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# Identities on the Walls

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Abstract
The aim of this paper is to investigate the nexus of identities, narratives and conflict. Cultural violence is argued to be the mechanism that opens and closes identities through historical narratives. By using the Northern Irish tradition of murals as a case the paper shows the development of murals and how they present, and project, sectarian historical narratives that promote sectarian identities. The paper shows how the historical narratives have corresponded to the needs of the present but also how the sectarian narratives have changed the present. A circular movement of action of the ideational and the material and the investigation show that a conflict never only just lie in the material; it also lies in the ideational. Furthermore, the paper shows that cultural violence can be strengthen as well as weakened in said movement of action. In the present state of Northern Ireland we are witnessing a so called comeback narrative, in which the narrative that promotes the use of violence is making a comeback. The paper calls this form of narrative a "comeback narrative".

# Introduction

Collective identities can be argued to contribute to unity as well as discord by default, since they are representation of inclusion and exclusion. According to Frederick Barth are collective identities the outcome of boundary setting practices of the meeting of the Other. It is only through said meeting we can understand what we are not, thereby understand who we are. These boundary-setting practices should not be seen as malign practices; they are not normative, nor judging; they are a form of understanding of the Self (Barth 1969). Collective identities can be hostile, contribute to discord and be an instrument of conflict. Whether the collective identity become benign or malign depends on the context of which they are formed, collective identities are never inherently evil. Although, within collective identities lies a substantial amount power since it can make its members act in the name of the identities, sometimes even commit atrocities in the name of said identity. In order to understand what mechanisms and variables that can unleash this destructive power researchers must choose to focus on the nexus of identities, conflicts and historical narratives.

Historical narratives are seen as the core and the basis of collective identities in this paper, since a historical narrative provides the historical context of which the communities – in extension its members, can place themselves in. A trans-generational bond is created through said narrative that stretches from the present into the past subsequently giving cohesion and understanding to the members of the collective identity. The historical narrative allows the members to place their own experiences within the framework of the narrative and thereby understand themselves as an entity in time (McDowell 2013). Agnes Heller has argued that without the past, or without the ability to place ourselves in the past we do not know who we are. Plus, through the past we can predict what can, or will, happen in the future. The perception of the past, and the relationship that we have to the past, determines what kind of collective identity we have. Historical narratives are always formed and understood in correspondence with the needs of the present, consequently making our identities formed and understood in the same manner. Collective identities and historical narratives are therefore transformable, dynamic, and always changing. Additionally: the present is always legitimised through the past (Heller 1982, Olick 2007, Dawson 2007).

This shows us that the material and the ideational are responding to each other, subsequently creating a circular movement of action between historical narratives, the present and identities. Historical narratives are seen to lie in the ideational sphere and the forces in the ideational have repercussions in the material since the historical narrative, the ideational forces, promotes action in the material. However, these actions consequently change the ideational since the ideational must conform to the material. The ideational is used to make sense of the material, and when the material changes so does the ideational, consequently creating a never-ending circular movement of action. It is through this circular form of action narratives correspond to, but also change, the present. The aim of the paper is to discuss the nexus of identities, narratives and violence and it is here we come close to said nexus. If there is a conflict in the present, material, the narrative must legitimise, celebrate and justify the conflict in question. This entails that conflicts always lie in two dimensions: the material as well as the ideational.

A historical narrative legitimises the conflict by presenting the conflict as a battle for the survival of the community that stretches back to the eternity. The collective identities are also often found to be in opposition to each other. The conflict is however only presented as such due to the presents needs it to be presented in this manner (Buckley-Zistel 2008). This statement presents to us the possibility that it us the present, and the circular movement of action, that dictates the form of relations between communities. The conflict does not lie only in the material; it lies as well in the ideational. Presenting to us a possible explanation to why the communities believe it is a matter of survival.

Jens Bartelson has argued that we often do not know who we are without our collective identity; this is an

element that is not exclusive to collective identities in conflicts (Bartelson 2006). The collective identity, i.e. the historical narrative is used to not only make sense of our experiences but also explain personal characteristics. However, one of the main distinguishing factors between identities in a conflict and identities in peace is the plurality of narratives the identity contains. An identity that is "in peace" contains a multiple of narratives and meanings consequently enabling several different types of memberships of the community (Bar-Tal 2014, Kinnvall 2012). The identity can therefore be labelled as open. Collective identities that are found in conflicts on the other hand are often closed identities, which means that the identity in question contains one narrative and one meaning. There is therefore only one form of membership, one form of identity of said community. Vamik Volkan has argued that the historical narrative is internalised into the core construct of the individual. The collective identity becomes intertwined with the personal thus leaving the collective more important than the personal if the collective is in a conflict. There is no distinction between the personal and the collective in this scenario. A consequence of said fusion is that an injury in the past has the same sensation as if it would have felt in the present (Volkan 2013). For these particular reasons the historical narrative is presented as a battle of survival and calls for the necessity of violence.

The paper will present a possible framework to explain and understand said phenomenon. The author of this paper argues that the answer might light in the aforementioned circular movement of action of the ideational and the material. A narrative promotes action in the present but must adapt to the changing dynamics in the present, thereby creating said circle of action. The answer might lie in which ideational forces that shape and promote the narrative in the first place, how the narrative is promoted and during which circumstances the narrative id formed. The ideational as well as the material must be taken into consideration. A proposed framework to understand said conundrum is cultural violence.

Johan Galtung developed the theory of violence in 1969 but it had firstly only two dimensions: direct and structural. The third dimension, cultural violence, was added in 1990 and cultural violence can be argued to be dimension that legitimises the two previously mentioned dimensions. Direct violence is the first dimension of violence and it is a visible event perpetrated by an actor. There are discussions whether direct violence can only be physical or if it can be psychological as well, this will be further discussed below. The second dimension of violence, structural violence, is in contrast to direct violence latent (invisible) and is perpetrated by a structure. Galtung never gives a concrete example of what structural violence is, but he likens it with social injustices. Structural violence does operate physically and psychologically. Cultural violence is the form of violence that is a prerequisite to the previous mentioned forms of violence by justifying, celebrating and legitimising them. Its domicile lies in the ideational and is expressed through cultural expressions and practices. Violence is presented and understood as a necessity of the survival of the community through these expressions. Although, it is important to stress that cultural violence is not an inherent element of these communities, or a part of the psychological makeup of the members of the communities. Cultural violence is something one is taught and it is repeated through the aforementioned cultural expressions and practices thereby maintaining the belief of the necessity of violence (Galtung 1969, 1990).

It can be argued to be difficult to find an empirical case in which there are cultural practices and expressions that clearly project narratives that justify and celebrate violence. Cultural violence lies in the normal, which means that it is hard to detect since it is seen as a normal element of or everyday life. In Northern Ireland, however, there is a cultural expression that presents narratives that promote violence. Furthermore, it is a cultural expression that adapts, and corresponds to, the present. Murals are a distinct working class feature that represent, and presents, the identities, of the communities in which they reside in Belfast and (London)Derry (Rolston 2010, Jarman 2005, Lisle 2006). They are the creators, and maintainers of the sectarian areas in Northern Ireland by projecting said sectarian narratives. A sectarian residential area is an area that is exclusively Catholic/Protestant. The political identities in Northern Ireland can be roughly divided into four political identities, in which two of them have murals as the primarily form of internal and external communication. Unionists (Protestant) and nationalists (Catholics) believe in a peaceful, or political, solution to the conflict and they are often seen as a middle class identity. Loyalists (Protestants) and republicans (Catholics), on the other hand, are working class identities and believe in a violence solution to the conflict. Murals are almost exclusively found in loyalists and republican areas thereby presenting a link between the use, celebration and justification of violence (McDowell & Switzer 2011, McDowell & Shirlow 2011, NicCraith 2002, McAtackney 2011).

Northern Ireland is also fitting as a case since it is an unresolved conflict but it has a peace process. There are still segregated areas in Northern Ireland and there is no reconciliation process. The peace process can be labelled as "functioning" but not being a success. The Good Friday Agreement, GFA, has been characterised as both a success and as a failure. But there have been efforts in the recent years to move towards peace in Northern

Ireland. There are for examples investigations regarding disappearances of civilians, suspicious deaths and collusion i.e. cooperation between the police/military and the loyalist paramilitaries during the Troubles (http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-36486779, Gilligan 1997). The political landscape has also changed in the recent year since after the election of 2016, one of the main unionist parties, DUP, chose not to be a part of the power-sharing executive and become a party in opposition. Northern Ireland can therefore be argued to be on the path to a normalised political landscape. Simultaneously as these steps been taken, status quo has remained with a segregated, and sectarian urban and political landscape. Northern Ireland is a case of contradictions since during the same time-period of working towards peace, there are also forces to maintain status quo, even to re-start the conflict. In 2016 the republican splinter groups did call out that they were taking up arms once more. Later in 2016 the MI6/MI5 did arrest members of said groups who had the intent to carry out terrorist attack in England. The previous actors in the conflict have not entirely laid down their weapons either. There had also been an Assessment concluding that the military hierarchies of the previous actors in the conflict were still intact, which is a breach to the GFA. They were not active in terrorist activities, just organizational crime, but they still have access to weapons. This can be seen as a sign of the mutual distrust that exist between the communities.

What the author would like to stress in this paper is that cultural violence is a force that can both be strengthened and weakened (Jabri 1996). The case of Northern Ireland and its tradition of murals is a fitting case since it shows how cultural violence can be strengthened, weakened and strengthened once more. This will be shown in the analysis and be discussed in the concluding remarks.

The paper is designed to firstly discuss collective identities and narratives and thereafter show how cultural violence is a fitting link to discuss the nexus of identities, narratives and conflicts. The case of Northern Ireland and a brief presentation of the previous research on Northern Irish murals will be presented. Thereafter the paper will present a short presentation of methodological considerations of researching murals and cultural violence. The analysis of the murals is presented in a chronological manner in which the development of the murals is matched with the events of the Northern Irish conflict. Lastly, some concluding remarks will be made on the subject of cultural violence as strengthened and weakened.

## Identities and narratives

Collective identities are products of boundary settings practices between different collectives. It is thereby only by meeting of the "Other" that we can distinguish who we are. Identities are also seen as socially constructed and fluid, i.e. collective identities are taught and not inherent (Fullerton Joireman 2003). Although, identities are important and connected to our personal identities and are essential to our beings. We should therefore not "diminish" the role and link collective identities have to our core constructs, making them appear to be inherent features of our psychological makeup (Fierke 2006).

Historical narratives are also essential in collective identities since they function as an anchor of which the community can form their own experiences and life story around. The historical narrative also provides a legitimisation of the community in which the community is presented as an entity through time and space. Benedict Anderson has called these communities for imagined communities; a community that exist only in the ideational but its existence has repercussion sin the material. The form of the narrative also dictates the form of the identity, argues Volkan and Bar-Tal. And the form of the narrative, in extension the collective identity, is a result of the needs of the present. Identities and narratives are therefore transformable since they correspond and legitimise the present. However, in a conflict situation, the collective identities in question tend to be more rigid and less transformable (Bar-Tal 2014). Bar-Tal and Volkan argue that this is due to the role that the narrative is given in the individual's core construct. The personal experiences of the individual and the historical narrative of the collective are intertwined thus leaving the individual with a collective identity. However, when a collective is threatened the importance of the collective identity is increased and when the narrative is challenged the individual is challenged too, subsequently hurting the Self and making the Self insecure. An injury to the Self in the past is just as hurtful as an injury to the new Self (Kinnvall 2012, Bar-Tal 2014, Volkan 2001). In order to protect the community boundaries are put up, consequently creating a narrative that puts the collectives in opposition to each other (Kinnvall 2012, Strömbom 2010). The narratives thereby present the conflict as ancient and as a battle of survival.

The constitution of a historical narrative, regardless of it being closed or open, is always built on events from the past, which are chosen and interpreted in relation to the present. These kinds of events can be described as major events or borderline events (Karlsson 2010, Bar-Tal 2014). But in closed historical narratives these events are understood as either glories or traumas. The chosen traumas are of specific interest in these studies since it is what these traumas do, how they are understood and internalised, which are of focus in this study. Chosen

traumas and chosen glories can be seen as a classification of borderline events in which the events are classified as either victories or as traumas. The classification of the event determines the shape of the narrative and the role it has in the narrative in question. A chosen trauma is a defeat of the Other and the community is the victim of the Other. It is often seen as the starting point of the community being victims of the Other. Chosen glories are the opposite of chosen traumas and it is an event in which the community are victorious, thereby showing that a victory can be achieved. These events provide the individual an explanation to why the conflict exists, why the Other must be vanquished, but also how it is possible to be victorious (Volkan 2001, 2013).

It is how these events are experienced that is essential in our understanding of cultural violence, closed identities and conflicts. A closed narrative is a narrative that is under what Vamik Volkan calls a time collapse. A time collapsed narrative is characterised by the fact that the temporality of the narrative is distorted, which means that time is circular rather than linear. A distorted temporality has severe consequences for the collective identity since it subsequently distorts the temporality for the individual. The chosen traumas are internalised into the core construct of the individual thereby making the past traumatic events a part of the present. Temporality is no longer linear but circular, therefore making the past traumas repetitive. It is also presented for the community that there is no future as long as the other exist and the existence of the community lies in whether or not the community succeeds in extinguishing the Other. It is in this instance we can understand how cultural violence operates; it is through presenting violence as the only available means of survival of the community (Volkan 2013).

## Violent Narratives

Cultural violence is used in this paper as a possible framework to understand, perhaps even explain, the nexus of identities, narratives and conflict. Charlotte Heath-Kelly has pointed out that within the field of IR, violence is both treated as a "normal" feature of politics and as a exception of politics. It is treated as a feature that only erupts when policies, and governments, break down and can be preventable by arming us with tools (Heath – Kelly). Violence is therefore something to expect in politics but it is also an exception. The violence that will be discussed in this paper is the form of violence that is invisible and is ever-changing.

Cultural violence can be understood as the Annales School's theory of temporality. Direct violence is similar to histoire de événementielle. It is therefore an event, perpetrated by an agent and is a visible act. Furthermore, it is also the form of violence that we think of when hearing the word violence (Galtung 1990). The question of visibility is interesting in this aspect since psychological violence can also be felt, but it is invincible, thus leaving us with the question what it can be classified as. In this paper direct violence can both be physical and psychological; the classification of violence depends on the perpetrator. Personal violence is an action performed by an agent; it is therefore always direct regardless of the form of the violence. The perpetrator of structural violence for example is a structure, but the structure can react through its agents with direct violence if it feels threatened. Structural violence is a process and it can be seen as the histoire de conjocturelle. A closed identity is also an example of structural violence since an individual can be locked into an identity as well as being locked out of an identity (Galtung 1990). It is therefore difficult to distinguish between these types of violence, and know where structural violence ends and direct violence begins. Furthermore, direct violence is also something most people have experiences whereas structural violence is in its nature illusive, consequently making it hard to exemplify. Galtung has argued that structural violence should be seen as the magnified version of direct violence. In the category of death for example, direct violence is homicide and structural violence is genocide. Cultural violence should be seen as la longue durée, or permanence (Galtung 1990).

The third dimension of violence, cultural violence, is, however, the dimension that this paper will focus on. It can be likened with "la longue durée" of the Annales School, therefore presenting it as permanence. Cultural violence legitimises direct and structural violence by making violence, in all forms, feel right, justified and a necessity for the survival of the community. It is therefore the force that puts the communities in time collapse and closes the collective identities. Cultural violence is the force that controls the circular movement of action by constantly promoting keeping the conflict in the material, as well the ideational, intact. By being in the core of the core construct of the individuals, cultural violence is the main hindrance to reconciliation since the personal security of the individual is intertwined with the security of the collective. Cultural violence presents a narrative that there will be no peace, no security if the community cannot vanquish the Other.

## Troubling Murals

Giving a full scope of the timeline of the Northern Irish conflict, the Troubles, is beyond the scope of this paper. The conflict is, however, not a religious conflict but a conflict about whether Northern Ireland should be a part of Ireland or the United Kingdom. The conflict is therefore a question of Irish vs British. The conflict can be argued to stem from the partition of Ireland in 1920 in which Northern Ireland remained within the United

Kingdom and Southern Ireland became the Republic of Ireland. The Troubles did not start until the 1960s in which the Catholic minority started a campaign, inspired by the American civil rights movement, to promote Catholic emancipation. The campaign, which began peacefully, became violent after several violent altercations with Protestants. The British Army was deployed to bring order, and were at first welcomed by the Catholic minority, but after several disastrous events such as the Bloody Sunday, Catholic support sank and calls for reunification with Ireland became prominent. The known actors were the Provisional Irish Republican Army, PIRA, which is a republican organisation. The loyalist armed actors are: Ulster Defense Association, UDA, Ulster Volunter Force, UVF and Ulster Freedom Fighters. In addition to the PIRA is the INLA, Irish National Liberation Army, which has not been as well-known as the PIRA (Tonge 2004).

Murals, in its modern form, were not painted until the 1980s in which it was used as a form of communication of the PIRA in relation to the hunger strike (Rolston 2006). The hunger strike was a strike against the classification of PIRA members as criminals rather than prisoners of war. The strike ended with the death of several of the hunger strikers and it was at this movement the PIRA gained popular support amongst the Catholic population. The conflict "ended" in 1997 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, GFA.

The research field of murals is rather limited due to the fact that the research has been inconclusive regarding the classification of murals. Is it a artwork? A propaganda tool? Communication tool? Or expressions of sectarian hatred? The truth is, is that a mural is all of these things and more. Murals are the main political mobilising factor in Northern Ireland and they are an essential part of the political communication. There has been a consensus made in the research that murals are the main creators of the sectarian areas and function as claimant of space. They are constant reminders of the collective identities of the communities in which they reside by constantly portray and project the historical narratives in which the communities base themselves in (Rolston 2010, 2003, Goalwin 2013, Smyth 1997, Smithey 2011, McBride 2011).

There are disagreements, however, regarding whether murals are the instruments of the armed groups that paint them or whether they reflect the view of the residents of the area. The author of this paper argues that the armed groups impose murals on the communities but they have now existed in these areas for several decades and is now a part of the communities' everyday life. Since 1981 there has been little opposition towards murals and when it has been opposition it has been against how a message has been presented, or the theme of the mural, not the message in itself (Rolston 2010). Furthermore, painting a mural is an active choice, the theme must correspond to the present needs of the communities, otherwise the mural, is, frankly put, useless. If murals are treated as "just" instruments of the communities we will not understand what it is a mural is doing and how the themes of murals is representing explanations to the present (Jarman 2005, Graham 2004).

## Methodological Considerations

Cultural violence is presented through said cultural practices and expressions and murals in Northern Ireland present such narratives. However, it is here I would like to stress that it is not murals as a tradition that is a form of cultural violence, it is what the murals are projecting, the narratives, which are examples of cultural violence. In this section some methodological reflections on finding cultural violence in images will be discussed.

Finding a narrative that promotes, justifies and celebrated violence can be somewhat tricky since cultural violence lies in the normal. It is not a question of finding the unique but what lies in the mainstream. Cultural violence lies in what we subconsciously respond to and not what we consciously react to, which makes the question of researching cultural violence harder.

It is also vital to point out that the author of this paper has no ties to Northern Ireland, thereby making me an outsider. A critical reader might argue that since I am an outsider I do not have the equipment to find the "normal" in said narratives since I am not a part of the cultural context. However, said argument is not valid since it entails that one can only research the contexts of which the researcher are a part of. I will get back to this question later but will firstly present a methodological framework of finding cultural violence. Researching cultural violence is similar to researching historical cultural products, since cultural violence in manifested in such products. What is essential in said studies is finding whether there is an Other and how said Other is portrayed. Is the Other an enemy? Is the community a victim of the Other? Is the Other the source of all grievances of the community? What historical events are chosen? And how are these events interpreted, glories or traumas? How is the future presented, is there a future? In addition to, these guiding questions it is vital to look at which cultural symbols and signs are used in the murals, and which are not used. This is especially important when juxtaposing the imagery of the republicans and loyalists with each other since it is interesting to see which elements are shared and which are not (Karlsson 2010).

Previously it was stated that the author has no cultural ties to Northern Ireland and that can be argued to be a difficulty since the murals clearly speak to the communities in which they reside in. However, the message of murals depends on who the audience is. A mural always has three audiences: the insider, the Enemy and the outsider. The message for the insider is always a message of who the community is and what it entails to be a part of the community. It is a message of cohesion and the narrative makes sense of the current situation through historical explanations. In this message the Other is presented as the perpetrator of the struggles of the community and it is here cultural violence shows itself the strongest. But cultural violence presents itself also in the messages for the two other audiences. The message for the Other is a narrative that firmly puts the blame on the Other but in this scenario the community is promising revenge. The community presents themselves as strong, resourceful and that they are ready to use violence, and win, once more. The message for the outsider is a message of persuasion; understand why the conflict exists and why it is a necessity for the community to use violence. One can argue it to be a form of PR in which the community presents themselves as the defenceless victim of a ruthless Other. These three messages are always present in a mural and they are intertwined with each other (Larsson 2012).

# Murals in Northern Ireland

## Early 20th century – Unionist

The Northern Irish tradition of painting murals stretches back to the early 20th century. But the unionists started the tradition of painting murals and murals were used as a form of manifesting and consolidating the Protestant Supremacy over the Catholic minority. The themes that were used were historical events from the Protestant, British, victories over the Catholics/Irish, primarily the battle of the Boyne and king William of Orange (Rolston 2006).

This form of the tradition of murals was different than its current form. Modern murals have a shorter life span, they are painted and repainted quickly (McCormick & Jarman 2005). The life of a mural is directly related to its need of corresponding with the present since it is only relevant when it speaks to its community. In comparison to the modern tradition of murals, this unionist form of murals appears to be static. The older tradition was rather short-lived and it can be seen as a "cheaper" version of statues/monuments. It was therefore a form of "top-down" communication, whereas the modern form of murals has a bottom-up approach. The unionist form of the tradition died out in the 1950s/1960s and it is hard to say when the tradition "died", so to speak. The loyalist community did take up the tradition shortly afterwards but the murals were, as the unionist tradition, rather static.

## 1980s
## Christian

The modern form of murals started in 1979/1981, the literature is inconclusive on the exact year it started. Republicans "started" the modern rapid form of murals during the hunger strike and murals functioned as a communication tool to the supporters of the PIRA but also to gain support. Previously, the PIRA had very little support amongst the Catholic population in Northern Ireland. It is, however, hard to pinpoint whether it was the hunger strike, as an event, which changed the view of

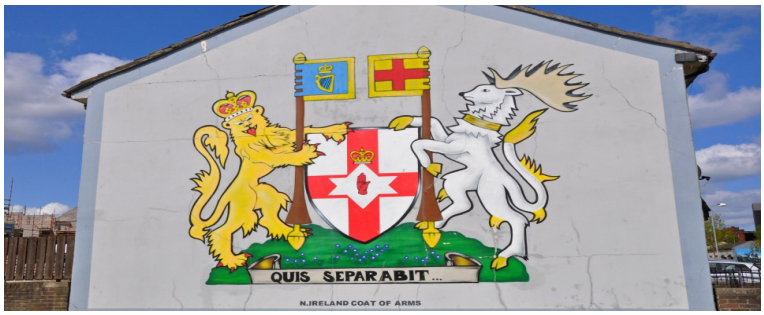
the population or if it was the murals that changed the perception of the public. It was probably a combination of the event and murals as a communication tool that shifted the perception of the PIRA. The function of the murals was to communicate the view of the PIRA of the Northern Irish conflict and of the hunger strike. Furthermore, the public's opinion of the PIRA shifted from viewing them as terrorists to freedom fighters (Feldman 1991: 165-166; 215-217, Dawson 2007).

The shift from terrorists to hunger strikers were foremost due to how the hunger strikers were presented, they were depicted in a Christian framework during the 1980s. The colours that were used were dark and sombre and the hunger strikers were painted in a similar manner as images depicting the suffering Christ on the Cross. Bobby Sands, the leader of the hunger strike, is the actor who is foremost depicted as Christ. The function of said framework is to argue that in similarity to Christ sacrificing himself for our sins, the PIRA are sacrificing themselves for an united Ireland. By juxtaposing the PIRA with Christ the violence that were used by the PIRA was legitimised. Cultural symbols representing Ireland are also often used in these murals to further emphasise the sacrifice of the united Ireland. Ireland is also represented through the use of red, white and green, colours representing the Irish tricolour (Rolston 2006; 2010;2009, McDowell 2008, Feldman 1991:259). The previous mentioned dark colours function as a backdrop in which the colours representing Ireland "pop out". Subsequently a link is created between the PIRA, Ireland and the sacrifice for Ireland. Through said link the violence of the PIRA is not only legitimised: they are presented as the only actor who can unify Ireland; thus presenting violence as the only choice.

The hunger strike as a historical event is interesting since it is not a joyous occasion, it is a chosen trauma in which the community is under threat of the Other. The Christian framework stresses this framing of the event by presenting the perspective that the PIRA are sacrificing themselves for an united Ireland but also that the Other is killing Ireland. It is implied that the PIRA are sacrificing themselves in exchange for Catholic civilians. The dark colours which are often used presents the event as a chosen trauma. According to Jenny Edkins is an event never a trauma in its occurrence, it is later interpreted as such and it is the interpretation that transforms the event to a trauma (Edkins 2003). Although, in this case I argue that the event was presented as a trauma by the PIRA. By presenting the event as a sacrifice to prevent further atrocities, the population became aware, or was taught, that it was a trauma that was happening. The narrative that is presented is that there is an Other who needs to, and can only be, stopped with violence. It is here we can understand the function of cultural violence and how it operates. It presents violence as the only means of action to change the present situation. The hunger strike increased the support for the PIRA, subsequently increasing the support for violence during this event. This will be further discussed and elaborated in the concluding remarks.

## Heraldic

Republicans see themselves in opposition to the British government and can therefore re- define themselves and chose from a wider range of themes whereas the loyalists must chose the cultural expressions of the British government. According to Bill Rolston this has led to that republicans have a wider range of themes to chose from in their murals whereas loyalist murals have a narrower range of themes to chose from (Rolston 2003). The term loyalist derives from the term loyal and the loyalist community stress that they are loyal to the British identity and the British monarchy. To stress this allegiance the early loyalist murals often used a theme that can be labelled as "heraldic". In these murals British heraldic signs and symbols were used such as flags, crests etc. and these symbols of the British government and monarchy were juxtaposed with the crests of the UDA/UVF/UFF. Thereby creating a link between the loyalist armed groups and the British security forces. The function of the theme is twofold. Firstly, to present to the loyalist community that the community is British and that they are defending the British identity. Secondly, to present to the community that the loyalist armed groups are a part of the British security forces and that their violence is a necessity for the survival of Northern Ireland being a part of the United Kingdom. Through the use of these symbols the violence of the loyalist groups are consequently legitimised since they uphold the British identity (Graham 2004, Graham & Whelan 2007).




What is perhaps the most interesting feature of said theme is that it does not discuss the Other, the Irish/Catholic. Personally, I argue that the emphasis on the British identity is a form of remanding the community not to be

persuaded by the republican narrative as the suffering Christ. The use of heraldic signs and symbols is therefore a reaction to the republican murals. It is a reminder to hold on to what the community knows: the British identity and government, which will provide them with stability. The loyalist allegiance is to the British government and the community should never forget this (Smithey 2011).

## 1980s - 1994

## The Hooded man

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Even though republicans and loyalists identities are in opposition to each other, they do have one theme in common: the hooded man. During the 1980s until 1994 one of the most prominent themes of republican and loyalists murals was the hooded man. The hooded man is a deeply sectarian symbol since it is a representation and embodiment of sectarian violence. It is still today a representation of sectarian violence since it is a symbol of the Troubles (Feldman 1991). The time-period of 1980s -1994 could be seen as a time-period in which the direct violence of the streets in Northern Ireland crept up onto the walls thus making the cultural violent framework more open with its calls for violence. The theme of the hooded man is also a good example of how murals are both a violent act and an example of cultural violence. It is an act of violence since it influences the communities in thinking in sectarian terms, claiming the space as sectarian; ultimately preventing the inhabitants to move freely. The influence of thinking in sectarian terms is also related to the sectarian narratives that the mural project. The mural celebrates and justifies violence but also locks in its inhabitants into a certain identity (Larsson 2012).


The hooded man as a symbol is quite complex, since it is a dual symbol; it represents protection and attack. It is a promise of an unexpected attack since it a portrayal of masked, paramilitarian violence which can occur at any given movement. The enemy can therefore not know when and where he/she will be attacked or by whom. The duality of the symbol lies in that it is also a promise of protection as well. The neighbourhood can always be reassured that community is protected by the armed groups, who are hiding in plain sight. The hooded man was in use during this time-period because there was a need of this theme since the themes of murals must correspond with the needs of the present. This entails that there was a need for a defender/attacker during this time-period since the community believed to be under siege of the Other. The hooded man was there to protect the community; in extension the paramilitary groups were there to protect the communities. Allan Feldman has argued that the hooded man is an embodiment of the violence that has existed, and still exists, in Northern Ireland (Feldman 1991, Jarman 2005).

In relation to the previous statements regarding the hooded man as an example of how the direct violence crept up on the walls of Northern Ireland. It is important to have in mind that the symbol was, and is, a celebration of the sectarian violence that occurred during this period. By depicting themselves, in extension their violence, the paramilitary groups created space and legitimisation of their violent acts (Shirlow &McGovern 1997). From the perspective of cultural violence is the hooded man an example of how the direct violence crept up to the walls of Belfast but also how cultural violence is strengthened by direct and structural violence. By celebrating themselves, and presenting violence as the only mean of survival, the murals enforced the belief that violence is the only choice of survival and why violence should continue. This will be further discussed below.

## Celtic and International framework

Yet, the constant celebration of violence did promote violence in the material but as it has been stated in the introduction: the ideational promotes action in the material subsequently creating a circular movement of action. Said circular movement of action does not always promote violence, it sometimes reaches the point in which it demands a new ideational framework. This was the case in the early 1990s in which there were increasing calls for peace in the population of Northern Ireland. In 1994 the first, successful, cease-fire in Northern Ireland took place. The republican and loyalist armed groups did react differently and chose different strategies to adapt to the present thus presenting to use the contrasts in ideational frameworks, and how cultural violence operates. The PIRA chose to repaint their murals depicting the hooded man and replace them with new themes; Celtic and international. The Celtic themes were often commemorating murals of known, deceased, PIRA members. This Celtic framework used Celtic symbols and signs as a form of transforming the PIRA members into ancient Celtic warriors. The hunger strikers hade previously used Gaelic as a form of communication and a form of resistance to their British prison guards. Allen Feldman has argued that it was through said Celtic framework that the PIRA was able to change themselves, and transcend the marking as terrorists, by using Celtic symbols and markers, into resurrected ancient Celtic warriors (McDowell 2012, McQuaid 2015)).


Celtic symbols and markers had been in use previously in combination of the hooded man but it was the combination of un-masked PIRA members and the Celtic framework, which transformed the public opinion further. The use of the Celtic framework presents a narrative in which the Catholic (Irish) population as a part of an ancient Celtic nation and thereby presents Britain as the oppressor of said ancient nation. By presenting Britain as such the PIRA discredits the British government and their view that Northern Ireland is a part of Britain. Furthermore, it also present the opinion that nations have a right to be independent and Britain is denying Northern Ireland's right to be a part of Ireland (Rolston 2004).

In addition to the Celtic framework, the republicans also increased their murals with an "international" theme. It is a theme that depicts independence struggles across the world and the function of the theme is to juxtapose Northern Ireland with these struggles. The theme also includes portrayals of abolishment, the Civil Rights movement and other forms of struggles against social injustices. Through this juxtaposition the republicans present themselves as an independence movement fighting against a colonial oppressor (Rolston 2011). The theme also presents the PIRA as a movement against social injustices and presents Britain as the preserver and creator of social injustices. Republicans are therefore the underdog in this conflict. The message to the outsider, as well as the insider, is that they are the victims of British oppression and that Ireland was the first British colony. The Celtic theme further stresses this claim and consequently presents the republicans as singular ancient and that they deserve to be independent.

During this time period not only did the murals of the PIRA change, the internal organisation within the PIRA changed as well. The new "public friendly" murals were a part of a internal power struggle of the republican movement. In the PIRA a shift from violence to politics took place and Sinn Fein became the ruling entity. This entailed that the republican movement persuaded a political solution to the conflict (Davis 1997:33, Shirlow 2010). However, the Dockland bombings of 1996 was an example of the

use of violence and this will be further discussed below in relation to the loyalist response to the 1994 ceasefire.

## Continuing the Hooded man

In contrast to the PIRA, the loyalist armed groups kept using the hooded man after 1994. Smithey has shown that since 1998 there has been a decrease in the use of the hooded man but the symbol is still in use today (Smithey 2011). The lack of re-invention of the loyalist narrative has been argued to be down to that the loyalist community believed to have "won" over the republicans (Graham 2014). Yet, in this section of the paper I would like bring forward another explanation to the continuation of the hooded man. It could be so that the loyalist community, at first, believed themselves to be victorious but from 1996, the Dockland bombings, they would have felt more insecure due to the fact that the republicans had through Sinn Fein increased their political power and leverage. The loyalist armed groups could have used the hooded man as a form of being relevant but also that the community felt a need to be protected from the republican Other. Additionally, in the loyalist historical narrative the Other, Catholic/Irish, is presented as deceitful. The Other cannot be trusted and the loyalist community have not been fooled by their "trickery", whereas the rest of the world has. This narrative is often presented by the famous mural: "prepared for peace, ready for war", which means that the loyalist armed groups are waiting for that the republican will not hold their word. By using the hooded man the loyalist armed groups present that they are the last line of defence between the PIRA and the Protestant community (Smithey 2011, Southern 2014).

George Boyce has argued that the lack of reinvention have led to that the loyalists have lost the propaganda war (Boyce 1997). The republicans have by presenting themselves as Celtic warriors fighting a colonial power, been able to wash away their terrorist stamp and gained popular support. The loyalists have on the other hand kept on to the ideal of the British Empire. Kumar has pointed out that the British identity is under renegotiation and is transforming to something different to the ideal of the British Empire (Kumar 2003, Boyce 1997).


This has lead to that the loyalist community has started to feel lost since their identity is now seen as something that belongs to the past. The British identity that the loyalist community represents is foremost presented in murals depicting WWI. Murals depicting this theme have increased in the latter years since it is seen "less sectarian. " In my opinion, it is also the theme that presents how the loyalist community views themselves and also presents how cultural violence function.

The loyalist paramilitaries see, and present, themselves as parts of the British security force since they believe themselves as descendants of the 36th Ulster division. This is a belief that the loyalist community shares since they are the last line of defence against the Catholic/Irish Other (Rolston 2010:295). The 36th Ulster division was a division active during WWI and was celebrated due to their sacrifice made during the battle of the Somme. They were treated as heroes who sacrificed themselves for the British Empire, an ideal that the loyalists want to uphold. The murals depicting the battle of the Somme are depicting a dual historical event: a trauma as well as a glory. It is a glory since it is a reflection of a time period in which the loyalist (36th Ulster division) was celebrated for their sacrifices for the British Empire. A sacrifice that is today forgotten according to the loyalist narrative thereby making it a trauma. Furthermore, the British government do not acknowledge them as a part of the security forces thus refuting their view of protecting the British identity (Southern 2014, Rolston 2012:453-455). It also entails that they are not, in fact, descendants of the 36th Ulster division. By portraying this theme, it becomes a reminder of who the loyalist community was and what they can become once more. It is also a rebuttal of the claims of the outside world that they are not descendants of the division and that they are not the protectors of Ulster. The theme also becomes a bittersweet celebration of the loyalist identity. According to the loyalist community, the loyalist sacrifice for Britain has been forgotten and it is therefore vital for the community to remember.



However, the continued use of the hooded man, and its position as a defender of the community, is depended on the belief that the loyalist armed groups are the defenders of Ulster. The use of the hooded man will only cease when the community no longer believes that it needs the masked vigilante. The murals depicting the hooded man is always in combination with murals depicting WWI, subsequently showing a link between the paramilitary groups and the 36th Ulster division. Furthermore, also showing these armed groups as the descendants of said groups, the modern loyalist armed groups are legitimised. The belief that the hooded man is the defender of Ulster is depended on the belief that the loyalist armed groups are the descendants of 36th Ulster division. This will be further elaborate in the section regarding concluding remarks.

After the GFA there has been efforts made to transform the most offensive murals and the loyalist community is under pressure to stop using the hooded man in their murals. Instead the loyalist community is encouraged to paint murals with the WWI theme or use the historic theme that was in fashion in the early 20th century. These themes are not, however, without controversy and they show the contested, and sensitive, nature of the nexus of identities, violence and narratives. The battle of the Boyne and King Billy are see in, from a loyalist/Protestant viewpoint, as pivotal events in their history. But from a Catholic perspective these events are deeply sectarian since they are manifestations of the Protestant supremacy in Northern Ireland. The republican and loyalist narratives are in opposition to each other, consequently meaning that the identities as well are in opposition. The other community sees the defining cultural symbols of the Other as the epitome of offensiveness (Smithey 2011,

Rolston 2003; 1998, Santino 2001:37-41). This forces us to ask the question: what can these communities have in common so they can create a common identity or find common ground?

## Republicans in the Present


The republicans have in the last two years started to change their narrative once more, which has been shown in the republican murals. To my knowledge the first mural depicting masked republicans was in 2015 and it depicts a funeral of a dead republican. One mural does not make a return of cultural violence but in addition to said mural there were displays of republican marches in Northern Ireland, in which the participants were dressed in paramilitarian regalia. The funeral of Peggy O'Hara, the mother of one of the hungerstrikers, was also "celebrated" with salutes over her grave and some of the participants were masked. Martin McGuinness called the event a return to the 1980s and said it was not a pleasant return (http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/sunday-life/unionist-anger-as-masked-inla-men-parade-at-funeral-of-hunger-striker-oharas-mother-peggy-in-londonderry-31386665.html). These latest developments must be seen in relation to the changing political context of republicanism. Sophie Whitting has shown that form an electoral standpoint Sinn Fein cannot be threatened by dissident republicans and will remain to be the only republican political choice (Whitting 2016). However, the question is not whether Sinn Fein is the only political choice, the question is whether they are a revolutionary choice. The dissident republican groups can never compete with Sinn Fein/PIRA on a political level but they can challenge them on whether they are true to their revolutionary, violent, roots. Could it be so that there is a change in the republican community in which violence is something that is called for once more?


As the presentation of the development of murals has shown, the republican narrative might have changed its appearance to become "friendlier" and less overt sectarian, it has still not changed its view of themselves being victims of the Other. There are no overt calls for arms but the violence in the past has been justified and celebrated. Furthermore, it has been implicitly been presented that without violence there would not be a today, or a GFA. It is here the present context must be taken into consideration. 2016 is the centennial of the Easter Rising and in 2016 there were calls for taking up arms once more by dissident republican groups. Who argued that this is the moment in which violence should be used once again to restart the struggle of the unification of Ireland. It could be so that we are in-fact witnessing a comeback narrative; a narrative that celebrates violence is making a so called comeback. This will be further discussed below.

## Concluding remarks

This paper has shown through the development of murals how historical narratives, in extension, cultural

violence shapes but also adapts to the present. By using murals as an example we can see how cultural violence can be used as a mechanism in explaining the nexus of conflicts, narratives and identities. Cultural violence is the mechanism that closes identities thus making them one-.dimensional and sectarian. Furthermore, the paper has also shown how cultural violence as a force can both be strengthened and weakened. Cultural violence can also make a so-called comeback, through a comeback narrative. This will be elaborated further below.

Loyalist and republican murals are closely intertwined with each other but have shown contrasting developments. Loyalist murals have shown a consisting narrative of which they show a clearer antagonistic Other in which the loyalist community is the last line of defence against the Other. There is a clearer traumatic element in the historical narrative since they present themselves as victims since the outside world is oblivious to their sacrifices. They have still a greater need of the hooded man to protect the community against the Other but also to present to the Other that they have not forgotten that they are deceitful The temporality of the community is therefore distorted and there is no future without the vanquish of the Other.

Due to the reinvention of the republican murals in the 1990s the republican narrative has been met with acceptance. They are seen as Celtic warriors fighting a colonial oppressor – just the image that they want to be presented as. However, there has always been a latent justification of the previous use of violence. There has always been a silent acknowledgment that violence created space for the present. Perhaps that is this quiet acknowledgment of violence that has created space for violence to make a comeback. To have this comeback narrative in which there is a historical narrative that promotes and justifies violence once more. The comeback narrative is presenting a standpoint that politics have only taken the republican struggle so far and it is now time to use violence once again.

It is here we can see how cultural violence is the mechanism that opens and closes identities through historical narratives. Also, it is here we can see how cultural violence is a force that can be strengthened and weakened and its strength is depended on the needs of the present. Violence can only make a comeback if there is a need for it in the present. In the case of Northern Ireland there were calls to stop using violence, which the republicans adapted to but the loyalists did not. As aforementioned, there is now a call for violence once more in the republican community. How this has developed is a question that is tantalising but is perhaps too large to discuss in this paper. Although, the answer could lie in both the political developments of Northern Ireland in which Sinn Fein is now a political party and could be accused of neglecting their revolutionary roots. It could also be so that the loyalist narrative of constantly portraying themselves as ready to attack has lead to a belief that the loyalist are going to attack the republican community and that the republican community needs to protect itself. PIRA no longer is a valid actor due to their neglect of the revolutionary roots and that a new actor should protect the republican community. These are speculations regarding what is happening in Northern Ireland but we do know that there is a new generation in Nortern Ireland growing up who have no own recollections of what happened during the Troubles but only have the stories of those who lived through them. They are also a generation of which has been taught these sectarian identities and they have seen these murals. They have been taught that they are the victims of a vicious Other. What we are perhaps witnessing today is a comeback narrative, in which violence is once again celebrated and justified. Furthermore, that violence should be used against the Other. The question is perhaps for how long this comeback is going to last and whether something could be done about it.

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