

Editorial

Jonathan Skinner

Welcome to the thirteenth year of *Anthropology in Action* publication, and our second with Berg-hahn. This is the start of volume 13 and, contrary to superstition, we have the great fortune to make it a strong and fascinating start as a double issue on anthropology and policy in Northern Ireland. In this issue, Dominic Bryan (Queen's University Belfast), an anthropologist and ethnographer of the Orange Order and their parades as well as public rituals in general, has brought together articles from the latest academic and policy research taking place in the north of Ireland. This collection of articles also goes to show how embedded Queen's University Belfast is as a key institution in Northern Ireland. As a university, Queen's is not only one of the main revenue earners in Northern Ireland, but is also a centre for the study of the north of Ireland, a place where academics explore and examine social, political and economic developments around them and, crucially, shape, influence and determine the N'orn Irelan' scene.

In fact, it is difficult to live and work in Northern Ireland (NI) and not to engage, anthropologically, with life around one. Daily life is an extra-ordinary negotiation involving an up-to-date knowledge of local religion, ethnicity, linguistics, development, memory and politics: of where and how to live and with whom. This makes NI an inevitable field for anthropologists at Queen's. Even if one's research interests lie further afield, anthropologists working at Queen's get swept into the post-Troubles engagements—if 'post' is the right word to

use, as readers of this issue will come to question. To give examples: Huon Wardle (2001), a Caribbeanist, came to explore schizmogogenesis in the graffiti of Belfast urinals, and local sporting activities before moving on to St. Andrews University; Maruska Svasek is looking at migration to NI and how the migrants are fitted into the local cognitive mazes; Kay Milton (1990; 1993) has explored conservation of nature and the countryside in NI, working closely and both with and for organisations such as the Ulster Wildlife Trust, the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside, the Lagan Valley Regional Park Committee and the Strangford Lough Management Committee; Jonathan Skinner has begun a comparison of dance communities—or cross-community dancers—in Belfast and Sacramento, and has a passing research interest in the voyeurist nature and dark tourism of routes taken by tourists interested in viewing the conflict murals and remains of riots recent and past. He has also worked with Dominic Bryan on a comparison of St. Patrick's Day celebrations and commemorations <<http://www.qub.ac.uk/iis/for-researchers/index.htm#stpatrick>>. And Fiona Magowan has worked for and subsequently explored notions of culture in Belfast's recent, unsuccessful City of Culture bid. With Hastings Donnan, she is now liaising with the new PSNI (Police Service NI) to examine notions of risk, danger and safety amongst citizens moving around the streets of Belfast.

Much more can be said and added to this brief list of anthropologists at Queen's lectur-

ing in the university as well as engaging with the immediate city and citizens of the north of Ireland. What I would like to note here is that it is in fact difficult *not* to engage anthropologically with one's Belfast milieu. For more than twenty years, Hastings Donnan—a number of times with Graham McFarlane—has been writing about, chronicling and commenting upon anthropology and public policy in NI. Much of this issue represents a serious engagement with Donnan and McFarlane's 1986 volume, *Social Anthropology and Public Policy in Northern Ireland*, and their 1997 edited *Culture and Policy in Northern Ireland: Anthropology in the Public Arena*. One should also note that the culture and policy work of *Anthropology in Action* stalwarts Sue Wright and Cris Shore (Shore and Wright 1997; Wright 1998) is used again and again in this issue to frame the work of anthropologist-consultants working in, on and from NI.

In this double issue, Neil Jarman, for example, in an ethnography of low-level violence and peace building, shows us that—despite changes in technology such as the use of the mobile phone network as a new form of community-based policing—the challenges of policy anthropology are as relevant today as they have ever been. Both Dominic Bryan and John Nagle take on the politics of the use of public space: both find the control of space central to NI problems, and in their rich ethnographies we also see how easy it is for the anthropologist to get caught up in the parades and riots. For Jaqueline Witherow, the parading band is the subject of her research and so she deliberately joined in with the band practices. She also discusses how she shifted her ethnographic position from researching academic to expert consultant when she worked for Diversity Challenges, using her position to audit and evaluate bands and band development projects. Similarly, Rosellen Roche shifted from working alongside the young in (London)derry to managing a research project to give the young a voice in their city. Her article takes these experiences and raises pertinent methodological

questions for the consulting and practising anthropologist.

The other two articles to mention explore policy in Ireland from outside of the city. Andrew Finlay, writing from Dublin, critiques the culture concept as it is used in the Good Friday Agreement, an example of the misapplication of anthropology rather than the usual complicity of anthropology, such as in the colonial legacy. And Kirk Simpson and Hastings Donnan write about border relations, about ambivalence in adversity, as relations across the border struggle to survive the conflict but as part of the conflict themselves: the image of a border Catholic keeping tobacco to share with his Protestant friend in one pocket and a knife to kill him if necessary in the other is one which will remain with me. At least there is the tobacco in the pocket in the first place, something lacking in some more urban overcoats. In Simpson and Donnan's interviews policy ripples down through the provinces, and relations cross borders and highlight or blur categories as Protestants on the border find that they have more in common with Protestants in Monaghan in the south than with Protestants up north in Derry or Belfast.

Finally, in this extended issue, we have included some work from several other scholars of life in NI, including Liam Murphy's narrative of fieldwork in Belfast which complements Roche in its attention to ethnographic positioning and possible pitfalls. This is followed by Lindsay Sprague's interview of a Queen's University public health researcher who is turning to anthropological techniques in her work. And finally, we have Siun Carden's account of the 2005 Irish Arm Wrestling Championships which were held in Belfast, a cross-border event which can be read metaphorically as well as literally. In sum, here is a double issue which focuses an anthropology of policy eye upon many aspects of living, struggling, researching and healing in NI. We hope that you find these pieces evocative and stimulating and that they cause you to look around your own circumstances with a sharpened policy eye.

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