The Anthropology of Ritual: Monitoring and Stewarding Demonstrations in Northern Ireland

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ABSTRACT: Rioting in Northern Ireland sometimes appears endemic. The control of public space, through the utilisation of rituals and symbols, has played a significant part in the violent conflict and has remained a central issue since the 1998 Multi-Party Agreement institutionalised the peace process. This article draws upon ethnographic research and anthropological models of ritual to explore policy interventions in conflict resolution over potential public disorders. In particular, it looks at the use of monitors, mediators and marshals at parades and demonstrations and describes how anthropological fieldwork has played a role in developing projects and policies that offer solutions to a cycle of intercommunal street violence.

KEYWORDS: Northern Ireland, parades, conflict resolution, mediation, public order, riots, ritual, community policing

Public disorder in Northern Ireland appears to be endemic. Clashes between rival ethnoreligious political groups, Catholic/nationalists and Protestant/unionists, were common through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The cities of Belfast and Derry, and towns such as Newry, Portadown and Lurgan have a long history of riots. These not only occur around an annual cycle of commemorative parades and demonstrations held as part of local community traditions but also at the boundaries of communal territories. The collapse of Northern Ireland into a period of civil conflict was in part triggered by the development of a civil rights campaign in 1967 that was manifested through demonstrations that took routes into city and town centres previously seen as the political preserve of Protestant-unionists. A predominantly Protestant police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), was not prepared to remove from town centres small groups of unionists waving Union Jack flags opposing the civil rights demonstrators. The RUC blocked the legitimate rights of protest of the civil rights activists and conflict between the activists and the police became increasingly violent. As insecurity within communities grew, ethnic cleansing of Catholics from Protestant areas and vice versa started to take place and territorial boundaries became more clearly demarcated. On 12 August 1969, after violent clashes following a parade by the Protestant organisation the Apprentice Boys of Derry in the predominantly Catholic city of Derry, the British government ordered soldiers in to ‘keep the peace’. The quasistate of Northern Ireland, riddled as it was with policies and practices of sectarianism and discrimination, was unable to provide an environment in which politics, manifested in public displays, could be managed peacefully. A low-level civil war involving the British army, the RUC, the Irish Republic Army (IRA) and loyalist paramilitary
groups, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) developed. The ultimate expression of the failure of the state to manage the politics of the street came on 30 January 1972 when members of the British Paratroop Regiment shot dead thirteen people in the Bogside area of Derry at the end of a civil-rights march.

In the City of Derry in Northern Ireland on 31 December 1999 preparations were in hand to celebrate the turn of the millennium. Like most local authorities in Ireland and the U.K. the council had prepared some festivities with which to see in the new century. One aspect of the organising was the provision of marshals to assist in the management of the expected crowds. Some of these marshals were members of the Apprentice Boys of Derry who had recently undergone a national vocational training course in crowd management. That members of the Apprentice Boys were working with the city council, which is controlled by Irish nationalist parties, is a small, but significant, indicator of the change of relationships that has taken place in the city. The Apprentice Boys of Derry hold marches in August and early December in the city which remain events of high tension that not infrequently lead to some disorder. However, much work has been undertaken to build capacity into the city to try and manage the conflict.

In this article I propose to look at a number of projects and training schemes which have attempted to build a capacity to manage public disorder in Northern Ireland. This has taken place within the context of the peace process that culminated in the signing of the Multi-Party Agreement in 1998 (also known as the ‘Good Friday’ or ‘Belfast’ Agreement). Two of the projects derive directly from fieldwork undertaken by Neil Jarman, Michael Hamilton and myself, on the nature of politics conducted in public on the streets of Northern Ireland. These draw upon broad anthropological understandings of the way rituals and symbols work and on an exploration of the nature of crowds. Other projects discussed are attempts by a range of local and international NGOs, local community workers, the police and members of the abovementioned paramilitary groups to come to terms with ongoing conflict that reveals itself through serious public disorder. Broadly speaking, these projects are interventions that it became obvious were necessary as a reduction in organised paramilitary violence, after the ceasefires in 1994, was accompanied by an increase in public disorder. This disorder was particularly associated with disputes over the right of Protestant Orangemen to hold ‘traditional’ parades near areas with a predominantly Catholic population, but also with the fact that Irish Nationalist and Republican groups were allowed to hold parades and demonstrations in the abovementioned cities and town centres. In short, there was a reorientation of power relationships away from the domination of public space by unionist groups towards a more balanced approach. This led to restrictions on some Orange parades in some areas but also the development of events such as St Patrick’s Day in central Belfast (first held in 1998).

From an Ethnography to Policy

On 10 July 1995 the RUC in Portadown in County Armagh refused permission for an annually held Orange parade to march from their church service at Drumcree church back to the centre of the town via the Garvaghy Road, where some protestors from the predominantly Catholic housing estate were holding a sit-down protest. In previous years the protestors had been removed. This decision was to start a process that would lead to a series of infamous ‘stand-off’ protests by Orangemen and supporters, that required policing on a massive scale, would directly and indirectly cost at least five lives, cost millions of pounds, and eventually led to the government-sponsored Independent
Review of Parades and Marches (North et al. 1997), and a consequent change in legislation, the 1998 Party Processions (NI) Act.

Neil Jarman and I were undertaking ethnographic fieldwork on parades through this period. Jarman had worked on the material culture deriving from the parades and marches (Jarman 1997a) whilst I was looking at the internal ritual control of Orange parades (Bryan 2000). Whilst most press analysis was discussing ‘orange versus green’, with the police viewed as caught in the middle, we became interested in the complexity of the events we were witnessing and what implications this might have for mechanisms of conflict resolution.

For example, on Easter Monday 8 April 1996 a small Apprentice Boys of Derry parade was refused permission to follow a route down the length of the Ormeau Road in Belfast, the lower part of which has a predominantly Catholic population. The parade was a ‘feeder parade’ (Jarman and Bryan 1996: 19–20), with those taking part climbing on buses, parked at the other end of the route, to travel to the main parade that day in Portadown. Marchers and their accompanying band, numbering in total around eighty, and a small number of supporters gathered at the line of police Land Rovers parked across the Ormeau Bridge, blocking their route. A large number of media reporters stood around, some behind police lines, others standing near to but apart from the gathering crowd. Over on the other side of the River Lagan residents looked on. As news filtered out that the parade had been blocked more people gathered. A number of people, including the local Quaker group and members of Mediation Network (now Mediation Northern Ireland), were present in the hope of playing a role in mediation. Legal observers, working for the local human-rights organisation Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ), were also standing on both sides of police lines monitoring the behaviour of the RUC. And, of course, there were two anthropologists moving amongst these groups. Police, for the most part, made decisions on those not likely to riot and would allow them to move between the Land Rovers through police lines.

The marchers and their supporters were themselves a diverse group. The spokesperson that day for the Apprentice Boys was also a member of Ian Paisley’s Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), but representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) were also present, occasionally in discussion with the police. Also present amongst the supporters were people from the UVF and UDA as well as members from their political parties, the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and Ulster Democratic Party (UDP) respectively. In addition, a range of young people hung around, some of whom were drinking alcohol. Other political representatives came and went as the stand-off continued all day.

It was clear that parade organisers had no particular plans over when to finish the protest or how to control what might take place. Violence between police and protestors broke out sporadically all day. Whilst it was the Apprentice Boys who were demanding their rights to walk down the road, this rather elderly group of men were obviously not in a position manage the protest. Indeed, so disorganised was the protest that I have since been told of a rumour that one of the organisers, when contacted by the police to negotiate, had gone home to have a cup of tea. Control of the protest could be seen to take place within a web of individuals and groups including parade organisers, local politicians, the paramilitaries, the police, and groups of partially independent young men, with the loose influence of journalists and observers. One informant told me sometime after that at a particular point in the afternoon the paramilitaries decided to withdraw any control they had. Serious violence erupted leading to the police going on the offensive and using Land Rovers to drive protestors back up the road. At one point I was caught between a stone-throwing group of young men and four rapidly advancing RUC Land Rovers. The well known local mediator I was standing with...
advised me to stand still and the police, recognising his role, drove around him. Unfortunately, I did not take his advice and I ran between the vehicles and received a stone in the back for my troubles. The protest finally ended late in the evening having lasted the best part of twelve hours.

It was clear to Jarman and I that the actual organisers of the parade and protest had relatively little control over what was taking place. Even the marching band that accompanied the parade spent part of the afternoon debating with each other and with organisers how they should proceed. Some members walked away whilst others became involved in directly confronting the police. This reflected the variety of attitudes towards the RUC, a police force many involved in the parade would normally have been broadly supportive of. But given the diversity of this relatively small group of protestors, any negotiations the police might have held with the organisers were only of limited utility since the organisers were not going to be able to deliver any sort of withdrawal from the confrontation. Indeed, this sort of situation is so common in Northern Ireland that in recent years, particularly in Belfast, the police, now renamed the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), know that they need to negotiate with the paramilitaries as well as the parade organisers.

Through 1996 and 1997 a political process continued to develop that offered some hope of bringing resolution to thirty years of violent conflict. Yet disputes over parades escalated with violence reaching a crescendo in July 1996 over the Drumcree parade. The British government was forced to introduce more soldiers on public-order policing duties. As in 1969 an inability to deal with the politics of street protest threatened any sort of political resolution. Calls for local accommodation went unheeded and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Secretary for State for Northern Ireland, announced an enquiry into the regulation of parades in Northern Ireland (see Bryan and Jarman 1997). The defining of the problem by the enquiry (North et al. 1997: 43) was influenced by reports we had written in 1995 and 1996 (Bryan et al. 1995; Jarman and Bryan 1996) and by work we were undertaking as the enquiry was underway (Jarman 1997b and 1999; Jarman and Bryan 1998: Jarman, Bryan, Caleyron and C. De Rosa 1998). Whilst we remained interested in the legal implication of right to parade, and a more academic concern around power and the control of public space, we became more focused on what an ethnographic analysis of confrontations, utilising theories of both ritual and the nature of crowds, might offer in terms of suggesting processes of conflict resolution.

We attempted to define some of the roles being played by actors: police, participants, spectators/supporters, stewards (formal and informal, including paramilitaries), political representatives, human-rights groups, solidarity groups, community-based groups, academic researchers and journalists (Bryan and Jarman 1999: 9–13). We were specifically interested in those people, groups and NGOs that define themselves as not directly involved in what was taking place, in other words a ‘third party’. As we looked at these groups it was clear that some were more closely allied to parties to the disputes than others. Some individuals and groups set out to intervene with protagonists, including the police, as events happened, others were observers who sought to influence what was taking place through ‘eye witness’ reports to be published later. Within this ‘third party’ category it also became useful to include the stewards or marshals at events because although they may be part of the organising of events, they sought to have specific responsibility for what was taking place and, on occasion, intervened in a manner that separated them from participants.

To better understand the roles this range of groups were playing we looked at the degree to which they intervened as events were taking place, their attempt to maintain some independence, the privileges that could be sustained in
terms of movement, particularly through police lines, and their relationships of power with other groups. For example, some of the legal monitors, such as those from the CAJ, sought not to intervene at all on the day, and placed monitors on both sides of police lines but attempted to remain strictly independent from any of the groups involved. Their aim was to observe police activities from a human-rights perspective and make public reports after the events. This independent role was taken so seriously that they would avoid crossing police lines, a privilege often offered to journalists and mediators, and would go so far as to make arrangements to use ‘neutral’ toilet facilities rather than those that might be offered by local residents. On the other hand, a number of those groups offering mediation would make it their business to engage directly with protagonists and for them the ability to cross police lines provided the possibility of creating the avenues of communication they were attempting to establish. So, for example, the two members of the Quaker group that attempted mediation on the Ormeau Road were recognised by all groups including the police and found it relatively easy to move across the spaces either side of police lines. However, a number of the international observer groups that had appeared to align themselves with one of the parties, usually the residents groups protesting over the parades, found it harder to make such moves because of their relationship with the police and their anticipated reception by those (usually the Orangemen) on the other side. The observing anthropologists were also making decisions over their movements as, although it occasionally seemed an attractive proposition to cross police lines, particularly when much of the activity seemed to be on the other side, to do so defined you as having some relationship with the police and therefore potentially made you unpopular with the crowd.

In monitoring the proliferation of fellow monitors, it became clear to us that whilst it was possible that the activities of these observers might make the situation worse, particularly the activities of journalists, there were significant possibilities in harnessing all of the types of monitors. Many of the groups offered the possibility of civic intervention into a conflict at least to mitigate the levels of violence and offer a context in which other processes of mediation between parties might take place.

We thought it worth exploring examples from other parts of the world as well as attempting to trace the history of third-party intervention in Northern Ireland (Bryan and Jarman 1999: 18–34). Whilst there is a longer history of election monitoring, monitoring of public-order situations was harder to find material on. However, we utilised some valuable material from South Africa, experience of legal monitoring in the U.S. and some examples from the miners’ strike in the U.K. in 1984 and from attempts to control football fans in England. Just as interesting, the Central Citizens Defence Committee in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s attempted to mediate between Catholic communities, the British security forces and Republican paramilitaries. The end of this approach is vividly described by one of those involved.

We had missiles hurled at us by rioters; we were harassed by the Army; we were threatened by military and paramilitary personnel alike; and finally the gunmen and the bombers made it impossible for us to continue our work of observing and intervening. It became too dangerous on the streets. (Watson 1991: 9)

Over a decade later the Irish Network for Non-violent Action Training and Education (INNATE) developed training models for observers and organised observer teams on the Garvaghy Road between 1988 and 1993. Given the obvious difficulties in undertaking this work in the 1970s though to the mid-1990s, it was interesting that by the end of 1996 there was a proliferation of groups.

In a report, Independent Intervention: Monitoring the Police, Parades and Public Order (Bryan and Jarman 1999: 35–64), we defined three
broad categories of groups, each with particular aims and each suggesting particular policy developments:

1. **Legal Monitors.** These are observers whose main aim is to monitor the application of the law by protagonists, usually from a human-rights perspective, and particularly, but not exclusively, the police. In general this requires the monitor to remain independent and impartial, such as CAJ, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, although a number of groups that have undertaken this role in Northern Ireland, such as Irish Parades Emergency Committee, are better described as solidarity groups. The mechanism nearly all such groups use is to witness what takes place then, afterwards, undertake activities as a pressure group, producing reports and evidence. For example, CAJ showed frequent examples of police officers in public order uniforms not showing individual police identification numbers, thus making the police officer behaviour unaccountable. A number of reports highlighting this issue meant that the RUC started to adhere more strictly to procedures (Committee on the Administration of Justice 1996). Whilst the monitors do not have a direct role at the events, their visible presence can clearly have some influence on what is taking place. Observers for CAJ always informed the police that they would be present at an event.

2. **Mediation/Intervention Monitors.** These monitors are willing to intervene on the ground and in particular are attempting to set up lines of communication. They are often individuals of some standing such as religious ministers or politicians. Whilst groups such as Mediation Northern Ireland work from an independent standpoint, other mediators garner legitimacy because they are from particular communities. People and groups working in this role will try and develop relationships before and after events.

3. **Stewards/Marshals.** Stewards at major public-order events either garner legitimacy because they are seen as independent and present for public safety, as in the case of concerts or football matches, or because they carry the authority of the organisers. This second type is particularly important with the organising of parades or protests. The Orange Order have always attempted to marshal their parades, sometimes the loyalist paramilitaries also act as marshals, and during the protests of resident groups members of Sinn Féin and the IRA were frequently present.

At the end of the report we recommended that there should be greater use of legal monitors to increase levels of accountability at public-order situations and that some of the new quasi-independent structures set up in Northern Ireland, such as the Northern Ireland Parades Commission (NIPC) and Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, could utilise field officers to undertake such work. We suggested that there could be greater use of community-based monitors to provide communication and mediation during periods of tension and that there was a need to develop training in both of these areas but particularly for marshals (Bryan and Jarman 1999: 67–70).

### ‘Community’ and ‘Policing’

The political institutions set up under the 1998 Multi-Party Agreement have, for the most part, and for various reasons, not been working. In addition, tensions over parades and interfaces have remained. In September 2005 Northern Ireland saw its worst rioting since July 1996 in a dispute over the Whiterock Orange parade that was rerouted from part of the Springfield Road in west Belfast. However, the context has changed appreciably. The reform process for policing, following from the Independent Commission on Policing, known as the Patten Report (Patten 1999), has led to significant changes. Whilst the PSNI does not get support from across all communities, it does now carry the support of some Irish nationalists in the form of the Social and Democratic Labour Party (SDLP) who have taken their seats on the Police Board. The PSNI have attempted to embed both human rights and policies of community policing through their organisation and the number of Catholics joining has increased. In addition, there have been significant acts of decommissioning of weapons by the IRA culmi-
nating in the organisation announcing a ‘final act’ on 26 September 2005. The NIPC, as recommended by the North Report (1997), has been making ‘determinations’ on parades since 1998 with the desired effect that the police, who formerly made the decisions, are not under quite as much political pressure. So whilst the broader political climate has been difficult, there has been a context within which new approaches to managing public disorder might be developed.

The use of legal monitors has developed in an interesting way. There has been relatively little legal monitoring undertaken by NGOs such as CAJ since 2000. The high-profile parade disputes in Portadown and on the Ormeau Road in Belfast have not attracted as many international monitors, in part, because the NIPC has not allowed the Orange Order onto the controversial routes thus leaving the solidarity groups with very little to monitor. However, as this form of monitoring has declined, the NIPC, following our recommendations, developed a system of legal monitoring. Under the 1998 Party Procession (NI) Act the NIPC developed a code of conduct for those taking part in parades and protests. This created a problem since it was not the role of PSNI directly to monitor that conduct. As such, the NIPC developed a system of volunteer monitors, trained by a number of us involved with Mediation Northern Ireland, to offer feedback on compliance with any legal determinations made by the NIPC and the code of conduct. Whilst monitors are asked ideally to make themselves known to organisers of a parade or protest, and to carry with them official identification, relationships between the NIPC and the Orange Order have been very poor so monitors have often observed without making their presence known. Whilst, in my experience, this system still has not been used to its full potential, it has provided the NIPC with detailed information that they can utilise which is independent of the PSNI.

As significant has been the range of mediation practices that has developed at both parades and interface areas. Many of the individuals and groups involved in mediation in the late 1990s are still involved. However, the NIPC, under the 1998 legislation, were required to encourage forms of mediation practice. Although this has been a difficult process, the use of ‘Authorised Officers’ working on particular disputes has been reasonably successful. The Authorised Officers not only collect information on the position of protagonists over a disputed parade but they also inform the NIPC on the possibility of a mediated resolution before a ‘determination’ is made. The Authorised Officers are frequently present at the events and are often used to facilitate communication between the police and other parties. I know of a number of examples when Authorised Officers have suggested solutions that have de-escalated tense public-order situations. Often this is by listening to the concerns of those involved in a parade and protest and suggesting a change in police tactics.

A number of forms of monitoring cover the territorial boundaries, known as interfaces, between Catholic and Protestant communities. The most widespread of these has been the use of mobile phone networks. Frequently riots at interfaces start with kids throwing stones and escalate when the police arrive to deal with a relatively trivial incident. Under various schemes key individuals in communities have been given mobile phones with which to contact each other. The idea is that these people, who are sometimes ex-prisoners, use their influence to stop a small incident escalating. This system is relatively cheap and simple although it does rely on some trust developing between individuals on opposite sides of an interface (Hamilton 2001).

The mobile phone networks utilise the legitimacy individuals have within their community. Another system of mediation monitoring, introduced at interfaces in east Belfast after serious disturbances, developed in the summer of 2002 (Byrne 2005). Mediation Northern Ireland and the Belfast Interface Project were asked by the Inner East Forum and the Short Strand
Community Forum to set up a system of monitoring where independent monitors would be placed on both sides of interface walls (Byrne 2005: 88). The project had the agreement of and worked with the three major paramilitary groups in the area, the IRA, the UDA and the UVF. If an incident was reported then the monitors had contacts within the communities who would attempt to de-escalate the situation. The monitors were not to intervene directly. Monitors were deployed late through the night for much of winter 2002/03 and then through much of the summers of 2003 and 2004. When large events were taking place such as the Battle of the Somme commemorative Orange parade on 1 July, the Eleventh of July night bonfires or the Twelfth of July parades, over fifty monitors were deployed, in teams, in different areas. The monitors, wearing fluorescent jackets and hard hats and communicating with walkie-talkies, placed themselves between the police and protestors from the Short Strand area and between those parading and the police. I suspect it was probably the most substantial monitoring of public order by an independent organisation that has ever been undertaken in Ireland or the U.K.

The project appeared successful in that there was a clear reduction of interface violence through the period of time it was in operation. It is of course difficult to tell how much this was due to the project or just changing circumstances. At a number of parades it was agreed that the presence of monitors in the Short Strand area meant that policing levels could be reduced. However, the major parades in the area still require heavy policing and the dialogue that it was hoped might develop between individuals either side of the interface has been limited. It was also clear that on occasions young people were manufacturing incidents to have fun at the monitors’ expense and by 2004 attitudes in the Loyalist/Protestant communities towards the monitoring project saw the initiative come to an end.

Interestingly within Loyalist working-class areas of Belfast the Protestant Interface Network (PIN) started having a presence at both local interfaces and parades. This seemed to suggest that the usefulness of monitoring groups was receiving acceptance even in the usually more sceptical Protestant community. With the projects mentioned above and others, there is now a significant resource of people who have experience as volunteer monitors.

The final category identified above was that of the use of stewards/marshals at events. The need for stewarding appears in the 1998 parades legislation which led the NIPC in autumn 1997 to ask a consultancy group, of which I was a member, to present a feasibility study on the possibility of steward training. Drawing upon case studies in England, including Premiership football, and in South Africa under the 1992 Peace Accord, the consultants argued that developing stewarding of events in Northern Ireland would have the effect of empowering members of the community, help organisers of events to live up to their responsibilities, reduce the need for large-scale policing, improve the health and safety environment, enhance community-oriented policing and offer individual career development to the participants. After some inquires the Apprentice Boys of Derry agreed to undertake training, with a safety trainer from Leeds United Football Club qualified to develop a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). Two local businessmen in Derry helped provide equipment for the marshals. The training proved popular, not least thanks to the skill of the particular trainer, with those that took part and although there have been some significant problems at the Apprentice Boys’ parades in August and late November, since trained stewards were first used in August 1998, the atmosphere at the events has improved.

This project influenced the Patten Report (1999) on policing which recommended that ‘it should be a condition of a parade that the organisers provide their own marshals’ (recommendation 67) and that ‘marshal training should be further developed, with an appro-
appropriate qualification on successful completion of the training’ (recommendation 68). Eventually, after some persuasion from Neil Jarman and another report (Jarman and Bryan 2000), a funding consortium that included the NIPC, the Community Relations Council and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) financed a steward-training course at the Tyrone College of Further Education in Cookstown. Not only is this course taken by members of the loyal orders, but the Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) have also become involved. It is my understanding that at least five hundred people have undertaken the training.

Conclusions

Public rituals and their associated symbols have for many years played a central part in the conflict in Northern Ireland. The most recent community-relations strategy from the government, A Shared Future (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister 2005), recognises the importance of developing mechanisms that free ‘the public realm from threat, aggression, and intimidation, while allowing for legitimate expression of cultural celebration’ (2.2, p.21). Given the history of inequality in access to the public sphere (Bryan 2000); given the bipolar, apparently oppositional nature of so many of the commemorations and celebrations that take place; given the history of a Protestant-dominated police force; and given the role of paramilitary groups in violently inscribing territory, attempting to manage conflict is a difficult process. Ethnographic research tells us of the complexity of many of the rituals the dynamics of which are contained in a web of power relationships. For much of the period since the late 1960s the state has dealt with these issues through the massive use of physical force mobilised both by the RUC and the British army. During the developing peace in the 1990s it became obvious that society had to face up to these problems and develop new solutions.

If, as I argued in my ethnographic research (Bryan 2000), we must examine the complex power relationships involved in the control of Orange parades, then policy interventions should take this into account. If ‘community policing’ were to be developed as a central policy for the new PSNI then we needed to work out how ‘community policing’ approaches would apply to public-order issues. What developed through this period was a whole range of responses, from new legislation to the use of monitors and observers, to the empowering of people involved in the events themselves. It could be argued optimistically that, unlike in the late 1960s, the state and, more broadly, society have adapted mechanisms through which to process the ongoing conflicts in public space. Some of what has developed has happened despite the state and has been based both within communities and amongst activists, be they international observers or local politicians, independent mediators or community workers. But the agencies of the state, including the police, have to some extent recognised these and adapted.

Anthropological enquiry provides me with a framework with which to start looking at the parades in Northern Ireland and ethnographic research is really the only available method for exploring the complex interactions around public rituals. What I did not anticipate were the policy outcomes in the field of conflict resolution. Many of the above projects developed as we watched what was taking place, but some were deliberate interventions on the part of a number of us who were observers. ‘Policing’ processes came from within communities, from within civil society and from the state.

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Note

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