

Public remembrance practices in Belfast: What, where and for whom?

First Abstract

Sarah Ritt, BA MA

What happens when two communities with opposite values and identities share a city, not only in their everyday lives, but also in their remembrance rituals and discursive practices? This project will seek answers to this question in the case of the Northern Irish capital of Belfast. The city has remained a hotspot of ideological tensions, even though the civil war has formally ended in 1998. Brexit – the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union – has once again raised the question of what it means to be Northern Irish in the 21st century and how the troubled past of the area should be represented and remembered.

Parades and regular demonstrations are the most prevalent form of civic participation in the city, often those happenings have ties to distinct groups, ranging from cultural initiatives to sports fans and – unfortunately, even to this day – paramilitaries. Those are all based on a mixture of religious holidays, political occasions or as reactions to current socio-political events.

By using a mix of empirical methods (Linguistic/semiotic analysis as well as participatory observation) from both actual parades as well as relevant stops along their routes, an insight into contemporary remembrance culture will be given, exploring how participants, audiences and even outsiders (f.e. tourists) create and consume those identity-building narratives.

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