The legacies of the dead: commemorating the Troubles in Northern Ireland

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Abstract. The Belfast Agreement of 1998, which initiated the so-called Peace Process in Northern Ireland, was fashioned so as to avoid creating mechanisms for addressing the legacy of the past, not least the commemoration of the fatalities of the Troubles which began in 1969. In this paper we explore, first, the role of the past and practices of commemoration in unagreed societies such as Northern Ireland in which consensus appears an unlikely proposition, the focus being on inclusion and exclusion and on the role of the contested nature of a hierarchical victimhood in commemoration. Second, the discussion engages with a succession of interconnected ideas that define the spatiality and landscapes of commemoration and considers the practices and spatialization of commemorating the Troubles within the grounded reality of everyday life and within the pragmatism of politics in Northern Ireland. We argue that processes of remembering and forgetting the dead of the Troubles point, at best, to a democracy shaped by ‘confictual consensus’, in which the contested heritage of victimhood both constitutes an important resource in ethnonationalist and ethno-sectarian politics and undermines the consociational Belfast Agreement and its attempt to elide the burdens of the past.

Introduction
Dealing with the past in the present has emerged as a key issue in the stalled Peace Process in Northern Ireland. As Bell (2003, page 1144) argues, the “Belfast Agreement [of 1998] was fashioned so as to avoid the need for a societal narrative.” It contains “no mechanism for dealing with past abuses, or ‘truth-telling’” (page 1097). One particular dimension that exercises all participants in the conflict (albeit from differing perspectives) and the wider public concerns the issue of commemorating the dead of the Troubles which began in 1969. In 1998, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, the then Northern Ireland Victims Commissioner, published his report, We Will Remember Them. While recognizing the importance of providing support for victims, the report also acknowledged the need to commemorate the dead, although admitting that this issue “can too easily take on a confrontational quality” in Northern Ireland (Bloomfield, 1998, page 11) and, by extension, in other transitional societies defined by ethnonationalist or ethno-sectarian division. In addition to measures of practical support to the bereaved, the Commissioner recommended that:

“At the appropriate time, consideration should be given to a Northern Ireland Memorial in the form of a beautiful and useful building within a peaceful and harmonious garden” (1998, page 51).

As Switzer (2005) remarks, the dilemma, however, is that such a memorial would honour all the dead of the Troubles, and it is difficult, at present, to visualize such an outcome. We Will Remember Them was subsequently heavily criticized for ignoring those who had been victims of the ‘security forces’—Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC); British Army including the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), later Royal Irish Regiment (RIR); and the Northern Ireland Prison Service. Subsequently, it has proven
impossible to separate out victims’ measures from wider “issues of responsibility and accountability for past killings” (Bell, 2003, page 1102), and there is certainly no constituency, as yet for a South African-style truth and reconciliation process. No consensus has been reached as to how the dead might be commemorated in terms of practices and sites of memory, or which victims of the Troubles should be included or, conversely, excluded from these processes. The issue of commemoration has thus emerged as an impediment to conflict transformation—which refers to methods that alter the nature of the conflict from violence to some other means (Lederach, 1997). In helping to transform the relationships, interests, and discourses which support the continuation of violent conflict, these processes operate at a number of levels from the individual to the state. As such, conflict transformation is not synonymous with conflict resolution, which is logically an unattainable goal in these circumstances as the outcome would be a Northern Ireland either entirely British or entirely Irish. In terms of the legacies of the dead, the repercussion of the lack of consensus is a plethora of commemorative acts in both public and private space by a wide range of state and nonstate agencies, including: the security forces; loyalist and republican paramilitary organizations; political parties such as Sinn Fein; the Orange Order; community groups (often an euphemism for paramilitary organizations and their associated political parties); and private individuals.

Such activity is not unique to Northern Ireland, and contested commemoration of the past is a characteristic feature of conflict transformation in all divided societies. Although we are concerned here solely with Northern Ireland, this is not to privilege that example as an exception but simply a reflection of the obvious point that causes of division in societies are complex, varied, and specific and it is all too easy to make facile cross-cultural comparisons. Our argument does reflect, however, the theoretical engagement of geographers and other academics with ‘memory work’ in a variety of societies. As in the US ‘Deep South’, where commemoration meshes public memory of the Civil War, Civil Rights, and unequal power (for example, Alderman, 2000; Dwyer, 2000), practices and sites of commemoration in Northern Ireland serve as icons of identity and spatializations of memory that transform neutral spaces into sites of ideology. Much more than a transparent window through which reality can be unproblematically viewed, these cultural landscapes comprise an arena of contested meanings. In her anatomy of memory, politics, and place in the new Berlin, Till (2005, page 9) writes of “ghosts”, of places of memory being “created...to give a shape to felt absences, fears and desires that haunt contemporary society” and through which “contemporary dreams of national futures are imagined” (page 193). Till also points to the dichotomy that characterizes all memorialization; that between the “evoked ghosts” and the ways in which places of memory “are made today to forget” (page 9). This fails, however, to capture the sense of the past being a hard-edged political resource, its contestation reflecting the unequal capacities of political groupings to exploit it to their own advantage and to the discomfiting of opponents. As Kong (1993, page 24) argues, landscapes of memory are important identity resources for political ideologies “in that they can be used to legitimize and/or challenge social and political control”. As such, in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, cultural landscapes function as significant sources for unravelling present geographies of contested political and cultural identities (Whelan, 2003).

The objectives of this paper are, first, to discuss the themes and roles of commemoration in Northern Ireland, a place where consensus appears an impossible—or, at best, very distant—goal, the most optimistic scenario for democracy being, arguably, a form of ‘conflictual consensus’ (Little, 2004, page 196). Second, we examine the ways in which various groups contest the meanings of victimhood and commemoration.
Third, the spatiality and practices of commemoration in Northern Ireland are considered, before we conclude with an assessment of the problematic of dealing with the practices and spatialization of the commemoration of the Troubles within the grounded reality of everyday life and the pragmatism of politics in Northern Ireland. Although commemorative practices and sites related to the Troubles are also found in the Republic of Ireland and Britain and among the Irish diaspora, with one exception we focus specifically on Northern Ireland because of the geographical and temporal specificity of the political, cultural, and social contexts of commemoration.

The themes and roles of commemorating the Troubles
Three essential themes inform the commemoration of the Troubles. The first concerns the ways in which it is a form of contested heritage through which the role of the past, as manifested by spatialities of memorialization, is implicated in present practices of sociopolitical inclusion and exclusion. Second, practices of sociopolitical inclusion and exclusion are expressed through localized geographies of territoriality and identity which reflect the point that Northern Ireland is a society that is both socially differentiated and structured by political discourse in parallel universes that are openly antagonistic to pluralistic practices of hybridity and diversity. Third, the commemoration of the Troubles intersects with the ways in which individual and collective identities are inflected by conflicting ethnonationalist ideologies that entwine private grief with memorial practices sited in public space.

Commemoration as contested heritage
Commemoration is clearly a form of heritage but not one confined to the role, in the present, of dominant official narratives of the past. It is deeply implicated here with ethnonationalist and sectarian constructs of society which reify an essentialist identity in which an individual is defined by the community into which he or she is born. The idea that Northern Ireland can be defined through two traditions (unionist – loyalist – Protestant and republican – nationalist – Catholic) is increasingly discredited, not least because of the escalating ethnic diversity of its society but also because republicans regard the British state as a full party to the ‘war’. Moreover, it is one committed to attacking republicanism by other means including the active reproduction of sectarianism (Sinn Féin, 2003). Arguably, however, in the 1998 Agreement, issues concerning responsibility for the past were subordinated to forging a consociational political consensus, a form of government that seeks to hold together divided societies by accommodation at the elite level (Tonge, 2005). Yet, this may be an inadequate model for Northern Ireland in that it depends on rational consensus. Meanwhile, the Agreement also exacerbated other problematic elements of Northern Irish politics, most notably the reification of the hegemonic status of the ‘two traditions’ paradigm through making what could be seen as an “exemption for one group... into a universal right that applied to all”. The obvious example is the entitlement to communicate in a language other than English, Irish and Ulster-Scots being given equal status so that there were “alternative languages for everyone” (Little, 2004, page 81). Moreover, a significant if unforeseen result of the Agreement has been a ‘depoliticization of society’, in which an escalating stress on identity, culture, and sectarianism has occurred “at the expense of the old contesting politics of national sovereignty, self-determination and independence” (Tonge, 2005, page 7).

Tonge follows Coulter (1999) in refining the essentialist idea of sectarianism by emphasizing the importance of religion, which, if marginalized in liberal society, remains “an accepted and sometimes overpowering agent” (Little, 2004, page 76) of identity in Northern Ireland. Thus, sectarianism can be defined as “religious bigotry, the
promotion of one’s religion or religious background at the expense of the alternative” (Tonge, 2005, page 192). Yet, given that religion is a key marker of difference, it will overlap with secular forms of conflict more accurately defined as ethnic or nationalist (Coulter, 1999). Commemorative and memorial landscapes and practices are marked inevitably by criteria of inclusion and exclusion within such a social framework in which they constitute part of a wider ‘idiom of recognition’ that displaces claims for egalitarian redistribution, or the idealistic landscape of justice envisaged in the Bloomfield Report, and that encourages “separatism, intolerance and chauvinism, patriarchalism and authoritarianism” (Fraser, 2000, page 108).

Such issues of the contested readings of the past and the resistance to hybridization have been raised widely in the literature on heritage, particularly with respect to the question: ‘whose heritage?’ (Graham et al, 2000). Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) use the term ‘dissonance’ to describe the discordance or lack of agreement and consistency as to the meaning of heritage, a condition that appears to be intrinsic to its very nature. In the sense relevant here, dissonance arises from the zero-sum characteristics of heritage, all of which belongs to someone and logically, therefore, not to someone else—a condition often implicated in ethnonationalist allegories of exclusivity. Edkins (2003, page xv) argues that “linear, homogenous time suits a particular form of power...[that] of the modern nation-state.” Her concern is with the struggle between memory and forgetting that takes place between the survivors of trauma and the sovereign powers that they confront. In Northern Ireland, however, it is Sinn Féin’s conflict with the British state that is particularly described by an aspiration to ‘linear homogenous time’, whereas the consociational state has abrogated its sovereign powers by declining responsibility for commemoration and for the past.

To some extent, this chimes with the argument advanced by Landzelius (2003), who disputes that the past should be such a constant and regressive point of reference in democratic societies, arguing instead that the imaginary lineage of heritage should be replaced with: “a ‘rhizome history’ of disinheritance” (page 213). “[in which] the erasure of heritage... should be mobilized as disinheritance... in order to make the past implode into the present in ways that unsettle fundamental social imaginary significations” (pages 215 – 216). Sectarian claims upon the past should be critiqued and deconstructed: “with the aim [of] subvert[ing] and deny[ing] all claims of some kind of imagined unbroken linkage and right to the past. The objective should be actively to disinherit each and everyone” (page 208). He argues that the universal democratic solution should centre not on inheriting a ‘heritage’ but on disinheritng a ‘disinheritance’, an idealistic goal that perhaps underlines the distance between the academy and the material world of ethnonationalist and sectarian democracy in Northern Ireland, where egalitarian, democratic liberalism is compromised by illiberal politics couched in antagonist discourses. There is no sense of commemorative heritage sites being constructed as places where people are being asked ‘to remember to forget’ through an admission of complicity (Peckham, 2003, page 14).

**Localized geographies**

To attempt any reconciliation of Landzelius’s goal with the issue of commemorative heritage in Northern Ireland, we must recognize that a majority of the electorate has voted to live apart, supporting political ideologies that entwine citizenship, civil rights, and cultural identity within micronationalist ‘what we have, we hold’ territories that deny self-reflexivity or the recourse to apology; instead, there are multiple local pasts “where ghettoized and antagonistic styles of remembrance” prevail (Peckham, 2003, page 214). The social construction of scale by the actions of groups and individuals has been explored by Flint (2004) through the terminology of ‘spaces of hate’, which seems
appropriate to the sectarian, ethnic politics of Northern Ireland. He observes the continuing importance of territoriality for ‘hate groups’, which delimit and assert control over geographic areas and support ideas of enclosed or sealed places. Gallaher’s comment (2004) regarding the US Militia Movement that the ‘last line of defence’ is the scale of the local conceptualized as place also has distinct resonances with the landscape of commemoration in Northern Ireland, with its mnemonic and external dialectic which is concerned as much with internal control of ethnic territories as with their bounded delineation. As Paasi observes, localized identities, especially when conflated with race, gender, religious, or class differentiation, “are among the most dynamic bases for both progressive political mobilization and reactionary, exclusive politics” (2003, page 476).

Localized urban and rural landscapes across Northern Ireland are marked by a plethora of commemorative sites to the dead, erected over the years since the onset of the Troubles in 1969, but especially after the paramilitary cease-fires in 1994. Leonard’s brief account (1997) records a range of memorials, located in both public and private space, to the casualties of conflict between 1969 and 1997, but the incidence of such memorialization has further escalated since the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998. Particular political factions orchestrate these commemorative practices, including wall murals, posters, flags, and other emblems, for specific political purposes and to portray changing political messages. Since 1998 there has also been a marked tendency to replace more ephemeral forms of commemoration, such as wall murals, with permanent monuments, statues, plaques, and memorial gardens, often located prominently in public space (Graham and Shirlow, 2002). These can be interpreted as expressing more enduring manifestations of contested identity. The dead remain a potent and emotive means of legitimating and perpetuating the ethnonationalism and sectarianism characteristic of political debate in Northern Ireland. There is little sense of reconciliation through shared loss, but, instead, the commemorative landscape seems largely to form part of competing claims for hegemonic victimhood by trenchantly opposed identities and spatialities proclaiming their irreconcilable differences. Political power turns on these differences and on the prolongation of the conflict by other means. Edkins (2003) has demonstrated that ‘state’ sites can become incorporated into landscapes of resistance for other groupings, but what is occurring in Northern Ireland is more a replication of a trend discernible elsewhere in the history of Irish monuments, namely “local, small-scale communities [constructing] public landmarks, with the explicit objective of adding to or modifying existing versions of history” (Kelleher, 2004, page 270). The imagery is often violent—or alludes to violence—precisely because:

“collective identity is rooted in founding events which are violent events. In a sense, collective memory is a kind of storage of...violent blows, wounds and scars” (Ricoeur, 1999, pages 7–8).

Public and private

The issue of scale intersects with that of the public and private in commemorating the Troubles in which ‘private’ trauma, emotion, or grief at bereavement or injury are displayed in the public domain as well as in the home. Conventionally, geographers have gendered the distinction between a private sphere associated with the home and with women and a public arena analogous with men. A significant feature of the commemorative landscapes that have evolved in Northern Ireland since the late 1960s relates to their highly gendered nature and, in particular, to the invisibility of women in the visual iconography of the Troubles. The marginalized place of women is thrown into even sharper relief by the overwhelmingly masculine nature
of public monuments, murals, and other commemorative forms. As Dowler (1998) has demonstrated, men have tended to be portrayed as soldiers and heroic participants in the conflict, while women have been cast either in supporting roles or as victims (see also Staeheli, 1996). When they are represented, there is a tendency to privilege the allegorical, abstract symbol, as in the case of the representation of Ireland as a woman in a number of republican wall murals, and which runs counter to the dominant masculine imagery that prevails elsewhere. Although gender thus offers a legitimate means for understanding public–private, it does not define the entirety of this supposed binary. In an exploration of the ways in which women have performed explicitly on the spatial margins between the public and private in Belfast, Reid (2005, page 493) argues against the artificial separation of the two spheres through associated gendered assumptions, and sees this dichotomy as being ‘crossed and blurred’. Further, a curiosity of Northern Ireland is that memorialization by agencies of the state is often within controlled or closed institutional space rather than in the public realm. This reflects both the impossibility, for example, of commemorating the security forces in public space and the state’s claim to be an ‘honest broker’ between the contesting parties instead of being an active participant in the conflict. Public–private may be defined by differential access to space, but it also encompasses the visible–hidden, which, in turn, is not delineated solely by the home.

This broader reading of the public–private or official– unofficial dichotomy is again a relatively well-understood characteristic of heritage in general. Place identities are created deliberately by public jurisdictions and by policymakers in the interests of the collective, but there are also popular or vernacular senses of place, defined at the level of both the group and the individual. In the particular context of commemoration of bereavement:

“The messages about grief...are mixed with other intentions, they confound the distinctions between private and public, personal and collective, memory and erasure” (Burk, 2003, page 319).

Burk argues that monuments ‘produce’ public space in three domains that distinguish between: the imaginative or ideological, which is an internalized ideological space that may or may not be transformed into the commitment of the other two domains; the discursive, which embodies the ideas committed to language and representation; and tangible, physical space. Consequently, the ‘taking’ of public space is a uniquely effective tactic in that it allows invisible social relations to become visible and, as Alderman (2000) argues, public commemoration can become a struggle over where best to locate a particular monument within the cultural landscape. Private manifestations of grief become part of the politics of visibility in Northern Ireland when these are transmuted through the practices and spatialities of commemoration into the public realm.

The roles of commemorating the dead

In sum, therefore, the commemoration of the Troubles has to be understood through the entwining of these themes of contested heritage, local geographies, and the public–private dichotomy. Between 1969 and 2001, 3665 people died as a result of the Troubles. Civilians accounted for more than 2000 of these fatalities, and the security forces lost more than 1000 dead. Total paramilitary losses amounted to around 550. No less than 88% of the dead were victims of paramilitary organizations, republican groups being responsible for almost 60% of all those killed (McKittrick et al, 2001). All convicted paramilitaries were released from prison after the 1998 Agreement.

The cultural landscapes of commemoration in Northern Ireland appear to play three specific if contradictory roles. First, they can fulfil the same function as
memorials to the two World Wars, acting both to commemorate the dead and to
provide places where a community can mourn (Winter, 1995). Some war memorials
have been reused to commemorate civilian and security forces dead, perhaps the most
poignant example being the eleven bronze doves incorporated into the restored war
memorial in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, to commemorate the victims of the 1987
‘Poppy Day’ bombing. Catholics and Protestants died together in many bombings
and indiscriminate shootings and therefore, as in the memorial garden to the twenty-
ine victims of the 1998 Omagh bombing by the Real IRA, commemorative landscapes
do not necessarily have to be the province of one particular group. Second, however,
many of them are precisely so for, as Winter observes, a war memorial also allows
a community to assert “its moral character and exclude...those values, groups or
individuals that placed it under threat” (1995, page 80). Thus, in Northern Ireland,
landscapes of commemoration are often overtly ethnonationalist or sectarian, acting
as sites of resistance for political ideologies whose legitimation depends on their
self-representation as military opponents of state oppression and/or of subalternity
(Graham, 2004a). This applies equally to republicans and loyalists who are engaged
in a bitter competition for the primacy of victimhood. Third, these landscapes and
their representations act as identity resources; their messages again are often grimly
divisive as is their aura of permanence in divided space. They assist in marking and
bounding territory, shaping place identities, supporting political ideologies, and con-
tributing to a group identity, which is often defined in contradistinction to the ethnic
other and which is both sustained and legitimated by reference to shared memories.
In such circumstances, commemoration is ‘an act of citizenship’ (Winter, 1995, page 80),
and, as Ricoeur (1999) contends, commemorative sites have a ‘duty-to-tell’ function
(which may overlap with a ‘duty to forget’) in political and ethnic constructions of
the future.

Within these broad parameters, there are three specific dimensions to the discur-
sion in the remainder of the paper. First, we argue that the issue of commemoration is
inextricably bound up in the theme of ‘victims and perpetrators’. Second, we address
the location of commemoration and the use of public and private spaces as sites
of memory. Third, we are concerned with the role of memorial landscapes in
ethnonationalist and sectarian politics and the wider issues as to why the past should
be such a constant point of reference in Northern Ireland, which, hypothetically at
least, is seeking a transition from conflict and human-rights violations to pluralist
democracy.

Victimhood and commemoration
As McEvoy (2001, page 345) acknowledges, the status of who is a “victim...in a violent
conflict is itself a contested issue”. So, too, is the status of the perpetrator, who, indeed,
might prefer the terminology of ‘protagonist’ or ‘combatant’. This issue is crucial to the
contested arena of commemoration in Northern Ireland. In assessing the Ardoyne
Commemoration Project, which documents the story of ninety-nine ordinary people
resident in a small nationalist community in North Belfast who became victims of
political violence between 1969 and 1998, Lundy and McGovern (2005) argue that the
issue of victimhood is the key question for truth telling. They identify, however, a “high
degree of skepticism of formal, institutionalized ‘top-down’ truth recovery processes”
(page 86) and also a marked difference between republicans and unionists on the
status of victims. We return to this issue below, but, in the vernacular, the key distinc-
tion centres on attempts to differentiate between ‘deserving victims’ and ‘those who
deserved it’. Thus:
We contend that there is a fundamental distinction between those who have suffered at the hands of terrorist groups and former terrorists who contributed to the terror campaign and wrought untold suffering through the period of the Troubles” [Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), 2003, page 4].

This distinction points to the recurring theme of a hierarchy of victimhood, although this construct is difficult to define as it takes many forms depending on groups and circumstances. As Lundy and McGovern show, the republican interpretation foregrounds the denial of equality to the victims of state violence but is also matched by an insistence on the inclusion of the families of alleged British informers. The Bloomfield report is dismissed by republicans for promulgating the idea that the ‘underserving’ victims were inevitably nationalists and republicans killed by the British security forces and their agents. Instead of heralding a new era of equality, the report “sowed anew the old seeds of ostracism” (Ardoyne Commemoration Project, 2002, page 8). For unionists, “the issue of inclusivity was a far greater problem... than it was for nationalists” (Lundy and McGovern, 2005, page 83), because of the distinction between ‘innocent’ and ‘noninnocent’ victims—those killed by ‘terrorists’ and those who were not. The definition of ‘victim’ adopted by the Ardoyne Commemoration Project neatly summarizes the difficulties of ‘single-identity’ work in a rigidly segregated society. It excludes through geography by defining a community boundary: the ninety-nine victims commemorated were all Catholics and included paramilitary combatants, although at least thirty members of the security forces were also killed in Ardoyne, largely by the local Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA).

Because of this contestation of ‘victim’ and ‘victimhood’ and also because of the piecemeal, pragmatic approach to the legacy of the past adopted in the 1998 Agreement, there is no common ground on commemoration, apart, perhaps, from the most poignant memorial of the Troubles: the book Lost Lives (McKittrick et al, 2001), which documents the circumstances of the deaths of all 3665 victims. Beyond this immensely powerful and important text, commemoration—as in Ardoyne—remains partisan, local, and piecemeal. The arena, which is predominantly inscribed with the markers of sectarian and ethnosecular exclusion, is contested between at least four distinct groups, each being involved in the interplay between victim and perpetrator. They are: PIRA/Sinn Féin and other republican organizations such as the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP); the more fragmented loyalist paramilitary groups, the most important of which are the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF); the state and its agents, the security forces; and the public at large (or noncombatants).

Republican groups
The essential key to the ideological mind-set of physical-force republicanism is to understand that it was—and remains by other means—engaged in a war against the British state rather than against loyalists. That state is held to have been responsible for the oppression and torture of republicans while, simultaneously, trying to deny that it was an active participant in the war. Thus, republican paramilitaries are regarded as victims, either as martyrs or dead heroes or as brutalized by imprisonment and by British government policies of criminalization. But they are also empowered by the close relationship between former prisoner groups and the macropolitics of Sinn Féin (Shirlow et al, 2005a). Consequently, former prisoner groups are prominent in republican commemorative practices, which take a wide variety of forms. In addition to monuments, murals, and republican plots in cemeteries, these include: ceremonies and annual commemorations; parades; wreath laying and graveside orations; Gaelic sporting occasions; festivals; pipe and band music; booklets; and rolls of honour.
If we follow Foote’s (1997) typology of the US landscapes of violence and tragedy, these practices are most likely to denote sites of sanctification, ritually dedicated to a martyr, hero, or victim and perpetuated by repeated rituals of consecration through which republican commemoration is clearly well orchestrated. Although specific memorials may be planned, funded, and maintained at the scale of the local community, they are marked by uniform ceremonies of dedication which will be attended by a prominent Sinn Féin speaker (often a former prisoner), involve family and church, and have paramilitary trappings such as colour parties. Monuments, too, are often standardized and inscribed with a ritual rhetoric of volunteers who died for Ireland and who were ‘murdered’ or ‘executed’ if they were killed by British special forces. As Foote observes, such memorials frequently become sites of annual consecration.

An analysis of the Provisional newspaper, *An Phoblacht*, for the period, 1997 – 2004 demonstrates a recurring pattern of commemorative sites being employed in annual rituals marking anniversaries and also in linking those held to be the martyrs and heroes of the Provisional movement to earlier republican dead. Four specific dimensions dominate republican commemoration in the cultural landscape: imprisonment and the 1981 hunger strike; 30 January 1972, ‘Bloody Sunday’, when fourteen men were killed by British paratroopers in Derry; alleged state ‘shoot-to-kill’ policies and collusion between the forces of the state and loyalist paramilitaries; and broader issues of political legitimacy for Sinn Féin. The first three strands point to the recurring theme of a contested hierarchy of victimhood. Although republicans may claim that victims of state violence are denied equality with other fatalities, republican ideology itself underlines the cynical point that certain among the dead are politically more valuable than others.

First, it is difficult to underestimate the central importance of former prisoner groups in the daily negotiation of street politics in Northern Ireland and the iconic role for republicans of Bobby Sands and the other nine hunger strikers whose deaths in prison in 1981 marked the culmination of the campaign against the abolition of ‘special category status’ for paramilitary prisoners. McBride (2001) supports McGarry and O’Leary’s (1995, page 245) interpretation that the hunger strikes were a miscalculation on the part of “rational agents pursuing strategic objectives, namely a united Ireland” rather than a manifestation of the “pathological fixation [of Irish republicanism] with sacrifice and death” (McBride, 2001, page 14). Yet, it is that latter ‘romantic’ reading that subsequent commemoration has inscribed upon the hunger strikers; thus, the inscription on the Derry hunger strike memorial in the city’s Bogside reads: “Let our revenge be the laughter of our children.” The twentieth anniversary of the hunger strikes in 2001 occasioned a plethora of acts of memorialization, which included: the erection of monuments and plaques; murals; street naming; and commemorative parks. These comprised both composite memorials to all ten men, such as the South Armagh hunger strike memorial stone near Silverbridge and the Derry memorial, and individual monuments. Sands remains the iconic republican martyr of the Troubles, the leader of the hunger strike, and the first to die.

The gendering of hunger strike commemoration is also striking. Particular contention surrounds the IRSP ‘National hunger strike and North West memorial’, which was dedicated in March 2000 at the graves of two 1981 hunger strikers in the very public domain of Derry’s City Cemetery. This menacing ten-foot-high statue of a masked gunman in paramilitary uniform is proclaimed as “a fitting tribute to members of the Irish National Liberation Army and Irish Republican Socialist Party from counties Derry and Tyrone who gave their lives during the latest phase of the war against the British establishment in Ireland.” Its message of republican resistance both conveys a claim to space that excludes Protestants from visiting the graves of their families.
(Shirlow et al, 2005b) and imparts a sense of male power, especially when one considers the commanding position and military stance.

Second, Bloody Sunday, which in 2006 still remains the subject of the ongoing Saville Inquiry set up in 1998, remains by far the other most potent focus of republican commemoration, not least because it is seen as having set the agenda for twenty-five years of state killing. It is obviously especially important in Derry, where the memorial obelisk inscribed with the names of the dead stands in Rossville Street. It should be observed, however, that the monument was erected by the Civil Rights Association and that the annual commemorative events associated with it are distanced from the firm hold normally exercised by Sinn Féin on republican commemorative practices.

Third, the entire issue of commemoration is intermeshed with the issue of ‘shoot-to-kill’ policies and collusion between the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries. Those who died as a result of such activities are portrayed as the victims of a state which, far from being a bastion of democracy or honest broker, was involved in the ‘dirty war’ directly and through surrogates. Hence, the eight members of the PIRA’s east Tyrone Brigade, who planned to attack the police station at Loughgall, Co. Armagh, in May 1987 but were ambushed and killed by an SAS unit positioned in the village because of prior intelligence reports, are referred to routinely as the ‘Loughgall martyrs’. This was the greatest single loss suffered by PIRA and the men are multiply commemorated at several scales and places, ranging from the home (McKitterick et al, 2001, page 1078) through the Edendork republican plot outside Dungannon, to the republican memorial at The Moy, Co. Tyrone, to the striking gunman statue at Cappagh, Co. Tyrone, which links the ‘martyrdom’ of the Loughgall dead to that of the hunger strikers, particularly Martin Hurson, who came from the locality:

‘Loughall epitomises British ‘peacekeeping’ in Ireland: kill the dissenters and the rebels and terrorise us into submission… at Cappagh at the memorial stone to the Loughgall martyrs and Volunteer Martin Hurson… there is one sure thing to be gleaned…’The British ARE going to go… because… republicans… aren’t going anywhere’” (An Phoblacht 15 May 1997).

The enduring importance of memorialization and of the idea of a hierarchy of victimhood is not confined to the commemorative landscape but also includes continued high-profile pressure on both British and Irish governments for inquiries and judicial reviews of killings involving the alleged collusion of state forces. Although these demands can be, but are not necessarily, orchestrated through political parties, such inquiries and reviews inevitably become a focus of resentment even if family demands for justice are to the fore. They are seen to privilege certain deaths at the expense of the estimated 1800 victims whose killers have never been brought to court.

Fourth, republican commemoration is concerned, too, with broader issues of political legitimacy and with the need to establish Sinn Féin as the rightful heir to the legacy of Irish nationalism. Commemoration of the Troubles is thus often integrated into linear narratives of Irish revolutionary events including the 1798 Rebellion and the United Irishmen of 1803, as well as more recent IRA campaigns of the 20th century, all of which were already heavily memorialized in the landscape. Easter provides a salient annual event which links the 1916 Dublin Rising with ceremonies at republican memorials and graves marking the Troubles. In 1999, for example, while the leader of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams, was declaring in Dublin that his party stood “with [James] Connolly ... on the position of the 1916 Proclamation on the national question”, Sinn Féin councillors were attending the ceremony in the Garden of Remembrance at Carrickmore, Co. Tyrone, where the Roll of Honour was orated by a former political prisoner and a masked IRA volunteer read the Easter statement from Oglaigh na
hEireann (Irish Republican Army). Elsewhere, there were orations and ceremonies in Fermanagh, Armagh, and Tyrone at the gravesides of dead IRA volunteers (*An Phoblacht* 11 April 1999). These and many other similar acts of commemoration are repeated annually. Conversely, the anniversary of internment without trial, launched by Operation Demetrius on 9 August 1971, is commemorated (and now coyly so, see [http://www.feilebelfast.com](http://www.feilebelfast.com)) by the annual West Belfast Festival (Féile an Phobail) first held in 1988.

**Loyalist groups**

Loyalist commemoration is less well organized, more diffuse, and lacks the coherence of its republican counterpart. In part, this is because the ideological position of loyalists is more clear-cut in that their war was against republicans rather than against the state. Loyalists have always had a problem with state violence in that they have been almost forced to deny its occurrence so as not to be seen to be supporting republicanism. Without the state to fulfill the role of oppressor, it is more difficult for loyalists to portray themselves as victims, while the overtly sectarian violence against Catholics practised by loyalist murder gangs also undermines the legitimacy of their cause. ‘Middle unionism’ is also antipathetic towards loyalist paramilitaries, arguing that service in the security forces constituted the appropriate response to republican violence. Further, loyalism is highly fragmented and riven by internal and sometimes murderous disputes. Again, this militates against the use of commemoration in the portrayal of a coherent ideology of victimhood, because the processes of memorialization are often directed internally within loyalism rather than against the other of republicanism (Graham, 2004b). Less convincingly, therefore, elements in loyalism such as the Progressive Unionist Party, the political wing of the UVF, claim that their victimhood is defined by the neglected, subaltern status of the Ulster working classes oppressed by the Stormont government of ‘middle unionism’ and now utterly betrayed through social exclusion and the demise of the industrial base that once provided them with employment.

Loyalist commemorative practices take similar forms to their republican counterparts but often lack the formal processes of ritual and ceremony: for example, the republican tradition of the graveside oration is much less common. Nor do loyalists have the equivalent of rolls of honour and republican burial plots such as those sited in Belfast’s Milltown Cemetery. Although there are ceremonial monuments, these are less grandiose than many of the republican variants (which may relate to the level of funding commanded by Sinn Féin through donations from the diaspora and from the post-cease-fire ‘economic’ activities of the IRA). Their scope also echoes Flint’s (2004) observations concerning the scale at which spaces of hate are constructed, as they are intensely localized and reflect, above all, the fragmentation of loyalism and the need and desire to distinguish a particular locale—not necessarily from republican areas but from its adjacent loyalist neighbourhoods and specifically from those controlled by rival paramilitary organizations.

The most powerful forms of loyalist commemoration are again those who aspire to incorporate commemoration of the Troubles into a linear narrative that links the dead of the Troubles with those of the Great War. The iconic event here was the decimation of the 36th (Ulster) Division on 1 July 1916, the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. As Jeffery (2000) observes, commemoration of Ireland’s shared suffering in the Great War might offer some potential for reconciliation. But this has yet to occur in Northern Ireland. Instead, one has to visit the Ireland Peace Park near Messines (Mesen) in Flanders, which honours the successful joint attack on 31 May 1917 by the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions in the Battle of Messines. In loyalist
Northern Ireland the iconography of commemoration is exclusive, and the paramilitary fatalities of the Troubles and the Great War dead—almost always those of the Somme—remain intermeshed through murals, commemorative gardens, and occasional monuments in a mythology of sacrifice, betrayal, and self-reliance that, using the high language of British war commemoration, once again, self-images loyalists as victims: “At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.”

Security forces
Total security forces fatalities in the Troubles comprised: 303 members of the RUC and RUC Reserve; 206 members of the UDR/RIR; and 503 regular army personnel. In addition, 29 prison officers were killed. As representatives of the state, members of the security forces can be portrayed as victims only if that state was not culpable of acting as an active participant in the war rather than as a mediator between republicans and loyalists. For republicans, these dead were legitimate targets, agents of a state with which they were at war, and a principal party to the conflict. For loyalists, however, because of the policy of ‘Ulsterization’, which saw regular army forces replaced progressively in the frontline by the RUC and the UDR/RIR, the security forces dead were often members of the unionist community. Many were killed off duty by the IRA because they lived in local places, had other social roles (numerous UDR personnel were part-time), and could be easily identified. Thus, they, too, can be claimed as victims of terrorists and arguably, as in the Fermanagh borderlands, even of ethnic cleansing.

Noncombatants
Designating the 2051 civilian dead of the Troubles as victims seems the least problematic aspect to this dimension to commemoration, although the term “covers a multitude of widely differing people” (McKittrick et al., 2001, page 1501). The Bloomfield report (1998) focused on victims and their financial and psychological needs, although it was acknowledged that the reaction to trauma varies so much that some would abhor being allocated that status. The Belfast Agreement (1998, paragraph 11, note 7) acknowledged the “suffering of the victims of violence as a necessary element of reconciliation”, and the subsequent government programme for victims included the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund, which supports community projects but not commemoration or memorialization as such. Because republican ideology denies that it is sectarian, given that there is no formal linkage between the movement and the Catholic Church, the civilian dead have been depicted by some republicans as ‘collateral damage’ in the war against the British. So even if victims were predominantly Protestant—as in atrocities such as the fire bombing of the La Mon hotel near Belfast, which killed twelve people in horrific circumstances in 1978, or the Shankill Road chip-shop bomb in 1993, which killed nine Protestants (and a PIRA bomber)—their deaths were inadvertent or unfortunate although, albeit, still questioned. In sum, war creates brutality, but republicans claim that it was not part of their plans to kill Protestants although, intended or not, the effects were the same.

It seems, moreover, that there is a fine distinction between this stance and the indisputably sectarian killings of Catholics by Protestant paramilitaries such as the ‘Shankill Butchers’ gang during the mid-1970s. Post-1998 loyalist commemoration has taken up this theme and starkly portrays PIRA violence as having been sectarian. For example, a substantial granite memorial erected in 2003 on Belfast’s Lower Newtownards Road, stands in memory of two Protestants killed and twenty-eight wounded by PIRA gunmen who, on the night of 27–28 June 1970, opened fire “in a planned and unprovoked attack” from St Matthew’s Roman Catholic church across the road. Other Protestant civilians killed by the PIRA in East Belfast are also commemorated by this memorial and, nearby, a wall mural remembers the ‘innocent dead’
of eight multiple killings, whose “Civil, human and democratic rights were taken away... by violent republicans... let us not forget.” Another mural on the loyalist Shankill Road in west Belfast rather laboriously recalls: “30 years of Indiscriminate Slaughter by So-Called Non-Sectarian Irish Freedom Fighters.”

The spatiality and practices of commemoration
We argue that, in this contested realm of victimhood, public memorial practices, monuments, and other highly symbolic markers inscribe meaning on space. The key factors differentiating the memorialization of the four groups considered here are: first, what can be termed the ‘importance’ of the dead; second, the location of their memorialization in relation to public and private space and the form of the monuments; and, third, distancing in the sense that the commemoration of certain of the dead occurs elsewhere.

A hierarchy of the dead
Yet another dimension to the idea of a hierarchy of victimhood stems from the inescapable conclusion that, although there are many memorials to the civilian victims of the Troubles, the commemorative sites and the practices which are linked to republican and loyalist paramilitary organizations and/or their associated political parties have far greater political value. The rhetoric of the military dead and the masculine gendering which permeates such sites of memory lead to the privileging of certain dead over others. Whatever their provenance, these sites and their iconography are utterly exclusive. This reflects the more general point that particular narratives will always be privileged in attaching memory to place. It also underscores the selectivity inherent both in the remembering and in the forgetting of people and events. Thus, for republicanism, the sites of memory which carry greatest value are those related to the dead martyrs—the hunger strikers, followed by memorials that can be read as narratives of the oppressive state such as the Bloody Sunday memorial in Derry, or ‘shoot-to-kill’ strategies by the security forces. Conversely, for Unionists and Loyalists the litany of multiple-death fatalities inflicted by republicans on the security forces—such as Narrow Water, Co. Down (eighteen soldiers killed by two bombs in 1979), Ballykelly, Co. Londonderry (seventeen soldiers and civilians killed in the Droppin Well public house by an INLA bomb in 1982), or the mortar bombing of Newry RUC station which killed nine police officers in 1985—is of particular significance. Even more so are the multiple killings of civilians as in the nine people killed in 1972 by the succession of bombings in Belfast that became known as ‘Bloody Friday’, and a series of incidents in South Armagh which included: the five people killed in an attack on an Orange hall at Tullyvallen in 1975; the machine-gunning of ten Protestant workmen at Kingsmill in 1976; and the shooting dead of three worshippers in a Pentecostal church at Darkley by INLA gunmen in 1983. Although there is no direct connection between the scale of the event and memorial activity—several of these sites lack permanent markers of any sort—they still retain a vital psychic role in remembering and commemorating the past, not just because of the scale of fatalities or the circumstances of the deaths but also because these and other incidents could be used to legitimate the war against republicanism and against its efforts to bomb the loyalist people into a united Ireland. As we have noted, such killings also support a sectarian reading of republican strategy, which is at odds with its proclaimed ‘war against the state’ ideology in which civilian deaths could be dismissed as unfortunate collateral damage; thus such killings continue to bolster the distrust of Sinn Féin that has so corroded the Peace Process since 1998.
The location of memorialization

Second, the hierarchy of commemoration is underscored by the location of sites of memory in public and private space and by the nature of the monuments themselves. The key factor here lies in differentiating between the four sets of participants, in that unofficial commemoration of the republican and loyalist paramilitaries has a far higher public profile than commemoration of the security forces, the agents of the state. As in numerous other aspects of politics in Northern Ireland, republican commemoration is also much better organized and more confident than its loyalist counterpart. Republican memorials are often erected at the site of death whereas loyalist fatalities are less likely to be commemorated in this way (Leonard, 1997). Again, numerous memorials have been dedicated many years after the deaths of those commemorated, as part of the legitimation of Sinn Féin. In Derry City, for example, more than twenty monuments or plaques have been erected since 2000 to commemorate individual dead PIRA and IRSP volunteers, although most of them were killed in the 1970s or early 1980s. A number of monuments sited in public places since 1998 can be read only as demonstrations of zero-sum ethnic politics. To take but one example, a large, harp-shaped polished granite memorial to Kevin Lynch, an INLA volunteer who was one of the 1981 dead hunger strikers, now occupies a dominant location on the principal street in Dungiven, Co. Londonderry. It could not be more public, given that this is also the A6, the principal route between Belfast and Derry, and one of the busiest main roads in Northern Ireland. Theoretically, if not in practice, such monuments are subject to planning regulations and also to the equality agenda set out in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which refers to the need to promote good relations between persons of different religious and political opinion and racial origin. In the contentious debate surrounding a monument erected during 2001 in Downpatrick, Co. Down, to commemorate local dead PIRA members, Sinn Féin appears to have accepted that “the erection of such monuments should be...addressed within the equality framework” (McEvoy and Conway, 2004, page 550), although there are few instances of paramilitary monuments actually being relocated or removed.

More commonly, perhaps, republican and loyalist sites of commemoration are located within the respective ‘spaces of hate’. Loyalist monuments are generally less grandiose but, like their better funded republican counterparts, they are sites of sanctification where, again, the ritual rhetoric is that of the martyr, hero, and just victim. Even mural sites may have small altars inscribed with the language of British war commemoration, and these act as the foci for annual rituals including the laying of poppy wreaths on 1 July to mark the anniversary of the Somme. The practices of commemoration are played out at an intimate scale that reflects the finely differentiated geographies of local communities. Northern Ireland is a patchwork of sectarian places, and the location of commemorative sites is therefore linked to territoriality and to the bounding of this fragmented space. The sectarian interfaces of Belfast, the borderlands of South Armagh, and the convoluted social geography of rural areas such as Tyrone and Fermanagh dominated the geographies of death in the Troubles and, therefore, remain marked by the spatialities of commemoration which are part of the unagreed nature of Northern Ireland’s society and of its zero-sum attitudes to identity and territoriality. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the burgeoning landscape of commemoration represents an orchestrated process in which paramilitary organizations and their political parties are consciously creating these sites and their memorial practices as one means of perpetuating identity politics and territorial control. Further, as we have noted, republicanism and especially loyalism are themselves fragmented, and commemoration may therefore also be inner directed as part of the power struggles within the respective communities.
There are no state-sponsored memorials to the civilian dead within (or without) Northern Ireland. While many victims of the Troubles are simply elided from the landscape of remembrance, numerous individual memorials honour the dead of particular atrocities. Often these are located at the actual sites, and examples include: the bronze statue of a sorrowing female figure commemorating the nine victims of the PIRA bombing of Claudy, Co. Londonderry in 1972; a roadside obelisk to the eight Protestant workmen killed in an IRA bombing at Teebane Crossroads, Co. Tyrone in 1992 (erected by the men's employer); and the simple plaque donated by the people of the village of Greysteel, Co. Londonderry, to commemorate the seven men and women murdered in the Rising Sun bar by UDA gunmen in 1993. Other memorials have been erected by firms to commemorate their dead employees; these can be sited in public, if controlled, space as is the fine ceramic panel in Belfast's Laganside Bus Station, which remembers the twelve staff of Citybus and Ulsterbus killed in the course of the Troubles. Obviously, graveyards are also sites of commemoration, as are Protestant—but not Catholic—churches. In their scale, simplicity, and iconography, these civilian sites of memory contrast with the often-grandiose republican and loyalist monuments and their inflated military rhetoric.

The commemoration of the state's dead is an even more vexed, fragmented, and difficult process. Official state acts of remembrance are rare in Northern Ireland, those of the two World Wars apart, and there is, for example, no single monument to commemorate the security forces dead from the Troubles. Instead, there is the same pattern of piecemeal and localized commemoration that is characteristic of the process as a whole. In East Belfast, the 303 RUC and RUC Reserve dead are commemorated at the RUC George Cross Garden in the grounds of Brooklyn, now the headquarters of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, which replaced the RUC in 2001. Dedicated in 2003, this is a multifaceted monument in which the sombre memorial garden, with its running water and polished marble plinths inscribed with the individual names of the RUC's Roll of Honour, is integrated into a larger ensemble that also includes a history trail which grounds the RUC within its past social and political contexts. Thus, the memorial complex commemorates the RUC itself as a police force, celebrates the award of the George Cross in 1999, and remembers all RUC officers who were 'killed as a result of terrorism' together with those 'who died in service' between 1922 and 2001. The monument, therefore, has a more extensive function than simply commemorating the Troubles but, crucially, it is not—indeed, it cannot be—located in public space. It is open to the public only by prior arrangement, although the ultimate intention is that the garden will eventually become part of an accessible RUC museum. Equally, army memorials are generally confined to private, closed institutional spaces such as Palace and Thiepval Barracks.

There are, however, a few exceptions. Individual security forces victims are commemorated at particular sites such as the memorial stone at Clogherney Parish Church, Co. Tyrone, where the Roll of Honour lists the names of seventeen dead RUC and UDR personnel, as well as three civilians. Memorials from the two World Wars have been reused to commemorate security forces dead and some civilian casualties, and there are other ceremonial sites such as the UDR memorials in Belfast's St Anne's Cathedral and City Hall. Those monuments to the security forces that have been sited in public space are generally erected at the initiative of unionist local councils and often use the sanctity of existing World War memorials to fulfil what Foote (1997, page 231) has termed a process of 'symbolic accretion', in which layers of meaning are added to a site through time. Switzer (2005) notes, for example, the war memorial at Castlereagh in East Belfast, which, in addition to the Great War dead, now commemorates members of the security forces and 'innocent victims
of terrorism’ killed in the Troubles. Again, in 2003, Ards Borough Council in unionist East Down erected a monument to the security forces that stands:

“in memory of and with gratitude to the men and women of the RUC, members of the security forces and the prison service and the emergency services who made the ultimate sacrifice or were injured in the line of duty to protect our community.”

The polished granite monument is sited in a prominent location adjacent to the war memorial in Newtownards, Co. Down, and, together with other monuments that conflate the memory of the state’s dead in the World Wars with those of the Troubles, performs a function of legitimation of the present which is analogous to that claimed by the linear narratives embodied in both republican and loyalist paramilitary memorials.

Distancing
It is a curiosity of the memorialization of the Troubles that actual state-sponsored commemoration of its dead in public space occurs only beyond Northern Ireland, and, again, this takes a relatively ambiguous form compared, for example, with the very formalized and ritualized honouring of the dead of the World Wars and other conflicts. Distant commemoration of war fatalities is in itself not unusual, given the imperial policy instituted during World War I of burying the dead where they had been killed. Thus, the Ulster Tower, sited near Thiepval on the 1916 Somme battlefield in northeast France, is Northern Ireland’s ‘national’ war memorial. Yet, the commemoration of the Troubles is rather different in that many of the graves are not in distant places—they are in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The Northern Ireland Office is the principal sponsor of the Ulster Ash Grove, dedicated during 2003 in the curiously contextless and placeless surroundings of the National Memorial Arboretum near Lichfield in Staffordshire, England. This complex, set in some 40,000 trees planted in reclaimed gravel workings, has over fifty dedicated memorial plots (National Memorial Arboretum, no date). These represent a disparate collection of largely but not necessarily military events, institutions, and groups. The Ulster Ash Grove is marked by a stele that stands within a stone circle of six large boulders, one for each of the counties of Northern Ireland. The inscription reads:

“In memoriam: In grateful memory of the men and women of the Royal Ulster Constabulary G.C., the Armed Forces and other organizations in the service of the Crown who laid down their lives in the cause of peace in Northern Ireland, 1969 – 2001.”

Nearby, an ash sapling, marked by a plaque giving the name, regiment, and date of death, has been planted for each soldier killed in the Troubles and, separately, for each of twenty-nine prison officers. This is the only public place where all the armed forces dead, including those from the locally recruited UDR and also the officers of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, are commemorated by name. The only other memorial to prison officers, formerly inside the Maze prison, has now been moved to the closed institutional space of the Prison Service’s Training College at Millisle, Co. Down. The RUC is denoted in the Ulster Ash Grove only by an individual tree for each divisional headquarter, although, in addition to the RUC Memorial Garden in Belfast, all police officers killed in the Troubles are named at the National Police Memorial, unveiled in London in 2005.

This placeless manner of commemoration is clearly much less powerful than those forms practised by the other combatants, the republican and loyalist paramilitaries. It is particularly so for the families of the UDR and Northern Ireland Prison Service dead, who obviously have no connection with the locale. Again, for the armed forces, who were drawn from all over the United Kingdom, the National Memorial Arboretum is a pale reflection of the monumental landscape created by the World Wars, in which the
dead are linked to the places of their death. It is perhaps less a site of memory than, in Foote’s typology (1997), a site of obliteration where the evidence of death and tragedy is effaced or removed from view so as not to impede the desire to forget. Because the state itself seeks to deny having been an active participant in the war, its interests are arguably best served by sponsoring a distant and geographically obscure form of commemoration. Formal memorialization in public places within Northern Ireland is not, therefore, congruent with the reading of the Troubles that the state seeks to portray.

Conclusions: the legacy of the dead
These various dissonances between the themes of inclusion and exclusion that characterize the debate on and claims to victimhood, the intersection of territoriality, scale, and the site of memory, and the contrasting extent of public–private memorialization among the various parties to commemoration point to the problematic nature of dealing with the past in the present. Northern Ireland, like many other societies, lies in a state of ‘transitional justice’ in which governments emerging from deep-rooted conflict seek to address the legacies of past human-rights violations (Bell, 2003). As argued above, however, the piecemeal, pragmatic approach of the 1998 Agreement to the legacy of the past, which, in fairness, does reflect the compromises required to reach a political settlement, has resulted, nonetheless, in the state essentially surrendering the high ground of victimhood, and the moral approbation that goes with it, to the paramilitaries and their political parties. Whether the paramilitaries and their political parties are perpetrators, protagonists, or combatants, republicans, in particular, have seized the commemorative landscape and, in so doing, erected fixed and permanent memorials to their partial, selective, ethnonationalist narratives that integrate the Troubles into a linear discourse of the struggle of an oppressed people against the state. For both republicans and loyalists, the ideological and discursive domains of public space (Burk, 2003) have become manifested in the chauvinistic, intolerant, and authoritarian material reality of the commemorative landscape which helps mark and bound space and reinforces the territoriality vested in spaces of hate that underpins politics in Northern Ireland. As we have suggested, the state may not regard memorialization of the security forces’ dead as being in its own best interests. Ignored in this interplay of the combatants’ priorities, the civilian noncombatant dead are memorialized sporadically and largely privately. The public monuments tend to mark those incidents that caused multiple deaths rather than single, sectarian murders.

Thus, Landzelius’s (2003) argument for the erasure of heritage through disinher- itance has few resonances in Northern Ireland, where commemoration has become one of the ‘surrogate debates’ which suggests “that the conflict has not ended, that the past is the present” (Bell, 2003, page 1099). The processes of commemoration in Northern Ireland—and the cultural landscapes which they produce—create political practices and in which the state has—or effectively chooses to have—little role to play. Therefore, sites of commemoration symbolize the enduring importance of ethnonationalist and sectarian politics and the continuation of the conflict by other means. Longley (2001, page 224) argues that solving Northern Ireland’s problems “may be equally inseparable from remembering the past in new ways.” She contends (page 253) that this requires a shift from “destructive remembrance to constructive amnesia—and from cynical, selective forgetting to responsible, alarming memory.” Yet, in the short term, at least, this is nearly as difficult a proposition as Landzelius’s call for the erasure of heritage. That this is so reflects a broader problem with the ideology of liberal democracy and with how it might accommodate the interests of those who are opposed to consensus. In effectively attempting to elide the past,
the Belfast Agreement was couched in terms of consociational, consensus politics. Their rationality remains compromised, however, by the issue of competing and unagreed identities embodied, in part, through the commemorative processes discussed here.

Consequently, the contested commemoration of the dead in Northern Ireland is one means by which competing ideologies are concretized as material realities in segregated lived places. In this context, as Little (2004) argues, liberal models of democracy are problematic because of their focus on political agency and especially that of the individual. Instead, issues of social structure mean that people choose democratically to locate their identities in narratives and representations of past and present oppression and victimhood. For Northern Ireland, models that depend on ‘rational consensus’ are deficient and the consociational basis of the Belfast Agreement is deeply flawed. The past is the present, and republican, loyalist, and even state commemorative landscapes—now increasingly made permanent in stone rather than being expressed through more transient forms such as the wall mural—reflect the irreconcilable dissonances that still exist and, by extension, the enduring importance of defining and controlling space at the local level. The British government’s stance that the past can be dealt with in a pragmatic and piecemeal fashion is a fundamental misreading of Northern Ireland. The commemorative landscape that is being erected and maintained by republicans and loyalists alike demonstrates the limitations to consensus in Northern Ireland and other divided societies. Nationalists are democratically choosing political former prisoners and the leaders of the PIRA as their representatives; unionists have opted for the more extreme political mandate, albeit not that of the loyalist paramilitaries but of the anti-Agreement DUP.

But the processes of commemoration are also linked to other grievances from the past that still resonate widely today. In privileging the memories that can be read as evidence of the state’s active participation in the war, republicanism is continuing the struggle against the policy of criminalization of political prisoners, which, in turn, implied that the RUC and the army could be depicted as the legitimate forces of a state mediating between the two opposed factions. For loyalists, it is more ambiguous. Their memorialization is about the war against the IRA and the suffering of innocent victims of terrorism, and again about resentment over criminalization; but it is also linked to the perceived betrayal of unionism by the British government and the emergence, essentially, of an ‘ourselves alone’ perception of the world. Commemoration of the Troubles thus becomes entwined with the attempt to reshape loyalist–unionist identities around ‘Ulster’ rather than around ‘British’ (Graham, 2004a). Republican and loyalist narratives of the past are irreconcilable, being shaped by diametrically opposed interpretations of experiences and events and perpetuated, in part, through the processes of commemoration to shape present discourses of identity. The competition for victimhood and for the moral high ground that stems from it remains crucial. In a situation in which the parties to the conflict see the world from totally different perspectives, agreed memorialization and the disinheritance of each and every one (Landzelius, 2003) seem remote goals. The processes of remembering and forgetting discussed here suggest that the best that can be achieved from democracy in such circumstances is the acceptance of the legitimacy of opponents and an understanding of how their perspectives embrace a different way of thinking (Little, 2004). In this world of ‘conflictual consensus’, the past as heritage is omnipresent whereas the 1998 Peace Agreement is built on the unsustainable assumption that the burdens of the past can somehow be set aside in a consociational society.

Because there is a hierarchy of commemoration, it is clear, however, that the processes of sanctification that mark the public articulation of republican and loyalist memorial practices are matched by processes of obliteration—of forgetting. Elided from
the commemoration process as it is played out in public space are the security forces, whose deaths can be acknowledged only in private and/or distant places, and the noncombatants, who are most likely to be memorialized in public space only if they were killed en masse in one of the salient atrocities of the Troubles. The sole truly inclusive form of commemoration is *Lost Lives* (McKittrick et al, 2001). We conclude, therefore, that the fashioning of the Belfast Agreement to avoid a ‘societal narrative’ (Bell, 2003, page 1144) has been compromised by the ways in which ethnonational identities remain sited in spaces of hate in which the public and permanent commemoration of certain among the dead is a salient and powerful process of spatial marking and delineation. The dissonant narratives which the state sought to elide have been written perforce and they point, at best, to accepting another party’s right to be different while using commemoration as one means of continuing the war by other means.

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