People, power and planning in public places: the making of Covenant Day

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ABSTRACT
Cities have been heralded as the spatial manifestation of differentiated land uses and activities. The planning system has tried to establish some interpretation of sense for the public good within this paradoxical and contested place. There is no singular ‘public’, however, that occupies the city. The concentrated heterogeneity of life creates a tension for land use planning – on the one hand, seeking to respond to the vibrancy that resides within city ‘messiness’, yet on the other hand, executing contemporary governance decisions that pursue the ‘sanitising’ of places into more ordered forms. Public places, mirroring the complexities of urban societies, have undergone significant transformations in their design, use, management and ownership structures contributing to the acknowledged decline of the urban public sphere. With the belief that a lack of understanding of the nature of public places is a root cause behind its deterioration, there is the need for the complex urban narratives to be investigated. This paper explores public places in an attempt to better understand the imaginaries and landscapes of public places through a new institutional framework with the arguments developed through a case study of the Covenant Day parade in Belfast, 2012.

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Introduction
Cities, for some pro-urbanists, are imagined as places of opportunity (Evans, 2009). Vibrant places of excitement, cosmopolitan differences and enchantment of eclectic cultures, facilitated by the co-mingling of strangers (Watson, 2006), with such a pro-urban leitmotif translating into policies to encourage and enhance city living (Bridge & Watson, 2001, p. 352).

In stark contrast to this, the anti-urban imaginaries of the city as a site of anomie, chaos, corruption, immorality, pollution, congestion and potential social disorder are equally well established (Mitchell, 1995, 2003; Sennett, 1992). Within such imaginaries, there is the latency for the urban to become a ‘beast’ (Le Corbusier, 1947) and consequently, there is a need for the urban masses to be contained and controlled. It is within this paradoxical place that the planner attempts to impose order in the face of disorder and harmony in the
midst of disharmony. Thus, planners have implicitly or explicitly often incorporated some element of anti-urbanism within urban plans, leading to the city to being perceived as a place that necessitates order and predictability (Bridge & Watson, 2001, p. 352).

To instil a sense of order, Moore (1984) and Fay (2014) have argued that it is important that every society makes some distinction between public and private places as this assists in structuring the pluralities of social life. Differences are constructed in, and themselves construct, city life with plural public places of democracy including the places constructed in and through the state, such as the nation state, cities, governments and public spaces (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2004, p. 147). They are also constituted spatially, socially and economically which can create an urban area with zones of inclusion whilst simultaneously being perceived as a zone of exclusion and fragmentation to others. Specific individuals can characterise specific public places with a sense of polarisation and inequality, with the urban constituting sites of power, resistance and the celebration of identity.

Difference is constituted in all spatial relations, but the particularity of the city is that it concentrates differences through its density of people and lived spaces, through the juxtaposition of different activities and land uses and through its intensities of interaction and interconnections (Bridge & Watson, 2001, p. 356). Subsequently, cities are constellations of overlapping publics and public places with urban dwellers occupying fragmented networks of activity and connections in public arenas and private spaces. They play different roles in each arena and experience themselves differently in their relationship to others with distinctions between public and private realms argued by Jacobs (1961) as critical to the success of the urban.

The malleable and contested term ‘public place’ has resulted in a definition which reflects a range of characteristics including ownership (Kohn, 2004), presence of people (Gehl & Gemzoe, 1996), unrestricted access (Carmona, Magalhaes, and Hammond 2008) and democratic, responsive places (Carr, Francis, Rivlin, & Stone, 1992). One element in which there is a degree of consensus regarding public places is the notion that something has been lost. Thus, the seemingly shared, accessible public places of the past have been replaced by a more orderly place exposed to the narratives of control, power, exclusion and inaccessibility (Davis, 1990, 1992; Kohn, 2004; Mitchell, 1995, 2003). The uncertainties of diversity and the spontaneity of the city, the allure for the urban flaneur, have been replaced by expectations and knowledge of the urban environment. This has been the accumulative result of planning and governance structures responding (or not responding) to the deeper structural changes taking place within society.

Public places reflecting wider society (Madanipour, 2010, p. 1) have become subsequently recognised as providing different functions for different users at different times and in different ways which has served to question the concept of a singular public (Webster, 2002). There is the conscious structuring of places in an attempt to minimise unsettling encounters with people who could threaten accepted narratives of a specific place (Kohn, 2004, p. 205). This has led to the paradoxical situation in which public places are inclusive and exclusive at the same time and are relatively more accessible whilst being more closed, depending upon the individual and the associated publics.

This has produced, in cities like Belfast, territories of local public places with different associated a senses of identity; the spatial product of the societal divisions of national identity and ownership (Gaffikin, McEldowney, Rafferty, & Sterett, 2008, p. 2). By attempting to introduce some sense of order within this socially turbulent place, public policy has
tended to ‘parcel’ the city into a spectrum of spaces which has served to further accentuate the fragmentation of public places in Northern Ireland. This has been acknowledged by Gaffikin et al. (2008, p. iv) to interpret public places as either cosmopolitan (such as the Titanic Quarter and the Cathedral Quarter), shared (such as integrated schools), neutral (such as city centres) or ethnic (such as the many segregated residential areas). Most of Belfast’s cosmopolitan Quarters are neutrally located near the city’s commercial centre (except for the Titanic Quarter which is an area of abandoned docklands that has been the subject of urban regeneration). They are situated away from the city’s trouble spots and avoid obvious references to any of the features of Belfast life that have been used as symbolic markers of ethno-national division. O’Dowd and Komarova (2009, p. 10) argue that this has created a dual city; the ‘Consumerist Belfast’ of regenerated Titanic Quarter and city centre retail areas, alongside the segregated working-class residential communities of the ‘Troubles Belfast’.

By attempting to minimise competition for a scarcity of urban resources, such as public places, by an increasingly expanding and heterogeneous population there has been the creation of a sense of co-habiting within a city, and the creation of a group identities in the city (Protestant, Catholic etc.) rather than an identity based upon residency of the city. This fragmentation of the urban fabric into various ‘publics’ has led to claims that urban planning and politics have become increasingly complex, delivering unpredictable political fields of action (Ploger, 2004, p. 72) with ensuing conflicts regarding the identity, form and use of public place, whilst ironically trying to create places of order.

Subsequently, conflicts regarding a place’s identity, form and use are an inevitable and established characteristic. The relative scarcity of public places (Low, 2006) and the pressure that is exerted upon them by an ever-increasing heterogeneous urban population (McIntyre, Rango, Fagan, & Faeth, 2001) has facilitated a professional, academic and governance interest in studying urban public places (CABE, 2008). There is now a general consensus of the fundamental need for research to help halt the escalating expression of discontent regarding our urban public places (Carmona et al., 2008) and to fulfil the aspirations of urban planning through the promotion of sustainability for the betterment of society as a whole (Healey, 2010, p. 20). The aim of this paper is to promote an understanding of the dynamics that are enacted out within and upon the public places and spaces to explain the motivation, cause, use, management and outcome of a public place conflict within the distinctive social settings of Northern Ireland.

Deploying a new institutional methodology, this paper investigates how the embedded socio-religious and political turmoil that has characterised Northern Ireland for centuries (Bryan, 2000). It examines the highly politised nature of land (Kohn, 2011), the symbolic representation of presence within the public place (Carr et al., 1992) and the position of marginalism that derives from the apparent assertion of power over those excluded from a place (Davis, 1992). This provides an insight into how the public place is shaped and impacts upon the use, user, creation, management and perceptions of ownership of public places.

Following this, the Williamson new institutionalism model (2000) is utilised to interpret the tumultuous events of ‘Covenant Day 2012’ which preceded the expression of Unionist discontent at the democratic decision to prevent the flying of the Union flag all year round upon the civic building of Belfast City Hall (Devlin, 2014). The rhetoric of societal unease provided the landscape in which the intertwined events aligning identity and culture with civic place and public policy were situated. The centenary parade was to commemorate...
the events of ‘Ulster Day’ (28 September 1912) in which there was the mass signing of 471,414 men and women (Holmes, 2009, p. 619) to the ‘Ulster Covenant’ which demarcated Unionist opposition to Home Rule and signalled their intent to resist any severing of their link to the UK. In 1912, there were Unionist concerns regarding the British Liberal Party’s introduction of a parliamentary bill that proposed a measure of independence be granted to Ireland – Home Rule. This would have seen the imposition of direct power in Belfast coming from Dublin, not London. Power and resistance, however, are seemingly two sides of the same coin within spatial practices and as the sovereignty and ownership of the land was under scrutiny, the answer to resist it was seemingly within the land itself. This was articulated and asserted through the use of public places as a democratic arena in which the Unionist people could come together. With cities typically fragmented by exclusions (Amin, Massey, & Thrift, 2000, p. 13), in using the public place for Unionist expression, there may be the perceived marginalising of Nationalist identity. Within the predominantly Protestant population (BBC, 2013) of Ulster in 1912, the Unionist expression of identity within public places was less contentious than today, with the commemorative parade in 2012 occurring within an atmosphere of heightened social tensions within specific public places of Belfast.

This paper interprets the public display of conflict associated with the commemorative March to demonstrate the complexities of public place and perceptions of ownership. This rests on the relationships in the urban environment between planning, place and politics to explore the schism of knowledge and understanding that exists between rainforest ecology and urban ecology (Davis, 2002, p. 363). Given the integral part that urban ecology has within the functioning of society, there is the need to abandon the reluctant stance of academics who have largely shunned the urban environment (Grimm et al., 2008). This paper aims to advance this understanding by demonstrating how these dynamically complex environments of public places within contested cities can be interpreted through new institutionalism by considering the connections between agent behaviour and motivation with the adopted structures and organisation of institutions and governance. The findings are further illuminated through quotes attained from empirical interviews of representatives from local Catholic/Nationalist/Republican (C/N/R) residents and members of parading institutions from the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist (P/U/L) community.2

Publicness of public places

Public places are a malleable component within planning with a highly flexible definition that is slippery to determine, shifting to fit the specific purpose or discipline focus (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2008, p. 117). Similar to other planning-related terminology, such as sustainability and resilience, the desire to devise a flexible term has contributed to a situation of confusion and non-consensus. The simplistic interpretation of public and private places as black-and-white dichotomies cannot be upheld, as Kohn (2004, p. 11) in alluding to the blurring of boundaries between public and private places, states that it is ‘necessary to develop a flexible definition of public space’. This has facilitated public places becoming defined by a range of characteristics, stemming from their ownership (Kohn, 2004), presence of people (Gehl & Gemzoe, 1996), unrestricted access (Carmona et al., 2008) and to describe places which are democratic, responsive and meaningful (Carr et al., 1992). As such, the fundamental component of what constitutes a ‘public place’ is not the traditionally held component of ownership of the place. This view positions public places as those owned by the state and
not by private groups or individuals. This traditional view cannot be upheld as private places can be provided by public bodies, as can be seen by social housing and public places may be provided by private owners as can be seen with the provision of shopping centres.

Public places are characterised by other people using them. It should be acknowledged, however, that whilst this component enables the option of co-consumption of public places (Webster, 2007) by a spectrum of users across society it does not deliver equitable consumption. Fundamentally, this inequity of use has the latent potential to expedite into conflicts and competition, which Pejovich (1997) defines as being the result of two or more individuals or groups attempting to capture the utility or value of a resource of which only one can have. This is particularly problematic with respect to the instrumental and expressive use of place (Figure 1), particularly within heterogeneous, polarised communities, as competition for place is a major source of tension (Madanipour, 2010, p. 119).

Public places play an important role in fostering democracy by preserving opportunities for asserting political speeches and dissent (Kohn, 2004, p. 189). Public places also provide a symbolic landscape of inclusion and exclusion, entitlement and refusal (Zukin, 1995, p. 7), determining who should be visible within a city and arguably more importantly, who should not. As such, the ‘right to the city’ (Lefebvre, 1991) is more likely to be considered as a negotiation within decision-making parameters of what is acceptable rather than determinations of what isn’t, with competition between places becoming the norm (Harvey, 2000). Consequently, the ‘right to the city’ is decided against a broader social struggle (Mitchell, 2003, p. 42) with contemporary cities interpreted as the sites of specific spatial struggles in which people attempt to cope with the dilemmas of identity, and difference (Massey, 2005; Sandercock, 2003). Public places can then be interpreted as the socially constructed product of specific social contests within specific spatial areas at a specific time.

As a consequence, public places can no longer be interpreted as a singular space within a homogenous society. Instead they must be perceived as exacerbating existing socio-spatial polarisation; a virtual Petri dish so as to observe and investigate the cacophony of conflicts that are played out upon the urban canvas in an attempt to attain the control and capture of the value of a given public place. In response to this, contemporary governance decisions

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**Figure 1.** Instrumental and expressive uses of public places.
have attempted to sanitise such public places into more ordered forms; essentially contrib-
uting to the recent phenomenon of the privatisation of public space (Atkinson, 2003; Davis,
1998; Sorkin, 1992; Zukin, 2000), which is often synonymous with a higher rate of control
and surveillance measures (Davis, 1998; Lofland, 1998). This has seen a shift in interpreting
and asserting public places as representational places, i.e. lived in places, to representa-
tions of space, i.e. relatively more planned and controlled spaces. The rhythm of the city is
then becoming relatively more monotonic and dull by this pursuit of urban order. These
decisions, as shown though the new institutional prism, have seemingly moved away from
values of shared places for active civilians to manipulate the institution of property rights
to enforce self-preserving homogenous semi-public places (Sennett, 1992).

Public places are a key component of the urban landscape (Banerjee, 2001, p. 10). There
is an increased importance in the contemporary climate of profound urban change; for
example, the Arab Spring and recent protests in Turkey. In this belief, the research is an
inquiry into the cultural and historical artefact of the socially constructed and contested
public place product. The paper argues that a public place is the product of a society’s views,
beliefs, norms and ideas. There is the accumulative cultural undertone that indicates what a
public place/pace should be, and what should be included and excluded from it. In being a
cultural artefact, public places may also be interpreted as an historical reality as they are the
product of specific social struggles at a specific time. As public places evolve, however, and
are reshaped they can be viewed as a palimpsest – with new landscapes and narratives being
layered upon them as society evolves and adapts over time. As such, the investigation of a
public place cannot be easily generalised from society to society, or even from place to place
with research attempting to investigate these critical cultural and historical perspectives.

With the acclaimed need to examine the concept of ‘place’ in a multi-layer manner
that integrates human behaviour, social processes and the physical environment (Stedman,
2003), the use of new institutionalism is justified. It is anticipated that this methodology can
further the discourse around understandings of public places and help rectify the current
situation as acknowledged by Lofland (1998, p. xv) in ‘what we know about the public realm
is greatly overshadowed by what we do not know’. This is demonstrated by the case study
of the Covenant Day 2012.

A new institutional perspective

New institutionalism is characterised by an acknowledgement of the rhetoric of change
within the urban environment, appreciating the importance of how all the dynamic parts
come together to manipulate and shape the urban whole. There is the questioning of pre-
vious theories of the world which perceived individual aspects of society, i.e. individual
agents and structures, as the atomistic players in the creation and management of society.
Alternatively, new institutionalism offers a diverse interpretation of the theory of behaviour
under uncertainty (Dequech, 2006, p. 109). It blends together the importance of political
institutions, history and culture, present actions, thoughts and behaviour of agents to deliver
a more holistic interpretation of the intricate relationships that are in constant flux within
the urban environment. There is increased appreciation of the potential for the ‘joint efforts
of judicial, legislative and planning systems to create a space that provides for the needs of
different population groups’ (Bishara et al., 2006, p. 4). As such, there is the moving beyond
the mere recognition of the institutions and structures that are provided by alternative perspectives, to a narrative which seeks to explain their existence and form.

There is the need to examine the dynamics of identity with a blend of beliefs, norms and culture and their intricate relationships in shaping and being shaped by institutions in the context of a research agenda of conflicts within public places. This can provide the means of studying how institutional structures combine with social structures to shape agent motivation and behaviour. There is a strong advocacy (Furubotn & Richter, 2005) for a perception that rational behaviour and expectations are motivated by the social constructs of culture and beliefs as well as institutions in attempting to understand real-world behaviour (Williamson, 1994).

Subsequent reasoning emphasised a hierarchy of factors to be considered. Williamson (1994) argued the importance of political pluralism within the urban environment with the formal state and the informal society combining to shape people’s motivation, thought and action. The tension between the formal and informal agents can lead to the corrective evolution of institutions, thus explaining their creation and evolution. A macro-level model of new institutionalism, however, obscures the importance of the micro-levels or local levels. This failure to appreciate the social and cultural element led to the inability to understand context-bound rational thought and action and how this differs from the macro-level rational thought. The need for the social matrix of relationships to be acknowledged, demonstrated by earlier perspectives such as structural and agency theory was incorporated by Williamson (2000, p. 597).

There is an acknowledgement of the influence of culture and how the complex nature of social norms, traditions, experiences and rules accumulatively shape society’s thought and actions. It appreciates that there is no ‘social vacuum’ in urban areas and that humans are conscious beings with knowledge, but unlike neoclassical assumptions, they fail to have perfect information. The experiences, culture, perception and language of people combine to structure the incentives and motivations which influence behaviour, actions and the social relationships of society. They provide the rules which individual agents draw upon. This approach interprets and explains how the ‘everyday’ individual microstructure level incrementally drives changes at the macrostructural level of social relations to shape governance and institutions. The thoughts and behaviour of people at an individual and collective level are not merely produced by the world, but can additionally shape the world through the shaping of institutions and governance structures. There is the blurring of the boundaries between the humanist perspective and the structuralist perspective within new institutionalism, rejecting their respective silo standpoints.

The new institutionalism perspective demonstrates that the ability of society to shape the world is not restricted to how institutions and governance structures are created. Through the appreciation of the relationship of culture and the local ‘ground’ level, there is the recognition in how urban environments and places are created. This is as people use culture to shape their urban environment with identities emblazoned upon public places. The constant projection and contestation of identities and culture can take various forms from the naming of streets, the use of symbols and flags, graffiti to the style of architecture. This can result in the creation of physical and perceived boundaries, particularly within contested cities such as Belfast, as to the perceived ownership of public places, influencing how such places can be used. The sense of ownership over public places can be psychologically exacerbated.
by the use of sectarian music during religious parades, with such music being a historical feature of the two dominant communities in Northern Ireland (Casserly, 2014).

These boundaries or borders, whether physical or psychological, have been claimed to be ‘mind maps of difference and belonging’ (Davy, 2012, p. 182) and cannot be interpreted as a ‘spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact which shapes place’ (Boggs, 1940, p. 28). Memories of events, stories of areas and perceptions of the ‘other community’ have left communities with a predisposed impression of what the ‘other’ is like and have aggravated the mental maps of places that they can and cannot access and use;

Religion and sectarianism is still an issue in the North. There is, for some people and caused by some people, an actual real physical danger of going into a specific area. This is in addition to areas where there are only perceived dangers, but you should note that at the individual level perceived danger is as inhibiting as real danger. It will still shape where you go and what you feel you can do. C/N/R

People often feel threatened or intimidated upon accessing or utilising public place that has the ‘others’ identity, particularly if there are symbols or emblems visible. This is as,

The Troubles has left us with a legacy of issues in terms of where people can go and be safe in and this is physically asserted through murals and flags. P/U/L

This has led to Belfast becoming heavily segregated;

People are introverted looking and don’t want to share so become isolated and siloed and you get that ghetto-like mentality where places are welcoming if you ‘kick with this foot’ and if you wear this football top, but are potentially or perceived dangerous places if you are from the ‘other’. P/U/L

Despite the fact that place is in a state of constant evolution, continuously being made and remade, ‘conflicts over identities and space cannot be erased’ (Gaffikin & Morrissey, 2011, p. 86). Through the social embedding of each groups’ experience, as well as the difficult to remove impacts upon the urban environment with place being the incarnation of people’s thought and experiences, people can either feel included or excluded from the public place which inevitably affects their perception and use of the place.

I can understand and there’s no doubt that there would be, I suppose ‘hangovers’ from the past which influences how people interpret places across Belfast and beyond. The past shapes how places are perceived and more than that, it also shapes how places are perceived to be being used, particularly if an area is temporally used by members of the ‘other’ community. C/N/R

The presence of physical demarcation has influenced how people access and utilise the urban environment by enabling people to create psychological interpretations of the city of places they can and cannot go. There has been the creation of mental maps as a result of the;

Perceptions of who owns what and who has the right to share in a particular culture and who has the right to share and understand it. If one group wants to use a place that is affiliated with the opposite community then issues can, and often do, arise. C/N/R

Given the inertial characteristic of socially embedded attitudes, such perceptions are difficult to overcome;

Sometimes perception is even worse than reality and if it takes hold there is a real challenge there to change it. Sometimes though there doesn’t appear to be a want to change it. People would rather be offended by a parade and what they perceive it to represent rather than know what it is actually about. In much the same way, supporters of parades would rather say that protestors are simply bigoted rather than find out their reasons for opposing it. It’s easier to think like that as it removes all personal responsibility. P/U/L
The resistance or reluctance to change socially embedded attitudes of distrust enables such negative perceptions to have a profound impact upon contemporary public places in the city of Belfast today, as demonstrated by the Covenant Day parade.

**Covenant Day – context**

Covenant Day was the name awarded to the mass signing of approximately 471,000 people (Tonge, 2002, p. 9) within Ulster to reject the potential of Home Rule being established in Ireland. The signatories to ‘Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant’ and ‘Ulster Women’s Declaration’ vowed to undertake all means deemed necessary to defeat the threat of Home Rule to assure their position within the Union, illustrating the ability to call upon arms if required, as was delivered by the creation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

The wording of the document brought together the Protestant’s embedded religious beliefs, (reflected in the Old Testament styled title and wording and the influence of the Covenant signed by the Scottish Protestants in 1643 in which there was acceptance of the English Laws but rejection of the English religion), with the British patriotic values to oppose Home Rule resulting from their perception that Home Rule was mutually equivalent to ‘Rome Rule’ (Jacobs, 2012, p. 147). This was perceived by Protestants as a potential threat to their identity and values, and it was this fear that united the Protestants within Ulster to organise and partake in the mass signings across Ulster.

The signing of the Covenant was something that needed to be done. Home Rule had to be avoided at all costs and this was shown by the huge number of people that took part … a unity that is unlikely to be seen again. P/U/L

The city and its public places have evolved over time as the political and social context has shifted and the opposition of Home Rule was acknowledged within the interviews to have been one of these events;

Our public places have been created through an evolutionary process and you can see how our public places have transformed in use and user after particular landmark events due to the perceptions that they seemingly belong to one group or another. The opposition to the threat of Home Rule was highly emotive at the time, as can be seen by the images of the huge crowds that came out from the parade in Belfast, and is deservedly remembered within contemporary Northern Ireland. P/U/L

With the political nature of the event in 1912 and the significant volume of people that were anticipated to attend, approximately 30,000 marchers (Vincent, 2012), there was the need for security at the site of the signings. This was reflected within the centenary celebrations in 2012 with sections of the parade from Belfast to Stormont being monitored by the police in the largest police operation in years, with the massive policing operation costing hundreds of thousands of pounds (Simpson, 2012) (For parade route, see Figure 2). This was to enforce the Parades Commission’s restrictions upon the event, which prohibited the playing of sectarian songs, authorising only religious hymns to be played near the interface point of St. Patrick’s Church (North Belfast).

They were only allowed to play hymns in front of St. Patrick’s according to the Parades Commission, which I feel is only right and respectful, but unfortunately they don’t always tend to adhere to it. Such actions should make the parade illegal but that doesn’t happen, yet it would if it was our parade that breached the restrictions.
The perception of sectarian undertones of the Nationalist residents by the seemingly ‘triumphant’ Unionists parading past the very symbol of their religion, St. Patrick’s (Figure 3), led to various legal appeals for tighter restrictions upon the Unionist parade (McDonald, 2012).
It's about respect. The parade goes quite close to our homes and right in front of our place of worship and recent parades have shown that they have no respect for us. They dance in front of it, play sectarian tunes in front of it, openly breach the conditions of the Parades Commission. They don't respect us or the Parades Commission and they act accordingly. There is no reason as to why the parade should play music at all for this part of the route, and particularly in front of St. Patrick's, instead saving music for areas in which they are welcome or shared and neutral. C/N/R

There was the perception that the ability to play religious songs was antagonistic in the face of the symbolism of the Catholic religion and that the parade should be restricted to a drum beat. This led to a selection of local residents seeking the institutional and governance structures to internalise the potential negative externalities by restricting the music to the areas which also affiliated with the asserted Protestant identity. Whilst this was refused upon the grounds that the Parades Commission had already expressed its determination, the move demonstrates the embedded nature of the conflict, the importance of symbols such as religion and parades and the perception that public places are seemingly owned by one community or another.

The parade itself passed relatively peacefully with relatively few incidents (ITV News, 2012).

The Ulster Day parade in 2012 was peaceful, which unfortunately hasn't always been the way of it. The political climate has changed a lot since then with things having become more tentative, which influences how society reacts and sees public events. C/N/R

The police were on high alert, however, and had a very high visual presence at potential interfaces, St. Patricks Church, to enforce the decision of the Parades Commission regarding the playing of music by the bands; in addition to the restriction of the potential number of Nationalist demonstrators to 150 (Telford, 2012).

The determination to limit the number of supporters was not one we were happy with, but the organisers and supporters of the parade were happy with it. I don't think there was a conscious decision to place restrictions on us and them, and I don't know whether it played a part in the parade being peaceful, but it helped create a sense that no-one won. C/N/R

I don't know how they came to the number of 150 protestors but it was good that they decided to take action to limit the number of them and stop them from being bussed in. The Commission is always willing to place conditions on us and then they come out to watch us and gloat – but the Covenant Day parade was different and may have been one reason as to why the parade was peaceful. P/U/L

The dual action of the determination by the Parades Commission may have been a significant tool in the creation of order within the latency for conflict of the Covenant Day event. The determination affected both communities. Subsequently, the situation in which either side could be perceived to have been victorious in the assertion of their ownership of the space was eradicated.

There is never just one story to things here – there are two sides to everything and they may be significantly different to each other even regarding the same event. If something bad happens, then it's the other groups's fault with both community's often looking to claim some form of victory over the other. There is no respect for the 'other side' and no responsibility shown by either side. C/N/R

In effect, the state had assigned itself as the owner of the space for a determined period of time – there was a dilution of the public accessibility and utility of the space with the public ownership of the place being managed in a private manner. It may have been this dual action
that was able to ebb away the mistrust and suspicion of the Parades Commission and the
state as, in effect, no-one side had won, yet, both had their interests and values heard – there
was the deliverance of coopetition.

Essentially, the Parades Commission concluded that it wasn't a Nationalist area as resident
protestors had their numbers limited, and that it wasn't a Unionist area as the parade had
restrictions. They didn't see the route in terms of a public place, restricting who could access
it and how it could be used. P/U/L

Public space and the Covenant Day

Drawing on new institutionalism, it is possible to demonstrate that the contemporary issues
of public place conflicts are grounded within the events of the past. Public places are the
product of cultural and historical trajectories. Historic events have shaped Northern Ireland
and how its society has evolved. With many of these events approaching their centenary
celebrations such as the formation of the UVF and the IRA (Irish Republican Army), the
Easter Rising, the War of Independence and Covenant Day itself, it is clear that these events
are continuing to have profound impacts upon people and how they use and perceive the
use of urban public places.

First, the culture and identity asserted by users upon public place conveys a particular
meaning and interpretation. The issue in Northern Ireland, however, isn't that the symbols,
parades and flags aren't understood, but that they are understood differently by the two
communities.

Trouble often occurs in Northern Ireland because of the lack of shared history being commem-
orated in the shared space we both try to call our home. We have our history and events and
they have theirs. The events that they celebrate are the ones we would rather forget, and the
ones we commemorate are the ones they would probably like us and history to forget. C/N/R

The embedded distrust, fear, mistrust and sectarianism between the two communities has
been the result of years of direct opposition to each other and scars the interpretation of the
expressive action of the 'others'. The exertion of control over a place implies power, which
can be viewed as oppressive or something to be celebrated, depending upon your position
within the enacting out of the conflict.

If the Parades Commission gives determinations in our favour it is a victory to us. If it is
deeded to be against us, then it is a victory to them. The rulings on public rituals is interpreted
as indicative to the community’s position within the current political climate and that puts the
Parades Commission in an unenviable position. C/N/R

To Roman Catholics, the apparent expression of Unionists celebrating the 100 year anniver-
sary of the opposition to Home Rule by marching through ‘their’ public places symbolises
the hegemony that Unionism had from the creation of Northern Ireland. The issue of the
seemingly antagonistic and triumphant nature of Unionism expressionism is further exac-
erbated by the fact that the parade and police presence constricts the Nationalist’s practical
access to and use of the place.

When they celebrate history or culture they do so, not solely in the places that would be called
‘their own’, but do so often in shared spaces, spaces alongside our places and at times they even
want to encroach into our places. When that happens we can be basically locked into our homes
by the police. Through no fault of our own, other than where we have chosen to live, we can
become captive audiences. C/N/R
For Unionism, the issue of parades is one of rights. Parades are embedded actions central to the expression of their culture and have been seen in the past as rituals of the state due to the prominence of high level Unionist politicians at such parades.\(^8\) Rituals are by their very nature repetitive performances and with parades firmly embedded within the Unionist identity, their repetition has been utilised as a means to legitimise their claims to control the public place. The degree of the embedded nature of their claims is demonstrated by the right to ‘walk the Queen’s Highway’ and the call of ‘For God and for Ulster’.

They talk about shared spaces but when we want to use it then it’s no longer shared. They protest against us parading but won’t tell us what they have against it, even though we have done it for centuries. Is it the music or is it that they just don’t want Protestant feet on what they try to claim is their road, as that’s what it feels like. We have a right to walk. P/U/L

To further demonstrate the embedded nature of Northern Ireland, it is claimed that the issues would not exist had it not been for the colonial ambitions of the Tudors and the plantation of Ulster (Peloquin, 2011). This reflects how deeply embedded the conflict is within the psyche of the identity and culture of the divided society within Northern Ireland and how the issue of which group is rightfully entitled to the ownership and use of land being at the very crux of the Northern Irish conflict.

The parades disputes are simply an extension of the conflict over land that has been going on for centuries. C/N/R

This expresses the embedded religious and political motivations within the identity of public places with the physical environment of Belfast today being scarred by references to the past; with the market-/micro-level of new institutionalism constantly reminded of the embedded issues through murals dedicated to Oliver Cromwell and William of Orange. The conflict over rightful sovereignty of Northern Ireland is enacted out at the local scale during marching season with both communities trying to assert a sense of ownership over public places by enacting out such rituals.

When the Parades Commission re-routes a parade or places other restrictions upon it, it sends the message to us that an area isn’t for us. The view is that if an area was welcoming or at least tolerant then we could come to some form of compromise, but if we aren’t welcome then the undemocratic body steps in to tells us so. P/U/L

Second, it is evident that the issue has been deeply affected by the embedded sectarianism and has enabled it to be reflected in the political and organisational structures. Such alleged sectarianism has had perceived impacts upon the governance level and the micro-/market-level with a shift in the public order conflict reflecting the political and institutional transformation. Historic conflicts within Northern Ireland were borne from the Nationalist frustration at their perceived oppression and lack of civil rights as sparked by the social housing issue with the Caledon Affair.

We weren't represented at a political level during the early years of the North. We were prejudiced against in terms of housing, discriminated in terms of employment and marginalised politically. Then when we started to protest to get our civil rights seen all measures were used against us, even murder, but we still used the public arena to spread our message. C/N/R

There was the playing out of formal political conflicts in the everyday public level. However, this facilitated a shift in place, control, politics and power as the institutionally violent means to ‘resolve’ the civil rights protests (such as the much maligned events of ‘Bloody Sunday’\(^9\)) motivated and politicised a number of prominent Nationalist youths. Nationalist
involvement and representation within politics began to transform the power structures with the institutions in Northern Ireland as they began to interweave their ideas, concepts and values within the political process. This began to alter the values and perceptions of the institutions which modified their structures and how they conducted their business.

The actions that the British adopted made the republican message an attractive one and encouraged many people to become involved with politics.

Crucially, this shift in politics has led to a shift in the conflict of public places. The traditional focus has been on Unionism – first with Orange parades and with the displaying of British symbols to the contemporary situation of a more balanced, representative public realm. This transition reflects the historic position whereby the institutional structures in Northern Ireland were predominantly Unionist to contemporary politics in which there is the process of consociational shaped institutions alongside the now more politically mature Nationalists.

When there was an Orange State there was an Orange public. They had the power in local government to do what they want and this was the same for the public realm. History shows we had many incidents of police, army and Loyalist attacks before, during and after civil right parades – which all served to bring about the conflict. When we became politically represented, we gained a voice and platform within public places, like the anti-internment parade; an example which shows that whilst we have made progress as it can be held, shows that we are still not equal. There is a breach of conditions in our parade like there was this year and it is deemed illegal, but they do it and it's not viewed in the same way.

The consociational form of governance involves guaranteeing group representation, and is seen as a tool for managing conflict in deeply divided societies. It has been counter claimed, however, that consociationalism doesn’t resolve conflict, but merely institutionalises existing divisions (McGarry & O’Leary, 2006, p. 46).

The media and world politicians acknowledge the advances that our politicians have done in leading us to the relatively peace that we have but they don’t hold them accountable often enough for the trouble they are responsible for. The flags protests caused by politicians, a lack of recent progress on the parades and Troubles with the Haas talks is on the politicians, etc. etc. etc. They are all interested in their own agendas, for their own people – they still divide down the lines of ‘us and them uns’ politics.

The new institutional perspective has illustrated that the institutions have been created by agents, whom themselves are shaped by their narrow perceptions of the ‘others’, which inevitably inhibits their potential to set neutral rules of the game.

Basically politics here is done on an ‘us and them’ basis. If this is still done at the top level, then how can things be different at the local? P/U/L.

Despite the criticisms of the consociational political structure, it enabled the peace process to be initiated, with President Clinton claiming that it had provided a model for the resolution of a range of ethnic conflicts (Wilson, 2003). To appeal to politicians and representatives from both sides of the community and encourage them to take the initial steps required to overcome the obstacle of their embedded distrust and reluctance to partake in dialogue with the ‘others’, there was the offering of concessions to incentivise parties. The use of concessions to motivate parties to accept power-sharing nurtured an ‘auction mentality’ (Horowitz, 2001, p. 341) within politics. This encouraged a self-interested attitude, which would inevitably filter down to the local scale.
Unionist politicians can throw the dummy out of the pram when parading issues don’t go in their favour and can then threaten the political stability here for everyone as a result. C/N/R

This self-interest of obtaining maximum rewards, the prisoner’s dilemma, is not conductive to equitable politics. It erodes the desired accommodation politics within the consociational model in favour of partisanship. The rewarding of division and parochial political wants can exacerbate silo mentalities which political entrepreneurs can manipulate, via the media, further heightening tensions to optimise their negotiation point.

The media here is itself caught up with it with local papers taking a side – the same story can be reported in different ways to suit the desired agenda as to what they want their audience to read. C/N/R

The Republican movement, due to its favourable bargaining position with the capacity for renewed violence, has been the alleged main beneficiary of these demands (Wilson, 2003). This is demonstrated by the attaining of concessions during the closing of the Good Friday negotiations that accelerated prisoner releases (Ibid), which fuelled the Unionist perception that the IRA and Sinn Fein were at the centre of the negotiations.

They have gotten all they wanted – the RUC is gone, the Union flag is removed from City Hall, the Garvaghy, Twadell, Dunloy are all seemingly sorted in a way that suits them and what have we got … terrorists helping to run the country. P/U/L

This apparent position of Republican importance has proved to be an Achilles’ heel within politics in Northern Ireland due to the mutual distrust of the ‘others’ motivations and actions. Consequently, the embedded mistrust and paranoia of the ‘others’ and the antagonistic nature of their past sees the success of the ‘others’ (in attaining concessions) as being directly antagonistic to them and their identity. This can be witnessed by the seemingly impossible position of the institution of the Parades Commission within the ‘Marching Season’.

Upon declaring their decision to permit the parade, re-route the parade, place restrictions upon it or to prevent the parade altogether can be seen as the state legitimising ‘the others’ claim whilst oppressing another’s. This is seemingly apparent within Northern Irish politics now at all levels, as a significant portion of the Unionist population perceive the legitimacy awarded to Nationalists within the political arena as being at the expense of their culture and identity within the local level of public places, as demonstrated by the contemporary issue of the flag protests within Northern Ireland. The political decision to fly the Union flag at Belfast City Hall on stipulated days, as opposed to the whole year, ended in protests and violence and accrued significant costs as there was the perception by a significant Unionist population that this was an attack upon their culture and identity (Gibson, 2013).

They protest on the need to respect cultures yet constantly attack our culture. It seems to be the need for one-sided respect as they attack all symbols of our identity, like flags, parades and even the bonfires. P/U/L

Further constraint upon the potential effectiveness of institutional structures filters down from the embedded unaccountability of politicians. Upon local-level social disturbances, the institutional structures displace the responsibility of ‘their’ people within the event and partake in a ‘blame game’ to shift the blame onto the antagonist ‘other side’ (Jarman, 2003).

If there’s violence at an interface after a parade they blame those parading or the supporters, yet when there was trouble after the anti-internment parade they blamed the PSNI. They are never responsible. P/U/L
Unionist politicians are willing to stand alongside people who have been known to authorities for violence during parades and have called for people to come out and support, knowing that it will lead to trouble in an area. It was done at Twadell, done in Portadown etc. C/N/R

The embedded nature of the ‘other sides’ responsibility for the incident demonstrates how the institutional structures are related to the micro-scale and can further exacerbate conflicts as there is the seemingly unaccountability of the agent’s behaviour. This unaccountability for individual action can contribute to what Ostrom (1990) describes as the ‘Tragedy of the Commons’.

The Parades Commission makes a decision – and whether a parade goes ahead or not makes little difference to us. If it goes ahead we are kept in by the police and by the supporters and have to listen and watch it. If it doesn’t go ahead or they are not happy with the decision then they protest and it is policed and we are kept in anyway and they see it as a win for us. C/N/R

It is because of this latent ability for the institutional structures to become embroiled with sectarianism that there is the need for these structures and their agents to ‘take more responsibility for parades [and] show more leadership and courage than they have in the past’ (Curran, 2013, p. 29). The leaders of both communities should strive to alter the socially embedded attitudes to the ‘others’ and work together should they wish to show the local level how to do it to deliver better functioning public places. The new institutionalism model, unlike many other perspectives, allows for the institutions to influence the governance and local levels in a top-down manner, whilst simultaneously enabling a bottom-up responses.

The leaders should do that, lead. They should show people the way things ought to be done instead of game playing and what-a-boutery. P/U/L

Third, the historic failure of the governance structures to tackle the issues of parades and sectarianism contributed to the issues at the governance level in regards to Covenant Day. The divisive nature of the parade, the questionable governance regimes of the past and the embedded sectarian values within community groups and other important agents have accumulatively altered perceptions to the governance structures within contemporary Belfast. This is demonstrated by the dual perception that the Parades Commission must attempt to negotiate.

When they give determinations we want, then we win and they aren’t happy. If they give determinations that they want then they win and we aren’t happy. It’s all or nothing but it’s still better than when the RUC just forced through the parades. C/N/R

Dual perceptions ultimately inhibit the success of the Parades Commission. Due to the highly subjective nature of their decisions, i.e. they are either on ‘our’ side or ‘theirs’ (in a similar way to the way the police was caught between a rock and a hard place prior to the Parades Commission). Regardless of the Parades Commission decision, due to the two communities conflicting for directly opposing goals, there will be inevitably be winners and losers.

This is further exacerbated by the political, community and paramilitary entrepreneur who utilises these perceptions and stokes up the tension. By using the media to express antagonistic views and organise protests, there is the setting up of the rules of the game for the players at the micro level. There has been the ‘filtering’ down of the embedded social attitudes which set the stage for actions to be enacted out upon the public arena.

The Unionist politicians spread the message to the Unionist people that they are being unfairly treated and spread a fear that they are being attacked. They don’t show any leadership. C/N/R
Finally, due to the embedded sectarianism there is a pursuit of the collective optimum for each individual community group, the enabling of sectarianism by the institutional structures and the sectarian organisations at the governance level, the players of the game are sectarian in motivation, thought and action. With their ability to influence the evolution of the governance and institutional structures, it must be acknowledged by all that whilst individuals are small enough to act, they are big enough to matter.

The people at the local level do have a voice and can use it, but they often feel that they can’t and so as a last resort they often resort to some form of violence. C/N/R

The embedded sectarianism breeds distrust and fear of the ‘others’ at an individual level. This fear, exacerbated by the politicians and community level paramilitaries, can lead to the creation of negative externalities during the marching season. The experience of negative externalities such as protesting and rioting has led to a level of expectation regarding potentially contentious marches, such as Covenant Day.

People here anticipate the marching season to be problematic. Experience has taught us that there will be trouble. C/N/R

The potential unrest regarding Covenant Day was not as prevalent as was feared. This was due to the high transaction costs of policing the institutional agreement.

There was a large police presence and as normal we had our own marshalls to monitor the parade and supporters which all helped to make sure it all went peacefully. P/U/L

In addition to this, there was the accrualment of transaction costs to resolve the lack of knowledge. The result of the socially embedded sectarianism and engrained distrust of the ‘others’ has generated spatial fragmentation of society through the use of segregated residential areas. As demonstrated, however, the issue is not the use of the public good; it is the interpretation of its use. If there was the sharing of knowledge between the two communities, then steps may be taken to alter the negative perceptions to enable a more pareto-efficient outcome. Within Covenant Day, there was an increased level of knowledge attained through negotiations between the parties.

At times there has been talking between all the parties. Whilst this has not been easy, there has been some positives from it with that parade one of them, but other parades are more difficult. P/U/L

This took time, trust and resources to create, as no one begins negotiations in an altruistic manner. The forward thinking action taken in regards to Covenant Day has been built upon with discussions ahead of previous ‘Marching Seasons’ having taken place in Wales; neutral space with neutral emotional attachments. Nevertheless, there is significant room for improvement.

As if to demonstrate the scale of the mission to alter the social perceptions, however, due to the behaviour and emotion generated by the socially embedded level there were some minor issues with the minority of bands breaching the Parades Commission condition regarding the non-playing of sectarian tunes at an interface near a Roman Catholic place of worship. This antagonistic behaviour was interpreted by some Roman Catholics/Nationalists/Republican to be the symbolic display of power and suppression over their identity, culture and place which generated some minor social unrest; requiring policing and clean up transaction costs.
Yeah, they flout the rules, show no respect and then want to walk where they want. I think that they feel they own the place and can do what they want. C/N/R

As demonstrated, the cultural, institutional, governance and micro level environments can be interpreted through a new institutional perspective to explain the conflicts or the potential of conflicts within the public domain. There is the potential for the gap between calculus interpretations and cultural interpretations of thought, behaviour and action to be bridged to enable the holistic explanation of the historic and present dynamics within a contemporary urban area and how they accumulatively enable the same public place to have discrepancies in how public it is and the highly temporal nature of perceived ownership.

Conclusions

Importantly, Madanipour (2003) asserts that public places reflect the society in which they are located. This is very evident in Northern Ireland where its tumultuous political climate has been mirrored in public places and how they have been perceived in terms of ownership and use. Similar to the political discrepancy that surrounds the legitimate sovereignty of Northern Ireland, discrepancies exist as to the perceived ownership of public places across Northern Ireland and how this influences their perceived publicness. Belfast, and many other urban areas of Northern Ireland are extensively segregated and polarised places in which all forms of territory have a potential to become contested and fought over, with this a particular issue during the Marching Season.

The Covenant Day example has provided a novel means of investigating how this example of a public place has been utilised and become embroiled in conflict. It has demonstrated the ability to elucidate the connections that exist between the use of public place and the motivations, thought and actions of differing agents, institutions and governance structures within a contemporary context that acknowledges the impacts of the historic situations. This paper demonstrates that the embedded interests of people, governance and the institutional structures will not only be played out within the public place but will inevitably alter and shape the design, management and use of the public place itself. The rules of the game, filtered down from the socially embedded level, the institutional and governance level, shape the accessibility of public places and the perception of who has the property rights. This perceived ownership can potentially expedite conflicts with actions at the local level influencing the decisions of the institutional and governance levels. The ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ levels simultaneously shape public places.

Within controversial parades in Belfast the Parades Commission can make determinations in favour of the P/U/L community, which can shape the perception that they hold the property rights to the ‘public’ place. Alternatively, the Parades Commission can make determinations that are more akin to the wants of the C/N/R community. In either situation, they inevitably create winners and losers with the interviewees indicating that such determinations can subsequently influence how they access and utilise a specific place.

The Parades Commission effectively assign boundaries over what is ours, what is theirs and what is neutral or shared. C/N/R

The perceived dichotomous sense of ownership of public places subsequently reflects the politics of Northern Ireland. There is ‘us and them’ with public places being ‘ours or theirs’.
Within the empirical study of Covenant Day, however, the state didn’t award property rights to one community over another. Similar to the shared and neutral ownership of ‘Consumerist Belfast’, the Parades Commission as a representative of the state took dual action and in so doing was perceived to have retained the property rights of the public place. No one community could claim victory over the other, yet both communities felt that they had had their voices heard. The parade commenced as Unionists desired, yet it was restricted to playing hymns in certain areas in respect of the Nationalist residents and their places of worship. The publicness of the area was seemingly retained.

This singular empirical study of a public place in Belfast illustrates the complexity of understanding urban public places. The intricate milieu that perceptions of ownership, access, control and use, and the highly dynamic temporal nature are critical considerations that can significantly inhibit the social and economic functions of such public places. Nevertheless, whilst the paper argues that there is a need to understand that public places are a cultural and historical product, it acknowledges that public places are not a static phenomenon destined to remain a historical legacy of the Troubles. Instead, the paper argues that they are a dynamic part of the social urban fabric responding to political and social changes and whilst there is a significant volume of polarised and segregated public places which are privatised in terms of use and users, there is an increasing volume of shared and neutral public places. Such shared and neutral spaces may be under significant social and political pressure, but they require positive and sustained actions, such as those taken by the Parades Commission on Covenant Day, to ensure that they are not abandoned and avoided, instead remaining shared and accessible to all sections of all communities.

Notes

1. The terminology used to distinguish the various groups that accumulatively formulate Northern Irish society are used for the sake of brevity. The Protestant religion is typical, but not exclusively, confined to two political groups. Unionists, through political ideology, wish for Northern Ireland to remain part of the UK whilst contemporary use of the term ‘Loyalism’ has come to define those who are prepared and willing to use violence to maintain the union. In contrast, the Roman Catholic religion is largely encompassed by the Nationalist and Republican groups. Nationalism is accepted as those that are supportive the pursuit of political means in attaining greater independence but not necessarily supportive of an Irish Republic. Republicans, however, are those that believe the island of Ireland should be an independent republic and have been prepared to pursue violent means in their struggle. Whilst religious doctrine is not the central source of the ethno-political conflict it is a typical defining characteristic.
2. The circumlocution or P/U/L and C/N/R has been utilised throughout as there is a diverse range of political and social beliefs that are encapsulated within the two predominant communities in Northern Ireland.
3. The mass Protestant rejection to Home Rule, which was enacted out on Covenant Day 1912, is ironic as the Protestant dominated Ulster became the only part of Ireland to obtain Home Rule with the creation of Northern Ireland as a result of partition with the Government of Ireland Act, 1920.
4. The separate documents for male and females reflect the embedded cultural and societal attitudes to the sexes during the Unionist opposition to Home Rule.
5. The political use of paramilitaries remains an embedded issue within politics and the community of Northern Ireland today.
6. Stormont is the name given to the grounds of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Northern Ireland Executive as they are located in the Stormont area of Belfast.
7. The Parade’s Commission was the independent body, created in 1997, which sought to achieve local agreement surrounding the issues of parades (Jarman, 2003) and who has the power to determine whether a parade should occur or be re-routed.

8. This is evident by the legacy of William Johnston who organised an Orange parade in 1867 from Bangor to Newtownards, despite it being illegal to do so as a result of the ‘Party Processions Act’. He was incarcerated for this but became a member of parliament representing Belfast. This demonstrated the ability of the political entrepreneur to utilise the socio-political nature of public places.

9. ‘Bloody Sunday’ is the name given to the events that occurred on the 30th of January 1972 in the predominantly Catholic area of Derry/Londonderry known locally as ‘The Bogside’. During a peaceful civil rights March against the policy of internment (the policy of arresting people suspected of terrorist involvement without trial) 13 people were shot dead by the British Army.

10. Consociational institutions work on the premise that there is a multiple balance of power among the subcultures of a society to assert the notion that political cooperation is required within decision-making. It is asserted by Lijphart (1984, 1996) that this can regulate the conflict and stabilise democracy within divided societies.

11. In the early hours of the 9 August 1971, British soldiers launched operation Demetrius, the introduction of internment without trial which was utilised almost exclusively against the Catholic population of Northern Ireland. It is commemorated annually by an anti-internment parade in Belfast City Centre, with incidents of riots being recorded following the parade on the 9 August 2015. The parade, which was to have passed Millfield junction by 13:30 BST as determined by the Parades Commission breached the ruling and did not start until about 14:00, was deemed illegal by the PSNI and prevented from completing its route.

12. The prisoner’s dilemma presents an interesting synergy to the perceived negotiations in Northern Ireland surrounding issues such as parades and flags. The Prisoner’s dilemma concerns two prisoners who cannot negotiate due to their isolation. The parallel exists in that those involved within the negotiations in Northern Ireland have often interpreted and conducted such meetings isolated by choice and a seeming reluctance to compromise; as illustrated by the recent Haas negotiations which failed to be agreed upon after 6 months and seven drafts (BBC, 2014).

13. A pareto efficient outcome is desirable as at this stage the situation for one group cannot be improved without making another party’s situation worse. For example, within this case study context, in sharing knowledge there is the ability to define the parade and protestor motives and concerns. This can influence and alter the perceptions of both parties and make them more responsive and understanding to the other’s needs so that cooperation and consensus can be agreed to deliver an outcome in which all parties are satisfied and their lives are not detrimentally affected.

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