deviant within his own community: he tends to be too inclusive towards non-members, and 'refuses' – or claim to refuse – to base his interaction solely on the use of the code.

This is a central moment of clarification of the code. During my fieldwork, many examples of identity markers have been notified to me and described as meaningful in encounter situations. The debate over the pronunciation of the letter H[1] makes it one of the most famous Shibboleths in Northern Ireland. Gaelic first names such as Seamus, Patrick, Gráinne are judged to be typical of the Catholic community and Anglo-Saxon first names such as Billy, Sammy and Ian are judged to be typical of the Protestant community. Rangers FC is a football team supported by Protestants, Celtic FC by Catholics, being the two famous clubs of Glasgow in Scotland. Similarly, the names of schools which one frequents fragment the identification of children and their parents. Attention is also paid to particular wording. The names of places of worship and the term used to refer to 'Northern Ireland' are of particular importance. Indeed, if 'Northern Ireland' is the official term, an individual using the term 'Ulster' will be presumed to be Protestant, whereas an individual using 'the North' or 'the six counties' will be identified as Catholic, based on political implications. As each area of North Belfast has services attached to it, mentioning their use also highlights the community to which one belongs, as they are used in either 'Catholic' or 'Protestant' areas. The 'Ardoyne shops' are a famous landmark, as they border the Ardoyne interface but represents the Catholic part of the area. Most of those signs are decades and centuries old, and are still used on an everyday basis as relevant signs and clues gathered to interpret an uncertain situation. Ginzburg 'indexical paradigm'[2], Mannheim and Garfinkel's 'documentary method of interpretation'[3] and Piette study on the typicality of details[4] have all described this social dynamic by which the progressive gathering of relevant signs allows actors to stabilise the typicality of a situation on which they can rely.

Indeed, these are all distinctive signs which the code prescribes to implicitly notify or conceal during meetings and conversations, in order to identify the other person or hide one's belonging. Those markers are all 'details' sustaining the interpretation of a given situation. Consequently, an implicit game can be set up based on the markers that one wishes to display to signal an identity in an interactional channel. Charles, wearing the official regional team jersey, believes that he makes himself describable as a Protestant in the eyes of other residents

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[1] More generally, this question has divided the United Kingdom and English-speaking country for a long time, and having been related to an 'unspoken class war'. See Kate Burridge and Catherine McBride, 'Haitch or aitch? How a humble letter was held hostage by historical haughtiness', *The Independent*, 13 June 2018.

[2] Carlo Ginzburg, 'Signes, Traces, Pistes. Racines d'un paradigme de l'indice', *Débat*, 1980, vol. 6, p. 3-44.

[3] Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*, London, Routledge & K. Paul, 1952, 352 p, Chapter 2 "On the interpretation of *Weltanschauung"* and H. Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, *cited,* Chapter 3.

[4] Albert Piette, *Ethnographie de l'Action : L'Observation des détails*, Paris, Métailié, 1996, 204 p.

and that he thereby encourages interactions between 'members', and also avoidance or even hostility with 'non-members'. Wearing the jersey in fact amounts to publicly showing one's belonging to a political community by signifying one's identity to others. Nevertheless, the code must generally remain implicit. It can be invoked as a layer of conventions that coexists with the official norms of each social space. But in so doing, enforcing the implicit dimension of the code amounts to considering that community belonging, presumed to be the most important information for characterising the person and deciding how to act towards him or her, should not be debated. To mobilise the code is therefore to tend to reduce an inhabitant to only one of their dimensions – his or her affiliation to a Protestant or Catholic community – and to defer discretion to this single dimension.

1.2.4 Between contentious and respectful avoidance

It is the defence of community sociability, which some residents take as a protection from forms of violence, mistrust and political domination, which, in their eyes, positively justifies keeping on implicitly using the code. To leave the code in silence is to resist some integrative norms that are judged by residents as posing threats which they should protect themselves from. The justification for its silent use is then based on the principle of upholding a past conflict in the present. Let us take an example that stresses the point whilst gathering all the characteristics we have mentioned until now. Mac, a bricklayer in his sixties, whom I meet during my fieldwork, is a devout nationalist. Privately, he often looks down on the Protestant residents of Ardoyne with disdain. In public, however, Mac still accepts to work with 'non-members' of his Catholic community. Yet, he has acted towards them on the basis of the code since his childhood. In 2017, when I've known him for a few months, Mac tells me a story to make me understand the importance for him of maintaining community avoidance and the distancing of residents he identifies as 'Protestant'. The story informs us again about the justification for the use of the code. Mac grew up in an exclusively 'Catholic' neighbourhood at a time of recurring confrontation. He encountered and frequented very few Protestant residents, but this still happened during exceptional outings. For example, Mac regularly went to local football matches. At the time, in the 1970s, children could use tricks to attend the matches free of charge, by asking adults to carry them over the stadium's turnstiles. This meant that each child had to learn how to identify members of his or her community in order to ask for help from a 'compliant' adult and avoid endangerment and forms of interpersonal violence. On one occasion, Mac had entered the stadium before his older brother Patrick, who had not yet been able to get help from an adult. Mac, who was then making grand gestures to a man near the

turnstile, asking him to let his brother through, says he received a positive response from the stranger. However, the stranger suddenly refused to help his brother from the moment Mac called Patrick out loud by his first name: Mac, as a child and as an adult, interprets this event by pointing out that the first name 'Patrick' is considered a strong marker of Catholic identity, and that the reaction of the stranger makes him an intolerant Protestant in Mac's eyes.

In sharing this anecdote, Mac insists that he misidentified and misclassified the way he addressed an adult. He experienced, at that time, the segregative dimension of the code, by realising that he had made a 'mistake' which necessarily implied the existence of an implicit code, as no official rule could explain the sanction he received. Following this episode, Mac would have understood the behavioural and classificatory premises one needs to honour in order to maintain positive interactional relationships and a fluid urban sociability. In that sense, it also means avoiding a potentially dangerous situation, and making the best out of the few available signs to differentiate and cover[1]. Those dynamics of copresence are by no means specific to Belfast. As described by an anthropologist studying the coexistence of ethnic groups in Chicago in the 1950s, they amount to 'getting a "quick fix" on the relative trustworthiness of fellow pedestrians, residents and trespassers'[2]. This learning process recalls the situation entirely determined by the presence of a non-member of the community which forces the members to identify them, to conceal information about oneself and to suspend interaction with the other. Goffman gives a paradigmatic example of this when he analyses the code of conduct of a spy infiltrating an enemy country. The spy must, in all his interactions, act as if he were not part of an enemy group and conceal his real identity, even though he continually masters the identity codes of those to whom he conceals it, in order to discover their own concealed information[3]. He has to master the 'run of information – including local geographical lore – which any resident of a claimed domicile is likely to possess. […] The subject will have to have some concern about the many little patterns of personal and social behaviour which could distinguish him by age, sex, race, class, religion, and nationality from the person he claims to be.'[4]

The implicit code of distinction is rooted in these springs. Social markers, and to an even greater extent localised biographical identity markers allow actors to do without further

[1] Taxi drivers, for example, 'mask their religious affiliations, carry very little cash, and turn up the heat to make drunk and potentially aggressive passengers feel drowsy' and the preference in establishing trustworthiness includes that they look for signs of 'for Catholic drivers, Catholic over Protestant, and vice versa'. Heather Hamill and Diego Gambetta, 'Who do Taxi Drivers Trust?', *Contexts*, 1 August 2006, vol. 5, no. 3, p. 29 and 31.
[2] Gerald D. Suttles, *The social order of the slum : ethnicity and territory in the inner city*, University of Chicago Press., Chicago, 1962, 243 p., cited in F. Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
[3] E. Goffman, 'Expression Games : an analysis of Doubts at Play', art cit., p. 24.
[4] *Ibid.*

examination when they know enough. When they already know each other, they have retained the points that made it possible to consider everything normal. The absence of these markers opens up more problems. It opens up an examination. An actor who wants to make people believe that he belongs to a group relies on local knowledge that proves his familiarity – e.g. knowing the siding of this neighbourhood or that school – and remains mindful of small patterns of behaviour. All of these are resources for telling.

1.3 Respecting and sanctioning a 'common' use of the code

This greater control of self-presentation in copresence with 'non-members' and the organisation of segregation are not the only aims of this code that authors such as Frank Burton, Andrew Finlay or Roger MacGinty have referred to as 'telling'[1]. This conflictual segregation is only side of the coin. On the other, we find local actors who also root their use of the implicit code in more 'positive' reasons to act. Or, to put it in other words, they root the existence and the use of the codes in reasons to act that bring the Catholic and Protestant communities together, in so far as they share something in using a common implicit code to keep one another at bay. We can take two elements to illustrate this point. When this idea comes to dominate in the initiation to the code, to code is judged as allowing a pacific avoidance, and also to be a common way to distinguish outsiders of the Ardoyne community.

1.3.1 Keeping the antagonism alive for the sake of respectful avoidance

In 2019, I discovered the 'social club' of Upper-Ardoyne. It is a big building hidden just outside Upper-Ardoyne and the closest place of socialisation for some residents there. I was then attending my first football match between Rangers and Celtic and realised that a drinker was watching me insistently. The overall situation and the interaction which followed show the relevance of the code even in areas that are expected to be more homogeneous:

> In the Middle Central box, a lone man on a half bench, and then three guys are sitting in front of him, facing the TV: Donis close to me but really focused on the TV, Alex is in the middle with a red, white and blue top, and then there is a big guy on the left with long black shorts. […]. In total, there are between 15 and 20 people in there. During that first part of the game, there aren't a lot of people chatting. The whole room is quite silent. The only group who sometime mentions something are the two guys behind me at the bar, and the old-timers against the wall – and still, on the three of them, only two are talking together. […] Alex from the middle box gets up and walk towards the bar, just in front of me. He has a red, white and blue T-shirt, is completely bald, looks to be in his 60s, and has some glasses. Alex is still waiting for his pint just in front of me. Looking at the screen,

[1] F. Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy*, *op. cit.* ; A.R. Finlay, '"Whatever You Say Say Nothing"', art cit ; Roger Mac Ginty, 'Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies', *Security Dialogue*, 1 December 2014, vol. 45, no. 6, p. 548-564.

he then turns towards me and says 'Sorry son, can you see' and I say 'Yes yes, I'm alright thanks'. As he still looks at me, and as I am confused since he was not hiding the TV from me, I start a discussion and we have the following exchange:
Théo – Where's the match?
What? – Alex
T – Where's the fixture?
A – Where is it?
T –Yes
A – In Scotland?
T –Yes, yes but where?
A – In Glasgow.
T – But is it in Ibrox?
A – In?
T – Ibrox [*I wrongly pronounce it 'i: bra: ks' instead of 'aıbra: ks'*]
A – Yes it's in Ibrox [*pause*] Are you a ranger man yourself?
T –Well no, not originally, I just come to watch the match…
A – [*Before I finish the sentence, laughing*] Well Ah you see around here you couldn't be a Celtic man that's for sure.
T – Aha yes. It's just that I come from France you see. They wouldn't be my first support.
A – Well, see when you're in here [*He puts a hand on my shoulder and smiles and gives me small double tap*] say you're a Ranger man and you'll be alright. [*He then turns towards the match and wait for half a minute, then turns back to me*] That's the biggest match of the year. […]
A few minutes later, on the pitch, a Rangers player runs towards his goalie and a Celtic opponent is running behind him, then the Rangers player stops yet the Celtic man doesn't stop and bumps into him. This prompts the Rangers player to fall and the goalie to leave his goals, run to the Celtic and gets into a small brawl with him. Don and the man with the cigarette roller both whisper in exasperation. Then the old-timer in the further box shout 'Come on fenian bastard', but he's on his own. The room remains silent. After a few minutes, the guy with the cigarette roller goes to see him and they have a chat about the foul of the Celtic man running into the other player, but nothing is said about the old man's intervention.

Worried about this first visit to this renowned 'Protestant' bar, I am not very expressive, and I control my gestures. The man is unable to point out any distinguishing marks that would allow him to know which community I come from. However, at the pub, one is expected to express one's sporting allegiance, even when one does not support the 'majority' team of the establishment located in the Catholic or Protestant zone. The conventions of 'good' supporters demand it[1]. My mistake is all the greater in this match: both teams are historically linked to the Catholic and Protestant communities. Engaging in a conversation, the man first asks me if I can see the television. I feel very embarrassed because the interaction seems threatening. I try to ask questions about the game and mobilise knowledge about the Rangers, without really succeeding. Faced with my suspiciously dissimulating behaviour, my interlocutor actually tries to find strong markers of my political identity in me.

This example shows that actors deploy investigative, testing and sanctioning skills to ensure that others respect the implicit identification code. The aim is then quickly to dispel any uncertainty as to whether people belong to a community, and to categorise them correctly in

[1] Tom Gibbons, *English National Identity and Football Fan Culture: Who Are Ya?*, Farnham, United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014. See especially Chapters 4 and 6.

order to know how to behave in their presence. Here, I had not shown any clear identity markers, trying to assert my neutrality to avoid a situation of threat and violence. This behaviour merely revealed my practical incompetence regarding the rules of distinction. The drinker pointed this out to me in two ways. Firstly, he underlines my mistake when I do not implicitly give the public identity signals, even though we are in a pub tacitly reserved to the Protestant inhabitants of Ardoyne. Then he tells me that it is obvious that one cannot be anything other than 'one of them' in this situation: a Rangers fan. This is why, on the one hand, he enquires about my political identity, and on the other hand, reminds me of the social rule to mark one's community identity in an area of non-mixed sociability. Implicitly, he therefore instructs us to display more unambiguous signs of loyalty to the Protestant community in order not to be disturbed – and not to be a disturbance – in this bar or in this area of the neighbourhood. The interaction with the drinker did not lead to my exclusion, but to an encouragement to differentiate myself from the Catholic community, allowing me to peacefully enjoy socialisation amongst members of the Protestant community. A form of sociability which allows, as the intervention of the other drinker shows, the explicit use of slurs to designate the other community.

This separation of space is as much maintained by the drinkers of the Catholic pubs in the area and the supporters of the opposing football team, Celtic. During my fieldwork, I saw them maintain that division and accept me in the pubs whilst knowing – and often congratulating – that I was also following the matches in the Protestant clubs. For example, in April 2019, I was following one of the Celtic matches in the Glenpark. This pub is situated at the very limit of Ardoyne, and is somewhat of an in-between in terms of frequentation: it is not frequented by the most communitarian members of the community, and is reputed for being more open to non-members. There, I had met a locally famous supporter the week before, a young man in his thirties, and he had given me contact information about people I could talk to about football supporting. I met him again on this Sunday afternoon:

> Dermot says he remembers me from last Sunday, and he remembered my name. Now I'm sitting next to him, and just as he explains that, he turns round, and tells me that the people I'm looking for are all around here now. [*They are the members of a local Celtic supporter club, which plays lottery for all the people in the pub every week*]. He points me towards the end of the room where a group of five men are sitting around a table on their own, and he calls Gerald 'Hockney' quite loud. He shouts, actually. Then, one of the men gets up and comes closer, limping. He's quite small and is past his sixties. Gerald wears a grey polo with green letters that says 'Celtic'. He also wears an old school cap that kind of hides his eyes and his black glasses do the same. When he comes in, he directly looks at Dermot. Dermot tells him about me and my interest in the pub, in local groups and in local supporters. Gerald is not looking at me during this exchange, even when he's talking about me to Dermot. Dermot tells him that I'm a young lad coming to do a piece on Celtic Supporters Club in the area, and that it would be great if I could talk to him because he knows everything about Celtic. When Dermot is saying that, whilst still on his stool, he sometimes looks at me with an inquisitive look to confirm he is telling the right story. I nod. But Gerald is still not looking at me. He says 'Well I don't know about that' – I think, as I realise that I am going to have a very hard time

> understanding what this man is actually saying, as he talks with a strong accent. I can still gather that Gerald is complaining. Dermot turns around to me in a look that means he wants to share mockery and frustration regarding Gerald, then turns back to Gerald to say 'Ach, come on Gerald!'. Dermot pauses then tell him 'He's just here to ask questions about that!'. Gerald mutters that he's not saying anything. Dermot reacts by pointing his hand at me and says 'But he's not in the fuckin' MI5, he doesn't care If you've been in the 'RA or not!' I intervene and say that it's alright, I really don't want to be a bother, but then Dermot turns to me and says 'No, but it's alright, he's just being funny now', then turns to Gerald and looks at him as if he's asking him to confirm. Gerald nods without smiling and says 'Ok but you should be speaking to Ryan', and he points another man to me, another man with a white Celtic shirt in his twenties. So I say 'Alright that's great', and Gerald goes back to his seat. Now that he's gone, Dermot turns back to me and says 'Don't worry, he's an old-timer, he's shy but he's not shy you know, it's just that when he sees someone he doesn't know, he's not too confident about it. But you can go, like, that'll be a good occasion, or you can just stay and have a pint, you know, I'm not forcing you'. […] Dermot then asks me if I'm doing something similar with the different Rangers club as well, and I tell him I am. He then says 'Well that's great now, because they do their own thing, you can get the two sides and you can see the difference'. And then he tells me he sees that from some of the Ranger guys he knows, 'Because I know different Ranger supporters you see, believe it or not' and he nods, explains that he knows them because he's been seeing them on his workplace [*Dermot works in local film studios*], because he just has seen them around, or has met them on different matches. He adds 'That's not possible over in Scotland actually, because when you go over there, they are separated, they live separated Rangers and Celtic, but when you come here well you know the Shankill is the Shankill, Ardoyne is Ardoyne and here it's the Bone, but the Rangers and Celtic can still move around.

Here, Dermot ends up supporting the idea that I spend time with both communities to 'see the difference', and his overall position comes to argue that the pub is meant to be a homogeneous place of sociability. However, the interaction that precedes this is also an initiation to the code, and one that displays the differences between what is deemed to be respectful avoidance – actualised by Dermot's efforts – and conflictual segregation – defined, in relation with Dermot's position, as Gerald's use of the implicit code. Dermot does confirm to me that this place is meant for Celtic supporters and Catholics, that there are other places meant for Ranger supporters and Protestants, and that this influences everyday sociability – since the supporters and members of the two communities can still 'move around' and meet one another. Certainly, Gerald would confirm those statements. They are the basis of the use of the implicit code. However, Dermot uses it to reinforce an ideal of mutual distinction, of homogeneous places of sociability. Most of all, uses the code and the initiation to the code as a way to reinforce the autonomy of one person to decide whether or not to engage with the other group, based on a greater knowledge on the situation provided by the code. Hence why he offers to introduce me to the group of supporters. He intends to dispel the suspicion that arises in the situation in order to comfort me, but also to make explicit their reasons and their origins in order not to be disloyal to Gerald, whilst 'not forcing' me and encouraging me to 'see the difference'. In the end, this tacit management of differences is deemed to allow possible encounters in rare occasion, as this supporter also considers – rightly or wrongly – that the Celtic and Rangers

supporters are more prone to communicate in Belfast than they are in Glasgow, where the separation between the two communities is said to be even stronger[1].

Gerald, on the other hand, representing a group of more traditional residents, is wary of talking to a stranger that he does not know, and his reaction aims at a simple avoidance of our interaction. But the homogeneous social situation we were in even meant that there was no need for him to resort to the implicit code to do that. Just like it was not necessary to keep implicit the sectarian slurs in the Protestant club, it is not necessary to hide or tone down a refusal to talk with a stranger in the homogeneous pub. Chances are Gerald would have handled the interaction differently if he had been in an urban environment, and would have probably used the implicit code to do so. He could not have afforded to be so openly opposed to a stranger, hence would have used the implicit code to notice and avoid, simply because the need to integrate in a more plural space requires it. Here, parts of those aspirations did not apply.

The reasons to use the code cannot always be reduced to a suspicious separation strategy, as shown by the disagreement between Dermot and Gerald during my induction. This other, more deferent, usage of the code attests of the 'commonality' of the moral code used to perform the distinction or to avoid one another depending on the situation, efforts which each group sometimes see positively for itself and for the other. Even if it includes moments of strong and stigmatising devaluation of the other community. This distinction between conflictual segregation and pacific avoidance also meets some differences between modes of urban existence such as 'encapsulation' and 'segregativity', as described by Ulf Hannerz[2].

What this more generally shows is that the code can be used to be more conscious of the deference needed in a specific situation, out of respect for what the conflict between communities means. For example, Andrew Finlay described how he had tried to hide his Protestant background from a Catholic worker during an interview, only for her to tacitly use the *telling* code not only to guess that he was indeed a Protestant, but also to render the following interaction more polite – even though it was meant to allow a criticism. Indeed, when she tried to denounce the discrimination she suffered in her workplace:

> 'In the tortuous preface to her generalisation about Protestants and trade unionism she was not only indicating that she had got the message, she was also engaging in what Hochschild would call feeling management. Before transgressing the norms of Catholic-Protestant interaction, she had to clear the way. In saying that she "was not a bit ashamed" and that she was "being honest and truthful", she was addressing the possibility that I might dismiss what she was about to tell me as bigotry. In saying "I don't want to hurt your feelings", she was acknowledging the possibility that I might be upset by

[1] We'll see in the next chapter that this is not as clear cut.
[2] U. Hannerz, *Exploring the city. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

> her condemnation of what she took to be my co-religionists and was seeking to diminish its immediate impact.'[1]

In this, Andrew Finlay sees the use of the implicit code as a way to manage the consequences that can have the transgression of 'the norms of Catholic-Protestant interaction' – an unclear category which refers, as we will see in our next part, to the new dominant expectation of indifference and neutrality. Here, using the code allowed the woman to be more conscious of the presence of a Protestant before voicing specific criticisms regarding members of the Protestant community. In this way, she did it without explicitly acknowledging Finlay's affiliation, nor without him making any explicit mention of it. She had just 'got the message', and so did he. Hence in those cases, the code is used to avoid conflictual situations, either by mutually avoiding one another in order to use non-mixed sociability space, or to settle interactions in order to be more conscious of the other interactor so that they may not lose face.

Of course, there may be contention regarding whether the code is being used for mutually pacific avoidance, or for conflictual exclusion. In the case of Dermot and Gerald, the opposition is quite clear-cut, but in other cases such as local shops frequented by a multitude of local actors, it may not be so clear. For example, in the case presented by another Catholic resident from the discussion organised by the local cross-community association, when mentioning their use of the local supermarket situated in a unionist area:

> 'I'd instinctively go to Tesco's on the Woodvale Road – I feel comfortable doing that – it's my local supermarket. The only thing I'd notice there is the imagery – the security men – they'd be all wearing their poppies. It wouldn't put me off going there – but I'd be thinking that people may be looking at me as I wasn't wearing a poppy.'[2]

As soon as one actor does not play the game of pacific avoidance by following the code – such as accepting that actors from one community should not use a specific shop, so that other residents going there do not pay the cost of using the code, of paying attention to passers-by, and enjoy a homogeneous social space – the entire collective tacit agreement is put to the test. This leads to tense situations such as this one, where the residents come to wonder what the display of the poppy really means, even though all the actors – the security men, employees of the shop, Catholic and Protestant residents – know that the official discourse is that this shop from a multinational brand is open to anyone from anywhere. Here lies the importance of being 'in' or 'out' of the tacit agreement to use a common implicit code.

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[1] A.R. Finlay, '"Whatever You Say Say Nothing"', art cit.

[2] Tascit : Twaddell, Ardoyne, Shankill, Communities in Transition, *Promoting Positive Change*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

1.3.2 Defining outsiders by their inability to notice the antagonism

As a consequence, another use of the code should be mentioned. Employing the code allows people to distinguish between those who know some of its most relevant signs and those who don't. This, in turn, sustains a main important distinction: those who take part in the local antagonism and those who do not. Sharing the understanding of the implicit code of distinction when considering the everyday local problems and interactions allows the distinction between community members and outsiders, or 'detached' members.

This is often noted when mentioning local communitarian geography, and the implicit meaning of most territorial location as being linked with one community or the other. This is one of the most common signs that comes to mind when mentioning the implicit code in North Belfast. Despite having been made particularly important because of the segregation that settled during the conflict, the intimate knowledge of geographical space and of the signs that relate to it is a general characteristic of urban life in any situations. Hence, the communication of territorial markers of the code is one of the most common and early steps of the initiation to the code. When I was returning in the area in 2019 after a few months' absence, I had a chat with one of the employees of the local library. We were talking about the fact that, in the months that had passed, the government had still been unable to stabilise a functioning executive, which meant that the administration was running without directions:

> 'You know, they could be putting us under Direct rule for some time. The problem with Direct rule is that we would be putting people, people from departments in England in charge, and they wouldn't get what's going on here. They would be running things just like in cities over in England. But see, Belfast has more libraries per head than… Than any other place, really. But they don't really see the role of the library in communities. Plus, see, you have the Falls library and then you have the Shankill library: everybody knows that you can't close any of them, because they are not interchangeable, the people who go to one wouldn't go to the other. See if you were to put someone from England in charge, they would … well they would just close both of them.'

The problem with transferring the ruling of local services to distant and impersonal civil servants is that they have no reason, nor even any possibility, to follow the implicit code in analysing local problems. It is not officially stated anywhere that the two libraries are linked to specific communities. They have no different plaques, no different rules, no different organisation. However, everyone who uses them knows the implicit code according to which those two different spaces have to be clearly differentiated, and knows that their users will follow this tacit rule. Local residents know that the Falls library is situated in one of the most prominent Catholic areas of Belfast, and the Shankill library is situated in a predominantly Protestant area. Here again, another use of the code is promoted, as the actors who are aware of

its existence are both more able to differentiate residents and to make realistic assumptions about local people's reasons to act. Something that an outsider would not be able to do.

This even leads to practical trials and sanctions when outsiders fail to use the code. Let us take another practical example, given by Charles. In June 2019, I was on a trip with the residents' association and was sitting next to Charles and two residents. As usual, Charles was very talkative, and nurtured a conversation with me and the residents, where he would speak fast, going back and forth between them and me, and change subjects quite often. We were going to meet a group of political representatives from a small town in the countryside, in order to compare their work with the work done by representatives in the city, in North Belfast. This was an important subject of conversation, and we transitioned from that:

> [*At some points during the trip, whilst we are talking about the difference between the communities and association in the countryside and those in the city*] Charles turns to me and says that 'the Catholics here, they're not like the Catholics in the rest of Ireland … well, even the Catholics in Ardoyne are not like the Catholics in West Belfast, and the Protestant here of Glenbryn will not be the same as the one on the Shankill.' I nod, but before I can add anything, he then explains that there is also a big difference between the Protestant here and in England: 'they will call us Paddy, and Irish, regardless of what we are, and that really pisses us off!' Charles then tells me the story of how he used to go down on vacation in England, and was 'staying in B&B's, when we had to go in England, because it was big at the time, bigger than hostels and, and other accommodations you know.' On one of these trips, he told me that he was having breakfast there and the woman running the B&B started to 'abuse' him by saying that they were all 'a bunch of paddys killing people in Belfast, savage going around murdering English soldiers'. Then Charles turns to me in the bus, does the 'time-out' sign with his hand to describe how he reacted then, and say to me as if he was speaking to the woman 'Wow, wow, wow: fuck you, I'm more British than you are!' […] Then he proceeds to give me another anecdote on the same subject, which relates to a trip he took to London in the 1980s. Charles had arrived there with his car, after having taken the ferry over, and had parked it in the street. He had to stop to go into a big mall to get some groceries. When he got back, as he tells me, he had found the whole street closed with police ribbons all around. There was no one left in the street, and police cars were sitting at one hand and at the other. He went to the first police officer there and asked him 'Well what's going on' and the officer said: 'There is a car bomb, we've had to seal the area'. And Charles said: 'which car?', after what the police officers pointed him towards the nearest car and said: 'The blue car over there'. Charles turned to him and said: 'Well… That's my car'. Charles stops at that point when telling me this story, and then continues with a comment: 'Because, at the time, there had been a lot of bombing in England and the English were a bit tense, whenever they saw what they called "an Irish plate" on a car parked in the middle of their street…'

Both examples, though the first one is more concerned with identity markers per se, are cases when Charles deplores that outsiders were unable to use the implicit code to differentiate him as either a Catholic or a Protestant, and simply considered him as a 'Northern Irish' or even an 'Irish'. He is angered by the fact that the English woman is unable to differentiate a Protestant from a Catholic, and the contrast with the local use of the *telling* is made even greater by the fact that Charles is taking the use of the code even further, by mentioning how one should also be able to differentiate between various local urban communities belonging to the same community. The second example is a common case of institutionalised suspicion in periods of conflicts, but one where the explicit risks are deemed too high to afford remaining at the level

of the implicit code to handle the situation. It is simply based on the fact that police officers noticed a car with an 'Irish plate'. Those two cases reveal how local actors such as Charles put outsiders to the test for their inability to use the tacit codes of distinction, revealing in their case another controversial interactional code which pertains to the context of the 1980s English society: the ambiguous need to distinguish the 'suspect community' of Irish people[1].

There too, making explicit how the misuse of the code allows actors to distinguish outsiders also means defending the implicit code as a support for a more complete and reflexive understanding of their local situations, despite the difficulties that his management represent. In the cases we have presented, the initiations, but even more clearly the sanctions regarding the misuse of – or the obliviousness to – the code, have shown that maintaining the code means reinforcing their common understanding of a mutual antagonism and of its relevance.

1.3.3 The embarrassment surrounding the code

Those two alternative uses of the codes – notice between members and definition of outsiders – lead us to an important comment. However, the code is being portrayed, resorting to it goes with a certain sense of embarrassment. To put it more generally, it requires those employing it to handle an expected risk of embarrassment. The man in the front door was embarrassed at exposing his use of the code (p. 207), and so was Odhràn in explaining it in a way that made him appear 'racist' (p. 209).

The same goes for the people who, when introducing me to the code, focus on their childhood or use examples from the past rather than simply using the code. This often leads them to tell how they were initially oblivious to such identity markers, until they were 'forced' by a conflictual situation or a problematic event to pay attention to them. This was the case with Mac's anecdote and his visit to the stadium. Many residents told me how, during the conflict, children had to go so far as learning the interactional patterns of the other community in order to avoid threatening situations. For example, the story goes that Catholic children learned traditional Protestant songs – the 'Sash' – whilst Protestant children learned the Catholic prayer of Hail Mary, as they were regularly challenged on the street by groups of local teenagers or adults in order to keep in check their community belonging. Knowing how to pretend to be a member of the other community by reciting these texts, which were a priori synonymous with Catholic or Protestant allegiance, was then essential to get out of such situations. Nevertheless,

[1] Mary J. Hickman et al., 'Social cohesion and the notion of 'suspect communities': a study of the experiences and impacts of being 'suspect' for Irish communities and Muslim communities in Britain', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 1 April 2012, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 89-106.

today, these situations and this total mastery of the code also appear from another era, notably for the new generations, since the danger is no longer an everyday threat. Even the older generation, who rely on those anecdotes, emphasises that those are past events. For example, Charles, immediately after listing identity markers and stressing their importance, also explained to me that he no longer taught them to his children. As such, he had recently been offended by the fact that his daughter had been told at school that she was a Protestant. She had been mocked by other pupils because she was wearing a Union Jack T-shirt, leading her to ask her dad if they were Protestant. An event that Charles was both angry and embarrassed to deal with, by answering her question and giving details on the area they lived in.

The woman talking with Andrew Finlay was embarrassed that he may think she was overtly being ‘a bigot’, or overtly mindless of what her discourse may do to him. Dermot was embarrassed by Gerald’s use of the code. I was strongly embarrassed every time I realised that I was resorting, or I was gauging the possibility of resorting to the code. Even in the case of people who do put forward their use of the code without being embarrassed, they do so in an often-conscious manner, whilst being conscious that they are expected to feel embarrassed but will not – such as Charles in his comments, or the women from the Ocean Women’s Group we have seen in Chapter 3. In all cases, there seems to be the idea that, somehow, it is embarrassing to use the implicit code of distinction. This leads us to an important point: not only is the use of the code central to one’s acceptance in certain areas of Ardoyne, but it also coexists with expectations of concealment so as not to be accused of resistance.

This can be linked with the fact that, as Elias pointed out with the advance of the civilising process, the threshold for shame has been decreasing, producing a strong increase in the amount of situation where shame appeared as a reaction to specific mistakes[1]. As a matter of fact, if we remember that this process went with the increasing pacification of modern societies, with the increased differentiation and integration between social groups, and the heightened contact between previously localised set of rules, *shame* regarding the use of the implicit code of distinction becomes an important aspect of the evolution of its use. This is also linked with what Cas Wouters mentioned when he argued that the civilising process rendered decreasingly acceptable to display statements or feelings of superiority regarding specific groups or individuals, and the disciplinarisation then informalisation of people’s reaction in the face of strangers and strangeness[2]. It also meant that the open use of the code would become more

[1] N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, *op. cit.*
[2] Cas Wouters, ‘How Strange to Ourselves are Our Feelings of Superiority and Inferiority?: Notes on Fremde und Zivilisierung by Hans-Peter Waldhoff’, *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1 February 1998, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 131-150.

difficult as the pacification of Northern Irish society ensued, and as more and more public acts of deconflictualisation occurred at the local level. It is also the embarrassment of residents of those deprived areas to resort to unofficial 'hidden transcripts' that are increasingly frowned upon by other social groups in the face of more 'official' expectation of sociability.

Embarrassment can be, in our case, translated in those terms: it is the result of concomitant difficulties to let the implicit code become the explicit rule of interactions or to minor it, by fear of being sanctioned either by members of the community, by outsiders, or by both. It goes with the handling of those difficulties: just like the code, embarrassment occurs 'at certain places in a social establishment where incompatible principles of social organisation prevail'[1]. In this sense, one rediscovers the idea that 'embarrassment is not an irrational impulse breaking through socially prescribed behaviour but part of this orderly behaviour itself'[2], precisely because it sustains a specific position towards the code in public and regarding its users. If it becomes increasingly important when pacification occurs, this also means that there exists, and that there has always existed, aspirations to keep the use of the code at its lowest level possible, to make it as discreet as possible. That is, to keep it in the minor level of everyday interaction, or even to forsake it. This is what we turn to now.

2. Willing to forsake the code?

We have seen that there exists an implicit code of distinction between the Catholic and Protestant communities, out of which actors can both mind the difference between each community and use them as reasons to act in their action or in their interpretation, without being too overt. We have seen, furthermore, that this could be both justified as allowing a conflictual segregation or a pacific form of avoidance or deference between groups. We then mentioned that the use of this code went with the risk of feeling embarrassed for its users, even more during moments of initiation. Regardless of how the code is presented, the very fact that local actors handle a code of distinction that is *implicit* points to the fact that there are aspirations to keep its use discrete and minor. In the face of the ambiguities and tensions that arise from the handling of identity markers, and from those different uses of the code, one posture often comes to dominate: the will to forsake, renounce or forbid the code.

[1] Erving Goffman, 'Embarrassment and Social Organization', *American Journal of Sociology*, 1956, vol. 62, no. 3, p. 264.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 271.

2.1 When the code is criticised for prevailing

2.1.1 Residents reflect on the code and decide it should not matter

Today, contrary to residents' tendency to use the identification code, we also find amongst these same inhabitants expectations that if this code of distinction should be made explicit, it is in order to forsake it in favour of a rule of multidimensional judgement. It is indeed necessary to verbalise the code in order to be able to put it up for debate, whereas keeping it implicit favours its use. In 2019, Harold was telling me about his work as a barman in an informal interview. Harold was then in his sixties. He is a former Protestant paramilitary. When he was released from prison in 1988, he went through several training courses on inter-community relations and on his past involvement in the Troubles, which were partly the reason for his involvement in a neighbourhood association promoting mixed relations. This transformed his implication in the local community, as he had been working for a youth club until now. As a volunteer, he sometimes participates in organising activities between Protestant and Catholic residents of the neighbourhood, which is a significant change in his personal trajectory. Harold tells me that he likes to observe the residents of both communities and 'how they behave as a group'. He then tells me about the implicit code:

> 'And in Northern Ireland we're still… Those things are very important because we're still very divided, as politicians still fantasise these things, and we will still use labels, all the time. Labelling is a big part of life here. You know, we're like that, there are lots of boxes and categories still, you know, people still call each other *taig*, prod, orange, and the same goes for Black and White. And see, I like watching TV shows and I look at TV shows just for that, because you always see, two mates will be interacting and one will be black and one will be white and it won't be referred to, it will just be an exchange between two mates, not "with my black friend"… But here, we still need to be doing that categorising, we need to put people in boxes so I think we really have a long way to go. And you hear that all the time really, you hear that with all the phone-in programmes for example, Nolan and all the likes, who would say "Well I have a great gay friend and etc. etc." or "Well you know I don't mind gay people, they can do whatever they want behind closed doors" which is terrible really… But it's said so that it seems like being tolerant. It's just that you have to pay attention and think about those things, otherwise, you don't see it. But if you tell people, you know, most of them realise that, most of them really rapidly reflect on it. But for a long time, we didn't say anything, just floated along. So, we still have a long road to travel. We're a country that has been divided socially, geographically, religiously, genealogically… You know we're even in a place where people used to tell if you were a Catholic or a Protestant by the letter H. Just the letter H you know… [*He nods in a sort of desperate way*]'

Here, Harold emphasises the historical weight of the implicit code that leads residents to categorise each other as 'taigs' or 'prod'. But he explains that, nowadays, an explicit statement of a will to forsake the code that goes with the explicit allusion to the code also leads some residents to detach themselves from a systematic use of the code: when making people 'realise' the positive dimension of considering the other person 'as a friend' rather than a 'taig' or 'prod', 'most of them think about it quickly'. Whereas, for a long time, most residents would not have

questioned the relevance of the implicit code: as we have seen, they would instead tend to consider it as being rooted in and inseparable from the segregated and conflictual context of Ardoyne. Based on their actualisation of primary socialisation trials in contemporaneous experiences, this would lead them to naturalise the social order at the basis of telling. This is why, according to him, there is still 'a long way to go'. Thus, and although it is still used, this implicit categorisation code is also denounced by some residents as being too simplistic, and too segregative in the way it supports a practical organisation of life in the neighbourhood and the avoidance of others. This was the criticism voiced by Charles when presenting his use of the code of distinction.

This idea appears often amongst the youth that undergo training or activities within the youth clubs, youth organisations or sports club in the area which encourages cross-community work. It has become a truism that is enforced both by youth workers and young people that the younger generation is deemed to 'not pay attention to any of that'. On numerous occasions when following the activities of the Ardoyne Youth Clubs and their cross-community group, the youth and the young workers argued after a few months in the club, the young people learn not to consider each other as Protestant or Catholics but just as 'mates', and end up 'not even thinking about it'. In both cases, this renunciation is deemed to sustain a further increase in equality between social groups: as mentioned by a young boxer volunteering for a boxing club in West Belfast in April 2018 'Catholics and Protestants, we're just the same people like. We've both grown up in the same type of situations and stuff, so … the younger people are the next generation coming up, so they are, instead of … it doesn't matter, it really doesn't matter, we are the same people, so we are. As I said like, we are all the same'.

2.1.2 Pacifying by leaving no choice

Those last examples show that, despite what most of discussions on those practices of distinction tend to emphasise, those expectations of renunciation are present amongst the residents of deprived and 'segregated' areas. They have always been present, because they are one of the results of the difficulties arising from the prolonged experience of the ambivalence between the need to know the affiliation of a stranger and to treat him with civil indifference, and between a divisive and a common use of the code. However, those expectations are more pronounced and more utterly formulated by actors who are detached from the sociability network of those areas, and who can rely on more detached context when they 'reveal' the code during public statements. For example, in March 2019, I was attending a meeting taking place in Ulster University. At this meeting, professionals and community workers from the whole

region had gathered to discuss the launch of a policy report called *Sectarianism in Northern Ireland: A Review.* The report, written by an academic, was making a number of political propositions to tackle the persistence of sectarianism in Northern Irish society. Several panels with different guests had been organised to discuss the report, whilst members of the media and professionals in the public suggested their questions. Only one community worker from Ardoyne attended the event, of which he had learned through social media. The rest of community workers to whom I mentioned the event not heard of it, neither had they time to attend. During one of the panels, the head of the Rural Community Network voiced her position regarding the everyday forms of sectarianism amongst rural communities, whilst a well-known journalist was mediating the exchange with the public:

> Journalist – People believe sectarianism is an urban problem, well most of the time … what do you say to that?
> KC – Yes, we don't have peace lines in the rural area where I come from, but really sectarianism is alive and well. Where I live, there are two different schools which are in two different areas with specific services, which means that depending on the uniform my kids are wearing, I will take one route or the other, and when I am leaving in the morning I have to decide on where I stop to shop, where I go to socialise … and I do make those type of decision, every single time I'm out…
> Journalist – Do you feel like you have to make a choice?
> KC – No, I don't strongly feel that I have to make a choice, but, the possibility is definitely there … there is clearly a choice to be made that is present in people's mind. And people continue to have that because it's based in their strong history, it's based in their line of work … so, I do believe, there is a real lack of challenge in rural areas. […]
> Journalist – Do you think you can work at a policy level, which is often seen as … as … dissociated from what people are doing at the local level?
> KC – Well, imagine a scenario where people do not have to make a choice, where it's not a possibility. That's what we need. And that's how you report changes on the ground. Long-term changes in how people make choices. See I'll take this example. Years ago, I remember being in a meeting with some of our colleagues, we had a man there who was swigging a bit, and so he bragged that he had been having a few drinks and that he would be driving home afterwards, which had people smiling. Today, I think, well I'd link to believe that in most cases, it would be almost impossible for people to say that. It would be a social suicide to talk like that in public. Well, that's what we need: it needs to be a social suicide to talk about sectarianism, just as it became a social suicide to brag about drink driving.

This community worker describes how she still takes everyday decisions based on the implicit code of distinction between communities and uses this description of her experience to call for an abandonment of the code. It is a call for renunciation in the sense that people should not have the 'choice' to use or not to use the code in their daily routine, nor even the 'possibility' of a choice. This renunciation demands that every explicit use of the code, or any action in which the code is deemed to be an overly central reason to act be sanctioned as a moral offence. As we said, such detached statements on the use of the code are the context in which voicing this position regarding the code is most likely to emerge. However, a tricky paradox appears when, in practice, actors try to implement this renunciation and initiate others into forsaking the code.

2.2 The paradoxical consequence of forsaking the code

This aspiration to forsake the identification code becomes visible when actors demand more civil inattention and indifference towards the distinctive signs characterising the interactions between the inhabitants of Ardoyne. Residents therefore see a positive sense in enforcing the renunciation of distinction practices, whilst the code was intended to decipher them in an unspoken way. Rather than a segregative control or a peaceful avoidance, it is a neutral involvement towards the other that become possible, since no signal would, in their opinion, give support to possible discrimination.

2.2.1 'To be unidentifiable' or 'To be anybody'

In 2016, I am in the Upper-Ardoyne community centre to meet the person in charge, Liz. This municipal centre officially organises mixed activities for the young people of the neighbourhood. In fact, it is mainly frequented by the Protestant population, as it is in the heart of the few streets where they live. Although the people who work there are also from this part of the neighbourhood and have long been integrated into Protestant support networks, their professional role in this municipal public service has given them the responsibility of fostering a more detached position vis-à-vis the use of the implicit code. In so doing, they are following the new public policies implemented since the turn of the millennium in favour of social diversity. While I was conducting an interview with Liz in 2016, we were interrupted by a volunteer who explained that two boys from the Summer scheme, both categorised as 'Protestants', had been singing loyalist songs on the bus as it passed through Belfast and had been fighting amongst themselves. After asking the volunteer to write them a 'note' of discipline, Liz turns to me:

> The volunteer to Liz – The likes of wee Jack, I had to bring wee Jack in front to Jennifer, and then he was still torturing Alan so I got him brought down to the front to sit beside Sarah.
> Liz – [xxx] a few times anyway … listen if you want to give them a wee note? [*The woman leaves and Liz closes the door, then turns to me*] There you go now! [*She laughs*] You're bad luck! Two of the boys were playing up on the bus and playing really bad. We have a three strikes policy, so if they get three strikes, they don't go to the next trip. So those boys, I'll have to contact their parents and they won't be able to go on Friday. It's not even a big trip on Friday so there probably won't be fuss. She should have barred them from Monday, they're going to the funfair. But hum.
> Théo – Do you have to end a lot of troubles with kids or?
> Liz – What's happened is, we have a policy that they're not allowed to go out on the buses wearing … Like Rangers …, anything that identifies them being as a Protestant community. They're not allowed to sing any paramilitary loyalist songs in the buses. And that's what they ended up, and they were fighting doing other stuff. So, I'll have a proper wee chat arranged with them later, and then I'll contact their parents. It's for safety reason.
> […] Théo – About the bus… Would this sort of thing, just as you said you're going to have to talk to the kids and the parent, does…
> Liz – Yeah does is happen a lot?

Théo – Yeah and the parents…
Liz – Occasionally it happens, it hasn't… It's been the first during the summer scheme this year, it's the only time it happened. And the parents are fine. I mean most of the time when we contact the parents, they're OK about it. Because a list of rules that we give out at the very beginning of the summer scheme. And we tell them that we are quite strict about them. So … and that we have a three strikes rule. So, they know that when they sign up kids here, that's the way we operate here. I mean you have to have something… It's just the bus is always through, like… I mean you don't know what the drivers are, they're Catholic, Protestant, you don't know you know. And they're singing this kind of song, or they're going through Catholic areas, and you'll get your bus stoned or something. It's just not… No, we don't allow it. They're in big trouble [*she laughs*].
Théo – Caus' most of the kids, there would be any kids that come just for the summer scheme, kids that you wouldn't know?
Liz – We know all the kids. We've loads of troublemakers, but that doesn't happen. I mean these wee kids they're only five to eight years old, this is our young group. You know, you'd expect that from the older group. You know, mostly. Not from those wee ones. Well, I think with this all… They were singing sectarian songs in the buses. So, I mean, that's … there is a band practice. There is a big band in the area, *Pride of Ardoyne Fluteband*, and they practise in here on a Monday night. So, it's a sort … a sort, it's just the way they're brought up, it's the culture they're brought up in. You know, and they… I think all the council centre would have the same policy, you can't sing those kinds of songs on buses, or anything that can… And you can't wear the tops or anything. […] I mean if you go to the venue wearing a Celtic top or a Rangers top o, then they'll know automatically in which way they are, there is always… Especially with the Celtic and Rangers, there is always, there's always a fight, guarantee they'll be a fight, so. So, all the Council centre barre the wearing of those tops. I don't know about other voluntary centres and voluntary groups, I mean I happen to have seen groups and they were wearing them. So not everybody does it. But all the council centres do it.
Théo – And I guess it's the same thing for volunteers as well?
Liz – Yep. Same thing. No way. The council gives volunteers t-shirts anyway, so they get those during the trips, and it sort of identify you.

Whilst the fighting incident is common in any youth centre, the children seem to have gone beyond common mischief. They did not attack other children, but they nevertheless displayed signs that Liz considered 'sectarian'. They transgressed the rule of renouncing identity markers that are deemed too ostentatious and distinctive, a rule now dictated by the municipal institution, but also by the aspirations for civil indifference that actors like Liz uphold, and which these institutions concretise. In these spaces – the cross-community municipal centre, the bus or 'venues' – social rules of neutral involvement, concealment of political identities and indifference to community distinctions predominate. Yet, the children have allowed themselves to publicly claim their religious and political identities, at the risk, Liz believes, of provoking forms of violence against themselves and others. If Liz presents a logic of tolerance and non-discrimination, this should necessarily involve, in her opinion, concealing the identity markers of the residents of Upper-Ardoyne. The same goes for the professional workers of the centre, who are bound by a need to be entirely neutral. The two boys should be punished and their parents warned for having chanted songs that were potentially offensive to the Catholic residents, which perhaps comprised the driver and passers-by. Here, Liz is trying to educate the new generations and their parents to these indistinct relationships in order to adopt alternative attitudes and with the intention of 'pacifying' urban life.

2.2.2 A PARADOX

When applied in this way by political actors in the district, this logic tends to reinforce some positive reasons for the implicit use of the code, even though it seeks to reduce its scope. If, from Liz's point of view, children should not give signs of their community membership, and despite the fact that this even leads Liz to defend the idea that they cannot differentiate between members of different communities – 'You don't know what the drivers are' – , this does not guarantee the abandonment of the code, notably since the children are still involved in socialisation networks that promote its use. Even more: for Liz herself, it is a question of promoting this renunciation and hoping for oblivion, while sometimes continuing to fear conflict and very practical threats… in which case giving up on the code renders actors even more uncertain of their ability to predict, or even apprehend, dangerous events coming from their social world. As a result, Liz continues to use the code to realise the limits of urban relations, whilst at the same time demanding that it be revoked. More than its abandonment, we are then witnessing its downgrading: a tacit return to maintaining the code of community distinction in the 'minor mode' of action, at the status of an implicit norm which cannot be made explicit nor be abandoned.

As it turns out, a simple initiation to the renunciation may reinforce one's ability to use it and to conceal their tacit reasons to act. But this grows to reinforce the paradox when community workers who make this position regarding the code explicit describe the complete impropriety of the code and the need to organise a form of sociability in which relying on the code 'is not a possibility', yet have to rely on the code to become – or to teach one how to become – unidentifiable. This is a paradox that has very practical consequences on the handling of the tension and on moments of initiation, as seen in the case of Liz. Similarly, in the 2016 group discussions facilitated by Tascit, a resident declaring themselves as a unionist said:

> 'We couldn't go over there [*in Ardoyne*] wearing a poppy, yet in Tesco's, which is in a unionist area, they come in wearing Celtic tops and even with ash on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday – or wearing their school uniforms. I certainly wouldn't let my ones go into the shops in the Ardoyne wearing their school uniform.'[1]

Whilst refraining from employing signs indicating their community, this resident deplores the fact that other passer-by in their area display clear community markers. Just like one of the other residents said:

[1] Tascit : Twaddell, Ardoyne, Shankill, Communities in Transition, *Promoting Positive Change*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

> 'There's less suspicion now, I've a 22-year-old daughter and I worry when she tells me some of the places she would go with friends, not because of any sectarian feelings, but because I just worry about her safety, not everyone has moved forward.'[1]

Here, two parents come to limit their aspirations to forsake the code when they are faced with the fact that other residents in the city are still using the implicit code of distinction between communities, either to display identity markers indicating their community or to distinguish strangers walking through their areas. As a result, when teaching their children not to display any identity markers, those parents do it less with the aim of renouncing the code – which would go with the idea of voiding the signs which compose the code of any relevance – but by reinforcing the need to be careful and to develop skills in the overt management of the code – by reinforcing the relevance of the signs which compose the code.

Here again, the paradox appears in clearer light when outsiders and detached members of the community make more detached statement on the code. Those public statements then contrasts with more involved experience of the code – a tension that Liz is already experiencing on her own, just like Susan was in the Ocean Women's Group. This is visible in another discussion which occurred during the meeting on the *Sectarianism report* in May 2019, which involved a researcher in social science and a local musician who would do tours throughout Northern Ireland and who was present in the audience:

> [*The researcher presents his work to the journalist*] 'Youth work was at the forefront of peace building. But the thing is, while Youh work had been pioneering in the 1970s and the 1980s, by now, there seems to be an overall fatigue within youth workers … to engage and to tackle intercommunity issues. And the same goes for the young people. Young people feel a bit tired by that. They don't see peacebuilding as cool. So there need to be a change on that side of things, a reworking of the programmes that we offer young people. Because, if, if you ask them, not a single young person would tell you that their number one issue is sectarianism. Not a single one. They would talk about stress, anxiety, about local drug issues. Because it takes a moment of reflexion, time to stop and think about it, it takes a deliberate interrogation – and not the interrogation we had in school (*the public laughs*) – to get behind those issues and to realise that sectarianism does influence on all those things.' [*He then proceeds to give different examples, and say that even in the area he worked with, there was a deliberate type of avoidance from young Catholic people who would go on to the film on certain nights because they knew that Protestants were going on other nights*] 'And for them it provided a strong reason to… Even though it wasn't based on anything or on any facts you know. Same goes for the classic problem of young people who know that they sometimes have to change the area where they come from, or change their accent … and as I was talking with Sean here, I know that he had a special technique for that, as he works in a band, and he told me about how he creates another persona, just in case…'. The journalist nods and says 'That really is a dreadful thing about this place' while talking in the middle of the researcher's sentence, who concludes '… But so it needs to be a concentrated effort, so that it's not left to being something coincidental you know.'. After a short pause, the journalist says 'Ok…' and then turns to the man mentioned, Sean, and says 'Well would you be bothered to tell them about this alter ego identity of yours?' Sean laughs and so do members of the public. He explains that he is a musician, and that he has to be playing in different venues with friends of his. Hence, it's just that he knows when he goes in certain bars that he has to look around: 'When you're there you have to do a bit of saving face, and then maybe sometimes we'll say with my mate "Are we Ok?", "Well not too sure…", and then in the middle of a show sometimes people will come up and ask us to play loyalist or republican

[1] *Ibid.*

> songs… And at that point we have to come up with reasons why we can't, we have to explain why we won't play them.' Sean then adds that he's sometime refraining from saying that his name is Sean McDonnell, and that if he sees that there is a grudge with that, he will add 'Oh my daddy is Allan' not to give away anything. The public laughs, and so do the journalists and the researchers.

The detached researcher is formulating the paradox by emphasising the fact that young people both ask for new types of programmes which do not concentrate on the subject of sectarianism, and continue to employ the 'sectarian' code of distinction 'even though it is not based on anything', allegedly unaware of the indirect impact of sectarianism on the issues they experience. To the contrary, resorting to making the code implicit – and asking for less overt mentions of community relations – is the very result of their awareness of this impact. This is what the intervention of the musician shows, saying that he resorts to the code for the reasons of 'deference' that we have already mentioned within the homogeneous spaces that are pubs and clubs (see Chapter 4 – p. 216). He then goes even further to dissimulate his use of the code, feeling compelled to find other 'reasons' why he refuses to play songs attributed to one community or the other.

2.2.3 Reasons why one may want to forsake the code

If they tend to reinforce this paradox, may lead to contradictory situations and are often putting people in the position to realise that they misjudged the limits of their actions or interactions, how come the aspirations to forsake the code still resist to those tests? It is because they are at the crossroad of several social processes which mutually reinforce one another, that we can broadly summarise here.

The accentuation of the urban organisation of social life has played a central role in this process. As it has already been extensively demonstrated by the first school of Chicago and subsequent work[1], urbanisation brings about a more anonymous form of life which, through its increased densification and the multiplication of sectors in which one person is invested, elevates differences and plurality to the level of the ordinary. The accentuation of the urban organisation of social life has played a central role in this process, as 'this part of Belfast has been a focal point for international peace-building strategies since the early 1990s. […] By altering the physical, social, economic, and cultural environments of north Belfast, [municipal and regional bodies] have created a tangible "peaceful space" in the city centre'[2]. And indeed,

[1] G. Simmel, 'The metropolis and mental life', art cit ; Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess and Morris Janowitz, *The City*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984, 250 p.
[2] Audra Mitchell and Liam Kelly, 'Peaceful spaces? Walking through the New Liminal spaces of peacebuilding and development in north Belfast', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 1 November 2011, vol. 36, no. 4, p. 308.

in 2020 and as part of the Belfast mobility project, 'a large percentage of respondents from both communities felt the city centre was a shared space within which both communities could feel equally welcome (82%) and was a far more open and inclusive space that it had been in the past (79%)'[1]. Despite this apparent shift in the use of public space, this was only a continuation of an understanding of the city that had settled during the conflict, during which 'integration could also be seen in the function of the city centre, which served as a commercial focus for citizens from all the ethnically separated neighbourhood'[2]. Just like for the hobos described by Nels Anderson when going through the city of Chicago, the experience of the city then meant that persons, including residents of Ardoyne and other *a priori* homogeneous areas could give very little information to one another about their background[3], in an urban environment which 'provides chances of escaping in some relationships from a self which cannot be avoided in others'[4]. The urban expectations are then to leave community markers, signs, and any actions pertaining to the relevance of those elements in the background, so to be assured that they will make no unfortunate appearance on the scene of the urban theatre. In return, it has become less acceptable to assert a communitarian or sectarian use of space, meaning one that is guided by the implicit use of the code. Indeed, whilst in the early 2000s, a majority of residents publicly voiced their refusal to avoid areas populated by the other community, in 2020, in North Belfast:

> 'A large percentage of participants rejected the suggestion that they would avoid areas that were associated with the "other" community, with between 40% and 55% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with suggestions that they would prefer to use single identity facilities, travel through or close to areas dominated by their own community, and avoid some public spaces, particularly if marked by visual symbols associated with the "other" community.'[5]

The progressive installation of a longing to forsake the code was also justified by the rise of neoliberalism, which went with both expectations of integration and economic considerations. In the case of Northern Ireland and the end of the conflict, the political reforms supporting this readjustment were driven by actors advocating for the implementation of a 'liberal peace'[6]: a vision that linked the return to peace to the return to a stable market, endorsing a certain conception of the organisation of labour, of the market and of international relations.

Lots of authors have debated the dramatic effects that attempts at a liberal peace have had at the regional level, and the first part of this thesis was dedicated to showing some of the forms

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[1] B. Sturgeon et al., *Mobility, Sharing and Segregation in Belfast: Policy Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
[2] F.W. Boal, 'Integration and Division', art cit., p. 155.
[3] Nels Anderson, *The Hobo. The sociology of the homeless man.*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1923, 302 p.
[4] U. Hannerz, *Exploring the city. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*, *op. cit.*, p. 233.
[5] B. Sturgeon et al., *Mobility, Sharing and Segregation in Belfast: Policy Report*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
[6] Roger Mac Ginty, 'The Liberal Peace at Home and Abroad: Northern Ireland and Liberal Internationalism', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1 November 2009, vol. 11, no. 4, p. 690-708.

of resistance that they bring about. But this literature also misses an important consequence of this form of liberalism, which is only noticeable through the persistent effect it can have on various domains of social life. Two effects have been cross added and reinforced one another: the focus on the individual, and the downplaying of group belongings as a relevant feature of everyday life. This liberal peacebuilding also went with the idea that stabilising political relations between inhabitants meant encouraging new relations between individuals 'as such', by relinquishing their community ties, considered to be the main obstacles to the positive effects of neoliberalism and 'international strategies'[1]. In practice, it means that the handling of the implicit code and of its signs has been increasingly put to the responsibility of individuals, including when they become more and more isolated in sorting out whether or not they could claim it. They are left more isolated not only to learn and use the implicit code, but also to sort out how embarrassing it is to still employ the code in front of outsiders or members of the community.

Yet, before being promoted by members of successive state groups, this ideal of relinquishing community ties in order to focus on individuals exists first amongst residents. That ideal of being 'ordinary citizens'[2] is upheld by actors who judge the experience of inter-community conflict as traumatic, having often been through situations in which the interactional recognition of their community membership was at the origin of violent events – when being recognised as a Catholic or a Protestant meant trouble – , while deemed as having been of little help in reducing economic inequalities between the two communities. The experience of telling during the conflict is mostly actualised throughout such negative and threatening memories. In July 2016, I interviewed a journalist who had been working in North Belfast for several years at the turn of the millennium and had written a book on the area. She now lived in Belfast and had close connection in North Belfast, seven though she originates from England. There, whilst we were discussing the everyday life in the area in the 2000s, she said:

> 'We lived on adrenaline in those days. You expected someone to come through the door with a gun, any moment. Everybody was looking, on their nerves, looking round like that. For who was listening into conversations. I wouldn't, for example, I wouldn't even play Irish Music in my car if I was travelling. Through parts of Belfast. In case somebody was listening to me. In case I would be shot for playing Irish music in my car. You know even Irish music like we're listening to here, if you were in bars in Belfast there were big cages outside, CCTV, so you'd ring the bell and people would see who you were before they'd let you in. And everywhere, big rocks everywhere, to stop car bombs from being parked outside bars. I mean it was a different world.'
> Théo – 'Do you think people in the community have inherited this sort of distrust?'
> Journalist – 'No, things are different now. There are very few places now, there is nowhere now in

[1] Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell, 'Peacebuilding and Critical Forms of Agency: From Resistance to Subsistence', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 2011, vol. 36, no. 4, p. 326-344.
[2] Richard Jenkins, *Lads, Citizens and Ordinary Kids: Working Class Youth Life Styles in Britain*, London ; Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul PLC, 1983, 176 p.

> Northern Ireland… And it's impossible to describe to you what it was like in those days. It was like… It was like living in a war zone. You expected to be killed any day. You didn't know if you'd ever come home that night. And you know you'd live with deaths, funerals, and deaths, and fear and hatred. It was, looking back on it, it was terrible.'

The experience of situations such as these can be actualised in contemporaneous settings to justify the aspirations to indifference and to renounce using or paying attention to any type of community markers. This 'renunciation' is not without ties with what Michael Pollak had theorised when showing the 'elementary forms of adjustment'[1] that persons had deployed during and after the experience of concentration camps during the Second World War, in order to stabilise their identity: Ruth, one of the main survivors interviewed by Pollak, tended 'never to think of the social world in terms of membership to a group and to consider only relationships from one individual to another'[2]. Pollak makes of this tendency a central reason why this particular survivor was able to return to a stable professional life, by avoiding a 'politicisation' of her experience[3]. As we will see later on, this means that a good number of residents from areas such as Ardoyne have embraced the idea that they should emancipate themselves of the code through work, through a professional life which provides opportunities to detach themselves of their community ties, often prompting them to leave their community or origin in North Belfast. Those dynamics lead to everyday form of 'resistance to ethnification'[4], according to ethnomethodolgists, or 'desidentification' according to interactionists, aiming at avoiding the naturalisation of community membership and its use in everyday interaction.

As a parallel consequence, citizens do expect the Northern Irish, British and Irish states to provide the conditions for institutional 'reliance' and urban 'security', on which the Northern Irish people in these deprived neighbourhoods could rely in order to develop mixed relationships, at the expense of claiming their political and religious identity. Thus, the urban public policies implemented by 'liberal' actors from both communities, from the mid-1990s onwards, consisted of defending the emancipation of Northern Irish citizens from their communities of origin, and the need to conceal their historical identity markers. These conditions guaranteed, in their view, social diversity.

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[1] Michael Pollak, *L'Expérience concentrationnaire: Essai sur le maintien de l'identité sociale*, Paris, Éditions Métailié, 2014, p. 340.
[2] Michael Pollak, 'La gestion de l'indicible', *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 1986, vol. 62, no. 1, p. 43.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[4]See the study of Dennis Day, Charles Antaki and Sue Widdicombe, 'Being ascribed, and resisting, membership of an ethnic group' in Charles Antaki and Sue Widdicombe (eds.), *Identities in Talk*, London, Sage Publications, 1998, p. 151-170.

2.3 The 'Telling' paradox and the reduction of sociologists

Hence, all those processes lead detached and involved actors to support, in part, calls to forsake the code. However, it is the paradox which ensues that sociological research very often overlooks: imposing the abandonment of the code of distinction – as a result of the forms of segregation and violence that it actually facilitates – at the expense of the possibility of claiming identity markers, has the effect of reinforcing its implicit use and may be deemed to diminish the chances of establishing a real social diversity and cohesion. This code has already been particularly identified by authors working on urban socialisation in Northern Ireland, either to denounce it or to praise its role in resisting public policies seeking to impose a 'liberal peace'. As summarised by Fiona E. McCormack, sociologists have used the term to encompass:

> 'A nonverbal communication aimed at knowing the others' ethnic allegiance, characterised by Frank Burton as 'pseudo-communication' (1979:67) [,] the importance of being able to tell whether strangers are Catholics or Protestants, as well as the resultant sensitivity of Northern Irish people to signs other than unambiguous badges [and] a cultural reticence that developed as a way to cope with the sectarian alienation associated with a national conflict.'[1]

It is the sociologist Frank Burton who first focused on these identifying practices as a set of discourses and norms guiding action between members of the two communities. At the time of his investigation in the 1970s, Burton described North Belfast as being affected by a 'quasi-apartheid between communities that [was] rooted in consciousness'[2]. Hence, he saw 'telling' as a system of signs by which Catholics and Protestants arrive at religious ascriptions in their daily interactions, necessarily leading to a reinforcement of conflict.

As it turns out, most observers perceive in the use of the code only the signs of an exclusionary logic and the fact that it would support a 'containment' of dwellers in a posture of mistrust towards one another. During the conflict, some authors would see *telling,* and the 'race relations' that it solidified, as a proof that no 'liberal' solution could be found to the conflict between communities[3]. Allen Feldman described it as 'the embodiment of sectarianism'[4] and Andrew Finlay as a pernicious practice [5].In a methodological discussion on some of his own interviews, Finlay went as far as saying that 'interviewers and interviewees both engage in

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[1] Fiona Elisabeth McCormack, 'Fear, Silence, and Telling: Catholic Identity in Northern Ireland', Anthropology and Humanism, 1 June 2017, vol. 42, no. 1, p. 57.
[2] F. Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[3] Robert Moore, 'Race Relations in the Six Counties: Colonialism, Industrialization, and Stratification in Ireland', *Race*, 3 September 2016.
[4] Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 59.
[5] A.R. Finlay, '"Whatever You Say Say Nothing"', art cit ; Andrew Robert Finlay, 'Reflexivity, the dilemmas of identification and an ethnographic encounter in Northern Ireland' in *Researching Violent Societies: Ethical and Methodological Issues*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2001, p. 55-76.

'telling' and, depending on the outcome of the process, may never, or only rarely, get beyond the bland, superficial, coded communication described by Heaney, Harris and Burton'[1]. The anthropologist Kelleher also emphasises how being initiated to telling amounts to being initiated into the 'initial stages of vigilance' towards 'non-members' and 'paying attention to oneself':

> 'This practice of watching yourself, these young Catholic men understood, was related not only to observing and being aware of one's self but also the selves of others. Watching yourself concerned making self/other relationships, making identities, and it proved to be a complicated differentiation process in Ballybogoin. Northern Ireland people have a name for the initial stages of this awareness and the practices of it: they call it "telling". Telling, a practice carried out by both Catholics and Protestants, refers to reading the bodies of strangers to tell whether they are Catholic or Protestant. Ballygoboin Catholics said their interpretations were correct over 90 percent of the time, and they got a lot of practice at it in their town, one with a slight majority of Catholics.'[2]

By arguing that the 'constructing and deconstructing activity' of telling is 'communication on the level of relationship, form, not content, and it [is] disturbed communication'[3], Kelleher ambiguously compares it with mental illnesses such as schizophrenia. All of those observations on the divisive and conflictual consequences of the telling are not necessarily false.

However, renewing this view would lead us to narrow down the various debates that are opening up in Ardoyne, whether it is already a matter of denouncing the excesses of this code of distinction, or of relating its positive effects when it allows for more respectful interactions, since actors are more aware of the antagonism that still opposes communities with persistent specificities. Those type of practical postures becomes hard to grasp when one concludes, such as Burton, that the 'sectarian consciousness' of telling 'seems to lead to a form of social relations which have an almost congenital inability to communicate across religious boundaries as each side immures itself in dialogue, making only "pseudo-communication" possible'[4]. One wonders, in this sense, what a 'real form of communication' would look like for those sociologists if a form of communication which allows manoeuvring with typical cues and implicit code of conduct is reduced to 'pseudo-communication'. It would mean that communication in modern highly differentiated societies, with strongly differentiated segments and persons with multilayered identities, would have no other choice than to be pseudo-so. Similarly, Burton added that 'In one sense Protestants and Catholics do not know how to interact. Their restricted knowledge of each other prevents communication. Telling contributes

[1] A.R. Finlay, '"Whatever You Say Say Nothing"', art cit.
[2] William F. Kelleher, *The Troubles in Ballybogoin: Memory and Identity in Northern Ireland*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2004, p. 12.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
[4] F. Burton, *Politics of Legitimacy*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

to shutting out this anomie before it can start'[1]. While it is indeed the case that telling contribute to managing the risk of anomie caused by a mismanaged tension, it is obvious, when one pays attention to what constitutes the code and its initiation, that the members of those groups have known very well and for a very long time how to interact, based on an extended knowledge on each other: however, this did not take the form of official and explicit norms of interaction, nor of codes of conduct paralleling the urban forms of life, but of an implicit code of distinction allowing them to tacitly interact on the basis of their antagonism.

The findings of these sociologists – established during the conflict and afterwards – have therefore renewed a commonsense vision of the reasons to use the code. As mentioned by several of them, the term 'telling' already echoes a term first used by Northern Irish people since the beginning of the 20th century to designate the way in which they categorise each other. The commonsense framing of this interactional code emphasises its tendency to distrust, conceal and avoid, with residents going as far as making these elements characteristics of the Northern Irish national habitus. This insistence on the segregating and conflictualising effect of telling simultaneously negates the fact that it is also a support for concealing a political identity for oneself, and for becoming more capable of determining when it is appropriate to leave it in the background out of deference or to communicate it publicly to others. This is why other authors, such as Fiona McCormack, defend the idea that the need to refer to the implicit code of telling is not a cause, but a symptom of the normalisation of violence represented by the need to remain silent in the management of one's identity markers, leading to this hybrid form of 'silent collaboration'[2]. The use of this implicit code can then be understood as allowing forms of self-protection and respectful avoidance[3], although nowadays, as we have seen, it becomes less and less probable to find someone publicly claiming a high skill in the use of the implicit code of telling. Lisa Smyth's work on non-sectarian mothering in Belfast, analysing how mothers 'struggle to restrain long-established sectarian fears and anxieties, as they cope with expectation of non-sectarianism, in a context of ongoing inter-group hostility and mistrust' is a good example of a sociological work tackling the paradox in a non-reductionist way[4]: for her, 'this effort sees them caught in a struggle to avoid reproducing the sectarian bitterness shaping historic relations between Catholics and Protestants, while at the same time feeling themselves

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[2] Fiona Elisabeth McCormack, 'Fear, Silence, and Telling: Catholic Identity in Northern Ireland', *Anthropology and Humanism*, 1 June 2017, vol. 42, no. 1, p. 57.
[3] H. Hamill and D. Gambetta, 'Who do Taxi Drivers Trust?', art cit.
[4] Lisa Smyth, 'Non-sectarian mothering in Belfast. The emotional quality of normative change' in *The 'Irish' Family*, Florence, United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014, p. 225.

to be bound by a moral duty to instil reasonable fears in their children, as they educate them to recognise, and so avoid, potentially sectarian attitudes and activity'[1].

In this sense, we now observe dynamics akin to those analysed by Rosemary Harris in her study of a rural village community just before the Troubles. In the 1950s, this ethnographer focused on the mechanisms of prejudice and tolerance between these subgroups. In the village of Ballybeg, Catholics and Protestants live in the same area, sharing the streets and some of the shops. However, members of one group follow activities that members of the other group avoid. Harris therefore devotes part of her work to this important point: what drives social interaction, in the paradoxical situation where members of one group maintain daily relationships but manage to maintain isolation from each other? Having presented all forms of social separation between Catholics and Protestants, Harris explains that, within the village, encounters by accident are embarrassing. A Catholic worker is embarrassed at a Protestant trade union meeting, a Protestant is embarrassed at an Irish hurling match, and the school children in one community do everything they can to avoid interacting with the gangs across the street. Yet, all this still happens on a regular basis. When they cannot avoid one another, and to prevent mutual discomfort during encounters, residents try to dodge topics that might too clearly indicate 'which foot they are digging with'. Religion and politics are obviously prohibited. However, more innocuous subjects must also be taken into account, such as sport, gossip, music, etc. Elements that, for a long time by now, were no longer neutral for the inhabitants of the village. The intense preoccupation with the recognition of the religious affiliations of each person encountered in the village provided an opportunity for pre-emptive and polite caution[2], the effect of which was to pacify social existence. The proper use of the code of distinction then became an essential skill in maintaining 'everyday peace' and its performance[3]. Just like in rural areas, Ardoyne residents now recall their urban life before the war in a similar light, emphasising their tacit distanced cohabitation. As a prominent Catholic school worker told a local community worker in the same set of biographical interview in 2019:

> '[My husband]'s maternal family, which included nine children, had come to live in Chief Street in 1917. They had moved into the city from the country when their business had failed. […] We did not experience what could be described as a real animosity, just an awareness of the need to be cautious. Catholics played openly in the Woodvale Park and in Chief Street, staunchly Protestant areas, but it was always different when it came to 12 July, the Twelfth. We developed what could be described as a shell around us, and awareness of the need to be careful when we were living or moving in Protestant areas.'[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Rosemary Harris, *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1986, p. 148.

[3] R. Mac Ginty, 'Everyday peace', art cit.

[4] B. McKee, *Ardoyne '69*, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

Still, in recalling the tales of the 1930s that their own relatives had told them in their childhood and influenced by the historicisation of the conflict, elderly residents also state that 'the reality is that there had been long-standing difficulty between the communities. You now hear people talking about "the good old days", but the more you look back the more you realise it was literally just a lid resting ever so lightly on what was bubbling underneath'[1]. A dual situation, with an official and an unofficial form of cohabitation, explicit and implicit codes of sociability, whose coexistence relied on the presence of the code of telling.

Even taking those considerations on 'deference' and 'politeness' into account, how can the code be both exclusionary and a support for social peace? The code in fact expresses the interdependence of people who have repeatedly been separated from each other over time – and increasingly during each period of conflict. It crystallises their awareness of their identity and political differences, as well as their ambivalence to get rid of them since they experience both threats, forms of violence or stigmatisation against themselves, and forms of co-presence and integrative moments. Thus, as we have seen, while Charles explained that he wanted to stop relying on a central use of the code to judge the 'non-members' of his community, he also noted that his daughter was mocked by other children when she wore a T-shirt representing the flag of the United Kingdom. He felt, and her question led him to believe that he had to explain the code to help her make sense of her situation.

Hence, the code nurtures a tension between ambitions to respect rules of concealment of these marks and to rely on them, just like it supports a tension between avoiding and engaging with the other groups or a member of another community. If one wants to overcome this tension, a further involvement with the code is necessary in order to maintain a further controlled involvement in this form of respectful interaction. Conflict rendered social groups more reflexive towards one another and reinforced a specific type of interdependence and social binds which crystallised in the use of the code: in this situation, social actors cannot 'regress' and decide to renounce this form of interdependencies, but can only strive for an increasing control and controlled decontrolling of the code.

In this sense, it reinforces a form of adjustment which already occurs in some urban areas where a partial sense of community exists, where 'toleration and calculated avoidance protect each family style. Neighbours seldom discuss differences openly, but guess at them. Differences are glossed over as long as one keeps to oneself'[2]. Similarly, Jean Sybil La Fontaine

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[2] Rosemary Harris, *Prejudice and Tolerance in Ulster*, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

showed in her study of Kinshasa[1] that 'neighbours often appeared to agree tacitly to maintain a fictive ignorance of one another's lives, as showing too much knowledge would be considered impertinent […], and this despite the fact that their living arrangements, as so often in Third World cities, made them highly visible to one another'[2].

3. Secondary detachment from the code and its effects

This tension is not easily attenuated or overcome, and it is on it that the renewal of the telling depends. Consequently, beyond this primary use of the code, some residents defend the idea that the perception of these differences should not dominate daily interactions, provided that the rule of indifference and integration does not come at the expense of each person's possibility to resort to political and community categorisations. Overcoming such tensions would not mean forsaking the implicit code of distinction, but rather collectively establishing a new balance between the informal rules and the formal expectations that govern how distinctions between Catholics and Protestants are rendered implicit and explicit. This is why getting out of this paradox demands a more reflexive take on the code, one that takes into account the different uses that we have presented here. One that may sustain residents in expressing differentiated identities without reproducing communitarian conflict. How to institutionalise this more reflexive take is already at the heart of some local initiatives.

3.1 Having debates on the desired role of the implicit code

We start to see that it is by assessing how some of the aspirations they uphold are contradictory that actors can start to envision a different use of the code. The form of this 'higher reflexivity on the ambivalence regarding the code' is not an abstract examination of those aspirations which social actors could deploy at will. Instead, it often comes as a consequence of strong embarrassments. Actors may either find a way to voice it in situations, or see in later collective discussion an occasion, in hindsight, to relieve it. Hence when we say that actors 'assess how aspirations are contradictory', we do not suggest that they sit around a table to summarise and put their ambivalence on paper. We have a more diffuse vision of reflexivity: instead, we mean that they jokingly or ironically express the ironies, the embarrassments, the

[1] Jean Sybil La Fontaine, *City Politics: A Study of Léopoldville, 1962-63*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970, 246 p.
[2] Quoted in U. Hannerz, *Exploring the city. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*, *op. cit.*, p. 266–267.

notable inconsistencies, the stressful conundrums, the hypocritical stances, the little white lies of everyday situations that are all manifestations of this ambivalent use of the code. However, sustaining this rise in reflexivity is not an easy task.

3.1.1 Obstacles faced by educators

This is clearer in the case of educators working with young people. Let us take a facilitator from one of the youth clubs in Ardoyne, Ben. He is a young man, 'born and bred' in the neighbourhood and particularly involved in cross-community work, who also exemplifies the aspirations to be indifferent and to forsake the implicit code. In 2019, after having followed some of the club's activities, I asked him why he rarely mentioned the fact that part of his work consists in bringing together young people from the two communities, whereas municipal funds emphasise this point:

> 'Well see people, we get lots of people coming into our sessions, we will just let anyone walk in, and they all expect us to be doing Good Relations work. Everyone thinks that this is what it's all about. But we don't do Good Relations you know, it's just a consequence of our work. We do leadership, we try to work with people to make good citizens out of them, we do youth work to change society, to have them care about the issues around them, in their community, and we work together to do something about it. It's not that you have to have Protestant and Catholics there to make progress, no one cares, they just work together and in front of them they see the likes of Peter, Aidan [*leaders of two youth clubs situated in a Protestant and a Catholic area who work together*] and me being friends with each other and having a good *craic* so they do not have any problematic example, nor any issue with that. The Troubles aren't felt, sectarianism isn't felt, those things aren't an issue in there. It's not spoken about, there's no need for them to tackle it in the programme, and we act on it just the way we work. We train them to be better persons, the best person they can be for their community, how to get skills and how to get a work that they're passionate about, and it's just what they get to realise is important, and they realise that if you decide to work as a Catholic or a Protestant the only thing you'll be doing is restrict your life expectations. But see Théo what happens is that sometimes, you actually have to change, to … well we don't lie, but sometimes in all the paperwork we have to say that we've done things we didn't do, just because we need to get money for a project. Because it's so tight, and we spend so much time on it to redo it every year… And we just fill cross-community work even though we see that already, it's not relevant for young people. See when we do tackle things and we ask them questions about it, they don't even know what we're talking about, they don't see what we mean. But that's the knack of it, it's just what we have to do to work.'

For this youth leader, it is not enough to educate young people about new aspirations for emancipation to cancel out the tension. Rather, they must tend to experience by themselves the non-use of the implicit code. He therefore tries not to mention how parts of his work aims at getting rid of the code, arguing that young people are already oblivious to it. Nevertheless, he obscures other consequences of these liberal approaches in schools and youth clubs, which the ethnographic fieldwork allows us to highlight. While these approaches support aspirations to undermine the code amongst local youth who attend the youth club, they widen the gap with those who do not. Integrated into much more community-based and potentially sectarian street

networks, they receive differentiated educations which reinforce their use of the code of communitarian distinction. The youth leaders' policy thus comes up against the alternative 'education' of the networks of more traditional residents, dissidents or armed groups, still present in their neighbourhoods. The problem is only displaced by reinforcing distinctions in the use of the code between groups of young people from the same community. Far from immediately cancelling out the negative consequences of the implicit code of distinction, defending the downgrading of the code can therefore lead to a greater contradiction in this double system of rules and values, and leads Ben to stop mentioning it. Just as residents speak little about the code, because it is now embarrassing to mention the conflict between communities, there is also an expectation to no longer talk of the efforts made to 'make peace', a topic that actors would 'not need to address': these peaceful efforts in turn become embarrassing, as they are also suspected of reducing the understanding of residents' interactions to the use of the code.

However, 'educators' have an understanding of this double nature of the code and of the need to formulate a more comprehensive form of initiation, based on a more comprehensive understanding of its role. In May 2019, I was interviewing another community worker who runs a local youth association in Ardoyne, who does outreach with young people in the street, coordinates numerous programmes and deliveries in the area. During that interview, he explained to me that he had just organised an event that had involved young people from the area, young people from Dublin and members of the government. It was an occasion to discuss the issues they were faced with. In describing the event, he said:

> 'Really for us it was about getting the spotlight back on young people, because in the GFA, young people didn't really have a room … we found they were not talked about, and when they were, we, you see in the T: BUC policies, the young people are only mentioned as an 'issue' to deal with, to control… But we need to talk to them, we need to listen to them […] So we tried to steer the conversation towards young people and towards their role, young people's role in society. Because it's still things we're discussing at the minute, I mean I'm having those conversations with my daughter all the time, the other day we were going through east Belfast, and we were going past a mural of the UVF and she said: "That's where the bad people live", and I was like "Oh no … no, no that's not where the bad people live" [*he mimics a panicked face*]. You have to answer questions about flags, and I mean I try to answer all of that as honestly as I can, I say that 'Before you were born, see, there was bad trouble happening here, you know…', well you talk to them. But really… We don't know how to have that conversation. We don't know how to talk about that "bad people good people" thing, about the territorial opposition, so … [*He leaves the sentence hanging in the air*]'

According to this worker, obstacles comes with the fact that by advertising a renunciation of the code, the devices set in place by some policies after the GFA have left him – just like Liz – more isolated to deal with the moments when, faced with real interactions and events, he has to come up with explicit initiation to the code to help children make sense of a problematic

event, just like Charles with his daughter. Only, if Charles's daughter had no idea of the existence of the code, Sean's daughter was, on the other hand, openly referring to it. Hence, both ignorant and informed uses of community signs remain moments that demand an explicit initiation into the code. One that is now faced with obstacles, as this also brings him to a further realisation of the limits of his relationship with the code: 'we don't know how to have that conversation'.

Now, as we have mentioned, in the past twenty years, some institutions have progressively been putting forward programmes and activities which encourage the explicit sharing of community-based experience and ideals, and taking more fully into account the different aspirations which sustain the telling. But here again, in the eyes of educators, this displaces the problem elsewhere. In the event tackling Sectarianism, another community worker made a public comment on this question. She was a young leader of a charity organisation which attempts to organise partnership between schools and companies, to bring professional entrepreneurs into schools and foster an 'innovative' spirit in schools of deprived areas. When mentioning actions she could take to tackle sectarianism, she said:

> 'We need to talk about the new culture of entrepreneurship, and how we build that within skills and education, and that's the core of what we do. My background was in the private sector, in HR, and a lot of the time I worked in factories, I worked in Dungannon, places like that, you spend a lot of time creating a very neutral working environment: removing flags, removing language, all, all culture … all of, you know, the local culture. And at the same time, in schools, we're trying to encourage people to have those dialogues. I think for the young people, that become very challenging, because if in education we actually do encourage them to have dialogues about their identity, but then when we get into business we say "Ok, all that's set aside now", it is trying for white neutrality and that's not realistic. So, I think there is a lot we need to deal with, in society, about how do we have those dialogues about, you know, what we actually deal with in our case.'

Here, an educator criticises how various third parties organise the explicit and implicit handling of the code. She is critical of the tensions that starts to appear when different forms of initiation to the code – just like those we mentioned with Ben – coexist because of political attempts at 'white neutrality'. Whilst some encourages a high level of reflexivity regarding the code, in other sectors, or parts of the community, the downgrading of the code is still expected. The disparities born out of explicit debates regarding the code represent a new obstacle. Yet, it only leads those actors to request more debates and a more conscious handling of the disparities caused by explicit discussions on the code. They embody a need to gain wider awareness and greater skills in managing the making implicit and explicit of the code of distinction.

3.1.2 Obstacles for State agents

Compared with those educators, some other actors regularly experience obstacles in debating the use of the code, or in promoting its abandonment: agents of the British State and city-council bodies. Let us return to the Ocean Women's Group and to Rosa, the coordinator of the centre, in charge of offering them activities. As she is not from this neighbourhood, she encourages the participants to be indifferent to their community membership and to that of others whenever they come to the centre. Nevertheless, she regularly notes that it fails. In the face of these difficulties, and although they are educators of civil indifference, these agents cannot help but anticipate the enquiries that residents make about them, since they know that they tend to rely on the code of community distinction. One day, in the winter of 2016, an external advisor is invited to produce a report on the functioning of the women's support association. The advisor came from a very Catholic neighbourhood. He and Rosa then agreed not to call him by his first name 'Padraig', but to use the anglicised version 'Paul', thus hiding his identity by following the code. They were in fact aware that his origin would raise a strong suspicion that this supposedly neutral third party was inclined to defend the interests of his community. This adjustment reinforces for all concerned the relevance of the signs of telling, even though the explicit institutional rules maintain that it should be abandoned.

The detached State agents are always at risk of realising that in order to really forsake the code, paradoxically, one must still make use of it, since the political stability of certain situations of co-presence is still based on the code. However, it is deemed necessary to use it *in a particular way*. It is the political purpose of telling that is transformed as a result. The code is used to promote integration, not exclusion. For these agents, this gesture of concealment was desirable, as it was meant to allow the meeting to take place properly, calmly, and to help the group by circumventing their reluctance to interact with other communities. The agents decided to shortcut any cues and markers that may have triggered the code – just like the care worker running the addict group. In so doing, they nevertheless deprived all participants, including themselves, of the possibility of regulating the use of the code in an even more reflexive way, by discussing collectively the need to mind or not to mind, to state or not to state one's political affiliation and the reasons for doing so. This adjustment can only be learned and become desirable when all the participants are aware that they are adapting together to a situation that they intend to prolong with the implicit code. This also becomes more understandable in so far as we have seen the use of the implicit code becoming associated with 'embarrassment', as something that became harder to claim in public. In such a situation, one finds solace in another

type of clarification: that which relies on the sharing of the feeling of embarrassment, meaning the sharing of the new balance between using and forsaking the code.

Indeed, it is only when participants enjoy a frame that encourages them both to state their differences and to show civil inattention to these differences that they can discuss together what prevents them from 'living together'. This also includes cases when the State agents sustain local actors in reorganising their use of the code as a way to distinguish outsiders from local residents. In 2019, the association ran by Charles was organising a festival on the Twelfth, a day traditionally celebrated by Protestant and unionist residents. This is a celebration of the victory of the Protestants over the Catholics at the battle of the Boyne. Hence, traditionally, the Catholics avoid the event, and in North Belfast they often say that they or people that they know tend to leave Belfast at that time of the year. Nowadays, though this is still an unwritten rule, the progression of some institutional measures is progressively disrupting this. At the same time of the year, I had been meeting with a representative from the Good Relations Council. They sustained the organisation of the festival, and were particularly supporting the fact that it was officially open to anyone, and publicly inviting the Catholic residents. With the help of funders, the City Council had asked the organisers to make it 'inclusive'. However, on the ground, some residents had debates on the matter with Charles. When mentioning this to me, he said:

> The city council wanted to make it an inclusive event, but I said it was a local event for local people, as it had been for the last ten years. Because, the funders they can't afford to say that it's loyalist, they have to say that it's inclusive … but If people from here hear them say that it's inclusive, then they're going to get a row at me on social media by asking me 'What the heck were you thinking of, why are there Catholics coming on the Woodvale for the 11th?'. […] Sure not, no Catholic would show up for the bonfires on the 11th, who wants that?, but they still need to say it's inclusive, and people still get mad if they see that the project turns into something where everyone comes in, and it gets even worse if you do put all your tickets online – which we wanted to do – and make it an all open visit, which means that people from all over will be buying tickets and no one from the Woodvale will ever get one.

Despite his previous comments, Charles criticises the decision of State agents as he considers there is no use in officially opening the event to everyone: he is certain that the Catholic residents will rely on the implicit code and avoid the area, despite it being officially open to everyone. More, he also expects the Protestant residents to publicly criticise this formalisation of neutrality as a breach of the implicit code. He classically considers that they are detached outsiders who fail to see the relevance of the code. Yet, it appeared that neither the official expectation of inclusion nor Charles' understanding of the code really fitted the position of residents. This appeared during a community workshop organised in May 2019. For the past two years, a local programme of 'difficult conversations' had allowed residents who would normally tend to avoid each other, from the various neighbourhoods surrounding

Ardoyne, to engage in weekly activities together. During one of the group conversations, the group had a discussion about peace walls, then moved on to the festival:

> Then Emma [*the woman from Catholic Ardoyne whom we have seen with ROSE women's group*] gets in and she says 'Similary, last summer there was a festival down in the Woodvale park, and it turns out that there was an incident in the middle of the night, a woman I know had her house attacked and her windows broken there, by a group of young people coming back from the concert … it was the only incident like but…' At that point, Charles who is sitting in the back of the room comes in, raises his right hand and says 'I will have to disagree with that! There was an incident in Ardoyne at around 3 am, and I got called, so I got out and scouted the streets, and there was nobody in the area. None coming back from the park, so it's really unfair that…'
> Emma cuts him off and says 'Now, they were really walking from Woodvale down the Crumlin, I have people there in the houses said that the group of young people was walking there…'.
> Again Charles cuts her and says 'How do you know that there were people coming from the festival? See I take great offence at that, because I'm part of the people who ran the festival [a few people whisper in understanding in the room] and I can tell you that those people did not come from the festival. Daniel called me on the day to check that, and the only thing that people there were saying was "We're assuming that, with the festival, that they come from there"… "We're assuming", see, this is what we're having to learn today, that's why I'm saying all that'.
> Emma nods and gets to answer, as she was waiting to say something 'Yeah, I agree a hundred percent, right, the people presumed… I'm not saying that they came from the park, but I'm saying that people from Ardoyne assumed that they were coming from the Festival … but you see on our side it becomes hard to convince people, the people who got their window broken that it wasn't them…'
> Charles also nods in agreement and says 'I know how it is, but see when I used to live at the Twaddell avenue just near the roundabout, I had some asshole attacking my house and breaking my windows as well. Well, the next day, you had people all over Facebook saying that "Ardoyne had attacked my house, lalalalala", and I had to come up and say "No, it's not the people from Ardoyne that have attacked me, some asshole broke my window … maybe he's from Ardoyne, who knows". I had to confront it.'
> Emma – 'Yes, it's hard for us to convince the people there that they didn't… Because obviously they came from Twaddell.'
> Charles – 'But just as you said "The people of Ardoyne *presumed*" – presume is the important word here – "that because there was a loyalist festival …"'
> Emma interrupts him to say 'Well it wasn't a loyalist festival it was a cross-community…' Charles, surprised – 'Well it was on the 11th and…'
> Emma – "I was invited!"
> Charles, now annoyed – '[*In a sarcastic tone*] Well Hello !… that's great, and we'll give you a VIP pass this morning for sure, but that was a local event for local people, I don't see a lot of people coming on the Woodvale for the 11th anyway to enjoy the bonfire…'
> Another woman, who introduced herself as a Protestant from another area of North Belfast at the beginning of the session, intervenes to say 'Well, we came to it, and it was cross-community!' Whilst Charles and the two women continue debating on the incident of the broken window, I am sitting in between Denise, a resident of Ardoyne, and Nina, a Protestant who works as a community worker in Ardoyne. Denise turns to Nina and says 'Well I didn't know anything about it, did you?', Nina says 'What?'. Denise: 'It was just the chosen few, aye… Had you heard anything about a cross-community festival in the Woodvale?', to which Nina nods 'No' with a dubious frown : 'No, we didn't'. Denise whispers, discontented 'Well … that's what I said, it's only a few invitations, just handed for the lucky few you know, because, I mean, you didn't know about it and you're a community group, right? So did you have to be an ex-prisoner or what?' then she adds, still in a low voice, bending over to Nina, ironically taking a surprised tone 'So It was just a coincidence, that there was a festival and there was an incident?'. Nina had got back to the group conversation, so she turns to her again and says 'What?'. Denise simply repeats, without any type of sarcastic or ironic tone 'So it was just a coincidence, the festival and the incident'. Nina says 'What?' a second time, but both residents return to the group conversation as the workshop move on.

Supported by the institutional context of a group discussion during a workshop, the expectations of different actors regarding the code were put to the test. In the first part of the

exchange, Charles is putting Ema's use of the code to the test. Both residents then come to the agreement that the mistrust and the implicit use of territorial signs – people were coming from Twaddell, hence from the Festival, hence were Protestants – led residents to hastily close their investigation on troublesome passers-by. Charles and Emma agree that the code was too central in this situation. However, it is then Emma who puts Charles' use of the code to the test, when he realises that he had misjudged the residents' intention to come to the festival, by assuming they would limit their actions based on the use of the code. Charles found out, both by confronting State agents and members of the local community, that they were putting this vision of the code to the test, as the residents had an occasion to display their expectation of minoring the code. Expectations that Charles had overlooked. Finally, Denise and Nina point to the fact that, even if the festival was a support to put the expectation surrounding the code to the test, it was not available to everybody. This leads them, in return, to consider those inclusive efforts as elitist, constituting another obstacle to efforts of regulating the code.

3.2 The importance of third parties in the regulation of the code

Those obstacles and attempts at overcoming them, with the last excerpt in particular, give us an indirect insight on a final point: it is the presence of third parties that seems to make possible, when adequately regulated and when inscribed in adequate socio-technical devices, more reflexive debates on the uses and the misuses of the implicit codes.

3.2.1 Third parties as moderators of excesses

This frame encouraging reflexivity regarding this tension requires the presence of a third party who assumes a posture which differs from the invisibilising or avoiding posture mentioned in those excerpts. Let us take another example, taken out another group session from the same programme of 'difficult conversations'. In May 2019, the first activities allowed residents to discuss, with the help of a professional mediator, how they manage interactions outside their communities. They began by discussing the meaning they attribute to their first names, or to their residential areas. With the help of a third party, the aim is then to value their differences while becoming aware of the things they share. During this workshop, I followed the discussion of three residents from different neighbourhoods:

> Denise tells us an anecdote regarding the fact that she's named her son Cormac. She says she'll always remember when she was down at the hospital, after his birth, waiting. The doctor came in the waiting room and called 'Cormac' out loud, and straight away she thought 'Oh shite now they've given us away … God they all know, they'll know straight away that's a fenian's name…'. At this

> point, Denise then laughs, and the other women laugh as well. Denise pauses then adds that all this changed now, and Elizabeth says 'You're right, it's not like that anymore.' As an example, she explains that she has a nephew who lives on the Shankill road and he's named Rory, 'which is Irish for Red, Rory as *Ruagh*, and so you'll have people calling for Rory in the middle of the Newtownards road, and that's a laugh!, (she laughs) but that's it you know.' The other women nods, and then Denise gives a similar example in the middle of the Falls road. She explains that she has someone in the family whose two sons and daughter are called Patrick and Sinead and they're Protestant. Elizabeth and Amanda both answer 'Yes' whilst Denise continues 'People don't really pay attention as much now'. Elizabeth adds 'Well you can say the about my Joe [*I figure it is her husband*], which comes from Joseph, and, and that's really a Catholic name… Same for Josephine. And he was supposed to be called Joseph John, but he ended up being called Joseph David.'

In a situation of controlled involvement, the socio-technical device enables these three residents to reassure themselves about the possibility to still comprehend the relevance of the tacit code. However, as soon as they are supported in this movement, the implicit code that allows them to distinguish themselves becomes, from a distance, a common system of rule that ties them together in the interaction. Rather than abandoning it, it is a matter of using it purposefully for a more distinctively respectful engagement, and a form of common familiarisation which enables their coexistence[1]. If this is possible, it is because residents have the opportunity to understand the relevance of the code whilst also being reassured about the well-intentioned use that is now being made of it, as well as the greater integration that now governs their interactions. But they do so without dismissing the relevance of avoidance and of distinction dispositions, as shown by the introduction of the mediator who plays the role of third party in this workshop:

> 'Our names are the things we present to other people first when in engage in conversation, but, as we know, here, our names can have more meaning, they can be telling of our background. See, my husband works over in England and where he works he is the only white person, around him there are only Black and Asian people. He is well known, and he stands out. Here, I can blend in. There is no difference between Catholics and Protestant, I can change my stories, I can change my accent. A black person will not be able to blend in amongst a white crowd, nor a male in an assembly of women. Well, there are still things that people know about us that are used to prevent blending in: here, some people are named Patrick and others are named William and when you know that, most people already make decisions about each other based on that.'

We then understand that the presence of a third party as moderator of the code is a resource for creating a situation of controlled commitment. Yet, that it is not sufficient, on its own, to erase dispositions to distinction that relate to the community of belonging. In consequence, the internal advantage of this system of 'difficult conversations' is that it does not conceal this plurality of potentially contradictory rules of political publicisation and of non-members' integration. It is coherent with the plurality of expectations already harboured by the social groups out of which it is born. It provides an opportunity for actors to share 'alternative

[1] Maxime Felder and Loïc Pignolo, ' "Je préfère les dealers à une rue déserte " : coexistence et familiarisation en milieu urbain', *Sociologie*, 13 January 2018, vol. 1, vol. 9.

stories' that test collective representations of a social life as necessarily segregated[1]. The residents of this scene maintain a favourable image of the reference group in front of the other, whilst questioning the excessive homogeneity of their community, and find support for presenting individual stories that compete with the collective stories circulating in this community. They have the opportunity to distance themselves from the distinctive ensemble that makes up their aspiration to use the code. In short, the aim is to promote a shift to a 'third nature' in managing community distinction and indifference, and the implicitness and explicitness of the code of social distinction[2].

The latter case reveals the role of 'third parties' in distancing themselves from the implicit code of communal distinction. However, they need to play a special role. They must be 'moderators' of the primary use of the code. This means, on the one hand, containing actors who constantly rely on the code of telling to conduct their interactions, and on the other hand, containing those who too regularly condemn users of telling. Other devices, although in the minority, encourage this reflexive use of telling. This is the case for several government programmes and local groups of mixed activities – for example crochet, conversation or prayer group. In these groups, sharing a common practice encourages a collective and open management of ambivalence. The third-party moderator tends to install the claim of community belonging, whilst at the same time educating people in skills of integration, sharing and deference through the management of implicitness and explicitness. It enables a better juggling between unofficial community categorisations and official 'state rankings' in the tasks of identification[3]. The effect of this double moderation is to readjust the interactional relationships between members of the two communities, while providing them with institutional devices in which they do not feel worried about the intentions of the people they meet.

3.2.2 New social groups affect the use of the code

We should finally note that, at a more regional level and on the scale of long-term processes, the same can be said of the importance of third party: the integration of 'new minorities' in the dynamics of urban sociability between Catholics and Protestants is key to the development of new, more reflexive, ways of handling the code. Here is what the head of the

[1] Madeleine Leonard, 'Teenagers Telling Sectarian Stories', *Sociology*, 2006, vol. 40, no. 6, p. 1117-1133.
[2] Cas Wouters and Bruno Poncharal, 'Comment les processus de civilisation se sont-ils prolongés ?', *Vingtieme Siecle. Revue d'histoire*, 7 April 2010, n° 106, no. 2, p. 161-175.
[3] Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, 'Finding one's way in social space: a study based on games', *Social Science Information*, 1 July 1983, vol. 22, no. 4-5, p. 631-680.

Community Relation Council said on the matter when we discussed the issue of 'new communities' in May 2019:

> 'There is a hugely positive impact that the new communities have had here, and that's the big thing. Are more of a migrant community unemployed than the local population? Substantially more. The percentage of unemployment is higher by 60% compared to it for a local population. Do they all come over here to take our houses? No, of course, they don't. They don't come over here to take our houses. Hmm. You know, I think the statistics are three percent of the workforce fewer than… I think about half a percent of social housing, so it's ridiculous. And it's I think thirty percent of doctors and nurses, something like that, that comes from outside the North of, the UK and Ireland, these are people who are coming here and provide a huge service. It's not acknowledged and recognised at all. But they also, if you look at Belfast especially probably, but also other communities too, the shape and nature of this place changes so much that it just forces you to be less insular, and looking at each other in terms of Protestant and Catholics. Suddenly, the horizon opens up, and it's very subtle thing but I think it's been hugely beneficial. And so when you see some of the racist … some of the crap that people got it's really really frustrating, and I don't think, people understand in any way how important … opening up to other people from other places has been for this place. Really really beneficial. […] And again you look, […] a million pounds, that's what the Minority fund is. A million pounds. And there's about 20 billion pounds are total spent, just over 20 billion pounds on Northern Ireland, a million pounds goes into the Minority and ethnic development fund. That's the fund, by our government, in the executive office, dealing with those issues. A million pounds. Anybody applying for it can only apply for a year at a time. This is, in a context where racist incidents are, I think have overtaken sectarian incidents for the first time, if not they're up there close to it, and yet the number proportionate of people from a BME background, and while most of the incidents may not be against people from a, who are black and maybe people who are white, but also come from different backgrounds. Hmm, those racist incidents are up at the same level for such a small percentage of the population compared to the sectarianism, that's a huge issue, that's a big problem, and you need to support the communities on the ground to deal with it. And yet there's a million pounds in funds. That's not enough.'

The reflexive integration of 'new minorities', through the reflexive apparatus of society, allows local actors to institutionalise their repeated experience of new situations in which other social groups, which do not fall into their understanding of the antagonism and of the use of the code of distinction that it parallels, lead them to put the code to the test. It provides supports for a further detachment from the use and misuses of the code. As such, this leads this State agent to be quite critical *of* the lack of funding available to support programmes which enforces moments of cohabitation and recognition of the plurality of segments that constitute society. Those programmes and those initiatives, in other words, are key to a more reflexive take on the code and to avoid falling into the paradoxical couple 'renunciation-reinforcement'. If their regulating effect fails because of lack of funding, one may run the risk that this confrontation with new social groups does not lead to a more reflexive handling of the code between traditional communities, but to renewing its segregating use with new social groups – as the increasing parallel between racist incident and hate incidents already seems to indicate.

Conclusion: turning distinction into differentiation

There is an implicit code of social distinction in Ardoyne which has become central over time. The code of telling means both attributing relevance to identity markers, and considering them as reasons to act in everyday action. It has been particularly important in the everyday experience of conflict, through its influence on urban sociability. We have witnessed the code in moments of initiation: it is used for a monitoring of interaction guided by mistrust and the preservation from the threat of conflict. Employing the code also produces peaceful avoidance, and can paradoxically support the state of peace through distancing and not through intra-community integration. We have seen that there is also an aspiration amongst some of Ardoyne's actors to no longer give such a central place to the code, and therefore to forsake it, in order to honour a constraint of multidimensionality when judging people. Consequently, these expectations lead to debates on the role that this implicit code of distinction should play in the action and sociability of Ardoyne's residents. These debates emerge when the tension between expectations of using the code and expectations of abandoning it becomes too contradictory and lead to its downgrading. It seems then that the presence of a third party moderator capable of supporting the reflexive use of the code currently in place gives greater opportunity to 'tell the telling code' openly in order to detach oneself from it, and to learn how to better regulate its implicit and explicit use.

It is now a matter of finding a more reflexive way to answer the question that now emerges caused by the persistence of this implicit code: what represents an acceptable level of distinction, avoidance or antagonism for those social groups? What is a level of differentiation that can be deemed acceptable in so far as it favours the integration of different groups to the same political society? The problem lies with the fact that, in the Northern Irish context, the answers social actors give to this question is bound to promote some relevance to the conflict between community, and some positive aspects of using it as a reason to act, but that those same social actors and the reflexive apparatus they constitute struggle to find a form of politics and the type of State within which it would be acceptable to do so.

We can therefore understand the paradox at stake: the inhabitants must in some way continue to realise the conflict between them if they want to integrate together peacefully, peacefully only in so far as they are more aware of this particular form of interdependence that unites them in the greater mastery of a common code of distinction, inherited from the conflict. The persistence of the implicit code of distinction tells us that there remains something of what makes conflict so permanent in social relation, but something which is not simply based on the traumatic effect of past conflict or on the automatic manifestation of antagonistic habitus. It is

something that lies in the inherent positive sense attributed to implicit codes of differentiation in social interaction, founding situations of 'specific distance-based sociality'[1].

This changes our understanding of telling. It can no longer be seen solely as a strategic code or an unconscious practice of categorisation. Neither can we fall into relativism. Both the questioning and the reaffirmation of telling are, above all, adaptations to potentially contradictory expectations of living together whilst noticing community differences. For residents, the increase in reflexivity on telling reduces the tensions that the investigation of their differences causes, and also reduces what the erosion of their notifications produces. The debates render accountable the groups of actors most concerned at different levels – inhabitants, community leaders, State agents – to establish a limit point for the use of these practical skills and their abuses, but also to preserve them inasmuch as they refer to the possibility offered to each individual to publicly claim his or her political and community identity, and to situate himself or herself in relation to that of others. Here lay the conditions for the realisation of a political society which is more segmented and regulated in its intersectional relations, allowing actors to claim, in action, the multiplicity of their affiliations[2].

It is therefore not a matter of reifying affiliations or of denying the importance of these distinctive practices for individuals. Rather, we ought to take seriously the paradoxical belief that a society can be integrative through the degree of differentiation it provides to individuals[3], a fact that is manifested in incompossible practical ideals. Thus, if the inhabitants of North Belfast publicly debate these two types of aspirations, and regularly appear confrontational in trying to have them recognised, it is because they are trying to achieve a desirable level of civil indifference whilst at the same time being respectful of the relative desirability of the distinction that they carry in each social space. In these rare, but crucially important moments, they seek to remind communal differences without re-actualising the conflict.

But how can such a coexistence of potential contradiction hold in practice? The most common way actors have found to continue to realise the conflict in order to reach a more reflexive stance on it is through the ritualisation of the signs that constitutes the code. Ritualising the use of the telling signs means displaying them in social spaces and contexts where the conventions that surround them change, where the signs become 'symbols' or

[1] Isabelle Thireau, 'Being Together at a Distance, Talking and Avoiding Talk: Making Sense of the Present in Victory Square, Tianjin', *The China Quarterly*, June 2021, vol. 246, p. 428–446.
[2] J.R. Gusfield, *Community*, *op. cit.*, p. 41–42 ; U. Hannerz, *Exploring the city. Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology*, *op. cit.*, p. 236, and Florence Delmotte, 'Termes clés de la sociologie de Norbert Elias', *Vingtieme Siecle. Revue d'histoire*, 7 April 2010, n° 106, no. 2, p. 29–36, §15.
[3] É. Durkheim, *The division of labor in society*, *op. cit.*

‘pretend signs’ and where actors know that the rules surrounding them are rules of a social game within a social game, which they can take with detachment. Hence, we may want to look further into how ‘ritualisation’ allow the ambivalence we have presented until now to be increasingly bearable. This is what we turn to now.

CHAPTER 5

Are there such things as a '90-minute bigot'?
Sports and the modern relevance of ritualisation

When one mentions 'rituals' in Northern Ireland, a few vivid scenes come to mind: a colourful and cheering unionist flute band on parade[1], a silent reflection over the death of volunteers in front of a memorial, the lighting of bonfires on the night of the 12th, or the traditional melodies of Irish instruments during a *Fleadh*. Those are some well-known rituals. They are inevitably considered as 'community rituals' and, as such, are often considered 'contentious rituals'[2]. As Jack Goody argues, the diversity of meaning behind the idea of 'ritual' has hindered its use as a descriptive category[3]. How come then that those ritualised situations are taken for granted community rituals? Because most of those situations are understood to gather the members of each urban and ethno-political community, offering them an occasion to detach themselves from the common use of sociability rules to reinforce them or to put them to the test, at the level of the community. But if community rituals are often listed amongst the main reasons for the recurring crises of the Northern Irish peace process, and as most of those rituals have been born out of and maintained through periods of civil conflict, how can some actors consider the contentious rituals of sporting confrontation as participating to a form of pacification?

By answering this question, we may try to understand how ritualisation plays a role in the pacification of Northern Irish society. But to do that, we should overcome another common vision of rituals in Northern Ireland. If rituals are understood to reinforce and gather social

[1] Dominic Bryan, *Orange Parades: The Politics of Ritual, Tradition and Control*, London, Pluto Press, 2000.
[2] K. Hayward and M. Komarova, 'The Limits of Local Accommodation', art cit ; Jonathan S. Blake, *Contentious Rituals: Parading the Nation in Northern Ireland*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, 248 p.
[3] Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, 196 p.

actors in the reaffirmation of specific community rules, one assumes that they do so by stressing the separation between communities. Catholics have their rituals, Protestant have their rituals. This position dominates in the depiction of rituals of commemoration, territorial rituals or religious rituals. However, there are cases in which, even though they reinforce their differentiation, both communities are involved in the common conduct of rituals. It is towards those common rituals that we must first turn. They reveal the existence of a need to reorganise social rules in common, including rules of avoidance and rules of ritual detachment from the meaning of social expectations. This implies that we switch scope. We should move from observing 'rituals', to observing, 'processes of ritualisation'[1]. This means that we should not define rituals by their static function, but rather by the practical relations to the rules that actors enforce when they progressively infuse their action with a ritualised dimension. This will lead us to consider a ritual as a detachment from the rules, a specific time and space where rules of a social game apply *within* the extended rules of a social sector. They demand that actors recognise how this ritual set of rules muffles, disturb, replaces, exacerbates or invisibilise the rules that they would have 'normally' followed in a typical social situation. *Ritualisation,* then, is the progressive translation of social rules into rules of a 'game within the game', and the institutionalisation of those times and spaces during which social actors are expected to play this game within the game, and can find socio-technical and institutional devices to support them.

It is then towards the common practice of sports that we turn. Even though the situation has changed since the early days of the 1960s and a specialised subfield has emerged in sociology, sports still tend to be disregarded by political sociologists as something that would not be *serious.* They still take them as a matter of 'games', and so do social actors who value sporting activities for that very reason. They are pleasurable, enjoyable, and are mostly meant to take them away from the serious topics of the rest of their life, which may include political conflict, discrimination, segregation and deprivation. Hence, seeing how the continuation of conflict through sports as a specific type of rituals may play a role in the peace process may seem surprising. Yet, by now, sociologists have been engaged for other three decades in debating whether the existence of sporting rivalry may hinder or renew political conflicts. We will discuss this literature during our chapter, but it is precisely this ambivalence and how actors handle it that will be the subject of our analysis. As such, this chapter will counter sociological

[1] A similar argument was made by Dominic Bryan when explaining that one could not define rituals through the idea of specific rules, specific meaning or specific forms of action, as all those characteristics applied to social life as a whole. D. Bryan, *Orange Parades*, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

works which see no value in tackling the role of sport in the transformation of political relations between social groups, or who consider that its role lies in the fact that it would be a ‘value-free social practice’[1]. We will do so by showing that the relationship between a sporting rivalry and political rivalries has become a social problem for Ardoyne’s residents over the last century, and a focus of political regulation and self-regulation for the last two decades.

One specific case will help us analyse these dynamics. It is the opposition between the Rangers and Celtic football clubs, the two Glasgow clubs, who are historically supported by the Protestant and Catholic communities, respectively. The ‘Old Firm’ will allow us to exemplify and work on this progressive ritualisation, and how it is describable through specific efforts on the ground. It allows us to extend sociological works which essentialise the ‘inseparability of sports and politics’ in Northern Ireland, without analysing the dynamics sustaining the continual renewal of this equivalence[2]. Since the 2010s, the UK has witnessed a resurgence of debates surrounding the issues of ‘90 Minutes Bigots’. ‘90 Minutes Bigot’, as coined by the amateurs of Scottish football, is a term defining a person who acts in a perfectly civil manner in their daily life – or claims to – , yet who publicly acts as an offensive and ‘religious bigot’ during the 90-minute duration of a football match[3]. More specifically, a football match involving Rangers FC and Celtic FC. Commentators and supporters have long been perplexed by this dissonant behaviour, and appeared to disagree on whether or not it should be considered ‘sectarian’. These shades of grey and the very notion of ‘90-minutes bigots’ encapsulate the role taken by ritualisation in the maintenance of the ‘Old Firm’, which links the rivalry between Celtic and Rangers with the enmity between Catholics and Protestants.

We will first explore the relation between the Old Firm and the Northern Irish conflict, revealing the installation of an equivalence between the two rivalries, and its transformation. These transformations – introducing forms of higher detachment and self-control – will point towards the dynamics of ritualisation through the case of sports, which we will study in a second part, by showing the link between sportization and pacification and its increasingly ambivalent nature at this point in the history of Northern Irish society. Finally, we will discuss the central reason for this situation: the role of ritualisation in allowing a specific displacement of antagonism within social life and the detached realisation of conflict. These mechanisms will

[1] John Sugden, ‘Critical left-realism and sport interventions in divided societies’, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 1 September 2010, vol. 45, no. 3, p. 258-272.
[2] John Sugden and Alan E. S. Bairner, ‘The Political Culture of Sport in Northern Ireland’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 1991, vol. 80, no. 318, p. 133-141.
[3] Graeme McGarry, ‘Scottish football will never be rid of the “90-minute bigot”’, *The Herald*, 26 October 2018.

appear under a clearer light through the case of symbols, the commemoration of the dead, and the use of humour concerning cross-community relations.

1. How a sporting rivalry and a political conflict became equivalent

In recent years, observers, supporters and non-supporters seem to have been increasingly debating the nature of the Old Firm. By the 2000s, 'after years of pretending it had confronted and neutralised its culture of religious intolerance', the re-emergence of violence prompted Scottish society to revaluate the rivalry[1]. In Belfast, residents were voicing similar concerns regarding community tensions. In 2012, in a workshop where members of both communities from North Belfast were discussing ways to confront sectarianism, a Protestant resident said:

> '[Recently] I asked a group of young Protestant males: What do you like? "Rangers." What do you dislike? "Celtic." Why? "We just hate them." Why do you hate them? "Dunno. Because everybody else hates them." […] Not one of them knew! So, they are sectarian, but none of them knew why they were sectarian. They know nothing about their own history, even to have a constructive conversation with someone.'[2]

When voicing that they supported the Rangers and despised Celtic, the youths were unable to voice the origin of their tendencies to act. This is seen as an additional offence to expectations of tolerance, leaving this non-supporter no margin to have a 'constructive conversation' about this rivalry. But demands for explanation indicate that there seems to be more at play than just a confrontation between two groups of supporters. Amongst supporters, too, this appears central to the renewal of the sporting rivalry. In April 2019, I was visiting Mac (see Chapter 4 – p. 213), who is an avid supporter of Celtic. As such, he knew that I was currently interested in sports, and that I was visiting several supporters' clubs in Ardoyne. This had been awakening his curiosity:

> 'Whilst he is sweeping the kitchen floor, Mac asks me "So … do you ever ask them why they support the Rangers?". I answer him that I do, but that Rangers fans – much as Celtic supporters – are always careful to explain that it's not related to the opposition between the two communities but just for the sport, and because of their parents being fans before them. He nods and says "Yeah, so, their fathers … but then, you can just ask the same questions again: why did their fathers support the Rangers?" I laugh and say "Ah sure, you can, but you can do the same with Celtics", to which Mac says "Yes! Yes but, see, there, I could tell you why!" […] As Mac already mentioned the story of Celtic, I ask him "It's because of the Belfast FC you mean?". He says "Well, Yes, I would say that's a big part of it. That's a big part that explains how most people moved to Celtic afterwards. But even before that, in Glasgow, you know, Celtic were seen as… Well, it was a team of Irish in Scotland. So, the people from here always supported it for that, and it had been created with that in mind. But then,

[1] Des Fahy, 'Roots of Old Firm violence run deep', *The Irish Times*, 14 February 2001.
[2] Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Towards a shared future (2) Confronting Sectarianism*, Belfast, Island Publications, 2012, p. 11 and p. 23.

> why do the people here support the Rangers? And not, say, Aberdeen?". I say "Aha, well…" and leave it hanging. He keeps on sweeping and then he smiles, looks at me, and says "Well I could also tell you!" I smile, and he continues "At the beginning Celtic were very successful, it didn't take them long. They became really good really quick. And after a short while, the papers, the media started saying 'Well, is there anyone here to stop the Irish?'. They were very sectarian see, well the media were. Because they just didn't like to see the Irish winning the cups over in Scotland. And so, at that point, Rangers existed you know but they were just a casual team. It's just that some media picked it up, and they pinpointed them to go against Celtic and money was invested into them. Just so that they could compete. So, they always existed together for that.'

This exchange with Mac encapsulates the current state of the relationship between Rangers and Celtic fan. Mac's carefulness – and playfulness – in explaining it goes beyond the animosity between winning and losing sporting team. It reveals an insistent tendency to justify one community's support for one team. Mac takes pride in being able to tell why he supports Celtic, and what the Celtic Football Club stands for. As a result, he accuses the other supporters to lack any 'proper' justification for their supporting. This very peculiar form of opposition has not always prevailed. What we are observing is the return of the question of why exactly the Catholic and Protestant communities are nurturing the Old Firm rivalry, a question shared by local non-supporters, supporters, observers and members of the State.

1.1 A sportive opposition manifesting Glasgow and Belfast political interdependencies

How have Rangers and Celtic presented their origins? In the 19th century, the great famine prompted mass emigration from Ireland to America, but also to Scotland. Glasgow, situated on the west coast, became a central settling point. In 1851 'it was estimated that between 50% and 75% of all dock labourers and miners in Britain were Irish'[1]. However, the Catholicism of the Irish and their willingness to work for a low price were sources of tensions with Scottish populations, be they upper or working class[2]. In the 1870 and 1880s, in turn, Irish Protestants tended to migrate to Scotland. This increased the rate of sectarian hostility, as 'parts of Glasgow and other towns became associated with Irish Catholics'[3].

In this context, the Celtic Football Club was founded in 1888 by first and second-generation Irish migrants in Glasgow. This was in line with the rise of amateur football teams towards the end of the 19th century, accompanying the sport's diffusion from English

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[1] John Gray Centre, *A brief history of emigration & immigration in Scotland: research guide 2*, Haddington, Library Museum Archive Archeology - East Lothian Council, 2014.
[2] D. Fahy, 'Roots of Old Firm violence run deep', art cit.
[3] John Gray Centre, *A brief history of emigration & immigration in Scotland*, *op. cit.*

aristocratic class to working-class localities[1]. As such, the birth of 'association football' teams were often tied to professional, social and political issues pertaining to local areas. That was the case of the Celtic FC. As often stressed by its supporters, the club was aided by the local Catholic church as a local charity relieving the deprivation in this part of Glasgow. It was also 'an important recreational area where young Catholics can play a variety of sports that will train them physically'[2]. It follows that the club was openly funded as a charity 'for and by Catholics'[3], increasing socialisation through leisure[4]. It was then exclusively Catholic, although the supporters would progressively pride themselves in never having enforced a ban on Protestants members. But the origins of the club, as is nowadays often emphasised by supporters of the Rangers, is also closely tied with more constitutional political issues. Celtic's founders are remembered to be heavily involved in question of Irish national politics, allegedly 'support[ing] Irish Home Rule, campaign[ing] for the release of Irish political prisoners'[5].

Rangers Football Club, on the other hand, predates Celtic. It was created in 1872 on the other end of Glasgow by four sporting aficionados[6]. Though not particularly holding a public orientation towards Protestants, the club would progressively acquire this reputation after the first fixture against Celtic in 1888, and the formation of the Scottish Football League in 1890. Where Celtic would always play in green to represent their Irish identity, the Rangers always carried a Red, White and Blue uniform which would become their trademark. Despite rising to fame as one of the most important Scottish teams, it would come to encapsulate a form of Britishness and Unionism. There too, Protestants from Ulster had also massively migrated during the 19th century, notably settling several lodges of the Orange Order in Scotland. They would progressively be tied with the success of the Rangers. Indeed, the Rangers FC, from the 1920s and up until 1989, were accused of nurturing an unwritten policy of refusing to sign Catholics players[7]. This overall orientation only became public when internal criticisms spread in the 1960s. In 1965, a former player publicly stated that the club operated a sectarian policy, and in 1967, the vice-chairman of the club justified that it was 'part of our tradition' and brought

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[1] Matthew L. Mcdowell and Matthew Taylor, *A Cultural History of Association Football in Scotland, 1865-1902: Understanding Sports As a Way of Understanding Society*, Lewiston, NY, Edwin Mellen Press, 2013, p. 4.
[2] Bill Murray, 'Celtic et Rangers: Les Irlandais de Glasgow', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 1994, vol. 103, no. 1, p. 42.
[3] Andrew Davies, 'Football and Sectarianism in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s', *Irish Historical Studies*, November 2006, vol. 35, no. 138, p. 200.
[4] Willie Maley, *The Story of the Celtic,* Bishopbriggs, Villafield Press, 1939.
[5] Joseph M. Bradley, 'Celtic Football Club, Irish Ethnicity, and Scottish Society', *New Hibernia Review / Iris Éireannach Nua*, 2008, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 99.
[6] Peter Millward, 'Glasgow Rangers Supporters in the City of Manchester: The Degeneration of a 'Fan Party' into a 'Hooligan Riot'', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 1 December 2009, vol. 44, no. 4, p. 383.
[7] *Ibid.*

‘considerable support’ to the club[1]. At that point, the club’s no-Catholic policy would be put in relation with the rising popularity of the Orange Order in Glasgow, where Rangers officials were supposedly holding functions[2]. After that, the dominant view settled that Rangers had been set up ‘as a Protestant boys’ club; [and that] Celtic emerged 15 years later, expressly for Catholics, spurring Rangers towards a unionist identity”[3]. In a word, this rivalry between Rangers and Celtic progressively became framed as the emergence of a reactionary fusion between sports and politics, in the face of an emancipatory movement.

This equivalence paralleled the increasing segmentation of Glasgow as an urban area[4]. Sectarian tensions would only continue to grow throughout the years, as the two communities were becoming increasingly intertwined in Glasgow, providing a support for an increasing legitimisation of anti-Catholic policies amongst Protestant, and of a communitarian retreat for Catholics. From the 1920s onwards, the apparition of new ethno-religious street gangs[5] and the increase in modes of transportation meant that matches between Celtic and Rangers were increasingly synonymous with urban disorder between Catholic and Protestant areas[6].

In the following decades, supporters from Northern Ireland would become increasingly invested in the matches in Glasgow as buses and ferries were becoming more affordable. This had not always been the case. During most of its history, the ‘Old Firm’ had an equivalent in Belfast, which was more than a distant cousin. Since 1891, Belfast football supporters would follow the ‘Big Two’. This local rivalry between the Linfield F.C and Belfast Celtic animated the entire Irish League. The Belfast Celtic Football Club was funded in 1891 in West Belfast, a mainly Catholic district, as a direct reference to Glasgow Celtic. When Linfield FC was funded in 1886, on the other hand, it was stereotypically affiliated with the Protestant community. Just like the two teams of the Old Firm, they developed a close enmity. Sectarian rioting, and occasions on which their supporters had produced weapons against Linfield’s fans[7], led Celtic to disband during the war of independence[8]. Similar incidents in 1948, arriving at a time of growing discontent regarding the discrimination of the Catholic community, would

[1] Rob Steen, *Floodlights and Touchlines: A History of Spectator Sport*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014, p. 42.
[2] Ronnie Esplin and Graham Walker, *The Official Biography of Rangers*, London, Headline, 2011, 320 p.
[3] R. Steen, *Floodlights and Touchlines*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
[4] A. Davies, ‘Football and Sectarianism in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s’, art cit., p. 203.
[5] John Burrowes, *Irish: The Remarkable Saga of a Nation and a City*, Edinburgh, Mainstream Digital, 2011, 332 p. See Chapter 6.
[6] A. Davies, ‘Football and Sectarianism in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s’, art cit.
[7] Benjamin Roberts, *Gunshots & Goalposts: The Story of Northern Irish Football*, Avenue Books, 2017, 242 p. See Chapter 2.
[8] Michael Wood, *The battle for the soul of Belfast Celtic, 69 years after the club folded*, https://thesetpieces.com/latest-posts/the-battle-for-belfast-celtic-69-years-after-the-club-folded/ , 29 August 2018.

prompt Belfast Celtic to definitively leave the Irish league in protest. In a statement, the clubs' officials declared that 'those responsible for the protection of the players fail[ed] to take measures either to prevent the brutal attack or to deal with it with any degree of effectiveness after it developed.'[1] Yet, this narrative provoked controversy, as the family handling the Belfast Celtic was also accused of using this easily believable reason to cover their strategic interest as the family would have wanted to sell the grounds of the stadium.

Just like this retreat was a way to denounce increasing tensions between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Belfast, the growing tensions in Belfast would give a new dimension to Glasgow's Old Firm. The departure of Belfast Celtic meant a 'real vacuum in terms of nationalist involvement in football in the north of Ireland'[2]. At that point, both in Belfast and Glasgow, the equivalence between the Old Firm rivalry and the enmity between Catholic and Protestant communities were becoming part of the symbolic landscape of the United Kingdom.

1.2 The communal role of local supporters and the reinforcement of external constraints

When the Troubles flared, the relation between the two groups of supporters became increasingly significant as a diffuse proxy for the conflict. This would lead, up until the beginning of the 21st century, to increasing forms of external restraint.

Though the disappearance of the Belfast Celtic had contributed to a renewed interest into the Old Firm, the conflict had more paradoxical effect on the 'supporters' clubs' in Belfast. Those were the local leisure club that had been organised in most local neighbourhood of Belfast. As recalled by Mac in April 2019:

> 'During the Troubles, there wasn't that many supporters … it felt a bit low because people just couldn't attend. You know, from the 1970s on all the adults who would have been organising clubs were in prison, and the ones who weren't were out rioting. And then, you just couldn't go down the city centre in those times, because you'd have to rent a bus and the bus were all getting burnt out … barricades you know.'

On one hand, actors considered the symbolic marriage between the Old Firm and the community rivalry was growing stronger. It was less acceptable than ever to be a Catholic Rangers supporter or a Protestant Celtic fan. On the other hand, there were far fewer occasions to attend actual matches, and to experience encounters between the two football clubs. It was

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Alan Bairner and Peter Shirlow, 'Real and Imagined: Reflextions on Football Rivalry in Northern Ireland' in Gary Armstrong, Richard Giulianotti and NetLibrary, Inc (eds.), *Fear and loathing in world football*, Oxford, Berg, 2001, p. 56. Except for Cliftonville, a North Belfast club just a few hundred metres away from Ardoyne.

more difficult to travel to Glasgow, or even to Belfast city centre, and the local supporters who had up until now been in charge of supporters’ clubs were in prison. Though this may seem paradoxical, the reduction of actual moments of ritual cohabitation, because of the higher difficulty to access fixtures and matches, left less support for fans to experience that they could engage with one another in a certain formalised way. Without the safeguards of actual examples of positive encounters, the twin equivalence between rivalries only grew stronger.

Thomas, a prominent member of the Ardoyne Rangers Supporters Club, painted a similar picture of the life of supporters during the conflict. Indeed, this particular club was set up in 1975, something he links with the effects of the conflict on the area:

> ‘There was always people going to the matches. From here, but there was no real sort of … there was just a group of guys getting together from different areas and stuff like that there. Hmm, and, what we decided was, at the time, I was younger, I was younger obviously then but the likes of Billy Mitchell, couple of other guys they decided to start a club. And that was in, where, the Jolly Rogers complex is down there, it used to be the bar. […] Basically, whenever the, Ardoyne was separated with the … they put the peace line up, hmm, and we decided to join, to start our own club in that area. Because there was obviously ones down the Shankill and, some of them had clubs and stuff but we set up to specifically go to the matches, that was our main objective. And we started running buses out of the area, and basically, obviously, you know the quarrel with… Protestants and Ardoyne, Catholics in Ardoyne don’t like to recognise it, that there’s Protestants in Ardoyne (he laughs) because they say it, it’s separated with the peace line, so because we were concentrated in that area, there was more of a, there was more of a … a thing from, an interest. We started running buses but unfortunately every time our bus left the area and came home after a match, it was getting attacked at nights. And the windows were getting broke, it was harder to get buses … hem, to do that, so basically what we had to do was travel by foot.’

Thomas describes the more ambivalent effects of the conflict on the equivalence. Compared to Mac, he argues that the hardship of the conflict in North Belfast also led residents to turn more decisively to supporters’ club. Whilst Mac stressed the difficulties of accessing the city centre, Thomas explained that the local desertion that the increasing segregation sustained the creation of a local club. As the local bar turned into one of the only services available to Protestant residents after Ardoyne’s partition, this encouraged the creation of a supporter’s club. Further acts of violence and difficulties to circulate reinforced the tendencies of neighbouring Protestant communities to gather in local supporters’ clubs. Like the Women’s Groups created in the 1970s, these had the initial effect of alleviating the isolation of urban communities. Not only did this increase the local cohesion, it also tied the birth of an Ardoyne Rangers Supporters club with the idea that local Protestants would not let Catholics present Ardoyne as a homogeneous area. In this, supporters affirmed sporting institutions by the same actions which reaffirmed their attachment to the local Protestant community. By multiplying trials such as this, the conflict reinforced the equivalence. The tensions would then grow higher between

those who naturalised and defended the equivalence between the Old Firm and community rivalry, and those who strove further and further away from both forms of enmity.

With the Troubles, the consequences of the Old Firm rivalry were becoming more dramatic in Northern Ireland than in Glasgow, inverting the trend of the early 20th century. In 1971, an Old Firm match led to one of the worst disasters in British football history. At the end of the match, a crowd movement amongst Rangers supporters triggered a chain reaction which caused the death of 66 people and injured 200 supporters. In Glasgow 'Celtic fans and officials joined Rangers in public mourning, which temporarily suspended rivalries'[1] in favour of sportive solidarity. This was not to be the case in Belfast. One month after 2000 fans had travelled to Glasgow to attend this final, a Catholic mob was reported to taunt Protestants with the slogan 'Rangers 66 Celtic 0', referring to the death of Rangers supporters[2]. If, overall, for the new Scottish generations, "in relation to Rangers, it stopped being fashionable around the mid1960s to support a club with its associations […] the effects of the countercultural times were less strong in the loyalist strongholds of Ulster"[3].

Because of such incidents, more restrictive rules and regulations started to be put in place. More public institutions and facilities such as pubs and bars, especially in the city centre, started to enforce rules forbidding customers to wear Old Firm tops in the facilities. Thomas, used to travelling every weekend to Glasgow by ferry, observed that:

> [The ferry company] was getting more strict there and with people singing songs, and about people being drunk. Not, not really bad stuff like! But just, passengers didn't … you have to be more sensible, so we decided "We'll run one bus [instead of four], from now on" […] Whenever you used to go to the games, see the boat, see if there was 18000 spaces on the boat? 1500 of it was football fans. So, it's … obviously a lot of noise, a lot of singing and all that there … not, not offensive songs! Obviously, there were songs that offended people but, I mean … when we went away, you sung everything, pop songs that were in the charts, and … stuff like that, and but… They got the new boats in, and it was a nice wee bar here, and a wee bar over there, and a wee restaurant in the middle, and a movie room for kids […] so … all the regular people on the boat were in sitting in a, in a cafe, and beside it was a bar with football fans, and, so I mean, it was all open plan … all the football fans used to be put on the top deck of the boats, so all the … all the normal people [he laughs] where in the bottom, they didn't mix! So there was no hassle, you just didn't go up the stairs if you didn't want to sit with football fans. Whenever we travelled to an away game against Celtic, all … it's all Celtic fans, we go down and sit down in a corner. But before, it used to be … fucking mad. There used to have to bring riot police, from Belfast to travel on the boat, yah!

The boat used by fans to travel to Glasgow used to be a space of public oppositions between the two groups. But increasing cohabitation with 'normal people' meant that a further control was imposed on the violent and offensively conflictual behaviour of the Old Firm

[1] P. Millward, 'Glasgow Rangers Supporters in the City of Manchester', art cit., p. 383.
[2] R. Steen, *Floodlights and Touchlines*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[3] Gareth Mulvenna, *The (Not So) Lost World: The Culture of Rangers Fans*, https://www.therangersstandard.co.uk/index.php/articles/fan-culture/277-the-not-so-lost-world-the-culture-of-rangers-fans , 2014, (retrieved 23 March 2021).

football fans. Paradoxically, even though Thomas tones down the behaviour of fans and argues that they are only called ‘offensive’ due to exaggeration from observers, he does recall somewhat proudly a period during which fans was violent, “mad”, requiring the intervention of police forces. The new rules echoed policing reforms within stadiums which had already been enforced in Scotland by the British State[1]. In 1980, a violent fight on the pitch involving hundreds of Celtic and Rangers fans led to a shift in public policies within the United Kingdom[2]. Overwhelmed police officers had to intervene on horseback in the stadium and were authorised to violently coerce supporters with batons. As most supporters were intoxicated and fought with cans and bottles, the government implemented restrictions and banned alcohol from football grounds. Similarly, after violent incidents in May 1999 during a match which came to be known as the ‘Shame Game’[3], the league association restricted Old Firm matches to the early afternoon to avoid tensions building up over the weekend before Sunday evening matches[4]. Still the new regulations all relied on the same principle: enforcing the dissimulation of the Old Firm rivalry or, when this was not possible, enforcing the separation of fans to ensure they would not meet.

The disparity between Ulster’s and Scotland’s fans was increasing. The safety measures voted in the 1960s were not put in place in Northern Ireland before 2009, which meant a progressive degradation of stadiums in Belfast, only reinforcing the tendencies of local supporters to turn towards the Old Firm[5]. Northern Irish supporters were reinforcing the idea that the Old Firm was a conduit for sectarian rivalry. Officials, players and members of the Rangers and Celtic football clubs, taken in the increasing internationalisation and commercialisation of football, were now actively trying to dismantle that idea to avoid public condemnation. They were not, however, reaching the stage of public disavowal[6]. As the control of violence reached the professional football organisation themselves, the head of the different clubs were trying hard to distance themselves from communal oppositions, at a time when their supporters’ groups did not share this considerate carefulness[7].

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[1] Since the 1930s, it had already been tradition that the stewards who handle the matches of the Old Firm stand in the stadium’s stands during the fixture, both in Ibrox Park and in Celtic Park.

[2] Kevin McCarra, ‘Seven deadly sins of football: Firm enemies – Rangers and Celtic, 1909-2009’, *The Guardian*, 17 May 2009.

[3] Stewart Fisher, ‘Six games that shook the Old Firm: the shame of 1999’, *The Herald*, 30 January 2015.

[4] Ian Archer, ‘Police read cup riot act to Old Firm’, *The Guardian*, 27 May 1999.

[5] Lefkos Kyriacou, ‘Football Frontiers: Competition and Conflict in Belfast’, *Conflict in Cities and the Contested State: everyday life and the possibilities for transformation in Belfast, Jerusalem and other divided cities*, 2014, 2014, Working Paper no. 30, p. 8.

[6] By the end of the 1970s, the Rangers player Derek Johnstone demanded that the issue be handled by the board of the club, see Derek Johnstone, *Rangers: My Team*, London, 1979, p. 92-95.

[7] As mentioned by Bill Murray, the Kearny club of Celtic supporters in the USA were openly bringing their support to the IRA. Whilst disowned by the Celtic FC, this did not jeopardise their affiliation to it. B. Murray, ‘Celtic et Rangers [Les Irlandais de Glasgow]’, art cit., p. 46.

Put together, those dynamics – the increase in control and the dissociation with Scottish supporters – had a central consequence in Northern Ireland: the focus on a repressive policy concerning supporters of the Old Firm, based on the unveiling and on the denunciation of the affinities between sporting rivalry and communitarian enmity. This would concern an increasing number of sectors. During the peace process, this increased control of supporters went hand in hand with a renewed political attention on the deprived areas of North Belfast and the issue of their segregation. Indeed, after the increase in regulation in stadiums, incidents related to the Old Firm were now deemed to be mostly located there, in urban areas, rather than around the pitch. By 2011, incidents away from stadia represented 85% of the policing costs related to the Old Firm[1]. In Ardoyne, the 1990s and the 2000s saw the Sportsman Bar, situated at the roundabout interface with Twaddell, become a regular flashpoint for violence after every Old Firm game, especially during Scottish Cup finals. When this was the case in May 2002, Celtic lost and 800 people were involved in a riot which saw 28 police officers and 10 civilians injured[2]. This would repeat on multiple occasions, like in 2005[3] and in April 2008. As recalled by William and Henry, two supporters from Upper Ardoyne, those were met with yet increasing restrictions in order to separate sporting and urban rivalries:

> 'There were riots all over the place, at the roundabout here, sure, but all over Belfast, whenever there was a Rangers and Celtic match'. Andrew nods, smiles and says 'Aye, and then you were put out of the pub'. William nods too and whilst still looking at me says 'Yes, then see the city council decided that they would close some of those pubs for the Old Firm. It was dead simple, as soon as there was a Ranger-Celtic match there, you'd be put out. So it was Westbank being closed by the City Council then, and then the same happened for the Sportsman up there, you know, the 32 degrees … it was closed for the Rangers match. And then it was just closed.' William pauses for a second, and I stay silent. He adds 'But it's all sectarian anyway.'

In that 2008 derby, a Celtic supporter had his throat cut in Belfast City Centre after being attacked by a group of men composed of hooligan Linfield's supporters[4]. These incidents were favoured by the influx of English and Scottish hooligans who now saw in Northern Ireland a more flexible ground for their violent altercations[5].

Hence, the coercive forms of control and demands of invisibilisation would spread to the urban space as a whole. Nowadays, international guides still advise tourists coming to Belfast not to wear Glasgow Rangers or Glasgow Celtic jerseys in nationalist or unionist areas[6]. By

[1] L. Kyriacou, 'Football Frontiers: Competition and Conflict in Belfast', art cit., p. 5.
[2] BBC Northern Ireland, 'Man shot in Belfast riots', *BBC News*, 5 May 2002.
[3] Sport News, 'Calm restored to North Belfast after fans riot', *Irish Examiner*, 22 May 2005.
[4] Laura Friel, 'Neo-Nazis slash Celtic supporter's throat in Belfast', *An Phoblacht*, 3 April 2008.
[5] Ciaran McGuigan, 'Police closing in on vicious gang', *Belfast Telegraph*, 12 July 2018.
[6] Belfast Tourist Information, *Staying safe in Belfast*, https://www.gotoireland.today/stay-safe-belfast.html, (retrieved 23 March 2021).

now, most actors tended to present the football players and supporters as ‘proxy warriors’ for the rivalry between communities[1]. Statutory bodies engaged further in refraining this dynamic, on the advice of the Equality Commission in 2008[2]. Whilst members and supporters of the Old Firm were now subject to a stricter control of their violent and offensive behaviour, it was now expected of them radically disjoint comments and actions having to do with the sporting rivalry with past and present political oppositions. As this tension was growing more and more public in Scotland, this was pushing a higher burden on actors in Northern Ireland to find a way to handle the topic, now that they had entered a peace process.

1.3 From an increasing control of supporters to demands of more self-control

However problematic the Old Firm was, it could not be sidelined. In 2005, it was estimated to bring £118m to the Scottish economy[3], whilst its fans were now amongst the most numerous numbers of arrests when travelling to games[4]. This seemed to gather the elements for a lasting tug of war. Yet, it accompanied another transformation in how fans approached the equivalence. For example, when Thomas presented the new regulations on Scottish ferries, he added that they were in part welcomed by the supporters’ club, which was already attempting to regulate its troublesome members on its own. Supporters were controlling each other, including by preventing each other from being offensive towards other passengers and Celtic fans, because those incidents could get them barred from the ferry company. As Thomas coined it, ‘we’re not going to have some idiot getting the club banned, and you don’t really want to be the one in our bus getting our club barred, cause there’s fifty-five people want to go to that game, and if they’re told they’re not getting to that game…’. Hence, those restrictive policies met forms of temperance that were presumably already present amongst supporters. It is at the scale of the group, within the supporters’ club, that a form of self-control started to be put forward in practice. But the growing influence of international regulating institutions, under the form of fines and sanctions, would increase the divide between how supporters balanced the equivalence and how the Glasgow officials attempted to undo it[5]. The globalisation of football

[1] John M. Hoberman, *Sport and Political Ideology*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1984, 328 p.
[2] See for example Learner Services, *Dress Code Policy*, Belfast, Belfast Metropolitan College, 2016.
[3] R. Steen, *Floodlights and Touchlines*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
[4] Chris Doyle, ‘Rangers and Celtic fans near the top for arrest figures’, *BelfastLive*, 23 January 2019.
[5] For example, in 2013, the *Union of European Football Association* fined the Celtic FC after its supporters had unfolded a political banner defending both Scottish and Irish nationalism during a game. See John McGarry, ‘Celtic fined £42,000 for Green Brigade fans’ political banners’, *The Daily Mail*, 13 December 2013.

inserted clubs into a web of economic, leisure and moral interdependencies which made it increasingly less desirable to stand as a 'proxy' for ethnic rivalry. The supporters' situation was not as clear. They could not afford to maintain the idea that supporting the Old Firm was the same as being sectarian, but they also could not accept to completely severe the equivalence between the Old Firm and community rivalry given the local differentiation it sustained in Belfast. Supporters would then strive for a third way to handle this tension.

In lieu of an oppositional response to the increased control or supporters, this claim of a stable self-control would become the angular stones of Old Firm supporters after the 2000s. It would be crystallised amongst this rising notion of '90 minutes bigots', as 'someone who has got a friend of an opposite religion living next door. But for that 90 minute they shout foul religious abuse at each other'[1]. Some of the supporters then started to employ it to manifest the fact that they could express rivalries both political and sportive on the field, whilst containing them during their daily life[2]. For supporters, it was to be seen as an increased control over their rivalry. For those who opposed the idea, it is rather that those individuals would come to feel less responsible for their behaviour during matches, as 'the security of being in a crowd facilitates the vocal expression of sentiment that would not be given a voice otherwise'[3].

1.3.1 Using the Old Firm as a support for detachment

One dynamic would be a central support in that shift: attempts at using the Old Firm rivalry in efforts of bringing together the Catholic and Protestant communities. In May 2019, I was meeting with the two leading members of the Upper Ardoyne residents' association, William and Andrew. There we mentioned their investment in the Old Firm. Both of them are strong supporters of Rangers FC. Their handling of the Ranger in Upper Ardoyne was then based on two things: cross-community programmes involving the children of the area, and the management of riots. I asked William what the cross-community programmes consisted of:

> 'Yes, yes, well that's a wee trip that we organise to Glasgow, where … we get fourteen kids and fourteen parents – you know, for child protection – , and on that we'll have around fourteen people who support Celtic, and fourteen who supports the Rangers. It'll probably be kids from Saint Georges FC and from the Ballysillan FC. So, we take two minivans, Andrew drives one and then my brother drives another, and we'll just head for Glasgow. On the first day, we have them visit the Celtic Park, they get the history and all … and then they get to play a match on the pitch, and then we'll head for a Chinese buffet. And so the

[1] R. Steen, *Floodlights and Touchlines*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.
[2] Michael Walker, *Tradition of hate: A recurrent, sad feature of our football world*, https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/soccer/tradition-of-hate-a-recurrent-sad-feature-of-our-football-world-1.3827311 , 16 March 2019, (retrieved 22 January 2021).
[3] *Ibid.*

> next day we do the same thing with the Rangers and Ibrox. […] All this, see, it’s good because it gets them to mix together, kids who are Cetlic and the others who are Rangers. Whereas at a start they’ll be “I don’t want to go in fucking Ibrox!” and “Well, I don’t want to go in fucking Celtic Park either!”’

William defends the importance of taking parents and children from both groups of supporters to Glasgow. As these trips are organised with the residents of “Lower” Ardoyne, it is taken for granted that the groups who have to “mix” are the Catholic and Protestant residents of Ardoyne, even though Football clubs are topical. But all this holds as long as, as we have seen, the two supporters also value the rivalry between Celtic and Rangers. In a sense, the trip involving children only qualifies as a challenging way to integrate Catholic and Protestant communities if the Old Firm remains a strong rivalry. Only then can working on the Old Firm be perceived as a lever to tackle the political conflict. The two men conclude by exchanging on stabbing and violent altercations which are still ongoing in Glasgow, before emphasising that in Belfast “it’s all grown quieter, these don’t really happen anymore”. This gives a new meaning to the intertwining between Belfast and Glasgow: Belfast supporters, when arguing that the Old Firm is only a game that allow them to know their communities better, may be accused of neglecting its nefarious consequences. They partly avoid this blame if they mention that it’s “still bad” over in Glasgow. Relying on the idea that Glasgow segregation is “similar but different” to what happens in North Belfast, members of the Catholic and Protestant communities can alternatively emphasise the positive and negative aspect of the Old Firm.

Just like William and Andrew, Charles emphasise the surprising effects of letting supporters gain detachment from their rivalry by experiencing forms of sporting antagonisms:

> ‘Take Sammy with Gerard [His Protestant brother and an old Catholic resident from Ardoyne, who met during a community workshop], they bonded over football. Because, here, Man United and Liverpool are two big teams with lots of supporters, and supporters coming from both the Catholic and the Protestant communities. So they talked about that. But then, the Catholics support Celtic and the Protestants the Rangers… Well, even there, Sammy, he supports Celtic you see, and he goes down the Shankill road with a Celtic top, and people ask him “Wait, what, do you support Celtic?” and he says “Yes, yes, I do”… And that’s it, he’s alright. So some Protestants do, very few of them, but they’re here. And see, the thing, and I’ll leave you with that, all the things that people tell you are impossible and all the things that you were brought up to believe, well if you just try and, if you just do something else, you’ll find that it’s not as bad as you think…’

The equivalence is now taken for granted. However, Northern Irish society is still affected by the many other international football clubs – such as Man United and Liverpool – which one can decide to support without it having any notable consequences on the other aspects of their social life. The transformation of football has meant that it is now more acceptable to individually decides which football club to support, even if this means surprisingly supporting

Celtic. It is still notably easier than changing communities. But because the rivalry equivalence still stands, it allows increasing detachment from the rigidity of the community rivalry. At least, this is how it is presented by Charles. Noticing this amounts to handling the contradictory plurality of one's community. And it is central to this process that the dynamics of football supporting rely on such global forms of interdependence, transforming rapidly, that this oddity has increasing chances of appearing in Northern Irish society.

The fact that Celtic and Rangers supporters are now often professional colleagues also increase these chances. This is particularly exemplified in the fact that both Rangers and Celtic supporters were enthused – or acted so to be describable as "enthused" – when I mentioned that I was working with the other group of supporters. In Ardoyne, this allowed a Celtic supporter to laud the fact that I could 'see the two sides and see the difference', and to open up on the fact that 'I know different Ranger supporters, you see, believe it or not, because I've been working with them'. A very similar thing happened with Thomas and the Rangers Supporters' Club, who said that he had a "mate" at work who was a Celtic fan. They had become friends by jokingly teasing one another on the Old Firm, calling each other 'Celtic B' and other insults. Thomas appreciates this, whilst deploring the fact that their other colleagues were 'panicking' in front of their mutual insults, whereas observers would not have blamed them if they had been teasing each other as fans of Liverpool and Man United. For Thomas, the type of bonding that the Old Firm allows between members of Catholic and Protestant communities, based on ironic detachment and professional cohabitation, is still faced with demands of concealment. Again, in both those cases, being invested as supporters of the Old Firm is judged as a support for an increased detachment from the overall forms of segregation running through the area. This, despite the risks and criticisms this rivalry still carries.

1.3.2 Towards Self-Regulation

All those supporters were now demanding a freer access to the tensions that constituted their rivalry. They aimed at managing the various 'polarities' holding all the actors involved in a football rivalry, from the pitch to the terraces, from the stadium to the pub. According to Elias, those 'polarities' – between cooperation and competition, between identification and rivalry [1]– are fundamental to the existence of rivalries as playful antagonisms. They matter only in so far as actors invested in it are able to move relatively freely from one pole to the other throughout

[1] Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, 'Dynamics of Sport Groups with Special Reference to Football' in Nortbert Elias and Eric Dunning (eds.), *Quest for excitement : sport and leisure in the civilizing process*, Oxford & New York, Blackwell, 1986, p. 202-203.

their interaction, ensuring that it never becomes too “dull” nor too “confrontational”. In expecting to be allowed to handle on their own the ambivalence of their rivalry, supporters were demanding that the Old Firm be managed more like any other “normal sporting opposition”. As we already mentioned, it follows that members of the supporters’ club would emphasise that becoming implicated with the Rangers or Celtic was increasingly becoming a matter of personal choice and preference. This is what Charles was referring to. Similarly, Thomas explained that he was not asking every tender of the club to follow Scottish football:

> ‘There’s a lot of people support Rangers here, there’s a lot of people support Man United but they’ll … they would sort of like Rangers as well, stuff like, obviously there’s people that like … there’s a fellow down the stairs there that don’t like Rangers at all, they support Linfield or somebody else, they’ve no interest in Scottish football, but it’s like everything else, if you’re … if you’re sitting somewhere, and your mates are wanting their teams to win you sort of don’t mind (he laughs). […] I think there’s still a big interest in it, so there is. But people support their own team.’

Hence, even though the community dynamics are still judged to be central for fans, a more central emphasis is being put on the fact that each resident decides who to support and is then more or less inclined to engage with the Old Firm rivalry depending on the situations. This trend is favoured by the return of a revindication of the right to promote a sporting opposition: not only do intercommunity rivalries get displaced, intra-community rivalries – or at least variations – find a ground to express themselves. This is exactly the argument made by Alan Bairner and Peter Shirlow in order to explain the continuation of the rivalry between Linfield and the Belfast Celtic[1]. The issue has now returned to a question of following either Scottish football, English football or both. This greater number of possibilities now offered to local supporters leads, just like the other dynamics we describe, to a ‘rising demand on steering capacities’[2]. Meaning, supporters face more social expectations to handle by themselves, with a sustained degree of self-control and self-consciousness, these sporting rivalries, their links with other forms of allegiance and the tensions that come with them.

This increased social expectations sometimes leads to paradoxical situation. In order to avoid being stigmatised, as we have seen, supporters sometimes argue that Celtic fans or Rangers fans should be regarded just as any other supporters. For example, they argue that it is not a matter of following the rule of a community, but a normal dynamic of interpersonal socialisation ‘just like cricket […] you’re going to support the team that your friends, your

[1] A. Bairner and P. Shirlow, ‘Real and Imagined: Reflextions on Football Rivalry in Northern Ireland’, art cit., p. 46.

[2] Cas Wouters, ‘Have Civilising Processes Changed Direction? Informalisation, Functional Democratisation, and Globalisation’, *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, 2020, vol. 45, no. 2, p. 294.

father, your uncle supported, but there's nothing wrong with that!'. But by expecting those demands to be treated as any other sporting rivalry, supporters sometimes end up legitimising the coercive rules that they strive to avoid in demanding a greater form of self-control. For example, in 2019, I was talking with Mac about the fact that Old Firm T-shirts were forbidden in certain public places:

> 'I asked Mac if the tops were still forbidden in the city centre. He says "Well, where?", and I said "Dunno, like in streets or in pubs". Mac thinks about it for a second and says 'Well, you can wear them in the streets, like, but you can't wear them in pubs, they'll have a plate refusing entrance to people wearing tops… But that goes for any club, and it also happens in England. But the thing I've seen is that when you go to England, the supporters don't really wear tops. Well, so they do, it's just that you get to the stadium and they have their big jackets zipped all the way to the top, and then boom, next thing you see, they open it up and they have their team there. Whereas Celtics, when you see them come in, you'll have them in big strips, with shorts and, and scarfs, and they will even have football boots. With the metallic hard bits in beneath. You'll hear it squeaking on the ground! So, probably they think that if ever a player is getting injured, they'll be called into the field [he laughs]! Well, so, they don't care.'

The idea of being treated like any other group of supporters leads Old Firm fans to be faced with the fact that the outer restriction imposed upon them is also part of the normalisation of sporting behaviours at the international level. Those regulations – of not displaying taunting looks, of not behaving offensively – concerns other clubs, in other countries. They are accepted by other supporters as they meet aspirations not to reduce their identity to the overly uniform display of football fandom. And this is this plurality that Old Firm supporters in Belfast are still confronted to when they stand for a new form of polarities' self-control.

This paradox between being treated normally and singularly leads to one of the central problems for Old Firm supporters when it comes to installing a self-constraint management of the ambivalence in a post-conflict societies. Even if supporters themselves have toned down their violent and offensive behaviours, the idea that Celtic and Rangers are normal teams is in tension with the tendency to value, even through non-serious remarks, the fact that this rivalry led players to be more violent on the pitch than most other football teams. Old Firm matches are famous for leading to a higher than usual amount of red and yellow cards, either for fouls or for offensive behaviours, even at 'times of extremely fragile relations in Northern Ireland'[1]. Though regularly provoking public and official sanctions[2], 'dangerous' players tend to be well

[1] Robert Redmond, *Gazza, a riot and three of the other maddest moments in Old Firm history*, https://www.sportsjoe.ie/football/gazza-a-riot-and-three-of-the-other-maddest-moments-in-old-firm-history-11388 , 31 January 2015, (retrieved 1 March 2021).
[2] 'Old Firm player behaviour "unacceptable"', *BBC Sport*, 2 April 2019.

regarded amongst supporters[1]. When I mentioned a fight between two Rangers and Celtic players in 2019, the Celtic fans I spoke to Ardoyne were rather enthused by the incident, first because it was a way to humiliate the other supporters, but also because it allowed them to show that the Rangers fans were the one who could not handle provocation and would turn it into an altercation[2]. Yet, uncertainty subsists as to what lies behind this ambiguous approval of violence. Is the 'dangerousness' of these players hailed for the exciting danger it causes as part of a game[3], or as part of a very real antagonism with the other group? This undetermined ambivalence is precisely that which supporters have to handle in practice every time such a trial occurs.

1.3.3 New forms of Enmity

There is, of course, a paradoxical effect. Within that position, striving for an increased form of self-regulation does not reduce enmity between the two parties. It simply displaces it on to the ground of its adequate regulation. The nature of blame between the two groups of supporters changes. During a first period – in the first half of the 20th century – , supporters were openly and in a mostly unregulated way engaging in forms of offensive and violent behaviours towards one another. In a second period – in the second half of the 20th century – this type of opposition would become less publicly avowable whilst increasingly regulated by public forces, leading supporters to engage in forms of dissimulation whilst still being directly opposing the other team. The last period – roughly corresponding to the turn of the 20th century – leads to a third form of enmity, linked with the higher forms of self-regulation amongst supporters. Increasing interdependencies have led supporters to value the ambivalence of the equivalence and to aim at being able to manage which rivalry guides the interpretation of any interaction. They want to set by themselves which situation is guided by sporting rivalry, and which by political conflict. As such, they now oppose each other by blaming the other group of being the most violent, the most sectarian and the less 'sportlike' party of the Old Firm.

We now understand why, as we stated at the beginning, the supporters' confrontational behaviour gradually leads to their higher emphasis on the histories of the two football clubs, the supporters' clubs or the supporters themselves. I have often heard supporters referring to specific historical incidents to criticise the other groups and, more importantly, refer to the way

[1] The Newsroom, 'Celtic captain Scott Brown charged by SFA over Old Firm behaviour', *The Scotsman*, April 2019.
[2] See for example this incident in Robert Collins, 'Celtic skipper Scott Brown WON'T face any action of Alfreo Morelos clash', *The Scottish Sun*, 25 September 2017.
[3] L. Kyriacou, 'Football Frontiers: Competition and Conflict in Belfast', art cit., p. 29.

the other group portrays itself and build its own 'myth' in order to delegitimise each other. This was really clear in the very first example we mentioned, when Mac was diminishing Protestants for their inability to come up with historical reasons for their admiration of Rangers. This induced more movements of historicisation, as it is now a matter of explaining the origin of the opposition and showing that the other group is tied for the wrong reason to the rivalry, or have always been the unreasonable ones stirring conflict. The first time Mac mentioned the Old Firm to me, in 2016, is a good example of the multilayered positions now upheld by supporters:

> 'I am in the pub with Mac and we are watching TV. Mac tells me that, as he heard in the news earlier, a member of parliament had suggested to send a joint congratulations letter to the football players of both teams on the island of Ireland – "Northern Ireland" and "Republic of Ireland" – for their participation to the Euro Cup. Mac then laughs and tells me that a unionist politician answered that, if that were the case, they had to send a letter to the English and Welsh teams as well[1]. I smile and come back to watching the telly. But Mac adds that it's "really stupid", and say that it is just like with the fights between politicians who do not know why they disagree with each other anymore. Mac turns towards me and says "See for example, just the other day there was a hardcore unionist at the commemoration in Belfast, for the Battle of the Somme, and all the people from Belfast who died there: well he had a swastika tattoo, like a Nazi thing … but the soldiers they were commemorating had fought the Germans during the war … strange, isn't it?"[2] . […] [Mac tells me that the same goes for the Old Firm]. Mac proceeds to tell me that it all has to do with Glasgow being a really segregated city too, notably because "at the time of the famine the Irish massively emigrated there, since Glasgow was just across, at the same level as Derry like" which means, according to Mac, that the city ended up very similar to Belfast, with the factories and the shipyards and all that. He adds that this is why there's a lot of Irish in Liverpool and Glasgow and, smiling, Mac says that this is why he likes those cities. […] He explains that supporters are still known for hating each other and massive fights. He then shows me another video of the 1980 Hampden riot[3]. Mac spends a bit more time commenting on this video. He tells me that we can hear them sing'We are the Billy Boys'. He turns to me and tells me that the song is now forbidden because it was too sectarian. I frown and ask him why exactly. At that point, Brian turns around to check that his partner his not around him, and then tells me that this is because of the lyrics: whilst bending over to me, whispering and pretending to put socks on, he explains that the lyrics talk about Protestants being 'up to their knees in Fenians Blood', to which Mac adds 'And so people say, when you have the Red White and Blue colours of the Rangers, that's why they have red socks when they play home. And the socks that go all the way up to their knees. Like Fenian Blood'. I tell him that I have never heard about that, but that I did see quite a lot of Red White and Blue flags: I ask him what is going on with the French flags that I saw on the Shankill Road, which had the 'RFC' initial marked on them [for Rangers Football Club]. Brian raises his eyebrows and tells me that he doesn't really know, really, 'It's just that them'uns will use anything that has Red White and Blue on it'.'

[1] See Rebecca Black and Claire Williamson, 'Euro 2016: unionist councillors refuse to back congratulations letter to Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland - because England weren't included', *Belfast Telegraph*, 5 July 2016.
[2] Sunday Life, 'Nazi swastika tattooed man takes part in Belfast Somme commemoration parade', *Belfast Telegraph*, 20 June 2016.
[3] 9panther, *Scottish Cup Final 1980 - Hampden Riot - Celtic Rangers*, Youtube, 2012.

Mac exemplifies a discourse that I have found amongst many invested fans, and which they reflexively use to distinguish themselves from more casual supporters, in which they take pride in knowing the history of the club and in being able to relate it with many other political and historical events in the United Kingdom. This includes the historical events at the basis of the Old Firm – the emigration of Irish Catholic workers, the urban dynamics of Glasgow, or the on-pitch controversies – but also the origins of the many symbols which constitute this rivalry – such as its most famous songs, or the conflictual interpretation of the Red White and Blue colours of Rangers. Again, it is through this historicisation move that the violence of the Old Firm still finds a place, through the nostalgic mentions of past violent events and ‘on pitch incidents’. Again, in that new paradigm, the opposition to the other groups of supporters takes the form of a delegitimising movement by which Mac argues that they are too ignorant to know their history and to manage their own symbols. As a higher reflexivity on those rivalries is now required from supporters, Mac can criticise those who fall into a contradictory defence of the rivalry equivalence. Here, those are the historical contradictions that are born out of the consecutive accusations of equivalence between ‘Rangers’ supporters’, ‘Northern Irish Football Supporters’, ‘Protestants’, ‘unionists’, ‘Conservatives’ and ‘Neo-Nazi’. The central problem becomes being able to make explicit, through a set of reasons that are put to common public trials, why exactly one nurture the rivalry.

The Rangers supporters display almost symmetrical efforts, as exemplified by Thomas comments on the Old Firm history, and the ‘hypocrisy’ of Celtic fans:

> ‘Rangers Football club was formed by … four fellas who played cricket. Four fellas that played cricket. Celtic football club, by their own admission, when they were formed, were formed out of the Fenian movement. They were born out of violent Irish Republicanism, if, if that’s … and I can show you whatever you want, I mean, that’s, that was their own, that was their first manager said that, so he would. And they were born, they were formed out of that. I mean they were banned from playing during the war, because, obviously, republicans supported the Nazis at that stage. Whereas Rangers, obviously, they supported the allied forces […] … and the thing that always makes me laugh is, they sing that song, the Billy Boys, that song is about the 1920s, right, there was two groups in Glasgow, there was the Billy Boys who were the Protestant Rangers, and there was the Tim Malloy’s, right, that was the Celtic nationalists, and they were the two street gangs… […] So they call themselves the Tim Malloy’s, the Tims, but they were always complained about us singing the Billy Boys song, but yet they call themselves the name after the street gang [he laughs] […] And the red socks thing, Govan, the colours of Govan, where Rangers are from, their colours are Red and Black, so, Rangers socks are, are red and black, but they say that Rangers wear Red socks to show that they’re up to their knees in Fenian blood. You know, this is just, this is the sort of crap, this is actually reported in the media, Théo, you know, it’s a disgrace and they still let them say, say things like that and sort of stuff like that there … and that Vanguard Bear was set up to combat that, and to go against that, obviously, you can go on Twitter and you can defend things and stuff like that there.’

Thomas links the foundation of the club with members who only had sports and charity at heart whilst criticising Celtic for the inherent political message vehiculated at the birth of the club. He, too, uses the contradictory affiliations of the republicans with the Nazis during the Second World War to denounce the political dynamics and the historical contradictions coming out of the supporter's narrative. This leads him to denounce the hypocrisy of Celtic supporters when it comes to denouncing the historical affiliations with violent street gangs, and the origins of offensive symbols. On the other end, the misinterpretation of the Rangers songs and uniforms are also, for him, instrumentalization of the equivalence to reinforce the enmity between Celtic and Rangers. As the creation of the organisation and internet forum 'Vanguard Bears' exemplifies, it is now on this ground that the hostility is being played out. What is now at play for each group of supporters is a growing demand to handle the complex imbroglio of the twin rivalry if they ever want to justify the continuation of the Old Firm[1].

The many new public efforts of organising a collective discourse around each group of supporters – the Vanguard Bears internet forum in one case, the Celtic Minded book series in the other – are prime examples of that, and are particularly valued amongst the Belfast supporters I met. Suffice to say that those collective efforts allow each group to contest the accusations of sectarianism thrown at the supporters. Fans may sanction their own peers when they appear too extreme or too contradictory in their handling of the rivalry equivalence. Hence a more reflexive form of blaming: it is one taking into account the capacities of supporters to historicise their relationship with the twin rivalry and to make explicit the reasons for their actions. As such, it also renders sociologist and other detached actors prone to engage within that rivalry[2]. Supporters now demand to be able to manage on their own the *raisons d'êtres* of the twin equivalence and of its manifestations, including when it comes to confronting and antagonising one another on their understanding of their rivalry. This relies on the long-term increasing interdependencies between the two groups of supporters in Northern Irish society[3].

[1] Anthony May, 'An 'Anti-Sectarian' Act? Examining the Importance of National Identity to the 'Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act'', *Sociological Research Online*, 1 May 2015, vol. 20, no. 2, p. 173-184, §3.5 and §6.3.

[2] For example, the historian Bill Murray denounced how Rangers FC has attempted to dissimulate its anticatholic policies throughout their history. Similarly, Rob Steen analyses the radicalisation of the Old Firm by revealing the financial interests of the clubs. B. Murray, 'Celtic et Rangers', art cit., p. 47; R. Steen, *Floodlights and Touchlines*, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

[3] Indeed, in highly differentiated societies: 'To act morally, it is not, or it is no longer enough to abide to the rules, to remain attached to a group ; it is also necessary that, either whilst deferring to the rule, or whilst devoting ourselves to a collective ideal, we do so in conscience, the clearest and the most complete conscience, of the reasons of our conduct. [We demands a representation] which gets to the bottom of things : it is the explicative representation of the rule itself, of its causes of its *raisons d'êtres'*. Émile Durkheim, *L'Éducation morale*, 2nd ed., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2012, p. 121-122. Translated by us.

With this recent transformation, blame shifts. It is now more openly blameworthy not to favour a clearly manageable distinction between sportive antagonism and other forms of social antagonism, or not to display the forms of consciousness which reassures the interactor that this distinction can and will be made when necessary. As such, this type of public opposition is liable to display traditional form of blaming. But in any case, it pushes each group of supporters to engage more fully in the description and judgement of the other team, as well as in a detachment from their own understanding of the links between sports and political the conflict. But how stable a support can this sporting detachment be for the pacification of community relations?

2. The ambivalence of sportization

Celtic and Rangers supporters have increasingly argued that they were capable of, and needed to be aided in, further regulating the tension caused by the equivalence. The evolution of other sports in the area allows us to stress two ways for actors to approach the link between sports and pacification, and the ambivalent relation between sporting and political enmity.

2.1 Sports to learn about community conflicts: going through the equivalence

By taking note of the fact that the equivalence is now a solid and very much real part of social life, actors could first argue that engaging in some sporting rivalries meant, in some way or another, engaging with community conflict.

As such, local sports can be an entry point to master the conflictual history of the community. For example, in Ardoyne and in North Belfast in general, many sporting organisations have placed at the heart of their identity the idea that, as central networks of sociability within urban communities, they have been particularly hit by the Troubles. Many local sporting organisations are now presenting the historical origins of their clubs, their experience of the Troubles, and the role they played in uniting residents in times of uncertainty. The Ardoyne and Marrowbone area publicly nurtures a very strong boxing tradition. This tradition is almost always put in perspective with the community’s resilience during the conflict. Residents and boxing aficionados often refer to the idea that the ‘area is known as a ghetto, it’s been hit very hard by the Troubles, there’s been a lot of tragedy, but the boxers have brought a

lot of pride to the area'[1]. The highly mediatised life of Eamon Magee exemplifies this trend. His course to holding several national and international boxing titles is, including in the boxer's words, always put in relations with 'his upbringing in the Ardoyne area'[2], the fact that he was kneecapped by the IRA, his time in jail and his recurrent fights with Rangers' supporters. This is reinforced by Magee's continuous and public support for the radical elements of Ardoyne:

> 'I was only punished once by the Irish Republican Army and I was guilty of what I was charged with. They were only doing their job, and I'll always take my hat off to them for that. […] It just made me the man that I am today – the society I had to grow up in and you have to deal with. I think everybody that grew up in this area was affected by the Troubles. I was no different to anybody, I'm just able to express my feelings and get it out there loud.'[3]

Engaging and succeeding in boxing is seen as a way to 'express' the conflictual organisation of the area and its consequences. This also goes for those who more openly tend to criticise them. Though somehow less famous now, the story of Eamon McAuley, another champion coming from Ardoyne, has some similar tones. In a 2019 documentary, the boxer tributed the 'really great community spirit in Ardoyne' and its 'hardness' for his upbringing, and told how being refused entry to a football competition for being a Catholic led him to boxing. McAuley later told of his first match in the British boxing final:

> 'I got into the British IBA senior boxing finals, which is the biggest thing you can achieve, and I was boxing in Britain … the irony was when I got into the final, I was to meet a British soldier [*a former paratrooper*]. It put a lot of pressure onto me also, because I was thinking of all the people of Ardoyne who had suffered in the hands of the British army. It was a big responsibility there, but I was only 19 years of age. If I had lost, I'd still be getting the cast up to me "Oh, you let that para beat you".'[4]

This time, engaging and succeeding in boxing is taken as the recognition of community spirit, of the ties which unite the members of the community, and of its local history. It sustains the more pacific realisation of social antagonism and of their extent. Coming from different parts of the community, the *dramatis personae* of Magee and McAuley sketch the same picture of the role of boxing in the process of a community coming to a greater reflexivity of the effect

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[1] Sean Whelan, 'Boxing's in the blood in the Bone and Ardoyne', *The Irish News*, 14 January 2019. This is a specific case of the more general tendency to link the fight for respectability and the male working-class boxer. See James Rhodes, 'Fighting for "Respectability": Media Representations of the White, "Working-Class" Male Boxing "Hero"', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 1 November 2011, vol. 35, no. 4, p. 350-376.
[2] Paul Fennessy, *'We were near finished the book and my son got murdered'*, https://www.the42.ie/eamonn-magee-interview-4332627-Nov2018/ , 11 November 2018, (retrieved 5 April 2021).
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Ben O'Loan, 'Schools on the Frontline', Belfast, Double-Band Films, 2019.

the conflict had on its members[1]. Similar dynamics apply to the various football clubs of the area, most of which come back to earlier historical periods and who have undergone similar historicisation efforts in present days. There too, the continuous investment in sporting organisation is praised as a means to detach oneself from the deprived and conflictual state of the area, but also to ensure that it is remembered. However, as such, it has also become a focus of criticisms from the more detached efforts of the government to address the 'legacy' of the past, as presented in the report of *the Consultative Group on the Past*. If those local sporting organisations should be praised for having prevented local communities from being 'sucked into a spiral of destructive behaviour' during the Troubles, they are nonetheless accountable for the fact that, at present, they remain divided along sectarian lines 'and the Group would urge sporting organisations, to consider and review their policies and practices in the context of whether they further good community relations and reconciliation'[2].

Some groups take those criticisms into account: rather than stressing the internal history of one community, they rely on sporting rivalry to learn about the peculiar relationships that unites Catholics and Protestants in Belfast. This has been the focus of youth clubs for a long time. For example, in May 2018, I was talking with an employee of the Houben centre who also happens to be heavily invested in cross-community work with youth clubs. Brian put forward this position when we tackle the obstacles faced by cross-community work:

> 'That's also an issue with the Integrated school. They're supposed to change society. People always put them forward, and if people say "I want to put my kids in an integrated school", I would always say "Well, great for you, go ahead! But then your kids go there, and when they come home, they still go back to your own community, to a society made of communities". And you can't just pretend that you can put all the burden on school and wait for the other parts to adjust. Schools have enough things on their hands, they have other things to fix. And I find that the [*local cross-community youth group*] took a very good position on that. What we would say to kids is that if you want to come in with a Celtic top, well you go ahead. And if you want to come in with a Ranger top, well you go ahead. We don't need a reconciliation in the middle. We need a reconciliation that brings the extreme. We need to work with what we have. Don't be ashamed, you're entitled to be that. And we need to work a reconciliation where people can be that.'

In this scene, Brian presents a criticism of the 'integrated' institutional approach, which we have already mentioned before. Though it is deemed a solution to the pathological differentiation of the educational system, the young children still come back to urban areas

[1] The current boxing life of the area is now more reflexively considered to be a palliative measure against it's the areas deprivation. This is at the heart of the more recent Ardoyne Boxing Club, which was openly created to support youth's mental health after the first wave of juvenile suicide in the area (see Chapter 2). See Gareth Fullerton, 'Ardoyne Youth Club boxing clever with mental health awareness', *BelfastLive*, 20 November 2018.

[2] Consultative Group on the Past, Robin Eames and Denis Bradley, *Report of the Consultative Group on the Past*, Belfast, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, 2009, p. 76-77.

where the community rivalry is highly relevant. Yet, with an added difficulty, since they have not solidified their ability to handle it reflexively. This is this void that the engagement with sporting rivalries would come to fill. Not only does it provide children with an occasion to become more competent in the handling of those tensions, it ensures that the most 'radicals' elements of the community do engage with the Other group.

What we're seeing here confirms the general trends that we have sketched with the evolution of the Old Firm rivalry: social actors have turned into a central element of the peace process the idea that 'sports games' could provide a 'simple introduction' to reflection on tensions and conflicts[1]. They have not done so in a sociological manner, but they have done so by attaining a further degree of self-control through the higher detachment from tension and conflict allowed by practices, exchanges and disputes surrounding sports games.

Just as mentioned by the *Consultative Group on the Past,* maintaining the possibility of these sporting antagonisms is not without risks. The conditions are not always gathered to allow for such a detached and comprehensive exchange on the equivalence. This risk is, of course, felt by residents themselves. If we go back to the new revindication of the Old Firm supporters, they are often ill-regarded by those who are not supporters, as the opposition between the Celtics and the Rangers appears as an all too great risk of returning to sectarianism. As voiced by a North Belfast resident in a working group on confronting Sectarianism in 2012, which notably involved workers from Ardoyne and the Shankill:

> ' – Resident 1: Some of the older generation knew that the war would end up sectarian, but we were too deaf, too idealistic, to listen. I recall my grandad saying to me: "Look, you are playing chess with the master, and what they will do is drag you into a religious war – the Prods against the Taigs – and then say: 'Oh, we had to step in to keep the two sides apart.' Why are you killing working-class people who are just as downtrodden as you are?" But we wouldn't listen. We just wanted to get stuck in. And it's sad that there's men on the Shankill Road today just baying to get back into a sectarian war. You could see how easily it could revert back. I go into the bar and they're playing the old Celtic music and singing basically sectarian songs and getting them going. And the young lads are then in a mood to fight with other young lads from the Village. No politics involved in it. Cheap cider and the songs and away they go. If you have people who feel that they have no future and are being told that they're just scum who will never amount to anything, you have a new discontented and alienated generation. And sectarian attitudes, when added to all this, will only make matters worse.
> – Resident 2 : […] I think it is the Protestants who are second-class citizens now. They're asking: what did we get out of the peace process? Especially in social and economic terms; we're worse off than we ever were. And young people say to us: "What did you lot do when you were frustrated? You joined paramilitary organisations. So what's the difference?" Young people don't see the peace process, but most of them didn't see the war either, didn't experience the conflict. And I feel most of them think they missed out on something. […] I asked a group of young Protestant males: What do you like? "Rangers." What do you

[1] N. Elias and E. Dunning, 'Dynamics of Sport Groups with Special Reference to Football', art cit., p. 194.

> dislike? "Celtic." Why? "We just hate them." Why do you hate them? "Dunno. Because everybody else hates them." Why do you burn a bonfire on the Eleventh night? "Dunno." So, you hate Celtic, you love Rangers, but you don't know why you burn the bonfire. Why do people walk on the Twelfth of July? "Dunno." Not one of them knew! So, they are sectarian, but none of them knew why they were sectarian. They know nothing about their own history, even to have a constructive conversation with someone about that history.'[1]

Here, the residents use their own experience of lacking detachment with the social dynamics of conflict in the beginning of the 1960s to express their worries regarding the display of signs such as Celtic songs and symbols today. The second residents emphasise how the younger generation lack any understanding of the *raisons d'être* of those oppositions, and of the equivalence between sports and ethno-political communities. Worried that the young generation may lack the detachment necessary to handle those rivalries, those residents would rather be wary of those manifestations and see them as risky supports for a return to violence. Even where there are 'no politics involved', it is seen as 'nurturing the mood to fight'. Hence, in their views, sporting rivalries and the persistence of the equivalence only reveals the problems posed by the transmission of conflicts when it goes without the socialisation to the third nature deemed necessary to their regulation. For those attempting to find a way to maintain their local identity whilst at the same time 'reaching out' to the other community, the residents invested in a simplistic equivalence of sporting rivalry and community rivalry are seen as a local embarrassment. Furthermore, by becoming too invested in sports, they are deemed as having at best 'lost', at worst 'instrumentalised' the real meaning of symbols affiliated with the unionist and the nationalist political movements to turn it into leisure.

2.2 Sports to learn 'normal' sportsmanship: a way out of the equivalence

A second approach to sportization runs parallel to the first. It amounts to seeing sports as a way out of the equivalence, as a means to reach a 'normal' type of antagonism, one devoid of any political conflict, and based on common sportsmanship. It was often expected from the peace process that it increases access to sports and leisure facilities for residents of North Belfast deprived areas. This was a strong view amongst Ardoyne and Upper-Ardoyne residents who, from the 2000s onward, repeatedly deplored the lack of football pitches, leisure centres, playground and green spaces for the younger generation. In so doing, they were marking a

[1] Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Towards a shared future (2) Confronting Sectarianism*, Belfast, Island Publications, 2012, p. 11 and p. 23.

rupture with the period of the Troubles, as exemplified in this discussion with a member of the Holy Cross prayer group in 2018:

> 'See when I was young, sport was never a fashionable thing. It was something you would do at school and you would want to get away with, and it wasn't as well regarded as getting into … political or intellectual activities. It was frowned upon. Only in the last twenty years has it become revered. So, I didn't do much sports at all'. I say 'Well, I find that interesting, cause I've always heard about the huge amount of working-class football clubs that there was in Ardoyne.' He nods and says 'Yes, oh yes, but that, this was actually in the fifties, that was true in the fifties. As soon as the Troubles broke out in the sixties, it all died out. There weren't that many sports teams during the Troubles. It was seen as a waste of time'.

For Daniel, sports were not as prevalent during the conflict as no facilities were available. More importantly, it was not well regarded because of the "seriousness" of the community's situation, but also because of the relation between sports as specialised activities, and sport as a general pastime for children. Only in recent years did the transformation of the area's situation was judged to allow more commitment to sports.

By now, this increasing access to sport has become an integral part of local communities' revival. It lies behind the popular idea whereby engaging young people in sporting activity will help them stay away from both drugs and violent activities, and from engaging within sectarianism and overly communitarian networks. The Upper-Ardoyne Youth Club, during the time it was active, was mainly engaged in sports summer camps and sports trips. Sports which came to be practised by both communities would offer occasions for common social events. In the summer of 2018, when the local Marrowbone Park saw a new surge in antisocial behaviour and organised sectarian fights, the local organisations, city council and executive agents as well as representative of sporting organisations set up a task group to find new solutions and alleviate the issue. As I followed their weekly meetings, setting up sports events were always amongst leading solutions in order to 'claim back' the park:

> Youth Club Rep. – 'You need families to be there, they need to feel supported. Remember, some of them have been living here for a long time, they've been here 20 plus years, and many told me it's the first time they ever walked in the park on a Saturday night. There is a good inertia here and we need to keep that going. We need to maintain that on Saturday nights, and use all the organisations around the table […].'
> City Council Rep. – 'We mentioned something with the pitch last time, I think we really should be working on that.'
> Sport NI Rep. – 'Yes we can do something here. We have the 'Everybody active' project, so we can work something out if you have guys on the ground to do recruitment, then we can organise soccer, rugby, have some activities to engage the girls as well, but we can definitely get the coaches up there to deliver.' […]
> Youth Club Rep. — 'So, we would organise the outreach with kids beforehand, and then you'd come in, work the activities, link the winners, and maybe we could have different teams from across city if we have enough people?'
> *Sport NI Rep.*– 'Yes that would work. And again, if you engage with the boys, the girls

> probably won't go out and do antisocial on their own anyway. So yes, we can do football tournament, just get them from the areas, and get them to compete […] But so where are they coming from [*the teenagers engaged in Anti-Social Behaviour*]?'
> Youth Club. — 'All over really, New lodge, Newtonards…'
> Sports NI. — 'So from one side of the community?'
> Youth Club. — 'No, no, we have Dundonald, Ormaugh as well'.
> Sports NI – 'OK cause we could also work with our cross-community sports and art programme'.

This is an example of how promoting access to sport is used to solve practical tensions within the area. It diverts the groups of young people towards an activity during which they can compete and where they can use the urban space without engaging in unregulated violent behaviour. Both the Youth Club and the Sports NI representatives argue that the use of sporting activities greatly facilitates the engagement with 'problematic' elements of the community, whilst also allowing the wider group of residents to feel 'safer' in the park. This gradually leads them to try and formalise this diversion effort into a cross-community programme, one that emphasise the commonality of sporting competition.

These attempts at reaching commonality through sport is central in the conception of the peace process held by more detached actors. In 2014, the €54.7m invested on youth by the 2014–2020 tranche of the EU's *Peace* programme aimed primarily at 'an increase in the percentage of 16-year-olds who socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community'[1]. Sport is also central to the programmes put in place by Belfast City Council for North Belfast, aiming at improving both 'levels of fitness and well-being' and 'sense of community and pride'[2]. The massive public policy put in place by the Department for Communities, *'Uniting Communities through Sports and Creativities',* is now one of the primary sources of funding for Ardoyne's community groups. Other sporting organisations put an even more neutral depiction of sports and of its aim, and 'seem to take the view that by formally including Community Relations as an area for development within their sports they are tacitly admitting that sectarian problems exist therein'[3]. Instead, the aim of sports group remains 'to win as many medals as possible, regardless of which side of the community they come from'[4]. In both cases, according to this second ideal of sportization, it should allow either for sports teams to indistinctly gather members of both communities, or for sports teams which

[1] European Territorial Cooperation Programme Ireland-United Kingdom and (Northern Ireland – Border Region of Ireland), *Citizens' Summary: PEACE IV Programme (2014-2020)*, Belfast, Special EU Programmes Body, 2016, p. 5.
[2] Urban Villages, *Ardoyne & Greater Ballysilan. North Belfast Strategic Framework*, Belfast, The Executive Office, 2016, p. 132.
[3] John P. Sugden and Scott Harvie, *Sport and Community Relations in Northern Ireland*, Coleraine, University of Ulster, 1995. Conclusion.
[4] *Ibid.* Conclusion.

are implicitly affiliated with one community to confront one another on the field following a set of rules which they accept to be the official and neutral reasons for their encounter. Even more, this may in turn allow communities to voice their internal fragmentation more openly[1]. This differs greatly from the pacifying sportization which sees in sport a way to nurture the historical equivalence by other means.

This dynamic faces its own lot of obstacles, which are describable through the ambivalence of actors regarding the 'neutral' and 'international' dynamics of sports. For example, in Ardoyne, the slow move which led more and more residents to support international football clubs was not without causing concerns to some residents, especially when this implied supporting English clubs. As Conor, the local republican activist, told me in June 2019:

> [We are talking about the current Champions' League] Then Conor adds 'And I was really impressed, see with the final coming up with, between Liverpool and Tottenham… You'd be driving around the area and seeing all the people having fucking flags out for the Reds of Liverpool, all the flags in gardens. What the fuck is going on?' He whispers those different 'Fuck' intended to convey surprise, as If to play out his reaction whilst he was in the car driving by. He continues 'We're a mini-England here or what? And all of them people had flags of red and white, on houses, where they would never fly a tricolour from their house you know. All these people, I have never seen them put a tricolour for Easter. Two English teams. What the fuck.' I nod and say that it reminds me that one could say the same about Celtic and Rangers being so big here, even though they are two British teams. Conor nods but adds 'Well… I think the case of Rangers and Celtic is a bit different now, cause there is a whole history of people emigrating from here in the 1800s, they were massively travelling over there, and it was all about an Irish priest there setting up the team, well I know for Celtic anyway, to run a charity in the Irish community. And it has always been linked with the Irish. The people supporting Celtic here would put a Tricolour out for Easter. So, I can understand why people feel a connection there. They are invested in it. Even Rangers for the Protestant community you know. It's not about football. Whereas the English teams are just… […] People here should remember their history before all of that is gone and we can't come back in time… it's disappearing you know.' He makes a downhill gesture with his hand.

This time, the symmetrical risk is pointed out by actors whose ambivalence is strongly reinforced by the growing internationalisation of sports. Local residents, by supporting English teams, are deemed not to realise the slow undercurrent in which they are hereby engaging, one that takes them closer to England and further away from the consciousness of their community's history, and their historical links with the rest of the United Kingdom. It is that risk that is denounced by some local actors, one that is inherent to the increasing sporting interdependencies. Still, Conor insists that he does not 'have anything against football': the other part of his ambivalence pushes him to recognise that it is no longer acceptable to

[1] Jonathan Magee, 'Football supporters, rivalry and Protestant fragmentation in Northern Ireland' in Alan Bairner (ed.), *Sport and the Irish: Histories, Identities, Issues*, Dublin, Ireland, UCD Press, 2005,. Chapter 11.

completely oppose this engagement with international sporting dynamics. Nor is this autarky something that he would even find desirable. For Conor, the Old Firm is precisely the right balance in engaging with international sporting dynamics and ‘remembering their history’.

Even for actors who are actively engaged within globalised sports, it proves to be a tense balance. The ‘international neutral’ and the ‘community centred’ approach to sports are still deeply intertwined, and push actors further towards a reflexive handling of the balance between the two. Let us take the case of a Celtic fan originating from West Belfast but who has lived in Ardoyne, and became an international football agent. In July 2019, this agent was talking in front of a dozen Celtic fans who had gathered in a pub in North Belfast. The agent told of his childhood memories of going to games in Glasgow with some other Ardoyne fans. When he became an agent, he tended to work more with the Celtic FC:

> ‘So a whole lot of Celtic players came on board, and then someone said to me “Listen, you’re a Celtic supporter from the Falls road and you only bring in Celtic players, this isn’t good you know, cause you’re reporting to be open and welcoming and so on, but your company doesn’t exactly welcome too many! So you’re probably better off working out and trying to sign a Rangers player” [everybody in the bar laugh, then he laughs too] Just ‘saying it’ is easy, now you have to put it into practice, you have to put … you have to put what you preach into practice!’ So I thought, well there’s probably nobody better than Kyle Laffery [people laugh and whistle] So I signed Kyle Laffery, and ended up probably representing five Rangers players. Hmm, did my whole dealings with Rangers just like I would have done with Celtic, sat at Rangers games, watched Rangers games. Very strange, surreal, you know, feeling, sort of that was for someone who was a Celtic diehard.’

Engaging further within the specialised network of football, including with members of the Rangers Football Club, reinforced the agent’s ambivalence. But this also led him to further consider the other players like ‘any other players’ in order to professionally engage with them. In return, this transformed how he presented his Celtic identity, going from a simple community based affiliation, to one that could be presented as based on political ideals of inclusivity, tolerance, ‘left-wing’ politics and so one. Wider moral elements which rendered the Old Firm more justifiable in increasing networks of global interdependencies and neutral sports, turning the ambivalence into positions which would make senses for detached actors, unfamiliar with the Old Firm. During the event, for example, this turned into a class-based criticism, whereby incentives towards globalising and neutral sports were seen as upper classes’ attempts to economically profit both from conflict and from the reintegration of footballers fans[1].

[1] See Davide Sterchele, ‘Fertile land or mined field? Peace-building and ethnic tensions in post-war Bosnian football’, *Sport in Society*, 1 October 2013, vol. 16, no. 8, p. 973-992. This relate with common criticisms of sports, notably at the end of the 19th century, for being a veiled disciplinarisation of workin classes.

Thomas, the representative of the Ardoyne Rangers Supporters Club, has operated similar displacements, though leading to a different diagnostic. For him, accusing the Old Firm of being a politically driven enmity, whereas other international football clubs should be taken as examples of strictly neutral sporting rivalry, does not stand:

> 'I mean Rangers players play for Scotland, their own team. Their own fans boo them, because… Scottish fans would be very nationalists, they would be very SNP, nationalist orientated, cause obviously… Politics, well politics is involved in nearly every club of the world! Barcelona is probably the biggest you know what I mean, so there's politics in all sports… But they actually boo their own players if they played for Rangers. And you're like [he stops, pretending to be confused] … what the fuck is wrong with these people?' [he laughs]. There's no, see, see I don't care, I mean you look at Hamburg, and St Pauli, Hamburg is a wee Protestant town and St Pauli is a wee Catholic town, they hate each other, Barcelona and Real Madrid, Ajax and flipping, look, Jesus, look at them Argentinian teams, they're nuts! And that's how that war started over in, you know the war between the Serbs and the Croats. That started off from a football game, did you know that?'

Thomas rejected the idea that complying to supposedly neutral sporting dynamics would bring pacification by allowing detachment from political communities. Rather than dividing actors in terms of unequivocal resistance or adhesion to the idea of sporting neutrality, he depicted the various ambivalent equivalence in which different sports teams are taken. Turning to history, he then presented the South American and the Yugoslavian examples and presented sporting incidents as the causes of dramatic political tensions. By this, he argued that conflictual dynamics pervade 'international neutral modern' sport as well, even though the UEFA and other international sporting organisations impose demands of tolerance, neutrality and detachment out of local Catholic and Protestant communities when it comes to the Old Firm. He denounced the lack of realism of those who demand – or claim that they already manage – the complete disjointing of the equivalence between sporting rivalry and political oppositions. In so doing, Thomas's view differed from Conor's, despite them being two radical members of their communities. Indeed, where Conor saw in international sports dynamics a risk of diluting the local community ethos, Thomas argues that international sports dynamics are, in fact, just as communitarian and conflictual as the Old Firm, and are only concealing it. He then normalises the Northern Irish situation.

Finally, this sportization out of faces yet another obstacle, the most common. It is the idea that sports, judged as trivial activities, cannot possibly be enough to solve a war. For most actors, efforts at using sports as a means of detachment from community conflict, be they commendable or laughable, are not enough. The 'non-serious' transformation which appears on a sporting pitch is deemed insufficient to resolve the social issues faced by areas such as Ardoyne and Upper-Ardoyne. As expressed by a worker of a local women's group in 2013:

> '[The people promoting cross-community programmes] are putting all their eggs into sport and really a lot of the conflict and a lot of stuff that happens here on the interfaces and a lot of our young people – most of the ones that's on those interfaces and most of the ones that's doing a lot of the antisocial behaviour stuff, don't play sport – and they're not going to play sport… So, y'know, I think there needs to be a lot more thought around what you are doing.'

Though sport has undeniably the primary benefits of 'mixing' people, it does not allow debates and discussions. As a 'good medium', it cannot stand on its own in helping social actors to become more reflexive on the social issues which divide and unite them. In addition, in Laura's eyes, focusing on sports is not addressing all the obstacles that are the very reasons why 'sports groups', as sociability network, are already facing difficulties in the first place: the alternate network of sociability in the area, deemed to be based on antisocial behaviour and in which the young people would rather engage than playing bowling or football. Those actors consider that a further engagement with the other community by means of a common sport, as a first step, should always be followed by a return towards community affiliations, under a new light. As expressed by a resident during a debate:

> 'Unless something happens with a brand-new generation, nothing'll change. I would advocate integration in play. A 3-year-old girl in Glenbryn will swing round a lamppost just like a 3-year-old girl in Ardoyne, and older ones with their Play-Stations, etc. They should grow up to see differences as normal, without all the baggage we usually add on. If I support Man City, I'll slag somebody who supports Man United, and people should be able to slag somebody who supports Rangers or Celtic without going: that means you're this, that and the other.'[1]

For this resident, playing by means of a common neutral sporting activity may be one thing, but it can only aim at becoming 'integration in play' if actors have the means to address the elephant in the room. This allows her to specify her ideals of sporting pacification, one by which residents may still claim and 'slag' each other's affiliations with the Rangers and Celtic, whilst knowing that the risk of worsening community relations is mitigated and that the two issues are, not separated, but interconnected in a way that is consciously familiar and predictable.

2.3 A new phase in long-term sportization

We have followed the attempts of local actors to seize how sports could help them in their transition towards a pacified society, and what the risks were in that process. In taking the example of the Old Firm, we saw how the equivocation between 'community rivalry' and

[1] Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Beginning a debate. An exploration by Ardoyne community activists*, Belfast, Island Publications, 2003, p. 18.

'sporting rivalry' led to some conflictual excesses. Some actors strove for the complete disarticulation of those dimensions, and others argued that they could informally regulate the relevance of those two dimensions in a variety of contexts. The same applied when tensions occurred more generally in debates around how sports could support the transition towards a more pacified Northern Irish society, either by ensuring the maintaining of a specific 'community spirit' inherited from conflict but devoid of harmful aim, or by aiming at a globalised, international and neutral ideal of sportsmanship and sporting regulations.

These problems are inherent to the sportization process. It is to this long-term process that actors refer when they argue that they wish to return to 'normal sporting rivalry', and to be subject to rules akin to those applied in England, Germany, France or Spain. In their work on sports, Elias and Dunning stress a co-occurrence that is everything but coincidental: in 18th century England, the social groups which formalised sports were also at the heart of the transformation of political competitions which would lead to the institutionalisation of parlementarism. As such, based on the same transformation of the personal control of aggression, 'parlementarisation and sportization are two parallel movements which mutually comfort one another'[1]. Those twin evolutions came at a time when the political society of the United Kingdom was trying to overcome the consequences of a revolution. Competing social groups were struggling to regain bases for trusting one another. The reorganisation of their tense interdependencies went hand in hand with the form of 'controlled competition' that would give rise to the sportization of leisure: 'As both sides gradually lost their distrust of each other and gave up relying on violence and the skills connected with it, they learned instead, and in fact they developed, the new skills and strategies required by a non-violent type of contest'[2]. It is tempting to see similarities with the parlementarisation/sportization of post-conflict Northern Ireland in the 21st century. Both have to do with the transformation of a divided society whose groups have to come to terms with their collaborative aspirations, whilst managing their relative distrust towards one another. Just as 'pastimes with the characteristics of sport grew into shape in England in connection with the coming down of a cycle of violence and its resolution into a

[1] Christian Le Bart, 'N. Elias, E. Dunning, Sport et civilisation, la violence maîtrisée ; J. Defrance, Sociologie du sport ; A.-M. Waser, Sociologie du tennis, genèse d'une crise', *Revue française de science politique*, 1996, vol. 46, no. 6, p. 1006.

[2] N. Elias and E. Dunning, *Quest for excitement*, *op. cit.*, p. 34. Though historians have tended to associate it with Irish nationalism, the birth of the GAA, just like the other initiatives of that period, also relied on the overall 'Victorian Sports Revolution'. See Tom Hunt, *Sport And Society In Victorian Ireland: The Case of Westmeath*, Cork, Ireland, Cork University Press, 2008, 357 p ; N. Garnham, 'Accounting for the early success of the Gaelic Athletic Association', *Irish Historical Studies*, May 2004, vol. 34, no. 133, p. 65-78.

non-violent political contest according to rules’[1], the changes in sporting dynamics in Northern Ireland accompanied the transformation of the conflict between Catholic and Protestants.

The fact that the peace process has opened a period of reflexive debates and political reforms aimed at regulating the excess of sportization represents a new step in this process. In short, secondary detachment separates 17th from 21st sportization. What our examples have shown us is that actors engaged in the peace process, both at the local level and amongst State groups, are at least partially aware of the plurality of social effects induced by sportization. The Old Firm example showed us how this increased reflexivity occurred gradually since the end of the 19th century. But the entire period of the peace process has produced a new way to approach this issue. As mentioned in the Community Relations Council’s global Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report in 2018, meant to measure the progress of the peace process:

> ‘In a divided society such as NI, sport can provide an interesting insight into the state of relations between the two main communities. While sport has the capacity to unite people in a common cause it can often act as a useful indicator of the underlying tensions that remain. Back in the summer of 2016, fans of both NI and Republic of Ireland soccer were able to enjoy their teams reaching the European Championship Finals (Euros) in France for the first time. In sport, success can also be measured off the field of play and the positive impact of thousands of Irish fans, both North and South, was recognised when they were awarded the Medal of the City of Paris by the Mayor for their “enthusiasm, jolliness … fair play … exemplary sportsmanship”.’[2]

The co-dependency between political affiliations and sporting dynamics is not only acknowledged but becomes a concern of research and regulation, since it offers an indicator both of the uniting capacities and of the remaining tensions between social groups. This, and the various public policies we have mentioned, mark a shift in the political project surrounding sports. What was a series of ‘unplanned’ social transformations in the 18th century now undergoes attempts of planned institutionalisation. Similarly, the ‘sportsmanship’ displayed by citizens, as a form of increasingly informal self-control, is taken as an indicator for pacification. It occurs, however, at a lower level of integration, and at a higher level of reflexivity.

This higher planning effort regarding sportization only aggregates in State policies in so far as it articulates the aspiration of social groups in Northern Ireland, both Protestants and Catholics. And as we have seen in our different examples, they can also voice this observation when they are given the occasion. For example, during the Anti-Sectarian courses given by the Tascit charity to different residents in June 2019, the participants were asked to list all the

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[1] N. Elias and E. Dunning, *Quest for excitement*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
[2] A.M.G. Gray et al., *The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report - Number Five*, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

domains that, they believed, could be attached to the idea of ‘sectarianism’. It is in this context that the issue of sport was mentioned:

> Mark [*the worker from the Shankill road*] adds ‘Another thing we didn’t put on the board, what about sports? What about Celtic and Rangers?’. The people in the room say ‘Yes, yes’. Mark continues ‘People become sectarian because of football, when you think about those teams, or even when I think about how I support Linfield…’ to which, at the same time Emma adds ‘See, sports really plays a big part in it, I’m sectarian whenever it comes down to Liverpool and Manchester United!’ Mark nods and continues by saying that ‘But It’s only certain sports though, because, you look at rugby for example, every Friday everyone can come together to get around Ulster Rugby, so they can…’. To this, Daniel answers ‘Well, I don’t really agree with that … it may have changed a bit, but I remember when I was in school, rugby and hockey clearly wasn’t for me. Rugby was seen as a middle-class sport… Really it was more a middle-class issue, than a national thing.’ The Old Man from Tiger Bay comes in and says that ‘Same for unionist areas, it was a middle-class thing’. Then Nina jumps in the conversation and adds, in a contending tone ‘But my son plays Rugby, he used to be playing for the school team!’ Phillis says something to her, and at the same time Daniel says that ‘Of course, it happens, I just wanted to say, on the whole, it was something from the other world…’ Nancy, adds ‘Well anyway, football causes racism’ and Daniel has to answer ‘Well … you need to be careful as well because you could be saying the same thing for every sport really…’

In this sequence, residents from both communities debate which sports are most implied in the reproduction of sectarian mechanisms and end up discussing the fact that, even in the case of sports which appear to overcome the rivalry between Catholic and Protestant communities, a class stratification applies. But this also leads them to clarify the two other risks that go with the higher reflexivity on this dynamic. They remind each other that there would be a risk in taking this as a rule applying to every individual – in which case Nina could not make sense of the investment of her son in Rugby – or to every sport – in which case residents such as Nancy would reduce every sporting activity to a renewal of racism, muffling the form of detachment induced in the sportization of rivalry. They trendily become aware of their ambivalence, and of a greater expectation to manage their double aspiration. As worded by Heaney, they increasingly wish their division ‘to become a bit more like the net on a tennis court, a demarcation allowing for agile give-and-take, for encounter and contending, prefiguring a future where the vitality that flowed in the beginning from those bracing words “enemy” and “allies” might finally derive from a less binary and altogether less binding vocabulary’[1].

Let us note that it would be misleading to argue that social actors have simply accessed a greater and more reflexive control of social processes. Instead, in the case of the Old Firm,

[1] Seamus Heaney, *Nobel Lecture : Crediting Poetry*, Stockholm, The Nobel Prize in Literature, 1995.

neither local actors nor social scientists agree on whether the playing out of the community antagonism on the pitch worsens or lessens the social issue that this antagonism represents.

Some social scientists argue that the maintenance of the Old Firm is an effective palliative measure and allows sectarian tensions to have less dramatic consequences. According to sportsperson, politician and journalist Matthew Syed, in the 1980s, the globalisation and commercialisation of football turned sectarianism into 'a pretext for a cherished ritual' of 'football, the historic vehicle for aggressive tribalism […] and this is why the animosity, however heated within the confines of the stadium, was temporary'[1]. The 'theatre of spite' described by Syed is then entirely seen as a adaptation movement in the face of an increasing globalisation of sports. Though a particularly strategic interpretation of the transformation that took place[2], it is still one which argues that the Old Firm helps constrain animosity in time and space, pacifying the rest of political society. As a case of 'Divided we stand', the temporary division was seen as an agreed form of integration between the two social groups, who desire to remain somehow in conflict even though they cannot deny the fact that they are becoming increasingly interdependent[3]. Similarly, as summarised by Andrew Davies, Bill Murray saw the Celtic and Rangers rivalry as an effective displacement of 'sectarian hatreds in the relatively harmless atmosphere of a football match'[4]. Sean Damer argues that the 'ritual expression of hostility' within the Old Firm prevented street violence, whilst Tom Gallagher considered that it ' may have been a useful tension-releasing valve'[5]. Similarly, G.P.T. Finn[6] and Steve Bruce[7] 'have suggested that football matches simply become an avenue in which ill-feeling can be vented, thus allowing good relations to exist between many fans in "everyday" life'[8]. An approach which has been explored by the Sport for Development and Peace sector[9].

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[1] Matthew Syed, 'Culture of fandom behind foul chants in theatres of spite', *The Times*, 7 December 2012, p. 54.

[2] Arguing that radical supporters decided to manufacture new "reasons" to behave the way they did.

[3] This matters because the works which have analysed the role of sports in the Northern Irish peace process have often focus on how the unity of Catholics and Protestant in common national teams was central in creating a sense of national solidarity. See for example Alan Bairner, 'Sport, the Northern Ireland peace process, and the politics of identity', *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research*, 1 January 2013, vol. 5, no. 4, p. 220-229.

[4] Bill Murray, *The Old Firm: Sectarianism, Sport and Society in Scotland*, Edinburgh, John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1984, p. 139, quoted in A. Davies, 'Football and Sectarianism in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s', art cit., p. 201.

[5] Tom Gallagher, *Glasgow the Uneasy Peace: Religious Tension in Modern Scotland, 1819-1914*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p. 3.

[6] Gerry P.T. Finn, 'Football violence: a societal psychological perspective.', *Football, violence and social identity*, 1994, p. 90-127. For more case studies sustaining this argument, see Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (eds.), *Fear and loathing in world football*, New York, Berg. Oxford, 2001, XIV, 304 p.

[7] Steve Bruce, 'Comparing Scotland and Northern Ireland', *Scotland's Shame? Bigotry and Sectarianism in Modern Scotland*, 3 April 2000, p. 135-142.

[8] P. Millward, 'Glasgow Rangers Supporters in the City of Manchester', art cit., p. 383.

[9] Richard Giulianotti, 'Sport, Transnational Peacemaking, and Global Civil Society: Exploring the Reflective Discourses of "Sport, Development, and Peace Project" Officials', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 1 February 2011, vol. 35, no. 1, p. 50-71.

On the other side of the court, some argue that this is a naïve view. Andrew Davies maintains that the Old Firm has been a key in the increase of sectarian hostilities in Glasgow during the 20th century[1], whilst Franklin Foer sees it as 'an unfinished fight over the Protestant Reformation'[2]. This is in line with the view of many observers and more moderate members of the Protestant and Catholic communities, for whom the collective gathering of supporters leads to an uncontrolled display of impulses. As mentioned by a Scottish judge in 1934, 'the spirit of faction frequently carries away people who are otherwise respectable'[3]. Similarly, women's groups see the maintenance of deleterious forms of antagonism and masculinity within the supporters' club as a central obstacle to the peace process, given that 'men's groups like the Orange Order or Rangers or Celtic clubs have fed divisive political parties if not directly into paramilitaries'[4] – something which Alan Bairner has also stressed by showing how those interdependencies reinforced hegemonic masculinity[5]. David Hassan as similarly repeatedly stressed how football was instrumentalised by nationalists to put forward political ideals[6]. All these comments put to the test the ritual compartmentation of social phenomena by showing the continuum of aggression existing in complex configurations, especially in time of conflict[7]. Yet, in so doing, those authors also often reduce those issues to a 'male working-class culture' of 'heavy drinking, sexism and profanity' without describing tensions and ambivalence, nor providing solutions for the divide that such blame is bound to provoke.

Whether the Old Firm act as a pressure valve or as a lighting match is still up for dispute. Whilst this problem may have exhausted specialists in British and Scottish sports[8], it is precisely this ambivalence which takes up actors' attention[9]. Hence, to understand this ambivalence and how it is regulated, we propose to understand how the tensions between framing sportization as a detached palliative to social antagonisms, and sportization as an added support for antagonisms, is rooted in an overall tension regarding the meaning and interpretation of ritual

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[1] A. Davies, 'Football and Sectarianism in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s', art cit.
[2] Franklin Foer, *How Football Explains the World*, London, Arrow, 2006, p. 35.
[3] *Evening Times,* 4 June 1934, quoted in A. Davies, A. Davies, 'Football and Sectarianism in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s', art cit., p. 218.
[4] A. Donahoe, 'Wee Women's Work', art cit., p. 268.
[5] Alan Bairner, 'Soccer, Masculinity, and Violence in Northern Ireland: Between Hooliganism and Terrorism', *Men and Masculinities*, 1 January 1999, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 284-301.
[6] David Hassan, 'A People Apart: Soccer, Identity and Irish Nationalists in Northern Ireland', *Soccer & Society*, 1 September 2002, vol. 3, no. 3, p. 65-83.
[7] Elizabeth G. Ferris, *Women, War and Peace*, Uppsala, Life & Peace Institute, 1993 ; Adèle Blazquez, 'The continuum of women's abduction in Mexico. Porosities between sexual and armed violence in a drug-producing area (Badiraguato, Sinaloa)', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 19 March 2021.
[8] M.L. Mcdowell and M. Taylor, *A Cultural History of Association Football in Scotland, 1865-1902*, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
[9] Sugden has already noted that sports were taken between 'peacemaker and warmonger', see John Sugden, 'Sport and community relations in Northern Ireland and Israel' in Alan Bairner (ed.), *Sport and the Irish: Histories, Identities, Issues*, Dublin, Ireland, UCD Press, 2005, p. Chapter 15.

acts. The socio-historical evolution of social life which is at the basis of 'sports' is intimately linked with what lay at the heart of 'sport' as game: the ritualised dimension of social interactions. As Gregory Bateson put it in his analysis on rituals and play:

> 'What is characteristic of "play" is that this is a name for contexts in which the constituent acts have a different sort of relevance and organisation from that which they would have in non-play. It may even be that the essence of play lies in a partial denial of the meanings that the actions would have had in other situations.'[1]

This characteristic of 'play', 'sport' and 'sports', is at the basis of most of the disputes we have analysed until now. It is the spring of disputes on the seriousness of sectarian symbols and actions on the pitch, on the risks of sporting rivalry, or of the defence of the '90 minutes bigots' stance.

What I would like to argue now is that it is this characteristic of play and of most actions related to sports which creates a tension, as it nurtures the possibility for all of those acts to be potentially framed either as 'actions following the rules within the game', 'ritualised actions', 'anti-structure' or 'actions following the rules of social life', 'everyday actions', 'structure'. This allows us to better understand the debates between those who believe that the Old Firm was a means to pacify sectarianism, and those who believe that it only reinvigorates sectarianism. The first emphasise the fact that ritualised actions can always be understood by social actors – with enough contextualisation or convincing – as moves played within the game, with detachment from the rules that would otherwise be applied in the everyday conduct of social life. This conception runs the risk of 'reifying' the gap between social opposition and ritual opposition, without supporting its regulation through devices or through an increased self-control amongst players and supporters. The second authors, who argue that sportization fuels sectarianism, emphasise the fact that actions can always be understood and taken as reasons to act *as if* they were moves in social life naturally based on a social antagonism, and not just as moves based on a 'detached' stance regarding this antagonism. Which often leads them to see it as too dangerous altogether, as 'the dividing line separating play and none-play, memetic and real battles may become blurred'[2]. This time, this position runs the risk of enforcing too strong a control on the players and supporters[3].

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[1] Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Cresskill, N.J, Bantam Book, 1980, p. 139–151.
[2] N. Elias and E. Dunning, *Quest for excitement*, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
[3] Hence, both sets of authors forget the central interest of studying sporting configurations: 'Some sociological theories are woven around problems of conflict and tension without much regard for those of co-operation and integration ; others pay regard above all to problems of co-operation and integration, treating conflict and tension more or less as marginal phenomena […] A study of sport-games is thus a useful point of departure for an approach to these problems which may allow the passions to calm down. […] In football, co-operation presupposes tension, and tension co-operation.' *Ibid.*, p. 196.

In order to better understand this key characteristic of sporting interactions in post-conflict society, that of being traversed by a 'dividing line between play and none-play' which may separate sporting rivalry from community rivalry, we finally turn towards ritualisation.

3. Ritualisation as the possible reappropriation of political ambivalence

Like sporting rivalry, many other social antagonisms have undergone similar equivocation during the Troubles. This has been at the basis of the triangle tying the unionist/nationalist, British/Irish, Protestant/Catholic antagonisms together. Yet, now, as we have seen in all our chapters, actors are facing a double aspiration between renewing and deconstructing those rivalries. Sportization and ritualisation are some of the practical gears and historical tendencies upon which social actors rest when they participate in the slow pluralisation of the social space which problematise those equivalence. Ritualisation is the practical posture which allows for those contradictory aspirations to temporarily coexist in a complementary way, without completely shattering the 'grammar' of social life, of its rules and of its principle of coherence[1]. As Humphrey and Laidlaw have already argued extensively:

> 'The pivotal transformation which ritualisation effects is to sever the link, which is present in everyday life, between the actors' intentions and the identity of the acts they perform. Commonly when this happens in everyday life, when you say something you do not intend to say, for example, it is a mistake. But ritual action is anything but a mistake: one of the definitive features of ritual is the *consistent* displacement of intentional meaning.'[2]

We would like to stress that this process is never complete and always relatively indeterminate. It is only by the response of social groups surrounding actors engaged in ritualisation that one can assess if it has indeed been considered a ritual action. Whether a fight on the pitch should be related to the antagonism between Celtic and Rangers FC or between Catholics and Protestants communities – and therefore, to intentions. Indeed, we would argue that Humphrey and Laidlaw are overly detached from the course of actual actions when they argue that 'in reproducing ritual acts, celebrants are no longer engaged in the constantly renewed compromise of everyday life whereby people endlessly adapt to new circumstances

[1] Cyril Lemieux, *Le Devoir et la Grâce, op. cit.*

[2] Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 260. It is therefore not surprising that 'Sport' and 'Sports' comes from the Old French *desporter* [des-porter] which literally means 'displace'.

and attempt to turn them into familiar habits’[1]. The ‘dividing line’ separating ritual acts and everyday acts is nowhere that hermetic, and is subject both to contextual and historical negotiations. When a football player faces accusations of really meaning what he did when he followed the rules of the game which allowed him to push an opponent, actors engaged in rituals acts can in the blink of an eye be judged based on the rules of everyday life. Rather than reifying the gap implied in ritualisation, we should start analysing its collective and continual stabilisation. After having sketched the problem in the case of the Old Firm rivalry, we return to three cases that are more commonly referred to as ‘rituals’ in North Belfast.

3.1 Attempts at managing the dual nature of symbols

Most flags, emblems, songs in use in Northern Ireland have long been considered symbols attached to either the Catholic or the Protestant community[2]. However, in recent years, they have been more reflexively considered as ‘symbols’, with more policies and local programmes openly aiming at the regulation of this symbolic nature. Flags are a good example. In 2018, when discussing the fact that flags were always put up on lampposts around summertime in the area, I asked Mac if it was the case during the Troubles, he told me ‘Yes, yes, even more … but the difference was that they posted it on their houses, not on lampposts. Back then everyone had a flag holder, now most of them don’t, except for that fellow in Glenbryn who always has three of them’. He was referencing a house in Upper Ardoyne where the resident often flies a Union Jack, an Ardoyne Ranger Football Club flag, and a UVF flag, something that is now considered unusual. Similarly, in June 2019, a local Interface worker was putting in perspective the surprising increase of flags in Ardoyne and Upper Ardoyne:

> ‘You need to remember that those flags are never, well in most cases, we find that they’re not being put up by residents here, but just by some individuals who are passing by or who put flags in the whole area. The Soldier F flags were not put up by residents … what residents would be doing is not lampposts, people would put flags on their house, you’d see the Tricolour that someone would put out at their window. And that, I think that, we have seen the numbers reduce completely. If you go around Twaddell or in Ardoyne you won’t see any flags on houses, I’m not talking about the lampposts, but the houses you won’t, or very few. Years ago you used to see them everywhere.’

In the last thirty years, the idea of constantly having a flag displayed on one’s house, instead of flying it at specific times under specific rituals circumstances, has been problematised. Residents consider the fact of permanently displaying community symbols as excessive. This displacement has been accompanied by progressive institutional changes, both

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Neil Jarman, ‘Material of culture, fabric of identity’ in *Material cultures. Why some things matter*, London, University College London Press, 1998, p. 121-147.

in regulating[1] and in educating policies. As such, those transformations became gradually apparent in public controversies. The infamous Flag Protests, into which residents of Upper Ardoyne and North Belfast were heavily invested, is a central example of that. In December 2012, Belfast City Council decided to change the rules guiding the display of the Union Jack on the city hall building. Whilst it used to fly every day, the City Council decided to restrict the flag's display to a few days every year – aligning itself with the regulation in place throughout the rest of the United Kingdom. By this decision, the City Council was reinforcing the displaced meaning of the flag as a symbol, by increasing the formalisation of the *timeframe* during which it was possible to openly refer to the flag as an open manifestation of a community spirit – just like the formalisation of sports had done for the community rivalry. This decision participated in considering the use and mention of this flag as a ritual, demanding a certain form of detachment from everyday activities. However, the unionist community rapidly manifested its discontent with the decision, prompting numerous protests and several political campaigns. This was one of the reasons for the increase in flags in unionist areas in the rest of Belfast. Seven years after that, in May 2019, residents of North Belfast were tackling the subject in a debate workshop. The coordinator asked them if they felt the flag should be there:

> The two men on the right – the Cap man and the Old man – from Tiger's Bay start explaining that 'It is dead simple, it is an official building, and see if you were to go in the US and walk in the Capitol building in Washington you would see an American flag. Well here it's the same, the building represents the official city council of Belfast which is part of the administration of the United Kingdom, so the flag is on it.' He waits for a second and then adds 'See, I don't have any problems with people flying their flags, I will entirely respect the Tricolour when I am in the Republic, and same for Palestine or what, but here, this is our national flag, end of.' Dolores then answers by saying 'I understand that really, I see where you're coming from, but this is Ireland, we're on the island of Ireland you see.' The Older man answers 'You can hang the Tricolour any time, at any of your windows, I really don't mind. People can do that, I'm not stopping you. But that's [he shows the Union Jack on the screen] the flag of this [he points at the ground] country'. Emma intervenes 'But that's not my flag.', Old Man 'It is', Emma 'But I'm Irish, the flag of my country is the Tricolour.', and the Old man 'No your flag is the Union Jack' […] Then the young man says 'But you know you have to, you have to respect this, I'm the first to say this, there are things changing and when the time come you have to go with the flow, you know. A hundred percent. So if the majority of this place goes in this direction I will not oppose it… I'll just be happy to go back to Britain you know! I'll be going back to Newcastle!' And the Old man nods 'Yes Yes'. Emma says 'Yes well it's your right, that's up to you!' but at the same time, rapidly, the coordinator starts to say 'But we don't *want* you to go, is the thing'. The Old man adds that Arlene will not be going anywhere though, that's for sure!' And people laugh at that.
>
> [At the end of the workshop, when the mediator asks them how the felt about it] The Old man turns to Emma and says 'I like the debate the we had, I felt it was a good discussion!' She then turns to him, points her fingers at him and says 'Yes, yes that was good'. They both nod as the coordinator write this down on the table. Other people nod. Then the young man joins in and says 'Yes, I did

[1] See A. C. Hepburn, 'Flags and Emblems (Display) Act' in *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. and Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, *The Display of Flags, Symbols and Emblems in Northern Ireland*, Belfast, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, 2013.

too, because I found someone who is as passionate about their beliefs and their country as I am, and I like that'.

This exchange surrounding the issue of the flags presents a very important sequence of action. The fact that the nature of the symbol has been shifting towards ritualisation has opened a source of uncertainty on the demarcation that it conveys. Despite the fact that this brings the Belfast rules and regulation in line with the protocol defended in the many other city councils in the rest of the United Kingdom, the unionist members see that as abandonment of the sense of the symbol. Nationalist residents see this as an occasion to defend that the signs never conveyed the meaning that the unionist residents care to defend. At this stage of the discussion, however, both sets of residents are not detached enough from the origin of this regulation and the sense of its transformation to conclude anything else that the reaffirmation of a stronger will to separate – 'I'll be happy to go back to Britain' – at which point the coordinator intervenes, given how it opposes the integrative objective of the workshop. Yet, partly conscious that this is only a step in the dialogic process, the two residents later confirm that they are mutually satisfied by their exchange, given how it gave them the occasion to assert in a new light, and in a more pacified manner, the origin and the extent of their discord.

As such, controversies such as this one can lead to the renegotiation of forms of affiliation. This means that they have also been more openly debated as being 'cold' or 'hot' symbols, that is, signs where the dividing line between their ritual meaning and their everyday meaning is clearly settled – the cold symbols – or signs where the dividing line between their ritual meaning and their everyday meaning is often disputed in situations – the hot symbols. A few weeks later, the same residents were taking part in a history field trip. We were travelling to Co. Armagh. Sitting beside the bus window as we were on a country road, one of the women turned to ask a question to the group. Nina was surprised by a flag she had just seen in a garden:

> Nina asks 'Charles, why is the Red Hand of Ulster on this flag?' [*The assumption behind this question is that the Red Hand is a unionist symbol and Crossmaglen is a notorious republican stronghold*]. Charles says 'Well, because there are two different types of hand, it's not just the red right hand, sometimes it appears somewhere else…'. Charles, leaves it at that and tells her that he'll get Declan to explain it. Alice [*A young Catholic woman from Ardoyne*] says she used to know that in school but has forgotten about it now. Charles then turns to her and says 'Is there not a GAA top with the Red Hand? But it has a whole other meaning. It has something to do with the provinces.' Alice says 'Yes, yes there is.' Charles 'Why is it?'. As Alice stays silent, Charles and Nina decide to turn to Emma, thinking she may know. They ask her 'Why was there a red hand on that one flag?'. Emma turns around and says 'It's for the provinces … but I didn't even notice it!'. Nina says she noticed it straight away […] and was just surprised about seeing it in the middle of Crossmaglen. Charles laughs and says 'That's what you find when you actually get in places you've never been to'. Now that Emma has given the answer, Alice turns to Charles and jokingly accuses him of 'stealing everything, every symbol'. Charles says 'We didn't, and sure you can talk, Saint Patrick wasn't even Irish, he was Welsh, or something!'. Alice says 'We never said we wanted him to be Irish, he's just a saint patron… And sure enough I could say the same of King Billy!' […] Charles

then asks, in a provocative tone 'Well why do you fly the tricolours on St Patrick's day if it's nothing to do with Ireland?'

A well-known symbol appears out of place, opening a discrepancy in the use of signs to delineate communities. This opens up a trial on the nature of the signs constituting the symbol. Whilst the Red Hand of Ulster is considered by residents as a typical symbol of the Protestant community, they are brought back to the fact that it originates in the coats of arms of the Gaelic province of Ulster. That is why it is still used in some areas by members of the nationalist community, who fly the ancient flag of Ulster and not the contemporaneous flag of Northern Ireland. Though they both contain the traditional red hand. By reopening the debate on the nature of this symbol, the residents are confronted with a way of approaching its composing signs which stress what they have in common. Its first effect is to blur the dividing line initially reinforced by the use of this sign as a cold symbol. Its second effect, following the debate, is to displace the dispute on the historical origins and reaffirmation of the symbols, and the mutual accusation of hypocritical communalism[1]. If residents have something in common, it opens up the possibility either of considering it as 'stolen', or as a proof that the community spirit was never such a specific spirit after all. In both cases, it has the effect of problematising present day practises of conflictualisation[2] by confronting them to the 'dissonance of their heritage'[3]. Yet, stabilising these reflexive interactions between humour and seriousness is a fine and fragile ridge path: during this trip, and even though she had engaged gleefully in this debate and in many others, Alice got into a heated argument with a unionist politician on the teaching of Irish in primary schools. During this argument, she was not supported by the organisers of the workshops, who blamed her for incautiously bringing up controversial topics. She would not return to the cross-community workshops.

In turn, third parties became increasingly aware that the management of symbols relied on the demarcation of a delimited time and space for ritualised action. In Glenbryn, the residents are quite used to this issue, which resurfaces every year and is highly controversial ever since the rise of the Holy Cross Dispute[4]. As such, around this period, the local residents' group has started to coordinate more transparently the groups of residents which had, up until now, taken

[1] Adrian Guelke, 'Northern Ireland's Flags Crisis and the Enduring Legacy of the Settler-Native Divide', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 1 January 2014, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 133-151.
[2] As witnessed here, the progressive reopening of symbols, which are 'heated' by discussions, often lead to debate having to do with the historical foundations of community relations. We will discuss this important dynamic in our final chapter.
[3] Michael Welch, 'Signs of trouble: Semiotics, streetscapes, and the Republican struggle in the North of Ireland', *Crime, Media, Culture*, 1 March 2020, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 7-32.
[4] In 2001, an altercation surrounding a Union Jack tied to a lamppost was at the origin of several months of violent protests opposing the Catholic and Protestant residents of Ardoyne.

the informal responsibility of tying flags to the lamppost every summer. In September 2018, one of the members of a local association stated on social media:

> ‘A massive well done to all the lads of Upper Ardoyne for taking down all the flags around the estate tonight. This is an unwritten protocol that the lads from the community have adopted. Put them up for July and take them down after Black Saturday. Well done! Respect the Union Flag.’

This effort was congratulated by the local DUP representative and by several residents. Members of the residents’ association are trying to make sure that the flags are not up outside of an implicitly delimited time period, whilst they used to be most of the time. During this time span, the display of those signs can be understood as being *something other* than the usual rules of the implicit code, something other than provocation. It ensures that the signs displayed are ‘cold’ and not ‘hot’ in so far as the higher formalisation of elements sustaining the demarcation line ensure that the divide between ritualised meaning and actual meaning is well set.

3.2 Torn between offending the dead and sharing the past

The type of transformation which operates with a codified sports or a symbolic garment also operates at the level of the symbolic relations of local communities with their dead. Nowadays, they are judged to be one of the primary sources of inter-community tensions given the difficulties which represents the handling of this topic[1]. First, the issue of the dead is in direct acquaintance with the issue of each community’s responsibility in their common past troubles. Second, the commemoration of the dead has reflexively come to play an important role in the maintenance of a ‘community spirit’. Given the increasing interdependencies between the two communities, and in line with the transformation observed in the other cases of ritualisation, we notice that Northern Irish feel increasingly compelled to be more reflexive about rituals if they wish to keep on commemorating their dead in a pacified society. The entire public problem of juvenile suicide was an instance of this dynamic.

A rise in reflexivity on commemoration is only becoming more necessary and more tense as it appears that the commemoration of the dead is the social locus where most varied forms of affiliation meet. For example, the commemoration of the dead members of the unionist communities during the Troubles ties and brings renewed relevance to the unionists’ investments in the footbalistic Old Firm, in 17th century Unionism, in the British military

[1] Brian Graham and Yvonne Whelan, ‘The Legacies of the Dead: Commemorating the Troubles in Northern Ireland’, *Environment and Planning : Society and Space*, 1 June 2007, vol. 25, no. 3, p. 476-495.

investment in the First World War[1], forming a complex nexus through which residents navigate with seeming ease, making connections across time and space which would appear surprising if not obscure to detached observers. Nationalists tend to do the same by placing along the same guiding thread the victims of the Hunger strike, of local terrorist attacks, of the Irish wars of Independence[2] and of the Great Famine. The actual contemporaneous practice by which actors commemorate one or the other of those groups tends to be a support to bring out the others, as an echo, and to renew the forms of social attachment which surrounds them. When I asked Thomas how he handled the fact that Rangers and Celtic fans were still asked to separate their sporting passion from political orientation, he answered that this was not the issue. Rather, 'at the end of the day', he judged that the issue came from the face that the republican movement was still active whilst the loyalist movement was inactive. However, given that both had been responsible for the death of members of the other community, the dispute would then be displaced towards the accountability of actors engaged in ritual mentions of the dead. As Thomas said :

> 'What happened was, Théo, you were going to a football game, and somebody, Protestants had been shot dead by the IRA, and then they were singing some IRA songs. And then the next time, a Catholic had been shot dead by the UVF, and we were singing UVF songs. And … it doesn't happen now, as such, although the likes of David Black and Adrien Isma were shot, not recently recently, but I mean, they're two Protestants, they … the problem with republicans is they try and paint it as "We only shot the person in the uniform". What we have always said is, it doesn't matter, he's still a member of our community, he's still my friends' father, I don't care that you didn't like him 'cause he was in the army, he's still my friend's father, he's still a member of our community. So you shot … you shot, to us you just shot a Protestant man doing a day's work. Whereas in their minds, they try and justify … but we are more honest, both sides were murdering people, pure sectarianism, there's no argument against that. They would say the IRA bomb in a Protestant bar was a war, but the UVF bomb in a Catholic pub was sectarian. So, and they still do that, they still … […] so we're still fighting that battle!'

Thomas mentions the fact that both nationalist and unionist songs could be particularly offensive for each community, given that they are engaged in commemorating their peers who have died as a result of each other's violent behaviour. Yet, this is not the central subject of concern for Thomas. He seems to defend an acceptable form of detachment from those offences given their ritual nature. However, he remains hostile towards the other community on the basis of their supposed inability to take responsibility for the entirety of their behaviour, and manage fully both their ritual songs and their violent acts.

[1] Catherine Switzer, *Unionists and Great War commemoration in the north of Ireland 1914-1918*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2007.

[2] Mary E. Daly and Margaret O'Callaghan (eds.), *1916 in 1966: Commemorating the Easter Rising*, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 2014, 356 p.

Defending the ritualisation of acts referring to the dead, either in the forms of offensive songs or in commemorations, at present, always runs the risk of leaving unstable and unclear the dividing line between invoking the antagonism for the sake of the ritual, and invoking the antagonism for the sake of a renewed conflictualisation. This is exactly the meaning of the dispute we mentioned in the Ocean Women’s Group regarding the local flute band (see Chapter 3 – p. 180). At present, residents seem stuck in the difficult task of being frozen in the present when attempting to commemorate their dead, as if any attempt at invoking the past would inevitably reopen the antagonism which defined the generation of their parents. The apprehension of letting the inherited antagonism ‘spill’, out of its ritualised dimension into the present, remains to be regulated. Yet, the further residents remain in this difficult position, the more years come to pass, the more scandals emerge from the commemoration of the contentious deads, from the unaddressed legacies of the dead, from the ‘offending’ way of handling the deads, but also from the masculine forms of commemoration[1]. Each becomes less and less justifiable. In the face of this increasingly tense double aspiration, residents have not yet found the means to affect each other in common commemorative practices that would give each community the opportunity to put into perspective the visions they put forward. At present, it carries only too clearly the risk of conflictualisation. It is therefore not a group that is responsible for the blockage, but the ambivalent state of their relations and the lack of support for its improvement.

This increasing difficulty in justifying attachment lies at the root of some of the ‘liberal’ aspirations leading local actors to simply renounce the reference to any community affiliations altogether. Again, in an interview conducted in June 2019, a local community worker told me how he experienced this difficulty with residents during community workshop, and how he used another form of ritualised detachment – theatre – to displace this tension. Yet, in so doing, he also reaffirmed that those aspirations to renunciation remained the ‘safest’ bet for pacification:

> ‘Labels are dangerous, because they prevent people from seeing … it’s a bit like, I wrote a play about five women… And they’re in a hospital, and they slowly realise, it takes place in a hospital prenatal ward, and they’re chatting and smiling to each other off and joking and then one realises that she, her husband was put in jail as an IRA man, and the other can’t get on with her husband because he’s a policeman and he was murdered. So, it’s about the tensions between them, and how they, how they resolve that towards the end. Now, the play was performed by a number of groups, mostly used as a reading script by young people in different community centres. And the young people could identify immediately with the women. Kids in Ballymurphy could identify with the policeman’s widow. Kids in the Shankill could identify with the IRA man’s wife. But some of the parents who were involved in the community groups, who were listening it, reading it, were saying

[1] Sara McDowell, ‘Commemorating dead ‘men’: gendering the past and present in post-conflict Northern Ireland’, *Gender, Place & Culture*, 1 August 2008, vol. 15, no. 4, p. 335-354.

> things like "You don't tell us anything about the policeman? What was he like? Was he an OK, a community cop, or was he a thug or whatever?" and I was like "That's deliberate. All you get in the play is the women's emotion". You know what happened here if whenever, during the worst years, you turned on the news, a body was found, lying, you could say "Who was it? The security forces? Was it IRA? Victim, was it an innocent victim? was his family republican?" … trying to get all these … identification marks, partly to see whether … he deserved sympathy. Whether his family deserved sympathy. So, the … the labelling process stops our humanity, so as I don't fit any label, I try not to see labels, rather people.'

Somehow akin to Brecht's epic theatre, Michael's attempts at revealing a tension by increasing detachment from commemoration awakens difficulties amongst adults. Michael sees it as a proof that the commemoration of the dead is caught up by the actualisation of antagonism coming from recent conflict. He sees in the reaction of the parents the very type of reaction that he was trying to formulate and expose in his play, and in offering community groups the occasion to engage with those problems by feeling the shoes of characters in pubs, community centres and theatres. Yet, noticing this vicious circle only becomes a supplementary support for Michael in concluding that labels are altogether too dangerous. He radicalises the conclusions of the conflict, by reducing them to the risks for community groups of being unable to see what they have in common.

In the face of this increasingly paradoxical difficulty of commemorating their dead, and in the search for a means to find what they have in common in those commemoration without 'giving up' on group differentiation, some local groups have found a type of solution in historicisation. They can go further back in time. Rather than invoking a present past which is judged to be the immediate proof of their conflict, they investigate a more distant past which appears, under a new light, as an example of their ability to cohabit. Indeed, just like the Red Hand flag, convoking the 'distant past' often provides examples of situations whose dissonance put to the tests the present day's understanding of the double bind, by confronting residents with a time when CNR and PUL were not as clear-cut groups as they are today. Nowadays, the local cross-community group make ample use of those: they have notably brought residents on trips to cemeteries. First, they took them to the British cemetery in Dublin, which provided a first historical dissonance by showing how British soldiers were commemorated in the Republic of Ireland. Second, the residents went and visited the Belfast City Cemetery in West Belfast, and experienced the historical dissonance in the life of Belfast residents themselves:

> [The guide explains] 'So, the cemetery initially welcomed all, but the Catholics were taken at the other end of the avenue, which meant they had their gate over there, and they entered the cemetery this way.' Similarly, Tom then tells us that Jews had their own parcels as well. He then explains 'But even then, there was another kind of division in the cemetery because, the more you paid for your grave and for your headstone, the more you'd be placed on the outskirts of a section, closer to a pathway. Whereas the less you'd be able to pay, you'd be getting more and more inside a plot. And people would have to walk across graves and look inside a square to find you'. Geordie intervenes and says 'Well there is class even in death'. Tom says 'Very much so.' […] We stop a

> bit further in, at the spot of a Joseph Lythe grave. Tom waits a moment in silence and then proceed to tell its history: He says the man was the son of Robert Lythe, and you have them both on different side of the stone. He says that the father was a reverend who spoke in favour of southern unionists, whereas his son was a socialist republican, who was an Irish Speaker, born in Dungannon, and funded a republican club when he was in London. […] Tom adds that this man also taught Roger Casement how to speak Irish, he was a friend of Michael Collins, and knew James Joyce quite well. After leaving a moment of silent, Tom says that this grave covers the story of unionism in this city, as well as the rise of Gaelic leagues. 'It is a unique stone that covers a wide spectrum of our history. In that sense this cemetery shows how much of a wide identity those people had, whereas we narrowed it, we narrowed down our own history, unlike that cross-community complexity that we have here.' Anne says 'Crazy isn't it'.

By visiting the cemetery and recounting the history of Belfast, the guide and the residents find an occasion to discuss both the increasing division of the urban sector and the fact that the lives of residents from the end of the 19th century showed a complexity which appears dissonant when seen from the present day understanding of community antagonism. Hence, the guide starts by stressing the divided nature of the cemetery, and how it renewed both community and class division. He finishes by presenting the multilayered identities of ancient generations, and the ambivalence which animated families due to their involvement in unionist, nationalist, socialist, Protestant, Catholic, Irish and English networks. Local actors not only become better able to situate the locus of their tension, but also to understand how it resides in their difficulties to overcome and incorporate the ambivalent expectations coming out of those relations.

Returning to the more ancient dead is not, however, always synonymous with rendering residents increasingly aware of their interdependencies. It can also serve to reactivate the divisive events which marked those interdependencies. Even if this means invoking political crises dating back to the 17th, 18th, or 19th centuries such as the Battle of the Boyne or the Irish Rebellion. In those cases, the confrontation with the dynamics of the past does not sustain a reflexive look on the present, but fuels the inertia of conflictualisation. To return to our central case, the importance of ritualised actions when it comes to characterising offensive behaviour towards the dead is particularly obvious in the case of the Old Firm. This appears when Thomas characterises the many scandals occurring in the face of some supporters' chants. The most notorious Rangers chant, also sung by loyalist bands, is the Famine Song. Originating in the mid 2000s and mentioning the 1840s Irish Famine, loyalist bands from North Belfast have been condemned on several occasions for singing it, and so have Rangers' supporters[1]. This song contains a line commanding Catholic emigrants in Glasgow to return to Ireland and Northern Ireland, now 'that the Great Famine is over'. When trying to oppose the scandals caused by the Famine song, Thomas compared it to other chants sang by Celtic supporters:

[1] Robbie McVeigh and Committe on the Administration of Justice, *Incitement to Hatred in Northern Ireland*, Belfast, Equality Coalition, 2018, p. 33.

> 'Whenever they sing IRA songs about the ones … the ten ones that died, they're responsible for 300 murders, the people they sing about. So, to me, that's more offensive that somebody saying the word "Fenian" although it's not politically correct to say that. But they would say that that song is worse. Well, I would say that their song is worse, because you're actually singing about men who did murder Protestants and, who did murder people! Don't get me wrong, we sing lots of songs as well, but I … it was always "We don't care what they sing" but they started caring about what we sing. And then, obviously, it backfired on them, we, we had songs, we have song there, whenever they [the Rangers supporters] started singing that Famine song, there's ten verses of that song, but the words that people are offended about was, is just "The Famine is over, why don't you go home?". That, the reason they sang that is because they sang The Fields of Athenry which is about the Famine, and in the middle of that they say "Up the IRA" and "Fuck…" [he pauses, and whispers] "F. the Queen".'

Thomas underlines the fact that both nationalist and unionist supporters have song that would be deemed offensive to the dead of the other communities. However, Thomas remains attached to a specific ritualised dimension of these songs, by which he expects the other community not to take them too literally. More precisely, he considers that the Rangers and Celtic have an unspoken agreement not to take those offences too literally, even though they may engage in debates over who has the most offensive behaviours. The recent evolution, which has rendered those songs more scandalous in the last twenty years, appears to Thomas as a breach of this agreement – 'they started caring about what we sing' – by which the everyday relevance of those songs has gradually taken precedence over the ritualised meaning of those songs. This opens the way, as we have seen, to disputes where the antagonism is displaced in accusations of hypocritical concealment of sectarianism. As mentioned by another supporter and member of a loyalist band:

> 'We are supposed to feel ashamed that we wear an Orange collarette, ashamed to be a member of a band. Republican bands are able to play their music going past St. Patrick's church, but we're not. During the Ardoyne Festival a republican band, 'The Druids', told us 'to go home to England!' Now, if Rangers supporters were to start singing *The Famine Song*, telling people to 'go home', it's sectarian, it's political. But if it happens on their side, it's just unfortunate. The PPS said there was to be no prosecution – but our side would be treated differently.'[1]

Just like in the case of flags, Thomas is brought to realise that one of the central reasons why this controversial opposition is maintained is because of the signs shared by both communities: each group of supporters sing a different song on the same tune, provoking renewed forms of opposition and divergence of interpretation whenever they encounter one another. Overall, in this case as in many others, Thomas finds those asymmetrical accusations 'hypocritical' and those common misunderstandings quite 'ironic'. Both of those notions prove to be central to the last form of ritualisation we will mention.

[1] Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *A process of analysis (1) The Protestant/unionist/Loyalist community*, Belfast, Island Publications, 2015, p. 107.

3.3 Humour as practical and disputed detachment

The use of humour is central to the dynamics of ritualisation that we have studied here, and more generally to situations during which the tense cohabitation of rules at the heart of ritual action is put to the test. For the sake of presentation, one could distinguish two main forms of humour by which actors find a way to ritually voice the tensions at the heart of their interaction: banter and irony.

A term originating in Britain, 'banter' designates the practice of slight humiliation by means of jokes, exaggeration, sarcasm, whose use can then be defended as being 'light-hearted' and devoid of hurtful intentions due to its humorous nature. As sports and commemoration, this social practice and the interactional debates surrounding it takes an especially layered nature in Northern Ireland. 'Banter' and 'craic' are deemed common, so much that they are claimed to be part of the national habitus by social actors as part of the 'Belfast Humour'. In recent decades, just as in many other countries, 'banter' has also become the vehicle for a specific form of politicisation practice in the region. Originating in the vernacular of London's 17th-century working-class slang, 'banter' encompasses social practices of trading carefully with statements so that they're more than simple jokes, yet less than open insults. It means mocking or ridiculing someone whilst tacitly claiming that the statement is devoid of offence, and any claim of being offended would be ill-received by all the actors involved in banter. In effect, one often mentions banter when trying to invoke the ritualised and humorous nature of an interaction, when it appears that risks of it having serious consequence reach a dangerous level. As such, actors are actively engaged in debating whether this practice is just a humorous way to come to terms with forms of antagonisms which would prove unproblematic since actors 'do not mean' what they say 'in jest', or if banter is an implicit renewal of forms of antagonism and domination which conceal their actual intents and effects behind the veil of humour. We have seen how banter was the central form of defence for the Old Firm supporters when it came to presenting their renewed form of rivalry as 'benign'. When I asked Thomas how people reacted to the jokes that he and Celtic supporters would exchange on the workplace, he said:

> 'It, it depends, you have to have it in your head mate. That it's football banter, I mean, there's … there's been Rangers fans stabbed to death, there's been Celtic fans stabbed to death over, after matches, and stuff like that there… But there's other fans have been killed in other places and things like that there, that's just football hooliganism, a fight in a bar, something … I mean a Celtic fan fired two shotgun shots into a Rangers bar after a cup final one time. But the, it's just … if you keep it to the football, you … you need to be able to separate, have two separate conversations. And if you want to talk about politics, talk about politics fine, but if you're gonna talk about football, just keep it to the football, keep it to the banter. Seeing the funny pictures, the funny videos. Cause, the … the thing that a lot of Celtic fans don't, can't get in their head, which I, in my honest opinion is … they don't… they don't see themselves as, the same people … see there's nothing that a Rangers

> fan does one week that a Celtic fan doesn't do the next. There's nothing, they can say 'Oh look, Rangers fan wrecked Manchester!' and I'll go onto say 'Celtic fans wrecked Amsterdam ! Yous wrecked Dublin!', […] there's no point in you saying, because anything you tell me about any Rangers, anything to do with any Rangers, I can say it to you back, so just leave it! Just have a bit of banter, have a laugh, have a bit of craic. Send me funny photos of ugly Rangers girls of something, and I'll say you one of an ugly Celtic. I mean have a bit of craic and a bit of banter. […] I put anything on at all [on social media], and it's all, they're all jumping in and stuff like that there, especially when they see that bar, well not that bar the Jolly Roger, 'cause they hate, they *hate* the fact that there's an Ardoyne band, there's an Ardoyne lodge, there's an Ardoyne… Ardoyne Rangers supporters' club, they hate it, absolutely hate it. So they do. [He laughs] Which is funny cause they hate that there's a Whiterock band, and they hate … aye, I mean there's an Andersonstown lodge, there's no Andersonstown lodge now, but there was a lodge used to be on Andersonstown Road before all the Protestants were put out of there. My mommie's family are from Ballymurphy! You know what I mean, but they were put out of Ballymurphy. I say my family is from Ballymurphy, but you burnt them out. So. So, there's loads … there's obviously the Upper Falls Protestant boys, they hate the fact that there's a loyalist band on the Falls road! [he laughs] Cause the Falls Road's there, and Ardoyne's there, so, well that's funny.'

Thomas defends his use of banter by arguing that it simply demands interactors to be aware of the different rules which apply to humorous statements, even though they sometimes pertain to very serious forms of oppositions. Any serious interpretation of the banter appears doomed to open an endless circle of accusation, as Thomas mentions that any attempts at blaming the Rangers fans for actual misdeeds can be answered with an accusation of Celtic fans of the same misdeeds. Hence, both the serious and ritual response to banter appear locked into a renewal of antagonism, as Thomas immediately gives several examples of the banter he engages in, by teasing the Catholics and deriving great joy for unnerving them and poking fun at what they supposedly try to conceal – that there are important Protestant communities in area considered to be Catholic stronghold. Thomas and many other supporters are constantly engaged in those humorous practice on social media. Any attempts at stopping him are countered by Thomas implicit warning that if Catholics try to bring him back to seriousness, he will send them back to their responsibilities in past violence, of which he considers being the victim. The fact that both communities and groups of supporters have been past victims and perpetrators alike seems to fuel this constant renewal of the ambivalent handling of banter. This is yet another factor which participates in constituting a situation wherein actors can only extract themselves from this vicious circle by a higher reflexivity on those 'ritual' dynamics, by which the meaning of a word or an act can either be taken literally or ritually – that is, in all the cases we have discussed here, as sporting rules, as commemorative rules, or as rules of humour.

Those banter practices are central in the relationship nurtured between supporters, who see 'football banter' as a traditional part of sports rivalry. Just as it reproduces an ambiguous form of detachment regarding social opposition and forms of domination, 'banter' is also inextricable from the social expectation of masculinity and male forms of excluding

sociability[1], which continues to be at the heart of sportization and commemoration. Just like banter conveys the possibility of a renewed antagonism, it also conveys the renewal of forms of masculine ambivalence. However, Ardoyne residents have become practically experienced in handling the tensions regarding community conflicts given the numerous deleterious consequences that it has had on their everyday relationships. The same self-control is far from applying to the gendered undercurrent of banter, as we can see from the less ‘ambiguous’ comments regarding women and gender that are conveyed through this form of humour.

As many a true word is spoken in jest, the exercise of banter is necessarily a tense one. It is riddled with occasion for interactors to overturn the vapour, and to frame the joke as a serious offence. What matters here is that the social organisation of banters, offences and denunciation have been evolving over the past decades: it has been evolving worldwide due to the overall informalisation trend, but it has also been evolving specifically in the case of Northern Irish political oppositions. As Thomas Kavanagh expressed when analysing the prevalence of sectarianism in Northern Irish rugby club, the use of ‘It’d just be banter’ as a way to counter accusations of sectarianism illustrates the multiple ways in which local actors deal and manage the risk of sectarianism influencing social activities[2]. The examples gathered by Kavanagh show the tensions which emerges when rugby players mobilise elements of character supposedly related to ethnoreligious communities to explain sportive behaviour, or to interpret events during a game. For Kavanagh, this is used by local teams to reinforce cohesion when local actors know themselves enough, and as defended by the local coach of this rugby team:

> ‘I think when a club gets to the stage where people are able to mock offend, then you’ve really got a much more healthy culture than, “don’t mention the war.” That people can actually say, “Protestant git, ye,” you know? Really, I think it’s a sign that people acknowledge cultural difference and can mock it themselves.’[3]

As we have emphasised, this is a tense assertion. Banter can always be accused of being a literal offence, and blame can always be avoided by ‘passing the responsibility to the recipient for not having a sense of humour’[4]. For Kavanagh, this is the main consequence of banter. Despite the importance of stressing those nefarious consequences, this vision naturalises and mechanises actors’ reason to act, as if the only reason they employ banter is to protect themselves from the criticisms that their insults could trigger if they were voiced literally. In

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[1] Ben Clayton and John Harris, ‘Our Friend Jack: Alcohol, friendship and masculinity in university football’, *Annals of Leisure Research*, 1 January 2008, vol. 11, no. 3-4, p. 311-330 ; Belinda Wheaton, ‘“New Lads”?: Masculinities and the “New Sport” Participant’, *Men and Masculinities*, 1 April 2000, vol. 2, no. 4, p. 434-456.
[2] Thomas Kavanagh, ‘“It’d Just Be Banter”: Sectarianism in a Northern Irish Rugby Club’, *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 1 October 2020, vol. 20, no. 5, p. 485-495.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

this sense, humour is seen as a simple way to reinforce political dominance and social boundaries, at the expense of dominated social groups. We have seen it should rather be taken as an element which is bound to reinforce actors' reflexivity on the ambivalent nature of any ritualised acts, as by handling the literal and ritual sense of their conflictual actions, they become better able to handle together what differentiates them. Kavanagh's next criticism, derived from many actors' reaction to the offensive nature of banter in specialised groups, still stands: humour – just like sports – is far from providing sufficient supports to criticise and transform the social dynamics at play, meaning that it tends to renew the status quo rather than disrupt it. As such, its overall social consequences, notably on the neighbouring social groups which are not in any way involved in this type of humour, are reduced to negative effects. The local supporters and people engaged in banter lack the support for a reflexive discussion of this dynamic and its origins, and because they also lack the means to exchange on those points with the surrounding actors who are trendily prone to condemn and avoid this type of banter.

'Irony', on the other hand, is a more common ritualised appropriation of conflict. It includes both ironic comments and comments on ironic situations. Ironic comments are ways for actors to convey a literal reason to act whilst also raising the awareness that their actual reasons to act is different. Humorous comments on ironic situations are a way to say that an overall situation has led to consequences that were not the expected ones, and which appear to be dissonant given the expectation of antagonism and differentiation between the Catholic and Protestant community. In that sense, the example of the Red Hand of Ulster contained both humorous comments on the irony of the situation, and banter accusation. Let us take a discussion between members of a loyalist band who exchanged on the problem of commemoration:

> 'Member 1 – Some UDA-linked bands […] changed some of their paramilitary banners to the Ulster Defence Union, which was part of the resistance to the 1893 Second Home Rule Bill. Many bands have made a real effort to change.
> Member 2 – I agree, but it's not happening across the board. Take for example Joe Brolly the other day, saying that the GAA is perfectly entitled to name their grounds after IRA men. So, while we're trying to get away from linking our bands to loyalist paramilitaries, there's young Catholics being told that it's OK to commemorate IRA men. If you're trying to move loyalism and republicanism forward on aspects of culture, both communities need to be doing it at the same time. It's hypocritical for nationalists to complain about loyalists commemorating their dead when they are doing exactly that with their own.
> Member 1 – Aye, but didn't you realise that the IRA were all 'freedom fighters' while we were all just thugs and criminals!'[1]

[1] Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Towards a shared future (5) Ulster's Marching Bands*, Belfast, Island Publications, 2014, p. 7–8.

Here, the two unionist residents stress that loyalist bands have attempted to change their image by referring to less controversial social movements, which also meant referring to older historical precedents. Accounting for this movement also means denouncing the fact that the other community, in their eyes, has been less inclined to readjust their parading and commemorating rituals. This ‘hypocritical’ imbalance is then more precisely stressed by pointing towards the counter-criticisms often deployed by nationalists, which these residents express by means of an ironic comment: the unionist community would only be a reactionary group whose violent behaviour falls into the criminal category, whereas the nationalist community would be an idealistic and progressive group whose violent behaviour should be considered as politically motivated war efforts. Both the dissonance of this discourse and the will to commonly readjust it is expressed in this ironic and falsely self-deprecating comment.

Comments on ironic situations similarly serve to stress how each community’s tendencies to differentiate from one another comes up against the realisation of what they have in common, and how each community’s attempts at coming together lead to apparently unstoppable divisive feedback. Again, the Rangers’ supporter Thomas makes this point by referring to the ambivalence of some sporting symbols:

> ‘Somebody else came on to me at one time, and they were complaining about the Billy Boys tune [the signature song of a 1920’s Glasgow unionist gang], but it’s not called the Billy Boys, it’s called the … the … ah, how do you call the Billy Boys tune … ach, but anyway Man United sings a song with the same titut tititi titi [he sings the melody] they sing a song with the same tune! Do you have ever hear of Acker Bilk? It’s “Marching through Georgia”, that’s what it is, “Marching through Georgia”’s tune. Right, Titi ti ti ti, all them songs are just popular tunes. They’re just popular tunes. That’s Acker Bilk. And I mean Man United sing a song to the same tune [He laughs] and I said the same thing, “What are you … the bands playing it, there’s nobody saying anything, the band’s playing the tune, there’s nobody singing!” I says “You’s fucking sing a song to that tune as well!” [He laughs].’

Both of those cases show us how residents reacted by commenting on the irony of the situation whenever dissonant situations occurred whereby members of the Catholic and Protestant community appeared to have something in common, in the very process of doing something intended to fiercely differentiate themselves from one another. The space between the literal meaning and the intended meaning of those ritualised ironic comments is the space in which residents find the possibility of expressing those dissonance, and of trying to come to terms with them in their liminal return from the ritual towards normality, from humour to seriousness, from the past to the present, from the pitch to the street.

Conclusion: handling political ambivalence through ritualisation

We have followed the attempts of local actors to seize how sports could help them in their transition towards a pacified society, and what were the risks in that process. In taking the example of the Old Firm, we saw how a 'community rivalry' and a 'sporting rivalry' progressively became equivalent, leading to some conflictual excesses. As a consequence, some actors strove for the complete disarticulation of those dimensions, and others argued that they could informally regulate the relevance of those two dimensions in a variety of contexts. This shows that, contrary to certain readings of Elias' work on sports, it would be misleading to continue describing the violence of football fans as a 'defect' in the civilising process[1]. Rather, it represents a poorly regulated will to engage in relations for groups who constitute themselves in political society, and in their interdependencies, by means of this opposition.

The same applied in debates around how sports could support the transition towards a more pacified Northern Irish society, either by supporting the maintaining of a specific 'community spirit' inherited from conflict, or by aiming at a globalised, international and neutral ideal of sportsmanship and sporting regulations. This was the heart of a tension holding a new step in the process of sportization of Norther-Irish society, one that leads local actors to secondary detachment. Handling sports is a way to regulate and overcome the double aspirations towards cooperation and competition.

Finally, we have seen that they primarily did so in practice, by confronting themselves with that ambivalence in the various ritualised acts in which they engage daily when it comes to sports, symbols, commemoration, or humours. All those ritualised acts and the dispute they open on the literal or ritualised intents of actions put them in greater contact with the dissonance of their interrelations. The issue of flags showed us how signs are contentiously turned into symbols. The issue of the commemoration of the dead showed us how paradoxical ritualisation leads to attempts of historicisation. The issue of 'banter' and 'irony' showed us how humour maintains ritualisation in times of uncertainty. This ambivalence is becoming clearer as the double aspiration become increasingly tense along the peace process's progression.

In the case of Northern Ireland, all these examples underline the limits of sociological analyses which see ritualisation as simply operating as the manifestation of the past in the present, therefore being reduced to evidence of resistance. If one looks at the classical approach

[1] Luc Robene and Dominique Bodin, *Sport et violence. Repenser Norbert Elias*, Laval, Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2018, p. 32.

of rituals in anthropology and sociology, one ought not to be surprised by the close links between the establishment or rituals and the present management of social conflictualisation. Dynamics presented in the case of the Old Firm and of the general process of sportization are not without resemblance with elements put forward by Van Gennep or Turner on rituals. In Van Gennep’s work, rituals are famously correlated with the occurrence of social crisis and the type of solutions that rituals offer to overcome them. The ‘liminal’ characteristics of rituals confer them with a transitional space during which the detachment from social rules allows actors to adjust themselves, and, in the long run, handle past ‘mistakes’ regarding those rules. Turner extends this work by seeing in rituals the potential expression of anti-structure, forms of contradictory social phenomena[1]. By this, Turner argued that the continuously oscillating coexistence of structure and anti-structure runs through the fabric of social events, between ‘normal’ and ‘conflictual’ situation. This becomes indiscernible from the conclusion that ‘“conflict” is the other side of the coin of “cohesion”’[2]. What we have tried to show is how social actors engaged within the peace process are trying to come to term with this characteristic of their relations through the experience of the dual nature of ritualised actions. In this sense, sports became a support for handling the liminality which characterises secessionist societies in ‘transformation; as it includes what is seen as mutually exclusive sets of relationships’[3].

Ritualisation appears to be that mechanism by which actors can come to grasp the types of conflict which cannot be experienced without conjointly reinforcing actors’ consciousness of their integration: they are, in Hirschman words, the ‘steady diet of conflict’ produced, addressed and managed by any political society[4]. They are ‘divisible conflicts’. This is essential since ritualisation is only the practical manifestation of a liminality that derives from the threshold conditions of those social groups. Invoking symbols and rituals lead actors to grasp the types of conflict which can hardly be mentioned without reinforcing their consciousness of their historical interdependencies. It is this continual work that pushes actors engaged in the peace process in a greater aspiration towards historical consciousness, one that they had tended to renounce. Debates surrounding symbols, rituals and the ambivalence they manifest often led local actors to try to come to term with this ambivalence by turning towards historicisation, and even to convoke ancient history. The necessity of this higher collective historical consciousness is now the object of daily dispute. It is to this collective realisation that we must finally turn.

[1] Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1974, p. 37.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 46.
[3] Mariann Vaczi, Alan Bairner and Stuart Whigham, ‘Where extremes meet: Sport, nationalism, and secessionism in Catalonia and Scotland’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 2020, vol. 26, no. 4, p. 943-959.
[4] A.O. Hirschman, ‘Social Conflicts as Pillars of Democratic Market Society’, art cit.

CHAPTER 6

Relating ambivalence to the increasing interdependencies of Northern Irish society

'It is difficult at times to repress the thought that history is about as instructive as an abattoir.'

Seamus Heaney, *Nobel Lecture*

'History justifies whatever one wishes for.'

Paul Valéry, *Notes sur la grandeur et la décadence de l'Europe*

WHEN ONE HAS REALISED THE LIMITS of describing the ills of pacification in terms of resistance, by fear of reducing social actors to monolithic interests (Part I), the picture may appear perplexing. When one has, in turn, taken notice of the double aspirations handled by deprived Catholic and Protestant urban communities, and the struggle of the State to support them (Part II), the horizon may seem decidedly grim. Hence when reaching this point, as many already did in the past, social actors often tend towards a peculiar form of renunciation: that of history. At best, history is deemed to have shown too well that social groups could 'revert' back into violence, that this violence was an inescapable part of their living together. At worse, history would become inefficient in the face of increasingly complex societies. And indeed, in Northern Ireland, positions according to which history and 'looking at the past' is a waste of time have become increasingly common. The difficult implementation of efforts to 'deal with the past' and to address the conflict's 'legacy' are only the manifestation of this reticence, and of aspirations to 'draw a line under the past'[1]. In those cases, when the 'past' is brought up, it is often in accusations of 'living in the

[1] Brian Feeney, 'We need to draw a line under the past, though many won't agree', *The Irish News*, 23 May 2018, p. 18.

past', and risking a return to conflict. In a collective discussion in September 2018, during an event organised in Ardoyne to reflect on what progress had been achieved in the area since 1998, one community worker said:

> 'From an emotional and a mental point of view, I would view that we've got to consider, at some point in time, crossing a line … over the past. From the view that, what, I'm not trying to belittle anybody's pain or suffering or aggravation, put there's a point in time where going constantly over the past, it only opens up old sores.'

One may easily see how this form of critical renunciation finds support in the fact that it has produced some positive effects in the past century, which this worker stressed by invoking the Second World War. Yet, in so doing, and after several decades of repeating those warnings, this renunciation has also reopened comments on the collateral consequence of this dispossession of history. This is well exemplified in the debate which opened up between this community worker and a local resident after his conclusion:

> Resident*:* 'We're talking about young people today, we need to address the past. Because if you don't address the past, it's going to stay with us, forever. And that's the truth. I would talk to my children about it, obviously, about things they're interested in. People who suffered in the past, [unclear] husband passed away, that happened during the Troubles. We have to bring up our children all sorts of different.' […] Community worker*:* 'From my perspective we could spend the next hundred years, two hundred years in fact, looking at Irish history. I mean we're still going back at something that happened in 1700. It's not going to… I know… I lead my own family, I have friends who went through, some of the terrible tragedies and unfairness that have happened in the last forty years and more. At the end of the day, we can only go on about it so much.'

Here appears a critique of history provoked by the disillusionment and denaturalisation after periods of strong conflicts of integration. Though it runs parallel with a demand for historical support, this tends to turn the questioning of the production of historical and sociological knowledge on nation states into a repudiation. It then leads to disputes and tensions such as this one. But what type of 'address of the past' may ease that situation?

In this closing chapter, we argue that we ought to solidify that historical consciousness. It is that which allow actors to seize the historical depth of their actions, after unprecedented social events have provisionally pushed them into a greater suspicion towards historical enquiries. Many of our examples have shown that a need for more stable forms of historical foundations come to be felt throughout all social groups in their mutual interaction. However, because of the division of labour in highly differentiated society, the historical consciousness that a society has of itself tend to rely on the work of a specialised group. That of historians. The more the demands of historicisation come to be felt by social actors, as in our previous example, the more necessary it is for those aspirations to be conveyed to this specialised group and back again to social groups, under the form of a more stable knowledge on the historical nature of their interdependencies and of their constitutive tensions. It is the discrepancies in this

circuit that are at the origin of growing demands of historicisation, and of their disputed nature, in Northern Ireland. this 'historical consciousness' is not that of individuals, rather it is the historical consciousness of a society which tends to express itself in practical efforts of historicsation amongst a specialised group of professional actors. This increases the chance of past events becoming a support shared by several social groups in the more reflexive handling of their ambivalence.

It is therefore not because we wish to restore a form of deterministic explanation that we now turn to historical dynamics. It is because, knowing all too well that the role played by 'history' for a contemporaneous political society resort only to present social practices of historicisation, the division of labour seems to justify our implication. But this also fulfils a more important role pertaining to the argument that we have made here: as the two last chapters have already started to indicate, the short-term transformations of the ambivalence in the case of telling and sportization means that we should see the double aspiration of North Belfast communities not as a situational condition, but as a processual condition. In that light, the increasing difficulties to handle these double aspirations are the signs of a threshold condition in the increasing interdependencies of Northern Irish societies.

As such, we will summarise the ambivalence as we have tried to present it in this thesis. We then turn towards some key historical processes which will help us see how the ambivalence we have studied is a result of tensions constitutive of the increasing interdependencies between social groups within the British Isles. We finally comment on how lower integration units – namely, North Belfast urban communities – have been increasingly held accountable for this tension.

1. How a society produces knowledge on its internal tensions

In Northern Ireland, contradictory ideals exist on attachment and distancing from urban Catholic and Protestant communities. They have crystallised out of the increasing integration and differentiation of those figurations within the wider political society. Since peace has been expected of them, those ideals have emerged in public disputes, when social actors act out the types of relations they want to nurture, between them and with the State apparatus.

1.1 Reduced ambivalence: Detachment and resistance

For a number of observers, including the most distanced members of those urban communities, their residents appear as social anachronism. They are deemed to remain attached to past forms of conflicts and social oppositions from which the rest of society[1] attempt to depart through a 'liberal' form of peace. The constitution of public problems in the years following the agreement has then increasingly tended to regress towards mutual accusations of 'resistance', 'adhesion' and monolithic reasons to act. The blaming of irrational individuals and reactionary traditional community made their return on the scene. It is these problems that the first part of the thesis has allowed us to discuss, by looking at mundane forms of blaming, praising and justification. The two cases we studied came to reveal more precisely the ills of the descriptions in terms of resistance, as those supposed resistance stemmed not from traditional members of local communities but from actors which were attributed reasons to emancipate from their local Catholic and Protestant communities, given their social position within it. Was this not an occasion to detach themselves from the local conflictual forms of community integration and, in so doing, to further emancipate themselves? The 'one' who could have reasonably expected them to do so, and who did state those expectations, were the more distanced members of local communities, and all those who tended to actualise a liberal pacifying discourse. Because of this apparent contradiction, and of the several blockades which it led to, the inner working of the interpretation in terms of resistance appeared in clearer light.

First, we studied how deprived areas of North Belfast have, since the early 2000s, struggled with waves of juvenile suicide. They have attempted to find and regulate their origins. According to several distanced actors, residents were progressively judged to be at best unable, at worst unwilling, to recognise the role of local paramilitaries, transgenerational trauma, traditional community organisation or individual isolation on teenagers' mental health. They would resist the detachment allowed by psychological and statistical knowledge on those dynamics. The reason given for this supposed resistance was that individual residents were trying to defend their interests at the level of the community. More attached actors stressed how the focus of distanced actors on the supposed conflictual state of their neighbourhood only hid the 'real' socioeconomic factors of deprivation behind the poor mental health of teenagers, and the abandonment of their community by the State. There, the outsiders were seen as resisting the local discourses because of their interests in writing books for their peers and in using

[1] Meaning middle and upper classes, State group included, and lower classes which are not confronted to the daily cohabitation of Catholic and Protestant communities.

Ardoyne residents as scapegoats. As such, the cohabitation of mutual interpretation in terms of resistance participated in a growing divide between how attached and distanced actors explained the suicides of young male teenagers. It turned their disagreement into a divide between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', a divide between supposedly homogeneous expectations. This prevented peripheral actors from seeing the local reasons why suicides were not tackled or not tackled adequately. It also prevented local actors from questioning and realising the limits of their interpretation, the extent of their responsibility, and the maintenance of norms which increasingly put those young males in the situation of both disappointing their local community and their ideals of emancipation. Engaged in countering their stigmatisation as a resistant community, residents now struggle to voice their aspiration to acknowledge and blame local paramilitaries, apprehending that this might reinforce their stigmatisation.

Second, we studied the various women's groups of the area. We saw how, despite their different takes on community and emancipation and because of their attempts at neutralising interpretation in terms of resistance, they all bore the mark of impeded gender emancipation. Some detached women's group, more engaged in individual forms of emancipation out of their local community, appear highly critical of the resistance of communities to favouring the emancipation of gender minorities. They stress the local obstacles to emancipation, the maintenance of patriarchal domination in enclosed urban communities, and the harmful effects of 'community politics'. Yet, in so doing they struggle to assert the sometimes-positive role of their engagement with the community. On the other hand, some other women's groups show the good reasons that they have to doubt an emancipation out of their community. They consider it would lead them to forsake their positive reasons to emancipate through their community, notably because of how they found a positive role in having their 'war work' recognised by communities during the conflict[1]. They then struggle to find ways of voicing their present will to avoid being reduced to their community. The problem became to find a way towards emancipation without being instrumentalised by the expectation of peace, nor remaining nostalgic about one's community. In the meantime, the women of those women's group progressively consider themselves as being twice victims of this impeded emancipation, having 'only paradoxes to offer', as Joan Scott puts it[2], being blamed either of patronising feminism or conservative womanhood. The local women's groups come to be describable as attempting at

[1] Laura Lee Downs, 'War work' in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, vol. 3, p. 72–95.

[2] Joan Wallach Scott, *Only paradoxes to offer French feminists and the rights of man*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 2004.

the same time to avoid being instrumentalised either by the State, by local communities, by local men or by other women's group considered to enforce a civilising form of feminism going with undue expectation of pacific relations, a conservative womanhood going with undue defence of conflictual communities, an overly specifying or an overly general conception of 'women's' experience of peace. Each case proved to be yet another occasion for those actors to be described as resisting the forms of emancipation supposedly favoured by the peace process, be it in terms of gender attribution or of community groups.

Both the case of juvenile suicides and women's groups' emancipation had in common the mention of State programmes' failures or detached actors' marred efforts to implement a certain type of pacification, based on liberal aspirations. They met difficulties because they were reaching the margins of disputes framed in terms of resistance. As such, most depiction of the resident's aspirations in terms of their resistance to pacification, to detachment, to emancipation and to tolerance became increasingly judged as incomplete pictures of their moral codes of conduct, and increasingly unacceptable. But so were descriptions of detached actors', such as state agents, supposed lack of comprehension of residents' attachment to their community.

1.2 Regulated ambivalence: Secondary detachment and double aspirations

By pointing the 'ambiguous dimension' of social relationships by which they simultaneously relate and separate[1], we become able to describe residents' difficult attempts at putting to the test the forms of stigmatisation they experience when it comes to their engagement with peace and conflict, whilst sustaining their own critique of their communities and of their limits. The local Catholic and Protestant residents of Interface conflictual neighbourhood are not compelled to emancipate from their community just because the British State, the Irish State and the European Union asked them to do so when they signed the Peace Agreement. They themselves make the everyday experience of the limits of community life. This does not reduce, however, the positive sense that they see in community attachment given that it remains an important means of differentiation, and therefore of individual emancipation. To honour both these commitments, they are compelled to be all the more attentive to the blame that may be addressed to them as to their loyalty, or to their lack thereof, towards their Catholic and Protestant communities. Hence why, to consider their behaviour in this period of transition,

[1] Georg Simmel, 'Bridge and Door', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 1 February 1994, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 5-10.

we cannot be satisfied with a conception in terms of resistance, regardless of whether we value this as a wrong or as an achievement. Rather, it was a matter of understanding how this ambivalence and the secondary detachment that follows is a result of double aspirations at the heart of their political experience.

We decided to analyse how some of the actors of the Northern Irish peace process already attempt to claim this double aspiration towards attachment and distancing, separation and unity at the community level, and to overcome its potential contradictions. We have done so by observing moments when actors were collectively able to sustain a secondary form of detachment from their tension, that is, not only realising their inadequate depiction in terms of resistance, but also anticipating the contradictory effects of their aspirations. Those cases highlighted the partial inability of the State to account for and regulate this ambivalence by tackling the social aspirations which sustains it. This went with expectations for local actors to handle by themselves complementary yet contradictory codes of conduct.

As a third case study, we looked at the case of 'telling', or the tacit code of distinction between Catholics and Protestant. Nowadays, residents of North Belfast still seem to make ample use of the interaction code by which they are able to 'tell' who is Catholic and who is Protestant. It is tempting to see this as an open resistance to the plural and neutral form of interaction that is facilitated by modern pacified urban environment, as if actors resisted this shift based on mistrust. However, we have seen that actors are actively engaged in the balance between their longing to abandon this code because of its sectarian nature, and to maintain it, both for the positive reassuring effect that it still has and because they consider that an increased control of the code is key to its pacifying renunciation. Yet, obstacles arise in their search for third parties and institutions which can support them in their efforts to handle this double aspiration on an everyday basis.

Finally, we saw that supporters of Rangers and Celtic FC, because they have progressively associated themselves with the Protestant and Catholic communities, are often considered as bigots who use sporting rivalry to renew their political oppositions. Again, it is tempting to consider this as a resistance to the internationalisation and pacification of sports – which would lead the State to increase its coercive control on their manifestation. What our investigation show is that football fans are demanding more support to handle by themselves the ambivalence between considering their antagonism as a sporting rivalry or as political rivalry. They aim to do so by reaching a 'third nature'[1] and regulating more reflexively the

[1] C. Wouters and B. Poncharal, 'Comment les processus de civilisation se sont-ils prolongés ?', art cit.

balance between their antagonism and their cooperation. In exploring the debates surrounding the Old Firm and more general forms of sportization of political enmity, we argued that one of the main way residents try to get out of the ambivalence and overcome the threshold of its paradoxical manifestation was through ritualisation. Several examples allowed us to show how ritualisation, by practically grounding an increasing detachment regarding the social rules of attachment and distancing, and the coexistence of opposed codes of conduct, acted as a lever for the transformation of ambivalence into a coherent liminal moment within interactions and within the sociogenesis of new institutions. Ritualisation appeared as one of the gears which make the balance, both at the scale of interactions and of long-term transformation of social activities.

Hence, we gain considerable insights into the dynamics at play when we consider the double aspirations of local Catholic and Protestants who handle their will to be attached to their own community, sometimes to the point of confrontation, and their will to distance themselves from it in order to integrate with one another, sometimes to the point of cooperation. However, another limit rapidly appears. It becomes quite apparent in this comment coming from a Catholic resident of Ardoyne, which stressed the ironical situation of his Protestant neighbours in 2018:

> 'People here call themselves "British," but they are something entirely different from what people would call "British" overseas … it's funny, they have so much to say about it, yet, when they go on holiday in Spain, all of a sudden, [he whispers] they become "Irish." They support Ireland in matches against England. They seem to change. And yet when they come back, they revert back to normal. It's very strange. Something clicks in their head whenever they cross the sea. There is a click. Like the joke says "We are reaching Northern Ireland, please wind your watch by 300 years".'

As we have seen, unless a moderating third party is present to increase detachment from this dynamic, when a Catholic witness a Protestant experiencing and voicing the ambivalence – and vice versa – , they tend to denounce it as hypocrisy. Secondary detachment does mean that they become able to point and discuss the vicious circles, the ironic situations and the contradictions which manifest the ambivalence. The fact is that residents often seem to run into a stopper. Rather than bringing this ambivalence back to a certain state of their relations, they often stress the irony and the suspicion of hypocrisy that may underlie it. Contradictions are sent back 'in the heads' of their neighbours, and not to social double aspirations anchored in the web of interdependencies and balance of power which constitutes their political society. They do not, for now, have the supports that would allow them to take a 'third way'[1].

[1] Colin Coulter, 'Unionists after Unionism', *Peace Review*, 1 March 2001, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 75–80.

1.3 Proper ambivalence: construing apparently contradictory historical processes

This last observation allows us to sketch the defining characterising of residents' current approach of their ambivalence: if we can notice the passage from a reduction towards resistance to a detachment from their own ambivalence, and to a secondary detachment from its anticipated paradoxical consequences, it is because Northern Irish citizens are now moving towards making of their double aspirations a proper ambivalence. To turn this political ambivalence into a proper ambivalence would mean that its very realisation does not impede but participate to the autonomisation of a political society and of the groups which constitute it, by the very fact that it turns those former resistance and double aspirations into a constitutive ambivalence, a *proprius* ambivalence that defines social groups. Only in that process can it sustain individuals, communities and their political societies in the greater knowledge and regulation of their internal tensions. A situation which, if adequately regulated, could come to mark the common condition of Catholic and Protestant communities as part of a same political society.

Noting this tendency immediately brings us back to describing what currently inhibits it. If all our examples have attested that actors are increasingly turning this ambivalence into a condition that they experience as their own, they have also shown us that they increasingly stumble on obstacles in voicing it. Considering this ambivalence as nested 'in people's head', to quote the resident, is but an instance of that. As the secondary forms of detachment described in the case of telling and sports have shown, actors progressively endeavour and struggle to see it as a contradiction inherited from historical and political transformation. The task of the sociologists is to sustain the move by showing how this apparent contradiction is inherent to the functional democratisation of the British Isles[1].

At present, the public manifestation of that ambivalence is progressively forcing pacifying discourses to come to terms with their blind spots. Both 'liberal' and 'consociative' approaches to peace have guided political attempts at social engineering. They have in common to consider the increasing integration between social groups as the main gear of pacification, only disagreeing on the political translation of this process. The increasing democratisation of a given political society does indeed rely on the increasing integration of social groups with one another. Yet, to an equally fundamental degree, it also relies on their increasing differentiation

[1] Cas Wouters, 'Functional Democratisation and Disintegration as Side-Effects of Differentiation and Integration Processes', *Human Figurations*, July 2016, vol. 5, no. 2.

from one another. More vocal demands of attachment to differentiated social groups may also be the signs of the increasing pacification of a political society, and not of its return towards conflict. In turns, the increasing integration of social groups to one another may very well be taken as an origin to conflicts of integration. Hence, the ambivalence forces us to do away with the essentialisation of ‘peace’ as the higher integration of groups and ‘conflict’ as the disintegration of interdependencies. It forces us to focus instead on how to handle the transitional discrepancies arising when the increase in integration and differentiation of social groups produce too strong double aspirations without yet providing the means of their coherent manifestation: this prevents those phenomena from being considered as complementary, and instead pushes social groups towards seeing them as contradictory. This defines the threshold conditions of Catholic and Protestant communities. Both are already too integrated and differentiated from one another for either conflictual competition or pacific cooperation to be a viable way to consider their interdependencies, but they cannot yet rely on a reflexive apparatus which could sustain the consciousness of being the member of a common political society. The increasing tendencies for local actors to experience double aspirations, and the recurring stops it encounters when they are reduced to dyadic opposition and uniform aspirations towards resistance or adhesion to peace, are the two effects of this liminal moment. How can the contemporaneous presence of double aspiration be brought back to this threshold condition? That is, how has it become increasingly felt and increasingly difficult to voice?

2. How increasing integration and differentiation displace political ambivalence in ‘these islands’

How could we bring back the ambivalence we observed in situations to a processual moment in actors’ detachment regarding their interdependencies? If we were to answer properly, we would have to follow two historical lines of enquiries: a social history and a political history. The sociologist certainly would not use such a distinction, in so far as political history is the history of the manifestation of social processes. But it serves to expose our point. On the first hand, writing a social history of the political ambivalence would be analysing the increasing interdependencies of social groups which populate the British Isles, through the increasing integration and differentiation of figuration units. It would account for the fact that, ever since the 13th century, social groups have been increasingly interacting with one another. This would require that we trace the progressive division of labour, the emergence of several

class societies out of segmented social units. More importantly, this would echo our ethnographic chapter in analysing the sociogenesis of more delineated codes of conduct out of the densification of interdependencies between various units throughout ‘these islands’. Since using the disputed terms of the ‘British Isles’ renders invisible some of the process we will describe here, we have referred to ‘these islands’ instead. This was used by the GFA signatories in 1998, to overcome the political difficulties of naming the human configuration concerned by the agreement. It matters because, when attempting to delimit and rearrange their relations with one another, it is to the effect of these long-term processes that communities are confronted. For examples, attempts to change the code of telling cannot do away with the actual state of urban geography or neglect professional interactions. Handling the problem of juvenile suicide could not be done without handling the increasingly detached production of knowledge on this local issue. It is a central part of what residents ‘stumble upon’ when voicing their double aspiration, since they often realise the limits of their efforts by witnessing the state of interdependencies by which they are bound. As Norbert Elias already put it:

> ‘People of feudal societies who were bonded to each other as serfs vassals and feudal lords could perhaps, in a limited way, move within that particular scheme of social bonds, also known as “social structure”, but they could not at will reshuffle the pattern of their interdependencies and become bonded instead as followers and leaders of parliamentary parties or as industrial workers and managers. Although it is certainly possible for men to bind themselves to each other with due deliberation and by their own choice, the whole groundwork of interdependencies which bind people to each other at a given developmental phase has not been planned or willed by those who form it and are bound by it.’[1]

Nonetheless, with the differentiation process also comes an increasing capacity, for social group, to apprehend their social relations and to detach themselves from it. In this comes their increasing capacity to adequately convey what characterises their interdependencies, ‘adequately’ in the sense that their depiction of their bonds becomes increasingly congruent to the experience that each social group has of its interdependencies with the ones that surround it. It is at this level that operates the transformation we have studied here, the transformation of aspirations and of the production of knowledge on society.

A political history, on the other hand, would follow the attempts of social groups to institutionalise a reflexive apparatus which manifest their interdependencies with one another and their increasing detachment regarding their capacities – and lack thereof – to regulate them. In our case, it denotes two parallel trends. First, the emergence of a political aspiration towards unity, manifesting centralising tendencies in the transformation of social bind, and which have come to sustain the formalisation of a ‘United Kingdom’. It is what lied behind the formalisation

[1] N. Elias, ‘Towards a Theory of Communities’, art cit., p. xviii.

of these islands as the 'British isles'. Second, political movements going counter to this one appeared by sustaining the emergence of distinct political units on the island of Ireland, suggesting decentralising tendencies born out of the very same increasing interdependencies. Those two political ideals are the two sides of the same coins, just like integration and differentiation are the conjoint effect of longer and denser chains of interdependencies. Far from limiting themselves to those two political societies, those two parallel trends have affected most social groups on these islands and coloured most of their interdependencies. One cannot understand how the double aspirations of North Belfast communities is a sign of a threshold conditions in their higher interdependencies with one another, if one does not bring it back to these social and political processes that have impacted social groups throughout these islands.

The aim here is not to delve into complex historical analysis, which we lack both time and capacity to do. Rather, we would like to isolate paradigmatic cases[1] to stress the orientation of a given socio-historical process. We will only trace two rapid movements which will help us grasp what lies behind this processual political ambivalence. First, rapidly summarising the long-term increase in interdependencies between social groups within these islands helps us see why it is at this scale that we must understand the political ambivalence of social groups. Second, from the 19th century onward, at the level of the political representation that social groups had of their relation, we will see them manifesting increasingly distinct ways to balance the aspirations towards unity and separation, centralisation and decentralisation. But the more this duality settled, the more the experience of a double aspiration – carrying within it the consciousness of interdependencies which could not be reduced at will – was brought back to 'margin groups' of lower and lower level of integration: the United Kingdom in relation with Europe, the population of Ireland in relation with these islands, the population of Northern Ireland in relation with the rest of these islands, and the North Belfast communities in relation with the rest of Northern Ireland and of these islands. Out of this process progressively appears a shared habitus based on the management of the political ambivalence constitutive of these islands, regularly resurfacing during political crisis due to the difficulties in handling the increasing integration of the archipelago.

2.1 The emergence of aspirations towards unity and separation (14th – 17th century)

[1] Danny Trom, 'Répétition et innovation sur la thèse de l'illusion héroïque' in Myriam Aït-Aoudia and Antoine Roger (eds.), *La Logique du Désordre*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2015, p. 53–70.

The increasing integration of these islands may be taken back to the liminal period of the Middle Ages, one which sees the disintegration of feudal systems prompting the modern civilising process described by Elias[1] and, for some historians, the political form of 'State' themselves[2]. By 1300, tensions had been rising steadily since the Anglo-Norman interventions in Ireland in 1160. These islands were not, in any way, akin to a unified political unit, nor even socially and politically distinct from continental social units. The Western European kingdoms and the successive empire they formed had been a polysemic blend of kingdoms constantly in tension between mutual interests and partial diversity[3], stretching from Gascony to Ireland. In addition, though the English Crown ruled Ireland, the native population was not included in the Common Law, which was blamed on lobbying efforts of the English landed community[4]. This would produce increasing tensions between the native Irish populations and the English settlers, which occupied high positions in the administration of the Eastern and Southern part of the island. More than the Law, throughout all this period and up until the first Industrial Revolution, tracing a social history of Ireland would mean focusing on land use, as it was both the core of the transformation of interdependencies and of their political manifestation[5].

At this point, ethno-national belonging did not serve as the basis for social oppositions. Instead, they would be moulded out of them, and out of the web of allegiances based on land use and the tense relationship between lords. A variety of ethnic and political groups shared the islands, and even when actors which we refer to today as the 'Anglo-Normans' invaded Ireland in the 12th century, they would alternatively define themselves as Normans, French or English[6]. However, as all those groups were becoming increasingly confronted to one another – often conflictually – throughout these islands, there was no definite line separating demands for a fairer representation of distinct social groups – Gaels, Anglo-Irish, Scots or English – within the

[1] Norbert Elias, *Moyen Âge et procès de civilisation*, Paris, Éditions de l'EHESS, 2021, 219 p.
[2] On the debates surrounding medieval 'States' in Europe, see Otto Brunner, *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, trans. by Howard Kaminsky and trans. by James Van Horn Melton, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992 ; Franz Oppenheimer, *The State: Its History and Development Viewed Sociologically*, New York, B.W. Huebsch, 1922, 328 p ; Jean-Philippe Genet, *La Genèse de l'État moderne : Culture et société politique en Angleterre*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2003, 384 p ; Susan Reynolds, 'The Historiography of the Medieval State' in *The Middle Ages without Feudalism*, New York, Routledge, 2012 ; Andrey Grunin, 'Le Moyen Âge, une époque sans État ? Construire le passé au présent', *Perspectives médiévales. Revue d'épistémologie des langues et littératures du Moyen Âge*, 11 January 2019, no. 40.
[3] Fanny Madeline, 'L'empire des Plantagenêts', *Hypotheses*, 1 December 2008, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 239–252.
[4] Gwilym Dodd, 'Law, Legislation, and Consent in the Plantagenet Empire: Wales and Ireland, 1272–1461', *Journal of British Studies*, April 2017, vol. 56, no. 2, p. 225–249; Sweetman, *Documents Relating to Ireland*, 1252–1284, no. 1681. See Otway-Ruthven, 'Request of the Irish,' 264, quoted in Sweetman, art cit.
[5] Helmut Jäger, 'Land Use in Medieval Ireland', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 1983, vol. 10, p. 51.
[6] Maeve Callan, 'Making Monsters Out of One Another in the Early Fourteenth-Century British Isles: The Irish Remonstrance, the Declaration of Arbroath, and the Anglo-Irish Counter-Remonstrance,' *Eolas: The Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies*, 2019, vol. 12, p. 44.

same integrated kingdoms, and demands for a distinct system of nations on the islands. This only increased 'the difficulties of the English crown in seeking to balance the elitist agenda of its English subjects, on the one hand, with its desire to bring the Welsh and Irish more squarely within the orbit of the English state system, on the other hand. And it shows how the dominions veered between welcoming and resisting the interference of the English crown'[1]. This balance would mark the increasing integration of these islands for centuries to come.

This social process would lead to periods of alternation between a higher political emphasis on adjustment to the increasing integration between social groups, and a higher political emphasis on resisting it. The latter was the aim of the well-known Remonstrance of the Irish Princes, written by Gaelic lords to the Pope in 1317, who attempted to denounce the ills of their increasing cohabitation with the English. After stressing the many conflicts to which this increase had led, the lords concluded:

> 'As in way of life and speech they are more dissimilar from us and in their actions from many other nations than can be described by us in writing or in words, there is no hope whatever of our having peace with them. […] There has not been hitherto, there cannot now be or ever henceforward be established, sincere good will between them and us in this life. For we have a natural hostility to each other arising from the mutual, malignant and incessant slaying of fathers, brothers, nephews and other near relatives and friends so that we can have no inclination to reciprocal friendship in our time or in that of our sons.'

In the words of the Remonstrance, the warning sounds neither like a call for war nor for a truce, but seems an agreement to separate, or at least to dissociate the two communities[2]. This would open a long period of a rise in independence and decentralisation, notably exemplified by the O'Neill dynasty[3] taking control over the Ulster region in these islands. The political need to reinforce the distinctiveness of social groups came out of the fact that they were increasingly confronted to one another. Fears concerning the gaelicisation of the English community in Ireland led the Crown to issue the Statute of Kilkenny in 1366, forbidding any type of personal union between English and Irish[4]. These efforts would not – and could not – mean a reversal to a previous state of lesser cohabitation. The period of decentralisation which marked the 14th and 15th centuries on these islands meant a transformation of the internal interdependencies between communities. Far from simply reinforcing the differences between Gaels and English, it paved the way for a tripartite dynamic between Gaelic Irish, Anglo-Irish – English settlers in

[1] G. Dodd, 'Law, Legislation, and Consent in the Plantagenet Empire', art cit.
[2] As the Remonstrance was rediscovered in the 18th century, it would be used as a central support for Irish Independance and Irish unity.
[3] The principal lord involved in the Remonstrance of the Irish Princes.
[4] A decision which should be understood as a follow-up to the 1362 Statute of Pleading formalising the official use of the English language throuhgout in the empire. See David Green, 'Lordship and Principality: Colonial Policy in Ireland and Aquitaine in the 1360s', *Journal of British Studies*, 2008, vol. 47, no. 1, p. 3–29.

Ireland – and English. All would, in the same movement, further differentiate from one another, whilst also finding more specific common points with one another[1]. Parallel to this secular movement, these islands where the locus of the tension between continental kingdoms, considered 'both within and without Christian Europe. While the Irish where at least nominally Christians, socially and economically they had a kind of society, tribal and pastoral, that had disappeared from the heartlands of European society before the 12th century'[2].

This increasing integration led to several subsequent rising of the Gaelic lords. Their attempts at distancing themselves from the English triggered several excursions from the Crown and other landed elites to reinforce the unification of these islands, progressively reflecting the dominance of centralising forces. An internal transformation which was, again, highly dependent on the changes of interdependencies between these islands and Europe. By the 16th century, Henri VIII had now enforced the separation of England from the Roman Catholic Church, acting the ongoing social sedimentation of Protestantism[3]. But just like the 14th century crises had led to a tense tripartite assemblage between Irish, Anglo-Irish and English in Ireland, the Reform did not lead to a simple opposition between Catholics and Protestants there. By now, the increasing interrelations between the various social groups in Ireland, added to the fact that European transformation had a delayed impact in these islands, reinforced the presence of margin groups. Descendants of the first wave of Normans who had been influenced by the native populations were becoming increasingly distant from the English population. They would soon become known as the Norman Irish, Hiberno Irish or the 'Old English' when they intermarried with the Gaels, whilst the 'New English' population, converting to Protestantism, started to appear on the island. From that point on, the 'Anglo-Irish' would not designate the descendant of the first settlers, but newly arriving members of the Protestant upper class of settlers. This new wave of planters would arrive from Scotland and England during the 16th and 17th centuries through a planned colonisation based on the redistribution of land. This period of 'Plantation' dramatically reinforced the economic and social binds between groups throughout this island and its centralisation, leading to strong rebellions from Ulster Catholics[4], and to an even harsher reinforcement of the unification process with the Cromwellian conquest. At that

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[1] G. Dodd, 'Law, Legislation, and Consent in the Plantagenet Empire', art cit.

[2] James Muldoon, 'The Remonstrance of the Irish Princes and the Canon Law Tradition of the Just War,' *The American Journal of Legal History*, 1978, vol. 22, no. 4, p. 311–312, p. 322 and p. 325.

[3] This time, whilst rallying Gaelic chiefs again, the O'Neil and allied lords presented themselves as defenders of Catholicism on the island, supported in this by a papal bull in 1600. See Stéphane Lebecq et al., *Histoire des îles britanniques*, 2nd ed., Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2013, p. 384.

[4] Joan Redmond, 'Religion, civility and the "British" of Ireland in the 1641 Irish rebellion', *Irish Historical Studies*, May 2021, vol. 45, no. 167, p. 1–21.

point, Ireland was fully merged within the newly created republic, the Commonwealth. By the end of the 17th century, and even throughout the Catholic restoration of the Crown, land ownership in Ulster remained overwhelmingly Protestant, especially in Ulster – where between 1 and 4% of all the land was in Catholic ownership[1] – and Catholic former landowners were still attempting to regain control over their territory. A vertical stratification was settling.

Social disputes between Catholic and Protestant landed classes echoed the dispute between the Catholic King James II and his Protestant contestant William III, which were in turn fuelling tensions between Louis XIV's French kingdom, and a European coalition led by the English and Dutch crowns to counter the rise of absolutism. This led to the Nine-Year Wars at the scale of Europe, and to the Williamite war at the scale of these islands, which were fought in Ireland, opposing supporters of the Catholic and Protestant monarchs. Out of this, and fifteen months of negotiation after the violent battle of the Boyne, came the Treaty of Limerick in 1691. It ensured a British Protestant coherence within these islands, supported by their increasing presence in Ireland. Whilst this would open a long rise of unification between the island of Ireland and the rest of the now British Isles, the articles related to the regulation of relations between Catholics and Protestant would progressively erode over the years[2]. As the fog of war settled, the realisation of increasing interdependencies led to the difficult management of those relations which were now defining the island of Ireland.

The implementation of the treaty's articles was particularly controversial during the 1690s. Whilst some Catholic lords now attempted to lobby in London, Protestants were particularly weary that the agreement would lead to a Catholic resurgence similar to that of the 1680s. The 1695 Penal Laws became the embodiment of the contradiction of a peaceful treaty whose social organisation requested the maintenance of conflictual antagonism between social groups. Not only was the antagonism between Catholic and Protestant rampant in Irish society, but it was still finding an echo in the crown's uneasiness with Catholic Europe[3]. The two penal laws voted in 1695 would have a lasting impact on the country, as they enforced the disarming and dismounting of Catholics, and prohibited foreign education. A higher reflexivity on those interdependencies and their risks, brought about by the Willimite war, was now at the heart of attempts at maintaining an asymmetrical balance of power as a means to convoke the 'pacification' of Irish Society. The contradictions surrounding the treaty paved the way to the

[1] John G. Simms, 'The Williamite War in South Ulster,' *Clogher Record*, 1979, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 155.
[2] Eoin Kinsella, *Catholic Survival in Protestant Ireland, 1660–1711: Colonel John Browne, Landownership and the Articles of Limerick*, Martlesham, Boydell & Brewer, 2018.
[3] Charles I. McGrath, 'Securing the Protestant Interest: The Origins and Purpose of the Penal Laws of 1695,' *Irish Historical Studies*, 1996, vol. 30, no. 117, p. 25–46.

already ongoing ascension of a bourgeois class. This would lead to the 'Protestant Ascendancy'[1], whereby Protestant landowners, clergy and members of established professions affiliated with the Church of Ireland and England progressively formulated, by means of the State legislation, laws preventing religious minorities – Catholics but also Presbyterian and Jews – to access positions of power. The end of the Williamite war confirmed the presence of the English and Protestant social groups in Ireland, their capacity to progressively monopolise the ruling of the island, and to base it on the internal management of the conflictual relations between Catholic and Protestant groups in the making. This stabilised up until the industrial revolution and the political changes which ensued.

With those internal and external transformation, the 'franco-english territory' was no longer a loosely unified 'interdependent territorial system'[2]. There were now two distinct sets of social phenomena, distinct because dependent: the internal community tensions in Ireland as part of a political unit that would increasingly become known as the British Isles – tensions which were at the heart of this oscillation between centralisation and decentralisation – , and the tensions between these islands and the rise of stronger Catholic nations in Europe[3]. By this, in part, those transformations are to be brought back to 'insular responses to Medieval European change'[4].

OVER THESE THREE AND A HALF CENTURIES, two central trends deserve our attention. The first trend is a traditional Eliasian movement: it is the increasing interdependencies between social groups who become, as part of this process, both more integrated with one another and more differentiated from one another. This ever-increasing process takes an oscillating form when it gives rise to phases of centralisation and decentralisation. It is because the relations between social groups such as Gaels and Anglo-Normans, then Catholics and Protestants, become denser, that forms of unification and reactionary forms of conflictual distinction come to mark the history of their interdependencies. With the unfolding of the 18th century, this will lead those relations to crystallise fully into the ideal relation between 'Irish' and 'British'. The

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[1] Patrick Walsh, *The Making of the Irish Protestant Ascendancy: The Life of William Conolly, 1662-1729*, Martlesham, Boydell & Brewer, 2010, 242 p. On the continuation of this 'ascendancy' in the following centuries, see Jacqueline R. Hill, 'National Festivals, the State and "Protestant Ascendancy" in Ireland, 1790-1829', *Irish Historical Studies*, 1984, vol. 24, no. 93, p. 30–51.

[2] Norbert Elias, *La Dynamique de l'Occident*, trans. by Pierre Kamnitzer, 2nd ed., Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1990, p. 77.

[3] The increasing Catholicisation of France and the Protestantisation of the British Isles during those period can only be understood as mutually reinforcing social processes, through very tangible waves of emigration and interdependencies.

[4] Brendan Smith (ed.), *Britain and Ireland, 900–1300: Insular Responses to Medieval European Change*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 300 p.

tension between unity and separation has accompanied these islands ever since the population occupying them have attempted to clarify the type of societies they constituted together, becoming increasingly conscious of it as they were becoming more interrelated.

The second trend may seem, instead, quite counter-intuitive with regard to traditional Eliasian analysis. It is what we may call the *regression of the ambivalence's margin*. Though formulaic, it precisely expresses the phenomena which interests us here. Let us put it like that: at every phase whereby groups become more interdependent, it becomes less and less viable for them to engage wholeheartedly in conflictual separation or in pacific cooperation with one another. Instead, the plurality of their relations pushes them towards a more nuanced understanding of their interdependencies, and more ambivalence. What we call the regression of the ambivalence is the fact that the ambivalence appears starker at lower and lower level of integration over time. Though the problem of the alternating aspirations towards unity and separation first marked the relation between the kingdoms of these islands and the Western European kingdoms, it would then mark the relation between the Gaelic and Anglo-Normans in the archipelago, and then mark the relation between the Catholic and Protestant community throughout the island of Ireland.

It is not, in fact, surprising. Because of the densification of web of interdependencies, dynamics which would previously have been observable at the scale of vast territories would progressively be observable amongst units of lower level of integration, given that they displayed an ever-increasing level of differentiation and complexity. As such, tensions between European kingdoms could then be replayed within specific kingdom not because of a displacement within, but because the type of social complexity that was once observable only at the scale of large territories was now observable within smaller provinces, and then even cities[1]. Hence, the ambivalence between unity and separation occurring at the conjunction of two higher integration units paradoxically tend to increasingly occur within lower integration units as they become more differentiated. The problem of the interdependencies of the Western European kingdoms became that of the British Isles, which in turn became the 'Irish Problem'.

That these islands display an ambivalence, defined by a fluctuating demarcation between a European continent and the Hiberno-Atlantic fringe, which later turned into one between an English core and a Gaelic margin, is not new. Historians of the 'British Isles' have, since the

[1] We may already sense how this ties in with more traditional sociological theory: that of the individualisation coming out of increasingly differentiated societies. This idea of a 'regression of the ambivalence' is another way to describe the fact that individuals have increasingly become the locus of internalised conflict which they derived from the transformation of their society, by being socialised to increasingly plural expectations.

work of Rees Davies and Robin Frame on the Plantagenet dominions, opened the 'New British History'. They suggested seeing 'the dynamic between English core and Celtic periphery as part of a pattern of state formation in the British Isles'[1]. However, the New British History has struggled to avoid controversies regarding its ideological undercurrent, partially reifying the idea of a 'fringe' and naturalising the similarities between the fringes of the archipelagos rather than sociologically analysing the conjoint increase between integration and differentiation, and seeing in the secular oscillation between centralisation and decentralisation the mark of the double aspirations increasingly felt by social groups whilst always being brought back either to resisting their higher integration, or to accompanying it. It is on this basis that, with modernity and the clearer manifestation of two opposed political ideals of the 'we' formed by social groups of these islands would represent a turning point. The United Kingdom and Ireland would come to encapsulate the two poles of this constitutive polarity.

How does that relate, though, to the increased possibility for social groups to experience double aspirations as part of this process? We understand it by stressing the role of margin groups. Those were the Anglo-Irish, the Old English, the Catholic upper-classes or the Presbyterian. If those groups are primordial, it is because they are the place where the 'increase in variety and reduction of contrast' is the more visible. Where there once was English and Irish[2], the increasing interdependencies between the two social groups leads to the formalisation of a margin group, that of the 'Old English', attached both to aspirations pertaining to the English and to the Irish. In short, to double aspirations. They are the place of an increase of variety, since where there once were two delimited social groups there are now three. They also are the place of a reduction of contrast, since where the codes of conduct of English and Irish could easily be brought back to antagonistic depiction, the codes of conduct of English and Old English becomes somewhat distant to one another but not completely, whilst the codes of conduct of Old English and Irish becomes somewhat akin to one another but not completely. The same can be said of all the margin groups appearing at every step of the increase in interdependencies. Those groups also become, for a moment in time, at specific moments of increasing interdependencies, the locus of more vocal forms of double aspiration. This is why, in the centuries that will follow, the role of the Presbyterian, as Protestants who were often discriminated against, not unlike Catholics, and especially intellectual Presbyterian from upper-

[1] Steven G. Ellis, 'Why the History of "the Celtic Fringe" Remains Unwritten', *European Review of History*, 1 June 2003, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 225–226 ; See also Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism*, New Brunswick, N.J, Routledge, 1998, 422 p.

[2] When interdependencies first gave rise to two opposed idealisations of distinction between groups.

middle class who were affected both by lower classes and the code of conduct of upper aristocratic classes, would be central to the higher consciousness on this double aspiration.

2.2 The Industrial Revolution and the formalisation of opposed we-ideals (18th to 20th century)

We can already sense how the continuation of this process throughout modernity may lead us to some of the things we have been discussing in this thesis: the Irish problem would become the problem of Northern Ireland from the 19th century to the 20th century, up until the Troubles. To be even more precise, it became the problem of Belfast since this urban environment was now the place of an unprecedented cohabitation between Catholic and Protestant communities. Then, the problem of Northern Ireland would become, at the turn of the 21st century, the problem of North Belfast communities.

Two central transformations came to magnify tensions linked with increasing differentiation. First, the Industrial Revolution meant the transition to a class-based society. This would radically transform the relevance of community opposition in the face of labour dynamics and class distinctions. The Industrial Revolution would progressively tend to undo the divide between 'Catholic segments' and 'Protestant segments' in the division of occupations. Because of that, far from being eased by the fact that they had clarified opposed we ideals, unionists and nationalists were in fact increasingly put in tension. This parallel transformation in the division of labour rendered even more difficult for them to neglect their dependence on one another. As we said, the importance of land and the system of 'plantation' had progressively indexed the functional division of labour in Northern Ireland to the opposition of status between classes affiliated to the British settlers of Protestant faith, and the Irish Catholic local population, through land confiscation. Hence, still, 'for most of the eighteenth century, a *modus vivendi*, based on recognisably different spheres, [had] maintained the peace between Protestant and Catholic in Ulster'[1]. The 'recognisably different spheres' were the mark of a stratified society whereby the division of labour was effectively running in the tracks of status groups, dividing the landless lower class and the proprietary upper class. Barred mobility went with a homogeneous division of labour. This translated, at the political level, into 'a strategy for accommodation'[2]. When the population of Ulster doubled between 1750 and 1790,

[1] Marianne Elliott, 'Religious polarization and sectarianism in the Ulster rebellion' in Thomas Bartlett et al. (eds.), *The 1798 Rebellion: A Bicentenary Perspective*, Dublin, Four Courts Press Ltd, 2003, p. 279.
[2] Thomas Bartlett, 'From Irish State to British Empire : reflections on State-Building in Ireland, 1690-1830', *Etudes irlandaises*, 1995, vol. 20, no. 1, p. 28.

and waves of immigration mitigated the Protestant irruption on the island and brought the population back to a more even balance[1], this increased cohabitation was to be yet again put to the test.

Second, the emergence of modern political society, more consciously defined by the will of their social groups to self-determine, would lead to the polarisation of two competitive we-ideals on these islands. This crystallisation of the trend that we have observed since the 13th century, with the conjoint apparition of British Unionism and Irish Nationalism – attached to the polarities of the United Kingdom on one hand and the Republic of Ireland on the other – , would maintain a sense of segmentarity.

During the 18th century, the landed Protestant upper-class was deemed to ensure an asymmetrical balance of power between social groups, out of a typical monopolisation process on the island. However, more liberal elements of this upper class would progressively seek to join the emancipatory efforts of the Catholic lower classes. They, too, aspired to gain more autonomy from the rest of the British Isles. Commonly related with the American and French revolutions and the spread of republicanism, the Irish Rebellion would follow in 1798. Hence, far from being the simple act of resistance of Catholics, it would be the result, again, of the growing ambivalence of all social groups in this tripartite assemblage during a period of increasing interdependencies. As such, it needs to be understood as the crystallisation, at a higher level of explicitness than ever before, of the wish to stabilise a balance between unity and separation that takes the entirety of these islands as a point of reference, as the horizon of politics. And indeed, this period of turmoil would then lead both to the reinforcement of social and political projects of Irish separatism[2], and to the reaffirmation of social and political unionism within the Protestant community. The pair was the complementary consequences of the same long-term transformation, that of the increasing interdependencies we have described, and its oscillation between centralisation and decentralisation.

The 1798 rebellion and the crisis of Irish divided society during the 1790s lie at the foundation of the 1800 Act of Union. With the separatist republican movement more vocal than ever, the British solution was to suggest an even more explicit and solid legislative union with the rest of the British Isles, like it had been done for Scotland in 1707. In ratifying this proposition in the mainly Protestant Irish parliament, the Crown sought the support of Ulster Protestants. Notwithstanding the Presbyterian minority, these declared themselves

[1] Youssef Courbage, 'The Demographic Factor in Ireland's Movement Towards Partition (1607-1921)', *Population: An English Selection*, 1997, vol. 9, p. 178 and p. 179.
[2] Deirdre Lindsay, 'The Rebellion Papers', *History Ireland*, 1998, p. 1.

overwhelmingly in favour of the union[1]. The Act of Union was pronounced and implemented in 1801. But the violent effect of the rebellion would only, as a return movement of the pendulum, increase the rest of the Protestant community's tendency to claim their unionist affiliations and to detach themselves from the United Irishmen. Soon after the rebellion, Protestants would come to describe it as 'the result of a papist plot aiming at driving Protestants out of Ireland'[2]. The rebellion had similar effects on the Crown and the government. The Crown, becoming highly conscious of the difficulties to validate 'the British civilising presence in Ireland' in light of the transformation of European political societies, compiled the Rebellion papers and the Outrage papers, meant to 'illustrate the Irish propensity for savage violence' during the 1790s.

Unionism and Nationalism came to spell a constitutive tension of the British Isles, as two distinct ways to handle the interdependencies between the social groups constituting it in order to stabilise a version of the same 'we' that they formed. Hence why Catholic and Protestant communities, even when they seem to be retreating in reactionary and separatist groups by defending radical unionism or radical nationalism, always come up against the fact that this idealisation comprises a certain vision of their relationships as part of the same ensemble.

This parallel movement – increasing reduction of contrast in occupation, crystallisation of long-term trends under two opposed we ideals – would become the defining characteristic of those societies after the 19th, affecting both by the Industrial Revolution and the emergence of more reflexive Nation-States. Each movement allowed for the contradiction of the other to express themselves.

HOW DID THOSE TWO MOVEMENTS INFLUENCED ONE ANOTHER? How did they make the tense balance between unity and separation, which had been affecting all social groups for centuries, more tense? The Industrial Revolution shook the island, and Ulster, at the end of the 19th century. Its effect was even more striking as it impacted a society which had been severely disintegrated by the great famine of 1846 to 1849 and the waves of emigration which followed. Industrialisation would accompany a new form of class stratification. In addition, the famine and emigration had freed a massive amount of land which meant a return of highly conflictual competition over land control amongst the gentry. Those several social processes precipitated

[1] E. Malcolm, 'A new age or just the same old cycle of extirpation?' art cit., p. 14.

[2] H.T. Dickinson, 'L'Irlande à l'époque de la Révolution française', art cit., p. 168 ; See also Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the Different Rebellions in Ireland: From the Arrival of the English Also, a Particular Detail of that which Broke Out the XXIIId of May, MDCCXCVIII; with the History of the Conspiracy which Preceded it*, Dublin, R. Marchbank, and sold by J. Archer, 1802, 608 p.

an increase in political tensions between social groups within the island. At this point, as argued Ian McBride, 'nationalist and unionist attitudes to 1798 hardened into their modern forms during the long struggle for self-government that took place between 1886 and 1922'[1]. This would mostly take the form of the Home Rule movement. Rather than a purely ideological and political evolution, this was mainly due to the fact that the 'recognisably different spheres' which had characterised the cohabitation of Catholic and Protestant communities were, during that period, becoming increasingly intertwined. The industrialisation would initially reinforce the differentiation between Catholic and Protestant spheres, before lading to its increasing complexification and to the communal heterogenization of most professional sectors.

This transformation was reflected in Belfast. The city experienced a dramatic population growth in the 19th century. At the end of the previous century, it had fewer than 10,000 inhabitants. By the beginning of the following century, it had grown to almost 400,000[2]. This densification is closely linked to the role that Belfast played in the industrial expansion of the British Empire, aided by its geographical location and semi-colonial status. The first phase of industrialisation in the 1830s was driven by the textile industry. During this period, poor and predominantly Catholic rural residents flocked to the city. This abundant labour force in turn attracted new investors from the English and Scottish industrial bourgeoisie. In this context, Protestants occupied the management, supervisory and design positions, while the working classes, which were devoted to manual tasks, remained predominantly Catholic. The denominational divide in the control of land that had been created by the plantations thus first tended to merge into the class organisation characteristic of industrial societies. By the end of the 19th century, in Belfast, the 'workplace became a more important site of conflict'[3].

This division of labour evolved when, in the late nineteenth century, shipyards became the leading industry[4]. This second phase of industrialisation brought Protestant workers to Belfast. They formed the majority of workers in this booming sector of activity. Denominational homogeneity was manifested by succession mechanisms whereby positions were passed on from generation to generation within families[5]. Thus, a double differentiation was emerging. One vertical, where management functions were judged to be reserved for Protestants; the other horizontal, with working classes within which the specialisation of activities by sector tends to

[1] I. McBride, 'Memory and forgetting,' art cit., p. 479.
[2] Stephen Royle, *Portrait of an Industrial City: Clanging Belfast 1750-1914*, Belfast, Ulster Historical Foundation, 2011, p. 12.
[3] A. C. Hepburn, *Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the Era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934*, Oxford, United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2008, p. 21.
[4] Stephen Royle, 'Workshop of the empire, 1820-1914', *Belfast 400 People, Place and History*, 2012, p. 207.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 211–235 ; S.J. Connolly, *Belfast 400*, *op. cit.*, p. 250 ; P. Hodson, 'Titanic Struggle', art cit., p. 228.

cover up the denominational division. This class stratification and class segmentation, in tension with the growing residential segregation between communities in Belfast, would be at the heart of the profound consequence of subsequent political crises on the city.

The opposition to the Union, the renewed dissatisfaction with the landowner's system following the famine, the nascent opposition coming from industrial working classes and the two failed rebellions of 1848 and 1867 were then at the origins of the increase in tensions at the end of the 19th century. The first twenty years of the 20th century were amongst the most agitated in the history of the island. They saw the succession of several political attempts at translating, at the political level, those social transformation into a new political organisation of the island.

Taken in a double bind movement which appeared more inclined to spiralling than ever, this would open a series of nationalist movements, unionist movements and reactionary movements. In 1912, the British Government accepted the demands for Home Rule and self-government that had started to appear in the late 1880s. The unionists of Ulster formed the Ulster Volunteers, and armed organisation meant to resist this movement and pledge not to obey the Irish parliament. The nationalists formed the Irish Volunteers to oppose them. The British government repressed both the overly loyal and the disloyal Irish citizens. For the first time in the history of the United Kingdom, in 1914, by passing the Home Rule Act through Parliament, a devolved government was to be put in place within the confine of the British Isles. This is the basis of a still ongoing process. The notion of 'devolved' government was not just a return to the local Irish parliament and administration that had existed *before* unification. It was a form of decentralisation which remained conscious of the need to maintain the unity of the political society now formed. As such, the emergence of the idea of devolution during the early 20th was a first political attempt at institutionalising the ambivalence of the political relations between communities and between nations within the island into a form of common government. The 'devolution' process could be reversed when necessary and, most importantly, it pledged to transcribe the tense ambivalence of Irish nationalisation process and of the British Isles unification process into a geographical partition. From the 21st to the 25th of May 1914, unaware of the turmoil that would soon spread through Europe, the UK's House of Common debated of how the peculiar position of Ulster within the Island of Ireland could be secured, and how a civil war could be avoided. To exclude Ulster from the terms of the Home Rull bill appeared an unsatisfactory yet 'better than nothing' solution. On the 23rd of June 1914, the bill was introduced in the House of Lords, proposing the 'temporary exclusion of Ulster' from

Home Rule. Four days later, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo. The opening of the First World War turned the Northern Irish proposal into a 'ticking bomb'[1].

Like many times before, and just like with the 1798 rebellion, a group of few upper-class men planned to organise a guerrilla warfare throughout the country, accompanying an uprising in some central cities. This time, this small group of Catholics, initially comprising intellectual and political activists (from the Irish Republican Brotherhood), were later joined by members of socialist movements and trade unions (Irish Citizen Army). After the failed Early Rising in 1916, the aspirations at the roots of this movement still translated into a major victory of the new Sinn Féin party in the 1918 general election. This would only increase tensions and accelerate the process of partition, leading to a general Anglo-Irish war in 1919. Repeated attacks on the police forces led the British government to deploy the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries in Ireland, two new forces with a blurry paramilitary status. By 1921, negotiation between English and Irish officials were conducted in London to 'ascertain how the association of Ireland with the community of nations known as the British Empire might best be reconciled with Irish national aspirations'[2]. The renewed contradiction which went with these two trends were now the explicit heart of negotiation between those opposing social groups, and the management of this balance between Irish autonomy and dependency with an external union would go hand in hand with the emergence of the project of an internal partition.

In December 1921, after long negotiations, the Anglo-Irish treaty established the Irish Free State as a self-governing dominion within the Commonwealth. But even political tensions in the Free State were rising[3]. Internal conflict erupted between nationalists who had negotiated and expected this settlement with the Crown, and other republicans who found this renewed interdependency with the British Crown unacceptable – De Valera, Sinn Féin and the IRA. These tensions, running through all social classes in the country, led to the Civil War which marked 1922 and 1923. Pro-treaty attempted to set a Provisional government and armed forces with the help of the British Crown, progressively trying to contain the groups of dissenters, which led to the reopening of violence within regions of Ireland itself. The fights were rapidly over in urban areas, and meant the continuation of diffuse rural guerrilla tactics. As such, the end of the Civil War was never officially declared nor called out, but resulted from the slow disorganisation of IRA volunteers in 1923.

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[1] S. Lebecq et al., *Histoire des îles britanniques*, *op cit*., p. 723.
[2] Deirdre McMahon, 'Anglo-Irish treaty' in S. J. Connolly, *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 15.
[3] Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity*, London, Pearson, 1998, p. 187.

From that point onward, the Irish government then had to organise more autonomously than ever the internal effort of conciliation between two opposed ideals. When the situation had turned into a civil war in the South, radical nationalists became more concerned with the discrimination faced by Catholics who remained in the North. But this concern was gradually lessened by the fact that the conciliation efforts which followed in the South would remain unparalleled in Northern Ireland for several decades. The pro-treaty government attempted to both engage in the institutionalisation of the newly formed Irish State with the help of the British Crown, and to integrate those who had opposed it, notably by encouraging memorials and public efforts of remembrance[1]. This would later become an open subject of policy, as the State created the Irish Folk Institute in 1930 and the Irish Folklore Commission in 1935[2]. All those efforts marked a paradoxical attempt at reinstating the Irish culture *as it was* before the arrival of Christianity and of the British rule, within an independent nation which could only consider itself as such by handling its relation with the rest of the British Isles, and in regulating their internal manifestation. It is by having this entire process in mind that we can understand the somewhat paradoxical fact that whilst sustaining efforts of memorisation, the government would also outlaw the IRA and affiliated republican movements in 1931 and in 1936[3].

The other apparent paradox, as stated, was that the claim of independency went with attempts at improving and furthering relations with the rest of the British Isles. As stated W.B. Yeats at the opening of the Aonach Tailtean, ‘the nation is, as it were, a young man just entering upon its prosperity […] he is celebrating his coming of age, and asks the goodwill of his neighbours’[4]. The paradox would only grow stronger as the State settled, become more autonomous throughout the ’40s and ’50s. By regaining control of the regulation of its internal labour, the Irish government came to the realisation of a limitation which had been ‘long obscured by the British and landlord presence’[5]. The Irish administration realised more practically that there was simply not enough land in Ireland to satisfy all the holders in the

[1] This conciliation efforts then took the form of reinvigorated attempts in convoking the modern and ancient history of the Island, notably by convoking ancient Gaelic and ‘pre-British’ sports and games. For example, this led to the emergence of the Aonach Tailtean, a sporting ‘series of events staged or participated in by independent Ireland as a method of projecting the positive attributes of the new state. See John Connolly and Paddy Dolan, ‘The Civilizing and Sportization of Gaelic Football in Ireland: 1884–2009’, *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 2010, vol. 23, no. 4, p. 570–598; Mike Cronin, ‘Projecting the Nation through Sport and Culture: Ireland, Aonach Tailteann and the Irish Free State, 1924-32,’ *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2003, vol. 38, no. 3, p. 396.
[2] Mícheál Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935-1970: history, ideology, methodology*, Helsinki, Finnish Literature Society, 2007, 535 p.
[3] K.T. Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800*, *op cit.*, p. 200.
[4] Quoted in M. Cronin, ‘Projecting the Nation through Sport and Culture,’ art cit., p. 401.
[5] Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006*, Oxford, United Kingdom, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2007, p. 446.

country, inevitably pushing it towards increasing exchanges with its neighbours. Handling those difficulties proved even more detrimental to the partition of the Island. To face those difficulties, the Free State's administration would partly rely on the Crown's parallel difficulty in settling the question of the border. The Irish government accepted a 'trade off' by which they would retreat the Council of Ireland in Northern Ireland and further implement the decisions of the border commission, in exchange of the suppression of the British public debt that the Free State had accepted to take over at the independence.

In years to come, similar examples would increase the divide between the South and North populations and within each community: each time one of the two Nation States stumbled unto such internal paradox, it would reinforce its efforts at differentiation. The Free State struggled to maintain a low economy, and the North grew more attached to the United Kingdom. The two regions would become increasingly equated with the dominance of the Catholic community in the South and the Protestant community in the North, stressing further the antagonism between the two social groups. It reinforced the divisible nature of their conflict by equating Unionism with Protestantism, and Nationalism with Catholicism, something that could still be debated locally during the 19th century. Despite having originally based the constitution of the new Irish Free State on a secular declaration, the Catholic Church would become increasingly central to the Irish State during the 1920 and1930s. On the other hand, the partition accompanied the reinforcement of an unprecedented unionist control on the organisation of Ulster society. A Catholic puritanism settled in the South which paralleled the Protestant puritanism branded in the North. The very conservative *Ulster Unionist Party* entered government in 1929 and would remain in power until 1972. The Second World War would only strengthen this political divide, pushing Ireland towards 'neutrality' and Northern Ireland towards a greater engagement with the United Kingdom.

By this twin growing divide, the distance which the Irish Catholics and British Protestants had to instil with their Northern Irish peers in order to constitute their 'own' nation-state would become a source of uneasiness. The Catholic nationalists of the Irish Free State, having the sentiment of having fully and independently completed their nationalisation process, felt increasingly ill-at-ease with the Catholic community of Ulster, which reminded them of the very partial and ambivalent nature of their political and social situation. Similarly, though unionists had initially hoped for the maintenance of the status quo, the partition would prove to

sustain most of their aspirations to create a 'Protestant parliament and a Protestant State'[1]. As summarised by Craigavon in 1934:

> 'In the South they boasted of a Catholic State. They still boast of Southern Ireland being a Catholic State. All I boast of is that we are a Protestant Parliament and a Protestant State.'[2]

A certain confidence in both state apparatus arose from the fact that community and society seemed to be finally aligning. Yet, this confidence had a cost. It came with the awareness, for each community, that by enforcing partition and by settling into a nation-state that they attempted to make 'their own', they would suffer accusation of turning a blind eye to the situation of northern Catholics and southern Protestants. For the new republic and for the Irish Catholics, as K.T. Hoppen argues, the 'affairs of Ulster became increasingly regarded as no more than an irritating sideshow to the main business in hand'[3]. Those feelings of mutual abandonment[4] would prove central in the emergence of local reactionary communities in each society. It fuelled the growing frustration of Belfast deprived communities in the inter-war period. Frustration would turn into criticisms in later decades, whereby the citizens of both nations were accused of hypocritically 'posture about the wickedness of divisions 'imposed' by Britain while enjoying the psychological, economic and political comforts which the border provided'[5]. The constitutive ambivalence was appearing under a clearer light whilst still being brought back to the hypocrisy of social actors and social groups.

Until then, the ambivalence of the two communities to oppose one another was still met with their will to cooperate due to their consciousness of being interdependent as social groups of a same society. Partition temporarily changed that. But if this led to a civil war between nationalist in the South, it took the form of increasing segregation in the North, with violent oppositions between communities running from 1920 to 1922 and then regularly every 10 years after. By effect of this paradoxical reaction, and despite members of both communities still being members of a common society, intentional policies of homogenisation affected professional spaces which had started to display a general movement of heterogeneisation. The presence of Catholics in public employment reduced to 10% in 1934, and reached 6% in 1943[6]. The religious segregation of schooling system was reinforced by the 1923, 1925 and 1930 reforms. In the Irish Free State, 'the Protestant minority (8% in 1926) of the State [was]

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[1] K.T. Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800*, *op cit.*, p. 188.
[2] Northern Ireland Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, vol. 16, p. 1094–1096.
[3] K.T. Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800*, *op cit.*, p. 189.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 208.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] S. Lebecq et al., *Histoire des îles britanniques*, *op cit.*, p. 801.

repressed, notably in access to public employment, even though, being composed mainly of a member of the middle and upper class, the discrimination it faces [were] incomparable with that striking the Catholics of the North'[1].

The partition proved to be a 'double-edge achievement'[2], as most political attempts at solving such situations: though initially soothing, the short-circuit introduced by partition came to disturb the means by which Catholic and Protestant communities had managed to handle their ambivalent relation without spiralling into violence, being held in mutual check by their internal relations and their common attachment to the same wider web of interdependencies. By removing the support of internal coaffection, it would leave the road open for a growing tension: that between the increasing differentiation of Northern Irish society and the cohabitation of Catholic and Protestant communities within professional spheres, met with the maintenance of residential and political attempts at maintaining homogeneous social spaces. This background would turn the civil right movement of the 1960s into a matchstick.

2.3 The Troubles as a conflict of integration

We can then understand the Troubles as a conflict of integration, in the sense that it resulted from the same increasing tensions between opposition in we-ideals and increasing occupational cohabitation and interdependencies.

The Second World War temporarily facilitated a lowering of the barriers that the Protestant and Catholic groups had erected between them, due to their common experience of the Blitz[3]. Moreover, in the post-war period, the needs of reconstruction gave new importance to areas in which Catholics had come to dominate – such as construction[4] or education[5] – which would displace the occupational imbalance. At the same time, shipbuilding entered a crisis that accelerated until the 1960s and 1970s[6]. The textile industry died out completely. With the economic crisis of the 1970s, which combined with the effects of the Troubles, unemployment soared in Belfast, reaching a rate of 26% for Catholics and 15% for Protestants in the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 797.
[2] Dominique Linhardt, 'Un monopole sous tension : les deux visages de la violence d'État', *Politika*, 05 2019.
[3] Brian Barton, *The Belfast Blitz: The City in the War Years*, Belfast, Ulster Historical Foundation, 2015. See Chapter 9.
[4] R. Munck and B. Rolston, 'Belfast in the 1930's', art cit., p. 241.
[5] Graham Gudgin, 'Discrimination in Housing and Employment under the Stormont Administration' in Patrick J. Roche and Brian Barton (eds.), *The Northern Ireland Question: Nationalism, unionism and partition*, Farnham, United Kingdom, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1999, p. 97-121. See table 5.3.
[6] D. Bryan, 'Titanic Town', art cit., p. 335 ; F. Geary and W. Johnson, 'Shipbuilding in Belfast, 1861–1986', art cit.

mid-1980s[1]. Under these conditions, the city began a shift towards service activities[2]. Some found employment in the civil service, others in commercial services. Catholics and Protestants who belong to the world of employees are increasingly working together in the same professions, administrations and companies – though often in different services or workplace. They participate in a professional world in which community affiliation was becoming less and less a criterion of distinction, giving way to specialised criteria that were akin to what was observable in other highly differentiated societies who gave more room to the expression of individuals' plurality of experiences.

THESE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOCIAL DIVISION OF LABOUR have made the contrasts outside the workplace more salient. On the long run, it has become increasingly apparent that 'the location of jobs in "neutral" or "safe" environments challenges aspects of ethno-sectarian conventions', including residential segregation[3]. Over the same period of the Troubles, residential segregation has steadily increased to become the main expression of community contrast. Widely documented by sociologists[4], this tendency towards residential enclosure has often been seen as the main cause of conflict between Catholics and Protestants[5].

The history of Ardoyne offers a concentrate of these transformations. As we have shown in our first chapter, the story of the area is precisely that of a neighbourhood born out of the Industrial Revolution and of its insertion within an economic system oriented towards exportation[6], but also of the increasing distinction between Catholics as nationalists and Protestants as unionists. We now understand that it is by this process that Ardoyne acquired its status as an interface in the 1930s. After the Second World War, as much of the city was destroyed, the state promoted a policy of reconstruction that resulted in numerous public housing projects that encouraged 'mixing' between Catholic and Protestant residents. However, this policy of mixed population relocation in new large housing estates came up against the avoidance strategies at work in the communities. Members of the Protestant community, in

[1] R.D. Osborne and R.J. Cormack, 'Unemployment and religion in Northern Ireland', art cit., p. 219.
[2] B. Rowthorn, 'Northern Ireland', art cit., p. 10, Table 4.
[3] Brendan Murtagh and Peter Shirlow, 'Spatial segregation and labour market processes in Belfast', *Policy and Politics*, 1 July 2007, vol. 35, p. 362.
[4] Frederick W. Boal, 'Territoriality on the shankill-falls divide, Belfast', *Irish Geography*, 1 January 1969, vol. 6, no. 1, p. 30-50 ; Frederick W. Boal, *Integration and Division: Geographical Perspectives on the Northern Ireland Problem*, Belfast, Academic Press, 1982, 392 p ; Paul Doherty and Michael A. Poole, 'Ethnic Residential Segregation in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1971-1991', *Geographical Review*, 1997, vol. 87, no. 4, p. 520-536.
[5] Florine Ballif, 'L'usage de la rue, enjeu de conflit entre catholiques et protestants à Belfast' in Judith Rainhorn and Didier Terrier (eds.), *Étranges voisins : Altérité et relations de proximité dans la ville depuis le XVIIIe siècle*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010, p. 179-195.
[6] S. Lewis, 'Belfast Linen Trade in the Nineteenth Century', art cit.

particular, when they had the opportunity, preferred to move to new, more privileged residential areas on the southern outskirts of the city.

Given this occupational evolution, it is therefore no surprise that the Civil rights movements which sparked the Troubles had all to do with the increasing awareness of community-based discrimination within professional sectors and in housing, in which Northern Irish members of both communities were increasingly aware of their interdependencies and of their differences. The conflict was not primarily the result of the desire to separate Catholics and Protestants. It was above all the reaction of social groups dissatisfied with the form of their increasing interdependencies, notably as the level of occupation and housing.

AT THIS POINT, the type of socio-historical approach that we have attempted to trace stumble upon difficulties. The Troubles are a controversial topic. It is one for which historians' monopoly is all but clear, since history still appears as something to be constituted rather than an agreed-upon support for explanation. Hence, the Troubles are notoriously more difficult to analyse. In addition, the historiography of this period seems to gather two types of work. A first group centres on a political history as we have defined it. They study the evolution of attempts at enforcing competing political ideals in the region, the rise of new political forces and the successive reactions of the British State[1]. We then find works which trace the social history of specific fringes of the population, by analysing how the conflict meant changes in occupation, poverty, education, etc. As we have argued in this sketch, these two levels cannot be disarticulated from each other. On the contrary, it should be possible to reconstruct the way they affect each other. There are very few historical approaches which consider in a holistic way the progression of social interdependencies within the region and its manifestation in increasingly conflictual political outcomes. If they attempt to do so, they often bring social transformations back to ethno-political conflict, and to the 'fallacy that the Catholic and Protestant peoples are transhistorical entities'[2], hence missing the processual transformations we have attempted to put forward here. This situation boils down to the fact that historians themselves have, since the opening of the conflict in 1969, struggled to return to a consensual definition of what the Northern Irish 'problem' is about[3]. Far from being solved, in the past few

[1] Niall Ó Dochartaigh, *From Civil Rights to Armalites: Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles*, 2nd ed., Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005 ; John Coakley and Jennifer Todd, *Negotiating a Settlement in Northern Ireland, 1969-2019*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020; J. McGarry and B. O'Leary, *Explaining Northern Ireland*, *op. cit.*
[2] Simon Prince, 'Against Ethnicity: Democracy, Equality, and the Northern Irish Conflict', *Journal of British Studies*, October 2018, vol. 57, no. 4, p. 783-811.
[3] Brian Lambkin, 'The pre-1969 historiography of the Northern Ireland conflict: a reappraisal', *Irish Historical Studies*, November 2015, vol. 39, no. 156, p. 659-681.

years, this void seems to have been filed by a transitionary historical focused on the politics of memory, remembrance and commemoration[1].

Hence, we can only rapidly sketch the vision of the Troubles that this sociological approach would lead us to defend. A conception that considers them as a conflict of integration coming as a direct consequence of the premodern and modern trends that we have identified. They represented a violent attempt to opt out of the increasingly contradictory position in which Northern Irish were finding themselves. Again, this contradiction came of increasing interdependencies and increasingly opposed *we* ideals, given that the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom progressed in their own parallel track as independent society who had managed their own balance of unity and separation by handling their own tension since 1921.

The central dynamic of the 20th century is the following one: in Northern Ireland, the long-term evolution of occupational interdependencies gave to the Catholic community a higher consciousness of the outsider position it occupied in several occupational segments, which manifested itself in their relations with the Protestant communities and with the British State. Out of this came demands for a more balanced relations with the Protestant communities through the implementation of fair employment, which accompanied the emergence of a Civil Rights movement in the 1960s[2].

It is the convergence of this mobilisation with the problem of opposed we-ideals that tense the situation even further: after initial reforms in 1968, both the political unionist elite and the British State agreed that the movement's clamours had been met, despite increasing popular dissatisfaction. On the other end of the spectrum, radical Irish republicans also agreed that the demands of the movement had been met, reaching an effective basis of equality within Northern Irish society. They used the fact that protesters were still unsatisfied to justify the need for an IRA campaign aimed at a more radical return to disunion with the British State[3]. Out of this came a general controversy on whether or not the movement was funded – 'was there ever such a discrimination against Catholics'? – and whether or not it was sincere – 'what were the links between the civil rights movement and the republican agenda?'. This only rendered addressing the issue more difficult and supported the transformation of double aspirations pertaining to

[1] Kirk Simpson, *unionist Voices and the Politics of Remembering the Past in Northern Ireland*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 ; Jim Smyth, *Remembering the Troubles: Contesting the Recent Past in Northern Ireland*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2017.
[2] John Goodwin, 'Employment Equality in Northern Ireland', *Work, Employment and Society*, 1 March 1997, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 167–172.
[3] N.Ó. Dochartaigh, *From Civil Rights to Armalites*, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

occupations and community attachment into a violent double bind in which the British state had lost its claim to impartiality.

The problem of occupational inequalities did progress, with unexpected consequences. The British State invested heavily in the province during the 1970s to mitigate this situation. Enforced in 1972 with Direct Rule, this interventionist stance would stabilise during most of the conflict. This only reinforced the interdependence between Catholic and Protestant communities within common professional segments, and even with the State itself: by the end of the conflict, 'the British state provided employment for around four out of every ten of those who work within the six counties. The expansion of the public sector has facilitated the enlargement of the Northern Irish middle classes[1]. This was at the origin of opportunities of upward mobility for many working-class workers, but the majority of lower classes were hit by the evaporation of manufacturing employment.

The literature regularly tells us that residents of the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland were the most involved in political violence[2] whilst rarely going further into why exactly this was the case. This might provide some insight, by showing how they were the one to experience more acutely double aspiration out of this movement. At the beginning of the 20th century, the lower classes had been the first and most affected by the progressive dissolution of barriers between communities which went with the crumbling of the manufacturing segments. In so doing, they were either confronted to other professional space which increased their tense cohabitation between Catholics and Protestants, or stuck in unemployment by which they tended to increasingly denounce the unemployment asymmetry between Catholics and Protestants. This was added to the increasing trend towards community separation. Indeed, residential segregation had continued at a low level in the 1950s and 1960s, and accelerated drastically with the opening of the conflict. There were numerous waves of evictions and 'house swaps': residents of each community retreated to different streets in Ardoyne, gradually separated by various barricades[3]. The interface areas between communities, considered as 'fronts' by the paramilitaries, became places of violence. On deployment, the British army set up a makeshift barricade to separate Alliance Avenue from the northern part of Ardoyne. Over

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[1] Colin Coulter, *Contemporary Nothern Irish Society: An Introduction*, London, Pluto Press, 1999, p. 65; Peter Shirlow and Mark McGovern, *Who are 'the People'?: Unionism, Protestantism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland*, London, Pluto Press, 1997, p. 188.

[2] C. Coulter, *Contemporary Northern Irish Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 72; Michael McKeown, *Two Seven Six Three: An Analysis of Fatalities Attributable to Civil Disturbances in Northern Ireland in the Twenty Years Between July 13, 1969 and July 12, 1989*, Murlough Press, 1989, 61 p.

[3] Michael Murray, *The politics and pragmatism of urban containment : Belfast since 1940*, Aldershot, Hants, England, Avebury, 1991.

the years, this barrier became fixed, transformed first into a palisade, then into a wall, with barbed wire and control towers. The same mechanism would be repeated in several places in the neighbourhood. The interface becomes rigid. The dominant reading of the conflict as a phenomenon of rupture between the two communities would settle in parallel.

In addition, the segregation between middle class and lower classes, which manifested the aspiration of the middle classes to do away with the segregation between communities, reinforced the incapacity of the lower classes to see their situation translated to the rest of society with the help of middle classes. Rather, an internal difficulty appeared, well summarised by Colin Coulter when he stresses that ‘while the British state may frequently appear to the nationalist middle classes as a generous benefactor, it often appears to working class nationalists as a tireless oppressor’[1]. Throughout the conflict, this increased working class communities’ difficulty to share their ambivalence with middle and upper classes. Even more, this progressively led to increasing tensions within deprived urban community. For those who attempted to distance themselves from their community in order to embrace social mobility, this sustained the formation of community fractions within lower-class areas that were conflicted between seeing the State as a benefactor and an oppressor. The nationalist communities made the experience of seeing him as a benefactor, whilst the unionist deprived communities also made the experience of seeing him as an oppressor, whilst they had up until now defended their attachment to it – both for ideological reasons and for interdependencies reason, notably because of the high number of unionist lower class workers employed in the Police forces. The Troubles were the terrain on which this ambivalence slowly grew amongst North Belfast deprived communities, whilst also becoming progressively difficult to voice because of their ambiguous relation with middle classes.

What current residents usually recall is the social groups’ toils to find in the British state a reflexive apparatus capable of taking this ambivalence into account, to the point of oppressing its manifestation as undue resistance. In considering the 1969 Derry marches for Civil Rights as the starting point of the Troubles, one usually remembers that the police violently fought the activists, rather than the social dynamics which had led the activists in the street in the first place. However, the increasing implications of the British State and of the British army in violently managing the conflict between communities in order to regain control over the monopoly of violence was only one part of the picture. The Troubles also marked the appearance and increasing centrality of a ‘Community Relations’ approach within British

[1] C. Coulter, *Contemporary Northern Irish Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

State's public policies. This transition towards sustaining community relations on the ground was at the basis of the 'community groups' we have studied in this thesis. Yet, this paved the way for an understanding of the conflict which focused on the internal dimension of the problems affecting Northern Ireland. From 1971 onwards, the British State approach to stabilise the situation – in addition to its well-known repressive policies – was to consider Community Relations as the main bulk of the problem, and to deploy various efforts at sustaining Community Development in specific deprived areas[1]. This only increased throughout the conflict, with the setting up of the Central Community Relations Unit in 1987. Not only was it focusing on the internal dimension of the problem, it was paradoxically rendering the occurrence of margin groups more difficult.

The Troubles were the result of an increasingly tense social situations: the Northern Irish from urban deprived areas could not do away with, first, the reinforcement of occupational interdependencies, and second, the conjoint reinforcement of opposed we-ideals. The first multiplied margin groups and favoured upward mobility which increasingly favoured aspirations to do away with the polarisation between opposed we-ideals. The second was manifested in the increasing distinctiveness of communities in residential and educational spheres[2]. That is, the two private sphere in which the notion of nationalist Catholic and unionist Protestant communities tended to confine their relevance. The violent riots, assassinations, battles, bombings between communities and the conflictual use of violence by local armed groups within communities were the surface expression of this process at a certain stage.

2.4 The difficulties of the Peace Process as results of processes going beyond war and peace

The problem now lies in the fact that the peace process certainly did not put a halt to those movements. The 1990s intensified the tension, by deepening the occupation interdependencies between communities. In Northern Ireland, attracting international investment became a priority political objective after the 1994 cease-fire. For the British and Irish governments, encouraged and supported by the European institutions and the US administration, economic

[1] Arthur Dunham, 'Community Development and Community Relations in Northern Ireland', *Social Service Review*, 1 June 1972, vol. 46, no. 2, p. 155-169.
[2] John Darby, 'Northern Ireland: Bonds and Breaks in Education', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 1978, vol. 26, no. 3, p. 215-223. Even though we did not have the time for it, one should add to this processual analysis the central problem of segregated education. Margaret B. Sutherland, 'Progress and Problems in Education in Northern Ireland, 1952-1982', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 1982, vol. 30, no. 1 ; Dominic Murray, *Worlds apart: segregated schools in Northern Ireland*, Belfast, Appletree Press, 1985.

recovery was not only a goal in itself, but a springboard for peace building[1]. This policy has attracted multinational companies. By now, three out of five of the jobs newly created were in service sectors, notably telephone centres[2]. At the same time, the government was pursuing more proactive anti-discrimination policy in hiring[3]. These policy choices were maintained in the 2000s, and are now pushing towards higher-value service activities, such as the tourism or film industry[4]. With these trends, it became increasingly common for Catholics and Protestants, including residents from working-class areas, to engage in a service sector where, because of its interdependence with international sectors, the polarisation between communities would appear increasingly irrelevant.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the workplace has gradually fallen out of the communal logic. What persists the ‘chill factor’, the sense of anxiety by which members of one community would avoid engaging in certain sectors for fear of cohabiting with members of the other community[5]. The growth of this chill factor, and the extent to which it is increasingly seen as a barrier, indicates an additional layer of reflexivity that could only arise because the two communities have effectively become professionally interdependent.

Conversely, the conundrum is that residential separation abides despite developments in the workplace[6]. Although from 2001 to 2011 and across the region as a whole the proportion of non-mixed residential areas fell from 55% to 37%[7], this fall has not been nearly as rapid in Belfast, let alone in working class areas: 94% of social housing in Belfast remains segregated[8]. Similarly, active segregation did not end with the signing of the peace agreement. In fact, it intensified, particularly in North Belfast where, after the 2000s, the British State built several

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[1] C. Coulter, *Contemporary Northern Irish Society*, *op. cit.* ; Conor McCabe, *The Double Transition. The Economic and Political Transition of Peace*, Dublin, European Union; Irish Congress of Trade Unions; Labour After Conflict, 2013.

[2] Paul Nolan, *The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report - Number Three*, Belfast, Ulster University, 2014, p. 25.

[3] Christopher McCrudden, ‘Legal Regulation of Affirmative Action in Northern Ireland: An Empirical Assessment’, *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 2004, vol. 24 ; Raya Muttarak et al., ‘Does Affirmative Action Work? Evidence from the Operation of Fair Employment Legislation in Northern Ireland’, *Sociology*, 1 June 2013, vol. 47, no. 3, p. 560-579.

[4] Phil Ramsey, Stephen Baker and Robert Porter, ‘Screen production on the “biggest set in the world”: Northern Ireland Screen and the case of Game of Thrones’, *Media, Culture & Society*, 1 September 2019, vol. 41, no. 6, p. 845-862 ; Maria T. Simone-Charteris, Jade Kirkpatrick and Christopher McLaughlin, ‘An Investigation of the Differences that Exist between Generations in Relation to Supporting Dark Tourism in Northern Ireland’, *DBS Business Review*, 29 November 2018, vol. 2, no. 0.

[5] C. McCrudden, ‘Legal Regulation of Affirmative Action in Northern Ireland’, art cit., p. 133.

[6] Ian G. Shuttleworth and Christopher D. Lloyd, ‘Are Northern Ireland’s Communities Dividing? Evidence from Geographically Consistent Census of Population Data, 1971–2001’, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 1 January 2009, vol. 41, no. 1, p. 213–229.

[7] P. Nolan, *The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report - Number Three*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

[8] A.M.G. Gray et al., *The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report - Number Five*, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

new walls[1]. The reasons given for this were the concerns expressed by residents, and their desire to preserve the homogeneity of their areas of residence, which was seen as a protection against the return of violence[2]. Since the 2010s, the government has stated its intention to dismantle the walls before 2023. The first wall did fall in 2016, at one of the Ardoyne interfaces. However, this remains an exception and, on the whole, in view of the fears that these dismantling projects are deemed to arouse in the population, the announcements are rarely followed up by facts.

It is no longer a conundrum if we understand that peace has not resolved the fact that disadvantaged communities in North Belfast have now become the site of expressions of a double aspiration. Hence why, as we have seen in several of our chapters, the communities are internally divided between actors prone to attachment and others prone to distancing, with margin groups appearing over time.

THIS INCREASE IN INTERDEPENDENCIES IS ONLY ONE PART OF THE THRESHOLD. This double aspiration is now becoming increasingly apparent as Northern Irish people realise that neither civil conflict nor peace has allowed them to move away from the conflicts of integration of which this mix of aspirations is the result. The situation is thus characterised less by an opposition between overly attached unionist and nationalist communities than by a common political ambivalence to attachment and distancing, separation and union. This dual aspiration has taken changing forms within the Protestant and Catholic communities, as we have seen in our ethnographic chapter. Nevertheless, it reflects the common fact that 'unionists' and 'nationalists' are increasingly aware of their interdependencies with each other within Northern Ireland, and increasingly aware of their differences with the British and the Irish. This last element is the second characteristics of the threshold condition of the peace process.

On one hand, the increasing interdependency of urban communities with the rest of society has meant the increasing experience of a double aspiration. On the other hand, the progressive difficulties in voicing the double aspirations were reinforced throughout the peace process by the increasing difficulties of the North Belfast Catholics and Protestants to neglect the distance that was now separating them from Irish and British societies.

It is common to see in this situation a paradox specific to the United Kingdom's 'devolution', the process of decentralisation which has seen the British State granting greater

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[1] P. Nolan, *The Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report - Number Three*, *op. cit.* ; M. Liggett, *Social capital's imagined benefits in Ardoyne electoral ward*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
[2] Peter Shirlow and Rachel Pain, 'The geographies and politics of fear', *Capital & Class*, 1 July 2003, vol. 27, no. 2.

autonomy to the regions of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales since the 1990s[1]. But it is important to remember that this State policy reflects the aspirations of social groups, including the unionists. The unionists are also demanding a more autonomous regional state, especially as they are less and less supported by the people of the rest of Britain in their desire to remain united with them. The unionists and loyalists' values and their attachment to the Crown and Commonwealth are increasingly dissonant with what has become of social and political life in the rest of the United Kingdom, where these emblems as increasingly considered backward-looking[2]. Similarly, Northern Irish unionists increasingly criticise the British government for its lack of interest in the region[3]. The riots which happened over Belfast in spring 2021 were presented by unionists as a reaction to this growing disaffection with the British state. The more radicals were outraged at the way the government in London had chosen to re-establish a customs barrier between the two islands. They saw this as a lack of consideration for their sense of attachment to the Union, which the government would have ended up neglecting to find a solution to the pressing demands of the European Union after Brexit[4].

A similar observation can be made about nationalist Catholics. Protestants and more distanced members of the Catholic communities are quick to point out that it is highly unlikely that the Republic of Ireland will take Northern Ireland back under its aegis, so great has been the gap between the economic trajectories of the two regions over the past twenty years[5]. The Irish from the republic, for their part, are increasingly disinterested in what is happening north of the border, and the fact that the Irish have been recovering for longer from their civil war of 1922 to 1923 means that internal tensions have already subsided. This has resulted in 'differences between the Northern and Southern ideas of Irish nationhood'[6]. It is not uncommon for republican nationalists in the North to be labelled as 'extremists' in the South and for Catholics in the North to be seen as burdens in the emancipation of the island[7]. In republican

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[1] On the paradoxes of devolution, see Arthur Aughey, *Nationalism, Devolution and the Challenge to the United Kingdom State*, London, Pluto Press, 2001, p. 127.

[2] Colin Coulter, 'Not quite as British as Finchley: the failed attempt to bring British Conservatism to Northern Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, 2 October 2015, vol. 23, no. 4, p. 407–423 ; Neil Southern, 'Britishness, "Ulsterness" and unionist Identity in Northern Ireland', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 1 April 2007, vol. 13, no. 1, p. 71–102.

[3] Mary C. Murphy and Jonathan Evershed, 'Contesting sovereignty and borders: Northern Ireland, devolution and the Union', *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 19 March 2021, vol. 0, no. 0, p. 1–17.

[4] Théo Leschevin, 'Covid, Brexit et Irlande du Nord : l'ironie du sort', AOC, https://aoc.media/the government in Londonanalyse/2021/06/09/covid-brexit-et-irlande-du-nord-lironie-du-sort/ , 9 June 2021.

[5] Seamus McGuinness and Adele Bergin, 'The political economy of a Northern Ireland border poll', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 7 July 2020, vol. 44, no. 4, p. 781–812.

[6] Jennifer Todd, 'Partitioned identities? Everyday national distinctions in Northern Ireland and the Irish state', *Nations and Nationalism*, 2015, vol. 21, no. 1, p. 37.

[7] Thomas Leahy, 'The politics of Troubles memories in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, 1998 to 2018', *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 3 July 2019, vol. 32, no. 3, p. 293–314.

nationalist circles, the idea that a cultural divide would threaten relations between Northern and Southern Ireland has become prevalent. For instance, in 2021, the Irish President denounced the 'unjustifiable' nature of segregation in the Northern Irish education system[1]. Conversely, the Catholics of North Belfast, who maintain somewhat denser religious practice even though they have been affected by the same decline as the rest of Europe, view with suspicion the secularised mores they perceive in the South. In 2018, Catholic residents addressed these issues at a debate on Brexit. One of the participants expressed himself in these terms:

> 'For a long time, the people down south remembered partition. I remembered travelling down to Cork in the 1970s, and talking to old people, who'd tell me that they remembered the "bad times". Now they're gone. More recently, I was at a golf in the South, and I met this woman who came to speak to me. When I told her that I was from the North, she said that she was a McKenna. "Like the famous McKenna from the IRA?" I asked, and she went "Yeah that was my father". And yet, that woman was saying that no one really wanted a united Ireland down there, because that was going to be expensive, that would lead to a disaster, etc. Even though she was coming from an IRA family. So that's that. […] We're not learning Irish history here, and they're not looking ours down south. They're just waiting for it to be resolved.'

Even IRA-affiliated southern Irish are judged no longer interested in Irish reunification, even republican nationalists in the North are deemed no longer interested in Irish history. Although they aspire to be part of the same political society, the gap is seen to be widening between the Irish and the republican nationalists in Northern Ireland.

Those two situations are far from new and, as we have seen, have been building up ever since the 1920s. This movement had already been ongoing during the Troubles. Throughout the conflict, citizens of the Irish Republic 'responded to the crisis from marching in solidarity with nationalists to increasing disengagement and fear'[2]. Already, in 1971, Dunham conveyed the comments of a resident saying:

> 'Theoretically the Catholics would like to unite with the Irish Republic and the Protestants would like to unite even more closely with England. But, practically, the Catholics would not be at all satisfied to have the lower standard of living and scale of social services that exist in the Republic, and the Protestant Fundamentalists would not be happy with the atmosphere of permissiveness in London.'[3]

Hence, the politically opposed we ideals were becoming increasingly contradictory with the state of interdependencies within Northern Ireland, which pushed them to have more in common that they had intended to claim. Neither the social groups of Ireland or the United Kingdom fully supported the capacity of Northern Irish to see the emergence of their internal

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[1] Garreth Cross, 'Irish President Higgins calls for end to segregated education in Northern Ireland after riots', *Belfast Telegraph*, April 2021.

[2] Brian Hanley, *The impact of the Troubles on the Republic of Ireland, 1968–79*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2018, 301 p.

[3] A. Dunham, 'Community Development and Community Relations in Northern Ireland', art cit., p. 156.

conflict as the result of a problem that pertained, and which was still pertaining, to the British Isles. By these mutual difficulties, 'the two governments themselves have not anchored the framework necessary to make devolution worthwhile to either of the internal groups'[1]. This was already well exemplified in the position of the Irish government, as exposed by the Taoiseach – head of government – Jack Lynch in 1972 during a debate within the Dail. Mentioning the death that had occurred in Ardoyne and other parts of Belfast, he declared:

> 'The attempt is made to suggest that we here are responsible for this unfortunate situation. I have repudiated these charges and I will continue to repudiate them. [...] I should like to reply to it now by adding that a regime, whose continuance involves the destruction of the lives of 20 people in one week in its capital city as well as the continued discontent and unhappiness of its entire population more or less indefinitely, has no right to the support it expects and even demands from the British Government and the British people. It has even less right to point an accusing finger at anybody else. I have said these things before but they bear repetition. The deterioration of the situation in the North of Ireland is due to the pursuance of wrong policies there by the British Government [...] which, if unchanged and successful – both of these are highly unlikely eventualities – can only restore the monopoly of Unionist power which is at the root of the instability in that State.'[2]

As clearly indicated here, the overall situation would maintain a blockade by which the aspirations of the Irish State to specify the responsibility of British groups in the Northern Irish situation and to oppose the Unionist we-ideals rendered it increasingly unable to claim responsibility in the situation of North Belfast residents, including nationalist Catholics. Northern Ireland social groups increasingly rendered lower unit of integration accountable for this unmanageable double aspiration: urban deprived communities. Here too, this situation has been affecting all social actors, including those responsible for the historiography of the Northern Irish conflict who now struggle to regain a view which used to dominate amongst pre-1969, that which approached the Northern Ireland by valuing both external and internal conflict paradigm[3].

In view of the many moments of detachment that unionists and nationalists seem to show with regard to their reciprocal ambivalence and to their double aspirations, we now have a better idea of what prevents them from completing this project and seeing it as a common experience. But this also requires consideration of the type of institutional devices in which they are embedded, which encourage or disqualify the expression of these political ambivalence. Whilst one might think that the establishment of peace would bring with it the creation of integration

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[1] Frank Wright, 'Northern Ireland and the British-Irish Relationship', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 1989, vol. 78, no. 310, p. 162.
[2] Houses of the Oireachtas, 'Adjournment of Dáil: Motion. – Dáil Éireann (19th Dáil) – Friday, 17 Dec 1971 – Houses of the Oireachtas', 17 December 1971, vol. 257, no. 13.
[3] B. Lambkin, 'The pre-1969 historiography of the Northern Ireland conflict', art cit.

mechanisms favourable to such a process of secondary detachment, it seems rather that it has sometimes led, in an unexpected way, to hinder it.

The ratification of the peace agreements was indeed marked by an attempt to institutionally establish 'consociationalism'. Influenced by the work of the political scientist Arend Lijphart on the particular type of democratic system that can accommodate highly divided societies, this idea has been the support of several forms of social engineering at the end of the 20th century[1]. Many political undertakings of 'state building' in post-war situations have been based on this political theory of reconciliation[2]. Consociationalism refers to a political theory that advocates the establishment of a state apparatus based on the coalition between the elites of strongly opposed social groups. With the circulation of Lijphart's work in the 1970s, consociationalism became both a political theory proposing to analyse the shape of stable democracies in divided societies – such as the Netherlands or Lebanon – and a support for political reforms in societies where social segmentation was deemed to pose a risk to the continuity of the state – such as in Northern Ireland or South Africa[3]. The peace agreements were based on the establishment by the British state of a Northern Irish regional state with unionist and republican nationalist elites living side by side. This involved the creation of a regional assembly, a proportional electoral system, the requirement for a nationalist and a unionist First Minister to live side by side, and the enshrinement-in-law of the need for 'principle of consent' and 'parity of esteem' between communities[4]. Consociationalism was above all an institutional extension, on the scale of Northern Ireland, of the 'constitutionalism' which had already founded the cohabitation of the various kingdoms within the United Kingdom as 'constituent nations'[5].

These consociative reforms were liable to a double criticism. Firstly, as we have seen, their focus on the opposition between communities rather than on the growing common ambivalence of each sense of community and national belonging proved increasingly incongruent with the experience of North Belfast Catholics and Protestants. Secondly, it led to criticisms by neglecting the greater reflexivity of the actors on their interdependencies. Rather

[1] Arend Lijphart, 'Consociational Democracy', *World Politics*, 1969, vol. 21, no. 2, p. 207–225.
[2] John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, 'Consociational Theory, Northern Ireland's Conflict, and its Agreement 2. What Critics of Consociation Can Learn from Northern Ireland', *Government and Opposition*, 2006, vol. 41, no. 2, p. 249–277 ; Andrew Finlay, *Governing Ethnic Conflict: Consociation, Identity and the Price of Peace*, Routledge, 2010, 204 p.
[3] Rudy B. Andeweg, 'Consociationalism' in James D. Wright (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Elsevier, 2015, p. 692-694.
[4] This was despite the fact that an attempt to reorganise the political system in similar terms had failed in 1974 following the Sunningdale Agreement.
[5] A. Aughey, *Nationalism, Devolution and the Challenge to the United Kingdom State*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

than dealing with their political ambivalence to union and separation, which nationalists and unionists were experiencing more and more severely, consociationalism encouraged them to be reduced to uniform volitions. By acting as if unionists and nationalists need to be constantly reminded of their interdependencies in Northern Ireland, the advocates of consociationalism do not know what to do when these social groups express the ambivalence and even contradictions that already emanate from a high awareness of these interdependencies. Reformers are then regularly blamed for entrenching a social 'double injustice' in Northern Ireland[1].In other words, consociationalism comes up against the complementarity of separation and union that already runs through social relations within an increasingly differentiated Northern Irish society. A complementarity that Simmel and then Elias have already largely underlined, the first one by analysing the dosage of 'proximity and distance' at the heart of social relations[2], the second by making the polarity between 'competition and cooperation' a central dynamic of the growth of interdependencies within a given political society[3]. It is also a matter of dismissing accusations of one-sided resistance, which assume that actors would have no internal difficulty in breaking down their mutual solidarity if they had the means to do so. It is this overcoming, underway amongst both unionists and republicans in Northern Ireland, that State consociationalism does not convey. It does not take on board the fact that communities, through the conflicts between the internal fractions of unionism and republicanism throughout the 20th century, are already the site of greater reflexivity about these double aspirations.

Conclusion: How figurations of lower levels of integration have been held accountable

We have now reached the point when we can reconsider under a new light the double aspiration that has been at the heart of our study of Ardoyne's Catholic and Protestant communities. We can now see it as a contradiction inherited from historical and political transformation, one that is inherent to the functional democratisation of the political societies constituting 'these islands'. In 1998, when all Northern Irish parties, local paramilitaries, local population of both regions, all three governments of the British Isles and the European Union

[1] Rupert Taylor, 'The Injustice of a Consociational Solution to the Northern Ireland Problem' in Rupert Taylor (ed.), *Consociational theory : McGarry and O'Leary and the Northern Ireland conflict*, London, Routledge, 2009.
[2] G. Simmel, 'The Stranger', art cit.
[3] N. Elias, *La Dynamique de l'Occident*, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

signed the Peace Agreement, it seemed as if centuries were around the table. It was the result of a long process of incentivisation by which various State groups progressively got involved into addressing the social problems of Northern Irish communities. All those social groups were focused in the same space and at the same time on the specific result of their common secular ballet. This common effort would not last.

Therefore, the fact that the British State has struggled to handle and regulate the increasingly felt double aspirations is the continuation of long-term tendencies. In the years following the Good Friday Agreement, the political will of those States groups to remove themselves from this situation, has rendered this complex form of interdependencies harder and harder to grasp over the years, making it more difficult for local actors to come to term with the double aspiration. Again. The Irish and British states were initially active in the negotiations that led to the Good Friday Agreement. They joined forces to help all parties involved – paramilitary groups, political parties and the nascent Northern Irish government – to consolidate an institutional peace project and even agreed to consult the people of the whole island through a joint referendum. This investment was only temporary. It was quickly followed by a disengagement: the EU's support for the peace process allowed the Irish and British states to gradually detach themselves from Northern Irish affairs. This was often blamed on financial interests. Yet, it also met a political ideal of independence. This disengagement had been part of the terms of the Agreement. On the Irish side, the constitutional status of Northern Ireland within the Irish nation had been amended. In 1937, Article 2 and 3 of the constitution defined the Irish nation in terms of its territory and placed itself 'pending the re-integration of the national territory'[1]. Despite controversy, this status was maintained until 1998 when, as part of the peace agreements, the articles were amended to provide for a double separation: the republic withdrew the wording of pending re-integration' and recognised the status of Northern Ireland, thus legally shifting nationality to the inalienable right of Irish-born people to recognise themselves as Irish, while preserving their right to recognise themselves as British. In return, at the same time, the British government also withdrew further from Northern Ireland, formalising the Northern Ireland Assembly. This was only the logical outcome of the policy of devolution now defended by the British State.

Whilst the Troubles and the need to bring them to an end had rekindled an awareness that the Northern Irish problem could not be dealt with in isolation from a wider web of interdependencies, the post-Agreement period has led to a tendency to treat the difficulties that

[1] Daltún Ó Ceallaigh, *Sovereign People or Crown Subjects?: The Case for Articles 2 and 3 and Against Sections 1 and 75*, Dublin, Leirmheas, 1993, 123 p.

persist within Northern Irish society as strictly internal problems. As we have seen, they were increasingly considered as public problems which concerned disadvantaged social groups and their irrational tendencies to oppose one another, and were less and less envisaged in relation to the tensions that the British Isles, as a set of interdependent political societies, have always had to deal with since the Middle Ages. Brexit, in that regard, has been an opportunity to make visible once again the interdependencies between community and interstate relations and the bottom-up and top-down phenomena of reciprocal affectation between these two scales on the relations between Protestants and Catholics.

By taking this long-term movement into consideration, we avoid the risk of being mistaken about resistance, ambivalence and double aspirations, but also about the nature of conflict. Conflictuality is not, in fact the opposite of integration. It is a moment and the effect of increasing interdependencies. As such, it needs to be considered not as the mark of their insufficiency – supposedly induced by community behaviour and by the refusal of Catholic and Protestant residents of working-class areas to emancipate and integrate with the rest of society – , but rather as that of their incomplete state. Conflictuality is not the expression of communities' predisposition to sectarianism. Rather, this 'sectarianism' is the result of shared ambivalence between social groups whose interdependencies are affected by a common double aspiration. This needs to open up on a new phase of secondary detachment, as the search for modalities of peaceful coexistence attempts to handle the increasing complexity that the integration process leads to. A transformation that aims at furthering the integration of contradictions in the detached understanding of political dynamics, and which has its origins in social groups' heightened experience of their political ambivalence.

Having stressed this point on the nature of conflict, one may suggest some similarities with theories which see in conflict a functionally indispensable process to the organisation of political societies – a proposal to which Georg Simmel's theory has often been reduced by authors such as Lewis Coser or Ralf Darhendorf. Even more, we ought to clarify what separates our proposal from critical and post-Marxist theories, which consider conflicts – and more precisely the class conflicts inherent to industrial modes of production and exchanges – to be the driver of social integration. An unfortunate driver, but a driver nonetheless. As argued Theodor Adorno, 'the societisation process is not accomplished above conflicts or antagonisms or in spite of them. Its medium is antagonisms themselves, which at the same time tear society apart'[1]. Those theories renew the idea that conflictual relations are incomprehensible. Authors

[1] Theodor W. Adorno et al., *Société : Intégration, Désintégration*, Paris, Payot, 2011, p. 29.

see them as ill-understood by actors who ordinarily experience those antagonisms, 'rapports which have autonomised to the point of becoming opaque to them' and in consideration of which 'sociology would have to comprehend the incomprehensible: humanity's relentless entry into inhumanity'[1]. Our processual pragmatic approach also accounts for the incomprehensible dimension of social phenomena. However, it deepens the furrow, twice. First, it shows how they are first effectively defined, and realised, as incomprehensible by the groups involved. Second, it explains how they can only be realised as incomprehensible on the basis of the long-term historical sedimentation of given social expectations. Our approach of social conflicts does not conceive them as misunderstood, but as presenting a problem. They are not 'incomprehensible' as if they were unseen. Rather, actors constitute them as a phenomenon in need of explanation. In this sense, our approach is more respectful of the experienced violence that the ascertainment of incomprehensibility may represent for those who are confronted with it, whilst at the same time restoring the socio-historical depth of this observation. This means that conflict must always be understood as already 'hardly comprehensible' for actors, and not as a blind or irrational engagement.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

CONCLUSION

Beyond the threshold condition?

> 'The irony is that in the last [workshop] it was a Catholic priest who offered the most positive comments about the fundamental impact Protestantism had made on European and world history. […] You wouldn't have had Irish Republicanism without Presbyterianism.'
>
> A unionist resident, quoted in Farset Community Think Tanks Project, *Towards a shared future (3) Irreconcilable Identities?*

IF ALL THIS HISTORY ONLY SERVED to show that present tensions between North Belfast communities have deep roots in history, this would have been much ado about nothing. Dozens of scientific articles, books, newspaper articles, Facebook and Twitter posts make that point every month. However, that the double aspirations and secondary forms of detachment which have populated the Peace process have been building up throughout the increasing interdependencies of social groups on the British Isles is a far less common statement, one from which we would like to draw the sociological consequences. After all, that Catholics and Protestants still live together in Belfast means that they have sustained their integration at least as many times as they have attempted to differentiate and separate from one another. They have managed to maintain 'a measure of true interdependence and solidarity' which, according to Elliott Leyton, was instrumental in reducing the level of casualties during the Troubles[1]. Hence, to be more precise, they have partly reconciled at least as many times as they have attempted to separate from one another. To reach the heart of the matter, they have partly reconciled at least as many times as they have attempted to partly separate from one another. By becoming ever more interdependent with one another, their attempts to separate from one another have become all the more partial with centuries. So have their attempts at

[1] Elliott Leyton, 'Opposition and Integration in Ulster', *Man*, 1974, vol. 9, no. 2, p. 198.

complete conciliation, running more and more contrary to the higher consciousness of their differentiation. Rather than exploring the problems posed by this situation, that we now know originates from both the present and the past, some authors remind us that Northern Ireland is problematic since Catholics and Protestants cannot be 'reconciled' as they have never been integrated with one another. As they would have never been part of a same political society. Not only is that not true, but it is a simplification of how the political societies which constitute these islands work, and how the articulation between traditional inter-communal relations and international interdependencies varies from one historical period to another, rendering local actors more or less able to voice the paradoxes they experience. Rather, this historical look changes our approach of North Belfast communites' problems.

1. Sustaining secondary detachment

Contemporaneous attempts at secondary detachment are bound to take a more democratic form than ever, involving negotiation between social groups and political parties of all the nations of the British Isles and the European Union. By emphasising the need for an agreement, the peace process reaches a stage where social actors can now attempt to reopen the contradiction and ambivalence which have marked their past conflicts, their attachment to local communities and their past attempts at conciliation, to integrate them as a real part of their interrelation. As we have seen in the many cases of debates and controversies surrounding how communities managed their problems, how they understood their relations and how they understood their relations with a common State, the threshold of reconciliation by agreement is higher than ever. Actors endeavour to pay due consideration to their aspiration to attachment and distancing, without ever naturalising the equivalence between their social groups, nor reducing them to uniform consideration of 'union' and 'separation', whilst leaving space for each individual to voice contradictions and paradoxical effects. They must do so whilst having increasingly less support from the external social groups which used to occupy the horizon of their we-ideal, and with a higher burden of proof and social coherence[1]. All that whilst agreeing with one another in a dialogical way.

This increasingly paradoxical situation is the form that the threshold conditions take for local actors. With juvenile suicide, we saw that the increasing interdependencies between local and peripheral actors have turned their tendencies towards specification and despecification

[1] Hayden V. White, 'The Burden of History', *History and Theory*, 1966, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 111-134.

into a sharp divide. They can hardly come back to the once common way to consider the public problem given the evolution of their aspirations. But they also struggle to rely on a third party that would allow them to move beyond this opposition by providing opportunities to voice this double aspiration and favour the circulation of knowledge on the issue. In the case of women's group, we have seen why a solidary collaboration between groups cannot happen yet, and why traditionalist groups can neither disappear nor turn into something else: the balance between *emancipation through* and *emancipation out of* become both more necessary and more difficult to achieve. In the case of 'telling', residents can neither come back to a situation where the code of distinction between communities was central to daily interaction, nor accept to move towards its complete forsaking. The same can be said of sporting rivalries which bear the mark of community enmity, given that they can neither come back to the complete equivocation, nor move beyond these relationships by simply considering the two rivalries as completely severed from one another. Hence the role played, in this case and in several others, by ritualisation. Those are all the practical manifestation of this processual threshold conditions, a liminal moment in the increasing interdependencies between social groups in Northern Ireland.

This situation demands a more reflexive regulation on the part of the Nation States involved in this configuration. The fact that the social locus of 'Interface Neighbourhood' such as Ardoyne is where we witness those contradictory situations has often been interpreted by detached actors and sociologists as the sign of local interface communities' resistance to change, rather than the very result of a long-term process of increasing interdependencies. This process moves them from within, though it derives from the greater ensemble in which they are increasingly integrated, and which has unwillingly devoted to them the responsibility of its processual discordance. As such, the local interface communities of North Belfast appear deprived of the conditions to resolve their historical and political disputes and to find themselves in good terms, given the state of their interdependencies and the threshold of acceptable reconciliation.

Hence, the current peace process is expected to be the most democratic, whilst giving the least amount of consideration to international interdependencies and to the proper awareness of interdependencies between social groups. This is why more demands of historicisation emerge over the year from North Belfast's residents (see Chapter 6). In comparison, at each previous period of conflict and reconciliation, movements of cooperation between conflictual communities were made possible by the pivotal role played by margin groups in the formulation of criticism regarding the organisation of the political societies of the isles, the administration of the Crown and the States. It was the Anglo-Irish settled communities, the Old English, the

community of Presbyterian bourgeoisie and upper class. All were signs of tensions between ascending bourgeoisie and descending nobility. With the advent of modernity, these tensions came to give a specific role to margin fractions of the bourgeoisie in conveying the emancipation of popular classes, and also appeared central in the movement of centralisation and decentralisation that accompanied the functional democratisation of western European societies[1]. This is the tripartite dynamic we have mentioned – two groups in conflict and a margin group –, which give way to the essential triadic nature of the conflict and to the pivotal role that comes to be expected from margin groups, then margin classes.

That is what local social groups are coming up against today when aiming for secondary detachment and for proper ambivalence. Having become the locus of expression of the double aspiration, deprived areas of North Belfast now stumble upon neighbouring social groups' difficulty in playing the role of intermediary, and upon neighbouring nations' difficulties in maintaining consciousness of being collectively responsible for the internal tensions of Northern Ireland. That lack, however, is not a surprise. It has been slowly building up through centuries, because of the 'regression of the ambivalence's margin' (see Chapter 6 - . At each period, the social unit that was deemed to be 'ungovernable' and traversed by 'archaic conflict' by its neighbours appeared to be a unit of a lower level of integration. Each time, the tension and the ambivalence between unity and separation would find a new translation. At each passage towards a higher level of integration and differentiation within a given figuration, it seems as if a renewed push-pull dynamic could not fail to leave behind a social locus which encapsulates, all the more strongly as it becomes all the more remote and negligible, the ambivalence of this pacification process. Thinking through the history of this ambivalence, and its embedded nature within the wider web of interdependencies and their long-term transformation, allows us to 'conceive local urban policies and conflicts without falling into the trap of a localist bias'[2]. But for groups to do so in practice, and to affect the consciousness a political society has of itself, demands a holistic look allowed only by the implication of all social groups in the realisation of their reciprocal affectation, of their ambivalence. Only by the implication of neighbouring social groups and pivotal classes may secondary detachment be accessible to deprived communities without being too costly. Only then can it support the possibility of publicly voicing and claiming the ambivalence.

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[1] N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, *op. cit.* The concept of 'pivotal class' and its role in nationalisation processes is suggested by Bruno Karsenti, *Socialisation et nationalisme. 2*, seminar, Paris, EHESS, 2020-2021.

[2] Laurent Gayer, 'Karachi : Violences et globalisation dans une ville-monde', *Raisons politiques*, 2004, vol. 15, no. 3, p. 39.

2. Emancipation as owning political ambivalence in highly differentiated and integrated societies

Up until now, we have stressed how this work may help further analysis on the Northern Irish case and on the peace process in general. We believe there is something else which comes out of this work which may be of interest to other discussions which are more central to contemporaneous sociology: that which surround the problem of emancipation. The type of ambivalence we have described here in the attempts of residents to emancipate from their community, both in order to avoid accusations of conflictualisation and to avoid the ills of the pacifying discourse, is not limited to Catholic and Protestant communities of North Belfast. This new type of emancipation is becoming painfully necessary for actors who find local reasons to emancipate from their local community, but who are aware of the disastrous consequence that the liberal emancipatory project of occidental political society has had in the past, on other societies and on their internal minority groups. As we have stressed in the case studies presented here, the peace process confronts the residents of North Belfast with the necessity to find a third way in their attempts at emancipation, one where they must learn to regulate by themselves the balanced ambiguities of their interrelations, 'without letting this matter throw them into the bottomless abyss of subjective interiority or into the nostalgia of a collective and the shame of having abandoned it'[1].

We propose to see contemporaneous 'emancipation' as defined, at least partly, by the capacity of a social group to reach secondary detachment and to own and regulate the political ambivalence which it experiences as a result of its increasing integration and differentiation within the complex balance of power which constitutes political society. This group would therefore gain the means of preventing its paradoxical effects or at least engaging in public efforts not to be blamed for it. We think that if we were to accept this partial definition, a number of social situations may become comparable with what we have studied in this thesis, both ethnographically and historically.

It would be important to analyse whether the same link between the problem of emancipation and secondary detachment applies to gender minorities, ethnic minorities, professional groups in charge of the 'dirty work', or stigmatised groups. As we already mentioned, it appeared to us that owning this political ambivalence seems of paramount importance in highly differentiated society. If actors do not claim their political ambivalence,

[1] Julia Christ, 'Sortie ou issue ? Ce que l'émancipation signifie', art. cit., p. 127.

and are not given the means to voice them, they are prone to be twice subjected to politicisation difficulties: first because they will encounter obstacles in describing their situation and their experience. Second, because every time they attempt a critique of domination, asymmetry, imbalance of power, undue integration or excessive abandonment, other actors may always rely on the denunciation of a 'hypocritical ambivalence' to denounce the supposed lack of consistence of those actors, or even defend their partial interests render them to blame for this asymmetrical situation. In societies that are as rapidly complexifying as contemporaneous occidental societies, secondary detachment does seem like an ongoing necessity if social groups want to keep on conveying the plurality of their expectations to one another. In this, adjusting our conception of political ambivalence and emancipation ensure that the denunciation of asymmetry does not fall on one social group, but indeed in the mutual transformation of all the social groups composing political society, by which 'both the outsiders and the established change their ideals about their mutual contact, their figuration ideals'[1]. The logical conclusion is that it is never a social group which emancipate from society, but a political society as a whole which emancipates from its political ambivalence at one step of its increasing differentiation, through the ability of a State, as reflexive apparatus, to support collective and individual emancipation.

The comparison stops here since, as we have seen, Northern Irish society is made specific by its peculiar situation within the British Isles, its internal and external tensions. The Northern Irish communities must be understood within the two-tiered political construction of the 'British Isles' form and of its internal poles – the United-Kingdom and unionism, Ireland and nationalism. This is their specificity. And it is the source of both the impediments to the situation's normalisation, as this normalisation would require that the political nature of the British Isles be stabilised beyond its ambivalence: as an assemblage of sovereign nation states coexisting in geographical and historical proximity, or as provinces of a fuzzier whole of which they are components. Nothing akin to Ardoyne's double aspiration exists for minorities in societies where this political alternative does not exist. We should study, however, how relevant this situation is to other post-conflict societies displaying similar trends – like South Africa or Liban, for example. From that point of view, the State, in participating to stabilising political society, regularly falls short of ensuring that social groups have the means to engage in such secondary detachment. Every move to either encourage or limit this detachment end up renewing and reinforcing attachment or distancing, rendering the double aspiration harder to

[1] B. van Stolk and C. Wouters, 'Power Changes and Self-Respect', art cit., p. 486.

claim. That is precisely the role of the educational system. Though we did not have time to tackle the problem of the Northern Irish educational system here, this constitutes an important array of future enquiry.

Reconsidering emancipation under those terms is a condition for sustaining a society that is more differentiated and regulated in its interdependencies, allowing actors to claim, in action, the plurality of their attachments[1]. This approach of double aspiration is not without links with what Charles Taylor has described as the management of 'double demands'. This designates, in contemporaneous social movements, the coexistence of a demand for equality and inclusion in society at large, and a demand for the recognition of a specific collective identity within this society at large[2]. In short, a demand of adequately regulated forms of attachment and distancing. For example, throughout the 20th century, the Catholic minority of Ardoyne requested to be equally included in society – compared to their Protestant neighbours – and recognised as a specific social group – compared to their Protestant neighbours. Though both Protestant and Catholic communities from deprived areas still uphold these demands, we have seen that the double demands, during the peace process, take a somehow different form. This 'double demand,' nowadays, has turned into a demand upheld by both local communities. It has shifted from one that used to be upheld by a Catholic minority, to one that is increasingly – though faintly – being upheld by Catholic and Protestant minorities from deprived areas in so far as they both defend the relevance of their communal affiliation, in the face of a political society which offers them equality and emancipation if they accept to abandon their differentiation with one another, synonymous with conflict. Althouh in a non-linear way, Northern Irish society has moved towards a more reflexive understanding of itself at each phase of its historical formation, by including and integrating the demands of minority groups which had up until then been relegated by the rest of political society and the State the status of 'outdated' traditional manifestation. The ongoing transformation of North Belfast communities and of their problem suggests an ongoing attempt 'to reintroduce that which is traditional under a modern form, as a condition for the intelligibility of modernity itself'[3] at one further level: the political ambivalence of interdependencies.

It is those communities' social attempts at voicing the ambivalence that the 'modern' State institutions must integrate if they wish to become more reflexive, by realising that they

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[1] Joseph R. Gusfield, *Community: A Critical Response*, New York, Harper & Row, 1975, p. 41-42.

[2] Charles Taylor, 'Reconnaitre la différence' in *Le Social à l'esprit. Dialogues avec Vincent Descombes*, Paris, Éditions de l'EHESS, 2020, p. 315-319.

[3] Francesco Callegaro, 'Pour une critique radicale de la modernité. Vincent Descombes et le projet d'autonomie.' in *Le Social à l'esprit. Dialogues avec Vincent Descombes*, Paris, Éditions de l'EHESS, 2020, p. 225.

have already participated to their contemporaneity in opposing – and realising them – as 'traditional' form of integration and sociability[1]. It radically and fundamentally displaces what aspiration to peace look like, and requests the recognition of forms of life which would be deemed 'antisocial' by those type of modernity planners. By this very process, the Catholic minority of Ardoyne share something of the claims of the Protestant minority of Ardoyne, and vice versa. It is this share that is already recognised gradually by local actors. If emancipation as claiming political ambivalence is not recognised by all the actors in place, this situation is bound to reproduce a dynamic in which 'the demand for a cultural separatism of minorities and the demand for a national unity reduced to an abstract universalism are mutually reinforcing'[2]. And in its reinforcement, this double demand runs the risk of turning into a contradictory demand, reinforce the double binds which are now considered as the telltale signs of conflict.

These suggestions regarding emancipation may open future discussion with other research domains. In the course of the 20th century African American[3] and Feminists emancipatory movements[4], social actors and social scientists have voiced similar mechanisms of double aspiration and political ambivalence. A comparative outlook would aim at a better comprehension, and therefore a better explanation of why these double aspiration struggle to be accounted for. Providing a theory of this ambivalence and of what obstruct actors capacities to claim it does not counter the critical aim of social sciences. To the contrary, we argue that it could provide more holistic critical resources for denouncing the hindrance occurring in those different cases. In our case, we did not start by denouncing the State oppressions nor blame upper classes for the form of domination which the deprived areas of North Belfast would have been the victims of, as our analysis would have very rapidly met its end. As we have attempted to show, we aimed for a practice of sociology which required that we follow actors' account of their own situation, in order to provide a critique regarding the organisation of political society as a whole, and not simply conveying a critique which already exists on the ground. At that point, we certainly come back to wondering how this work may better sustain the alleviation of forms of domination which continue to weigh on social groups in Northern Ireland. But it was our principle that this should arrive in the conclusion, with those comments on collective emancipation, and not in the introduction. One aspect of our work, though, that may be more easily denouncable is its expectation to find in the State a reflexive apparatus, in a society where

[1] Pablo Blitstein and Cyril Lemieux, 'Comment rouvrir la question de la modernité ?' *Politix*, 2018, n° 123, no. 3, p. 7–33.
[2] C. Taylor, "Reconnaitre la difference", art cit., p. 339.
[3] William E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, 261 p.
[4] J.W. Scott, *Only paradoxes to offer. French feminists and the rights of man*, *op. cit.*

three different States have repeatedly struggled to occupy this role, or even to maintain order and solidarity amongst affiliated social group. It may therefore appear as a very utopian promise. We think it is not, and that the sharp increase of social situations which are unanimously considered unacceptable by all social groups of this divided society, such as Brexit, is bound to produce aspiration of a more efficient form of State which will materialise at various levels in decades to come. As we have seen, they already have crystallised at lower level of integration. However, they may give way, through the same process, to violent trends going in the opposite direction.

Nonetheless, another more substantial continuation of this work should be addressed in the future. It does not relate to theoretical disputes but to a subsisting analytical blind spot in this work that, for lack of time, was not addressed. It now appears to us that it should have had its place in this work. After writing the two first chapters on juvenile suicides and women's emancipation, it appeared highly detrimental to neglect the fact that the two public problems we were discussing were, in the words of actors themselves, dealing with the effects of the transition from conflict to peace on expectations of masculinity and femininity. For example, in the case of juvenile suicides, the mutual accusations of resistance also meant that locally unaddressed norms of militarised masculinity increasingly put those young males in the situation of either disappointing their local community or their ideals of emancipation. This was further confirmed in analysing the case of football supporters, and although less present in the case of 'telling', dynamics pertaining to gendered variation of sociability certainly played a fundamental role in the readjustment of the implicit code of distinction within the Greater Ardoyne area. As such, those elements should have been more than mentioned but integrated within a consistent aspect of the theoretical framework, given that those dimensions could greatly solidify our analysis of that ambivalence. Indeed, the social and political transformations of those gendered sociability have become one of the most central means of expression of the political ambivalence of emancipation in modern society, the locus of its disputed nature. Just as the rest of political societies throughout the world, it has gradually played an increasing role in shaping Northern Ireland's internal transformation.

3. A State able to manage conflicts of integration as political ambivalence

Finally, considering ambivalence under such a light changes the exchanges of blames surrounding the State and its responsibility, and conflicts of integration. This paves the way for

new analyses of State*s* and their trials in Northern Ireland, a research area that would complement the present study on urban communities.

Indeed, though we only had a glimpse on the difficulties of the State group in our chapters, the evolution of Irish and British societies showed us the emergence then retreat of the Irish and British State apparatus from the handling of the Northern Irish social situations, participating in the threshold conditions we witness today. This reading of the current situation naturally entails a risk: that of conferring a 'voluntarist tone'[1] to the transformation of the social configurations which have been underway over the last few centuries, and more particularly over the last few decades, in these islands. In this case, it would amount to suggest that the Irish and British States have tacitly agreed to remove the holds to which actors could relate to reach increasingly reflexive views on the causes of the Northern Irish conflict. That this form of accusation does emerge from the discourses of certain actors does not fundamentally change the problem.

One should then always be reminded of the holistic and historical processes that we have depicted. Part of the problem that is now at hand is to formulate a vision of the State which attempts to regulate the conflicts of integration and internal political ambivalence born out of its own tense process of functional democratisation. One that does not fall in liberal, or consociative excesses. Indeed, we have stressed how this regulative attempt fails to tackle the entirety of the problem, given how it atomise the regulation of the tension to the internal space of this political society. It fails to account for both the local experience of the ambivalence, and its historical origins. It is the consciousness of those dynamics that a process pragmatic sociology of public problems allows us to retain. Further sociological enquiries should now turn towards the British and Irish States, its agents, its institutions, its inner trials and debates in order to see how the reflexive apparatus of society handles or not this situation from within, and how it changes State groups' understanding of their role.

We suggest that a specific transformation may be of particular interest: it becomes increasingly prejudicial for a State to blame resistance on social groups without considering itself as the place of an insufficient reflexivity of the political society on itself. On the other hand, social groups cannot criticise the State and other contenders to the role of third party without questioning their own will to see the State's ideals derive from theirs, from ideals manifested throughout social groups. The double nature of the State as a reflexive apparatus is bound to accompany the existence of an ambivalence amongst actors. One is reminded more

[1] N. Elias, 'Towards a Theory of Communities', art cit.

than ever that the State, as reflexive apparatus of a political society, is a type of third party which is defined by an inherent ambivalent nature in so far as it embodies the ideals that a political society has of itself based on the aggregation of social groups' aspirations, whilst at the same time crystallising into partial and specific social groups that are effectively engaged in the always possibly pathologic management of social relations[1]. Each time the State and its agents are brought to exist in social situations in given trials, they put to the test the fine balance between those two forms which gives the State its relevance[2]. How is this risk managed in situations of high political ambivalence amongst social groups?

In Northern Ireland, today, there seems to stem an aspiration that the State should 'remove' itself from social life not once, but twice: first because of the transition from a conflictual situation to a pacific one – war being the dominant situations in which sociologists have deemed the interventions of the States to be relevant –, second because of the transition from a colonial administration to a devolved administration. Yet, there also stems an aspiration that the State should be more present than ever in social life, precisely because it could sustain the form of historical and holistic detachment that may avoid growing double binds and ambivalence to turn into mutual accusations of resistance again. And that other aspiration is also present amongst social groups. This far from limited to Northern Ireland, but is 'the particular modern contradiction', consisting 'in calling upon the state to intervene while in the same breath engaging in radical critique of it'[3]. Hence, a sociology of 'State requests'- moments during which social groups demand that the State intervene in the handling of their situation –, of how they appear and of how they are treated, would extend our study of the political ambivalence by taking us further down the path of its politicisation. This leads us to see those situations not as demands of State's removal, but of State's transformation.

Finally, considering our results, we should strive to redefine what 'community' means in Northern Ireland. We have concluded that the overcoming of tense double aspirations, in the transition towards survival units of a higher level of integration and differentiation, has often led figurations of a lower level of integration to be held accountable for political ambivalence which had up until now characterised the plurality of social groups and of their interdependence.

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[1] Inspired by the conception of State1 and State2 of Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur l'État : Cours au Collège de France 1989-1992*, Le Seuil, Paris, 2015, 708 p ; but which fails to not reduce the State to its domination tendencies. For a more balanced approach, see Dominique Linhardt, "L'État de société, considérations sur la méthode" in Bruno Karsenti and Dominique Linhardt (eds.), *État et société politique : Approches sociologiques et philosophiques*, Paris, Editions de l'EHESS, 2018, p. 63-82.

[2] Dominique Linhardt, 'L'État et ses épreuves. Éléments d'une sociologie des agencements étatiques ', *Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation (CSI), Mines ParisTech, CSI Working Papers Series*, 1 January 2008.

[3] Bruno Karsenti,'Ethical Life and Anomie. From Social Philosophy to Sociology of the State' in *Debating Critical Theory: Engagements With Axel Honneth*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield International, 2020, p. 165-167.

The tension of a political society's increasing interdependencies is brought back to the ambivalence of social groups of a lower level of integration, if not to their unequivocal resistance. We would like to propose that it is the consciousness of this very dynamic that the emergence and maintenance – and in fact the formulation – of the idea of 'community' within the modern societies of the British isles has indicated. In that regard, the human figurations which we call 'communities' appear inseverable from the unit which we call a 'political society'. They are born out of the very same process of modernisation and increasing complexification of figurational units, and equally participate in the increasing production of reflexivity of social groups on themselves. Only, they have done so by allowing actors to address what came out of their reflexive look on themselves whilst also manifesting their will to oppose the State and the integration to a wider political society. This position paradoxically presupposes the ongoing presence of the State in order to be formulated.

Communities seem to accompany a political society in its attempt at representing its own internal ambivalence to its increasing integration, differentiation and reflexivity. In that light, the approach developed in this thesis may serve to renew Elias' proposal for a theory of communities[1]. This includes first the need to propose a coherent sociological approach to what 'communities' represent in modern societies, given that they persist. It also means understanding the relationship between community interdependencies and the increase in social differentiation given that, through lack of detachment on the part of all involved, this sometimes reinforces conflictual phenomena at the origin of social and political problems.

To live up to these tasks, we should keep on stressing the importance of maintaining a solid link between empirical investigations and holistic theoretical proposals. This involves both a theory of interdependencies and a socio-historical theory of the development of social ties and its paradoxes. In this thesis, we have attempted to sketch the type of arrangement that this holistic approach requires, by joining ethnographical fieldwork, an enquiry into public problems, and a socio-historical analysis of long-term processes. It should be further expanded in the future: not for the pleasure of moving from the part to the whole, but because it conditions the production of a holistic social reflexivity. It is this holistic social reflexivity that may allow us to accompany Northern Irish communities beyond their threshold condition.

[1] N. Elias, 'Towards a Theory of Communities', art cit.

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APPENDICES

1. Data

Observations Ethnographical fieldwork – totalising 11 months of ethnographic fieldwork from 2016 to 2019. They were divided in one stay of 5 months in 2018, one stay of 4 months in 2019 and several shorter stays of two weeks from 2016 to 2019. All observations were noted in fieldwork notebooks then directly transcribed into MaxQDA, totalising 5,350,827 characters. The data recovered from the fieldwork could be categorised in three broad categories:

> *Floating Observations*[1]: Those observations constituted most of the early periods of fieldwork, then populated the everyday work which was mainly occupied by moving around the area throughout the day by visiting residents, organisations or local workers. They included spending time with the local community centres, youth associations, café, churches, sporting organisations, pubs, parks and streets and taking part in the general everyday life of North Belfast in its residential and extra-professional spaces.
>
> *Long-term group observations and participations*: Those constituted the heart of the fieldwork from the second year onward, after a solid position had been established amongst community groups of both Protestant and Catholic communities. This included attending weekly or biweekly meetings for several months over the three years, such as local prayer groups, crochet groups, protest camps, women's groups, band practices, advice groups for residents, cross-community conversation groups, youth club activities, friendship groups, masses and sporting events. Those regular yet formally framed moments of observations were my main point of entry into the professional life of part of the residents and local worker.
>
> *Short term observations*: I attended several events or meetings which were occasional events in the life of the area. This including organised tours throughout Northern Ireland with residents, attending Bonfire nights, 12th of July Celebration, Easter celebrations, some City Council meetings and North Belfast based meetings, Police consultations with residents and other 'one off' moments of celebrations and anniversaries.

Part of this fieldwork involved participating and recording more formal meetings taking place in the area or in North Belfast. Those include 11 events and meetings organised by local organisation, statutory bodies or national political representatives.

[1] Colette Pétonnet, "L'observation flottante. L'exemple d'un cimetière parisien", *L'Homme*, 1982, vol. 22, no. 4, p. 33-47.

Interviews	Semi-directive recorded interviews – I conducted 34 recorded interviews ranging from 1 to 6 hours with residents, local workers and members of relevant organisations. They include interviews with residents, local youth workers, community workers, shop owners, political representatives, church officials, school and nursery staffs, social workers, volunteers and coaches in sporting organisations, therapists, members of supporters' club, journalists, documentary producers, agents of the City Council, agents of the Executive and agents of the European Union, and social scientists – psychologists and sociologists. Ethnographical interviews – As part of the more general fieldwork, dozens of *in-situ* interviews were gathered without being recorded, as they took place within the workplace or the direct environment of social actors as I was accompanying them. They have been a very important part of this work, and due attention will be paid to them in the thesis, but they will be considered more like moments and 'scene' that have been described as such rather than controlled interviews.
Documents	Local newspapers (North Belfast News, BelfastLive, Newsletter, Irish News and Belfast Telegraph) and national newspapers (BBC, The Guardian) were consulted every day during fieldwork and were used as a source of topical information, both during the investigation and as part of the analysis of public problems. The production of actors followed during the investigation on social media – Twitter and Facebook – was also diligently followed and noted, and sometimes used in early analysis, as it constituted an important medium of information. The documents gathered there were often one of the early stages of debates and disputes, but often could not be used due to their highly personal nature. Finally, numerous official reports were used and quoted in the bibliography.

2. Concepts

DOUBLE ASPIRATION – A situation in which the coexistence between mutually exclusive though mutually reinforcing social process puts social actors in the position of following different codes of conduct.

AMBIVALENCE – The sociological situation in which actors find themselves as a result of the practical experience of this double aspiration, and which manifests itself in the possibility to actualise contradictory reasons to act in interactions.

RESISTANCE – The unilateral opposition to a code of conduct, to reasons to act and to specific expectations that come to be used to define other actors' behaviour when actors reduce one another to one or the other of the aspirations they experience in a situation of political ambivalence. Conversely, actors who blame others for their resistance can also praise others for their adhesion. Both of those tend to reduce actors to unequivocal reasons to act.

DOUBLE BIND – A situation in which the double aspiration turns into a vicious circle whereby the difficulties to voice and regulate both aspirations mutually reinforce one another. It is opposed to the 'virtuous circles' by which actors become able, by means of secondary detachment, to mutually reinforce the more conscious regulation of both aspirations and of their ambivalence.

PRIMARY DETACHMENT – The primary detachment from actors' ambivalence is that which allows them to understand that they are not opposed to each other by simple resistance

but that they are moved by a common double aspirations to union and separation. Through the realisation of their interdependencies, these then give a more ambivalent form to their opposition.

SECONDARY DETACHMENT – The secondary detachment is that by which actors can anticipate, delimit and even regulate the contradictory effects and vicious circles that emerge from this condition. Contradictory effects which, if they are not made sufficiently aware to all, always pose the risk of bringing them back to forms of double binds which facilitate the return to violence.

INTERDEPENDENCIES – 'interdependencies' is a conceptual tool to describe the phenomenon by which social groups or social actors become mutually dependent on one another by result of both their increasing integration and their increasing differentiation.

INTEGRATION AND DIFFERENTIATION – The fact that the seemingly contradictory yet complementary phenomenon of integration and differentiation are both inherent to the process of democratic functionalisation (or the increase in web of interdependencies, or the increase in division of labour) is at the origin of the political ambivalence of modern interdependencies in highly differentiated societies.

CONFLICTUALISATION AND PACIFICATION – Rather than conflict and peace, conflictualisation and pacification allow us to think in processual terms the types of blaming and praising involved in the definition, by various social groups, of the given state of the political society they commonly constitute. Both can take the form of blaming – when actors are accused of giving in to violence and disorganisation, or when a social group is accused of imposing forms of emancipation and social relations to another – or of praising – when actors welcome the expression of antagonisms and dissents as a form of higher reflexivity, or when actors welcome the adequate regulation of their tendencies to relate sometime violently to one another. As such, conflictualisation and pacification are ways for actors to voice and formalise the unsatisfying adjustment between their integration and their differentiation at a given stage of their increasing interdependencies.

STATE – The State, as the Reflexive Apparatus of a political society, is a type of third party which is defined by an inherent ambivalent nature in so far as it embodies the ideals that a political society has of itself based on the aggregation of social groups' expectations and aspirations, whilst at the same time crystallising into partial and specific social groups that are effectively engaged in the possibly pathologic management of social relations. Each time the State and its agents are brought to exist in social situations, they put to the test the fine balance between those two forms which gives the State its relevance.

COMMUNITY – Communities are inseverable from the State as they are born out of the very same process increasing complexification of modern societies. They equally participate in the increasing production of reflexivity of social groups on themselves, only they have done so by allowing actors to address, up until now, what came out of their reflexive look on themselves whilst also manifesting their will to oppose the State and the integration to a wider political society. Communities can take many forms, as long as they fit this specific role in the production of knowledge of a society on itself, allowing it to represent its own internal ambivalence towards its increasing integration, differentiation and reflexivity. In Northern Ireland, the word can designate three types of figurations : Community1 describes local urban social groups, Community2 describes ethno-political groups of reference – Catholic nationalist and Protestant unionist – whilst Community3 has the meaning of the wider sphere sometimes encompassing public action – 'the' community – whilst being tacitly at a lower level of integration than the nationwide society.

3. Abstract

In Northern Ireland, the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 ended a long-running conflict between the Protestant Unionist and Catholic Nationalist communities in Belfast. Since then, the city has faced unexpected challenges, such as a rise in youth suicides and a resurgence of street clashes. The root of these difficulties is often attributed to residents' desire to renew the conflict, or to a lack of support from the British state. But as the state is increasingly attentive to the situation and members of both communities are involved in peacemaking initiatives, how come these difficulties abide? Based on over two years of immersive ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews and examination of local archives, this thesis analyses moments in the daily life of the Protestant and Catholic communities in North Belfast, as well as the management of local political issues. It argues that the difficulties faced by the people of North Belfast are not due to a dynamic of conflict reproduction or social exclusion, but to the impeded politicisation of their interdependencies and their contradictory effects.

In a first part, based on the study of local controversies on the rise of juvenile suicides and the emancipation of women from their communities, we show the importance of developing an approach centred on the concept of political ambivalence. This concept allows for a positive understanding of a double aspiration, shared by members of both communities, for community attachment and detachment. Thus, the tendency to reduce existing tensions to forms of conflictual 'resistances' or dominations ignores the fact that these actors already take into account the local solidarities in which they are increasingly involved, while seeking to emancipate themselves from their Catholic or Protestant community.

In the second part, we show that some actors are already trying to politicise, and even to regulate the political ambivalence that such a situation lead them to experience. We study the management of street sociability and sports relations. The secondary detachment that some inhabitants collectively achieve in order to claim, publicise and regulate this political ambivalence in devices favourable to its enunciation, brings to light its most contradictory effects. This politicisation often finds its stumbling block in the reproaches of hypocrisy, naivety or manipulation, which local actors and external commentators address in these debates. Noticing community interdependencies is reduced to a return to the past, and adressing collective emancipation to a denial of differences in political interests.

In a final chapter, we show, in an Eliasian and socio-historical explanatory approach, that the situation of North Belfast can only be understood in the light of the increasing chains of interdependencies that have been taking shape between Protestant and Catholic communities within the British Isles since the beginning of the 19th century. On the one hand, the industrial revolution and changes in labour relations led to greater integration between communities, on the other hand, they led to a greater awareness of their differences, precipitating the emergence of unionist and nationalist ideals. The first dynamic makes the politicisation of this dual aspiration increasingly desirable, the second makes support for this politicisation increasingly conflictual. The local difficulties of the peace process become explicable because of the double bind that defines the contemporaneous awareness of these concomitant developments and of their effects. The British state, because it too often ignores or reduces this politicisation of political ambivalence, struggles to sustain a greater distancing from the way in which this double aspiration already marks the participation of these communities in political modernity.

KEY WORDS

Communities; Northern Ireland; Post-conflict situations; Integration conflicts; Political ambivalence; Secondary detachment.