Inside and Outside of Peace and Prosperity:
Post-Conflict Cultural Spaces in Rwanda and Northern Ireland

by

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Abstract

In post-conflict settings real and imagined boundaries do a great deal to determine who is inside and who is outside of state-based narratives of peace and prosperity. Based on case studies in Rwanda and Northern Ireland, I provide an analysis of the post-conflict periods and the impact of neoliberal-styled governance on the dynamics of power. I argue that as power shifted, ‘peace’ also entailed a general social pacification, and prosperity equated to greater private profit. However, top-down social engineering has not contained the entire field of social struggle. I examine micro-level interventions taking place on the margins of mainstream discourse that trouble the moralizing state-narratives that seek to legitimate structural violence. Such spaces facilitate alternative values and practices that contribute to sustained social and cultural resilience, as well as forms of resistance.

Post-conflict Rwanda and Northern Ireland have been impacted by both coercive and consensual forms of social engineering. In Rwanda, state-based framework laws and forceful regimes of local implementation rely on stark contingencies of reward and punishment to shape and control behaviour in the public sphere. In Northern Ireland, the power-sharing structure of the Belfast Agreement has reinforced ethnic politics, while depoliticizing and instrumentalizing civil society in support of its neoliberal policies.

I present ethnographic research and interviews conducted with community organizations in Northern Ireland (Ikon) and Rwanda (Student Association of Genocide Survivors - AERG) that demonstrates how alternative discourses and practices are emerging in the cracks of these top-down systems. I explore Ikon’s use of creative performances and radical theology to create socially resonant cultural spaces that function as temporary autonomous zones. These TAZs unsettle aspects of individual identity while intentionally seeking to destabilize mainstream power dynamics. Unlike Ikon, AERG faces greater public scrutiny and higher political stakes. They demonstrate an adherence to the dominant social script in the public sphere, while exhibiting micro-level agency through trauma healing, and material support in private day-to-day practices. AERG’s performance in the public sphere creates temporary spaces of encounter that exceed the boundaries of official discourse, making their alternative presence felt while remaining illegible to the dominant surveillance frameworks.
Acknowledgements

There are many individuals who have contributed to this project. In particular I am grateful to the members of Ikon and AERG for their inspirational fortitude and commitment to creating a brighter future in Rwanda and Northern Ireland. I have also benefited immensely from the insights and mentorship of faculty from a number of institutions and departments. In particular, the department of Cultural Studies at Queen’s University, the Reconciliation Studies Program at the Irish School of Ecumenics, and the Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at the University of Manitoba.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Many people want to know why, out of the entire white segment of society, we want to criticize the liberals. We have to criticize them because they represent the liaison between both groups, between the oppressed and the oppressor. The liberal tries to become an arbitrator, but he is incapable of solving the problems. He promises the oppressor that he can keep the oppressed under control; that he will stop them from becoming illegal (in this case illegal means violent). At the same time, he promises the oppressed that he will be able to alleviate their suffering – in due time. Historically, of course, we know this is impossible, and our era will not escape history.¹

Post-Conflict Frameworks, Neoliberalism and the Space for Alternatives

This dissertation provides an analysis of state frameworks and local-level processes involved in the post-conflict transitions in Rwanda and Northern Ireland. One strand will focus on how aspects of the top-down structuring and the official discourses of these programs are based on a realignment of power-relations in accordance with a neoliberal vision of peace and prosperity. In the second, parallel strand, I present two case studies based on ethnographic research with community groups, the Association des Éleves et Étudiates Rescapé (AERG) in Rwanda, and the Christian arts collective, Ikon, in Northern Ireland. Drawing on participant observations and semi-structured interviews, I argue that both AERG and Ikon have created alternative spaces and narratives outside and in the cracks of the dominant models of peace and prosperity. These spaces have facilitated creative experiments in reaction to social organizing, towards trauma healing, and in resistance to the pacifying neoliberal policies that have facilitated private profit and the replication of structural forms of violence.

Micro and Macro Theoretical Chapters

The first two chapters set out the macro and micro theoretical frameworks that provide the basis for my analysis of the state-based peace agreements and the local-level alternatives.

Chapter 2 – Peace, Prosperity and Post-conflict Neoliberalism

This chapter provides a discussion of how, in the context of shifting power dynamics, new social and political boundaries can also change the meaning of identity categories and legitimate new forms of exclusion. I argue that, while the violent conflicts in Rwanda and Northern Ireland were characterized by the politicization of local ethno-political identities, these regional dynamics were also connected to the global power struggles of the 1960s and later to the anti-globalization movements of 1990s. In the current period, although the state-based programs have brought an end to open ethnic conflict, many of the same underlying sources of the conflict remain and are exacerbated by the peace and prosperity agenda.

The latter part of the chapter introduces the literature on social engineering as a means of understanding the major features that characterize top-down approaches to post-conflict social change. Social engineering projects are planned by élites with a vision of improving the lives of future generations; their goals are meted out through coercive force imposed by top-down schematic changes onto a much messier social reality. The desired result of such projects is a more legible population that can be managed,

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3 Suri, *The global revolutions*.
monitored and compelled to contribute economically (through taxation and labour) to the peaceful and prosperous new society. At the micro-level, I suggest that social engineering is applied in a way that resembles the behavioural shaping that was championed by the psychologist B.F. Skinner in the 1960s.6 On the macro-level, when the principles of social engineering are applied to post-conflict settings and accompanied by neoliberal economic agendas, the result is a particular variant of what Naomi Klein has described as disaster capitalism.7

Chapter 3 – Conceptualizing Alternative Spaces

This chapter deepens the discussion of shifting boundaries by focusing on the importance of local sites as threshold spaces in transitional societies. Here, I engage Victor Turner's cultural anthropological concept of liminality as a lens for examining both the individual and social experience of crisis and change.8 Unlike traditional societies in which liminality represents an in-between phase in an individual’s development, in post-conflict societies there is often no clear way of emerging from this social uncertainty.9 While official post-conflict narratives in both Rwanda and Northern Ireland herald a new era of social progress and development, the day-to-day realities under the peace and prosperity programs offer little room for micro-level agency.

In Rwanda, the authoritarian state enforces a policy which forbids public discussion of ethnicity, requires that all citizens participate in communal work projects and metes out harsh punishment for transgression of these local-level laws. In Northern

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6 I discuss how the Rwandan government’s micro-level social engineering is based on operant conditioning techniques advanced by behaviorist psychologist B.F. Skinner, Beyond freedom and dignity (New York: Hackett Publish Company, 1971).
7 Naomi Klein, The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2007).
9 This is sense of incoherence is a common description of post-conflict trauma as well. See Astier M. Almedom, “Resilience, hardiness, sense of coherence, and post-traumatic growth: All paths leading to ‘light at the end of tunnel’?.” Journal of Loss and Trauma, 10 No. 3 (2005): 253-265.
Ireland the Belfast Agreement has structured politics around ethno-nationalist party leadership, entrenching aspects of the conflict in an ongoing “cultural war” while depoliticizing other social antagonisms. A great amount of trauma remains unresolved and society remains divided. This social uneasiness is reflected in the disturbing fact that the number of deaths by suicide since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement has exceeded the total number of deaths during the thirty-year conflict.\textsuperscript{10} Still, advocates of the peace and prosperity agenda insist that the only choice is between normalizing this new status quo or returning to sectarian violence. In both Rwanda and Northern Ireland, local-level groups are rejecting the notion that there are no alternatives, and spaces are being developed where different discourses are able to emerge, if only for short periods of time.

In order to conceptualize these emergent spaces, I turn to a discussion of temporary autonomous zones, a praxis-oriented tactic that uses social disruption to create immediately realizable social change.\textsuperscript{11} Rather than seeking to achieve either revolutionary change or sweeping reform, temporary autonomous zones seek to puncture the flows of power and realize alternatives in an immediate, if fleeting form. Once these spaces exist, they create the possibility for deep individual transformations that may not fit well within the dominant discourses of peace and prosperity; in fact, these personal transformations can contribute to the conditions for ongoing alternative forms of social change.


\textsuperscript{11} Hakim Bey, \textit{The temporary autonomous zone, ontological anarchy, poetic terrorism} (Autonomedia Anti-Copyright: New York, 1991).
Substantive Context and Ethnographic Research Chapters

There are two chapters for both Northern Ireland (chapters 4 and 5) and Rwanda (chapters 6 and 7). The first chapter from each case (chapters 4 and 6) deals with the state-based post-conflict framework and provides an overview of the post-conflict context. The following chapters (chapters 5 and 7) draw on ethnographic case studies of Ikon and AERG to present a number of theoretical interventions based on the alternative discourses these groups are involved in creating.

Chapter 4 – State Forms and Civil Norms in Post-conflict Northern Ireland

The peace agreement known as the Belfast Agreement was signed by Northern Ireland’s eight major Parties on April 10th 1998, bringing to an end the thirty-year period of conflict known as The Troubles. A number of other peace agreements had been signed over the years, only to fall apart as a result of intransient political positions and the inability to end local-level violence.12 The success of the Belfast Agreement has been attributed by some to the fact that élite politicians from the major Protestant and Catholic opposition parties were finally able to agree on the terms of power sharing.13 While this is true to some extent, the élite nature of Agreement has also been a major point of criticism by those who claim that the agreement simply redistributes power among the already powerful.14

The Agreement operates from a state-powersharing model known as consociationalism, which seeks to balance the influence of the main ethno-national

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parties through élite-based negotiation.\footnote{Arend Lijphart, \textit{Democracy in Plural Societies} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).} At the level of implementation, civil society is considered by many to be the driving force behind social transformation.\footnote{John D. Brewer, Gareth I. Higgins and Francis Teeney, \textit{Religion, Civil Society, and Peace in Northern Ireland}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).} In this chapter, I argue that, in many ways, the top-down consociational state and liberal civil society are, in fact, dependent on one another, and, as a result, have collectively limited the space for alternative narratives.

\textit{Chapter 5 – Ikon: TAZ in the Cracks of Liberalism}

In this chapter, I present the case study of Ikon, a Christian arts collective that formed shortly after the Belfast Agreement was signed. Organizationally, Ikon operates on the anarchist model of \textit{temporary autonomous zones}, which has been adapted as a tactic both for destabilizing dominant social narrative and for facilitating personal change. Ikon has strong philosophical underpinnings that combine radical Christian theology with contemporary social theory. I argue that in post-conflict Northern Ireland, this intellectual critique, combined with an emphasis on engaging in the public sphere, creates a powerful alternative narrative to liberal peace and prosperity.

In response to the legacy of sectarian religious groupings, Ikon’s primary organizers have intentionally avoided creating a stable community, preferring a performative approach that is meant to stimulate and unsettle. Unlike peacebuilding organizations associated with the Northern Irish state and civil society, I argue that Ikon draws on local cultural resources and a critique of global power relations to create an alternative space that promotes a multiplicity of alternative narratives. By not overtly engaging in formal politics, Ikon has remained outside of the official peace and
prosperity discourse, and has simultaneously created a liminal space where people can take part in collective experiments in individual and social transformation.

Chapter 6 – Social Engineering in Post-conflict Rwanda

The chapter provides an analysis of the development and implementation of the Rwandan Government’s ambitious post-genocide project of top-down social engineering.\(^\text{17}\) The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) has introduced sweeping reforms under its policy of *National Unity and Reconciliation*. These changes are conceptualized and legislated at the highest levels of government, while the difficult task of implementation is carried out by local administrators.\(^\text{18}\) This top-down project has severely limited freedom of speech in the public sphere, and has used the legacy of genocide to suppress and criminalize dissent.\(^\text{19}\)

In addition to the macro-level impacts of the RPF’s social engineering, I argue that the micro-level management bears a strong resemblance to models of behavioural conditioning.\(^\text{20}\) This model of reward and punishment has been implemented through a combination of vague laws and micro-level policies that are strictly enforced at the local level. As a result, the RPF’s dominant narrative has, in many ways, become a script which individuals must learn how to perform or to negotiate using *hidden transcripts* at the local level.\(^\text{21}\)


\(^{20}\) Skinner, *Beyond freedom and dignity*.

Chapter 7 – AERG: Micro-level Agency in the Private Sphere

This chapter presents my ethnographic field research with the Association of Student Genocide Survivors (Association des Éleves et Étudiants Rescapé de Genocide - AERG). I discuss how research with a group of genocide survivors presented a number of challenges that were both ethical as well as methodological. Drawing on research and observational data with an AERG chapter at a university in a rural Rwandan town, I explore the interplay between micro-level constraints in the public sphere and spaces that allow for micro-level agency.\(^{22}\) I found that the formation of ‘new family’ groups provided an internal structure that facilitated both material and affective support within the private sphere and promoted forms of micro-agency.

AERG’s presence in the official-public sphere in many ways confirmed the hypothesis that there was a great deal of pressure to follow the RPF’s National Unity and Reconciliation social script. This was also confirmed by the fact that interviewees' accounts of participation in public events were often stripped of emotional content and provided simple factual descriptions. AERG occupied a liminal position that was both inside and outside of the public discourse. As Tutsi genocide survivors, they played a central part inside of the RPFs public discourse; on the other hand, the micro-level agency and affective engagement needed to develop coherent individual narratives could only occur in the private realm outside of the dominant discourse.

Shifting Global Hegemony: Situating Post-Conflict Rwanda and Northern Ireland

This section provides an introductory discussion of how, following the end of direct violence, shifting power dynamics in Northern Ireland and Rwanda marked

significant turning points in the history of both regions. In the post-conflict period, the necessary focus on preventing renewed ethnic violence has overshadowed the fact that, during this time, both Rwanda and Northern Ireland have become more deeply integrated into the broad system of states associated with global neoliberalism. While post-conflict governance has succeeded in preventing new outbreaks of ethnic violence, it has also marginalized those voices that oppose integration into a new status quo of power determined by the dictates of capitalism. This dissertation questions the implicit assumption that because ethnic conflict has been suppressed, hegemonic power relations should no longer be a source of antagonism or contestation. As my research indicates, there are alternative spaces in Rwanda and Northern Ireland where people have moved away from antagonistic ethnic politics, and are able to meaningfully address the private legacy of conflict, while also experimenting with alternatives that don't simply acquiesce to further integration within neoliberal hegemony.

At one level, the roughly thirty year periods of social turmoil and violence in Rwanda (1959-1994) and Northern Ireland (1968-1998) were conflicts over state legitimacy overlaid with ethno-national dimensions that reflected the fault lines of hegemonic power relations. The politicization of ethnic identities fluctuated over the

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24 The primacy of state legitimacy is a well recognized factor in both the Rwandan and Northern Irish literature, though there is some debate about its relative influence alongside other factors such as economics and culture. For an overview of the issue in Rwanda see, Mahmood Mamdani, When Victims
course of the conflicts as in-group boundaries became more or less salient at different moments and in different regions. Following the end of the most acute periods of violent conflict in Rwanda (July 1994) and Northern Ireland (April 1998), national peace processes funded by international donors focused on creating economic development and promoting social reconciliation.

### Shifting Hegemonic Power Relations in Rwanda

The history of conflict in Rwanda can be traced back to at least the 17th century through several different phases of hegemonic control. In the land that came to be called Rwanda, groups of pastoralist warriors established themselves in the region and eventually developed political dominance which included a clientalist system that required the labour of local groups in exchange for protection and other goods. These pastoralists came to be known as Tutsi, while the largest local group were farmers called Hutu, and there was a smaller local group of hunter-gathers known as Twa. Compared to other tribal regions in East Africa, Rwanda developed a relatively strong state form based around the Tutsi monarch or Mwami prior to the colonial period. Following periods of German, then Belgian colonization, the political organization of Rwanda was restructured, leaving primarily Tutsi chiefs to govern with the support and direction of the

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26 The two major donors in both Rwanda and Northern Ireland are the United Kingdom and the United States.
27 The population in Rwanda prior to, and after the genocide (due to re-immigration) was approximately 84% Hutu, 14% Tutsi and 2% Twa. The history of migration and origin in Rwanda is extremely contested. For one of the most extensive overviews of the historical processes in the region, see Réné Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (Westport: Praeger Publishing, 1970).
Belgians. While a number of popular accounts of the Rwandan genocide imply that prior to the colonial period there was relative social harmony in the region, in-depth accounts provide a different view of power relations in the region. For instance, Villia Jefremovas writes:

The pre-colonial and colonial history of Rwanda is not about the destruction of previously egalitarian traditional structures by European imperialism or by the penetration of a capitalist economy. Rather, it is about the growth of hierarchical institutions within a fundamentally non-egalitarian system characterized by unequal social relations and strong regional distinctions. It is a history of conquest and assimilation, of the incorporation of different regions into the pre-colonial kingdom of Rwanda under varying circumstances, of the creation of ethnic groups based on the organization of economic life, and of the transformation of a largely ceremonial kingship into a centralized politically and economically powerful absolute monarchy.

The period of Tutsi domination was brought to an abrupt end in 1959-61 when an increasingly educated Hutu population overthrew the Tutsi regime and installed the first Hutu president, Gregoire Kayibanda. During this period, known as the “Hutu Revolution,” many prominent Tutsi elites were forced into exile in neighbouring countries, the greatest number fleeing to Uganda. It was among these refugee communities that the Rwandese Alliance for National Unity (RANU) formed in 1980 (renamed the Rwandan Patriotic Front [RPF] in 1987) under the leadership of Rwanda’s current President, Paul Kagame. RANU and the RPF fought alongside the Ugandan military of Yoweri Museveni and played a major role in Museveni’s rise to political

30 Such accounts of pre-colonial harmony often feature as part of a regional background to more popular accounts of the genocide. For instance, Philip Gourevitch's popular book *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 1998).
32 Mamdani estimates that there were approximately 500 000 Rwandan refugees in Uganda following a number of waves of displacement. Mamdani, *When Victims*, 166.
dominance. After reneging on its promise to grant Rwandan refugees citizenship, the Ugandan state began purging Rwandans from its military. Facing pressures to relocate, the RPF launched an invasion of Rwanda in 1990 with the support of the Ugandan military, which feared that an unsuccessful repatriation would have jeopardized that country's stability.33

As civil war engulfed Rwanda, president Juvenal Habyarimana agreed to enter into multi-party peace talks, which culminated in the signing of the Arusha Accord of 1993.34 Meanwhile, extremist elements within the Hutu Power movement gained more and more backers. The popular narrative spread among Hutu was that the RPF was coming to re-establish a Tutsi ethnocracy, and this generated a climate of insecurity in which many Hutu were radicalized.35 When President Habyarimana's plane was shot down on April 7th, 1994, genocide erupted on the streets of Kigali and subsequently spread to other communities. The spread and success of genocide was not due to a chaotic explosion of local hatred; rather, it was authorized by the highest levels of government and relied heavily on the existing state structures.36

In the post-conflict period, the Rwandan state under the RPF has established a dictatorship that employs the language of national unity and reconciliation to impose a state-based plan of post-conflict modernization.37 The state discourse has severely limited discussion of RPF crimes against Hutus following the genocide, and employs vague laws

33 Ibid., 183.
36 For a well-researched and persuasive account of necessity of state order for the genocide to occur see Scot Strauss, *The order of Genocide: race, power, and war in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).
37 Filip Reyntjens, “From genocide to dictatorship.”
against such things as “divisionism” and “genocide ideology” to prevent and punish dissent. At the same time, the RPF has received a great deal of praise from international donors and the global press for having re-built a successful state so quickly after the devastation of genocide.

Northern Ireland: History of Shifting Hegemonic Power Relations

The period of British colonization of Ireland began in the early 1600's with the Plantation of Ulster, when tracts of land were given to English companies, who in turn brought thousands of settlers from England and Scotland to work the land, dispossessing many of the native Irish. The majority of those who settled in Ireland were ethnically different, spoke English rather than Gaelic and were adherents of Protestantism, not Catholicism. The penetration of the British state in Ireland was formally secured in 1800 through the Act of Union, which incorporated the Irish government into British parliament. Despite its increasing hegemony, the British State in this period remained “incomplete and persistently illegitimate.”

The salience of ethnic antagonism between Protestant and Catholic communities historically fluctuated in response to global social, political and economic change. For instance, the industrial boom in Belfast driven by shipbuilding, linen, rope making and other industries brought rapid immigration to the urban centre. At the turn of the 19th

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42 McGarry and O’Leary, The politics, 72-73.
century, Belfast consisted of only 3% Catholics; this number rose to 34% by the turn of the 20th century. Between 1871-1901, the overall population of the city increased from 175,000 to 350,000, creating additional conflict over access to employment. Belfast continued to develop as an important site in the Industrial Revolution, establishing its position within the global economic sphere.

Following a prolonged struggle by the Irish Republican Army, the island of Ireland was partitioned by the 1920 “Government of Ireland Act.” This legislation separated the twenty-six counties of what would eventually become the independent Ireland Free State in 1921 from the six counties of Northern Ireland, which were to be managed by a devolved government. At the time of partition, Northern Ireland was comprised of approximately 65% Protestants and 35% Catholics. The first Prime Minister of the six counties, Sir James Craig, envisaged the new boundaries as an “impregnable pale, a rampart behind which the descendants of British settlers could defend civilization.” This initiated a period of complete hegemonic dominance by the Protestant state that would last from 1920 until the insurgent period beginning in the late 1960s.

During this time the British State ensured its sovereignty over Northern Ireland by supporting the devolved Protestant regime. Despite the political and economic advantage afforded the Protestant community, there was pervasive anxiety surrounding the possibility that their fate might abruptly change. Above all, Protestants feared

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44 Ibid.
46 McGarrry and O’Leary, The Politics, 100.
47 John Gibney, In the shadow of a year: The 1641 rebellion in Irish history and memory (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).
abandonment by the British, an act which would leave them as a minority on a primarily Catholic-Gaelic island. Foregoing this apocalyptic scenario, there were fears about the potential for a violent insurrection of disenfranchised Catholics and for growing disunity within the Protestant community itself. 48

This climate of uncertainty led to unofficial yet systemic forms of local violence and discrimination by Protestants seeking to demonstrate their cultural dominance and superior capacity for violence. While this violence was not officially sanctioned by the British State, it was made possible by measures such as the Civil Authorities (or Special Powers) Act of 1933. The act declared that, “Civil authorities shall have power, in respect of persons, matters and things within the jurisdiction of the Government of Northern Ireland to take all such steps and issue all such orders as may be necessary for preserving the peace and maintaining order.” 49

The period of un-contested Protestant hegemony began to change in the late 1960’s, as other global civil rights and anti-oppression movements provided momentum and concrete strategies for marginalized Catholics to challenge the dominant discourse. 50 The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) carried out community education and planned Marches in support of civil rights – such as voting rights, electoral boundaries and access to housing. 51 During this same period, there was a growing resurgence of the Provisional Irish Republican Army, which launched a series of militant actions following violent confrontations between civil rights advocates, Protestant militias and the British Army.

50 For an overview of the global movement see Suri, The global revolutions.
51 Niall Ó Dochartaigh, From Civil Rights to Armalites: Derry and the Birth of the Irish Troubles (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997).
The early years of The Troubles (1971-1976) was a period of revolutionary violence, with more than 56% of all casualties occurring during these years. In response to this groundswell of popular dissent, Britain resumed its policy of direct rule and introduced a strategy that included the mass internment of Catholics suspected of being involved with the IRA. Ethno-religious segregation increased and was reinforced by the building of “peace walls” in areas where Catholics and Protestant communities interfaced. By early 1973 over 10% of Belfast's population had been forced to move to avoid the growing violence.

In the decades following the initial uprising, there were multiple failed attempts to broker peace between the divided communities and to stabilize British interests. At the same time that the famous Hunger Strikes led by Bobby Sands were gathering international support for the Nationalist cause, the newly elected British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher refused to recognize the legitimacy of the struggle, obstinately insisting that “crime is crime is crime. It is not political.” Rather than compromise, the Conservative government focused on rolling out its program of neoliberal change, which included “reforming of Northern Ireland” through the “… application of Thatcherite recipes of economic rationalization and privatization.”

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52 McGarry and O’Leary, *The politics*, 33 and 175-177.
53 Nagel, “The right to Belfast city centre,” 137.
54 After the failure of the 1985 Anglo Irish Agreement (AIA), leader of Sinn Fein Jerry Adams wrote that “in the final analysis [the AIA was]…about stabilizing British interests […] by insulating the British from the international criticism of their involvement in Irish affairs.” Jerry Adams 1986, 105 quoted in McGarry and O’Leary, *The politics*, 223.
Intra-State Conflict and Neo-liberal Development

The forces behind the shifting relations of power described above are not unique to Rwanda and Northern Ireland, nor can they be understood in terms of ethno-nationalism alone. Following the end of the cold war, the number of wars between nation-states has decreased, while the amount of violent conflict within state boundaries has increased.\textsuperscript{57} The fall of the Communist Eastern Bloc and the apparent victory for global Capitalism did not result in increased global stability as some had predicted.\textsuperscript{58} On the contrary, the past 30 years have been characterized by an increased number of intra-state conflicts (or hot wars), creating greater global uncertainty.\textsuperscript{59} This state of affairs has come into being not in spite of globalization, but because of it.\textsuperscript{60} The world-wide expansion of the neo-liberal project has opened new markets that have destroyed local economies and created the need for local and global societies of control to ensure the free flow of capital and cheap production of goods.\textsuperscript{61}

The way that states engage with neoliberal development varies in different contexts. What many of these sites have in common is the normalization of neoliberal dogma within the dominant discourse. As David Harvey has put it, “Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many


\textsuperscript{58} For instance Francis Fukuyama's heralding the End of History in the free market, American led world order. See Francis Fukuyama, \textit{The end of history and the last man} (New York: Free Press, 1992).

\textsuperscript{59} The term hot wars is denotes intense local-level fighting. More recently Hot wars have acquired new meaning since climate change has increased scarcity and environmental instability driving conflict. For an overview of the latter position see James R. Lee, \textit{Climate Change and Armed Conflict: Hot and Cold Wars} (London: Routledge, 2009).

\textsuperscript{60} For an account of the current liquid modern times, see Zygmunt Bauman, \textit{Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty} (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).

\textsuperscript{61} For an excellent introduction to the processes and players involved in the ascension of neo-liberalism see David Harvey, \textit{A brief introduction to neoliberalism} (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2005).
of us interpret, live in, and understand the world.\textsuperscript{62} In the following chapter I provide an in-depth discussion of theoretical issues involved in post-conflict neoliberal governance.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 2.
Chapter Two: Peace, Prosperity, and Post-conflict Neoliberalism

Introduction: Boundaries and Power

This chapter provides an overview of the interconnectedness of modern social-legal processes as they contribute to the conditions that make mass violence and genocide both thinkable and achievable. In times of social uncertainty and conflict the need to secure the nation against perceived threats creates shifting legal, political and social boundaries that are central to determining which groups are protected by sovereign power and which are subjected to its violence.63 Within the boundaries of nation states the logic of sovereign exception is increasingly merged with the interests of supranational institutions and networks, creating new criteria and demands upon individual life-worlds.64 In post-conflict situations, even as ethnic antagonisms are brought under control, neoliberal discourse moves to simultaneously co-opt the public sphere in order to reinforce the hegemony of global capitalism. These shifting discourses re-distribute, re-align and solidify relations of power that exist along ethnic and religious lines.

As I will show, the ethnic hegemonies that dominated Rwanda and Northern Ireland changed drastically when direct violence ended; the post-conflict period has been characterized by further integration within the neoliberal agenda of a western alliance of states. Both countries have been heavily influenced by the involvement of the United States and the United Kingdom in the domains of policy consultation and funding. The processes of social engineering deployed in these periods of rebuilding can be seen

clearly at two levels: 1) top-down elite political decision-making regarding legislation and funding; and 2) civil society mechanisms of implementation that impact at a level that engages with local narratives.

My intention is not to downplay the ethnic-identity elements of conflict in either Rwanda or Northern Ireland – identity politics in both cases are real and remain volatile. Within both contexts, I draw largely on western-conceptions of sovereign space and governance while recognizing that there is an important post-colonial literature that addresses the regional specificity of post-conflict struggle over sovereign power. I employ these conceptual tools at a broad level in order to call attention to the continuity of social processes at play under hegemonic conditions that have facilitated violence historically, and continue to persist in the post-conflict period.

The way that the legacy of conflict is addressed at the level of state legislation and policy is an important factor in establishing and maintaining political legitimacy. Concurrently, post-conflict civil society functions as a dynamic site where competing discourses vie for popular support. For instance, competing ethno-national discourses continue to structure antagonisms, while civil rights discourses seek to find common ground rooted in dialogue and processes of forgiveness. However, when civil society begins to be seen as challenging the legitimacy of the state, this can lead to various forms of depoliticization. In the case of ethno-national discourses, depoliticization occurs by associating these groups with ethnic violence and in some cases criminalizing their membership. In cases where civil society discourses challenge the neoliberal

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underpinnings of state projects these too are often silenced either by also associating these critiques with violence, or by isolating them from the state-civil society dialogue through defunding and stigmatization.

**Local Conflict and Global Contestation**

There is no need to ask which is the toughest or most tolerable regime, for it is with each of them that liberating and enslaving forces confront one another … There is no need to fear or hope, only to look for new weapons.66

The most recent periods of violent conflict in Rwanda and Northern Ireland were related to, but not determined by significant global social and political upheaval. For instance, the beginning of the Northern Irish *Troubles* can be located alongside the 1968 uprisings against the entrenchment of capitalism, imperialist war-mongering and the bureaucratized suppression of basic civil rights.67 The unrest and violence leading up to the genocide in Rwanda had significant roots in the “Hutu Revolution” of 1959-1961, part of the wave of African anti-colonial independence movements in the early 1960s.68 These earlier periods of conflict in Rwanda and Northern Ireland manifested both as a result of, and in response to, local conditions of oppression and inequality. These were not problems specific to Rwanda and Northern Ireland, but deeply connected with a period of global insurrection against the interwoven hegemonic systems of colonialism and capitalism.

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67 The upheaval of 1968 was not primarily about sectarian issues, nor was it an expression of an alternative lifestyle choice, it was “part of a global struggle to free humanity from imperialism, capitalism and bureaucracy.” In Simon Prince, *Northern Ireland’s ’68: Civil rights, global revolt and the origins of the Troubles* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007).
The genocidal and ethno-nationalist violence in Rwanda and Northern Ireland did not occur as explosions of ancient social hatred. Rather, violence occurred in both places during moments of great uncertainty, fueled by incendiary propaganda in the midst of shifting power relations. While the events in Rwanda and Northern Ireland bore the distinctive mark of the places, peoples and histories involved, these local webs were tied into the complex web of global social process leading up to the mid-1990s. Therefore, in order to situate the current study of post-conflict peace processes, I will position the discussion within broader relations of sovereignty and global influence in the context of modern social processes.

**Warnings: Modern Political Space is Exceptional**

In 1989 Zygmunt Bauman identified a number of intersecting features of modernity that had helped to make the Jewish Holocaust both thinkable and achievable in the mid 20th century.\(^{69}\) In Germany (and many other places in Europe), discourses of scientific rationality and legal exceptionalism had helped to legitimate and normalize the exclusion of certain groups from the public and economic spheres as a social necessity, and even as a social good.\(^{70}\) The extensive legal frameworks and bureaucratic processes facilitated a growing social, psychological and spiritual distance in mainstream society from the Jews and other stigmatized groups.\(^{71}\) The insight Bauman draws from his study

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\(^{70}\) Foremost among the figures involved in these processes was the German jurist, Carl Schmitt whose definition of sovereignty as “the one who decides on the state of exception” is a central development. See Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, trans. George Schwab (MIT Press: London, 1922).

\(^{71}\) “The Holocaust was born and executed in our modern rational society, at the highest stage of our civilization and at the peak of human cultural achievement, and for this reason it is a problem of that society, civilization and culture.” *Modernity and*, x. This reflects what is still a general consensus among genocide scholars, for instance, as Thomas Cushman writes, “… genocide is not a phenomenon that is counter to modernity, but actually built into modernity, and, indeed facilitated by the very social
is that the Holocaust was not a historical aberration, but occurred because of the discourses and technologies of modernity. Given the continuity of social and political processes, we can expect that the conditions which made the Shoah possible will continue to occur, albeit in different places and in unexpected ways. In addition to being a critical analysis, Bauman’s study is a warning: “the unimaginable ought to be imagined.”

In the twenty years following the first publication of “Modernity and the Holocaust,” Bauman has continued to track the rapidly changing social, political and economic processes that comprise what he has come to refer to as liquid modernity. Bauman uses the concept of liquidity to refer to the increasingly fluid features of neoliberal globalization that have contributed to the incredibly vast and extremely rapid flows of information, bodies and, of course, commodities and capital that are marked by seemingly floating, but deadly boundaries. Despite claims that neoliberalism increases absolute levels of freedom, the shifting dynamics of global power have fueled preexisting antagonisms and created new axes of oppression, mainly among already marginalized populations.

The uncertainty of rapid social change today takes the form of unstable global markets, increasing climate crises, overpopulation, food insecurity and the threat of new

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73 Despite the extraordinary ascendancy of the global neoliberal project, it is far from being monolithic or unassailable. Bauman tends to focus on the most extreme cases of modern liquid subject who are hyper mobile and are actively engaged within the flows of transnational political economy. So while it may be true that the impacts of modernity – global warming, mass displacement of people due to war – leave few people untouched, it would be a stretch to argue that the majority of people on the planet represent liquid modern subjects in Bauman’s sense.

74 For an example of the “freedom” producing effects of neoliberalism, see Freedom House’s annual Freedom in the World Reports. Accessed November 1, 2013. www.freedomhouse.org/reports.
and unending wars. Such unstable circumstances intersect with local social narratives, often activating implicit biases and facilitating scapegoating of ‘the other’ in ways that can precipitate violence that is guided by ideological propaganda. The unprecedented level of global interconnectedness has also created unprecedented challenges to sovereign states' capacities to regulate capital, people and territory.

Within these changing dynamics of power, state sovereignty is increasingly evoked in order to create states of legal exception. States of exception are not legal norms, but sovereign decisions determining where the law is suspended, stripping people of all rights and exposing their bodies to the whim of sovereign power alone. The American military prison at Guantanamo Bay is an exemplary state of exception since the law has declared that those people in custody can be detained indefinitely and subjected to torture without charge or hope of trial. The detention site at Guantanamo came into existence through a sovereign's ability (in this case, that of the President of the United States) to suspend normal legal process (requiring a site outside of American territory), including all human rights, effectively dehumanizing the affected subjects. In his genealogy of states of exception, Giorgio Agamben argues that the most complete consequence of states of exception can be seen in the Nazi concentration camps. Like

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Bauman, Agamben sees a value in studying Nazi social and legal processes because the same practices exist today - so much so that Agamben claims that the concentration camp has become, "the hidden paradigm of the political space of modernity, whose metamorphoses and disguises we will have to learn to recognize."\textsuperscript{80}

Whereas the Nazi belief in racial purity was central in the final solution to annihilate the Jewish race, the current formula driving most states of exception can be summarized in the legal formulation: \textit{for reasons of security}.\textsuperscript{81} In a liquid modern world characterized by uncertainty, new forms of boundaries have become more versatile in their capacity to penetrate into all forms of life. As Agamben writes,

\begin{quote}
If there is a line in every modern state marking the point at which the decision on life becomes a decision on death, and biopolitics can turn into thanatopolitics, this line no longer appears today as a stable border dividing two clearly distinct zones. This line is now in motion and gradually moving into areas other than that of political life, areas in which the sovereign is entering into an ever more intimate symbiosis not only with the jurist but also with the doctor, the scientist, the expert, and the priest.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

While sovereignty remains a constitutive property of the nation state, it is increasingly used in order to facilitate the prerogatives of transnational corporations. As multinationals race to identify, secure and legitimate their claims to resources and markets, nation-states increasingly pander to these neoliberal forces, ensuring that their investments are secured through public-private partnerships. So while the state retains the responsibility of preserving and securing its territory against threats, this increasingly

\textsuperscript{80} Agamben, \textit{Homo Sacer}, 123. Also, Wolfgang Sofsky provides a detailed account of the highly systematic and purposefully arbitrary approach was seen as a "process typical of this power, the structuring of space, time, and sociality in the camp, and the excessive and organized intensification of the power to kill." Wolfgang Sofsky, \textit{The order of terror} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 12.


\textsuperscript{82} Within this list of specialized functions could certainly be included “peacebuilders.” Giorgio Agamben, \textit{Homo Sacer: Sovereign power and bare life}, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 122.
means protecting the rights and freedoms of corporations. The deployment of sovereign force under the influence of corporations is yet another feature of the new global dynamics in which, 

Much of the power to act effectively that was previously available to the modern state is now moving away to the politically uncontrollable (and in many ways extraterritorial) space; while politics, the ability to decide the direction and purpose of action, is unable to operate effectively at the planetary level since it remains, as before, local. The absence of political control makes the newly emancipated powers into a source of profound and in principle untamable uncertainty, while the dearth of power makes the extant political initiatives and undertakings, less and less relevant to the life problems of the nation-states’ citizens and for that reason they draw less and less of their attention.83

These foregoing analyses provide strong reasons to be wary of exuberant progress narratives that suggest that new legal regimes, new trade pacts, or new technologies are the key to human advancement.84 Somewhat ironically, it is just such modernist narratives of progress paired with sovereign power that dominate the political rhetoric and redefine the social boundaries of many post-conflict states. In both Rwanda and Northern Ireland, different combinations of sovereign force and privately-driven economic modernization are presented as keys to ensuring post-conflict peace, security and economic success.

Who’s in Control? Post-Conflict Neoliberalism

Following major political conflicts, the post-conflict period entails a re-assertion and a re-articulation of hegemony.85 As I will show, the post-conflict transitions in both

83 Bauman, Liquid times, 2.
84 For further discussion on how to put such insights into action, see Andrew Woolford, “Making genocide unthinkable: Three guidelines for a critical criminology of genocide,” Critical Criminology (2006) 14: 87–106
85 Walter Benjamin’s discussion of constituting and preserving violence are relevant to this process. See “Critique of violence” in Reflections: Essays, aphorisms, autobiographical writing (New York: Schocken Books, 1978).
Rwanda and Northern Ireland have been heavily influenced by the global neoliberal project and demonstrate many elements of hegemonic neoliberal societies of control.\textsuperscript{86} Just as regional conflicts bear the mark of global social processes, the post-conflict politics in these areas have been strongly influenced by global political-economic currents. The \textit{public sphere} is the site where directive, top-down political sovereignty comes into contact with bottom-up social and cultural reform, and is therefore where the boundaries of hegemony are negotiated.\textsuperscript{87}

In popular discourse, neoliberalism tends to be associated with a laissez-faire market economy, where governmental barriers to trade and labour mobility are reduced – a combination that is supposed to make people “more free.”\textsuperscript{88} While there is no doubt that the economic flows of capital are a central concern of neoliberalism, what gives these new paradigms their hegemonic force is the extent to which these global economic agendas have been integrated with the state-level sovereign power. These integrated and neoliberalizing systems rely on the normalization of this new way of doing business as well as the power to govern and police the growing number of poor and disenfranchised people who may resist.\textsuperscript{89}

The connections between sovereignty, social control and neoliberalism are expressed in Michel Foucault’s lectures at the Collège de France in the late 1970s and early 1980s.\textsuperscript{90} Foucault traced the development of neoliberalism to the multi-national

\begin{footnotes}
\item[86] Deleuze, “Post-script on societies of control.”
\item[88] Consider, for instance, the endless political speeches in the West aligning freedom, democracy, justice etc. with principles of the open market.
\end{footnotes}
agenda that was articulated during the 1938 Walter Lipmann Colloquium in Germany. According to Foucault, the development of neoliberalism was not simply about free markets or individual choice, but rather determining “… how the overall exercise of political power can be modeled on the principles of a market economy.”

The exercise of power on local structures of governance allows neoliberal principles to infiltrate local-level ideologies in order to secure territory, population and new markets. Under neoliberalism, alliances are strategic and everything is on the table. Thus, as societies become integrated within a neoliberal hegemony, the question is, as Foucault puts it, “… not whether there are things you cannot touch and others that you are entitled to touch. The problem is how you touch them. The problem is the way of doings things, the problem, if you like, of government style.” As neoliberalism penetrates into the fabric of society, it structures day-to-day life to such an extent that it becomes difficult to conceive of ways-of-being outside of the dominant, productive regimes of habit. Economic utility and good governance become indistinguishable, such that whoever does not play by the rules of the neoliberal system becomes a de-facto threat to society.

This understanding of neoliberalism has many implications for regions where violent conflict has ruptured previous power regimes and ushered in new forms of governance. As a result of globalized power having become un-tethered from the

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92 Ibid., 133.
93 Foucault, Society must be.
94 See, for instance, Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and difference in the global economy,” Public Culture, 2, (1990), 1-24. Appadurai provides a discussion of global scapes, which “… point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these [global] landscapes, shapes which characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles.” 7.
nation-state form, post-conflict social order tends toward establishing power relations that are favourable to local development based on the principles of neoliberal capitalism. When neoliberalism is integrated within a state apparatus, it influences sovereign decisions upon the *states of exception* that dictate the boundaries of who is outside of the law.\(^{95}\)

The historical ethnic violence in Rwanda and Northern Ireland illustrate the consequences of having a normalized social discourse in which the state can determine who is subjected to exclusion through criminalization, marginalization and violence. In these post-conflict systems of governance, the boundaries that determine sovereign exclusion have not been done away with but have shifted in ways that accord with, and give priority to, changing international interests.

Just as global forces contributed to the conditions for the most acute periods of ethnic conflict, these same forces are actively shaping official discourses and directing local-level implementation of neoliberal reforms. While framing the new power arrangements as a remedy to ethnic sectarianism, these reforms privilege a remodeled style of hegemony, reinforced by new strategies of pacification and social control. Riding a wave of international accolade for being historic peacemakers (in Northern Ireland) and national liberators (in Rwanda), both governments have used the celebrated end of open conflict to legitimate their political positions. The post-conflict task of economic and political élites now involves maintaining their hegemonic status by mediating between the demands of the global economic agenda and control over domestic and regional security.

\(^{95}\) For a detailed discussion of states of exception as a primary political category see, Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
“Peace and prosperity” has become the *raison d’état* of the post-conflict Rwandan and Northern Irish Governments, providing “the rationalization of a practice, which places itself between a state as a given and a state presented as having to be constructed and built.”96 The transition from one mode of governance to another requires not only a new governance style, but also the creation of new social realities through the progressive re-shaping of the lived environment and of the discourses that dominate the public sphere.

**Designing Post-Conflict Change: Macro and Micro Social Engineering**

The civil war and genocide in Rwanda and Northern Ireland’s Troubles were very different situations and were concluded in very different ways. In Rwanda, this came about through the absolute victory of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). In Northern Ireland, the peace agreement was achieved through negotiated settlement after the most intransigent ethno-nationalist parties Sinn Fein and the DUP agreed to share power. There are, of course, major differences in the sheer level of death and destruction involved in the conflicts (4000 died in Northern Ireland compared to between 500 000 and 800 000 in the genocide alone), as well as the number of perpetrators involved.97 Again, without diminishing these important differences, I will remain focused on the common logic guiding the transitional process from conflict societies to post-conflict societies. At the level of the state, the top-down processes involved highly structured peace agreements, political reforms and billions of dollars in funding. Implementing these changes involved a great number of urban infrastructural projects as well as large

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97 For an account of the difficult process of ascertaining the number of deaths in Rwanda, see Scott Straus *The order of Genocide: race, power, and war in Rwanda* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).
amounts of funding for civil society organizations. While it is difficult to quantify the importance of these changes, they have had substantial impacts on both the physical environment and the nature of community in public spaces.

The post-conflict peace and prosperity programs in both Rwanda and Northern Ireland demonstrate many of the features that James C. Scott’s has identified as social engineering. In Scott’s formulation, social engineering projects simplify the actualities of territories and populations, are based on a vision for a vastly improved society, are backed by sufficient authority to effect large-scale change, and rely on non-interference from civil society. Critically, social engineering projects usually begin as idealized visions of the future that are subsequently forced into reality by superimposing abstract plans onto the real world. By imposing a framework of order based on simplified and calculable dimensions, social engineering strives to create a more legible population. Once established, this regimented framework allows the state to more easily assess its assets, extract taxes, and control social unrest. To put it another way, such “administrative ordering of nature and society” allows states to keep track of, control, and manipulate territory and population by relegating the complexities of real life to simplified maps, indices and laws. The logic of social engineering runs on the assumption that, once the facts on the ground are changed, people’s behaviours will change. Once people’s habitual patterns have been changed and flows of social energy have been reordered in accordance with the design, so the logic goes, individual values

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99 Ibid., 3.
100 Ibid., 5.
and practices are more likely to follow (or become legibly dissident) until, gradually, the social vision is reached.

While theoretically impoverished, social engineering projects are often incredibly powerful because of their capacity to sustain (economically and politically) interventions at important social nexes such as agriculture, housing and public space. The fact that these schemes often fail to achieve their stated aims does not change the fact they have huge impacts on the territories and populations targeted for re-engineering. In fact, the failure of these projects is often evidenced at the macro level by the parallel emergence of illegible spaces populated by people who have either been excluded from participating in the new official social space or have chosen not to take part in it (for example black markets, favelas). However the micro-level impact is often harder to ascertain, particularly because the grandiose visions of social engineering have no place for individual perceptions, so long as more aggregate information is gathered, taxes collected, and undesirables are identified and subjected to regimes of control.

Scott’s analysis of social engineering, like Foucault’s biopolitics, is concerned with how states set out to re-shape societies by acting on populations and spaces. The predilection with mass change has also been theorized on the micro-level from a very different perspective, as a matter of physiological and psychological conditioning. Like social engineering, the principles of conditioning are important not because of their theoretical nuance, but because they reflect what is happening in the on-the-ground interventions. States intervene on subjects at the micro-level through the powerful mechanism of reward and punishment. In an operant or Skinnerian conditioning paradigm, behaviours are “operated” on by reward or punishment, often on an
intermittent schedule, in order to increase the frequency of desired behaviours and diminish the frequency of less desirable ones.101

The behaviorist psychologist B.F. Skinner considered operant conditioning the most effective way to conduct what Scott calls social engineering (Skinner referred to cultural design and behavioral engineering) in order to change the world for the better.102 While Skinner’s political analysis was superficial, his articulation of behavioral shaping techniques (much of which was based on experimental research) provides a strong articulation of a micro-level complement to macro-level analyses of social engineering. Like other proponents of “utopic” projects of social engineering, Skinner believed that the management of the lived environment could allow an enlightened elite to control reinforcement schedules (punishment and reward) in order to change popular behaviours and eventually emotions and beliefs. Skinner based his theory on experimental research with small mammals and pigeons, believing that the same principles of behavioural learning would hold true with humans. However, translating macro and micro level social engineering designs into the real world requires the sloppy processes of implementation. The extent to which top-down visions fail to correspond with the reality on the ground often reveals just how untenable these designs really are. In many cases, it is difficult to determine what the long-term consequences of massive social change will be. Unlike the assumption made by proponents of social engineering, I believe that it is not in simplification backed up by force, but in the messy complexities of post-conflict social

101 Operant conditioning is different than classical, or Pavlovian, conditioning which functions by pairing a reinforcer (like food) with an unrelated occurrence, (like a bell ringing). After hearing a bell ring before food is delivered over a number of occasions, the bell itself begins to elicits salivation – the conditioned response.
102 Skinner’s fullest articulation of cultural design occurs in Beyond freedom and dignity (New York: Knopf, 1971).
realities that hopeful new visions are to be found. One such space of complicated reality is often described as *civil society*.

**Peace, Prosperity and Politics in Civil Society**

“One way a hegemonic understanding of politics is achieved is through circumscribing what will and will not be admissible as part of the public sphere itself.”

Defined broadly, civil society includes a large cross-section of institutions including, churches, NGOs and secular community organizations. As a result of its broad scope and dependence on many contextual factors, descriptions of civil society abound. According to Charles Taylor, “The underlying issue [regarding civil society] is this: what gives a society its identity?” Others have emphasized civil society in terms of shared values, “the locus for civic virtues such as trust, respect and tolerance, altruism, and senses of belonging, which imprint themselves on the quality of social *and* political bonds.” Some have deemphasized the institutional component of civil society, preferring instead to focus on sociological functions, especially political socialization and the practice of non-governmental politics. Still others focus on underlying class dimensions and see civil society as the, “location of political contestation between society's weak and powerful … the space in which people are able to envision

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alternatives to the existing order … creating possibilities for those who lack access to state power to empower themselves through other means.”

While it is perhaps impossible to settle on a singular view of what civil society is, perhaps it is enough to acknowledge that because of its long history and contested meanings, it signifies an important, multi-modal, context-dependent site where the balance of power between society and the state is negotiated. In the context of the current cases under study, I would like to suggest that, at its best and unlike elite state-based politics, civil society can reflect the constituent power of the people themselves, not the presumed sovereign force of law.

Following mass violence, post-conflict power relations often become the defining feature of society. As a result, civil society faces pressure to conform to the new order and reinforce state legitimacy and prevent any destabilization. Two of the major axes that are central in structuring these post-conflict power relations between state and civil society are “peace and prosperity.”

In the context of these post-conflict arrangements, peace means more than reducing sectarian violence, it also signifies pacification – not only of rogue paramilitaries with a bloodlust, but also of the political and ideological currents that are perceived as threatening to the stability of the new status quo. Pacification is additionally important because it is needed to secure the second part of the post-conflict neoliberal project: prosperity. Like the rhetorical fusing of peace with pacification, prosperity also

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108 Taylor, “Modes of civil society,” 101
means private profit.\textsuperscript{110} This statist logic stifles the potential for social revolution, while simultaneously exerting control over societal development by influencing the nature and trajectory of reforms. Claims based on “reasons of security” lend social and political legitimacy to the use of sovereign power to stabilize conditions for global economic integration, including criminalizing dissent and increasing localized control.\textsuperscript{111} Such social securitization protects the flows of capital by constraining the capacities of civil society.

Civil society is expected to help implement the simplified vision of top-down social change, and at the same time attend to the personal and cultural aftermath of violence – trauma, poverty, and meaninglessness.\textsuperscript{112} It is ironic that many of these negative phenomena persist and are exacerbated by the economic systems and security regimes that these peace and prosperity programs endorse.\textsuperscript{113} Despite the important work being done by many different organizations, civil society writ large has been largely constrained to a subordinate, supportive role \textit{vis a vis} the state and is not seen as a place of serious political contestation over the public sphere.\textsuperscript{114} In the eyes of the state, micro-level social change is, properly speaking, the role of civil society; however, it is also clear

\textsuperscript{110} In many ways aspects of “peace and prosperity” programs following major conflict closely resembles what Naomi Klein has termed \textit{disaster capitalism}.

\textsuperscript{111} The surveillance apparatus that is employed in post-conflict situations in many ways shares parallel concerns with the massive developments happening concurrently with mega world events such as the Olympics and World Cup.

\textsuperscript{112} Both Northern Ireland and Rwanda have extremely high rates of domestic abuse, substance abuse and suicide. In Northern Ireland, the number of suicides since the signing of the 1998 Belfast agreement is nearly the same as the number of people killed in the thirty year period of the Troubles. For Northern Ireland, see Kathryn Torny, “Suicide deaths since 1998 almost equal to Troubles killings,” \textit{The Irish Times}, Accessed February 11, 2014, \url{www.irishtimes.com/news/health/suicide-deaths-since-1998-almost-equal-to-troubles-killings-1.1685549}. For a review of suicide rates in Rwanda see, Emmanuel Mayah, “Suicide rate increases in Rwanda,” \textit{Reporters-360}, Accessed February 20, 2013, \url{http://www.reporters-360.com/2013/02/suicide-rate-increases-in-rwanda}.


\textsuperscript{114} It should be noted that subordination of civil society to the state and its patrons is not a phenomenon unique to post-conflict situations, but evident in “peaceful, democratic” nations as well.
that the state does not accept that such change may also challenge its prerogatives or the
terests of those invested in their country's course of development. As David Harvey
writes:

The shift from government (state power on its own) to
governance (a broader configuration of state and key elements in
civil society) has been marked under neoliberalism. In this respect
the practice of the neoliberal state and developmental state
broadly converge ... Non-governmental and grass-roots
organizations have also grown and proliferated remarkably under
neoliberalism, giving rise to the belief that opposition mobilized
outside the state apparatus and within some separate entity called
“civil society” is the power house of oppositional politics and
social transformation. The period in which the neoliberal state has
become hegemonic has also been the period in which the concept
of civil society – often cast as an entity in opposition to state
power – has become central to the formulation of oppositional
politics.¹¹⁵

The unbalanced influence of the state relative to civil society both in terms of
setting and policing the national agenda has led to criticisms that civil society has been
depoliticized in both Rwanda and Northern Ireland.¹¹⁶ This depoliticization is being
carried out through funding priorities that target pre-established criteria set by social
engineers, and further compromises civil society’s independence.

**Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland, the Governments of Britain, Ireland and the European Union
have dedicated billions in support of the Northern Irish peace and prosperity agenda. The

*SPECIAL PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROGRAMME* in Northern Ireland alone received more

¹¹⁶ While these claims have been made widely, for an account of depoliticization in Northern Ireland, see:
“The Belfast Agreement and the limits of consociationalism,” in Christopher Farrington, ed., *Global
Change, civil society and the Northern Ireland peace Process* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2008),
183-195. For the Rwandan case, see Catherine Newbury, “High Modernism at the Ground Level: The
Imidugudu policy in Rwanda” in Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf, eds., *Remaking Rwanda: State making
than £1.5 billion in 2001 and the European Union's Peace Programme allocated a further £575 million to the Northern Ireland government and the six bordering counties of the Irish Republic as part of the 2009 Transitional Objectives I Programme. While only part of these funds were directly delivered by the state itself, they flowed through semi-state bodies such as the Northern Irish Community Relations Council, which functioned as an even more neoliberal gate-keeper overseeing the rest of civil society.

Although nominally distanced from the state apparatus, organizations such as the Community Relations Council’s, “whether wholly intentional or not … control of funding gives it the muscle to encourage its client groups to follow the directing and the policy it wants them to.” These councils make up state-civil-society alliances that are able to provide incentives and decide upon who is included and excluded from the dominant discourse. The idea that civil society is an independent sphere where normal members of society are able to muster sufficient resources to successfully challenge the corporate-state nexus has largely been discredited. In practice, the dispensation of funding to civil society in Northern Ireland has been severely biased in favour of the state-based status quo. The Community Relations Council’s demonstrates this clientalist relationship with the state through its vetting applications for civil society organizations seeking funding. As Gladys Ganiel observes,

The consultation process did not stimulate a great deal of debate with those groups that do not already enjoy mutually supportive relationships with government. Groups that toe the government line have greater access to and interaction with government … Not only does this compromise the ability of some groups to maintain their independence, it systematically excludes and

alienates other groups … Groups that do not approve are excluded if they do not sign up to these norms. ¹²⁰

**Rwanda**

In Rwanda, the case of depoliticization and funding dependence is comparable but less transparent. Over 50% of the governmental budget comes from foreign aid, the bulk of which is supplied by the United States and the United Kingdom. ¹²¹ The RPF has increasingly faced accusations of authoritarianism, violating human rights and funding insurgents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. ¹²² Human rights groups have called on donors to put pressure on the government to change certain policies, and, in fact, there have been a few instances of short-term suspension of funding. ¹²³ However, the Rwandan state has managed to retain a great deal of independence over the use of its donor funds, developing lucrative alliances with international mining companies operating in the East Kivu region.

Eugenia Zorbas has identified four main reasons why the RPF has continued to receive substantial international aid while still maintaining policy independence to enact its contentious social engineering project: 1) the RPF’s successful rhetorical deployment of genocide exceptionalism and international guilt; 2) their shrewd ability to use donor-friendly language in their policies; 3) the international community’s desire for African success stories and; 4) the fact that the RPF’s approach and neoliberal objectives are

¹²² For an illuminating discussion of Rwanda’s role in mineral extraction in the DRC see, Fillip Reytjens, “Waging (civil) war abroad: Rwanda and the DRC,” in Strauss and Waldorf, eds., *Remaking Rwanda*, 132-152.
popular across the political spectrum in both the United States and British Governments.\(^{124}\)

The RPF consistently evokes the threat of paramilitary violence as a rationale for its heavy handedness, but also as a means of defining who is entitled to engage in the public sphere. The most commonly evoked threat is the *Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda* (Forces Démocratique de Libération du Rwanda - FDLR), a remnant of the government and paramilitary Hutu forces that fled into the DRC following the RPF's victory in 1994. Although the FDLR does pose a minor threat due to its proximity to the Rwandan border, it is believed to have no more than a thousand members, many of whom have integrated into the subsistence poverty and conflict of the East Kivu region. Militarily, they do not pose a significant threat to the Rwandan state. However, the presence of the FDLR has consistently provided the rationale for the Rwandan army to invade the DRC in order to pursue the *genocidaires*. Using this pretext of preemptively protecting the peace, the RPF has successfully established itself both directly and through proxy militias as the most powerful force in the extremely mineral-rich Kivu region.

Another striking example of policing the public sphere is the RPFs re-introduction of identity cards. As is well known, the ethnic identity cards that were introduced by Belgian colonizers in the 1930s solidified ethnic boundaries and later became a deadly efficient means of identifying and murdering Tutsis. Despite this history, the RPF has introduced identity cards that do not indicate ethnicity directly, but focus on region of origin and current legal status (for instance returnee, former prisoner, etc.) – information that provides a strong indication of a person's ethnicity and potential political leanings.

\(^{124}\) Zorbas, “Aid dependence,” 104.
According to the RPF, these cards are used to weed out potential insurgents, but in reality they are used primarily to police Hutus, controlling their movement within the state.125

Civil Society: Victim/Perpetrator

These analyses suggest that the depoliticization of civil societies has come about because of the state’s unwillingness to disperse its power, either in terms of policy guidance or in funding independence. Additionally, civil society has been depoliticized by the criminalization of certain groups described by the state as sectarian or terroristic. This rationale has led to a post-conflict public space in which only state-sanctioned forms of social engagement are permitted. This logic reflects the assumption that ethno-nationalism was and is the exclusive underlying source of conflict – and since this is being addressed through formal post-conflict politics, all other issues can be dealt with as criminal security challenges. As Lee Ann Fuji writes,

Privileging ethnic division over other types of cleavages not only risks missing more important fault lines, it also comes dangerously close to accepting the pronouncements of hyperrationalist leaders who want outsiders to believe the main conflict in their country is ethnic, rather than political. Leaders’ attempts to reframe political problems as ethical issues have clear motive.126

Thus, depoliticization of civil society also represents a politicization of ideologies and groups that run counter to the state’s hegemonic narrative. By evoking the specter of ethnic violence, the state is able to dismiss opposition that is focused on altogether


different axes of oppression as sectarian or criminal. Particularly excluded from the realm of legitimate civil society are discourses that challenge the post-conflict state’s entanglement with multi-national globalization and neoliberalism. In the eyes of the state, civil society’s role is limited to supporting governmental programs, and taking a lead role in addressing ground-level consequences and legacies of ethnic conflict.

Neither the dominant discourse in Rwanda nor Northern Ireland have addressed the oppressive elements of neoliberal globalization in the post-conflict period, even though these processes are part of one of the largest axes of global struggle today. Both governments have ignored, dismissed, marginalized and criminalized critiques and engagement that stem from decades of anti-globalization movements and new forms of insurrectionary politics aimed at destabilizing the neoliberal project.

In terms of the global significance of these movements, it is similar to the Northern Irish government in the 1950s dismissing civil rights concerns, and the Rwandan government of the same period continuing to endorse a clientalist system which forced Hutus into subservient positions. So while post-conflict projects have limited direct ethnic and religious violence, they seem unable to address the numerous other

127 For example, some claim that in Northern Ireland, since “the defensive rationale for organized paramilitary groups diminished or disappeared” as a result of the peace agreement, there are now mostly criminal security challenges to be met. See Christopher Farrington, “Introduction: Political Change in a divided society – The implementation of the Belfast Agreement,” in Christopher Farrington, ed., Global change, civil society and the Northern Ireland Peace Process: Implementing the political settlement (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).


129 As Rupert Taylor puts it, “Why should the constitutional question [ethno-national representation] be so starkly posed as a single-choice option divorced from wider transformative trends? – especially when increasing global interconnectedness (economically, culturally, and politically) has resulted in a declining significance of national sovereignty and state borders, and led Britain and Ireland to become two of the world’s most globalized countries (Foreign Policy, Globalization index 2003) ...” He continues, “... There has been a dispersal of power to subnational, transitional, and global levels such that beneath and beyond the level of formal institutionalized politics attached to the state, issues of governance and civil society have assumed new import.” Rupert Taylor, “The Belfast Agreement,” 191.
problems emanating from neoliberal hegemony. Just as the peace processes diminish certain modes of violence, they are simultaneously increasing other modes of violence (structural, cultural).\(^{130}\) This can happen because the neoliberal approach doesn't take into account these other forms of violence, indeed cannot, must not take them into account or it will undermine itself. This model of peace as pacification is expressed well by Chris Gilligan:

The liberal peace has become a model through which Western-led agency, epistemology, and institutions have attempted to unite the world under a hegemonic system that replicates liberal institutions, norms, and political, social, and economic systems ... Peace in these terms is seen not as an international gift, or as a local production, but as a contract. Emancipatory thinking about peace has collapsed into conditionality and governmentality.\(^{131}\)

Not only does the instrumentality of civil society in service of the state create unengaged citizens, it destroys the foundations of community. As Partha Chatterjee argues against the patriarchal western logic of civil society,

Suppressing independent narratives of community which make possible both the posing of the distinction between state and civil society and the erasure of that distinction … the concepts of the individual and the nation-state both become embedded in a new grand narrative: the narrative of capital. It is this narrative of capital that seeks to suppress the narrative of community and produce in the course of its journey both the normalized individual and the modern regimes of disciplinary power.\(^{132}\)

These critiques could go on. However, their effect is to disrupt the moral discourse that has otherwise been usurped by the post-conflict hegemonic narratives.

While counter-discourse is needed, so are alternative spaces that can facilitate actual political engagement in the public sphere in post-conflict societies. Since conflict and

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post-conflict periods are extremely dynamic and include a great deal of re-ordering, there are cracks and potential angles of leverage to resist both new and old hegemonic domination. Such spaces would necessarily be experimental and rely a great deal on creative approaches that address the practical realities of post-conflict space. One such practicality is the real potential for state-based violence, or ethnic scapegoating of those who appear to threaten the legitimacy of the state-based hegemonic status quo.\(^{133}\)

Based on my research with alternative communities in Rwanda and Northern Ireland, in Chapter Four I present observational accounts and participant interviews that give a sense of how these alternatives are developing and the obstacles that remain. Prior to this, I outline the theoretical dimensions of some key micro-level elements of post-conflict alternative spaces.

\(^{133}\) For as Chatterjee also warns, such counter narratives are often, “violently interrupted once the post-colonial nation-state attempts to resume its journey along the trajectory of world-historical development. The modern state, embedded as it is within the universal narrative of capital, cannot recognize within its jurisdiction any form of community except the single, determinate, demographically enumerable form of the nation.” Ibid, 131.
Chapter Three: Conceptualizing Alternative Spaces

Introduction: Alternative Boundaries

This chapter provides a review of micro-level theories and interventions that exist on the margins of official discourse in the context of post-conflict public spaces. After direct violence has stopped society continues to be characterized by political volatility and social uncertainty, but these periods of instability also create opportunities for different forms of social and cultural experimentation. The blurred boundaries and intersection between private experience and public intervention, personal transformation and cultural production constitute an important site from which to examine the affective dynamics of post-conflict cultural space.

Micro-Politics and the Boundaries of Peace

Since the 1990s there has been a growing emphasis in conflict scholarship on the day-to-day realities, not just the macro-level determinants, of war and violence. This shifting focus has been referred to as the, “micropolitical turn in the study of social violence.” This increased attention to the dynamics of micro-level social processes is also reflected in the proliferation of peace studies programs and research during this same period. Whereas conflict-oriented sociology has retained more of an analytic distance from conflict processes, Peace Studies emphasizes engagement with local-level, non-violent approaches to peacebuilding, reconciliation and dispute resolution. In this

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135 The number of institutions with degree programs in “peace and conflict studies” as well as similarly themed journals attests to the rising popularity of these of peace and conflict discourse.
136 For example, Bartos and Wehr highlight how conflict behaviour stems from factors such as incompatible goals, solidarity, resource competition, hostility, organization and mobilization. Otomar J
regard, peace studies theory has made significant contributions to conceptualizing interventions into the sphere of structural-level forces of oppression and the underlying cultural discourses that can make direct violence seem like an acceptable or even a desirable activity.  

These engagements with micro-level conflict and post-conflict processes are, however, continually pushing up against the fact that many of the underlying systemic causes of conflict, in particular unrestrained neoliberalization, remain after periods of violence have ended.  

As a result, many academics and practitioners who work in peacebuilding because of their commitment to social change end up employed by governments and multinational NGOs which increasingly operate according to business model principles. This has driven a rapidly expanding market economy of professional sub-fields and area specializations within the peace-industrial-complex. As a result, “peacebuilding experts” are forced to compete for limited funding through extensive grant applications. The goals of these projects are often set by targeted funding initiatives that reflect supranational interests and require that interventions meet the specific criteria determined by the funding body.  


138 Indeed, many conflicts can be seen as multi-generational cycles when the unresolved resentments and traumas of one generation re-emerge among the next, often along the same fault lines. See for instance, Vamik Volkan, Bloodlines, from ethnic terror to ethnic prejudice (Virginia: Westview Press, 1998).

139 This micro-level neoliberalization has also been discussed in relation to non-profit social work. See, Andrew Woolford and Melanie Curan, “Community positions, neoliberal dispositions: Managing nonprofit social services within the bureaucratic field,” Critical Sociology No. 39, 1 (2013): 45-63.
to address particular facets of post-conflict societies in service of broader social engineering programs. While attentiveness to individual circumstances in specific contexts is very important, interventions often proceed in ways that preclude critical analysis of broader power dynamics, and are limited to addressing the most visible fault lines of conflict - usually ethnic identity.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, social engineering projects in the wake of major social upheaval are often caught up with other forms of disaster capitalism. Under the frameworks of peace and prosperity, forms of social engagement that threaten to disrupt the neoliberal status-quo can be subject to pacification and, in some instances, criminalization. While large-scale social engineering projects ultimately aim to change individual values and behaviours, the level of intervention is broadly macro – focusing on a combination of top-down legislation and incremental reforms within a circumscribed civil society.

Of course, the micro-level dynamics of post-conflict societies are deeply impacted by large-scale projects that restructure social, political and economic regimes; however, social engineering projects almost always fall short of producing the type of social change they promise. Well-conceived and locally integrated peacebuilding can be a successful means of deterring context-specific violence, as can funding for popular

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141 In an excellent introduction to a special issue of post-conflict Rwanda Nigel Eltringham calls to attention a tension between the *thick* or ideal concepts of justice and reconciliation and the *thin* experiential and contingent realities that he sees as one of the major defining points of contemporary Rwanda. See Nigel Eltringham, “Introduction: Special Rwandan Edition,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 11, No. 1: 5-10.

142 That these schemes fail is made clear in James C. Scott’s exemplary analyses of a number of social engineering projects. See *Seeing Like a State*. 
community projects; however, developing and sustaining social change is easier said than done.

A major obstacle to peacebuilding programs is the fact that community resources needed to sustain external interventions are often severely depleted as a result of protracted conflict. For instance, the collective legacy of trauma fosters widespread mistrust that is compounded by poverty and a lack of opportunity, perpetuating a sense of scarcity and competition for resources. Post-conflict societies are also predisposed to high levels of emigration and have much higher rates of suicide than other areas. So while peace and prosperity agendas do benefit society broadly by stopping direct violence and providing an influx of short term funding, they are far from the transformative panacea the rhetoric suggests.

Shattered World Views and Social Rupture

Alongside the widespread destruction of the natural world, infrastructure and political-economic systems, social conflict can leave acute and lasting impacts on the souls and bodies of individuals and on the tissues of communities. The exposure to violent conflict – be it the 100 days of rapid mass killing in Rwanda, or the slow, thirty year trickle of death in Northern Ireland – has profound impacts how individuals

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143 For instance, research in Northern Ireland has indicated some local successes, but these are often understood to be focused at local sites and not indicative of general social change. See Sean Byrne and Jobb Arnold, “The Impact of International Funding on Reconciliation and Human Security in Northern Ireland: Identity, Affinity, and Aversion in the Political Domain,” Journal of Human Security, 6 No. 3 (2010): 16-35.


understand themselves and the ways they relate with others.\footnote{146} Conflict experiences are often quickly lumped into the broad concept of “trauma,” and, in particular, the medicalized sense of the term associated with post-traumatic-stress disorder (PTSD).\footnote{147} These definitions of trauma play an important role in official public discourse and are often deployed in moral terms alongside peace and prosperity agendas in the form of public health narratives.\footnote{148} At the micro-level, trauma narratives associated with psychological research tend to be heavily biased in their emphasis on examples of the pathogenic nature of trauma, often ignoring the range of normal responses to trauma.\footnote{149}

Beyond the problems of medicalization and research biases regarding the prognoses of people exposed to trauma, many accounts of post-conflict trauma fail to sufficiently grapple with the emotional and cultural complexity of translating one’s experience.\footnote{150} Mass violence is only mass in name. The reality of violence is a discrete and irreducible interaction between individuals, even if social groups are able to render the face of the other temporarily invisible.\footnote{151} Ideological positioning can make the killing of someone labeled as ‘the enemy’ seem like a legitimate action, a distinction that

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[146]{For a more nuanced account that takes into account the deeply social nature of trauma, see Judith Herman, “Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror” (Basic Books: New York, 1992).}
\footnotetext[147]{The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association defines a traumatic event as “one outside the range of normal human experience including experiencing, witnessing or learning about death, injury or serious harm” (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2000).}
\footnotetext[148]{The medicalized discourse around the health of populations is a major feature of biopolitical forms of governance. For instance see, Michel Foucault, The history of sexuality (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978-1988).}
\footnotetext[150]{See Jill Bennett, Empathic vision: Affect, trauma and contemporary art (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).}
\end{footnotes}
dissolves the person’s individual identity into a broad category of ‘other.’ In the wake of such violence, the illusion of the faceless enemy is often dispelled, leaving the family and friends of the victims as well as the perpetrator traumatized by the gravity of, what is often seen to be in retrospect, a senseless death.\textsuperscript{152} For this reason, the official narrative of common memory is always constrained by the “limitations of narrative organization [that] contains affect within certain corporeal and moral boundaries.”\textsuperscript{153} The individual experience of social upheaval, on the other hand, is often characterized by a sense of having ones narrative coherence severely ruptured.\textsuperscript{154}

Providing a new and socially coherent narrative is an important objective of social engineering projects and is often very much framed in terms of sustaining peace and creating opportunities for economic wellbeing. That peace and prosperity programs are seldom able to restore deep social coherence is in part explained by the fact that such projects serve to replicate many of the internal paradoxes inherent in the neoliberal agenda. For instance, it is difficult to sustain the coherence of a discourse in which safety and security are equated with militarized surveillance and policing that are most often deployed when the interests of élites appear to be threatened. The overall coherence of social engineering projects demands a well-ordered and depoliticized public that acquiesces to the imbalances in power relations that are required for local-level implementation of top-down solutions. At the same time, the regimes of local-level implementation must not contradict or delegitimate the state-level powers that give them their force. This type of systemic social reproduction of structural oppression constitutes

\textsuperscript{152} Jean Hatzfield, Machete season: The killers of Rwanda Speak (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).
\textsuperscript{153} Bennett, Empathic vision, 31.
a barrier to forms of community development that are relatively unfettered from the logic of neoliberal capitalism, and thus literally rules out other possible avenues for deep social change. It is an internal paradox to demand that civil society facilitate the conditions needed for both a peaceful and a neoliberal post-conflict society. These incompatible goals lead to an inherent instability within society, an instability that compels new approaches to achieving social change to emerge within the cracks of both the ideology and the social system that seek to regulate and govern personal experience and space.

**Cultural Space**

Elements of conflict and trauma are always already present in every society, not just those that experience widespread public violence; insofar as a global culture exists, most people, especially in industrialized countries are also both complicit in violence and to some extent, have been traumatized by it.\(^{155}\) In the public sphere of post-conflict societies, narratives of trauma are often specific to the particular perspectives of the ethnic community affected. The extent to which these perspectives are reflected in the dominant narrative depends on how readily they can be adapted to reinforce the discursive field of peace and prosperity.

Following mass violence, state legislation and civil society interventions are often seen as two complementary processes that provide the resources for trauma healing while engaging in direct community health promotion.\(^{156}\) In a parallel fashion, state-funded projects in the sphere of public culture are also expected to play an instrumental role in

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\(^{155}\) Indeed, the cynical resignation that is so present in many affluent populations may be seen as a sort of psychic numbing, a major PTSD symptom according to the DSM.

achieving peace and prosperity at a local level.\textsuperscript{157} These instrumental conceptions of community health and local culture provide yet another example of how civil society is expected to function as a useful appendage to the broader state-level social-political architecture.\textsuperscript{158} This ‘thin’ description of culture and health necessarily fails to account for the broad spectrum, profound force and irreducible meanings that are constantly exceeding and redefining these definitional boundaries.\textsuperscript{159}

Culture is a polyvalent concept that is conceived of differently across academic disciplines and in different contexts.\textsuperscript{160} For the current analysis of cultural spaces, I draw on anthropological theorizations of cultural space as a site where collective meanings and identities are negotiated.\textsuperscript{161} In addition, by deploying a cultural studies lens, I emphasize the capacity of cultural productions to creatively engage the boundaries of public space and re-articulate the relationship between performance and audience.\textsuperscript{162} Cultural-level engagements are particularly important in post-conflict spaces. The dynamic webs of relational meaning not only mediate the interactions between individuals, but also influence the formation of the social boundaries. These boundaries, while not static, come

\textsuperscript{157} For a review of the uses of theatre in Rwanda see Ananda Breed, “Performing the nation: Theatre in post-genocide Rwanda,” \textit{The Drama Review}, 52:1 (2008), 33-50. To receive funding as part of the Northern Irish Arts Council’s “Peacebuilding through the arts and Re-imagining communities programme,” “Projects must meet at least one of the following 5 strategic objectives;” (1) Community Cohesion, (2) Regeneration through the Arts, (3) Positive relations at a local level, (4) Build Peace and Reconciliation, (5) Connecting communities.” See Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Accessed November 12, 2013, \url{http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/the-arts/visual-arts1/re-imaging-communities}.

\textsuperscript{158} I mean here to point out the problem of locating culture and art within a means-ends analysis. I do not mean to suggest that culture and art are not \textit{instruments} that have particular techniques and purposes.


\textsuperscript{160} These disciplinary differences are profound both at the level of theory and methodology. For instance compare, Geertz, \textit{Interpretation of Cultures} with the cultural psychology of Steve Heine, \textit{Cultural psychology} (New York: WW Norton & Co, 2011) and the cultural studies perspective of Stuart Hall, \textit{Critical dialogues in cultural studies} (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

\textsuperscript{161} For example, Clifford Geertz, \textit{The interpretation of cultures} (1974).

to function as the inside and outside surfaces of social discourse at different moments, positioning individuals in relation to the dominant narrative.

By blurring the inside and outside of day-to-day life experience in post-conflict spaces, cultural productions can and do impact and influence discourses of power. Cultural-level engagement can change the purpose of spaces, allowing for performance to emerge and disappear across different sites through varied media reaching different audiences. The capacity for culture to facilitate momentary experiences of extreme creative intensity - only to recede back into the wash of day-to-day activity - is particularly relevant in post-conflict societies, where obscuring one’s ideas and actions from the state and potentially hostile groups can be a matter of survival. The impermanence of cultural forms can facilitate participation in collective creative actions that have the power to resonate among different people, as well as across social and political boundaries.

**Liminality: Threshold and Passage**

The earthshaking social and personal upheaval associated with widespread violent social conflict, and the subsequent efforts to transition into a period of relative peace, in many ways demonstrates features of a *liminal* process.\(^{163}\) The term liminality emerged among cultural anthropologists in the early 20\(^{th}\) century as a way of describing the in-between space, or suspended threshold stage, that characterized many types of rites-of-passage rituals.\(^ {164}\) In the basic model of these ritual processes, a person is initiated by being plunged into a crisis phase, separated from normal society and forced to enter into

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the indeterminate phase of liminality. In the liminal phases, individuals are neither their old self nor yet a new self. Through the process of performing certain rites, both alone and interactively with others ritual actors, the individual is transformed in a profound way. In the final phase, the initiate is re-incorporated into society with a different social role and, in a sense, as a different person.\textsuperscript{165} Liminality, then, describes a state-of-being in which an individual is literally on the threshold of what they were and what they will be, both in terms of the self-identity as well as their identity within a web of relationships. In more broadly social terms, a society that is moving from open conflict to peace can also be loosely thought of as undergoing a \textit{liminal process}. For instance, once a society is plunged into the crisis of civil war, the fundamental impact this has cannot be undone, but has started down the path of becoming something very different - ideally a society that is more integrated, both internally and in its external relationship to the broader world.

In its original formulation, liminality was conceived within a structuralist analysis that proceeded through a series of stage-based events toward a teleological end point. This process was repeated over and again with new initiates and was considered to have an instrumental role in maintaining the internal coherence of a social system. This structuralist understanding of the liminal process was substantially re-conceived in non-structural terms by the British Anthropologist Victor Turner. Turner suggested that transformative spaces of liminality could exist outside of the formal structure of social rituals. Furthermore, he claimed that people were able to intentionally engage with the dynamics of social structure and anti-structure, subvert and redirect social processes in

\textsuperscript{165} Liminality is derived from the Latin \textit{limen} which itself means threshold. This concept was first articulated by Arnold Van Gennep in his 1909 Study of \textit{Rites of Passage}. Van Gennep’s theory was developed and adapted extensively by Victor Turner, in \textit{The ritual process}. 

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new and creative ways. Whereas Turner’s early writings involved ritual process among un-industrialized tribes in Zambia, in his later writings he examined the nature of suspended thresholds in post-industrial sites such as experimental theatre productions and the counter-culture movements of the 1960s. Turner coined the term *liminoid* (like-the-liminal) as a way to distinguish those ritual processes that are socially prescribed and reinforce hierarchies, from those processes intentionally created in order to destabilize the status quo. As Turner puts it,

The liminoid can be an independent domain of creative activity, not simply a distorted mirror image, mask or cloak for structural activity in the “centers” or “mainstreams” of “productive social labour.” To call them a distorting mirror is not to identify liminoid productions solely with apologia for the political status quo. “Anti-structure,” in fact can generate and store a plurality of alternative models for living, from utopias to programs, which are capable of influencing the behaviour of those in mainstream social and political roles (whether authoritative or dependent, in control or rebelling against it) in the direction of radical change, just as much as they can serve as instruments of political control.  

Liminoid activity provides a lens for viewing the transitional processes of post-conflict periods as a space of great creative opportunity rather than a disorderly mêlée that requires a highly structured state response to protect and heal the population. Whereas state-based responses require a legal-political architecture, cultural responses promote creative experimentation with a multitude of possible ways-of-being. Such a cultural-level perspective on emergent possibilities is supported by a growing body of literature within positive psychology that identifies a historic and systematic bias in both the theory and research on trauma. This research shows that the overwhelming amount of theorization and research on trauma had only set out to examine the pathogenic (disease

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causing) elements of trauma, without ever considering the possibility that there may be salutogenic (health causing) results from the destabilization of habitual ways of thinking and feeling.\textsuperscript{167} When the salutogenic possibilities were included in research methodologies, researchers found that, just like post-traumatic-stress, post-traumatic-growth was a predictable and consistent finding across a wide variety of traumatizing contexts.\textsuperscript{168}

The possibility that there may be elements of positive post-traumatic growth following conflict intuitively seems like a \textit{silver lining} to the general devastation of social violence. However, the dominant view of post-traumatic pathologies that require community mental health institutions and interventions is deeply imbedded within post-conflict discourse. What the medical spectrum between of illness and health does not account for is the possibility that some people who have a strong re-orientation of their way of being-in-the-world as a result of trauma may find the day-to-day drudgery involved in sustaining capitalism less attractive. The prospect that thriving might require alternative ways of life troubles the idea that psychologically ‘healthy’ people are those who are able to hold jobs, eschew violence (even in the face of systemic oppression, or 'structural violence') and contribute dutifully to the new economy; ‘mentally ill’ people, on the other hand, are those who cannot get over the fact that much of the systemic inequality that gave rise to conflict remains, and/or they are those who are unable to control their anger against a system that continues to perpetuate violence against them, yet in their name.

\textsuperscript{167} Recognizing the salutogenic aspects of trauma does not require one to ignore the pathogenic elements.
Liminality is, in and of itself, neither good nor bad. Fear in times of uncertainty can be a powerful motivator leading to scapegoating and violence, especially when framed by propaganda that facilitates the identification of the ‘other’ as the (potential) enemy. On the other hand, the state’s penetration into the private lives of individuals in order to enforce a regimented structure in the name of security is a mark of violent totalitarian societies. From a cultural-level perspective, the question in post-conflict space is not whether more or less order is needed to achieve a greater sense of existential certainty; rather, it is more a matter of the means available for individuals and groups to negotiate social processes and find a balance between what Turner calls structure and anti-structure.

Destabilization caused by conflict can create both the potential and impulse for individuals and groups to experiment with alternative ways of living. While such experimentation does not preclude or negate the negative impact of trauma, it may allow people to direct their lives in ways that they consider to be more meaningful than prior to the experience of crisis. Whether individuals and societies will pass through these liminal phases into some other radically new and collective way-of-being in not clear, nor is it evident what such a different mode of existence would look like. Attempts to prescribe and engineer post-conflict society clearly illustrate that, so long as industrial capitalism retains it hegemonic position, reform will continue to favour neoliberalization and securitization over deep transformation. In the absence of any other grand narrative to

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169 For ease of writing, I will continue to use the term liminality rather than periods of liminoid space, in the post-structural sense given to in Turner’s (1982) usage.

170 For instance, see Bauman, Modernity and the Holocaust.

171 Turner, Ritual Process.

172 In a sense, this is not unlike the whatevernenss of being that Giorgio Agamben suggests as a basis for the coming communities. The coming community, trans. Michael Hardt. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
replace capitalism, it may be that the re-aggregation phase of the ritual process must be forever deferred, and that the liminal will remain as a fluid instability. If this is the case, than so too is there an ongoing space of opportunity that is prone to the totalizing rhetoric of groups that seek to gain certainty and authority at the expense of others. Such spaces, however, also allow for an array of potential ways of being through creative engagement with the public sphere, opening up alternative pathways to coherence in the cracks of the dominant discourses. Such spaces can be conceived of as types of temporary autonomous zones.


temporary autonomous zones

The concept of temporary autonomous zones emerged in the early 1990s, a period when many left-wing activists had given up hope for the capital “R” revolution that would bring an end to capitalist domination and exploitation. This social moment gave rise to the popularization of various experiments in creating temporary autonomous zones. Such spaces facilitate and encourage tactics that disrupt the flows of power at whatever level, wherever and whenever possible. Temporary autonomy also became the basis for a lifestyle of personal experimentation through the ongoing deconstruction of identity boundaries as a means of fostering individual liberation by destabilizing the normativities and conformities conditioned by society. Although the idea of creating spaces for temporary autonomous activity surely emerged organically among different groups of people in response to different contexts, the formal articulation of the concept

\[173\] While TAZ style spaces were plentiful during the global revolutions of 1968, the period of disillusionment I am referring to was also related to the crumbling totalitarian specter of the USSR.  
\[174\] In many ways these micro-interventions were inspired by and variations of actions from the 1960’s and the theory and praxis epitomized by Guy Debord’s Society of the spectacle (New York: Zone Books, 1967).
has come to be associated with the American theorist of anarchism, Hakim Bey (aka Peter Lamborn Wilson). For Bey, 

"[t]he temporary autonomous zone metaphorically unfolds within the fractal dimensions invisible to the cartography of control [and is] freed of time and place… flows of forces and spots of power …localize it spatio-temporally, or at least help to define its relation to moment and locale." \(^{175}\)

Criticisms of the hedonistic ‘lifestyle anarchism’ associated with temporary autonomous zones has led some groups interested in radical social change to dismiss this tactic as being corrosive to radical political communities.\(^{176}\) This criticism has been driven, at least partly, by the increasingly mainstream popularity of ostensibly anarchist ways-of-being. Like punk music, many anarchist aesthetics have become increasingly co-opted and commercialized, associated with pointless vandalism and generally divorced from radical political action. Another reason for the decline in the first wave of temporary autonomous zones (or semi-permanent autonomous zones) as a mode of social organizing was the failure to create truly healthy and inclusive emotional spaces.\(^{177}\) Countless zines emerged in the 2000s identifying and criticizing the persistence of micro-level oppression and the male-dominated, white-privilege that had overtaken many such spaces. Conflicts also emerged due to struggles for power, and an inability or unwillingness to reconcile


\(^{176}\) This also represented fragmentation in the radical left, while some recognized the potential in new tactics such as TAZ, others saw these as a self-indulgent hedonism without political force. For instance, see Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (New York: Anastasi Press, 1995).

\(^{177}\) Of course there is the potential for an extremely toxic scenario to emerge as well. The experience of personal incoherence can be incapacitating and the absence of social structure can lead to group dynamics dominated by individuals with aggressive social dominance orientations and gang-styled hierarchy. For a relevant review of dominating personality dispositions in small groups see, Jim Sidanius, and Felicia Pratto *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
individual claims to autonomous action. For these and countless other reasons, many radical intentional communities imploded, seeming to confirm external criticisms.

Outside of the western context from which the tactic of temporary autonomous zones emerged, the concept has been developed and adapted to the realities of contemporary struggles in different contexts. This is particularly relevant to the fact that after the end of the Cold War the number of intra-state conflicts rose substantially. In the context of internal conflict, temporary autonomous zones provide not only a means of destabilizing capitalism and xenophobic discourses, but they can also be a survival tactic. It is in such micro-level conflict spaces where the durability of some of Bey’s early theorizations rings true. For instance, he writes, “Why bother to confront ‘power’ which has lost all meaning and become sheer simulation? Such confrontations only result in dangerous and ugly spasms of violence.”

Temporary autonomous zones are not just personal liberation spaces, but sites where identities are enacted relationally and sustained through the ongoing process of constantly re-imagining and escaping from dominant social and political discourses and their material consequences. Temporary autonomous zones are actively effective insofar as they disrupt the global dynamics of power and challenge the local-level logic that allows identity categories to become the basis for enacting violence. Central to their capacity for externally subversive action is the fact that temporary autonomous zones allow for the creation of compelling alternatives that tap into local cultural discourse.

179 For a review of the factors involved in the changing nature of conflict see the report compiled by the University of British Columbia’s Human Security Centre, Human security report: War and peace in the 21st century (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)
This also means creating actual safe space where people can access the resources they need to sustain themselves and each other.\textsuperscript{181}

Such spaces provide an example of liminality, where the principle of post-traumatic-growth is able to channel a collective convalescent force beyond narratives of passivity and pathology. These spaces can also become staging points for assaults against discourses of cultural violence by exposing not only the illegitimacy of the underlying assumptions, but also the undesirable realities on offer within the status quo.\textsuperscript{182} Once again, this type of action is consistent with Bey’s formulation of the temporary autonomous zone as a space from which,

> The strike is made at structures of control, essentially at ideas; the defense is invisibility … and invulnerability. As to the future - only the autonomous can plan autonomy … the realization of TAZ begins with a simple act of realization.\textsuperscript{183}

By creating mutually constituted spaces of collective presence, temporary autonomous zones allow for resonances to emerge based on elective affinities. Such affinity is grounded in personally coherent and affectively sensitive contact with others in a space where the significance of particular ideological and identity backgrounds are suspended. A principle of collective organizing is a shared interest in destabilizing constricting and controlling tendencies within society, while recognizing that the strictures of power-relations have impacted all people differently. In the broadest possible

\textsuperscript{181} These are sometimes referred to as hidden transcripts, See James C. Scott \textit{Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). See also Gladys Ganiel’s description of religious havens, “Havens are...conceived of as safe spaces where people use religious resources to challenge ethnic boundaries and power structures. They can be seen to function as mechanisms for disrupting long entrenched feedback patterns of opposition and conflict.” Gladys Ganiel, “Ethno-religious Change in Northern Ireland & Zimbabwe: A comparative study of how religious havens can have ethnic significance,” \textit{Ethnopolitics}, 9 No.1 (2010), 103.

\textsuperscript{182} To use the peace studies framework proposed by Johan Galtung, such actions are means of challenging cultural violence.

\textsuperscript{183} Bey, \textit{Temporary}, 3.
terms, temporary autonomous zones seek to amplify the potentiality of a multiplicity of actions through creative and improvisatory ways, while consciously striving toward the ideals of an anti-oppressive, non-hierarchical consensus. That lifestyle anarchism became a divisive issue among well-educated, predominantly white, male-dominated western urban centers demonstrates the capacity of potentially threatening discourses to be co-opted and depoliticized. That said, collective spaces that facilitate multiple possibilities for alternative lifestyles through intense moments of self-transformation and creative collective action can be incredibly powerful. In contexts where the choices on offer are limited to either the violence of identity-conflict or the overbearing social control of capitalist exploitation, compelling options are needed. Whereas many anarchist intentional communities imploded because of their incapacity for collective care, temporary autonomous zones can open up opportunities for fostering and nurturing core aspects of human interdependence. In post-conflict societies, the legacies of identity-based violence and segregated suffering remain close to the surface. In such contexts, even the occasional emergence of temporary autonomous zones as I have described them can potentially have substantial effects that rupture blockages and orient the flows of affective force through private channels and public spaces.

**Affective Forces Inside and Out**

Beyond simply identifying and exploiting the cracks in transitional post-conflict systems, social spaces must be able to offer meaningful alternatives that resonate with a common desire to live in a way that is not possible within the dominant structures.\(^{184}\)

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Rather than groups that forge coherence through dogmatic doctrines or unequal power relations, the alternatives spaces I am interested in, while deeply embedded in their context, are more oriented toward pro-social and self-transcendent values and practices. An important part of the ethos in such groups exists in their adaptive approaches to creating alternatives to the normalizing mainstream discourses that perpetuate violent power relations. This impulse to creative engagement contributes to be a shared valence that energizes collective action.

The space and time in which groups form and dissolve are sometimes particular and singular events, but more often they evolve amidst complex and paradoxical social intersections over time. At the level of the individual, living in a world that is perceived as absurd and incoherent is often accompanied by a strong internal sensation of non-coincidence between social narratives and the lived experiences of individuals. Even alternative spaces that emerge for short periods of time can facilitate deep

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185 Social divisions based on dimensions that distinguish people motivated by power and domination versus those inclined toward transcendence and benevolence has even been proposed as a universal distinction. See, Shalom H. Schwartz, “Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries,” Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, No. 25 (1992): 1-65.

186 I consider such “shared valence” in the sense of Stuart Hall’s magnetic lines of tendency, which draw together, through particular discursive articulations, the otherwise non-necessary connections to form coherence within the sphere of culture. Using the example of religion, Hall says, “Its meaning – political and ideological – comes precisely from its position within a formation. It comes with what else it is articulated to. Since those articulations are not inevitable, not necessary, they can potentially be transformed, so that religion can be articulated in more than one way. I insist that, historically, it has been inserted into particular cultures in a particular way over a long period of time, and this constitutes the magnetic lines of tendency which are very difficult to disrupt.” See Stuart Hall with Lawrence Grossberg “On postmodernism and articulation. An interview with Stuart Hall,” in David Marley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies (London: Routledge, 1996), 142.

187 Many similar forces are however at play in Events, which occur as singular a defining moments such as revolutionary overthrows. See Alain Badiou, Being and the event (London: Continuum, 2006).

individual-level change, impacting society at particularly key moments that can have lasting effects on the development of broader social discourse.

_Private Experience and the Ethics of Seeing_

Public-official versions of historic violence are often morally loaded in ways that privilege certain experiences while excluding others.\(^{189}\) The simplification of complex social histories can have a great deal of influence on how contemporary power dynamics are justified. Although the public sphere can be a site of struggle to achieve a common memory that accommodates and incorporates a wide breadth of experiences, the particularity of the affective experience of trauma defies a generalized narrative.\(^ {190}\) In societies where intense violence punctures the normalcy of day-to-day routines, such incoherence between inside experience and external media coverage often exemplifies this type of non-coincidence.\(^ {191}\) Despite their symbolic importance, public representations are often unable to adequately express the particularities of private experiences of violence and trauma. As a result, embodied experiences are in tension with individuals' abilities to communicate the profound dimensions of their deeply personal experiences.\(^ {192}\)

Although their experiences defy a cohesive narrative, for some survivors of violent trauma the persistence of powerful embodied sensations impact aspects of their lives seemingly beyond conscious control.\(^ {193}\) Trauma in this sense is not something that is

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\(^ {190}\) Bennett, _Empathic Vision._


\(^ {192}\) Dominick LeCapra, _Representing the Holocaust: History, theory, trauma_ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

had, but rather something that is felt. Such affective force may propel destructive
behaviours, but it can also be channeled in creative ways that give individuals new and
invigorated purposes.\textsuperscript{194} Bringing private experience into a space of encounter with other
private experiences can create a mutually constituted affective force that can be a
powerful basis for intervening into the tropes of public memory.

In her analysis of contemporary art and trauma, Jill Bennett distinguishes sense
memory from what she refers to as the ‘common memory’ of societies. Sense memory
denotes a primarily felt experience that can be revived but not narrated. By bringing
deeply private emotions into encounters with a public audience, sense memory can act as
a means of exposing the, “uneasy relationship between common memory and that which
threatens its coherence: a manifestation of the lived experience of an inside and an
outside.”\textsuperscript{195} In a formulation that fits well with the thinking behind temporary
autonomous zones, Bennett suggests that, “If the negotiation of sense memory entails an
emergence into a designated social space, then it occurs not in a discrete region but as a
rupture within the field of representation or common memory.”\textsuperscript{196}

An important insight offered in Bennett’s work concerns the capacity of visual art
in post-conflict societies to both address and impact audiences in ways that go beyond
reinforcing moralized emotional responses to narrative scenarios.\textsuperscript{197} Expanding on
Bennett’s insights, I aim to explore other aspects of culture in the public sphere that
facilitate going beyond the boundaries of post-conflict discourse. Aesthetic experiences
can activate a dynamic affective engagement on the threshold of what we are able to

\textsuperscript{194} For a discussion of various models which indicate personal growth following traumatic experiences see,
Astier M. Almedom, “Resilience, hardiness, sense of coherence, and post-traumatic growth: All paths
leading to ‘light at the end of tunnel’?” Journal of Loss and Trauma, 10 No. 3 (2005): 253-265.
\textsuperscript{195} Bennett, Empathic vision, 27.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 50.
grasp of the experience of another person and what remains unknowable. Such affective engagements can have the effect of taking an individual outside of themselves, where they come face to face with exteriority of other people. Along with aesthetics, other experiences in cultural space can destabilize the boundaries between our inside and outside affective experience, giving rise to what Bennett refers to as an “empathic ethics of seeing.”

**Shifts in Habitual Centers of Energy**

The destabilizing affective forces involved in threshold experiences have long characterized private and public rituals that seek to go beyond the boundaries of the status quo. An ‘ethics of seeing’ involves recognizing that there are feelings and truths that are inaccessible to our own experience, or what Judith Butler describes as “hearing beyond what we are able to hear.” These affective experiences can transform how one perceives the permeability of the social and material membrane between the inside and the outside.

A prototypical example of such a transformative encounter is the phenomenon of religious conversion. The moment of spiritual transformation has been described by many as having ‘seen the light,’ a trope that implies a new way of seeing that was previously unimaginable. Conversion is a highly affective and embodied experience that

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199 Bennett, *Empathic vision*.  
201 I will limit my discussion here to a mainly Christian conception of conversion.
at once exceeds the limits of an individual’s capacity for expressed understanding, while simultaneously being overwhelmingly true and compelling.

In the case of conversion, although the experience ruptures the assumptions of an old self, it is not a negative source of uncertainty or fear, nor does it necessarily involve adopting a prescriptive religious narrative with clear dictates. Rather, it is often described as an embodied experience of indistinction between inside and outside, accompanied by a profound sense of meaning that re-orient one’s life priorities. In his lectures on the varieties of religious experiences, William James describes conversion in the following terms:

> Let us hereafter, in speaking of the hot place in a man’s consciousness, the group of ideas to which he devotes himself, and from which he works, call it the *habitual centre of his personal energy*. It makes a great difference to a man whether one set of his ideas or another, be the centre of his energy; and it makes a great difference, as regards any set of ideas which he may possess, whether they become central or remain peripheral in him. To say that a man is ‘converted’ means, in these terms, that religious ideas, previously peripheral in his consciousness, now take a central place, and that religious aims form the habitual centre of his energy.\(^\text{202}\)

Consistent with Bennett’s insight, the sensation of conversion exceeds the kinds of narrative structures that are made up of formulated ‘ideas.’ Also, like sense memory, the experience of conversion cannot be fully accounted for, though it can be revived through the performance of ritual. Conversion, for James, denotes a major shift in affective valence, a re-alignment of magnetic poles to stretch the analogy, which consequently alters the behavioural and cognitive framework in which the convert operates. Importantly, James’ account of conversion – even religious conversion – does

not necessarily imply that a person shifts to a new belief framework, only that they are
overwhelmed and changed by a force they perceive as spiritual. In the same sense that
one does not have trauma, but feels it, the same can be said for conversion.

The rupture that often accompanies conversion is not a psychotic break.\(^\text{203}\) That is
to say, the convert does not disassociate from the materiality of the world or enter into a
world of hallucination; rather, conversion is often accompanied by the perception of an
extreme and inseparable connection between the inside and the outside of their
experience and the world. In religious language this has been expressed as the Kingdom
of God on earth, or as the indwelling Christ within all peoples.\(^\text{204}\) The contours of
conversion, in this sense, also distinguish it from a nihilistic individualism that is
sometimes associated with ‘post-modern’ claims that posit an endless series of discursive
deferece; this sense of conversion also departs from theories that reduce human agency
to reductionist stochastic behavioural probabilities.\(^\text{205}\)

Insofar as conversion reconfigures behavioural habits, it also impacts the affective
ergies that motivate new affinities and challenge the ideological systems that condition
them. The moment of rupture in one’s ways of being is the most pure form of conversion
because it marks a tipping point, or fulcrum upon which the orientation of a newly
valenced orientation hinges. In other words, conversion can reconfigure the affective
dynamics of inside-outside relations in a way that directs behaviour.\(^\text{206}\) The material

\(^{203}\) The ambiguity between madness and religious revelation has a long history. For instance, see Michel
Foucault, *Madness and civilization: a history of insanity in the age of reason* (New York: Pantheon


\(^{206}\) The concept of ‘tipping points’ suggests that by instigating micro-level changes in the preference or
behaviours among individuals, once a critical point is reached, these small effects become amplified to
have far reaching social impacts. For a popular account of such phenomena see, Malcolm Gladwell, *The
struggle of sustaining this embodied transformation, and of re-establishing habits around new magnetic lines of tendency becomes a task of re-inhabiting day-to-day life in a way that is responsive to one's new ethics of seeing.

Such a task of re-inhabitation necessarily involves experiments in ways of being. As I have argued, such experimentation can more readily take place, and involve less severe risks in spaces where liminality is already present and is to some extent embraced.\(^{207}\) The cases I have been concerned with are liminal spaces or temporary autonomous zones that come into existence as a response to the lack of social and personal alternatives in mainstream discourse. As spaces where people intentionally strive toward non-hierarchical practices, collaboration and consensus, conversion of a particular inside should not occur as though there was no outside. In this sense, conversion in temporary autonomous zones (as opposed to a highly structured church) seems conducive to the emergence into the domain of ethics, in the Levinasian sense in which,

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\text{[a] calling into question of the Same - which cannot occur within the egoistic spontaneity of the Same - is brought about by the Other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics.}^{208}\]

Alternative spaces in post-conflict societies trouble the notion that there can be a teleological resolution to either social conflict or individual trauma; like engaging and

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\(^{207}\) The original sense of liminal space described by Turner functioned as a ritual way of bringing about something of a conversion experience. However, this type of social conversion was not only forced, it required individuals change in a way so that they could assume a new socially useful role.

challenging art, they blur the affective boundaries between inside and outside. To the extent to that affective forces are always flowing through cultural space, collective participation in experimental rituals in liminal space have a powerful potential. There remains an element of mystery in these experiences, which is perhaps not unlike what is compelling about aesthetic or religious experience. What is clear is that in neither case can these experiences be reduced or captured. In post-conflict spaces where thresholds are sustained by virtue of social uncertainties, resisting easy sources of narrative coherence may be the precondition for allowing new poetic formulations of social transformation. In the following chapters, I explore how two alternative communities in post-conflict societies are engaging on such thresholds of the dominant social narratives.

**Methodological Overview**

The research conducted for this project draws on two very different case studies that require their own specific contextualization and historicization. The following chapters (4 and 5) provide the necessary overview of the post-conflict contexts that make it possible to situate the cases studies. In what follows I address my general methodological approach and the specific challenges I encountered while working across disparate post-conflict settings.

I had previous experience working and conducting research in both Rwanda and Northern Ireland prior to beginning the current research. As a PhD student enrolled in a

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Peace and Conflict Studies program, I had also begun to identify a number of overarching commonalities in post-conflict peace programs that led me to increasingly question their relation to broader global power dynamics. My experiences ‘on the ground’ also suggested that there was much more to the post-conflict situations than was evident in the top-down peacebuilding discourses. This project was born out of my desire to see how these top-down and bottom-up realities fit together and what alternatives existed.

I had spent several months in Rwanda as a researcher and intern with the United Nations Development Project and had developed a social network in the country. Through these connections I held a position with a local NGO helping to prepare grant proposals and conduct support work for a number of community development sites. Through this experience I became familiar with members of AERG and became immediately interested in what the organization was doing. The contacts I made allowed for the necessary arrangements to be made, and I conducted the research over three months in 2007.

The obvious cultural and linguistic differences, as well as the ever-present legacy of genocide created a gulf of experience that I was never able to overcome. However, having built connections to the community allowed me the opportunity to gradually build rapport with a number of members of the AERG which in turn helped to facilitate access to various events and seemed to make other members more willing to take part in my research. Overall, I recorded about 43 hours of interviews with members of AERG over a three-month period. I also interacted with members of AERG on a semi-regular basis and was also invited to take part (as an outsider of course) in a number of events. I kept a
journal of these interactions, and used these notes to help orient future interviews and guide my observations.

My first experience in Northern Ireland came as a visiting doctoral student at Trinity College Belfast’s Centre for Reconciliation Studies in 2008. I did, however, have a personal connection to Northern Ireland that fuelled my interest. My father’s side of the family had migrated from Northern Ireland to Canada in the mid-1800s and I grew up with a broad but unspecific cultural affinity to ‘Ireland’ although my understanding of the conflict was limited. While living in Belfast I became acquainted with members of Ikon and soon developed a rapport with a number of members and took a personal interest in their unique theology and practice. Unlike in Rwanda, where I had to rely on outside networks and NGO friends to establish connections, in Northern Ireland I found it much easier to make in-roads through personal interactions.

I was able to engage more fully in Ikon’s events prior to conducting substantial research, and because of the inherently inclusive nature of the group, I felt like much more of an insider. The core membership of Ikon is relatively small, around 30-40 people, so when I began my research I already had a strong rapport with a many of Ikon’s organizers, which helped to create more of a conversational interaction during my interviews. In total, I collected approximately 62 hours of interviews and recorded talks given by members of Ikon. I also kept a journal in which I took notes regarding Ikon’s gatherings and informal conversations.

From the early stages onward, my position as a foreign researcher was very different in Rwanda than it was in Northern Ireland. I chose AERG and Ikon as case studies because neither organization was directly state-based and both groups exemplified
social structures and activities that were deeply engaged in the post-conflict culture. Although members of both groups had been exposed to conflict-trauma – especially members of AERG – this was not an issue that I was focused on. That said, the impact of trauma was present in much of the discussions, even when it is not explicitly articulated. For ethical reasons I did not try to solicit explicit trauma experiences from participants, but rather relied on a semi-structured interviews in which I asked about their involvement in their respective organizations. Inevitably, stories of traumatic experience did come up, and these are reflected in much of my discussion on post-conflict liminality.

This study was particularly concerned with aspects of post-conflict culture that emerged outside of the dominant state-based narratives and post-conflict peace programs. In particular, I was concerned with how these organizations responded, and created alternatives to what I identified as primarily western-based interventions with a neoliberal focus on social engineering. So while it would be possible to situate these case studies more deeply in post-colonial frameworks, I relied on my case-specific observations of these organizations’ values and practices as I observed them in order to situated them vis-a-vis the dominant discourses of western-styled power dynamics.  

210 For an example of post-colonial scholarship which engages with many of the concepts introduced in the foregoing theory chapters see, Achille Mbembe and S. Rendal, “At the edge of the world: boundaries, territoriality, and sovereignty in Africa,” Public Culture 12, No. 1 (2000): 259-284.
Introduction: Conflict and Transition in Northern Ireland

The ethno-national conflict between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, commonly referred to as ‘The Troubles,’ is usually located between the years 1968 until 1998, although the intensity of violence and local dynamics varied greatly across this period. The root of the conflict lies in the legacy of colonial appropriation of lands during the English and Scottish plantations in the 1600s. In many ways, this historical period created the basis for the ethno-national struggle between the native Catholic population and the settler Protestants over the legitimacy of the British state on the island of Ireland. The Troubles, however, were not simply the continuation of historic conflict, but occurred as part of a global uprising related to both the civil rights movement in the United States and the rejection of capitalist domination throughout Europe. In the case of Northern Ireland, the popular movement in the late 1960's took the form of a push for equal rights for the marginalized Catholic populations. This thirty-year period saw the re-occupation of Northern Ireland by the British Army, over 3,500 deaths, and numerous failed peace talks.

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213 For an overview of the ongoing tensions following the first Irish Rebellion of 1635 see John Gibney, *In the shadow of a year: The 1641 rebellion in Irish history and memory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).
Changes in the international political and economic situation often exacerbated the underlying conditions of inequality, and created more forceful securitization of marginal communities. In the 1990s, pressure mounted for governments with the greatest stake in the conflict - namely the United Kingdom, Ireland and the United States - to find a settlement. What emerged was a highly structured élite arrangement that addressed issues of identity politics and formal governmental representation in the Northern Irish Parliament. The political settlement among élite actors initiated far reaching social, economic and cultural changes that affected people differently across Northern Ireland. On Easter Friday 1998, the Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Peace Agreement) was signed between Northern Ireland’s eight major political parties, as well as the governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom. On May 28th of the same year, the Agreement was endorsed in a public referendum by 71% of Northern Irish voters and 94% in the Republic of Ireland.

**Élite Power-Sharing**

The architecture of the Belfast Agreement was constructed using the principles of a political science framework known as consociationalism, a top-down method of power

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216 For instance, the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 marked a new period of neoliberalization and draconian governance.

217 The United States has long had strong ties with Ireland and American-Irish were a substantial force in funding the republican cause.

218 I will be using the identity labels ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant’ to indicate the two major ethno-political groupings in Northern Ireland. The reality of identity is in fact much more complex as I will allude to, including the political distinction between Ulster ‘Loyalist’ and ‘Unionist’ as well as between Irish ‘Nationalist’ and ‘Republicans.’ Some scholars have referred to Catholic and Protestant identities as simply political markers in Northern Ireland. This too over-simplifies the importance of religious belief and community dynamics. While choosing to stick with the traditional designation of identity has its problems, the complexity of these groupings remain a point of conscious reflection throughout this dissertation.

sharing developed in the works of Dutch Political Scientist Arend Lijphart.\textsuperscript{220}

Underlying consociational conflict transformation is the \textit{realpolitik} assumption that only the free hand of powerful leadership backed with economic and coercive force can create the conditions for meaningful social change in divided societies. Such an arrangement centralizes power so that élite representatives from oppositional parties share executive power, each providing a check on the other’s ethno-national hegemony, while jointly managing issues of internal security, and external political-economic developments.\textsuperscript{221}

According to proponents of this style of conflict resolution, in addition to executive power-sharing, successful consociational agreements demonstrate three other features. Parties involved will have: 1) equal status and authority in regards to matters related to their particular culture; 2) proportional representation in, and benefit from key public institutions; and 3) veto rights to prevent changes that negatively impact their vital interests.\textsuperscript{222} Advocates of consociationalism emphasize that meeting demands of élites is of paramount importance and that popular public sentiments can, and often should, be disregarded if they depart from or interfere with this top-down vision.

One of the underlying assumptions of consociational politics is that conflict transformation is unlikely to happen if left up to the masses.\textsuperscript{223} Thus, for intractable conflict to be transformed and deep systemic change achieved, “...the independent actions


\textsuperscript{221} Features of segmented societies include endogamous marriage, separate schooling, distinct service economies, separate media as well as distinct culture and language. See Brendan O'Leary, “The Limits to Coercive Consociationalism in Northern Ireland,” in John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary \textit{The Northern Ireland Conflict: Consociational Engagements} (London: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-63.

\textsuperscript{222} McGarry and O'Leary, \textit{The Northern Ireland Conflict}, 1-2.

\textsuperscript{223} Consociationalism also precludes the possibility that class-based solidarity might be a means of transforming a conflict. Of course, such a possibility would certainly not be something the political and economic élite, the prime actors in consociationalism, would be interested in entertaining. On the contrary, such a Marxist belief in cross-ethnic class solidarity was reflected in the ideology of revolutionary IRA members at the beginning of the Troubles. See John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, \textit{The Politics of Antagonism: understanding Northern Ireland} (London: Athlone Press, 1993).
of political élites,” is required, even when these actions are carried out “...in opposition to their followers' demands,” for it is the responsibility of strong leaders to disregard “other less important societal variables.” Throughout the process of élite top-down conflict transformation those who start with the most power remain in power. The architecture of the consociational agreement is intended to reach a balance of power between ethnic groups, but does not fundamentally change the basic nature of political economic power relations on a broader scale. For consociationalism to work there needs to be sufficient pacification to ensure security and promote targeted economic restructuring in ways that facilitate development along capitalist, hegemonic lines.

The structure of the Belfast Agreement was not without precedent in Northern Ireland. There had been numerous versions of power sharing agreements attempted during The Troubles, beginning with the 1973 Sunningdale Agreement. There was a great deal of mistrust and bad faith involved in these negotiations and each successive attempt fell apart because of the intransigent positions held by extreme Nationalist and Loyalist blocs. The conflict appeared to be a zero-sum game, where an advance by Catholics was a loss for Protestants and vice versa, creating a strong disincentive for political leaders to be seen as making compromises with the enemy. The Troubles involved a complex relationship of personalities, failed political arrangements and violence – the legacy of which still remains.

225 Here again, the logic of *disaster capitalism* described by Naomi Klein in theShock Doctrine is apparent.
226 There were also elements of this type of power sharing that led to the partition of Ireland in 1921.
Prior to the Agreement of April 1998, the question of “consociational engineering” was a popular topic of debate amongst academic and politicians. For the powerful players involved, the crux of the question was “... whether élite motivations, élite autonomy, and segmental structures can be reshaped by British and Irish policy-makers in ways which are conducive to consociation.”

Evidently, in 1998 the élites were satisfied that the Agreement would both meet their immediate needs and that it would be amenable to their collective long-term interests. For the UK government under Tony Blair, the Agreement represented the resolution of a longstanding security issue and also provided a welcomed public relations success story after the embarrassing international attention paid to the UK's abuses of human rights. Britain had also faced increased pressure to reach an agreement from President Bill Clinton who was unusually responsive to the Irish American lobby and the popular cause of Irish liberation. For the Republic of Ireland, the Agreement was seen as a step toward unification and a way to prevent further insecurity and disruption to the island's economy should the conflict escalate.

The framework of the Agreement continues to give legislative as well as strong consultative input to political élites from Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. While there were many local level factors that led to the signing of the Belfast Agreement on Good Friday of 1998, it was concessions on the part of élite political negotiators that finally allowed the Agreement to proceed.

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230 The fact that Clinton granted accused “terrorist” and Séin Fein political leader Jerry Adams a visa to America in 1994 outraged many but also brought many hardline Nationalists into the process.
231 Prior to the partition of 1920 the conflict had engulfed the entire Island and many saw this as a warning of a possible future.
232 The United States, especially under President Clinton, played a major role in influencing Britain as well as militant Irish Nationalists to negotiate. The US does not, however, does not have an explicit role in the Agreement.
The consociational framework privileges élite priorities by setting the trajectory both for the legislation and implementation of policy in ways that exclude and marginalize alternative perspectives. By arguing that consociationalism is both the cause and the keeper of peace, the dominant discourse legitimates all state-driven actions on the basis that they are necessary for peace and prosperity. By framing the Belfast Agreement as primarily about stopping direct sectarian violence, other forms of structural violence were ignored and have been allowed to continue unabated.233 The discursive movement which legitimates structural violence also creates the conditions that perpetuate forms of oppression. As these conditions of inequality become entrenched, it is more likely that the people bearing the brunt of the oppression will again come to see direct violence as a legitimate response. Peace activist and theorist Johan Galtung has described the dialectical movement that legitimizes both structural and direct violence as “cultural violence.”234 As Galtung puts it “Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel right – or at least not wrong.” Both state violence and local insurrection rely on, “the use of violence and the legitimation of violence” which “becomes internalized within the psyche of individuals and dominates social patterns as well.”235 Cultural violence then, is a discursive force insofar as it conditions unequal power relations both between individuals and social institutions. By exulting peace while creating the social, political and economic conditions needed for continued neoliberal development, consociationalism and liberal civil society risk perpetuating the dynamics of cultural violence along new axes of domination.

235 Ibid., 291-292.
Soft Social Engineering in Civil Society

In principle, a top-down social engineering project need not be too concerned with the wishes, opinions or reactions of the broader society, so long as there is enough élite support and sufficient force to impose order and to ensure that the disenfranchised pose no serious threat. Northern Ireland has seen its share of heavy-handed imposition and oppression; however, the current Agreement represents what can be considered a relatively soft approach to social engineering. This is partly due to the fact that it was a priority for the majority of people in Northern Ireland, from both ethno-national communities, that direct sectarian violence come to a stop. Also, Britain had learned hard lessons from the several unsuccessful periods of direct rule. During this era, it became clear that the use of overwhelming force to suppress Irish Nationalists only bolstered broader support for the movement in the Catholic community and that violations of human rights, such as mass internment and torture, damaged the credibility of the United Kingdom and brought embarrassment on the international stage.

To the credit of the negotiators (many of whom have toiled their entire careers to reach such an agreement) it was undoubtedly a substantial accomplishment to secure the co-operation of historically intransigent members of the political élite. To date the

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236 Although as James C. Scott argues, the unwillingness to recognize social factors often leads to the demise of the state. *Seeing Like a State: how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

237 While the Agreement may be a softer form of social engineering than in places such as Rwanda, it was still argued that it needed to be “coercive” and that threats of more oppressive alternatives – such as force partition of Northern Ireland – be used to ensure it was implemented. See O'Leary, “Limits to Coercive Consociationalism.”

238 All polls conducted which included question on the use of violence indicated that cessation was a priority for most Northern Irish.


240 McGarry and O'Leary, *The Politics of Antagonism*.

241 Some commentators have noted that individuals leaders, now old men, may have felt motivated to compromise as they consider the nature of their personal legacy. For instance, see John Gibney's
Belfast Agreement has managed to achieve one of its major aims: it has substantially reduced the level of direct violence between the Protestant/Loyalist and Catholic/Nationalist communities. The success in disarming the paramilitary groups and working toward a police force which includes members of both communities (amongst other things) has helped to establish what can be called a negative peace.\footnote{Negative peace implies the absence of direct violence. See Johan Galtung, \textit{Peace by peaceful means} (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, and London: Sage Publications, 1996).} While there is an absence of direct violence, there remains distrust and disunity in many communities that continues to create barriers to the sort of reconciliatory and co-operative intercommunal thriving that would constitute positive peace.\footnote{Positive peace indicates the presence of conditions that allow for individuals to thrive. \textit{Ibid}.}  

\textit{The Blurring of Social Antagonisms}  

At its best, civil society can be a site of substantial local transformation through popular participation that can change the facts on the ground, while also influencing state-level direction. At its worst, civil society conflates peace at the local individual level with the pacification that is needed to ensure smooth economic and political ascendancy. Within such a weakened civil society, direct violence may be suppressed, but new forms of structural violence are permitted. Such violent permutations are played out in local level discourses within community organizations as well as educational and religious institutions. These local discourses are engaged at the same level at which propaganda and cultural symbols inflame sectarian sentiments and popular narratives condone violence.\footnote{Paul Dixon, \textit{Northern Ireland: The Politics of War and Peace} (New York: Palgrave, 2001).} As a result, the spaces where these local discourses are formed and reproduced is a terrain of ideological struggle. For some, the primary conflict fault line at

\textit{In the shadow remarks on the occasion of making previously classified historical archives related to the Troubles digitally available to the public, an event attended by Rev. Ian Paisley. Gibney, \textit{In the shadow}}
the local-level remains the presence of ethno-sectarianism; in communities where this antagonism has lessened, the underlying social processes involved in the encroaching and oppressive forms of neoliberal power-dynamics are becoming a greater concern.

While the Agreement has done a great deal to address the antagonistic power imbalances between ethno-religious communities, it does not reflect the reality that power in globalizing societies is much more located in multinational flows across national frontiers. Thus, whereas the historic imbalance of power could more readily be mapped onto Protestant/Catholic identities, the current antagonism is less clear. As a result, the peace and prosperity discourse implies that because the ethno-religious imbalance of power has been addressed, so too has the major basis for social antagonism. Thus, participation within civil society also implies that there is a need to limit and to moderate the scope of social-level action, which in some cases requires forfeiting certain political aspirations. Of course moderation is certainly a positive thing in the context of civil war, or for instance when the political aspirations of one group entail the oppression or annihilation of another group. However, a constrained civil society creates limits on the expression of other forms of political dissent, particularly when it is aimed at the state and other élite interests. This can lead to a self-selecting civil society based on the principles of neoliberal securitization and development. This type of conditional-inclusion has also been facilitated by offering economic and political incentives to groups considered to be ideologically “radical” in order to make them “less extreme” and give

246 The Orange Order used to hold thousands of marches every year which would symbolically cover a large a representative territory in order demonstrate the ruling political ideology. While the Orange Order continues to march, a growing symbolism can be seen in the spread of “peace” centric programs and policy which is everywhere present.
them “a stake in the system.”247 Thus, the same mechanisms ostensibly meant to shape the body social toward peaceful economic development are directly linked to mechanisms of state coercion and control. Simply put, the state security apparatus and civil society are interwoven.

The official mandate of Northern Irish civil society is to support the Belfast Agreement, but in practice there is a substantial amount of ambiguity in terms of narrative positions and local support for policy implementation.248 This ambiguity is in fact characteristic of the Agreement more broadly, as Arthur Aughey has put it,

the grandeur of the architecture in its post-modern pastiche seemed clear enough from a distance, but the shape, operation and substance of it was fuzzier the closer you got...this fuzziness was thought to be one of the greatest strengths of the Agreement. It was also thought to be one of its major weaknesses.249

In other words, the Agreement is structured in a way that benefits Loyalist, Republican and international élites but the impact that these top-down structures have had at different localities is much less clear.250 In part this fuzziness is a result of the difficulty in translating top-down political and economic legislation into policy that actually impacts local social and cultural realities. As one Irish theorist of post-conflict transition puts it, political structures can be examined formally, but studying social

247 McGarry and O'Leary, The Northern Ireland Conflict, 25.
250 I have been part of a research team which has set out to explore these local impacts. Sean Byrne, Jobb Arnold, Katerina Standish, Olga Skarlato, Pauline Tennent, “The Impact of International Funding on Reconciliation and Human Security in Northern Ireland: Identity, Affinity, and Aversion in the Political Domain,” Journal of Human Security, vol. 6, no. 3 (2010) 16-35.
change requires, “bringing meaning and variation back in [which] makes the explanation considerably more complex.”

Modalities and Meanings of Civil Society

Civil society is a notoriously slippery term with multiple meanings and modes of operating. In contemporary usage, civil society is often thought of as the “third sector” comprised of a variety of community groups that are able to pursue their agendas somewhat independently of both business or government. Other civil society theorists have shifted away from such institutional definitions, instead defining civil society as a, “locus for civic virtues such as trust, respect and tolerance, altruism, and senses of belonging, which imprint themselves on the quality of social and political bonds.” In a similar fashion, Jeffrey Alexander has proposed a shift away from notions of civil society defined through terms of networks of institutions and organizations to, “a set of values towards ‘the democratic life’ that are communicated by discursive and cultural practices and disseminated by the mass media as well as cultural, legal, and other institutions.”

There have also been significant criticisms of the tendency to glorify civil society as a predominately benevolent force working for equality among all members of society. The selective nature of civil society can be a powerful social force in defining the public boundaries of discourse, marginalizing voices considered to be unacceptable. As Slavoj Žižek argues,

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inherent structural dynamics of civil society necessarily give rise to a class which is excluded from the benefits of civil society, a class deprived of elementary human rights and therefore also delivered of duties towards society, an element within civil society which negates its universal principle, a kind of “un-Reason inherent to Reason itself”—in short, it's a symptom.\textsuperscript{256}

In Northern Ireland one of the major tensions that exists between the state and civil society has to do with the relative importance of top-down legislation and grassroots reform in bringing about effective social change. Proponents of civil society challenge the view that consociationalism was singly responsible for ending the conflict. Such critics argue that the Agreement could not have been reached without the many individuals and groups who worked within civil society organizations to set the stage for change.\textsuperscript{257} However, because relatively little distinction is made between the various actors in civil society – their values, practices and objectives – it is difficult to ascertain who exactly is doing what.\textsuperscript{258} Noting this overly broad usage, Gladys Ganiel has suggested that civil society should be viewed in terms of its function rather than in terms of its institutions. The particular functions of civil society organizations are to a large degree determined through the discursive interplay between organizational dynamics, institutional form and the facilitation of the broader state apparatus.\textsuperscript{259}

The capacity for civil society organizations to navigate between the complexities of local context and the official policy framework is also a key part of their ability to carry out particular functions. For this reason, being able to function in the domain of civil society requires that organizations accept the new modes of governance as

\textsuperscript{256} Slavoj Žižek, “Multiculturalism or the cultural logic of multinational capitalism?” \textit{New Left Review}, I/224: 46.

\textsuperscript{257} Brewer et al., “Religion, Civil Society.”


\textsuperscript{259} See Brewer et al., “Religion, Civil Society.”
legitimate, while maintaining a keen awareness of the elements involved in defining the nature of social antagonisms in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{260} In Northern Ireland, civil society organizations that are able to demonstrate the right balance between state compliance and social relevance are more likely to maintain funding while also remaining legitimate in the eyes of the populations they interact with.\textsuperscript{261} This strategy of successful-moderation also has the effect of normalizing groups with more radical social or political views that fall outside the mainstream discourse. In order to be part of civil society, such groups face pressure to change their public position as well as the their particular function, or risk being excluded or even criminalized. For these reasons, a broadly positive but generally constrained narrative of civil society discourse exists that is not only complementary but is also, in fact, necessary for the top-down framework to succeed.\textsuperscript{262}

\textit{Outside of Civil Society}

The most effective way to marginalize criticisms of the current state form has been to associate dissenting positions with sectarian violence. In this way opposition becomes not only marginal, but also serves as a demonstration of the necessity for the consociational system itself. The function of the marginalized young people who are actually on the streets and rioting seems only to provide further justification of top-down

\textsuperscript{260} This contestation is particularly evident in urban space such as Belfast city centre, see John Nagle, “The right to Belfast city centre: From ethnocracy to liberal multiculturalism?” \textit{Political Geography} 28 No.2 (2009): 132-41.

\textsuperscript{261} The issue of particular organizations within civil society advocating for the interests of one of the ethno-nationalist communities remains a concern (and is provided for within the framework of the Agreement). This is not of great concern to me for this analysis. The point I wish to make is that civil society has been framed within the broader post-Agreement peacebuilding discourse as obviously working toward peace and prosperity, and that this is the right aim.

rule and the expansion of the neoliberal hegemony.\footnote{263} Indeed the sporadic but ongoing sectarian violence in Belfast serves a critical function in the élite power sharing government. These cases are used to affirm the dominant position that the conflict is exclusively about the ethno-national antagonism between Catholic and Protestant communities. This leaves little space to critique or oppose the ongoing oppression that is sanctioned by the reformist liberal agenda of peace and prosperity.\footnote{264} In the early phases of the political engineering of peace “The British state claimed to offer a new pluralist and inclusionary beginning for all willing to work within its terms, while harshly punishing those who challenged it outside the law.”\footnote{265} After much political bargaining, revision and posturing, the principle of peace contingent on fundamental acquiescence to the revised state form is still firmly in place.

There are certain other voices active at the local level that have also been deemed “uncivil” and excluded from the legitimized realm of civil society.\footnote{266} These include, for instance, the Loyalist Orange Order, as well as Catholic groups that are sympathetic to retaining a diversity of tactics in the struggle over state legitimacy, such as paramilitary

\footnote{263} For instance, the position of the Northern Irish First Ministers (who represent the historically ethno-nationalist communities) often repeat the same rhetoric as the comments on riots in July 2010: “Northern Ireland’s first minister, Peter Robinson, and the deputy first minister, Martin McGuinness, denounced the ‘thuggery and vandalism’ of the rioters and defended their political efforts to ease tensions over controversial parades.” Siddique, Haroon. “Belfast riots continue for third night: Northern Ireland politicians unite to condemn ‘thuggery and vandalism’ after shots were fired at police,” The Guardian, Accessed October 20, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/jul/14/belfast-police-violence-ardoyne.


\footnote{265} Ruane and Todd, The Dynamics of Conflict, 191.

\footnote{266} For many people, the notion of “subcultures” continue to connote alliances with criminal organizations, Paul K. Clare, “Subcultural Obstacles to the Control of Racketeering in Northern Ireland,” Conflict Quarterly (1990): 25-52.
activity. Riots are a relatively common occurrence in public spaces around Belfast. While there is often a sectarian undertone to riots (Catholics and Protestants don't usually riot together) most often these events amount to young people clashing with police with no discernible purpose or agenda. Many of these young people come from relatively impoverished areas of the city and have been raised facing systemic poverty, social marginalization and criminalization. The type of “hooliganism” that is evident in riots provides a highly visible spectacle that receives a great deal of media attention. Besides the fact that the poorer communities tend to have maintained a stronger link to ethno-sectarianism, it is difficult to ascribe any political motive, let alone particular political consciousness, to the individual participation in these actions. Such images of violent clashes are subsequently framed, repeated and presented as justification for securitization and the attendant programs of political engineering that are meant to bring about peace.

State-based strategies to pacify and contain these segments of the population have a long history in Belfast, from the use of military-style armoured police vehicles to the use of urban design to segregate and separate communities. For instance, West Belfast was intentionally separated from the main part of the city by the building of the massive A12 Westlink freeway through the area, making the corridor impassable except for a series of easily regulated bridge crossings. The Westlink intersects with a large security fence (euphemistically called the “peace wall”) that divides the working class Catholic community on the Falls Road to the South and the Protestant working class enclave on

268 Social Psychologist Konrad Lorenz has found that feelings of social immobility lead to frustration which in turn is often expressed as aggression. Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963).
269 The riots I am speaking of here should be differentiated from the riots that often occur during the summer “marching season” when Protestant organizations such as the Orange Order and the Apprentice Boys march through predominantly Catholic areas as a show of dominance.
the Shankill Road to the North.\textsuperscript{270} The containment of West Belfast is a classic case of social engineering as are the smaller security walls that continue to be built around Belfast as a way of managing behaviour through spatial control. This ongoing strategy of pacification and containment is being most heavily deployed in North-Belfast's inter-face areas.\textsuperscript{271}

People are free to criticize the particular features of the Agreement (and do so fervently). However, fundamental critiques or activities that question the legitimacy of the current state in its neo-liberal form are construed as either marginal and irrelevant or extremist positions in favour of insurgent sectarian conflict.\textsuperscript{272} Such a logic suggests that to disavow ethno-religious violence (which most do), is to be more-or-less within the boundaries of civil society. Within these boundaries, circumscribed by official discourse, is a mainstream that wants peace and prosperity and is willing to compromise on other issues to work toward this super-ordinate goal.\textsuperscript{273} This reinforces the notion that post-conflict political engagement at the local level involves a choice between civil war (i.e. street violence) or civil society has created an effective distinction for implementing a strong form of governance that employs both consensus and coercion to prevent serious challenges to the dominant discourse.

There are also subcultures within Northern Irish society that are non-sectarian and have remained peripheral in the discourse of mainstream civil society. For example, a

\textsuperscript{270} The phrase “peace wall” may be close to Orwellian double-speak maxim “war is peace” than euphemism. Indeed, this uncanny use of language begs the question of how the other tenets of Orwell's dystopic future manifest in Belfast, i.e. “freedom is slavery” and “ignorance is strength.” George Orwell, \textit{Nineteen Eighty-Four} (London: Penguin, 1949).

\textsuperscript{271} Inter-face areas are urban spaces in which a largely Catholic/Protestant community begins to increasingly occupy space which runs abut to the other community, increasing the likelihood of interaction.

\textsuperscript{272} Brewer, Higgins and Teeny “Religion, civil society.”

form of evangelical Protestantism has been growing that shares more commonalities with the global evangelical movement than local religious society. Another group with a tenuous relation to the dominant discourse are artists, many of whom receive government funding. During an interview, Brian Connolly, a prominent Belfast performance artist and professor of art at the University of Ulster explained that,

In some cases the arts have become instrumentalized in the service of community building and conflict resolution. This has created a problem for the arts. This is in part because too often the government is interested in the [artistic] product without the practice. [There are however] a lot of artist collectives emerging, and there is more fragmentation than in the past because there were simply more opportunities and people involved.

The liberal agenda in Northern Ireland has benefited from the agreement through multiple stages of peace funding. A new peace economy has been a boom for many groups and individuals have become involved in civil society peacebuilding activities because it was a sector that offered better jobs. That said, the Good Friday Agreement has not received unquestioned support, nor have all those groups and individuals working within civil society embraced it. The social and political climate remains volatile, and there are many different local-level discourses that coexist alongside the hegemonic narratives. The majority of state-sanctioned organizations, however, are engaged in what can be called a liberal peacebuilding discourse. Organizations seek to address a range

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275 Interview with Brian Connolly, March 20, 2010.
277 The funding for peacebuilding projects is now coming to an end, which has put additional pressure on civil society and non-profit organizations to secure funding through other sources. Again, this puts pressure on organizations to develop more cost efficient, strategic business plans.
of social issues – advocating ethnic tolerance, ecumenical dialogue, education – while remaining united in supporting progressive reform aligned with state-based programs. There are however groups that are emerging outside of these dominant narratives whose focus is less on social reform than on puncturing the normalcy of day-to-day life.

Chapter Five: Ikon: TAZ in the Cracks of Liberalism

Introduction

In Northern Ireland, there exists a range of local narratives that diverge from the official state discourse. The state’s peace and prosperity agenda does however, exert a strong influence on peoples' everyday lives and frame the their relationships within the public sphere.\textsuperscript{280} In this chapter, I present participant-observation research and semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the Belfast-based Christian arts collective Ikon. I began this research while I was living in Belfast as a visiting doctoral student between September 2008 and May 2009 and returned on a number of occasions afterward to attend Ikon events. During this time I conducted a total of 23 interviews with Ikon participants and organizers. The interviews were open-ended and the topics ranged from the reasons why individuals became involved in Ikon and the nature of their experience of community, to the group’s position within Belfast’s post-conflict civil society. An overarching theme that emerged was the sense that Ikon facilitated a space where individuals could experiment with different ways of thinking about and engaging with religion, culture and community.\textsuperscript{281} In this chapter I explore how Ikon’s creation of temporary autonomous zones has facilitated dynamic individual and social-level experimentation with alternative forms of discourse that were not present in the dominant post-conflict discourses of consociationalism and liberal-civil society.

\textsuperscript{280} These local narratives range from re-calculated approaches to ethno-nationalism, increased global integration and general depoliticization, see Rupert Taylor, “The Belfast Agreement and the limits of consociationalism,” in Christopher Farrington, ed., \textit{Global Change, civil society and the Northern Ireland peace Process}, (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2008), 183-195.

\textsuperscript{281} Although the vast majority of participants in Ikon come from Protestant backgrounds, there are also several Catholics as well as many who have chosen not to identify with either the tradition or the identity.
Case Study Selection and Research Methodology

The basis for this case study research had its beginnings in 2008 after a lecture given by Ikon founder Peter Rollins in a seminar I was taking at the Centre for Reconciliation Studies at the Belfast Campus of Trinity College, Dublin. Rollins spoke about engagement and ethics in contemporary society, and approached the topic in a very engaged manner that immediately struck me as distinctly different from other approaches to post-conflict scholarship I had encountered. The description he gave of Ikon also differed a great deal from the various NGOs, peace-building centers and community initiatives I had encountered through my work and research in post-conflict settings.282

The lecture he gave deployed a great deal of (what I later realized was a characteristic) intensity and dealt with the possibility of imagining new forms of ethics using the works of the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the philosopher Jacques Derrida. Although he was speaking to a group of students in a graduate seminar on Reconciliation in Northern Ireland, Rollins did not offer any direct commentary on the Troubles or the Belfast Agreement, instead he evoked a method that asked what it might mean to ethically deconstruct social processes more broadly.

I spoke with Rollins following the lecture and he invited me to attend an upcoming Ikon event which I readily accepted. I continued to attend Ikon ‘gatherings’ over the course of my time in Belfast and developed a strong rapport with several participants and organizers. During this period it became clear that in many ways Ikon was an exemplary case study of a self-organizing group that was creating a space where

282 I had the chance to review a relatively broad swath of post-conflict NGOs operating in Northern Ireland as a research analyst at the University of Manitoba reviewing funded community organizations as part of a European Union project. I had also had the chance to learn about and visit a number of different organization through the Centre for Reconciliation Studies at the Irish School of Ecumenics in Belfast.
alternative discourses and practices were emerging in a creative and experimental way. Ikon demonstrated characteristics of social activist groups I had been involved with in Canada - for instance, its non-hierarchical organization, and its emphasis on creating an inclusive and safe space free of discrimination. My previous experience with anti-oppressive organizations provided a sense of shared affinity with many members of Ikon which I believe was an asset as I began to conduct more formal interviews.

Although I was acquainted with the majority of the people I interviewed, I ensured that the research was conducted in as non-intrusive and ethically responsible a fashion as possible. For example, the experience of violent conflict can have a substantial impact on communities even if it is not apparent on the surface and so I avoided questions that directly probed into individual experiences of trauma. Research in conflict-affected communities requires sensitivity to and respect for individual boundaries and awareness of potential risks. These considerations framed both the ethical basis as well as the methodological underpinning for this case study. Had I been too direct in asking my research participants to talk about painful experiences or politically charged issues such identity or historical wrongs perpetrated, I would have risked not only violating their privacy but I would likely have also made them less willing to respond honestly.283

Rather than focus on issues of ethno-religious identity or political subject positions, my research proceeded by taking part in the intellectual and organizational aspects of Ikon. As a participant-observer during the preparation phases of Ikon gatherings and performances allowed me to talk with individuals during the process,

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283 For an overview of approaches to post-conflict research see, Alpaslan Özerdem, Richard Bowd, eds., Participatory research methodologies: Development and post-disaster/conflict reconstruction (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010).
which often led to learning more about their personal experiences. My research thus provides firsthand accounts from a group that has created an alternative social space wherein they experiment with modes of engaging in a post-conflict environment in a broader community where ethno-national identity boundaries remain salient.

This case study can be situated in the growing research literature on post-conflict Northern Ireland that has demonstrated that values and practices at the level of local social engagement offer a very different picture of post-conflict social change than the top-down view. For instance, there has been a recent resurgence in research that takes seriously the role of religion in post-conflict social change, something that had been dismissed by many political scientists as merely a ‘political identity marker.’

Undertaking this research over a decade after the Belfast Agreement was signed, I was able to explore some of the expected and unexpected consequences of the unfolding peace process. For some, the Northern Irish model of consociationalism is an exemplary model of conflict resolution that can be applied in other societies. It is also a model of how a western European nation is being re-shaped in a way that reflects the disparities and struggles within contemporary global power relations.

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287 For instance, McGarry and O'Leary’s dismissal of religion as merely a marker of political identity has been challenged on many fronts by work such as Gladys Ganiel, Evangelism and Conflict in Northern Ireland (New York: Palgrave, 2008). John Francis McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, The Northern Ireland Conflict: consociational engagements (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
289 Incidentally, Rollins had been invited to give this lecture by Professor Gladys Ganiel, who at the time had been the only academic to have written about the role of Ikon within the broader peace process as
research on post-conflict social change has taken a relatively liberal view of what an ideal post-conflict society should entail. While acknowledging the importance of moving from violence to greater tolerance in post-conflict civil society, my research seeks to contribute an alternative social movement perspective that challenges the assumption that a ‘liberal’ society is in fact a desirable end point.\(^{290}\)

**Ikon – Not Your Everyday Liberals**

The participants in Ikon I interviewed had a demographic profile that was similar to other liberal organizations in civil-society with a slightly greater experience outside of the country and generally higher level of post-graduate education.\(^{291}\) The majority of those I interviewed had come from relatively middle-class Protestant backgrounds, although there were notable exceptions. In a number of ways this type of demographic is quite similar to what Adrian Guelke has describe, somewhat pejoratively, as in indicative of, “British or urban metropolitan liberals.”\(^{292}\) In her account of Ikon, Gladys Ganiel has

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\(^{291}\) This demographic profile was noted by Ganiel, *Evangelicalism and Conflict*.

also questioned whether “[t]heir concentration among the young, urban, educated elite may ... limit their influence” in transforming Northern Irish society.  

Ikon’s relative privilege and over-representation of people from Protestant backgrounds may be seen by some as grounds to discount them as inconsequential integrationists with a mistaken analysis of the political situation. What can equally be noted about Ikon, is that in many ways their demographic make-up is quite similar to organizations outside of Northern Ireland that have been associated with some of the most effective social movements in the past two decades - such as the anti-globalization movement and Occupy Wall Street. Far from being ‘liberal integrationists,’ many of the participants active in these movements emphatically reject liberalism as a way of obtaining social change, opting for radical and anti-oppressive social alternatives.

Within Northern Ireland, Ikon can be further distinguished from Guelke's partisan “metropolitan liberals” by the extent to which their ideas, values and practices deviate from much of the mainstream discourse. While there are many influences in Ikon, the group has been most heavily influenced by Peter Rollins’ vision of an insurrectionary and materialist reading of Christianity that is based on a deep skepticism towards, and confrontation with, mainstream social norms. Rollins has been prolific in articulating these ideas in public lectures, several book publications and actively blogging.

293 Ganiel, Evangelicalism and Conflict, 105.
294 In fact McGarry and O’Leary suggest dismissing several varieties of integrationists and transformers John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, The Northern Ireland conflict, 17.
295 This demographic make up in alternative social movements has been noted by Richard J.F. Day, Gramsci’s dead: Anarchist currents in the newest social movements (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2005).
297 For instance, see, Peter Rollins, Insurrection: To Believe is Human; to Doubt, Divine (Hodder and Stoughton: 2011); How (not) to speak of God (Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2006); The fidelity of betrayal: Towards a church beyond belief (Massachusetts: Paraclete Press, 2008).
Although his work engages contentious social issues, Rollins seldom writes or speaks directly either about the Northern Irish political climate, or his experience growing up during the Troubles. While Ikon cannot be reduced to Rollins’ vision, he has been able to paint a picture that has drawn people in, and it is far from embracing a liberal view of society. For instance, during the launch of his most recent book *Insurrection* that was also the first stop on an American pub-tour with two other members of Ikon, Rollins stated:

> Resurrection is nothing if it is not insurrection. The belief in resurrection is the participation in insurrection in communities. Pirate islands. Pirate islands are little communities and collectives of people who live differently than the dominant political, social and religious values of this society. That's what we want to see. Resurrection is insurrection. ²⁹⁸

This reference to “pirate islands” is a direct allusion to the work of anarchist philosopher Hakim Bey, who uses the notion of “pirate utopias” as a template for intentional communities formed outside of mainstream society.²⁹⁹ Rollins’ reference is not merely a coincidental association. Bey's concept of *temporary autonomous zones* has been highly influential to the development of Ikon’s five “coordinates.”³⁰⁰ As a


³⁰⁰ Ikon’s five coordinates with a brief description as posted on their *Pyrotheology* website:

“(1) **Iconic:** Just as an icon is a physical creation that invites us to experience a sacredness in, but not fully contained by, the creation, so ikon endeavors to form spaces in which the world that we inhabit is experienced as possessing a profound depth. By creating iconic spaces where the event opens up participants to a love of the world, ikon is committed to practices that evoke a deep celebration of, and commitment to, life.

(2) **Apocalyptic:** The word ‘apocalyptic’ refers to the incoming of a singular, unrepeatable event that is inconceivable from our present place. It describes an event that could not have been predicted in advance of its coming and which defies all expectations. At ikon we value the place of the absolute surprise and attempt to form spaces that help to challenge some of our most deeply ingrained beliefs, opening ourselves up to what we might otherwise be unable to imagine.

(3) **Heretical:** If heresy brings to mind that which deviates from the accepted and agreed path then ikon is heretical in the sense that it causes us to rethink the well trodden paths of our inherited traditions. We welcome the fact that our own success will ultimately undermine our heretical stand, for if we become established then we will become the dominant voice. Hence we seek to build self-critique into the very heart of our gatherings so that we continually undermine our own ideas.
temporary space that destabilizes the normalcy of day-to-day routine Ikon creates the conditions to foster moments of intensity that can both disrupt flows of power and give new meaning to life. This type of micro-level autonomy is perhaps particularly appealing in post-conflict societies as power and control transition from a climate of militarized fear and occupation to a neoliberal society of micro-level controls.  

In such a transitional context, it would be a mistake to dismiss Ikon’s experimental engagement in social action and cultural production as just another whimsical pursuit of the privileged. The subversive nature of temporary autonomous zones lies in the fact that they can plant the seeds of future developments, compel new allies and propel lines of flight that offer more than simply a choice between the old conflict and the new ideal of liberal peace and prosperity. In temporary autonomous zones, “The strike is made at structures of control, essentially at ideas; the defense is invisibility … and invulnerability. As to the future - only the autonomous can plan autonomy … the realization of TAZ begins with a simple act of realization.”

The undefined and relatively anonymous nature of Ikon's gatherings is well suited to the social environment around Belfast, where the old ethnic politics is never far below

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(4) **Emerging:** The idea of emerging captures the nature of movement that ikon wishes to celebrate. For things to emerge there must be birth, but there must also be death and decay. For if things do not die and decay then they cannot feed the soil out of which the new can emerge. This means that ikon seeks to embrace cycle of birth, death and decay, allowing thoughts and practices to come into being, pass away and dissolve into ever new forms.

(5) **Failing:** Finally ikon acknowledges that it constantly falls short of its hopes. Because of this we recognise that it would be inauthentic for us to sit back and declare that we have accomplished what we have set out to do. Instead we remain mindful of the fact that our attempts at forming a community of individuals who touch the depth of existence and celebrate life before death, are precisely that: attempts.” From Ikon’s website Pyrotheology: Theory and Practice, Accessed March 19, 2014, www.pyrotheology.com.


the surface. Using a cocktail of ambient music, performance art and participatory rituals, Ikon intentionally tries to create an uncanny ‘space-apart’ from normal society.

Individuals are invited to temporarily suspend their identities for the period of the gathering, and are provided with the symbolic tools and space to take part in an emotional experience of collective creativity.

In an interview with Rollins at the “Re-Emergence” conference held at the Irish School of Ecumenics in 2010, he again made reference to the importance of the temporary autonomous zone model for what Ikon does. Here he revealed a deeper sense of how such suspended space can function to destabilize the individual’s self concept, even in a society where identity conflict had made such a deep impression on people.

If we too strongly hold on to our identities, the concrete aspects of political, religious, social beliefs, we reduce ourselves and we miss this transcendent element, this thing that we have, our humanity, our bare humanity. But of course you can't think of yourself outside of categories like male and female, and in this culture Protestant and Catholic. So for me the church provides a space for us to, I would call it, performatively lay down our identities in the liturgical hour. What we do is we symbolically participate in kenosis [Philippians 2:7]– you know, the self-emptying of God. And by emptying ourselves of our identity performatively, and eating a meal together, communion, we take on the identity of Christ who became nothing, we encounter each other beyond those identities. But it's only a TAZ moment - that's it a TAZ moment, it's a temporary autonomous zone. When we leave the liturgical hour, we take on our identities again, but we take them on differently. And they're more fluid, they're more open to being changed, we see them as historically conditioned, not intellectually, we experience them as historically conditioned and the idea is then the friend-enemy dialectic is broken, and we argue as friends.⁴

One of the unique features of Rollins' thought is that he is able to combine knowledge of radical social theory with culturally imbedded theological concepts. Some

⁴ Peter Rollins, Interview at Irish School of Ecumenics, March 2010.
may argue that anarchistic notions such as temporary autonomous zones are incompatible with religious dialogue or that such strong social critiques are too close to views of violent paramilitaries and undermine the foundations of the peace process. Both such claims do not hold up to under serious critique. For example, Protestant paramilitaries are particularly dogmatic and conservative, rallying around events that commemorate historic victories and clinging to monarchical traditions that are the epitome of conservative.

Rollins' interest in affecting change is in many ways more similar to certain strands of Irish Republican Marxism, insofar as there is a radical critique of class division. This, however, merely recalls the numerous affinities and aversions between Marxists and anarchist ideologies and tactics that go back to Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin themselves.

*Sustaining a Liminal Presence*

As an autonomy-oriented religious group in a post-conflict situation, Ikon holds a precarious position. This precarity also seems to be the source of their longevity and success. Again, their orientation along the lines of temporary autonomous zones can be seen as one reason that Ikon has continued to be relevant. Rather than progressing to some more mature state, Ikon has remained relatively unformed, allowing it to serve a transitional function for individuals who arrive at the gatherings. This precarity and embrace of fragility was expressed by an Ikon organizer who told me,

> We've often toyed with the idea of just stopping [Ikon]... just, lets have a count down let's just say okay, we're ending on this day,

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305 Of course, “Anarchy” is often associated in the mainstream press with violence and mayhem, which on a visual level share similar space as the violent and peace-hating paramilitaries.

306 Indeed, Rollins often draws on the Work of Slavoj Žižek – a philosopher who claims to stand by the revolutionary Marxist project.
let's just do it, you know and make something of it. Because of course our five coordinates, one of the coordinates is failing. Ikon is iconic, it's apocalyptic, it's emerging, heretical and it's failing. Wouldn't it be great if we just did one and it was called “Ikon fails” and that was just the end [laughs]. Or we just said “Ikon – failing” with the date you know. And we love the idea, but there's still something – no we don't want to stop ... but it's great to have it built in.307

Many of Ikon’s participants were raised in the violent climate of the Troubles and this background is something that is reflected in Ikon, though mostly through what is not overtly talked about. Indeed, the importance of religion, individual responsibility, social justice and radical philosophy converge on some of the key fault lines that mark Northern Ireland's cultural and political landscape. However, Ikon’s approach has provided a space where people can engage with all of these issues without any pressure to divulge their past or claim any political position. As one on-and-off Ikon attendee put it,

We're all informed by The Troubles to some degree. Whether we've never seen anybody shot, whether we've never been in a bomb scare, whether we've never been in any of those things we're still – even if we're being influenced by the silence about it, even if we're being influenced by people ignoring it, we're still influenced by it. Sometimes it's the elephant in the room kind of stuff with the troubles you know, sometimes its just people not talking about stuff, it doesn't mean it's not affecting us. So I suppose there is an edginess [in Ikon] you know that I feel, that I don't see in other [places] – there have been connections.308

The fact that Ikon's alternative social positioning and edgy aesthetic has continued to be primarily associated with religion is also a significant feature of Ikon’s experimental social space. In his subsequent writings after The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Hakim Bey has noted that, foremost, it is in areas that have been ravaged by violence where deeply creative and flourishing social realities are able to emerge. Bey

307 Interview with Jon, April 8, 2010.
308 Interview with Ricky, March 2010
calls these radical communities that come into being after mass conflict, *No Go Zones* (NGZ) - areas that have been abandoned by the state and hold no allure for capitalist development, thus allowing for development outside of the normal determinant forces. Although Northern Ireland was once seen as a dangerous place, it never underwent the extreme devastation that Bey has in mind in the ideal type of a No Go Zone. All the same, it is interesting to reflect on the role that Bey sees religion playing in No Go Zones,

I am not saying that the NGZ should be ‘religious.’ I’m saying that it will be ‘religious,’ and is ‘religious’ and that if we believe in the desire for some liberatory potential in the NGZ, we should begin now to find a ‘religious’ language that will reflect and help to shape and realize that potential or else we will face a religion of fascism … or a spirituality of entropy.309

While there was a substantial variance in the opinions expressed by the Ikon participants, it was clear that very few of the Ikon participants I interviewed considered themselves to be part of the liberal mainstream - even though several of them worked in post-conflict organizations. One organizer differentiated the “comfortable liberal church-goers” from Ikon’s more activist-oriented participants that considered micro-level change to be a way to respond to the broader social systematic forces impacting people’s lives.

You have some liberals, the liberal church or whatever... They find a little comfort in the liberal churches, but when you're just up against the wall – maybe it's something Ikon can do differently. I think the reason Pete says that [Ikon] could happen anywhere, is cause he wants it to happen everywhere, he wants these kind of little groups to form. He doesn't put people on, he doesn't want to put liberals on either, he wants to challenge them as well. And so he should.310

310 Interview with Cazi, March 2010.
Unsettling Privilege: Language and Positioning in Ikon

In a conflict that has been characterized by economic inequality, socially divided communities and sectarian political violence, language and symbolism continue to carry potent messages. While the Catholic community has seen a political resurgence following the Belfast Agreement, the Protestant community is finding itself compelled to negotiate between its historic privilege and an increasingly precarious political position in the present. The legacy of settler Protestantism has sometimes been referred to as a “siege mentality,” referring to the very strong in-group cohesion among members of the ethno-religious communities. While there has always been a diversity of political, social and economic views among Protestants, there was a great deal of pressure on Unionist/Loyalist groups to observe the general prohibition against acting or speaking in ways which may undermine their collective legitimacy in Northern Ireland.

Historically, to disavow the crown as a member of the Protestant settler community was to be a traitor to your own local community – a cultural norm that stems back to the oft-memorialized Siege of Derry. In 1689, the Governor of London-Derry, Robert Lundy (who had pledged allegiance to the Protestant King William of Orange) retreated from the approaching Catholic Army, compromised the defence of the city and

311 Indeed, many people even today chose to talk about Ireland as an undivided Island, and see the recognition of a North and South as unwarranted legitimation of political oppression. I will use the Northern Ireland in my discussion, since it is both a formal designation and also one that was used by all of the participants in my research interviews.


313 Community cohesion was also very strong in Catholic communities, but the dynamics varied greatly and are beyond the scope of the current discussion.

314 Many Unionists who are leery of the British Government because of their desire to be neutral in the conflict. Because of this feeling of betrayal, they are even more isolated which drives the siege mentality. See McGarry and O’Leary, The Politics of Antagonism: understanding Northern Ireland (London: Athlone Press, 1993).

315 Many Protestant traditions commemorate the lifting of the Siege of Derry, including the parading of the Loyalist groups The Apprentice Boys and the Orange Order, and large public bonfires during which effigies of Lundy are burned.
then fled to Scotland. Henceforth \textit{Lundy} has been a Northern Irish Protestant synonym for a cowardly traitor to your own people. Accusations of Lundyism became more frequent during the Troubles, owing to the rhetoric of Protestant Loyalist politicians such as Ian Paisley who framed any Protestant political compromise as “Lundyism from above.”\footnote{See Aughey, \textit{The politics of Northern Ireland}.} Local dissenters who expressed dissent toward community-level sectarianism were also considered Lundys, and often faced violence from their own community paramilitary groups.\footnote{See McGarry and O'Leary, \textit{The Politics of Antagonism}.}

Strong Protestant community cohesion has also been framed as a strategic necessity for survival in a country surrounded by potentially hostile native Catholics.\footnote{The rhetoric of a looming conspiracy amongst “Papists” to eradicate the English-Protestant community has been around since the propagandistic construals of the Irish Rebellion of 1641. For an overview of the divergent interpretations of the conflict stemming from that event, see John Gibney, \textit{The Shadow of a Year: the 1641 rebellion in Irish history and memory} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013)} This trans-generational rhetoric has been used to impose internal restrictions upon the bounds of discourse and cross-community engagement. This ongoing socialization and internal surveillance likely prevented many members of the Protestant community (especially the educated middle class and those politically active) from openly taking positions that could be construed as Lundyist.\footnote{This is not to suggest that no Protestants spoke out against the intolerance and abuses perpetrated by their own community; some did and this internal critique has expanded during peace negotiations.} While steps have been taken by the government to address the economic inequality that has been enshrined over centuries (to the advantage of Protestants) many Protestants continue to enjoy the privileges that had been structurally established during the decades of exclusive Protestant hegemony.

For many well-to-do evangelical Protestants, the peace agreement has meant increased security without severely compromising their social status. Since many of Ikon’s members come from just such a background, there has been a conscious process of
trying to come to terms with privilege. This self-reflective process was evident in the comments of an interviewee who described the tendency for liberal Protestantism to be in the luxurious position of being able to claim to be apolitical:

You know a lot of people, or most people I think that would come to Ikön, or have experienced Ikön would probably be the people who actually have come to the place of saying you know I don't really care if you're Protestant or Catholic. It's almost like an old language of our parents. So maybe people haven't even journeyed with that a lot, maybe there's actually a lot of people that actually assume that as being the language of their parents and have never really journeyed with the political ... Maybe that's actually a luxury of being Protestant Evangelicals, you can say we're not Protestant we're not Catholic, we're just born again. And they sort of actually remove themselves from the political thereness, the political messiness. Which is the same as anyone who wants to be the observer rather than the participant – because it's easier...

It's a very naive kind of desire to be “oh I'm just the observer I'm not connected to all that.” Well actually you're radically connected but you're part of the problem by not engaging with it, and you're not getting involved in the messiness of connections, of politics ... They remove themselves from the messiness and it's a nice position to have, it's a luxurious position to have. Of the detached observer almost, looking at these people doing these things. So there's an interesting political landscape and I don't know what Ikön does for that.

In keeping with Ricky's observations, many of the members of Ikön who I interviewed indicated that they had come from a relatively homogenous Protestant, evangelical milieu and had felt pressure to preserve the internal consistency of the community dynamic. Instead of preserving this comfortable background, the majority of my interviewees reported that their experience with Ikön had either induced or was a catalyst in unsettling or rupturing their beliefs. For example, one of the more conservative-minded participants I interviewed described such a unsettling feeling when he first encountered Ikön.

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320 Interview with Ricky, March 2010.
I think my first impression of the Ikon thing was to be completely gobsmacked by what it was offering me...I remember going along and just kind of being astonished by what they were doing exactly because my experience of church up until then had been fairly traditional, you know I'd been going to a quite conservative Baptist church most of my life, and it was just before I started going to bible college.

It just struck me that this [Ikon event] was the first time I had been in anything vaguely church related that actually engaged me intellectually. Because in the traditional way you go to church, you sit on the pew, you listen to the sermon, you sing the songs, and then you go home. There's no real necessity for engagement. Well this I actually felt engaged with and I've always been somebody who really thrives on discussion, it's the most rewarding theological thing I've ever done.\(^\text{321}\)

**Inside and Outside: Troubling Unstable Boundaries**

Many of the organizers I interviewed were very aware that Ikon tended to have a destabilizing impact on peoples' religious beliefs, and particularly on the Protestant worldview particular to Northern Ireland. As one of the key Ikon organizers suggested, creating a space where individuals are able to confront, revise or disregard aspects of their own beliefs may also help to unsettle a more general social insularity. By destabilizing inherited or dogmatic barriers associated with religion, the space created by Ikon allows for the individual emotional experience to come into contact with a potentially hostile outside world. Rather than using religion as a means of separating the inside from the outside, by unsettling the boundary between inside and outside, Ikon creates a potential space for encounter.

In some ways it's interesting that Ikon arises from a very troubled space, you know in terms that it arises in Northern Ireland. And Ikon kind of tries to rupture this type of faith experience in some ways ... 

\(^{321}\) Interview with Phil, April 12, 2010.
While the Troubles are going on, all this trauma is going on outside, with shooting and bombs and all the rest of it, then in the church context people are very sheltered ... at one level very insulated. But at the same time almost denying, kind of insulating themselves from the traumatizing of other people you know what I mean, psychologically or whatever. And so it's interesting to me that Ikon arose out of that and said, you need not actually insulate yourselves from that but actually expose yourself to your feelings and expose yourself to faith.\footnote{Interview with Chris Fry, March 20, 2010.}

Ikon has been able to employ elements of art and ritual in ways that resonate with local culture to facilitate collective experiments on the borderlands of individual experience and social engagement. The particular character of Ikon’s gatherings differs based on the combination of people and various temporal and contextual contingencies. These elements of surprise and spontaneity help to create the conditions that can allow for affective encounters between individual experience and the unpredictable nature of engaging the public sphere. It is in these moments of unpredictability, when inside and outside forces collide, that civil society can be said to be operating to its fullest potential. The undefined consequences of such engagements give a sense of gravity to autonomous spaces, where individuals are able to grapple with their own responsibility for the world in which they live. It is in such spaces of upheaval that Pete Rollins re-deploys a radical reading of materialistic Christianity, in which a political valence in Ikon begins to manifest.

I don't care what you believe, I care about how you contribute to the transformation of society. Christianity is a materialistic religion, it’s a religion that transforms our material reality, it transforms who we are in our very being and our very core. If you are not the site where life takes place, you do not believe in the resurrection.\footnote{Pete Rollins, Insurrection Tour, McHugh’s Bar, Belfast, March 16, 2010.}
This challenge to take responsibility is not accompanied by any script for how to act. Such a horizontal view of social change entails a lived experience of private transformation that is inseparable from the transformation of one's habitual ways of being-in-the-world. Such processes proceed with difficulty and without certainty as individuals' engagement with society becomes a part of giving an account of themselves.  

Personal responsibility is often diffused through one's association with institutional norms, and religious beliefs in particular have a history of being deployed to mobilize and justify atrocious behaviour. Alternatively, diffusion of responsibility is also an effective way of depoliticizing people by making them feel as though they are doing something simply by virtue of taking part in some innocuous collective behaviour. Rollins appears to have wrestled with the possibility that, through its successful appeal, Ikon may come to replicate a form of the navel-gazing and social insularity he had hoped to undermine. In an interview, he was acutely aware that Ikon 'the temporary autonomous zone' was in many ways very close to Ikon 'the ineffectual liberal organization.'

One thing I would say is that there's kind of the radical suspended space which is what I'm trying to talk about. There's also other forms of suspended space which are completely apolitical and I'm not a fan of them and the question is how do you distinguish between the two. Take for instance holidays. Holidays are a type of suspended space where you go away and you meet people from other cultures and you have a few drinks and you kind of hang around. And then you re-enter the world completely unchanged. And it is like a release valve, where a Zen-Buddhist meditation that somebody does on a weekend and then they return to their

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324 This is a formulation that resonates with the argumentation in Judith Butler, Giving an account of oneself (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).
325 For a Northern Irish example, see Steve Bruce, God save Ulster: The religion and politics of Paisleyism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
frenetic activity Monday to Friday and the suspended space does not actually feed back into their material existence Monday to Friday. It actually acts as the very thing that prevents change from happening.

The very important question is, is Ikon or emergence Christianity, do they create these suspended spaces that actually prevent change from happening, or can they create these suspended spaces which fundamentally re-configure our material existence so that we are different and we are changed. And that's a very serious question.\(^{326}\)

**Intentional Non-Community**

By definition, creating and maintaining a temporary autonomous zone is a paradoxical task. Ikon’s struggle to negotiate between destabilizing boundaries and the need for overarching coherence was most clearly demonstrated in the interviews through respondents’ uneasy relationship to the notion of *community*. All of the Ikon participants I interviewed agreed that the group had collectively rejected the ‘community’ label. In Northern Ireland the term 'community' has long been synonymous with ethno-religious groupings (i.e. The Loyalist or Republican Communities), and so the desire to avoid sectarian connotations is not surprising. However, the rejection of the language of community is also a strategy of sustaining an element of suspended space and remaining open to new-comers.

Claiming not to be a community also freed Ikon from the pressures of ‘community building’ and allowed them to retain distance from what has become an umbrella term within liberal peacebuilding. The discourse surrounding intentional non-community was one of the more fascinating threads that wove through nearly all the

\(^{326}\) Interview with Pete Rollins, Irish School of Ecumenics, March 15 2010.
Interviews. When I asked a principal female organizer if Ikon had simply never developed as community, or if it was a non-community by design, she replied,

Yes, it is by design, and that's an issue that's been discussed – always is discussed as sort of an ongoing question, “what should Ikon be, and are we a community” and intentionally we're not. But it's hard to deny that we're a group of people who are all friends with each other, so what does that mean? Does it mean that we are really not kind to one another (laughs)? We've had lots and lots of discussion about that, so at the minute, no we're not, I mean I think we definitely say we're not intentionally a community. You know I think Pete, and others have been known to say “Ikon doesn't care” on purpose. And I don't think they mean that Ikon doesn't care, but just that you can't come expecting that we will provide any social … any relationships for you, so if you want to do that you have to do it yourself. Which sounds very harsh but I think a lot of people come for the void you know, for the empty space. Because what the church has traditionally done is provided the social aspect, like we'll get you together, we'll make you talk to each other and we'll do all this for you. And so we decided not to do that at on purpose.

J.A. – So is what Ikon does intentionally meant to counteract what the church has typically done?

For some people yeah, but some people would just say [community's] not what they come to Ikon for. You know, they come to be challenged and a lot of people as well would say it's for the art side of it rather than the social side of it. So it's difficult because I think some people consider Ikon their church, but for other people they absolutely wouldn't, I mean they go to their own church and have their own social life, Ikon's maybe something to express their artistic and spiritual side, but it's nothing more than that you know. It's definitely an ongoing debate.327

The relationship between social community and the sectarian use of “community” as denoting a specific ethno-national in-group never came up in the interviews. In public gatherings in particular, Ikon’s purpose was focused on puncturing the status quo and inducing individual uncertainty, not on presenting itself as a community. This public

327 Interview with Shirley, March 2010.
rejection of community was discussed by some of the organizers as being part of the overall strategy of troubling individual narratives and destabilizing the cultural meaning that pervaded social-level discourse. While there was evidently a strong association between some members of Ikon, the label of 'community' was discarded because of the sense that the term still connoted either a dogmatic group-think mentality, or implied the kind of local-help, service-provision model that characterized many churches and NGOs within Belfast civil society. Speaking to the issue of community in Ikon, Pete Rollins joked that,

[Ikon's] starting a thing called the non-membership course because if you ever ask anybody are you a member of Ikon they'll always say no, so this is a course where you get a card saying you're not a member so if anyone ever asks you, “are you a member of Ikon?” you've got proof that you're not. Kind of a way of saying, this is about you taking responsibility, membership in this community is actually you being a singular individual within this collective.\(^\text{328}\)

The issue of being a non-community raised concerns among some organizers who worried that creating a purposefully disruptive experience and then offering no formal support structure could have negative consequences for some people. This concern was expressed by one of the Ikon organizers who also works as a therapist in Belfast.

For me as someone for whom community is very close to my heart, how do you – what happens to all the transients you know? So I've always lived in that tension a little bit, between how much it should be community oriented and how much it should be disruptive, and I've enjoyed both aspects of that. But there can be a bit of frustration. I do think that one of the things about post-modern groupings of any sort is that they can be a bit phobic of relationship and community. That they are very good on ideas and they know how to talk, but when the ideas are gone, or they're paused, or whatever, it’s the same story which goes on everywhere which is well, what do I do with other people?

So there have been times when I've went to Ikon where I've felt very lonely as well even though, even if I've been organizing because it's created a connection that's been interesting but it's missed other stuff. So it's by no means – if you travel a long way and think “Ikon's going to be the most amazing thing” you could be bitterly disappointed by the fact that it's these bursts of activity, that are supposed to flurry your mind into activity d’you know what I mean? or to push you, but not necessarily to hold you. And ultimately in life you probably need a bit of both. You need a community that's going to hold you in place a little, and you need something that's going to knock it over. And so it's an ongoing dilemma you know.329

These concerns surrounding the balance of community and destabilization expressed by organizers were also borne out in interviews with former participants who had stopped attending Ikon because of issues surrounding the groups approach to (non)community. For many individuals, coming to Ikon events is part of a large process of transitioning away from a form of religious practice. While the excitement and flurry of ideas provided by the mixed media and heady theology is what entices some, others found Ikon’s reaction against mainstream religion went too far and so looked elsewhere for actual community. This was described to me in an interview with an individual who described how, despite the stimulation of Ikon, he eventually found its events lacking in meaning and decided to attend a more traditional church. Interestingly, his description of Ikon’s unwillingness to “take the next step” further attests to Ikon’s valuable function as a liminal space. What this interviewee seemed to be looking for was what Victor Turner might call a re-aggregation moment, where he could emerge from the period of crisis and doubt into a structured community.330

329 Interview with Chris Fry, March 2010.
But what began to strike me was that, although it [Ikon] was valuable as a spectacle, I never really felt like it was much of a community. The whole Ikon thing, you know. Because the emphasis, as far as was made clear to me, was always “Ikon is not church, Ikon is not church.” It is experimental theo-drama space to kind of do your thing and church is what you go to on your Sunday morning. So don't ... so they would say, don't expect Ikon to provide what church provides you with, don't expect it to provide you with community, don't expect it to provide you with, you know, with a kind of worship space, necessarily.

And so I started thinking, you know, Ikon's all well and good in what it provides, but it seems reserved about taking the next step, as it were, and really becoming a community. I remember speaking to another guy who went to Ikon and he had a family and he was always like, well I love Ikon, but what can it do for my kids - and that's one thing Ikon never tried to tackle. I think Ikon went so far, but no further. I think that's because, the reason why Ikon couldn't provide community in that kind of sense is because it didn't have a sense of core values. You know it had the co-ordinates which it has up on its website you know, apocalyptic, emerging, heretical ... something like that. Well, you know what church provides us with is shared belief, like Ikon's all about questioning belief, like deconstructing everything. But in deconstructing everything it's like, well what are we actually here for, what are we doing here?

Ikon definitely ... taught me all these things that I can appreciate in terms of innovation and intellectual rigour and artistic value – because Ikon’s got some really clever people - it also made me realize how key community and sharing is. That's the main thing I kind of missed in Ikon and so it made me remember that when I go into this place [new church] that's maybe in some ways antithetical to Ikon, but you know if it has nothing else it has perhaps that one thing that's the key element in any community, or in any church community, so Ikon didn't have community and that's the most important thing for me. I think community is the heart of it.\(^{331}\)

Ikon’s claim of being a non-community was troubled by the fact that there was a longstanding core group responsible for its organization who are in fact a relatively tight-knit group. While the planning for Ikon takes place in open meetings which are

\(^{331}\) Interview with Phil, April 2010.
announced at the end of events, it seemed clear that the main influence came from a relatively stable group centered around Peter Rollins, sometimes referred to as the Syndicate. Many of the members of the Syndicate had been involved with Ikon for several years - some from its inception around 2001. The group included a number of professional artists, academics and professionals, and had been largely responsible for organizing Ikon's hallmark gatherings, some of which were published in Rollins’ first well-known book How (not) To Speak of God. The strength of this group was also forged through taking part in other projects over the years, including relatively large-scale theo-drama pieces that were performed at the popular English Christian arts festival “Greenbelt.”

Unlike the group of people who attended Ikon’s public gatherings, it was clear that the majority of those involved in the Syndicate were a more stable community of friends. A number of individuals knew each other from outside of Ikon, while some had developed friendships through taking part in the planning events. Despite the fact that planning meetings are open, the number of people who attend is generally rather small - seldom more than 10 people. One of the organizers explained that it was difficult to get people to participate in planning, and expressed frustration over the fact that some people see the Syndicate as an exclusive group.

We would love people to be very involved. I've given up basically. I think that some people are still very upset that we make these announcements – look anybody can plan this, anybody can come along, anybody can be involved. Especially now that we haven't been able to do a Monday night meeting of

Greenbelt is England's largest Christian-based arts festival. Running since 1974, the festival now has 20,000 attendees annually. Greenbelt is described on their website as “an arts, faith and justice festival with a long and rich history ... The festival we put on is all-age and multi-disciplinary in its programming. Our roots in the Christian tradition, and our approach is inclusive and wide-reaching. Greenbelt is a festival like no other – both in terms of the breadth and depth of its content and also its vibe.” from Greenbelt's Website, Accessed November 4, 2013, www.greenbelt.org.uk.
getting together and planning it, we've had to do a lot of it online. We've had to do a lot of it by the email list. And it's just like, if you want to be on that list you can be on the list. Anybody. And we just don't get that many people....

Now and then it bothers me if people say, “well Ikon's so exclusive” you know, “it's always the same five people, you guys run it.” That's when you start hitting your head against the wall you know, well if we didn't do it nobody would do it. So we've had to kind of basically say we do it for ourselves, we've – especially since Pete's moved to America – we've had have some soul searching.

One of the interviewees I spoke with had been friends with Rollins and several members of the Syndicate since the early stages of the group. Although he had long been involved with Ikon at the conceptual level, he only recently joined the planning syndicate and described to me how he had made an effort to foster community through having a weekly dinner.

One of the things that Ikon introduced and I think that we've been okay with is that people usually come to my house once a month for a meal and we have a meal on Sunday together and then we have a planning meeting. Then after that when we get the core idea of the gathering, then we do the rest of the planning by way of a couple of other meetings which some people can get to other people can't, or over email... it kind of brings a bit of community into it. Family, you know. Because a lot of us people have known each other for a long time.

As was mentioned by Jon in the previous interview above, there were some people who felt that the Ikon syndicate was exclusive and protective of their particular way of doing things. While the sentiment of “doing Ikon for ourselves” was presented as

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333 Interview with Jon, March 2010. Around the time when I was conducting my interviews, Peter Rollins was preparing to move to the United States where he had received a position which allowed him to continue his writing and public speaking. Since Pete had been dedicating a lot of time to organizing, the limited amount of time that the other members could afford meant that the organizational structure of the planning meetings shifted to an on-line emphasis (rather than the original in-person meetings), and some of Ikon's side-projects were suspended.

334 Interview with Chris, March, 2014.
an organizational necessity, it was also a point of internal criticism that some members of Ikon had become attached to the status and recognition that the group had received. Again, this raises a familiar tension in alternative social groups, that occurs when the ideals of a temporary autonomous zone come into conflict with individual motivations that appear to be inward-looking and self congratulatory. As one interviewee explained, Ikon sometimes seemed to be about members of the syndicate affirming one another's intellectual or artistic abilities.

It becomes just another self congratulatory community like any other place. A pat on the back, well done you've got rid of your idols, brilliant let's keep doing this. Pat each other on the back you know, brilliant you're on the right track. And it just becomes another back patting session which is what so many other communities are. It's a place for belonging and a place for “yeah you're right where you are.”

Despite Ikon's internal contradictions, there was a general recognition of the importance not so much of living up to abstract standards, but of the need to create spaces outside of the current dominant order. The need to create an actually existing space of difference was again held in tension with the need to avoid becoming an insular pocket of what Rollins calls “cool Amish.”

And so the point is, we believe in the system when we affirm it, we believe in the system when we attack it. How is it possible for us not to give any energy to an unjust system whatsoever, robbing it of its fuel, its power? Because injustice only exists insofar as people participate in it and believe in it, and that's where I believe when we set up these communities, enough of them, which are just living differently, living a different type of life, a different set of values. Through non-participation, through living fully by the way, I'm not talking about us all growing all our own vegetables and walking everywhere and covering ourselves in whale fat and swimming places you know. I want to live life fully and I want to live it well, but I just want to live it outside of the structures that

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335 Interview with Ricky, April, 2010.
tell me you have to get a job, you have to go to university, you have to get married, you have to get divorced. The voices that tell us what we have to do, I just want to live in a way that's free from those voices.

I think we can live outside of the system and we can grow our own vegetables, we can live differently. But I'm just making a more general point about not being constrained by the systems of power. The other thing is you can get a community that is so isolated that it has no effective power whatsoever, and that's the other thing. Ikon itself can be part of exactly the problem that your saying [withdrawing from society] and we can become our only little enclave of cool Amish who do our own thing.\textsuperscript{336}

\textit{Performance and Resonance in Cultural Space}

Where Ikon’s public activities were not intended to create community, this was in contrast to what interviewees described as the importance of the performative and ritual dimensions of Ikon. These dimensions were intentionally built into events both at the planning and organization stages, and they did a great deal to impact individual level experience. Aesthetic composition is a major consideration in planning Ikon events, and seemed to be a strong motivation for sustaining involvement. The core syndicate itself was made up of many people with artistic backgrounds and this has contributed to the particular stylization of Ikon performances. In contrast to a community building organization, one organizer compared Ikon to a music collective that delivers its message through intense performative moments that impact an audience.

So the Ikon thing was supposed to be a touchstone to something. You know, you arrived in it and it gave you this burst of energy, a burst of questioning, then you went back, you went back out. So it never particularly held strong community emphasis, except more amongst the actual people who were putting it on. So Ikon in some ways is more like a band – like \textit{God Speed you Black Emperor} or something like that – twelve, thirteen people you know, sitting around and planning these events or these little

\textsuperscript{336} Interview with Pete Rollins, March 2010.
moments which are kind of performance-esque at times as well, kind of provocative pieces. Much more like that than an actual functioning, community church based thing.\footnote{Interview with Chris Fry, March 2010.}

The comparison of Ikon to a musical performance was also a way that one interviewee described the fluctuation of people who attend Ikon. This echoed the sense that there is an audience around Belfast, for whom Ikon has become known for its performance in the same way a musician becomes known. “I think for some people it's a gig. You don't go see Dexter Gordon every time he comes through Northern Ireland, you went once, you went twice but you don't go every single time.”\footnote{Interview with Jon, March 2010.}

The artistic and aesthetic element of Ikon has also been another way that some members have distinguished it from the Church and peacebuilding organizations within civil society. Events typically include a mixture of ambient music, usually created by DJ and artist Jonny McKewan, and the space is decorated in a way which reflects a particular theme or is intended to set a certain mood. The result of the various artistic contributions to Ikon events often have the effect of creating a minimalist, very engaging sensory experience. This strong aesthetic dimension also facilitates the resonance of affective currents within the liminal space that is occasionally interrupted either through planned performance or in the course of participatory rituals. This combination of artistic and religious sentiments in this context creates a vacillation between an uneasy sense of anticipation and sombre contemplation. When I asked one female organizer whether she thought Ikon was as much a part of the art scene as it was the religious milieu in Belfast she replied, “Yeah, definitely. Again I'm not part of the art scene really in Belfast, but I
think it must have. It's a very, I suppose you could just refer to it as theo-drama, so it has as much to do with religion as drama or art. So yeah, it does.”

Another organizer made a similar allusion to the fact that, like a local cult-band, Ikon seemed to appeal to a niche audience that resonated with its approach to theo-drama. In the case of this organizer, he linked this resonance to a broader audience of individuals involved in post-conflict peacebuilding activities. Here he refers to Gareth Higgins, who started a peace and justice oriented collective called Zero28 in 1998, an organization that bears a number of similarities to Ikon, and included many of the same active participants.

Gareth Higgins kind of referred to all of us at one time as, “the peace and reconciliation underground,” and there weren't that many, there was about fifty or so people he was probably be talking about – I'd be interested to know the size he would think of it. It's seeing all the same people, and not in a bad way. Seeing them at Ikon, you saw them at Zero28, you saw them at Padraig’s poetry readings and you see them at Common Grounds and you're seeing a corps of people, and I think that's a lovely core. I think there might be a community, but it's an extremely diffused community.

Jonny McEwen has referred to it as a crowd, which I always thought, was interesting. We'd be arguing, having these huge, long, obsessive compulsive talks about are we a community? Are we a community? And I like that he said once, that I don't think that we're a community but I think we're a crowd. Like when you're at a concert of a group or something like that, you don't know anybody around you, but there's a feeling of camaraderie, that we're here together, we're focused on the same thing and you know, you can give a hi-five to the person next to you even

339 Interview with Shirley, March 2010.
340 Zero28 was an organization that was based around promoting peace and social justice. It took its name from the area code in Northern Ireland -028 - which also alluded to the joke during the Troubles that those numbers were the only thing that the conflicted communities had in common. Higgins graduated with a PhD in sociology from Queen’s University, Belfast and has since went on to write extensively on civil society in Northern Ireland. For instance see, John D. Brewer, Gareth I. Higgins, and Francis Teeney, Religion, Civil Society, and Peace in Northern Ireland (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also Gladys Ganiel for a brief discussion of Zero 28 and Ikon as mediating evangelicals. Evangelicalism and conflict, 134.
though you don't know who they are and so he said, “I think we're a crowd” which I thought was an interesting way of putting it.\textsuperscript{341}

Ikon helped to amplify the resonance that existed among people, but it was difficult to describe or contain. In one sense, the non-community approach created a feeling of belonging, while also allowing people to retain distance from the legacy of ‘religious community’ and past experiences with overbearing church structures. The fact that Ikon continued to hold events for well over 10 years without accepting external funding is also a particularly remarkable feat. The people who attended Ikon were also constantly changing, and many interviewees remarked that there was always a large percentage of new people at events and that this high turnover had been relatively steady over the years. As the accounts above indicate, participants in Ikon did not see it as community, but rather, found that it created a compelling space that had impacted them personally in ways which carried over into other social spheres of their lives. While some interviewees were more analytical in their attempt to describe how Ikon has developed and why it has been sustained, Ikon organizers seem to have succeeded in eluding a particular description. The majority of interviewees expressed a sense that it was difficult to define, let alone explain, the factors that had been involved in making Ikon what it is, and that this was in fact one of its most compelling features.

It's such a random bunch of people, so am I in community with them? I think Ikon influences the way you operate in community, within your own community, more than being one itself ... So we talk about it like a crowd, just like a rabble, these are things - it's more like a … I don't know what it is (laughing) ... \textsuperscript{342}

\textsuperscript{341} Interview with Jon, March 2010.
\textsuperscript{342} Interview with Cazi, April 2010.
Chapter Six: Social Engineering in Rwanda

Dimensions of Post-Genocide Rwanda

The civil war in Rwanda began in 1990 and reached its dreadful climax with the 1994 genocide that left between 500,000 to 800,000 people dead, and destroyed much of the country’s infrastructure. This period of mass violence and upheaval has left a legacy of trauma and mistrust that continues to touch nearly every domain of public and private life. In the decades following the genocide, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) has established a highly centralized power structure and has launched an ambitious program of social engineering which is officially known as the program for National Unity and Reconciliation. With the support of international donor funding, the RPF has rapidly moved forward with development based on principles laid out in its framework document Vision 2020. The main goals include creating a modernized, post-ethnic Rwanda, reducing poverty and unemployment through a concerted shift toward becoming a knowledge-based economy and developing regional trade networks. This peace and prosperity agenda has been implemented through successive waves of sweeping policy

343 It’s beyond the scope of this analysis to recount all the complex sources of genocide in Rwanda. For the most complete overview of causes of the genocide see Alison Des Forges, Leave none to tell the story: Genocide in Rwanda (Human Rights Watch: London, 1999). For the most accepted version of the number of casualties during the genocide see Scott Strauss, The order of Genocide: Race, power, and war in Rwanda (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2006).
345 The explicit analysis of the components of social engineering in Rwanda has become a guiding thread in much of the current scholarship dedicated to post-conflict developments. The most comprehensive collection of these analyses can be found in the edited collection by Scott Strauss and Lars Waldor, Remaking Rwanda: Statebuilding and Human Rights After Mass Violence (University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, 2011).
reform at the national and regional levels, the particularities of which are meted out locally through secondary legislation and public administration.\textsuperscript{347}

This dramatic top-down restructuring is framed as a necessary step in the process of healing after the genocide, promoting reconciliation, enhancing security and generating economic prosperity. In reality, the \textit{National Unity and Reconciliation} program has imposed a highly simplified framework based on abstract concepts (national unity, post-ethnicity, prosperity) that have been used to dictate a particular version of history, silence internal dissent, militarize the neighbouring Kivu region, and facilitate neoliberal investment.\textsuperscript{348} The \textit{National Unity and Reconciliation} program functions as an ideological architecture that provides both the meta-level narrative as well a local-level apparatus needed to apply and enforce reforms across the country. Deviation from the RPF policies is met with strict punishment that is part of a macro-micro strategy of control that has redefined social categories and boundaries, and regulated social behaviour in the public sphere.\textsuperscript{349}

While the government maintains that ethnicity has no place in a unified Rwanda, the impact of identity boundaries is still evident in both the creation, as well as the implementation of policy decisions that have political and economic importance.\textsuperscript{350} Reports from multiple sources have suggested that, amidst the social turmoil, RPF elites

\textsuperscript{347} For an account of local level implementation from a veteran Rwandan scholar see, Catherine Newbury, “High modernism at ground level: The imidugudu policy in Rwanda,” in Straus and Waldorf, \textit{Remaking Rwanda}, 223-240.


have increasingly centralized power, giving disproportionate privilege to a select few.\textsuperscript{351}

More specifically, scholars and human rights observers have noted that those most privileged by the government are of an ethnically Tutsi background and connected to the powerful political and economic networks within the RPF that were established in Uganda prior to launching an offensive war into Rwanda in 1990.\textsuperscript{352} These observers warn that the consolidation of power and re-distribution of land has begun to resemble the early-colonial and pre-colonial clientage systems in Rwanda.\textsuperscript{353} Seen in historical context, these criticisms are very concerning, since the perception of a minority Tutsi rule contributed to popular frustration prior to the genocide and was manipulated by Hutu extremists to incite general fear of a Tutsi return to power.\textsuperscript{354}

Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa with approximately 340 inhabitants per square kilometer, 80-90\% of whom rely on agriculture as a primary source of subsistence.\textsuperscript{355} The population has been subjected to extreme flux and uncertainty following the genocide as successive waves of refugees returned to the country after decades in exile.\textsuperscript{356} This process of shifting power and demographic dynamics has generated a great deal of social tension as multiple groups make claims to

\textsuperscript{351} Reyntjens, \textit{Rwanda, ten years on},
\textsuperscript{353} Jan Vansina, \textit{Antecedents to modern Rwanda: The Nyangina Kingdom} (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).
\textsuperscript{354} The pre-genocide Tutsi population made up about 15\% of Rwanda's population. Taking into account both the number of Tutsi murdered during the genocide as well as the various cases of returnees, estimates suggest that this 15\% figure continues to be accurate. For an elaboration on the basis of this calculation see: Scott Straus, \textit{The order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda} (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2006).
\textsuperscript{356} There have been several “case-loads” of returnees. The first, or “old case” refugees were primarily made up of Tutsi who had left the country after the Hutu revolution in 1959 displaced the ruling Tutsi government. The second or “new case” of refugees involved many Hutus who had fled the country as the RPF gained control of the country after the genocide. See Mamdani, \textit{When victims become killers}. 

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the same households and fields. The RPF’s social engineering project entails the paradoxical task of imposing abstract social ideals through rigid legal, economic and spatial planning policies on this fluid population. Such a task can be likened to translating a scaled-down planning model, with precise grids defining political and economic space, onto the much more textured and complex social reality.\textsuperscript{357} Since these sweeping changes are officially grounded in reasons of post-genocide security, any overt defiance can be classified as either treasonous or as promoting “genocide ideology,” and hence subject to extremely harsh punishment.\textsuperscript{358}

Under this program of forceful social engineering there has been a great deal of material change across Rwanda. For instance, entire communities have been re-located en masse to new, simply planned and easily managed villages as a means of dealing with overcrowding and disputes over land rights.\textsuperscript{359} Citing the necessity of strategic ‘development,’ villagers have little or no input in the selection of new sites (which are often far from water and supply centers), nor are they provided any viable alternatives. These changes have occurred alongside policies that both mandate genocide memorials and decide upon the site and content of these lieux de mémoire.\textsuperscript{360} Currently, there are six national memorial sites, hundreds of informal local sites, and the entire month of April is dedicated to national mourning.\textsuperscript{361} Any locally organized memorial activities are

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{357}{For a relevant comparison of translating miniature models of social design into real life, see the discussion of Ujamma villagization program in Tanzania, a policy that the RPF has openly adapted to meet its own needs. Scott, \textit{Seeing Like a State}}
\footnote{358}{Rwanda introduced formal legislation prohibiting “genocidal ideology” Law No. 18, in 2008.}
\footnote{359}{For a review of the villages known as Imidugudu see Newbury, \textit{High modernism at ground level}.}
\footnote{361}{Most of the informal sites are places, such as churches or bridges, where massacres happened. April was chosen as the commemorative month because the genocide began on April 7\textsuperscript{th}, 1994.}
\end{footnotes}
expected to observe general policy and may not transgress the official narrative. Of course, much of the genocide commemoration is not itself “engineered” out of nowhere, but entails authentic expressions of personal loss through public mourning. Part of the efficacy of Rwandan post-conflict ideology is its ability to articulate these very real human emotions – fear, sadness, hope – with the legitimate strength and leadership of the RPF itself.

Although there is a great deal of highly visible change occurring in Rwanda – memorials, villages, new infrastructure – an important aspect of this social engineering project has been its ideological penetration into the level of local culture. For example, the RPF’s deployment of the ambiguous but compelling language of *National Unity and Reconciliation* has allowed for a highly affective melding of the legacy of genocide with the legitimacy of the current power regime. This mobilization of popular affective force within a governance regime guided by universalistic principles but managed by highly structured local-level policies has done a great deal to shape the day-to-day lives of many Rwandans.

**Funding Social Engineering: The Reconciliation Industry**

Donor funding makes up approximately 50% of Rwanda's national operating budget and since 2005 nearly all of this money has been channeled into a *general budget*

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362 For instance, member of the Hutu community who had innocent family members killed by the RPF are not allowed to publicly mourn these events because it would contradict the RPF’s narrative, that they did not commit massacres and only killed perpetrators of genocide against Tutsi. For instance, see Jennie E. Burnet, “Whose Genocide? Whose truth? Representations of victim and perpetrator in Rwanda,” in Alexander Laban Hinton and Kevin Lewis O’Neill, *Genocide: Truth, memory, and representation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009): 80-113.
support fund to be used at the discretion of the executive. What this means is that international donor countries no longer choose the particular projects, programs or government ministries they fund; rather, the use of these funds is determined by the RPF. This is in keeping with the 2005 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s “Paris Declaration” on development aid, which encourages funding bodies (which are often nations) to channel funding through central governments that have demonstrated effective use of funds for poverty reduction. These outwardly progressive changes have also given greater influence to certain neoliberal partnerships with foreign-aid donors (and their mining-company interests) who have benefited from the peace and prosperity agenda facilitated by the RPF's social engineering. As Eugenia Zorbas has succinctly put it,

"The basically technocratic approach to development enshrined in the Paris Declaration stands in sharp contrast to what were supposed to be the lessons that development practitioners learned from the 1994 Rwandan genocide ... it was precisely a technocratic and apolitical conception of development that led donors to contribute to the structural violence that made genocide possible."

Under the current arrangement, Western governments are able to retain their benevolent donor status (perhaps helping to assuage a residual sense of guilt about

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364 The two largest financial donors in Rwanda – the United States and the United Kingdom – are currently having to publicly address their own contentious use of sovereign force, the use of aerial drones to kill citizens. It is perhaps not surprising that the RPF is applauded for its strong leadership by both UK and US governments, across partisan lines.

365 Zorbas, “Aid dependence,” 103.

366 Zorbas contends that “The absence of strategic and commercial interests has meant that the development co-operation program itself has become the principal strategic interest for big donors,” 109. While there may be little economic interest in Rwanda directly, a UN report revealed that in 1999-2000, the Rwandan Army made $80-100 million dollars form the extraction of coltan (a mineral used in cell phones and computers) in the DRC. The North Kivu region of the DRC is thought to hold 80% of the world's supply of these minerals. This part of the DRC is largely under the control of Rwanda and Uganda. For a review see Filip Reyntjens “Waging [civil] war abroad: Rwanda and the DRC,” in Remaking Rwanda, 132-151.

inaction during the genocide) while benefitting from the RPF’s securitization (which involves mass violence) of the mineral-rich Kivu region.\(^{368}\) Since it no longer falls to western donors to conduct “ethical” development, the hard executive decisions needed to implement such drastic social change and to secure the region have been left to the RPF. In effect, international governments – primarily the US and the UK – have given the RPF a free hand to exert sovereign power to shape the country and gain huge sums by facilitating violent extraterritorial resource extraction in the East Kivu region.\(^{369}\) This is not a coincidence, nor an aberration in foreign policy; such economic alliances are directly interwoven into the power structures that drive policy inside and outside of Rwanda. As a recent UN panel on Rwanda noted, there is “a great deal of interaction between the military apparatus, the state (civil) bureaucracy, and the business community.”\(^{370}\) Though this report does not specify the extent of international participation in this corporatist nexus, it helps to explain why, when the Rwandan regime has tested the limits concerning the “tolerance of the international community,” it has found (or perhaps always known) “that there are none.”\(^{371}\) Such information troubles the overly simplistic stories that “politically, donors need success stories as much as the recipients need aid.”\(^{372}\)

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\(^{369}\) This also includes extra-judicial killings by the RPF. Such extra-judicial force is a hallmark of sovereign decisions in defined exceptional circumstances. For an account of such killings see Human Rights Watch “Killings in Eastern Rwanda,” in \textit{Rwanda Human Rights Watch} (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2007).

\(^{370}\) Reyntjens, “Waging [civil] war abroad,” 140.

\(^{371}\) Ibid., 146.

\(^{372}\) Cited in Zorbas, “Aid dependence,” 110.
The above analysis suggests that, following the genocide, international political-economic forces underwriting the Rwandan state have been deeply involved in the RPF’s program of social engineering. An important feature of this design is the psychological distance created between those who facilitate sovereign decisions, those who authorize them, and those who actually enact them (not to mention those who have these actions enacted upon them).\textsuperscript{373} To put it another way, the international donors wash their hands of the human rights abuses of the Rwandan regime because they have followed OECD guidelines; at the same time, the RPF has also built in an additional layer of responsibility between executive laws and the secondary legislation that is responsible for the messy implementation of policy in complex real-life contexts.\textsuperscript{374}

This top-down orchestration is conducted through what the RPF refers to as “framework laws” that outline legal principles but omit the implementation mechanism - thus requiring a certain degree of arbitrary decision making by the empowered local authorities.\textsuperscript{375} The far reaching implications, and potential abuses, of such framework laws can be seen clearly in those laws which pertain specifically to issues concerning genocide ideology.\textsuperscript{376} In principle, these laws are easily justified given the nation’s history; however, the vagueness of the criteria for what constitutes genocide ideology means that the law can be exercised at the whim of local elites acting on RPF authority.

\textsuperscript{373} Psychological distance was a key variable identified by Milgram in his studies. It has also been identified by Zygmunt Bauman in his analysis of popular inaction during the Holocaust. Bauman, \textit{Modernity and the Holocaust},


\textsuperscript{375} First, the RPF establishes “a new legal and policy framework” then it “regularizes it through a nation wide... process.” See Chris Huggings, “The Presidential Land Commission.”

\textsuperscript{376} For a detailed account of this piece legislation dealing with genocide ideology see, Lars Waldorf, “Instrumentalizing genocide: The RPF’s campaign against genocide ideology,” in Strauss and Waldorf, \textit{Remaking Rwanda}, 25-48.
Such laws have contributed to a culture of silence in Rwanda, characterized by an extreme guardedness around topics related to the RPF’s approach to dealing with internal political dissent. Indeed this fear of speaking out is not unjustified, as these laws are used frequently and often with much public fanfare. For instance, the RPF’s high-profile arrest of the political opposition party leader Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza on charges of “Forming an armed group with the aim of destabilizing the country, complicity to acts of terrorism, conspiracy against the government by use of war and terrorism, inciting the masses to revolt against the government, genocide ideology and provoking divisionism.” Umuhoza denies all the charges and maintains that the charges against her were politically motivated to chill would-be opposition leaders.

Once a policy is decreed by the RPF it is backed by the force of law; implementation, however, is conducted via “secondary legislation” which is “far less participatory” than the initial consultation process. This regularization employs operant technologies to reinforce behaviours that coincide with new micro-level laws which prohibit certain practices and prescribe others.

**Conditioned Compliance: Shaping Behaviour at the Local Level**

Just as spatial reconfiguration requires intricate planning and forceful implementation at the macro-level, micro-level features of social engineering are achieved through clearly defined local-level policies backed-up by coercive force. In Rwanda, the authority of the President’s sovereign decree is directly and quickly transmitted through the various levels of government responsible for implementing policy.

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and ensuring compliance in particular communities.\textsuperscript{379} The application of the policy grids, devised in the broad framework of social engineering, at the local level in many ways resembles the techniques of behavioral shaping through \textit{operant conditioning} articulated by the behaviorist psychologist B.F Skinner.\textsuperscript{380}

Underlying Skinner’s thought is a basic model of social learning which states that behaviour is modified by consequences to the organism: behaviors that are rewarded will increase, behaviours that are punished will decrease.\textsuperscript{381} When applied to populations, Skinner argued that this simple but powerful model of behavioral shaping was capable of gradually changing social habits over time until they became naturalized.\textsuperscript{382} Once the behavioural habits of the majority of the population had been conditioned, reasoned Skinner, so too would their emotions and thoughts become amenable to the dominant social narrative – thus explaining why, for him, such a well-ordered society not only benefitted the individual, but was also necessary for preserving the general good.\textsuperscript{383}


\textsuperscript{380} Skinner was a Harvard psychologist who rose to prominence in the 1960s as the chief proponent of radical behavioralism, a school of thought that presumed that organisms were not ‘free’ but determined by external contingencies. Much of Skinner’s work was based on experimental research from which he derived social implications. See, B.F. Skinner, \textit{The behavior of organisms: an experimental analysis} (Oxford: Appleton-Century, 1938).

\textsuperscript{381} Skinner claimed, “Behavior is shaped and maintained by its consequences. Once this fact is recognized, we can formulate the interaction between organism and environment in a much more comprehensive way.” B.F Skinner, \textit{Beyond freedom and dignity} (New York: Vintage Books, 1971).

\textsuperscript{382} This line of thought has a direct continuity with one of the contemporary dominant paradigms in social-cognitive psychology research on automaticity. For a review see, John A. Bargh and Melissa L. Ferguson, “Beyond behaviorism: On the automaticity of higher mental processes,” \textit{Psychological Bulletin}, 126 (2000): 925-945.

\textsuperscript{383} Skinner even wrote a utopian novel outlining what such a society based on operant conditioning would look like. See B.F. Skinner, \textit{Walden Two} (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1938). However, it is critical to note that in his novel, Skinner envisioned an intentional community in the United States that relied primarily upon shaping behaviours among willing participants through positive reinforcement schedules. However, based on his research, Skinner notes that negative reinforcement, or punishment, is a far more effective way of shaping behaviour than reward. Thus, the case of Rwanda offers more of a naturalistic experiment based on efficacy and authority of negative reinforcement rather than a situation based on mutuality and collective intention.
This same logic is very much at play in post-conflict Rwanda. As I have outlined above, there are many cases which demonstrate the fact that what constitutes good and bad behaviour in Rwanda is very much dictated by RPF policy such that, in a modern, statist sense, the RPF are operating as highly powerful de-facto behaviorists.\(^{384}\) As I have argued in my theoretical chapters, such social intervention clearly constitutes a broadly biopolitical approach to managing population in ways that have been described by Michel Foucault, one that relies on the state’s ability to instrumentally employ states of exception for reasons of security.\(^{385}\) Skinner’s theories have been rightly criticized as reductionist and over-extending the implications of experimental research into linguistic and social domains.\(^{386}\) However, I believe that what is valuable about the type of analysis provided by Skinner is similar to a central point in James C. Scott’s analysis of social engineering – it allows us to see the simplified axes upon which power focuses in order to achieve a broader social vision.\(^{387}\) Whereas Scott identifies simplified macro-level changes in the form of highly standardized villagisation, and mono-cropped agrarian conformity, Skinner allows us to identify micro-level schema that are imposed on the day-to-day lives of individual.\(^{388}\) Examples of this in Rwanda would be the categorical prohibition against

\(^{384}\) The need for sufficient power and authority is one of the key features of social engineering described by James C. Scott and is also recognized by Skinner as a necessary condition for bringing about large-scale change.


\(^{387}\) Just as social engineers were willing to suppress contemporary populations in order to their grand vision for future societies, so too for Skinner, “The problem is to design a world which will be liked not by people as they now are but by those who live in it.” Skinner, *Beyond freedom*, 145.

public discussion of ethnic identity and mandatory monthly participation in collective community work.  

Such a micro-level understanding of the technologies of behaviour being applied by the RPF also provides a basis for examining how the practices of everyday life at a local level are able to negotiate these rigid policies.  

Just as social engineering projects are thwarted by the emergence of pervasive hidden transcripts that are not legible to the state apparatus, so too are micro-level behaviours able to obscure their intentions from local officials and neighbours through different forms of acting and dissimilitude.  

The implicit principles involved in behavioural shaping are most effectively targeted towards young people who have been less conditioned by other social environments. This insight is not lost on the RPF social designers who focus extensively on the nation’s youth – for instance, through the country-wide program of re-education camps known as Ingando, which are mandatory for all students attending state-sponsored schools. Given the efficacy of Ingando programs, they are increasingly becoming mandatory for a broad segment of the population, including all students, former prisoners, and individuals who draw attention to themselves for some perceived transgression.  

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389 In Rwanda, there is a mandatory community service day from 8:00am to 11:00am, on the last Saturday of each month called Umuganda meaning community service. See, Rwandan Government website, “Fostering good governance for sustainable development,” Accessed February 2, 2014, [www.rgb.rw/main-menu/innovation/umuganda](http://www.rgb.rw/main-menu/innovation/umuganda).

390 For a discussion of the intersection of day-to-day situations and individual behaviour see, Michel de Certeau, The practice of everyday life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984);


393 A Canadian political scientist was recently forced to attend an Ingando camp after having fallen afoul of local authorities. For her reflections on this experience, see Susan M. Thomson, Reeducation for
Situating the Current Research

The structural and ideological features and implications of Rwandan social engineering have received increasing attention in recent years. There has been a wide range of approaches to engaging with local-level issues, which reflects the disparate motivations of those involved in such work, as well as the different disciplinary methods and populations studied. A large amount of material has emerged from the need to bear witness to the genocide, and often entails testimonial accounts of the genocide from the perspective of survivors and perpetrators. Recent social and political research has focused on the authoritarian nature of the RPF, and, in particular, the tendency for ethnic Hutu groups to be excluded from material assistance and recognition under the National Unity and Reconciliation program. A number of psychological and medical interventions have been undertaken with a joint orientation toward studying the nature of widespread trauma and creating interventions with the aim of ameliorating the most acute consequences. Social- and political-psychological research in the post-conflict period

\[\text{reconciliation: Participant observations on Ingando}, \text{ in Strauss and Waldorf, eds., Remaking Rwanda, 316-331.}\]

\[394 \text{For instance in 2009 the Journal of Genocide Research put out a special issue on “Identity, Justice and Reconciliation’ in Contemporary Rwanda,” Vol. 11, Issue No. 1. See also the excellent contributions contained in, Straus and Waldorf, Remaking Rwanda.}\]


\[397 \text{For an example of psychological approaches to studying trauma in Rwanda see Phuong Pham, Harvey Weinstein and Timothy Longman, “Trauma and PTSD Symptoms in Rwanda Implications for Attitudes Toward Justice and Reconciliation,” Journal of the American Medical Association, 292, No.5 (2004), 602-613. For the perspective of a Rwandan psychiatrist see, Bagilishya,}\]
has also engaged in various field-experiments that have deployed interventions aimed at reducing inter-group prejudice and promoting reconciliation among groups, though notably, these have occurred as state-facilitated media projects. To the extent that cultural productions in the public sphere have been studied, these analyses have primarily focused on the ways in which theatrical performances have been instrumentally deployed in order to facilitate community reconciliation that is largely in line with the RPF agenda. Still other research has tried to make connections between individual psychological processes and the factors contributing to the degree of openness to engaging in public reconciliation activities.

This aforementioned research literature has been significant in situating my current project insofar as it has allowed me to identify a number of intersections between macro and micro level social processes in post-conflict Rwanda and to pursue the numerous unexplored connections. By post-conflict cultural space, I am referring to both sites and moments within the public sphere where various strands of individual meaning, interpersonal relationships and social forces are in a productive tension. My analysis relies on ethnographic observations and interviews, concerning the internal

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401 In so far as my work examines webs of meaning, I am employing a sort of anthropological notion of culture in the tradition of Clifford Geertz, The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
organization and the public engagements of a Tutsi genocide survivor group. By situating the group and its activities within the embedded web of local social relations I hope to demonstrate that they have, in particular instances, created spaces of encounter between their personal affective experiences and the highly regimented domain of outside social forces.402

For example, I examine the case of a public procession planned by a local chapter of The Association of Genocide Survivors (AERG) in the context of the period of national genocide commemorations. Although this parade complied with all the local regulations, it was organized separately within the private “family unit” of this particular group, which created a performative space that existed alongside, but not as a part of, the commemoration organized by local administration. The public display also allowed for members of the group to affectively mark their own private narrative space outside of the official discursive realm. The creation of such temporary spaces of encounter between the private and the public sphere allow for emergent forms of micro-level agency (in contrast to deterministic Skinnerian conditioning) that are an important part of fostering continued community-level experimentation with alternative approaches to social relations that go beyond the reductive parameters of the state.

The genocide in 1994 was dependent on dynamic encounters and public construal of otherness at the local level. Just as these spaces of encounter facilitated genocide by providing “the immediate context in which people act and interact for, against, and toward others,” alternative webs of meaning and association can destabilize the rigid and

402 In a sense I am following Jill Bennett’s insight that artistic creation in communities affected by violent trauma can be a means of bringing the private force of trauma into contact with the outside sphere, opening potential empathic connections. See Jill Bennett, Empathic vision: affect, trauma, and contemporary art (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).
antagonistic narratives to make genocide unthinkable. The case study of AERG explores the ways that individuals and small groups can both create and occupy cultural space in ways that are not only illegible to official surveillance, but also allow for a greater social and existential complexity that punctures the simplified grids of compliance enforced under the National Unity and Reconciliation Program.

The capacity for such micro-agency requires a certain ability to perform for an external “audience” that may be adhering to particular social scripts that, to some extent, have been habituated in mainstream social practice. In my analysis, the cultural performances exhibited by AERG are not part of these conditioned day-to-day habit patterns, but rather, they are moments outside of the ordinary. The social script for genocide and the actual performance of direct violence in a given moment were mediated by local ties and group-level dynamics; so too is the social engineering script, which, with its exclusionary simplifications, mediated the capacity for new relations in alternative spaces.

Engaging the public sphere with the affective force of the irreducible individual experience of trauma can have the impact of rupturing the inflexible boundaries of a general narrative. In a context where some people’s suffering can be grieved in the public domain while the suffering of others is forbidden, these types of public encounter and

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405 Bringing into the public their individual sense memories also serves to disrupt the public narrative which constitutes ordinary memory. Jill Bennett, *Empathic Vision*.
mourning help to expose the ongoing violence of official narratives. Because people of ethnic Hutu and Tutsi backgrounds continue to live in dense and integrated spaces, such spaces may be part of creating social formations that are not blind to different social positions, and are willing to engage in new affective economies.

As Judith Butler suggests, the experience of trauma and mourning can “… furnish a sense of political community of a complex order, and it does this first of all by bringing to the fore the relational ties that have implications for theorizing fundamental dependency and ethical responsibility. If my fate is not originally or finally separable from yours, then the ‘we’ is traversed by a relationality that we cannot easily argue against; or, rather, we can argue against it, but we would be denying something fundamental about the social conditions of our very formation.” Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The powers of mourning and violence (London: Verso, 2004), 22-23.

Affective economies denote spaces where, “emotions do things…they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments. Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective.” Sara Ahmed, “Affective economies,” Social Text, 79, No. 22 (2004), 119.
Chapter Seven: AERG: Micro-level Agency in the Private Sphere

Overview

Twenty years after the genocide in Rwanda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)'s post-genocide policy of National Unity and Reconciliation has drastically reconfigured the country and the local-level conditions experienced by the populous.\(^{409}\) Sweeping changes to legislation and economic policy have touched nearly all facets of life, and new post-genocide securitization has created a thick web of social control. Although the RPF has pushed a post-ethnic politics in the public sphere, it is clear that ethnic categories continue to matter in the current power dynamics.\(^{410}\)

Within the context of these complex social and political dynamics the day-to-day lives of different groups in Rwanda varies immensely depending on social status and relation to the local power structures.\(^{411}\) In such a constrained environment, cultural activities such as community organization events and public gatherings are subject to both the influence and constraint of official and non-official frameworks. As a result, alternative discourses are often only able to develop within private spaces that are not suspected of being subversive to the RPF’s peace and prosperity agenda. A unique example of one such private space that has been able to come into existence within the framework of the RPF's National Unity and Reconciliation program is AERG.

\(^{410}\) Johan Pottier, Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, survival and disinformation in the late Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
AERG: The Private and Public Space of Generosity Family

The Association of Student Genocide Survivors (Association des Éleves et Étudiants Rescapé de Genocide – AERG) was formed in 1996 at the National University of Rwanda in the country's former capital, Butare. According to an official Rwandan-State website, it has more than 43,000 student members at 26 universities and institutes of higher learning and 272 secondary schools. This chapter presents ethnographic observation and interview-based research conducted with members of a university-based AERG chapter in a rural town in Rwanda's Eastern Province. The demographic composition of these members of AERG, as well as my analytic focus, differs from previous related research on the perspectives of Rwandan youth and alternative narratives among peasant groups. This project seeks to contribute an account of the organizational structure of the group, while providing an analysis of AERG's presence within the local public sphere. In the highly controlled context in which the current research is situated, AERG exemplifies a group on the threshold of engaging day-to-day struggles and private memories, while negotiating a high-profile role within the public narratives that dominate the official sphere. During these moments, the case could be made that AERG creates *temporary autonomous zones* in some of the senses described by Hakim Bey. I hesitate to use this framework consistently in reference to AERG since

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413 Because of the potentially sensitive nature of the research I have removed all references to specific names and places involved in this research.

414 As far as I’m aware, this is the first work to directly investigate AERG. This group is made up of relatively elite Tutsi who not only occupy a particular position within the Rwandan state narrative, the individuals are at a transitional point in their own careers. For comparable work with a group of Urban youth in Kigali see, Lyndsay Mclean Hilker, “Everyday ethnicities: identity and reconciliation among Rwandan youth,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2009): 81-100. For work based on research with Rwandan peasants new Butare, see Susan Thomson, *Whispering Truth to Power: Everyday Resistance to Reconciliation in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).
this western-anarchistic notion was not a familiar concept to members of AERG, and the notion of *autonomy* raises a number of problematic issues in the post-genocide context. While this chapter highlights a number of features that resemble temporary autonomous zones, I will instead speak of *micro-level agency* as it has been previously used by Lee Ann Fuji to describe the important contingent situational interactions in Rwanda.\(^{415}\) The temporary spatial element, however, remains an important feature of the group's significance.

As an organization, AERG falls under the auspices – and surveillance – of the state to some extent, but some of its members have used the flexibility and private space to develop their own narratives, while continuing to perform public displays of adherence to official policy. The RPF's inflexible policy of unity and reconciliation does not acknowledge, and therefore is unable to respond to many of the complex dimension of social life. My experiences with one chapter of AERG suggests that the organization gives members access to emotional resources outside of official discourse that allow them to cope with the day-to-day realities that they face in post-genocide Rwanda.

AERG was constantly on the threshold of official discourse and private experience. Occupying this liminal space that was simultaneously inside and outside of the dominant state discourse allowed AERG to move fluidly from exercising micro-level agency in the private realm, to performing a highly scripted role as part of national genocide commemorations and official discourse. These private narratives are kept both spatially and temporally separate from the official and unofficial public sphere, and I saw

no indication that AERG sought to overtly challenge the RPF-state's project of social engineering, nor to engage directly in the local-level hidden transcripts.\textsuperscript{416}

If AERG can be seen as a space of cultural transformation it is, in part, due to the fact that it has found ways of responding to the variable psychological and affective realities of the individuals who are subjected to an otherwise rigid program of behavioural shaping in the service of social engineering. The existence of these private spaces means that the narratives, values and practices espoused there occasionally come into direct contact, and even rub up against officially established social parameters. Sarah Ahmed has called this point of contact between private and public processes “the skin of community.”\textsuperscript{417}

Just as social engineering is unable to fully contain populations through urban designs, it is also unable to access the micro-level realities of trauma, or to fully subsume micro-level agency. Working within the cracks of these rigid statist systems, AERG provides a model of the temporal and spatial partitioning that is needed for alternative culture and community narratives to emerge in the highly restrictive society of post-genocide Rwanda.\textsuperscript{418}

\textit{Research Methodology}

My research included approximately 15 semi-structured interviews, several focus groups and general observations conducted with members of a local AERG chapter in a

\textsuperscript{416} I refer to social engineering as described by James Scott, \textit{Seeing Like a State}, and applied by Scott Straus et al., \textit{Remaking Rwanda}.


mid-sized rural town in Rwanda's Eastern Province. I chose this particular site because of its location outside of the major urban centers of Kigali and Butare; all members of the group also lived near the university campus, which facilitated a relatively closed environment for ongoing participant observation. I had a strong connection within the community that I had established through previous research and work with a local NGO, which were very helpful in gaining access this chapter of AERG. After connecting with a number of members of AERG, I effectively relied on a snowballing technique to gain additional participants.

All interviewees were with individuals who identified with an ethnic Tutsi background, had lost family members during the 1994 genocide and many had experienced direct violence themselves. Although my research was not intended as an investigation into individuals' experience during the genocide, this inevitably became a focus of discussion in many of the interviews.\(^{419}\) I lived on the outskirts of the town near the university in a house rented by a local NGO for a period of about 3 months during the course of this research. As a result, I had regular informal contact with AERG members and was occasionally invited for meals and other social activities.

I also attended a number of official AERG events including a national AERG meeting held in Kigali, where I was able to speak with AERG members from other regions. This provided a useful contrast to the AERG group that my research was focused on, and also gave me a better understanding of the group's official structure and its relation to the government.

\(^{419}\) Much of this research was highly emotional and required a great deal of sensitivity to the comfort level of the interviewees. For an in-depth discussion of the challenges of conducting this type of research see, Susan Thomson, An Ansoms and Jude Murison, eds., *Emotional and ethical challenges for field research in Africa: The story behind the findings* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
Limitations and Challenges Conducting this Research

In my position as a foreign researcher I found it difficult to get members of AERG to speak directly about the specific nature of their private emotional-level experiences. I believe that this was due to a combination of the factors that other researchers have referred to as contributing to a “culture of silence.” More generally, discussing one's intimate exposure to extreme violent trauma can be a very painful experience. While I found that many individuals appeared to have embraced the idea that it was important that they share their testimony with foreign researchers, this same willingness to share did not extend into their current private lives. I felt it would have been a violation of the group’s privacy and hence of my ethical obligation to push members of AERG to divulge more fully the specific nature of their personal issues or of the inter-family relationships. I also believe that this general reticence to discuss their private activities was influenced by the fact that they did not want to make any explicit comments that may have been construed as being critical of the RPF. While this is a general concern for all Rwandans, for members of AERG, being perceived as subversive could very possibly have led to their removal from the group.

As a result of these limitations, I relied on informal conversations to get a sense of the general narrative of support and social engagement that existed within AERG. During my numerous informal interactions with members of AERG, people spoke more freely than when I was recording and these casual conversations provided me many insights that did not emerge from the more formal interviews.

Parts of this research was conducted with the help of a Rwandan research assistant and translator who came from an ethnic Tutsi background, and had grown up as part of the Tutsi diaspora living in Uganda during the genocide. This is significant, since Ugandan-born Tutsi are often more closely associate with elite circles connected to the RPF, and as a result it is possible that the interviewees saw him as a potential government agent which may have impact their responses.\textsuperscript{421} However, I had known the research assistant for some time, and found his presence during the research was welcomed and had no indication that the presence of my translator made interviewees uncomfortable.

Finally, this research may be subject to the criticism that AERG is an élite Tutsi organization that profits from the RPF political domination. Much recent scholarship on Rwanda has been highly critical of the authoritarian policies of the RPF and its replication of uneven power dynamics in ways that benefit people from Tutsi backgrounds.\textsuperscript{422} In some cases, these criticisms have been extended more broadly and have generated a skepticism of “Tutsi élites” in general.\textsuperscript{423} Such conflation of state privilege and the character of individuals and groups from a particular ethnic background is, in my view, incredibly problematic and ignores the importance of individual differences within the broader Rwandan population – factors that were salient before, during and after genocide.\textsuperscript{424} As for the potential impact that governmental support may

\textsuperscript{421} In \textit{Killing Neighbours}, Lee Ann Fuji speaks to the relevance of the background of translators and research assistants.


\textsuperscript{423} Such opinions have been personally communicated to me by a veteran Rwandan scholar, whose work focuses primarily on Hutu groups, who went so far as to caution me that members of AERG were likely to be “pawns” of the RPF.

\textsuperscript{424} This is not to suggest that there is not systemic bias within a particular political structure. For a discussion of the persistence of individual difference pre, during and post-conflict see Peter Suedfeld, “Coping strategies in the narratives of Holocaust survivors,” \textit{Anxiety Coping and Stress}, 10 (1997): 153-179.
have on the group, AERG does receive funding at the national level through the

*Genocide Survivors Assistance Fund* (Le Fonds d'Assistance pour Rescapé du Génocide
– FARG). These funds are primarily used to supplement school fees and amounts to very little actual assistance for individual members.\(^{425}\)

**The Private/Public Structure of AERGs “New Families”**

According to official guidelines, student genocide survivors must make an application to become a member of an AERG chapter either during secondary school or during university.\(^ {426}\) This official process was not emphasized by the majority of the AERG members I interacted with. The majority of my interviewees had joined the group when they began their university studies, and had become involved either by contacting the local-level association or by recommendations made through existing social networks. These student survivors (with no biological relation) formed “family” groups that ranged from between 10-20 members, and remained more or less consistent for the duration of their studies. At the educational institution these students attended there was a total of four family groups, each distinguished by a self-given name. The majority of the AERG members I interviewed belonged to *Generosity Family*.

Each family elects a father and a mother from among their peers and these individuals tend to be considered persons of “much integrity.” Generosity Family’s father

\(^{425}\) Jennie Burnet has claimed that while FARG funds are ostensibly available to all survivors of genocide, the contiguity of the Tutsi-Survivor labels has excluded Hutu victims from benefiting. While this may be true (I recognize that there are a variety of experiences that are not equal in their privilege), the AERG members I engaged with were Tutsi-Survivors and still received very small amounts of support. For her full discussion of the matter see Jennie E. Burnet, “Whose Genocide? Whose Truth? Representations of Victim and Perpetrator in Rwanda,” in Alexander Laban Hinton and Kevin Lewis O'Neill, eds., *Genocide: Truth, memory, and representation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 100.

\(^{426}\) These official regulations are posted on AERG’s governmentally affiliated website, Accessed November 1, 2013, www.aerg.org.rw.
agreed to take part in this research, and the mother decided not too. The father told me
that his responsibilities included organizing events and checking in with the rest of the
family on a regular basis. He also said that in his role as father, he could sometime be
asked to settle disputes between other family members, although I was aware of no
incidents requiring his mediation.

I was unfamiliar with AERG when I began my research, so a substantial portion of
the interviews I conducted involved members explaining the organization of AERG and
the families to me. This was quite beneficial, both because it provided an innocuous
initial topic of discussion, and because it gave me a first-hand account of the organization
- which I later found diverged substantially from the descriptions given by official
sources. For instance, Bertrand, a 28 year old economics student told me: “We created
the families so we can know each other well, and if one of us has problems, we can see
how we can help them. There are some who live alone. When that person joins the
family, he feels that he’s not alone, he has someone else, another family.”  

During a focus group with three AERG members, they collectively explained the
structure of AERG in a very systematic fashion. In these sessions, members would
frequently take turns writing on a pad of paper to describe the various parts of the
organization. They explained the different levels of membership in AERG as follows:

Each AERG family is made up of three [types of] members: 1). An effective member: a survivor of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi 2). An adhérent member: a student who is not a survivor but one who is sympathetic and wants to support AERG 3). A member of honor, i.e. a university professor, a business person, or someone who is influential in the society, to whom the organization can turn for advice and moral support. Outside these three categories, we have a sage, someone well-respected, members of the family can seek advice for a member’s better

427 Interview with Bertrand, June 2007.
future. The person is called *parrain* [patron/or godfather] or *marrainne* [matron/or godmother] 428

When I asked about whether I could speak with an *adhérent* to discuss their role in AERG, I was told that there were no active members with adherent status at that time. I did, however, have the opportunity to meet Generosity Family’s *parrain*, who was also a professor at the local university as well as an influential member of the community. When I asked members of Generosity Family if it was possible for a Hutu to become an *adhérent*, they told me that it was, but that there were no Hutu members at this time nor did they know of any in other AERG families. This absence of a Hutu membership in AERG, despite the fact that many Hutu are also genocide survivors, reflects the troubling fact that the *Genocide Survivor* status is seldom accorded to Hutu. 429

Members of Generosity Family were enrolled in a variety of academic programs and were at different stages in their education; hence, they mingled broadly with other members of the university community. On one occasion, I was invited to a social event held at the university that had been organized by AERG members, but was widely attended by the student body. When I enquired about the relationship between AERG members and non-members, Philippe told me:

> The relationship is positive. AERG does not discriminate against non-members. That’s why we have other members who are not genocide survivors – *adhérent*, effective, and honorary members ... *Adhérents* are these members who are not genocide survivors, but supportive. I want to tell you there is a good relationship between us and the other students because they help us significantly in everything we do. So, we don’t have to ask them for help, they come to offer it. So what I’m saying is that the relationship is good. I think it’s positive. So during the commemoration we don’t have to be at the fire alone, us Survivors, these people come and sit with us. The help us, carry

428 Interview with Clement, Claire, Arnaud, June 2007.
429 This issue is described in greater depth in Burnet, “Whose Genocide?,” 100
chairs, so we don’t have to be alone for the commemoration. We
don’t have to do the work alone – we do it together – they help us
carrying chairs and with the tents. I cannot say the relationship is
good 100%, but I can say the relationship is good.\footnote{Interview with Philipe, July 2007.}

This type of response given by Philipe reflected the kind of guarded, and
somewhat stilted answers that I often received regarding AERG’s relationship to broader
society. Over the course of my interviews it became clear that while family members
would respond to most of my questions, they were careful to ensure that what they said
did not contradict the RPF’s narrative of unity and reconciliation. In this sense, at a
public-official level, AERG was very much inside of the peace and prosperity framework
and members were conscious of the particular script from which they ought not deviate.
In the private domain, however, the RPF’s rigid ideological parameters were unable to
contain the micro-level emotional space in which family members developed forms of
narrative coherence; in these spaces Generosity Family developed relationships that were
both responsive to private emotional experiences, and to the local social complexities in
which they were embedded. In this sense, Generosity Family’s most transformational
activities took place outside of the dominant discourse.

\textit{Imagining Families, Material Connections, Emotional Supports}

In her influential 1995 ethnographic study of Burundian Hutu refugees living in
Tanzania, Lisa Malkki’s describes how, during periods of extreme flux, individuals
simultaneously adapted both their personal identifications and historical narratives into a
coherent narrative suited to their current situation.\footnote{Liisa H. Malkki, \textit{Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 253. This research is relevant to the current}
histories contributed to the creation of “profoundly subversive site[s] of historical transformation because it was there that national categories were continually being dissolved and subverted.” In a comparable way, AERG families created a form of liminal space that allowed individuals to collectively imagine into existence new forms of kinship – relations which were formed through a process of communal experimentation with possible forms of community that had yet to be realized.

Rather than an abstract dream process that transcended daily realities, for many of the people I interviewed, Generosity Family was a materially-grounded strategy for addressing basic survival and subsistence needs in day-to-day life. For example, many of my interviewees expressed concern about paying school fees, housing, supporting other family members and generally dealing with widespread chronic poverty. Despite their personal economic concerns, members of Generosity Family seldom spent much time discussing their individual finances, but rather, they emphasized a sense of a shared, collective responsibility for other family members. Eugene described the way that Generosity Family approached this commitment to mutual aid and improving the family’s collective future prospects.

Generally what we do, when we have a member of the family, we know each other well and what we have to do is help each other.

Rwanda case study since Burundi and Rwanda were part of the same colonially constructed country – Ruanda-Urundi. Both countries are primarily made up of Hutu and Tutsi ethnicity and both have experienced genocidal violence. For an overview of this history see: René Lemarchand, Rwanda and Burundi (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

Malkki, Purity and Exile, 253.

Such a formation resonates with Giorgio Agamben’s notion of Coming Communities. For Agamben, coming communities represent a undefined potential for ways of being together that exceed what can be currently imagined. Significantly, in Agamben’s formulation the communing communities represent the possibility of separating life from law, and hence offering an escape route out of this contemporary formula for the production of bare life. In contemporary Rwanda the indistinguishability between life and law under the ubiquitous sovereign exception that is RPF rule, is deeply worrying. See Giorgio Agamben, The coming community, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). For a discussion of bare life see also, Giorgio Agamben, Homo Sacer: Sovereign power and bare life, Daniel Heller-Roazen, trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
Where one doesn’t have something you give it to him. If one doesn’t have papers to use in class, or handouts we help him to get it. If I don’t have these things, I approach a person like Bertrand here, and he gives them to me ... If we see someone is worried because he doesn’t have something, we tell him he doesn’t have to feel bad for missing something. When we don’t have books or pens, or any school material, you can approach another member of the family who you think has them, and they help you.\(^{434}\)

Beyond this material support, Generosity Family served as a site where a great deal of micro-level emotional work took place. As I have explained above, the RPFs policy of National Unity and Reconciliation requires that individuals adhere to its basic principles and not deviate from the ideological vision. Such a rigid and prescriptive social narrative is quite at odds with the incoherent experiences that emerge with social upheaval and emotional trauma. As a group of Tutsi genocide survivors, Generosity Family is squarely situated within the RPF’s narrative; however, as individuals coping with complex, emotional realities family members are left rebuild their lives outside of this dominant narrative.

The fact that members would often use a familial language to talk about their interpersonal relationships within AERG pointed to the strength of these bonds. Family members were also considered especially trustworthy confidents and the more I came to know individual members of Generosity Family, it became clear that advice-giving was a very important part of the new family structure.

For instance, Clement told me,

Another thing we do is give advice to each other. If we see one of us about to do something wrong, we tell him not to do it ... In these families we have a father and a mother – the way it was before. We try to create these families so that we can feel we have a parents, even though they are the same age, they are the big

\(^{434}\) Interview with Eugene, June 2007.
person, they take care of us. Some of us have parents who are widowers, they are left with nothing, they can’t help their children – so these families try to do what they would be doing for their children.435

**Private Memory and Public Memorialization**

While Generosity Family’s approach to social support was very much based in day-to-day interactions among family members, the collective was also frequently present in the local public sphere. In Rwanda, public memory is dominated by the official RPF narrative of unity and reconciliation which functions as a meta-narrative, structuring and reinforcing the party’s dominant ideological position. This official discourse has set out clear boundaries and rules, the violation of which carries the serious threat of punishment, either from state officials or from the local party faithful.436 While such a system is effective in curbing public behaviours that are considered undesirable by the RPF, it is too narrow to satisfy any but the most dogmatic of individual experiences.

As an organization of genocide survivors, AERG has a strong implicit link to the RPF, and for better or worse, is directly implicated in the discourses of memory and memorialization that define much of Rwandan society.437 Public memory, however, is constantly being produced through unofficial and locally-contingent activities that bring private narratives into contact with the official meta-narrative. Many of the private narratives of different groups of Rwandans are deeply irreconcilable with the RPF's

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435 Interview with Clement, July 2007.
The uneasy relationship between individual memory and public memorialization also reveals the substantial gap between notions of truth and forms of representation pertaining to the genocide. In Rwanda, various types of memorialization serve different functions and are received by different audiences. For instance, there are six national, well-funded and highly produced memorial locations dedicated to commemorating the genocide; there are also hundreds of smaller memorials, many of which were sites of genocidal massacre where human remains and grenade-punctured buildings are left to deteriorate in a semi-organized manner. There are also sites where no visible memorial exists - unmarked spaces with a significance for only those individuals who know the stories from the genocide. For instance, there is such unmarked recognition at the site of a bridge that had once served as a roadblock where Tutsi were killed on mass, their corpses thrown into the swelling river; or also, at the site of the technical school where hundreds of desecrated corpses were left to stew in the corridors for weeks.

These different types of memorials occupy different places in the public memory, and also serve particular functions within the dominant political discourse as it operates at the international, national, and local levels. Apart from the instrumental political value official position and, as a result, much of the local-level discourse is transected by hidden transcripts.438


Hinton and O’Neill, Genocide: truth, memory and representation.


Jens Meierhenrich refers to such unintentional places of memory as Loci in “Topographies of Remembering and Forgetting: The Transformation of Lieux de Memoire in Rwanda,” in Strauss and Waldorf, Remaking Rwanda, 283.
of memorials, they are places of intense private emotion and mourning. These profoundly powerful undercurrents of politics, memory and affect exist in a dynamic relationship. These different levels of memorialization and memory may be considered, albeit roughly, as shown in the table below.

Table 1. Modes of Memory and Memorialization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Memory</th>
<th>Public (Official)</th>
<th>Public (Unofficial)</th>
<th>Private (Unofficial)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meta-Narrative (Hegemonic)</td>
<td>Micro-Narratives (Hidden Transcripts)</td>
<td>Narrative Coherence + Sense Memory (trauma, physical scars)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commemorative Sites (Intentional, Instrumental)</td>
<td>Unmarked Locally-Understood Spaces (Incidental)</td>
<td>Performative and Affective (Rituals, Art, Familial Relations)</td>
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</table>

Based on the divisions presented in the above table, I found that Family Generosity’s ability to demonstrate micro-level agency and their capacity to engage in processes of relational remembering were largely confined to the private sphere. As a Tutsis survivor group, AERG was obliged to take part in official public events and to adhere strictly to the RPF script.

This created frequent situations within the public sphere where Generosity Family’s narrative and memories were brought into contact with the narrative framework of official discourse. These public encounters in some ways epitomized the liminal and paradoxical space of AERG families.

In her work on visual art in post-conflict societies, Jill Bennett explores how embodied traumatic emotion can come to the threshold of public space, often through

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oblique forms of coded expression. In a similar fashion, the affective experiences *inside* the familial space of AERG came to the threshold of the *outside* space of official memorialization. In Bennett's terms, the private domain of Generosity Family can be thought of as a space for “the registration of sensation or an embodied affectivity [that] cannot be reduced to the dynamic of a mechanistic stimulus-response trigger.”\(^{443}\) Within this space of deeply embodied experience lies the possibility of profound individual transformation – a shifting of ‘the habitual centers of energy’ which, in turn, has the capacity to fundamentally change social orientations.\(^{444}\) Bennett continues in her description to suggest that, “To reflect on sense memory is not to move into the domain of representation ... but to move into contact with it ... of envisaging sensation both from the inside and the outside ... *calculating the effect* of putting the two sides into contact.”\(^{445}\) Indeed, throughout my time with AERG there was a palpable difference between those interactions that occurred within more or less private and unofficial space and those which occurred in the public sphere. Such highly structured events only required that individuals behave according to a “stimulus-response” script which reinforces the dominant narrative.\(^{446}\)

Clement, a 26 year old economics student in his 5\(^{th}\) year described taking part in an AERG procession during the genocide commemoration events that occur every April.


\(^{445}\) Bennett, *Empathic vision*, 44.

\(^{446}\) These are precisely the types of mechanism envisioned by behaviorist social engineers. For instance see, Skinner, *Beyond freedom*. 
In his description, all emotional content was left out and he instead focused on giving a factual account of the event.

On Friday, April 24\textsuperscript{th}, AERG organized The Wake. We started at four in the afternoon and stayed up all night till at six in the morning ... We began with a Catholic mass – we chose Catholic not because everyone is Catholic but because the majority of people in [the town] are Catholics. [The educational institution] is located in a Catholic facility. We held the event at [the local] Cathedral. After the service, we took a silent walk. From time to time someone would start a song that was reminiscent of what happened. The walk took us from the Cathedral to the Memorial Site near the [Town] Hospital. When we reached the Memorial Site, we placed flowers and candles at the site. The candle symbolizes hope. We observed a minute of silence. We thought about our loved ones who passed away and prayed that when the time comes we will connect with them again. The bishop prayed in memory of the victims.\textsuperscript{447}

Such a factually-oriented account reflected the fact that active participation in such commemorative events is a public expectation for all Rwandans. Clement’s description reflected the formal role that AERG was supposed to play, and it also provided an indication that this was not a space where agentic and emotionally destabilizing work took place.

Generosity Family’s presence in these momentary spaces of contact in no way challenged the official meta-narrative. However, from my outside perspective, the evident change in the self-presentation of certain family members from the private-unofficial sphere to the public-official domain presented a disjuncture in the otherwise smooth continuity within which the group was mobilized into official discourse. It was not clear to me that Generosity Family had calculated any particular effects through these public appearances, other than that which may arise from undertaking their private

\textsuperscript{447} Interview with Clement, June 2007.
mourning in the context of a public commemoration.\footnote{For a discussion on how public mourning can help enable a process of “hearing beyond what we are able to hear,” see Judith Butler, \textit{Precarious Life: The powers of mourning and violence} (London: Verso, 2004), 18.} What AERG’s presence at these events did provide was a basis for reflecting on those groups whose private experiences were not permitted to come into contact with the official narrative - in particular, members of the majority Hutu population, who remained conspicuously invisible.\footnote{On these kinds of choices around inclusion and exclusion in Rwanda, particularly in small communities, see Eric Stover and Harvey Weinstein, eds., \textit{My neighbor, my enemy: Justice and community in the aftermath of mass atrocity} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).}

\textit{Local-Level Engagement}

Unlike either the relatively close-knit private sphere, or the highly officiated public genocide commemorations, Generosity Family was also involved in the sphere that I have distinguished as the unofficial public space. For instance, members would frequently visits the local secondary school to speak with their “younger siblings.”\footnote{On the importance of pedagogy in reconciliation see, Michalinos Zembylas, \textit{Critical emotional praxis: Rethinking teaching and learning about trauma and reconciliation in schools} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).} Often, these visits were informally coordinated with local teachers and the topics of their discussions varied from the importance of education to providing health advice, such as risk factors for HIV. Members of Generosity Family also took turns in conducting the routine upkeep of local memorial sites, tending to gardens and carrying out minor repairs to fences and banners.

Although, these day-to-day activities brought individual members into contact with the dominant narratives of the public sphere, the relationship between the inside and outside spaces was more obscured, and existed at the local and hidden transcripts levels that, for the most part, I was not able to access. There were, however, certain features of
the post-genocide space that brought the distinction between private and public narratives bluntly to light. One striking example was the presence of individuals who had been visibly disfigured by genocidal violence. For instance, one member of Generosity Family, a 28 year old man, had large machete scars on both the front and the back of his head that were highly visible. Although he never spoke directly about his experience, his scars served to symbolize the stark threshold between public visibility and the private realm of embodied sense memory. In fact, such evident bodily inscriptions of violence in Rwanda have been referred to by some as evidence of a person having been “genocided.”

Within Family Generosity

While the overarching structure of the AERG organization was an important framework that was shared by all families, in the private domain Generosity Family appeared to be largely self-determining in its day-to-day activities. Phillipe, a prominent member was careful to clarify that, while all four of the university’s AERG families were collectively involved in official public activities, otherwise, they functioned independently. When I asked if members of Generosity Family had much interaction with the other families, he again was clear that while they did occasionally collaborate in the local-public sphere, this did not influence each family's self-determination in terms of their private affairs.

Yes, at [the educational institution] we have four families. Every family has its own activities, its own way of coordinating and acting – it depends on their proclamation. At [the educational institution] we also have an AERG committee for all our members. Every family has a committee, and then the other members. The committee is the one who organizes what we should do and the other members follow. Sometimes families come together and we mostly meet when there’s umuganda
[community work days] if we have not gone there today, the others are there working. All the families, each family there is many children. They act themselves in the families.451

A number of interviewees recounted occasions when members of Generosity Family explicitly fulfilled traditional familial roles in the context of culturally-specific mourning rituals. On one particular occasion, family members helped to organize, took part in and supported one of the members who was performing a burial ceremony for family members killed in the genocide.452 While this account is again primarily factual, it was clear, not only because of the personal nature of the ritual, but also because of the amount of time that was dedicated to the ritual, that this was an occasion where Generosity Family carried out substantial emotional work in support of one of their family member's embodied memory. Even though this was a highly private occasion, Eugene still noted the importance of the fact that the local public would be able to see that their comrade was not alone, but had a supportive family.

For example, recently a family member wanted his family buried officially, so we had to go there and help him with everything. Which means we helped in everything - at work, at home and with things that required money, and so the burial took place. So we sat with him after the burial, lit some fire, and even the neighbours could see that he had a family and they could join, and everything was cool. He lost a lot of his family members, but we don’t know where they were buried, so we were there to bury people but they were not there. So we all sat together and talked about a lot of things, and all the neighbours joined in and we talked until the morning – and everyone could see that he had a family with him.453

451 Interview with Philipe, June 2007.
452 There is a great deal of importance for many Rwandans that the remains of the dead are accounted for and buried in a ceremonial way in order to ensure their spirits can find peace. See Meirerhenrich, “Topographies of Remembering.”
This type of private-level support also extended into personal activities that were not specifically commemorative or genocide-related. For instance, Eugene provided another example of how the group was to stand behind other family members in whatever aspect of life they could.

For example, this one can lose a young brother, so who would go to help him? It’s us here, because it’s the only family he has. As I had told you, if one has a wedding, it’s us who go to serve people, contribute what we have and make the wedding as a family. If there are some clothes needed for the wedding, and maybe one of has those clothes, we lend them to each other. If one of the family has a car, he will lend you the car.454

**Inside and Outside Over and Again**

Generosity Family's engagement in networks of interpersonal ties and community performances revealed an ongoing and dynamic interplay between official discourse, local understandings and private experiences. It was only in the private sphere of inter-familial emotional support that it was clear that Generosity Family was able act with micro-level agency. Members were also well integrated at the local level, although it was unclear how they were perceived in relation to the hidden transcripts within the broader community. In the context of official public engagements, AERG members followed closely the RPF's National Unity and Reconciliation script, reinforcing the hegemonic force of this narrative around the country and the importance of the country's genocidal history in maintaining its legitimacy.455

My interviews and observations indicated that members of AERG were highly aware of the external audiences they encountered, including myself as a foreign

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455 AERG's negotiation of narratives recalls the mythico-histories discussed in Malkki, *Purity and exile.*
researcher. On the other hand, it was clear that family members found the private emotional support of the group to be a highly important part of their lives. While members took seriously their involvement in both the official and unofficial public realm, it was the affective bonds within the family that appeared to be the strongest factor informing and empowering their micro-level agency to engage was beyond the reach of official discourse.\footnote{See Fuji, \textit{Killing neighbours}.}
Chapter Eight: Conclusion

*Peace and Prosperity*

In this dissertation I have provided a theoretical account of some of the macro-level forces that structure relations of power within post-conflict societies. Based on this analysis, I have argued that, while there are salient fault lines that define and structure many aspects of conflict, underlying these there are often broader power dynamics at play. In our contemporary times, the most evident underlying source of conflict is modern industrial capitalism, and in particular its highly fluid neoliberal form. As is evident from the analysis presented by Michel Foucault and others, neoliberalism is not simply a matter of economic free markets, but entails a broader apparatus of power that structures ways of life in order to service the flows of capital.

In an increasingly globalized world, even when periods of open ethnic sectarian conflict are ended through military victory or negotiated settlement, the major multinational power structures remain in place. Often, these devastating periods of social upheaval and subsequent restructuring actually allow for neoliberal structures to become more fundamentally embedded within post-conflict states. I have proposed that, as a result of this increasing neoliberal hegemony, many post-conflict processes are structured by and managed according to the logic of *peace and prosperity*.

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In the aftermath of widespread violence, peace and prosperity is achieved through extensive social engineering to ensure popular passivity and private profit.\textsuperscript{461} As a result of such top-down structures, post-conflict processes are framed in terms of building tolerance between ethnic communities, and creating jobs to give people productive ways to spend their time. At the same time, the legacy of violent conflict is instrumentalized within the state discourse to legitimate the use of exceptional sovereign powers to 'protect the population' from extremists who are eager for a return to violence.\textsuperscript{462} In reality, the ‘reasons of security’ given within the post-conflict narratives serve to deflect criticisms from ongoing imbalances of power, to criminalize dissent, and to ensure that economic flows are not disrupted. Often, these local-level social changes are implemented by deploying clearly-defined social scripts that are backed with the prospect of reward and punishment, in effect, shaping the way people behave in particular public circumstances.

The post-conflict peace processes in both Rwanda and Northern Ireland contain elements of social engineering that seek to work on the macro and the micro levels discussed above. In reality, because of the complexity and the scope of the conflicts in Rwanda and Northern Ireland, not to mention the arrogance of those who hope to create and impose reality from the top down, both sites are far from perfect post-conflict states. It is clear that the peace processes have had a substantial impact at every level of life in both Rwanda and Northern Ireland. Some broad social changes have made positive impacts, such as reducing violence and promoting intergroup toleration; however, they have also had significant negative impacts, such as depoliticizing the public sphere and criminalizing dissent.

\textsuperscript{461} Scott, Seeing like a state.
**Alternative discourses**

Against these programs of neoliberal social engineering, I have presented a number of theoretical models that demonstrate the capacity for local-level tactics not only to destabilize peace and prosperity discourses, but also to create spaces that provide more compelling alternatives.\(^463\) The social upheaval and uncertainty of post-conflict societies is portrayed in dominant discourses as a condition to be feared, and replaced with certainty and structure. Contrary to this *politics of fear*, micro-level theories provide perspectives that reveal how upheaval also entails a space of opportunity and the potential to reorient individual and social trajectories.\(^464\)

From Victor Turner’s description of liminal social processes, to Hakim Bey’s temporary autonomous zones and the habitual shifts in personal energy described by William James’ as conversion, I have made the case that social instability also creates opportunities for alternative social discourses and practices to emerge.\(^465\) These alternatives, of course, do not diminish the very real suffering, trauma and loss involved in social conflict. Evidence does suggest that alternative spaces may also be better suited to providing context-specific support for post-traumatic symptoms in ways that are not possible within the dominant post-conflict state discourse.\(^466\) In Rwanda and Northern Ireland and elsewhere, alternative discourses exist that challenge the assumption that reforms that entail public pacification and private gain are necessary preconditions to achieving a better society.


Post-Conflict Case Studies: Rwanda and Northern Ireland

Following on my theoretical analyses, I have presented case studies of Rwanda and Northern Ireland which both, in their own distinct fashion, exemplify elements of macro and micro level post-conflict processes. These case studies are snapshots of two organizations operating at particular moments in complex post-conflict situations. In Rwanda, the legacy of genocide remains salient and as new generations have begun to take on important roles in society, there is hope the future will not repeat the past. While I was conducting my research, it was clear that the RPF exerts the dominant influence of social change and there was no indication that this would be altered anytime soon. With simmering tensions below the surface, as noted by many Rwandan scholars, the importance of cultural-level changes that promote alternatives to violence are all the more indispensible.

In Northern Ireland, as the peace funding ends the durability of civil society peace programs will continue to be tested. Although the continued presence of ethno-national antagonisms remain a volatile faultline, high levels of suicide and broad depoliticization present challenges for achieving the conditions of positive peace. Organizations like Ikon reflect the need for spaces where individuals are free to explore and challenge their own identities as well as broader social norms.

These case studies illustrate very different approaches to post-conflict engineering, and also very different contextual realities at the local level. These very different situations provided a stark contrast at the macro-level between the coercive

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468 Ibid.
social engineering of the RPF’s authoritarian *National Unity and Reconciliation* policy and the largely consensual consociational power-sharing agreement in Northern Ireland. In parallel fashion, these very different top-down frameworks have resulted in distinct constraints and opportunities at the local-level.

*Ethnographic Research*

The case studies of the Association of Genocide Survivors in Rwanda and Ikon in Northern Ireland have provided a basis from which to examine features of the dominant peacebuilding narratives, as well as alternatives discourses as they intersect with the level of civil society. While neither group was opposed to their country’s peace process, many participants expressed a desire for social transformation that was other than a simple integration into a smoothly functioning neo-liberal order. This desire for alternatives was reflected by the fact that participants were actively engaged in creating spaces that were more reflective of, and responsive to, their lived experience and personal values. Although confronting very different realities, both groups successfully created spaces (if only temporarily) that allowed for some forms of micro-level agency in their negotiations both inside and outside of the dominant discourse.

The chapter on AERG demonstrated that, to a large extent, the RPF’s policy of social engineering had succeeded in shaping behaviour according to scripts adhering to the dominant narrative in the public sphere.\(^{469}\) Within the private sphere of a ‘new family’ structure, members of AERG engaged in a relational system of shared meaning based on affective economies of sense memories that the RPFs top-down approach was

unable to access. This micro-level agency allowed members of Generosity Family to provide both material and emotional support to other family members.

Quite contrary to AERG, I found no indication that members of Ikon faced strong top-down pressure to conform to the dominant narrative. Whereas members of AERG were most agentic within the private sphere, Ikon’s adaptation of temporary autonomous zones relied on creating destabilized spaces within the public sphere. By employing an array of artistic practices and a radical interpretation of Christian practice, Ikon created liminal space which had the effect of destabilizing aspects of the dominant social narrative as well as individual belief structures. It was clear that these experiences had indeed been transformational for a number of the members of Ikon that I interviewed.

The impact of AERG in the public sphere was limited to engaging with the RPF’s dominant discourse of national unity and reconciliation. In the accounts provided of AERG’s participation in official public events, they consistently performed their expected role within the broader social script of the RPFs post-conflict narrative. The extent to which AERG was engaged in the particular hidden transcripts of the local community was not clear, although members articulated that joint activities in the spaces were more constrained than private activities.

There was some concern among organizers of Ikon events that the emphasis on destabilizing individual social-identity positions could have negative emotional consequences – an experience that was born out in the interviews with participants in

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Ikon. Ikon had developed its ability to disrupt social narratives, but was limited by their unwillingness to engage in forming sustained relationships.

**Outstanding Issues**

The Rwandan and Northern Irish ethnographic case studies demonstrate a number of the tensions and contradictions within the theoretical assumptions as well as the political motivations that appear to underlie post-conflict development. Despite the very different realities faced by members of AERG and Ikon, these groups shared in common the fact that they were relatively privileged and were in a position that allowed for a certain degree of reflection. This ability to see themselves in the context of the interplay of broader social forces raises the question of how responsible these individuals were for their role in broader social systems. As a group of exclusively Tutsi genocide survivors, Generosity Family had a certain amount of privilege in relation to the dominant RPF social discourse. As university students, the majority members of AERG had better prospects for future success than the majority of Rwandans.

In a similar fashion, the majority of the members of Ikon I interviewed had a high level of education and many were well-situated in the upper middle class. Since the majority of the members of Ikon were coming from Protestant backgrounds, they had also inherited some of the systematic privileges that had been transmitted from that group's recent hegemonic position.
Concluding Reflections

In considering spaces where direct violence has been affectively layered upon bodies, spirits, and community, there is often a latent, conflicting concern about judgment and accountability. The primary subjects of these my case studies, Protestants and Tutsis, have been historically privileged groups with greater recourse to state power than either Catholics or Hutu. Although these areas are not currently in a state of open conflict, there has been a return to power imbalances that are similar to those which existed, and in some ways contributed to previous periods of violence. The potential return to ethnic violence is more likely in Rwanda. In Northern Ireland, while the antagonisms based on religious identity has been lessened, the oppressed class tension is high, as is the case with the rest of Europe in the age of austerity. This is in no way to suggest that all Protestant or all Tutsi either endorsed or were necessarily active in the oppressive systems.

To grasp what is at stake here is also to grapple, again and on an ongoing basis, with the evolving nature of the banality of evil. Arendt's insight is not only that people will do their jobs if the immediate conditions of life expect them to, but also that they are actively shaped into particular roles fitted within a broader script. The scripted actions of these emerging narratives tend to align with the dominant ideology to ensure that, overall, they serve the various regimes of hegemonic power.

Despite their major differences, the juxtaposition of the AERG and Ikon highlights the widely unstable boundaries between what is inside and what is outside of a shifting hegemonic structure. What both Ikon and AERG exemplify is that the point of

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contact between the inside and outside always involves a process of mediation involving the individual in relation with other individuals whose experience cannot be reduced to rhetoric.

In some senses, these groups that exist in post-conflict societies face dilemmas that also apply to those in comparatively more stable contexts. How long can one exist in liminal space before being subsumed within the dominant discourse? At what point is one compelled to draw a line that distinguishes the inside from the outside? Or, as technology continues to accelerate and destabilize historical patterns generating new conflicts, will constant states of instability and liminality become the norm? Perhaps the question that is the most pertinent in post-conflict space is not how to sustain an imbalanced peace, but how to find new ways of meaningfully engaging in conflict with imbalanced systems.
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Appendix A: Research Ethics Approval Form 1

October 1, 2010

Mr. Jobb Arnold
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Cultural Studies
Queen’s University

Dear Mr. Arnold:

GREB Ref #: GCUL-004-10
Title: “Articulating Meaning and Coherence: Identity Politics in Northern Ireland”

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled “Articulating Meaning and Coherence: Identity Politics in Northern Ireland” for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (article D.1.6) and Senate Terms of Reference (article G), your project has been cleared for one year. At the end of each year, the GREB will ask if your project has been completed and if not, what changes have occurred or will occur in the next year.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB, with a copy to your unit REB, if applicable, of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (details available on webpage http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/GeneralREB/forms.html – Adverse Event Report Form). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example you must report changes in study procedures or implementations of new aspects into the study procedures on the Ethics Change Form that can be found at http://www.queensu.ca/ors/researchethics/GeneralREB/forms.html - Research Ethics Change Form. These changes must be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services or irvingg@queensu.ca prior to implementation. Mrs. Irving will forward your request for protocol changes to the appropriate GREB reviewers and / or the GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Stevenson, PhD
Professor and Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c.c.: Dr. Richard Day, Faculty Supervisor
Dr. Richard Day, Chair, Unit REB

JS/gi

SHIPPED 5FP 29 2010
Appendix B: Research Ethics Approval Form 2

## Certificate of Approval

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**INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT**

Arnold, Jobb, Psychology

**SPONSORING AGENCIES**

Unfunded Research

**TITLE**

An Investigation of Some Psychological Variables in Genocide Survivors

**APPROVAL DATE**

SEP 19 2006

**TERM (YEARS)**

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**DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL**


The application for ethical review of the above-named project has been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approved on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board by one of the following:

Dr. Peter Suedfeld, Chair,
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Armine Kazanjian, Associate Chair
Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Associate Chair

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the experimental procedures.