The Use of Visibility in Contentious Events in Northern Ireland

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Abstract

Territorial space in Northern Ireland is often associated with certain communal and political identities. This is demonstrated most vividly in the tradition of parading in local areas. Some parades are seen as contentious because their routes pass through spaces which are associated with very different identity groups (specifically, Irish Catholic or nationalist). In a few cases, contentious parades are met with protests – some of which can escalate into violence. This paper is based on eight years of unbroken ethnographic fieldwork on one of the most contentious annual commemorative events in Belfast, that of the Protestant Orange Order through Ardoyne in North Belfast.

Our hypothesis is that it is useful to understand such contentious events not just in the usual terms of locality, tradition or identity but rather in terms of the quest for visibility. Visibility may be understood as a field of social action through which territories are established and relationships of power are contested and maintained. Drawing on Brighenti's (2010) insights, we illustrate the three forms of public visibility at work in this context: Spectacle, Recognition, Control. This helps us better understand the type of social relationships at work and the effects of their contestation.

The Twelfth July in Ardoyne

On the morning of Wednesday 12 July 2017, there was a Protestant Orange Order parade from the Orange Lodge in Ballysillan in North Belfast. As it has done each 'Twelfth' for generations, the parade's route came down the Crumlin Road, through Ardoyne (with its predominantly Catholic population) into Woodvale (with a predominantly Protestant population), before continuing on into Belfast city centre. There were strict conditions enforced on the parade as a result of the decision of the Parades Commission – the agency tasked with determining the rules for the conduct of parades, particularly those (such as this one) likely to be contentious.[1] These conditions were enforced by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in a carefully light-touch way. Whilst a few officers in summer uniform of peaked

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[1] The Parades Commission of Northern Ireland is an independent public body established in 1997 – after a period of growing tension and violence around contentious parades. Under the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, the Commission is tasked with facilitating mediation between disputing parties regarding public processions and issuing determinations in respect of proposed public processions and protest meetings. Its determinations and, indeed, its legitimacy have been frequently challenged by both sides (Walsh, 2015).

cap and shirt sleeves interacted face to face with the leaders of the parade and its supporters, dozens of officers waited in police landrovers in streets adjacent to the Crumlin Road with riot gear at the ready.

The progress of the parade down the Crumlin Road was closely followed by a police helicopter overhead, by several journalists (including a TV crew from Belgium), and (via phone) a sizeable group of supporters who were waiting at the roundabout interconnecting Woodvale and Ardoyne. However, for the first time in years, something was missing: there were no protestors to meet the procession as passed through Ardoyne. Even more noticeable was the absence of violence in the area that evening – another 'tradition' that has evolved in connection with the contentious nature of the parade. Indeed, the Twelfth parade through Ardoyne has long been associated with riotous and violent behaviour. In 2011 – the year we first started observing the passing of the Twelfth feeder parade of three Orange Order lodges[2] through Ardoyne – the news reported outbreaks of sectarian rioting and violence against the PSNI to an extent not seen for at least a decade.[3]

This chapter is based on research that originated with the ESRC-funded 'Conflict in Cities and the Contested State' project and has produced eight years of unbroken ethnographic fieldwork on contentious annual events in Belfast. It draws on data that includes field observations from different perspectives and locations: from alongside a marching band, to pressed up against a police line, to standing with protestors, to observing (via helicopter feed) from the distance of a PSNI Gold Command Room. Our methods have included qualitative primary research based on ethnographic observation and interviews (including 'walking interviews') with a range of participants (local residents, Orange men, local politicians, police officers, community workers). We have also conducted extensive desk research, including analysis of media coverage of the events, analysis of official documents (particularly Parades Commission determinations) and photographic and video archives of the events in question.

This chapter explores the thesis that understanding conflict around contentious events rests not on police tactics, territorial containment or political compromise but on appreciating the quest for visibility among actors involved. Visibility may be understood as a field of social action through which territoriality is established and relationships of power are contested and maintained. We see all actors in a contentious event such as an Orange parade through Ardoyne engaging in their own efforts to be

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[2] LOL No 1932 Ligoniel True Blues, the Ballysillan LOL 1891 and the Earl Of Erne LOL No 647.
[3] 'Belfast Riots. Appeals for Calm After Night of Violence', BBC News, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-14130190

'visible' – not just to their own group but also to each other and to a wider, external audience. Drawing on Brighenti's (2010a, b) insights, we illustrate the three forms of public visibility at work in this context: Spectacle, Recognition, and Control. By better understanding the type of visibility at work during a contested event, we can better comprehend the most effective means of defusing the friction around it.

Contentious parades

The parading tradition in Northern Ireland has a long history (Bryan, 2000). Parading on Twelfth July commemorates the 1690 victory of the Dutch King William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne over the (English) Catholic King James II. It is the most significant commemoration in the annual calendar of Protestant unionists in Northern Ireland.[4] Whilst predominantly associated with the Protestant community, parading has also been part of some Catholic traditions too, notably the Ancient Order of Hibernians and some republican groupings (Browne, 2016). The parading tradition in Northern Ireland is a classic enactment of commemoration; whether it be republican commemorations of the 1916 Easter Rising or the Apprentice Boys commemoration of the siege of Derry, the parade is part of a ritual of collective memory. As such it can be understood as one means of solidarity formation, creating a sense of unity and collective consciousness through the shared performance of a ritual (Durkheim, 2001).

However, the use of collective memory formation and ritual has a particularly sharp political edge in the context of a divided society such as Northern Ireland. Political behaviour and belief are central to the use and construction of identity in such a performance of collective memory and solidarity (Ross, 2007). This is why, as Jarman (1997) explains, the use of symbols and iconography in parades in Northern Ireland is not just intended to assert a particular form of cultural identity but also to give a tangibility to deeply-held, antagonistic political views. Parades thus become an integral form of sustaining mutual antagonism as well as entrenching cultural difference; this is particularly true when they pass through communities of a very different cultural and political tradition. Commemoration (and contestation in the form of protests at parades) strengthens group experience in relation to place, but it also opens it up to challenges which are based on and exercised through local space. For such reasons, contention around parades appear to be a microcosm of wider political and communal tensions in Northern Ireland. Violence and disorder at such events are seen as significant indicators of risk for the wider political

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[4] According to the 2011 census, 48% of the population in Northern Ireland come from a Protestant background. Around 84% of them, according to the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey of 2017, would hold 'unionist' political aspirations, which is to say that they want Northern Ireland remain part of the United Kingdom. This is in distinction from the predominantly-Catholic nationalists in Northern Ireland, who would like to see Northern Ireland becoming part of a united Ireland.

compromise in Northern Ireland, especially if the forces of law and order appear to be biased or unbalanced in their management of the event.

The annual occurrence of contentious parades and protests in Northern Ireland are typically explained as an expression/manifestation of the relationship between communal identity and territory, i.e. a manifestation of social territoriality. As such they are seen as a struggle over territory (Cohen, 2007). Although where and when parades and protests are performed is very important to their understanding, our hypothesis is that it is not place itself that is of most importance in such events, but rather the way in which the practice and performance of parades and protests in particular spots produces certain visibilities for different participants and for the general public. This is because visibility, as argued by Brighenti (2010a), is itself central to the social production of space, to claiming and contesting territory, and to the broader production of the public sphere (and the associated relationships of power). Drawing on his work, we see that events are made contentious by the *type* of visibility that participants in a contentious event are seeking and are given at any particular point.

This is a particularly useful lens through which to understand how contention increases and is ameliorated. The complexity of the matter is in part because there are several groups of persons who contribute to the performance and management of the event itself. This includes: marchers, supporters of the parade, protestors, agitators, observers (such as journalists), and the police. By better understanding the type of visibility at work during a contested event as it relates to the position and action of these groups, we can better appreciate the social effects of performances in such events. Our research has shown that the participants are astutely aware of and consciously use various techniques and devices of visibility to communicate and interact with various audiences but also claim, contest or resist (ascribed) subject positions. As such, visibility is not simply a tool through which to (re)claim territory but is also at the very centre of contestation itself - it is what is being fought over. The necessity for visibility itself, in other words, can be understood as one of the reasons for the intractability of local contestation.

Visibility

In the introduction to this volume McGarry et al describe protest as a performative operation of democratic power through which the democratic public 'demands recognition, embodies visibility, articulates a political voice, and communicates ideas/demands'. As such, protest is a performative act of public communication that, at its core, aims to contest existing power relations and 'the rules of the

game' that may be dictated by those in positions of authority. More broadly speaking, as Gambetti affirms, '[T]he public sphere [is] a space of *appearances* where conflicts, identities, differences, communalities and power structures are compellingly revealed to a heterogeneous multitude [...]: a public is constituted performatively as the addressee of discourses and practices that brings [sic] it into being' [emphasis added] (2005: 2). Not only are human relations of inter-visibility essential to publicness, the above suggests; publicness itself is innately performative. To communicate, publics need to make themselves and their claims recognisable through literal physical and spatial performances. 'This is more than an empirical point about how people in the real world communicate' Parkinson (2012: 35) states: 'it is a theoretical point about the conditions of democratic communication'. The public sphere as such is 'constitutively a sphere of communication through visibility' (Weintraub and Kumar, 1997).

Visibility itself, as noted by Brighenti (2010a: 186), is a complex social field of meaning, action and communication which helps to separate 'the perceptible or noticeable from the imperceptible or unnoticeable'. It thus encompasses many other forms of 'managing attention and determining the significance of events and subjects' (Brighenti, 2010b: 52). As such, performative activities such as parading or protesting seek to draw attention away from alternative narratives and identities, rendering them less significant. Even if this is just for a brief and temporary period, this may be considered a symbolic and worthwhile 'victory' for a community that considers itself to be under threat or in conflict.

One level through which visibility operates is 'socio-technical', i.e. that of space, materiality and technology (Brighenti, 2010a). Common place discussions in architecture, for instance, suggest that the built form shapes perception and cognition and can make spatial order appear 'natural' or 'unchangeable' through both *concealing* and *revealing* social relations (Dovey, 2005: 291). Space itself, in other words, works as a visibility device that gives shape to publicness, allowing for certain kinds of social action to 'take place' in certain localities and, as such, makes a crucial difference to the way that power relations work. For example, the extent of proximity is central, as Allen (2003: 148) stresses, to the exercise of relationships of authority: 'the more direct the presence, the more intense the impact'. The same holds for coercive relationships, that most visible imprint of power, where the threat of force lasts only for as long as people feel constrained by its possibility.

Yet, space is not an inert container of social action. It is itself the outcome of social relations. As such, another level at which the field of visibility operates is the 'bio-political' (Brighenti, 2010a), i.e. that of social practices, actions and interactions, down to the micro-level of the positioning of bodies and gestures. In this respect Brighenti (2010a: 123) notes that:

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public space on the ground is constantly made by acts of territorialisation, which are themselves processes made up of different thresholds and dynamics of visibility, carving the environment through acts of boundary-drawing.

Visibility as such is a way of 'prolonging' the territorial social relations (including power relations) inscribed in physical space by managing perception and attention. In short, Brighenti (2010b: 52) concludes, 'visibility lies at the intersection of the two domains of aesthetics (relations of perception) and politics (relations of power)'.

Regimes of visibility

A central aspect of the field of visibility is that it is relational and strategic: being noticed and noticing is manipulated by subjects for social effect. In this sense, the visibilities produced in different circumstances are both generated and used by social actors for different end goals. They also produce different effects depending on the means through and the conditions under which they are generated. Visibilities, in other words, are asymmetrical and these asymmetries, as Brighenti (2010b) suggests, are organised 'around regimes of visibility', each with different representational and power effects. The author discusses three regimes of visibility – 'recognition', 'control' and 'spectacle' – taking care to stress that they are not mutually exclusive.

Visibility as 'recognition', which we briefly discussed above, is perhaps most commonly encountered in the fabric of everyday life. This is because looking at each other is where we constitute ourselves as 'subjects' (Brighenti, 2010a). As Goffman (1967) further notes, acknowledging the visibility of others legitimises them as participants in a social situation. In the case of the parades and protests which we discuss in this chapter, this form of visibility captures the actively constructed 'identity work at play' which participants engage in. Here, 'the public square acts as a theatre where the individual and collective identities of protestors are performed, as well as communicating ideas of democracy and specific demands and grievances' (McGarry et al, Introduction). Achieving visibility in the form of recognition is, therefore, an act of empowerment and is particularly common to the repertoire of social movements (Honneth, 1995).

By contrast, visibility as social 'control' can be disempowering. Here social actors do not themselves 'struggle for recognition through visibility' but are 'obliged to be visible' (Brighenti, 2010a: 49). An example of how visibility as control is constituted can be seen in contemporary surveillance practices. Drawing on Foucault's ideas on power and governmentality (Rose, 1999), surveillance impacts on and has the power to alter one's actions and behaviour by virtue of the very knowledge or suspicion of being

observed. Contemporary professional surveillance knowledge, Brighenti (2010b) adds, intersects with and even colonises lay knowledge in the public domain. For example, in our research we have observed how the use of helicopter cameras by police on the day of a contentious event creates visibilities not open or accessible for either protesters or marchers. Policing decisions on the ground are often based on such privileged visibilities and create a clear consciousness on the part of other participants that pre-existing agreements regarding how a parade and protest will be policed are subject to momentary change. This often shapes the longer-term relationship that protagonists may have with the police and may infuse it with distrust. Yet, neither as recognition, nor as control, is visibility linearly associated with empowerment or disempowerment. This is because the means through which visibility is produced open up a range of possibilities for resistance or even unintended counter-effects.

One example of this is seen in our case study, specifically in the response of the nationalist party Sinn Féin to the challenge of the Orange parades through Ardoyne. They have strong political support in Ardoyne and would consider themselves to be the primary party representing not just nationalists in the local area but nationalists across the island of Ireland. With international focus on contentious events like the parades through Ardoyne on the Twelfth, Sinn Féin sees a natural opportunity to be visible. One representative interviewee described their conundrum in this way:

> If they're not on the streets placating then the raw edge is the police and the people. …But if they are there and then they end up with too forward a role, then people will identify them as facilitating a parade or supporting and sponsoring police violence.[5]

There is a careful balance to be struck in visibility, and it is not always clear whether those who are seeking visibility as recognition will manage to avoid being subject to visibility as control. In seeking to become empowered through coordinating protests and through a high profile role on the day in obvious support for local residents, Sinn Féin could easily become accused of being manipulated and used by the police and even the Orange Order to facilitate the parade. What matters in this instance is the audience. Sinn Féin wants to be seen by the wider audience and the local residents as showing leadership, but it could be seen by critics within its community as demonstrating compliance.

The final regime of visibility is perhaps the most straightforward: that of 'spectacle'. The parades and protests that we discuss in this chapter are first and foremost forms of public ritual. At one level they serve as illusory or ideological forms of unity (Durkheim, 2001), which intensify collective experience in

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[5] Interview, Parades Commission representative, 08/07/2011)

relation to territory (Koster, 2003; Lukes, 1975). In another way, crucially, by making a spectacle of themselves as they perform specific roles, social actors become visible to external audiences (Brighenti, 2010a). The notion of spectacle is readily embedded in the performance itself. The performers' visibility is an easily-understandable social exchange. 'During the spectacle, all gazes are morally authorized to direct themselves at the performer and to fix upon him/her' (Brighenti, 2010a: 50). This is not just true of the participants in the parade, in the case of our fieldwork. Protestors can also become performers who '[modify] the field of visibilities ... by offering [themselves] to an audience's gaze' (Brighenti, 2010a: 50).

Minute differences in the use of space, gestures, positions, cameras, for example, can all be exploited by performers, safe in the knowledge that they are being watched, observed, noticed. The strategic use of any and all of these devices for producing visibility feed into an exercise of power relations and can signal solidarity, resistance, compliance, challenges to authority or lack of legitimacy. As Allen (2008: 1617) suggests, 'the spacing and timing of people's interactions' can be mobilised as resources. Furthermore, as Parkinson (2012: 35) notes[6] the demands of our 'mediatized' age are such that political communication is under additional strain to become highly 'spectacular' by nature so that 'issues of staging, lighting, audience access, symbolism and interaction between actors are all important'. Thus, for instance, in our research both the police and local community workers often cited the presence of journalists at contentious events as inciting observers and protestors to engage in conflict or even violent behaviour as a form of performing to external audiences.

Visibility on the Crumlin Road on the Twelfth July
In order to ascertain the role played by the quest for visibility in the performance of political positions in Ardoyne on Twelfth July, we look here at each one of five key groups: marchers/participants in the parade, supporters of the parade, agitators, protestors and police.

Marchers in the parade: Making a spectacle, seeking recognition
Those marching in the parade can come from several different groups. They may be Orange men or women marching with their Loyal Orange Lodge, or members of a marching band accompanying the lodge on the parade. Marching bands traditionally include pipes, flutes or drums. This is significant because the Parades Commission often recommends that a single drum beat be played whilst the parade makes its way through a contested part of the route – that way avoiding the risk of sectarian songs being played by a band. A third category of 'marchers' would be supporters who follow the parade down the

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[6] Drawing on Hajer (2005 and 2009).

route, usually up to a certain point. When a Lodge submits an application to the Parades Commission for permission to parade down a route on a particular day and time (it must do this for each occasion), it is required to predict how many supporters will accompany the parade on the route.

At one level, the regime of visibility for the marchers is very obvious: the parade is a spectacle and their primary role is to perform as part of that spectacle. This is clearly true for the members of the Orange Lodge; it is also true, by association, of the bandsmen and women. There is something else going on in the case of their accompanying marchers, however. Indeed, their presence is more than that of the performance of a collective ritual. More than to create a spectacle, they are looking for recognition. Our fieldwork suggests that marchers are highly conscious of the contentious nature of the event. This is evident in the conversations that are held (speculating about the size of the protest from the Ardoyne residents, for example); in visible displays that are used (for example, in the bedsheet hung on a fence along the parade route with the words 'F*ck your talk, we will walk'), including specially prepared t-shirts (one woman wearing a 'No 1 Likes Us We Don't Care' top in 2018); and in the management of the parade itself by stewards in collaboration with the police. The parade always stops at a certain point along the route, at the junction between Hesketh Road (leading directly to the few streets in the Ardoyne area known to have a predominantly Protestant populations) and the Crumlin Road (a major arterial road and the main parading route to the gathering point near the city centre) (Figure 1). At this point, the marchers wait – some new supporters join in but many more stop following the parade. From this position – a few hundred metres away from the roundabout where Ardoyne meets Woodvale – marchers can get a sense of the size of the crowd that awaits them: the police presence, the protestors and their supporters waiting in Woodvale (Figure 2). The police manage this waiting crowd of around 100 people (the greater the friction, the greater the crowd) in a low-key way, using requests through band leaders and senior figures in the Orange Lodges present to ensure that marchers comply with the rules set by the Parades Commission. The rules that are relevant in this case would be the need to walk in the middle of the road (not the pavement) and the need for the parade to be within a certain size.

Such rules offer the marchers the possibility of demonstrating acts of resistance – showing that they see the parade as an opportunity for recognition and manifesting in the use of cultural symbols (attire, flags), of sound (songs, humming), of space (walking close to the pavement), as well as more obvious acts such as jeering at the protestors or namecalling. Marchers are careful not to violate the rules as a collective act, knowing that it is likely to lead to much greater restrictions on them on the return parade or in future years. In that sense, the 'civilised' morning parade is the clearest space for the manipulation of visibility to seek recognition.

A striking example of this came in 2011 when the parading procession was led, not by an Orange Lodge but by a group of women holding a large banner with the words: 'Republicanism = Cultural Apartheid'. This was a direct retort to the large banner held by a republican group protesting the march the previous year, with the words 're-route sectarian marches'. Other marchers held smaller posters saying 'respect our culture' whilst protestors' banners demanded: 'respect our rights'. From an observers' perspective it was clear that marchers and protestors were using their visibility to both communicate with one another and to seek recognition – from each other and from the wider audiences of the highly mediatised event. This is a particular example of the importance of visual culture for political communication. By making their message visible, the paraders and protestors immediately expand the potential reach and impact of their claim.

Furthermore, marchers often seek to make their culture visibly different from those of the nationalist residents of Ardoyne, despite the rulings of the Parades Commission which are deliberately restrictive with regard to the use of (potentially provocative) symbols. For example, the Parades Commission had originally ruled in 2011 that all flags should be furled as the parade passed the protestors in Ardoyne (in order to avoid the flags of loyalist paramilitary groups being displayed). After some harsh criticism from unionist MLAs, the Commission amended its determination to allow the union flag (as the national flag of the United Kingdom) to be unfurled. This was seen as an important concession, not least because nationalist residents in Ardoyne had hung the Irish tricolour (the national flag of Ireland) from lampposts along the contested part of the parade route as an act of defiance. The marchers now had a means of direct riposte, and they not only carried the union flag (sometimes as a shawl) but also wore the colours of the flag (red, white and blue) in their clothing. A few individuals proudly displayed tattoos of the union flag on their arms and calves. Individuals' inventiveness when it comes to seeking recognition for their cultural identity is very evident on Twelfth July.

Supporters of the parade: Seeking to bolster the marchers' quest for recognition

The power of the spectacle of the parade is fuelled, of course, by the fact that it is witnessed. From early morning on the Twelfth July, roads and streets across Northern Ireland are lined with chairs and mini picnic tables as people secure their places on the pavement to get a good view of the parades. Busy highways are turned into parallel lines of red, white, blue and orange as people line the route. One unusual point about the Orange parade through Ardoyne on the Twelfth, is that the witnesses of the spectacle and supporters of the parade, are not able to stand on either side of the road for a distance of

about 450 metres. As a consequence, the supporters of the parade from the southern side of Ardoyne are corralled at two exits off the roundabout - Twaddell Avenue and Woodvale Road.

The positioning of this group is very important as their presence and size has a direct effect on tensions during the parade. This was particularly notable during the year 2013, when tensions were particularly high given the Flag Protests by loyalists which had caused civil disruption over the Christmas period before and which resulted in the setting up of a loyalist protest camp at the top of Twaddell (Nolan et al, 2014). There was a heavy police presence, with police having been drafted in from England to boost the capacity of the PSNI. The number of supporters was much more than the previous year and the police moved the group to different locations behind the roundabout. Standing in the crowd, this adjustment of position had the effect of raising expectations that the parade was imminent, only for yet more waiting to follow. In the vacuum of communication, rumours were flying around about riots having broken out at the top of the parade. Such rumours were all the more wild and effective because of the fact that the supporters were unable to see the parade itself. The density of the crowd and the close cordon enforced by the police meant that a slightly claustrophic atmosphere was created. It became increasingly important for the supporters to be visible and noticed. If the marchers were under fire further up the route, it was all the more important that they knew that a strong crowd of supporters were waiting for them. In this way, the supporters used their visibility to bolster the marchers' quest for recognition.

Another perspective on the role of supporters was gained for us the previous year, when we came down the route of the parade as part of the marching group itself. Hemmed into the road, lines of police either side, banners of Orange lodges being held overhead – it was difficult as a marcher to get a clear glimpse of the protestors who were objecting to the parade. Although the music of the bands had been silenced (according to the Parades Commission determination), what we could hear was the cheering and singing from the group of supporters waiting at the roundabout. The 'frisson of danger' that went with being part of the parade along a contested route and objected to by residents meant that the sense of celebration and triumph when welcomed by a crowd singing the famous Orange song 'The Sash' was enormous.[7] The visibility of the supporters was, thus, directed not so much at the protestors, as one might expect, but at the marchers.

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[7] The Sash is a ballad commemorating the victory of King William III (known as William of Orange) in the Williamite-Jacobite War in Ireland in 1688-1691. 'The sash' refers to the regalia of the Orange Order, which is the fraternal institution established at the end of the 18th Century to celebrate the victory of King William for Protestant ascendancy, particularly his victory at the decisive Battle of the Boyne on Twelfth July 1690.

Agitators: Exploiting visibility as control in order to show resistance

Those involved in the negotiation and management of contentious events locally are usually people in positions of authority within their communities. This authority can derive either from their capacity of local residents, positions within traditional local institutions (churches, schools) or from their experience with political conflict (often such people are ex- combatants, political prisoners or paramilitaries). Yet, the very performance of contentious parades and protests represents not simply a testament to the authority of such figures but, increasingly, intra-communal challenges to it. As such, contentious events have often been a visible manifestation of growing fragmentation within republicanism and challenges to the authority of Sinn Féin as the largest nationalist party.

It is therefore most accurate for us to report the activities of two types of protestors: the community residents' group (CARA) that is loosely associated with Sinn Féin and the hardline group associated with dissident republicanism (GARC) who advocate more direct action to disrupt the parade. Whereas CARA is involved in behind the scenes negotiations with the police and those associated with the Orange parade, GARC criticizes this approach as too concessionary. The differences in approach were most starkly evident in 2009 when GARC sat on the Crumlin Road to block the route of the parade. Their forced removal by police officers generated the type of headlines and photographs that they had hoped for. This group recognizes that their visibility is a form of control by police and they seek to exploit this for their own political ends. Another act of resistance by GARC utilizing their visibility was holding its own parade whilst complying with the requirement to submit their intentions to the Parades Commission in advance. This allowed them a further means of exploiting visibility as control: they requested that their parade be on the Crumlin Road at exactly the same time as the returning Orange parade. This clearly set up a direct confrontation between the rights of both sides – not just on the road but across the committee table of the Parades Commission, if not in their physical presence on the Crumlin Road at the same time.

For the most part, the tactics of GARC are to distract the police and supporters from the main legitimate protest by breaching the requirements of the Parades Commission vis-à-vis the use of space, particularly its ruling on where protestors should stand. By simply walking twenty metres away from the main protest towards the roundabout, GARC members immediately heighten their visibility. They are noticed not only by police but by journalists and by supporters of the parade itself.[8] In this way, the 'visibility as

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[8] We observed on several occasions how supporters of the parade took it upon themselves to draw the attention of the police to any potential breach of the Parades Commission's rulings by GARC. This is partly because the

control' being used by the Parades Commission is exploited ruthlessly to its full potential to 'agitate'. In 2011, when the GARC protestors attempted to move towards the roundabout, they were closely followed by police, journalists and human rights observers. The exclamation by one middle aged woman from the breakaway group is telling: it was not an expression of defiance aimed at the police, but one of provocation aimed at their fellow republicans: 'where are you, Sinn Féin?'. The impression of resistance, the effect of agitation is where GARC seeks to distort the visibility of control.

Protestors: Seek to counter the marchers with their own quest for recognition
Ironically, the visibility of the main protest group (CARA) risks being diminished by the activity of the agitators. We noted, when we were in the Gold Command Room in 2016, how the feed of the police helicopter over the site of the protest does not concentrate on CARA but on GARC. Whereas GARC uses space to full advantage (spreading out before the parade arrives, thinning out police lines by ensuring they are followed by police), CARA is much more contained. Their presence, immediately proximate to the parade, spread in a line just one person deep, for a stretch of about 20 metres, is primarily to counter the marchers' quest for recognition with their own counter quest. The protestors talk quietly among themselves and rarely address comments at the marchers (even when provoked). Instead, they communicate their message through the use of posters, knowing that this can project a message much more clearly to a much wider audience (through disseminating images on[social] media networks) than any chants or verbal exchanges. These posters have fairly consistent messages. It is noteworthy that in 2016, CARA held a large banner stating 'Resolution is possible'. The following year, they decided not to protest.

It is interesting now, after a long period of observation of this protest and interviews with the protestors, to see what effect their decision to become 'invisible' had on the contentious nature of the parade. After much behind the scenes negotiation in 2017, the Twaddell camp was finally dismantled, there was no official protest on the morning of the Twelfth, and the return parade complied with strict conditions and passed off peacefully. In refusing to stand, protestors withdrew themselves as witnesses for the marchers' quest for recognition. In so doing, the parade returned to being primarily 'visibility as spectacle', with the principal audience being their own supporters.

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supporters' position, at the roundabout, allows easier view of potential 'breakaway' groups than the main body of protestors. In 2013 we witnessed an over-enthusiastic group of supporters demand police question a young couple walking down the unapproved route beside the roundabout; they turned out to be bemused tourists.

Police: Using visibility as control

The final group of agents we consider in the management of this contentious event is that of the police. The police themselves are fully conscious that the performance of contentious events is the most immediate threat to their attempts to develop good relationships with local communities, particularly those in 'interface' areas.[9] A police commander commented, for instance that while promoting 'empathetic' and 'responsive' policing is both what the police aim to do and what 'interface' communities have come to expect from them, contentious events by their nature require the use of coercion which makes it 'hard to convince people that you are there to police with the community... So, when you're involved in that type of policing there's a risk that you continue to alienate people'.[10] The complex maelstrom of power relationship involved in the negotiation, attempts at management and the policing of contentious events most directly thwart the development of community policing, based on stable and trusting community-police relationships locally and on police institutional legitimacy more broadly.

Our observations of the Twelfth Orange Order parade and the nationalist protests confirm that the PSNI do attempt to ensure that the visibility of the police is carefully choreographed so as to reduce tensions and the sense of surveillance and control that further exacerbates tensions in the local community. Small changes in the visibility of the police have been shown to make a big difference in defusing potential conflict. Such changes include: the clothing of the police (white shirt sleeves and soft caps rather than riot gear); the direction in which they face (i.e. not all towards the protestors, which gave the impression that they alone were the source of potential trouble), the number of police on the road (the vast majority are ensconced in landrovers adjacent to the route), the speed with which they evacuate the area (as soon as the last marcher has crossed the other side of the roundabout, there is a line of police landrovers exiting the area at speed). Such efforts are positively commented on in our interviews indicating that, indeed, even the body positions of individual officers are both carefully watched and judged to have significance for defining who and what is seen as 'the problem' on the day. The shape and positioning of police lines and cordons are considered to display the police's degree of commitment to even-handedness and neutrality (Bryan, 2006).

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[9] These are areas (usually working class) where Protestant and Catholic communities live side by side. In Belfast such areas have been the sites for a disproportionate amount of violence during 'the troubles'; continue to witness regular outbreaks of sectarian disquiet; and to exhibit higher levels of social deprivation.
[10] Interview with a district police commander, 21/09/2010.

That said, over the past decade the use of cameras has also grown exponentially. There is the camera of the police helicopter overhead (so strong, we witnessed from the Gold Command Room, that it is possible to read the brand of a chocolate bar on the ground from 1,000 feet). There are also large cameras facing in several different directions from tall poles on the top of an armoured police landrover, which is a very familiar vehicle in public order situations in Northern Ireland. In addition, individual police officers carry small handheld cameras which they clearly direct at certain groups. There are also CCTV cameras on lampposts and shop fronts and cameras in the hands of other subjects (marchers, supporters, protestors, journalists). Visibility as control is no longer exclusively in the hands of the police. With the increasing technologisation of visibility as such, its use as control has become more subtle. Rather than keeping out of the eyeline of a particular officer, each individual marcher and protestor may be conscious that they are being watched and recorded, and thus their actions are potentially viewed by dozens if not hundreds of people. As it is, a contentious event such as this embodies an unusual melding of physical, territorial and temporal space together with a type of control that transcends the constraints of physical presence, territory and time. The critical point of commonality here is that of visibility. Any and all changes in the dynamics of visibility result in changes to the whole dynamic of the event.

Conclusion

The focus on visibility demonstrates that contentious events serve as direct stages for intra- (as well as inter-) communal power struggles (opposition to and contestation of political authority) and the crucial role that space and performativity play both as media and as resources of these power relations. The three models of visibility that Brighenti (2010a) speaks of - of recognition, control and spectacle - are clearly not mutually exclusive. In our case study at every one moment of time the three were present. They also have particular potency in a 'post-conflict' context. We have shown here how, in a sensitive, sometimes volatile environment, the use of visibility by different agents is a very useful tool for understanding why some actions have the effect of increasing conflict and why others defuse it.

In our case study, we have witnessed the transition over time from a fairly violent and tense event to a fairly routine and mundane one. We do not assume that the problem of the contentious Orange parade through Ardoyne has been resolved. As a predictable event and a highly symbolic tradition, the parade will always be vulnerable to exploitation by those who wish to demonstrate resistance or to seek recognition. That said, it is notable that the contention on the day has been dramatically reduced simply by the tit-for-tat quest for visibility being made much more one-sided: if there are fewer witnesses, then the act immediately becomes less powerful or important. Moreover, being a witness also makes one a

subject, in that the attention of the gaze of others are on you. In realising this, and actively averting visibility, actors have the opportunity to regain the type of agency that they had feared was impossible under such police presence and cultural provocation.

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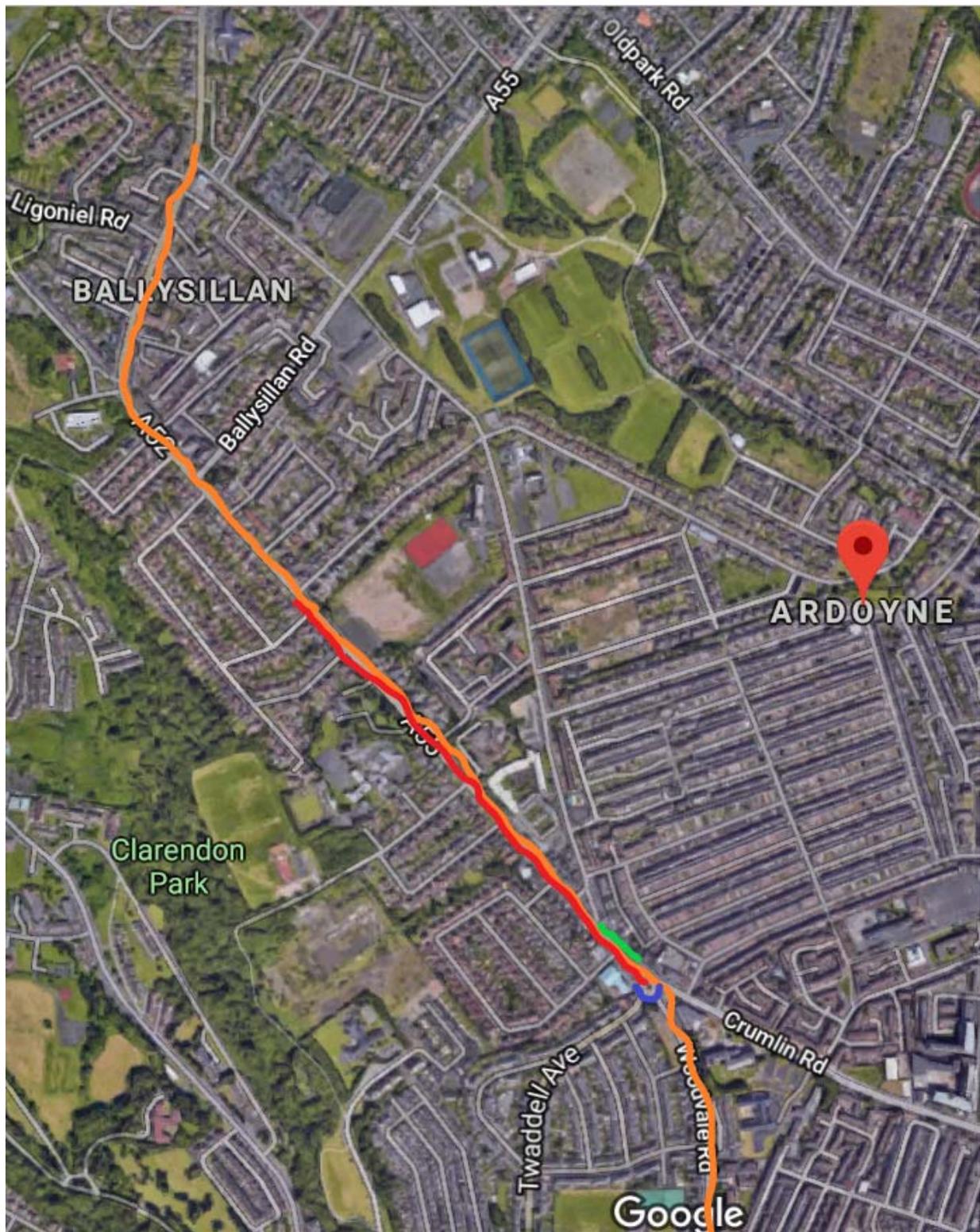
Figure 1. The route of the Orange parade through Ardoyne, from the start point in Ballysillan to down Woodvale Road. The part of the route with the most restrictions is in red. The location of the residents'

protest is in green. The location of the supporters of the parade is shown in blue. Source: Googlemaps (modified)

Figure 2. The Orange parade through Ardoyne on 12 July 2012, including the marchers (A), their supporters at Twaddell/Woodvale (B), the protestors (C), the police (D) and journalists (E). Photo credit: researchers' own.