Lifting the veil of the borderscape

A phenomenological research on lived experience and societal processes in Northern Ireland

31-7-2020

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'While we have shared past, we do not have a shared memory'

Ulster Museum

Lifting the veil of the borderscape

A phenomenological research on lived experience
and societal processes in Northern Ireland
to contribute to the critical potential of
the borderscape concept

A thesis

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of:

Master of Science in Human Geography with
specialization in Europe: Borders, Identity and Governance

Under supervision of Dr. Olivier Kramsch

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Internships: Visiting Research Associate at Queen's University Belfast

Radboud University Nijmegen, July 2020

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Preface

Before you lies the master's thesis 'Lifting the veil of the borderscape', part of the master programme Human Geography with the specialization Europe: Borders, Identity and Governance. I was engaged with writing this thesis from September 2019 to March 2020.

In essence this thesis is a direct follow-up on my bachelor's thesis, only takes another approach to borders. The former was a policy approach, the latter is a theoretical approach. The first impetus for this research originated during a lecture by Dr. Olivier Kramsch on post-colonialism, after which I developed my thoughts in a paper on Brexit, the UK and Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland's unique position within the UK and its critical role in the Brexit debates within Parliament piqued my interest and I kept following the developments closely. When learning about borderscapes I directly linked it to the Northern Irish border, Ireland and the UK and the research you are about to read was born.

My gratitude goes out to Prof. Dr. Hastings Donnan and the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute at Queen's University Belfast for providing me with a research associate position and enabling me to properly conduct this research. A special thanks goes out to Pól Deeds and Linda Ervine for welcoming me with open arms and providing me with the most intriguing insights into Northern Ireland's society and its peculiar border situation. Lastly I want to thank everyone involved in this research and my supervisor Dr. Olivier Kramsch for allowing me to develop my ideas and providing great guidance in doing so.

A special expression of gratitude goes to my parents who have always supported me and kept me motivated, without them this research would not have been possible.

Nijmegen, March 25th, 2020

Marnix Mohrmann

Summary

Border scholars are trying to develop new ways of border thinking in which actors beyond the state are accredited with border creating capabilities, therefore moving away from the state/territory dichotomy, in this thesis referred to as the 'political primacy' in border thinking. Based on the works of Appadurai, Van Houtum, Rumford and Mignolo the borderscape concept emerged. Brambilla reflected on the critical potential of the concept and Krichker touched upon the limited theoretical application because the concept remains ill-defined. This master thesis concerns with developing the borderscape concept, based on the critical reflection by Chiara Brambilla in an attempt to find a solution for the critique of the irresistible vagueness of the concept as put forth by Dina Krichker.

In contemporary Europe opinions are voiced that there are no longer any internal European borders. When taking a closer look this appears to be far from reality, borders proved to be everywhere. These borders become especially visible when there is a dispute over them, for example the borders between Eastern European countries or the Green Line in Cyprus. Another, until recently lesser known, disputed border is that between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. This specific border has gained a lot of attention in recent years because of Brexit and the political division it created in Westminster. From the perspective of the EU the region is interesting as well, because the border is potentially about to become an external EU border. All these facets make Northern Ireland a very interesting region to study.

By applying the borderscape concept in Northern Ireland this study attempts to gain knowledge on the conceptual shortcomings of the concept. The Northern Irish borderscape is explored, portrayed, explained and illustrated by physical indicators and lived experience. This reveals an intricately connected and divided society in which religion and politics are the major connectors and dividers. Even then things are not what they seem because there are individual acts of cross-community cooperation that go against the general societal division. It appears that there is a distinct difference between individual and societal perceptions on society and the border. This is only exacerbated by the stark political division in national politics and polarizing trends in international (geo)politics, such as Brexit. The data shows a contested, protested, resisted yet traversed sphere of influence that constitutes the Northern Irish borderscape.

Despite the borderscape being portrayed as a completely open and unbounded concept there are certain structuralist elements identifiable, meaning that perhaps there is a derivable demarcation. This potential boundary becomes most visible when dissecting individual acts of borderscaping. Individuals are bound by what they know, their lived experience, and external factors like historical heritage and techniques of life. The latter ones exist without the individual and are imposed on the individual, thus they are a structuralist element. This societal aspect might be crucial for the borderscape concept, by understanding the social lay of the land a possible demarcation of the concept can be made. A borderscape in this regard could be seen as a diffuse zone of different types of borders, social, political or a mixture. However this reiteration provides insufficient support to shape the concept into a workable theory. Perhaps looking *from*, *as* or *with* a national border provides the theoretical anchor the concept needs to combat the irresistible vagueness. Taking the national border as anchor point and looking at socio-spatial and political practices from this point might introduce some form of uniformity the concept eagerly searches for.

1   Introduction

1.1   Laying the foundation

The European Union (EU) in the 21st century is subject to change. Not so much change from within, but forced upon by events in the world. Global flows of data, goods and people have an impact on every corner of Europe (Vaughan-Williams, 2009). The refugee crisis is a prime example. A sudden influx of immigrants, either legal or illegal, has posed Europe with a challenge, a challenge that laid bare issues of sovereignty, equality and identity and challenged the state/territory dichotomy (Balibar, 2002; Sidaway, 2012; Scott et al, 2017). All related, to a certain extent, to borders and bordering. Who belongs here and who does not, the much referred debate on 'us' and 'them'. At the same time academics have tried to grasp what a world without borders would look like, how cosmopolitan individuals experience the world. Yet this academic approach is lost to non-academics. Why think about being a human of the world when there is work to do and a family to feed. But exactly those people, the non-cosmopolitan, grassroots, 99% of the population hold the power in democratic countries, i.e. every European Country and thus the European Union. In something that could be called a *response*, by the people, on globalization is the resist towards more transnational entities, most notably the European Union. It fascinates me that in the, by now, old and settled EU a wave of anti-Europe has 'invaded' the European Parliament. The paradoxical nature could even be found funny. Though it appears harmless, or just a temporary thing like the previous populist waves, Europe is changing in a way like never before. The future of the European Union is being constructed through debates on bordering, led by the lived experiences of the people. The technocratic, top-down approach is coming more and more under fire from practice and lived experience. As Makarychev (2015) puts it "the refugee crisis strongly resonates in the current discourses on the future of the European integration and regionalism", indicating a focus on the individual identity of European citizens and reinforcing the focus on the local level in a globalizing world.

The European toolbox of approaches to its regions, border regions and cross-border cooperation (CBC) is vast. In my most recent research I explored the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), a niche in the European toolbox, to assess its effectiveness and argue it to be a new generation in the approach to the (border) regions of Europe (Mohrmann, 2018). This argument is based partly on the growing focus on the local in a global world, like Makarychev states in his quote. Since then the academic world has written a great deal more about borders and how they are constructed (Paasi et al., 2019; Deiana et al., 2019). Borders have been ever more identified as places in permanent transition, non-linear, fluid and socially constructed. The knowledge on borders is moving away from a binary territorialist Western approach (the 'lines in the sand') towards a multivocal, kaleidoscopic and actively (re-)constructing approach with borders (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007; Rumford, 2013; Brambilla, 2015). The emerging concept that encompasses this has been coined *borderscapes*. The concept finds its roots in the work of Arjun Appadurai (1990) and has been developed by the aforementioned authors and further expanded upon by authors like Van Houtum (2010), Dell'Agnese & Szary (2015) and McCall (2013; 2017) each shifting the focus within the concept. Chapter 2 contains an overview of the different lines of thinking and how the concept evolved over time. The basis of the concept has remained the same over the years, yet the precise (f)actors that contribute to the concept are being debated. Very briefly said, there is a continuous debate between politicizing and a-politicizing the concept. The goal of this research is to give an

overview of the current borderscape debate and to situate itself in the debate, to ultimately attempt to raise new critique and help move the concept forward. The approach to formulating such critique is through phenomenological research on lived experience of border region inhabitants. This is extensively explained in chapter 3.

The terms 'lived experience' and 'border region inhabitants' will be mentioned very often in this research. There is good reason, researching a theoretical concept without proper footing in reality makes for a hollow research. As will be argued later on, borderscapes cannot be viewed apart from the people that constitute them based on the work of for example Appadurai (1990) and Van Houtum (2010). This fact lies at the basis of the emphasis on lived experience, specifically those of border region inhabitants. Such experiences are very broad and general and are influenced by many factors. Chapter 2 will go in more detail on lived experience and the social construction of society and individual reality. Seeing as borderscapes are not an exclusively social concept, merely focusing on the social aspect through lived experience is insufficient. The politics of the borderscape are also instrumental in helping understand and develop the concept. The political aspect of borderscapes has been advocated by Rajaram & Grundy-Warr (2007), later picked up by Scott et al. (2017) and most recently applied by Winkelmolen (forthcoming) in a narrative study of Russia's 'borderscaping' activities. To further demarcate the political aspect of this thesis only European policy aimed at Northern Ireland (NI) is looked at, because Europe's peace building attempts in NI have proved to be quite successful and Europe's presence is still substantial in the area. But Deiana et al. (2019) argue that the current state of European policy support for its regions is not sufficient to support the local inhabitants of border regions, creating real challenges to local participation and ownership. Viewing border regions in a different, or arguably 'broader', light that is borderscapes, might prove useful in overcoming this limitation and also acts as a practical application of the concept.

One of the most interesting contemporary border regions in Europe is the region of Ulster (image 1). This region is home to the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern-Ireland. A culmination of historical, cultural and political factors has created a unique region within Europe. Especially now with the controversial Brexit the tensions and uncertainty in the region are mounting. It is by far the most contested border in Western-Europe and serves as a prime example for researching notions of lived experience, identity and supranational policy influence. Through a Research Associate position at the Queen's University Belfast I will attempt to gather data on the lived experiences in the Ulster border region. Questions that pop up are: How do the inhabitants experience the hotly debated border? Do they even notice its existence? How do they influence the border? How do they contribute to the Ulster borderscape? These are all locally influenced and dictated processes of bordering or borderwork (Van Houtum, 2010; Rumford, 2008, 2013). In contrast to borders, the borderscape concept has a lesser focus on spatial demarcation or constraints. It is convenient that Northern Ireland is small and surrounded mostly by water, making a clear spatial distinction. In chapter 2, *borderscape or borderland?*, this is highlighted in more detail and delves into the different aspects of a borderscape. In line with the spatial diffusion of borderscapes is the historical conflict within Ulster. This conflict not only takes place *at* the border, but also 'far' away in the rest of society. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2, *the where of borders*.

Image 1: A base map of the Ulster border region

From a top-down European viewing point there is a lot of reason for concern, not only because the United Kingdom (UK) would be the first country to leave the European Union, but mostly how to deal with such an event on a policy level. It is a moment in time of many firsts for the UK and the EU, making it an ever more interesting case. In various literature the knowledge deficit of European policy in regard to specific regions in Europe has been argued, despite improvements coming with the new Europe 2021 – 2027 agenda there is still much to gain from research 'in the field'. Understanding the complex and intricate dynamics of a much contested region like Ulster might prove useful in improving targeted analysis (TA). Questions arise like; how does European policy support the Ulster region? And, what is the international discourse on this region? It might prove useful to ask such questions to see if practice and policy match and to better understand the larger institutional dynamics in regard to this region.

As a result of this unprecedented unfolding story of the Brexit, media and academics all write about it. They place a large focus on the story as it unfolds, the possible outcomes and the economic impact it will have in any of the possible scenarios (Dhingra et al., 2016; Busch & Matthes, 2016; The Guardian, 2019). There are three reasons this thesis will not focus on Brexit in the same way as media and other authors, (1) my personal preference, and therefore the research focus, lie with the people that live in the Ulster border region, which is as argued an extremely interesting border region for multiple reasons aside from the Brexit. (2) Focusing on uncovering lived experience and personal identity to develop the borderscape concept make the long term relevance of this research greater. Seeing as the Brexit is yet to conclude, investing time in an event that can change by the week might be redundant. Instead acknowledging Brexit as a factor influencing local identity and (re)shaping the Ulster border region contributes to the long term relevance. (3) The research goal is to contribute to developing the borderscape concept. The Ulster border region, its history, religious polarization and the impending Brexit are merely part of the case through which this is attempted.

Cultural turn

Territorialist Western views on the border have prevailed for the last decades. From this viewing point borders are the domain of states and the international political arena, constituting a binary understanding of the geographical lines us/them or inclusion/exclusion. As a result there mainly has been a technocratic top-down approach to spatial planning and (transnational) cooperation, with little regard to the actual local actors and practices. For example in spatial planning, Robert Moses' remodeling of the New York inner city to create a better flow of motorized vehicles is a prime example. The technocratic vision was that cities, in terms of Corbusier, were machines, able to be (re)designed in whatever way deemed necessary (Hubbard, 2018). For Moses the city was an obstruction to the flow of goods and people. In his proposed plan he wiped out several, now deemed classic, neighbourhoods, mainly inhabited by people of colour, without any regard for the spatial and social implications. His plan ultimately did not see the light of day and fueled an upcoming discussion even more. From the late 80's, early 90's, the idea of an engineerable world started to fade and a more human centered approach emerged (Newman, 2006). Instead of planners knowing what is best, there was a dialogue between spatial and social practice and spatial planning. Minority groups, like in the mainly black neighbourhood Moses wanted to replace with a highway, were able to vent their opinion and exert influence on (spatial) planning.

In border studies there is a similar paradigm shift visible, the *cultural turn* (Brambilla, 2015) or the *processual turn* (Paasi et al. 2019). Like in spatial planning the approach to borders was technocratic and top-down, being solely the domain of national governments. With a growing focus on individual identity, borders are being placed in a different academic light. Borders are no longer seen as territorial dividing lines and political institutions. They are now regarded as constituted of socio-cultural and discursive processes and practices (Perera, 2007; Brambilla, 2015). People in border regions thus are (re)shaping the border through their social and spatial practices. For example a local football club, playing in a division across borders, can be seen as a contributor to improving cross border relations (See for example 'The Peace Link', Ireland) and inherently changing the border dynamic as a whole. A deeper academic knowledge on these practices is needed to better understand and improve the cooperation at and over borders, i.e. how to improve border regions by looking at the daily socio-spatial practices of local inhabitants that (re)configure the border every day. At the moment the European policy in place to support border regions proves insufficient and therefore presents a real challenge for local participation and ownership (Deiana, Komarova & McCall, 2019). Especially in light of the Brexit there is a lot of uncertainty for resident, shopkeepers, farmers, traders, etc., related to the Ulster border and the wider region, for example see 'Border – Brexit and the Irish border' short documentary (Murr Media, 2017). Changing cohesion policy could support more and better socio-spatial practices in and across border regions and foster a long term positive development, even in when the Brexit has concluded.

Irresistible vagueness of the concept

There are many ways of looking at the border as a fluid social construct. Border studies are being conducted in many disciplines ranging from sociology (Go, 2016) to political science (Hagen, 2013) and other multidisciplinary combinations. All are looking at the reconfiguration of the border in light of historical events and contemporary trends; for example the collapse of the Soviet Union bringing about a change to the European borderscape or processes of globalisation leading to greater integration of regions in the world. In understanding this new and complex nature of borders, identity, at different spatial levels, is important. Moving away from the border as a realm of the

state, borders can be viewed locally, nationally and globally (Scott, 2015). Day to day life in border regions constitute the 'small stories', the lived experience of the border, in which local actors individually and collectively (re)configure the border through their everyday practices (Brambilla, 2015). Or by looking at the 'big stories': Super-imposed borders by transnational organizations, creating borders in the midst of rural areas not adjacent to any historical, physical border (Rumford, 2013).

It is clear that there has been a shift from a top-down approach to a bottom-up, identity focused approach to borders. This paradigm shift has led to the issues of what a border is and how to approach one, i.e. the ontology of the border has to be reformulated (Brambilla, 2015). There have been several attempts at writing 'handbooks' on how to prevent viewing the border as a binary, solid construct, in other words the 'territorialist gaze' and to study it freed from colonial thinking (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007; Perera, 2007 Brambilla, 2015). Moving away from the 'lines in the sand' approach to borders there have been a few concepts and processes that emerged, from Appadurai's suffix -scape thinking to the borderwork of Rumford. The most prevailing concept is that of *borderscapes*. As mentioned in the introduction, the concept has its roots in the work of Appadurai and has been developed by many authors since. However the debate on borderscapes is still going strong, the overarching arguments of the debate create two sides: political and a-political. Since Appadurai's initial writing on –scapes in 1990 a shift over time is visible, flowing from a-political to political and back. After Appadurai's writing Rajaram & Grundy-Warr (2015) applied the –scapes thinking in a mainly political manner, while Brambilla (2015) and Dell'agnese & Amilhat Szary (2015) approach borders from a more a-political view intended to explore the cultural production of borders. The difference between both sides is their research focus and data sources. The former views borders and the borderscape as mainly political and as such looks at politics on multiple levels in regard to the border, the latter places a greater emphasis on the social construction of the border and looks at local actors and possible acts of border-making. The borderscape concept still is closely linked to borders and politics and as such the attempt at de-politicizing the concept has been met with critique that seems to shift the concept 'back' to the political side, an essential contribution comes from Krichker (2019) with a renewed critical reflection on the potential of the concept. It seems that at the time of writing the borderscape concept is being applied more widespread than ever before, be it consciously or subconsciously. For example the European Union with setting their goals for the new programming period align almost perfectly with the borderscape concept, without them mentioning it. Though the debate is far from over, this thesis aims to contribute to the borderscape concept debate by researching lived experience within the Ulster border region through a phenomenological approach.

In a more elaborate explanation, this thesis looks at the local border (re)configuration through socio-spatial practices in order to shine new light on day-to-day bordering practices, in an attempt to identify factors that can contribute to understanding the dynamics of the Ulster border region. By looking at socio-spatial practices of local residents and not practices within national politics, this thesis is already more on the a-political side of the debate, like Brambilla (2015) attempted. The a-politicization of the concept has received some backlash by various authors, yet there is still more to be uncovered through an a-political phenomenological approach. In addition, a critique has been voiced that the borderscape concept is ill-defined and therefore everything could be relevant to the concept. This critique, by Dina Krichker (2019), is called the 'irresistible vagueness of the concept'

and she calls for a critical reflection of the concept. By looking at the socio-spatial practices that constitute the borderscape, a contribution can be made.

Humanising border studies

Having a well structured and thought out approach to data collection and analysis is necessary to achieve a valid and reliable research. The starting point for structuring this thesis can be found in Creswell's book 'Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design' (2013). Here he describes and proposes five different qualitative approaches to research. In chapter 3 of the book, designing a qualitative study, he proposes several research design formats. The third format, theoretical/interpretive lens, provides the most suited design for this research. Based on this design the methodology chapter is divided into three parts: philosophy, general approach and applied approach. In this paragraph these three parts are briefly explained.

Perhaps not relevant for every research is the philosophical approach (Creswell, 2013). Creswell places focus on the philosophical aspect which helps in understanding and explaining the creation of the social and cultural contexts that human agents inhabit. This allows for an argued and better structured approach to understanding practice, interaction, feeling and meaning. When thinking and writing about lived experiences and the notion of identity a strong subjective character is present, this points to a more constructivist paradigm and thus opposes paradigms like functionalism (Thorpe & Inglis, 2012). Delving deeper into the philosophical thinking on meaning and action, the symbolic interactionist line of thinking in the pragmatist paradigm are best suited. These terms will be explained in great detail in chapter 3.2, *philosophical approach*. This grander thinking on meaning and practice serves the borderscape concept really well, as it allows for explicitly identifying the building blocks of socio-spatial practices and thus embraces how a border region is being (re)shaped in terms of borderscapes. There is a striking similarity between this jargon and that of policy, which is also concerned with meaning and bringing about an intended change in society (see Van Manen, 2014 and Wagenaar, 2015).

Continuing building on the notion that the concerned research data are feelings, meaning and opinions, the chosen research approach is a phenomenological research. Phenomenology is used to capture the 'essence' of a certain event or practice, as experienced by a multiplicity of individuals, by developing ever broader categories. This classic, Husserlian, phenomenological approach has to be slightly adjusted in order to prevent a technocratic top-down research. Instead of looking for the 'essence' of an experience the focus shifts to mapping multiple experiences without generalizing. This strand of thinking is Alfred Schutz's sociological phenomenology and holds several methodological implications which will be argued in chapter 3.3, *general approach*. The phenomenological research method entails that subjective data is being gathered, through multiple available methods, to then be analyzed in a structural manner. It is a challenge for this type of research to be accurate and valid. To assure a structurally sound research it is paramount to justify each step in the data gathering and analysis. Textbooks on qualitative inquiry, like Creswell (2013), advise to argue a structural approach to data gathering and analysis. Qualitative data collection can be quite difficult and requires multiple, if not many, re-iterations to achieve the desired and required data to be able to answer the main research question and fulfill the research aim. Mainly unstructured and semi-structured interviews will be used as means of data collection, though other forms of data are not excluded.

Repeating the same exact methodology by building on the same theoretical concepts will not bring about new results. In applying all of the above knowledge an innovation can be made, or at least attempt to gather data in a novel way, a novel way of seeing *with* the border. Brambilla (2015) proposes such novel way for border studies, in her research she sets the goal to 'humanise' border studies. The essence of her research is to advocate looking at the human aspect in borders by viewing them not as political but as socially and culturally constructed. Borders and bordering are a multifaceted concept, studied from various angles and fields, for which there is no real 'standardized' way of approaching and researching them. Brambilla (2015) proposes in her critical reflection on the current academic paradigm that a way to move forward is to study the border from three axes: ontological, epistemological and methodological. These three axes provide the final guideline in how to practically go about gathering data that will help uncover new knowledge on socio-spatial border practices.

1.2 Research objective and outline

Europe is changing and both academics and politics are revolutionizing their views on borders. Now more than ever the focus of thinking and acting is placed on local citizens, empowering every region in the EU. Where politics and practice lag behind academic thinking a little bit, they are catching up. Yet in the academic world there is still a consensus to be reached on the exact nature of region, borders and overarching cooperation. The rapidly emerging borderscape concept has been embraced and suits the needs of an inclusive, non-exclusionary, approach to borders. The European Union is evermore adopting, without explicitly mentioning it, the borderscape concept. While valuing the potential, critical stances on the concept have been voiced by Chiara Brambilla and Dina Krichker that suggest the concept to be faulted. They propose through three axes and the irresistible vagueness of the concept that there is much more to be gained from borderscape thinking and borderscaping. The goal of this thesis is to contribute to moving the academic debate on borderscapes forward, through applying the three proposed axes by Brambilla (2015) and tackling the irresistible vagueness of the concept and with it lifting the theoretical veil of the borderscape concept through sociological phenomenology and lived experience. In order to achieve this, the research question is formulated as follows:

How do lived experiences of Northern Irish citizens actively (re)construct the Ulster borderscape?

This thesis is divided into 5 chapters in order to create an understandable and logical structure. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic and situates it within contemporary ways of thinking and doing. It further continues to argue the societal and scientific relevance, briefly introduces the methodology, explains the research objective and introduces the research question and lastly, brackets the researcher, states the limitations and demarcation of the research. Chapter 2, *theoretical framework*, delves deep into the academic literature and builds further on the situation of the research in chapter 1. In this chapter all relevant aspects, terms and academic discourses on border thinking are set out and also operationalizes the relevant terms. It provides a critical reading of said literature and applies them to the Ulster border regions. Chapter 3, *methodology*, explains how the research objective will be reached, starting with the methodological framework. This framework provides a structured approach to philosophy and phenomenology and applies these to the Ulster border region. Chapter 4, *the Ulster borderscape*, builds on all the previous chapters and contains the data gathering and analysis; the how, where, who and why. Chapter 5, *conclusion*,

critically reflects on the data analysis and links it to theoretical concepts laid out in chapter 2. Based on the conclusion possibilities for future research are highlighted.

2   Theoretical framework

2.1   Border Thinking Paradigm

This paragraph poses and answers five questions/topics: How has European Union border thinking evolved since its establishment? What is a border? What is the difference between a borderscape, as often mentioned in literature (Buoli, 2014; Houtum & Ekker, 2015; Brambilla, 2019), and a border region, the two of which are often used interchangeably? Where can borders be identified, a question posed by Rumford (2013)? And, where does the current academic knowledge on European borders stop? This is illustrated using a paper by Deiana et al. (2019). The intent is to give a practical overview of relevant general literature as a means to structure theory and prevent an unfruitful flight into grand theory that might impede on the practical implementation of the theory (Wagenaar, 2015).

European border genealogy
In the early days of post-war Europe the emphasis on cooperation grew and political agreements were signed which resulted in the current European Union (for a more in-depth overview see Mohrmann, 2018). The international political arena rapidly changed and academics had to renew their thinking from 'good' and 'bad' borders towards different narratives (Houtum, 2005; Newman, 2006). Academics started to think about borders and place them in broader (inter)national frameworks of political systems and colonialism. A big influence was the social and political structure in regard to colonies and empires capturing 'the East', 'the West', religion, descent and often (sub)consciously Euro-centrism. Walter Mignolo (2000) took this very literal and coined 'border thinking' based on these trends and attempted to think from us, the other and neither at the same time. His writing on 'an other thinking' or 'une pensée autre' explores thinking from a European, Empire point of view and an Arabic, Islamic point of view to think about borders in a broader framework. The prevailing, now deemed classic, narrative was that the state is at the centre and borders are solely its domain. Borders are there to demarcate territory, outline a state's sphere of influence (certainly in the wake of World War 2) and define inclusion and exclusion. Borders were viewed from a western territorialist standpoint and had a binary nature. The western territorialist view also included colonial and imperial thinking, with its power relations further problematizing the binary border and frontier thinking (see for example Al-Hardan, 2018, or Sidaway, 2019, for a culmination of border thinking over the last few decades). One of the main points of critique of these new narratives is the binary thinking inherent to the western territorialist view. This viewing point, with its traditional assumptions of state territoriality and fixed images of the bordered world of nation-states and identities, is branded the 'territorial trap' (Agnew, 1994; Paasi, 1998; Brambilla, 2015). Gradually over the course of decades, starting around the 1980's, discourses began to challenge state-centric and colonial narratives and providing new ones in their place (Paasi, 1998; Houtum, 2005; Newman, 2006).

The resulting 'cultural turn' took place around the 1980's and 1990's and attempts to move away from binary thinking and to avoid the territorial trap. No longer are borders solely the domain of the state and international politics, more actors are attributed to influencing and shaping borders (Hataley & Leuprecht, 2018). In synergy with postcolonial thought the focus shifted towards identity, culture, socio-spatial practices and in general a non-exclusionary approach to borders, society,

politics and spatial practice (Brambilla, 2015; Go, 2016). The focus shift is initiated by regarding borders not as geographical lines, but as sites of social interaction, contest and an outcome of socio-spatial practices creating a fluid rather than a static border (Perera, 2007). Perera (2007, p.207) describes, in an exploration of the Pacific borderscape, borders(-capes) as shifting and conflictual spaces being reconstituted through ongoing spatial relations and practices that defy categorization of borders. The statements are in line with the greater focus on identity and socio-spatial practices emerging in the cultural turn. While European cohesion policy, based on their definition of a border, is mostly economic, new policy is showing a more humanized approach to borders and cooperation through acknowledging its fluid, socially constructed nature (Crescenzi & Giua, 2014).

Contemporary borders

There are many ways, angles and disciplines to answer the question of what a border is, often combined or borrowing some notions from one another, a few examples: philosophical (Houtum & Ekker, 2015), cartographical (Houtum & Lacy, 2015), sociological (Sidaway, 2007; Go, 2016), geographical (Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Sidaway, 2007) or political (Scott, 2015). The previous chapter preludes the question of what a border is by setting the frame for the development on European border thinking. Having determined how the current border thinking came about, this paragraph provides a deeper understanding of the contemporary border, if even it can still be called a border.

Speaking and writing about a border is inherent to a specific location, a place where bordering is taking place. In the traditional sense the specific location entails the edges of a state, demarcating a nation's sphere of influence. This is also often referred to as 'lines in the sand', drawing tangible territorial lines which no one dares to cross (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2009). Even throughout the latter part of the 20th century the edges of the state, the border, were inhabited with physical structures to control flows of goods and people. With the emergence of the European Union and agreements like the Schengen Agreement, such places are nowadays seldom visible or tangible. Despite the little academic detour in the 2000s on the topic of cosmopolitanism, borders have persisted to exist and to exert their influence, though in a more modern form: paper borders or eBorders for example (Sullivan & Burger, 2017). The concept of a border consists of the idea that borders are markers of spatial separation, creating two sides (Krichker, 2019). The two resulting sides have always coincided with national and state borders. With the cultural turn the border concept is being stretched to its limits by including everyday life in border regions. New research has argued for acknowledgement of actors, beyond the state, to contribute to the (re)shaping, (re)defining and (re)structuring borders. It has become more and more difficult to use the border concept to include the latter observations.

Thus a problem arises: the inherent binary nature of the border concept is being challenged in the cultural turn, so is the border concept sufficient enough in order to keep moving the discussion forward? It has become more and more difficult to use the border concept to include the latter observations and academics have started to develop new concepts to better suit the newly argued border. A new, mostly unrivaled, theoretical notion emerged based on the critique: borderscapes (Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2007; Schimanski, 2015; Brambilla, 2015; Krichker, 2019). The borderscape concept is more inclusive than the border concept, which clings to spatiality and is rigid. In fact, the borderscape concept can include so many different actors and factors, in relation to borders, that the concept has an 'irresistible vagueness'; a vagueness that at the moment serves the needs of the

discerning disciplines to cater for the need of a new concept, more inclusive than the border concept (Krichker, 2019). There are two reasons why this concept is more appropriate than borders, (1) borderscapes move away from the idea that borders are spatial markers that serve a dividing purpose and (2) borderscapes focus on the social interaction and personal identity in a border region (Krichker, 2019). A borderscape can therefore be seen as a diffuse area in which there is no clearly defined end and includes all (f)actors that create and contribute to its existence. It therefore implicates that there is still an 'inside' and an 'outside' but there is no clear definition so it might even be impossible to define this. It seems that, because of this loose definition, there is a restricted applicability of the concept.

Borderscape or borderland?

When reading the literature on borders, in many disciplines, one may get confused through the interchangeable use of terms: Borderscape, border region, borderland, border aesthetics or in European context Euroscape and Euroborderscape (Dell'agnese & Amilhat Szary, 2015). Each of these terms, in relation to one or another, are argued to be 'trendy', novel or a newer iteration. While the entire concept is relatively new, it has been rapidly embraced and developed by academics. It appears that the borderscape concept has matured quickly and is now set in stone, but the concept is as fluid as borders itself. This paragraph serves as a clarification and an operationalization of the borderscape and borderland concept.

Despite the plethora of terms, they all descend from the terms borderscape and/or borderland. Although these terms, and their descendants, are often used interchangeably there is a distinct difference. The latter term has been around for decades and contains a rigidness that contradicts the contemporary viewpoint on borders. Dissecting the term borderland, in an etymological fashion, results in two words: border and land. Perhaps the simplest definition, based on the latter distinction, is that a borderland is a land of borders. More specifically a land of borders, as perceived mainly before the cultural turn. A borderland thus inherits the binary notion of borders, creating a spatial location where (state) borders are present and indicating spheres of in- and exclusion (Schimanski, 2015). As Michel Agier argues a borderland is a space to contemplate the sedentary order of state and politics that are identity based ('us'/'them') and as a 'prolonged time and border space in which people learn the ways of the world and of other people', heavily instigating cosmopolitanism (Agier, 2016, p.8-9, translated by Fernbach D.). While this covers the general way of perceiving and thinking about borders there were authors that included cross-border contact, identity and change in their writings on borders and borderlands. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), a scholar and poet, captured her sense of identity at the Mexico-Texas border and her feeling of being in between cultures. Part of this in between identity can be traced to the binary politics regarding the border, it is only later with for example the borderscape concept that these 'small stories' gain significance in border understanding.

In general the term borderland is not suited for this research, perhaps even obsolete in contemporary border studies. Then, the focus turns to *borderscape*. This is a more difficult term to define, as it composes not only of a spatial definition but also a spatial process. Johan Schimanski begins his account of the Norwegian-Russian borderscape with the following sentence:

'The borderscape concept is a way of thinking about the border and the bordering process not only on the border, but also beyond the line of the border, beyond the border as a place, beyond the

landscape through which the border runs, and beyond borderlands with their territorial contiguities to the border' (Schimanski, 2015, p.35)

As far as a definitive description of the term, this comes pretty close. It demarcates what a borderscape is not, leaving a very open space to define what is confined in a borderscape. Loosely said, a borderscape entails practices, not confined to any space, by a plethora of actors that influences the border (Schimanski, 2015). Even the way and form of the possible influence remains unspecified. A borderscape is more diffuse in character than a borderland and a borderscape is not solely the culmination of borders in a given spatial area. A borderscape can rather be seen *as* the border, diffused across space, defined by what it involves (Schimanski, 2015). Even what it involves is left completely open; in line with the cultural turn new emphasis is placed on culture and day-to-day socio-spatial practices even on multiple spatial levels. It acknowledges and accredits a plethora of (f)actors, moving beyond a territorialist view on borders.

In contrast to borderlands, there is an active component to borderscapes. Van Houtum (2015) provides an etymological analysis of the term borderscape. Just like the term borderland, he splits the term into two parts: border and scape. Border in this regard can be defined as set out in the previous paragraph. Scape has the prevalence here, he argues it to stem from the Dutch verb 'scheppen (to create)' and the Dutch term 'landschap', freely translated to 'created land' (Houtum, 2015, p.2). The important note to make is that borderscape includes the verb 'to create', which is an active process that is never finished. Unless the term is used in the past tense which has not been done in literature and does not even exist (yet). The important contrast in regard to the becoming of a border between borderscape and borderland is that the latter is often viewed as more fixed and as the result of a bordering process while the former is never fixed, can be ephemeral and is fluid. The term borderscape, thus, is as much of an object as it is a process. The process it refers to is the process of *bordering* and *ordering* (b/ordering), a term frequently used by the same author. Where a borderland has a strong spatial aspect, how can one define that spatial aspect of the process of b/ordering? Linking back to the quote, a borderscape moves beyond the line of the border and beyond the border as a place. A borderscape involves anything and anyone that influences the border process, an exact spatial demarcation is thus quite difficult. The main point here is to conclude that a borderscape is a dynamic spatial process, which includes a plethora of (f)actors and is spatially diffuse. In chapter 3 the methodological demarcation is made for the Ulster border region.

The where of borders

In the previous two paragraphs different ontological/epistemological perspectives on borders have been provided in a general chronological sequence of the last few decades. In light of the cultural turn and socially constructed borders, there is another question that can be posed: *Where* can borders be identified? People are everywhere, throughout Europe there are cities, villages, farmlands, communities, etc. Following logical reasoning that borders are no longer geographical dividing lines per se, as a result of the unravelling of the binary geopolitical mindset, and are socially constructed, one might suggest that borders are everywhere, in different sizes, shapes and/or meanings (Vaughan-Williams, 2009; Rumford, 2013; Cooper, 2015).

Rumford, among others, poses the question of the where of borders, building on the notion of fluid, socially constructed borders. His work is not directly related to the borderscape concept but to comprehend the potential of borderscapes it is useful think about the possible plethora of borders

and their locations. It does not mean that every border identified by looking in Rumford's way is socially diffuse, it does mean that different borders are acknowledged to be a part of the borderscape that is built on socio-spatial and political processes. Letting go of borders as solely geographical dividing lines between nation-states and shifting focus to identity and practice, Rumford (2013) questions and identifies new types of borders within Europe. In contrast to Agnew and the relation between borders and sovereignty, Rumford identifies a border superimposed by a supranational organisation located far from traditional borders and not related to state sovereignty. He illustrates this by looking at the city of Melton Mowbray, home to Melton Mowbray pork pies, and the granted status of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). The PGI status creates a border, stating that only pork pies from within the demarcated geographical zone may be called a Melton Mowbray pork pie. EU superimposed borders, lobbied for by local actors, are being used to gain recognition and derive authority from. In terms of Rumford this border empowers producers within the border while disempowering those outside (Rumford, 2013, p.170). Even in this case, where the border is not related to matters of state and sovereignty, there is still an inherent power relation. Rumford, therefore moves away from obvious homogenous centered borders and goes beyond the geopolitical definition and identification. This is an example of different locations a border can be identified, but why is this important? Why is there a need to ask *where* borders can be identified?

In the 2015 special edition of the Journal of Contemporary European Studies, the contributors address the *where* of the EUropean border, also moving beyond the purely, oversimplified, geopolitical definition and stating the importance of the inherent power relations that a border holds (Lacy & Houtum, 2015). Cooper (2015) introduces the special edition of the Journal by posing and answering the *why* question. He does so by conveniently distilling the general gist of border studies, as conducted by multiple disciplines; 'There are some key, overlapping, observations that rest upon the idea of the borders as process' (Cooper, 2015, p.450). His summary and identification of key, overlapping, observations can be read in chronological order. Starting with thinking about borders as a process, by stating a few ways academics have given a metaphor for borders; Firewalls or asymmetric membranes (Walters, 2006, Hedetoft, 2003 in Cooper, 2015). This paved the way for a new definition of a border, one that is socially constructed, focusing on 'everyday mundane border practices' (Cooper, 2015, p.451), as has been previously argued in this thesis. In addition to (and in line with) with Rumford, Cooper's observations and thinking continues by stating that borders are 'meaning-making' and 'meaning-carrying' entities, regardless of where they are (Cooper, 2015, p.451). This indicates the inherent power relations a border contains, regardless of where they are. These power relations in turn influence and are influenced through social interaction and lived experience. In case of the Ulster border region it created two sharply opposing (religious) sides and in light of the Brexit and the potential Withdrawal Agreement it rallies many against such an agreement. Acknowledging this, in the EU context, impacts the spatial organisation and governance of Europe, on all (policy) levels. The need to ask the where question is thus important in understanding European borderscape dynamics on cultural, political and economic aspects. 'Locating Europe's borderings … [shifts attention] to governance regimes and regulatory practices that are prevalent in the so-called borderless Europe' (Cooper, 2015, p. 453).

The point here is to illustrate that asking the question of the *where* of a border is important, but also to point out that the *where* of a border impacts *who* is being affected, spatially as well as socially; who is being b/*ordered* and *by whom*? Thinking in this way, a socially constructed border is not a line, but a spatial location that entails culture, politics and economy (Vaughan-Williams, 2009), practically

assuming the definition of a borderscape. In practice this means that one needs to be aware of different borders, with different meanings to different people (Strüver, 2004).

Limitations and possibilities

Borderscapes encompass a large variety of actors, at different scales and in different contexts. The concept can be used to understand local communities, grasp geographically bound historical, social and economic processes and much more. There is seemingly no end to the possibilities. If everything is possible, then everything is relevant. There needs to be more direction, an agenda as some call it, in the study of borderscapes to create consensus on its ontology and a general workable methodology. Yet the 'everything goes' aspect of it also frees thinking from the 'lines in the sand' approach and offers an inclusionary iteration of borders. This paragraph sets forth the limitations and possibilities of the borderscape concept in theoretical, political and social regard.

Starting with the current state of the borderscape concept; it has been applied in many different contexts, ranging from artistic practices to the territoriality of transit spaces (Krichker, 2019). There is a variety of problematics encompassed by borderscapes which points to, in terms of Krichker, the 'irresistible vagueness' of the concept (Krichker, 2019, p.2). She argues it to be on the one hand responding to the urgent need of the border study discipline of including both bottom-up and top-down (f)actors. It allows for including actors beyond the state to be included and shifts the discipline's ideas towards the everyday life, the local developments, and meanwhile also re-appreciating borders in regard to political geography. Making it return to pre-cosmopolitan border thinking while also including 'regular' citizens and socio-spatial practices (Brambilla, 2015; Krichker, 2019). Perhaps in the global interconnected world local cosmopolitanism can emerge because a borderscape is juxtaposed in local, national and international flows and trends. On the other hand the inclusion of so many intricate and complex dynamics of geopolitics, social life and with it economics and globalisation poses a serious challenge to the conceptual development of borderscapes and border studies in general (Krichker, 2019). To overcome this challenge Krichker states that 'analytical and methodological clarity is necessary to draw effective conclusions about the futures of space, territory, and sovereignty, and to account for the multiplicity of border zones and bordering dynamics' (2019, p.2). The sociological phenomenological approach to borderscapes through lived experience in this research is an attempt to see whether or not this can bring the required clarity to some extent.

Deiana, Komarova & McCall (2019) applied the borderscape concept in European context on the potential of conflict transformation and its promises and limitations. In line with the concept, Deiana et al. (2019) argue for the inclusion of 'ordinary' citizens in (European) policy directed at overcoming border challenges. In peace building contexts the idea of 'everyday peace' (Mac Ginty, 2014), memory and emotion of individuals can prove promising in achieving actual border bridging results. This points to the fact that contemporary border studies acknowledge that '…the study of borders has moved from a dominant concern with formal state frontiers and ethno-cultural areas to the study of borders at diverse socio-spatial and geographical scales' (Scott, 2015, p.27). Inherent to this statement is the academic acknowledgement of a multiplicity of actors influencing and (re)shaping borders (Brambilla, 2015). Civil society, municipalities, local businesses and cultural institutions are among these actors (Scott, 2015). Unavoidable in peace building and conflict resolution is the (geo)political character of borderscapes, herein a transnational actor like the EU plays a big role. Deiana et al. (2019) question the significance of the EU in such conflict resolution situations and point

to its shifting political space as a global actor. The current European cross-border paradigm is being criticized as being driven by purely economic interests and 'thus often sidelines other sites, actors and resources', deteriorating the effectiveness and quality of Europe's trademark cross-border cooperation (Ledarch, 2005; McCall, 2014). Deiana et al. (2019, p.534) argue that borderscapes can capture 'the complex relations and contentions between borders as sets of (legal, political and socio-cultural) rules, practices and spatial realities on the one hand, and identities, representations and imaginaries, on the other'.

From the literature it appears there is a disconnection between day-to-day socio-spatial practices and transnational (European) discourses and policies on supporting its regions. International discourses on certain border regions seem to be incorrect and policies do not seem to cater for the needs of local border regions, which in turn could (negatively) influence these borderscapes and ultimately deteriorate social cohesion at and across borders. This notion is confirmed by the EU, for example in the Territorial Agenda 2020 (European Union, 2011). Both Scholars and the EU argue the need for 'updating' European cohesion policy with a greater focus on socio-spatial processes in order to promote security, stability and economic growth in border regions and the greater European area (European Union, 2011; Raugze, 2019). The current knowledge deficit lies in how to translate the needs of local communities into effective policy that contributes to better cohesion of Europe's regions. Through the large emphasis on the 'small' and 'big' stories, borderscapes could prove useful in understanding what creates local borders and how its sphere of influence looks like, from bottom-up and top-down.

2.2   Lived experience

The previous paragraphs have elaborated a great deal on the general gist of borders, their whereabouts, definition and its contemporary iteration. Attempting to go into the field based on primarily broad conceptual notions will result in practical limitations. Where does one start? Where does one look? A second theoretical layer is required to focus this thesis further. Not so much a second layer in the sense of deepening the understanding on borders, borderscapes and other invisible, intangible concepts, more so to gain an understanding of what constitutes lived experience, its true building blocks, and thus what lies at the foundation that creates and shapes the aforementioned borderscape. The premise is still that a borderscape constitutes of human actors and their actions. In order to do so, a theoretical picture has to be painted on what lived experience is. The starting point for this picture is social theory and partly sociology, these help bring about an understanding of lived experience and social interaction. David Inglis and Christopher Thorpe (2012) 'invite' us to social theory and set out an understanding of the 'study of observable occurrences', through themes like everyday life, practical consciousness and action and interaction.

Setting the stage
Before directly jumping into unravelling the threads of lived experience, it might prove useful to 'set the stage' of the Western world first, the Ulster border region is located in the West after all. By setting the stage the characteristics of the Western capitalist society are being included by preceding lived experience and how such influences shape the individual from the day they are born. A great place to start setting the stage is by looking at a text by Georg Simmel (1903), although this text is not new whatsoever, it does hold true to this day and society still. In 'Die Grossstädte und das Geistesleben' (The Metropolis and Mental Life), he sets out to answer the question of 'how the

personality accommodates itself in adjustments to external forces'; how is one's identity being created and shaped in light of external factors? He sets out a multiplicity of external forces that shape one's identity, all embedded in the western capitalist society, such as time, state, history and money economy. Without going into too much philosophical and sociological detail, Simmel describes the stage in which one battles to exist and under influence of externalities attempts to (re)gain identity in the impersonal through their experiences and their construction of reality. This is very relevant for the Ulster borderscape, seeing as new generations keep being born into a long lasting conflict. From the youngest age individuals face(d) tremendous external social forces, historical heritage, external culture and techniques of life in their upbringing and perception of reality. Thus the way one experiences reality, lived experience, is influenced by a plethora of factors.

By stating that one's reality can be influenced and altered through external stimuli means that reality is not ready-made, a pre-given reality that is unable to be altered through human actions. When familiar with literature on philosophy, this immediately opposes structural paradigms like functionalism. In the structural paradigms, like structuralism, the premise is that interrelations between humans may have slight variations on the surface but that there are always constant laws of abstract nature behind them (Hawkes, 2003). Thus there is an overarching structure, and set rules that go along with it, that governs social interaction. Applying such structural thinking makes one fall directly in the territorial trap because one will look for an overarching, 'higher' set of rules that governs the conception and evolution of borders and immediately caters for a top-down approach. Second, this directly conflicts with the borderscape concept in which nothing is pre-given and borders can be ephemeral and are constantly shifting because of human agency and a result of and dependent on human interaction. Instead a more constructivist paradigm is suited, in which human agents are inextricably bound up in the creation of the social and cultural contexts they inhabit as they actively (re)shape their everyday lives (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012). Constructivist thinking concerns itself with thinking in interaction and suits well for researching socio-spatial practices and processes. A specifically useful line of thinking within constructivism is pragmatism, which is based on several assumptions like the dialectic way the world is being shaped and understood and that research always takes place in social, historical, political and other contexts (Creswell, 2013). Building on Simmel's ideas and relating to borderscapes, pragmatism is even more suited because this philosophy (1) refutes the idea that reality is ready made and (2) individual actions, based on one's knowledge and agency, shape one's social environment (Inglis & Thorpe, 2012; Creswell, 2013). Already the first connection with the borderscape concept can be made, that of socially constructed reality.

The Chicago School
The borderscape consists of 'social interaction and is transformed through it'. But what is this social interaction? How does individual agency bring this about? One of the strands partly based on Simmel's ideas is that of the Chicago School. Members of this school of thought were sociologists like Durkheim, Goffman, Hughes, Denzin, Mead and Cooley and they attempted to unravel social interaction in society from different angles and viewpoints. Although varying independently, they concerned themselves with developing Symbolic Interactionism (SI). Their goal was to view and set out social reality as emergent and actively created through individual agency, building on Simmel's notion of external factors influencing individuals their perception of reality. Despite the differences between authors the Chicago School set forth two important notions: active/practical consciousness (Mead, 1967; Schutz, 1970) and individual reflexivity of identity, social interaction and society

(Blumer, 1969). In a clear explanation Maines (2017) states that every individual, varying in degree by cognitive abilities, is self aware and able to actively reflect and act upon their speech and behaviour in different social conditions. Pairing self reflection and social interaction in regard to society, and in geographical terms borderscapes, lived experience begins to take even more shape. With the ability to self reflect in social context, one can actively shape their social environment by, for example, altering their place in society or advocating a specific group in society. The ability to alter one's place in society is not solely reliant on the degree of self-reflection, it merely enables a cognitive understanding of power relations within society. The actual altering of social position in a capital society relies on a variety of factors including actions taken by an individual. Thus how one experiences their reality and subsequently acts upon it is how, in this case, a borderscape can be socially (re)constructed.

An important takeaway in the previous sentence is that individual experience precedes action and that this experience influences action. This assumes that there has to be a bodily or mental experience that precedes any and all alterations of reality. In Merleau-Ponty's embodiment phenomenology he makes an explicit distinction between bodily and mental experience. He states that all impressions and experiences are corporeal rather than intellectual and therefore one knows the world through embodied actions (Van Manen, 2014). But the distinct focus on corporeal experience first and mental reflection second is not necessarily relevant for grasping lived experience and individual action on a societal level. Because it is about the experience itself and how this influences an individual, distinguishing between corporeal and mental would misdirect focus and subvert the goal. Besides this he states that the body not only perceives experiences but also acts and that these always precede consciousness. He argues this through stating that individuals perform many actions without thinking, because the body already knows what to do. This contradicts the previous paragraph in that body and mind, experience and action, are in different orders and dependent on a specific event. Another approach to interpreting experience as preceding to action, in light of symbolic interactionism, is Alfred Schutz's sociological phenomenology. As mentioned SI is partly based on Simmel's ideas, the other part has been based on the phenomenological work of Schutz. In turn Schutz's work has been heavily influenced by Simmel, among others.

The general two notions as set forth by the Chicago School provide a great theoretical insight into the exact substance of an experience as lived in the moment and how an individual can form his actions because of it. But it offers little guidance as to larger society. Despite Schutz preceding the Chicago School, going 'back' to his writings do offer guidance in regard to understanding individual experience and action in larger society. His goal was to synthesize a framework of social interaction based on individual experiences (Schutz, 1972). In 'Der Sinnhalte Aufbau Der Sozialen Welt' (The meaningful construction of social reality), his first and most fundamental publication, he lays the basis for understanding social reality basing his thoughts heavily on the phenomenology of Husserl and the ideas of Max Weber (Schutz, 1970, in the edited introduction by Wagner). A term often used by phenomenologists like Simmel, Husserl and the Chicago School is that of 'life-world'. Simply put, the life-world is the whole sphere of everyday experiences, orientations and actions through which individuals pursue their interests (Schutz, 1970, edited by Wagner). Schutz focused on the life-world from different angles, one of which deals with the dominant factors which circumscribe the conduct of any particular individual. An individual not only finds himself in a specific situation, containing opportunity and limitation to the individual, but one stands in the situation as having gone through a long chain of prior life (lived) experiences (Schutz, 1970). All the experiences the individual has had

up until that point are factored into his current experience. Therefore no two individuals can experience something in the same way. This is especially relevant for borderscapes seeing as, for example, geographical location influences the possible 'chain of lived experiences'. Seemingly small things like the primary school one went to or in which neighbourhood one grew up in dictates how one perceives experiences later down the line. The fact that no two individuals share the same experiences can create challenges for local and larger communities in identity building and social cohesion. In the supranational example Deiana et al. (2019) word this as '… local challenges to businesses and feelings of ownership'. Despite this having multiple other causes, this is a concrete example of challenges to social cohesion, on any scale, through differing lived experiences. Schutz combines these lived experiences in another viewing angle on life-world and refers to them as 'stock of experiences' one can rely or fall back on. In the case of Deiana et al. (2019) there seems to be a lack of shared experiences creating the challenges presented.

Continuing on Simmel's externalities in combination with his and the Chicago School 'life-world' an individual shapes one's own world and is being shaped by others. Shaping one's own world happens through the 'long chain of prior experiences', forming a 'stock of experiences' and subsequently act upon the available knowledge. An individual being shaped by others occurs through 'building blocks and methods' offered to one by others. This can refer to externalities like techniques of life and cultural heritage, as mentioned by Simmel. The life-world an individual finds oneself in is therefore, at least partly, pre-structured. Thus there is a dialogue, or interplay, between individuals' lived experiences and actions, comprehending the social world around, and the cognitive prestructurization of the world itself (Schutz, 1970). A critical reflection has to be made in regard to borderscapes here. Previously it was stated that the concept is constructivist in nature, yet when looking at life-world it appears that an individual is placed at the nexus of elements that appear to be somewhat structuralist in nature. Acknowledging this might help define the vague boundaries of a borderscape a little bit better, because there are some structuralist elements from the outset. This is specifically aimed at the individual and its respective externalities. All in all this is sociological jargon for explaining social encounters. Grounding it in a spatial location, or wording it differently, life-world can also be argued to be a summation of culture, religion, heritage, language, politics and economics. These macro scale concepts can be attributed to a specific place, or region. Being able to identify these constructivist and structuralist concepts based on lived experience might prove useful in identifying the, let's use this rhetorically, 'building blocks' of borderscapes and therefore demarcate the concept more clearly.

Concluding, lived experience is intricately connected to more than just a person and their individual experience. External forces like cultural heritage influence one's perception of reality. Individuals have the ability to self reflect and act upon what they experience, thus creating the ability to alter their place in society or advocating a specific group in society, of course depending on multiple factors besides self-reflection. Lived experience goes beyond a single practice or event. It is a continuous dialogue between the self, other and society. This seamlessly fits with the borderscape concept, seeing as both are socially constructed and actively being (re)shaped. Combining both concepts, questions arise like: 'How do those being 'othered' by bordering practices negotiate, contest and resist such practices?' or 'How does one behave in different social contexts, dictated by spatial location, divided by borders?'. Posing these questions in the field might provide answers as to the local lived experiences, social fabric and (collective) identity.

Individuality and externality

Having set out the building blocks and intricacies of lived experience, there is still the question of how an individual's lived experience is actually influenced through externalities. The previous paragraphs delved into how to understand an individual's experience and differentiated between experiencing and acting. Yet applying the reasonably abstract theory in an example might help to build a clearer understanding of the social construction of reality. This paragraph attempts to view *with* the individual through looking at the relation between the subject and the object, to see how externalities can influence lived experience and inform action.

There are multiple facets to understanding how a person experiences reality, all connected in a different way and on different levels. All these are best explained and understood at the hand of an example: borders. Both in the traditional and the modern, more human-centred sense, borders encompass many facets ranging from history to politics and are therefore somewhat holistic in explaining externalities. A border can demarcate a sphere of influence or indicate a difference between things. In the traditional sense borders marked the geographical boundaries of a tribe, kingdom, state, etc. and often these would coincide with a river or a mountain. These physical structures could clearly indicate the border, yet these borders imposed on physical structures are not visible or real in the sense that one cannot touch them. So, provided that a state border is not real or part of the physical world, how can it exert influence? It is through individual agency that borders have become an institution. Individuals each acknowledge a border's legitimacy and internalize its existence. People make a state border real and act upon it, purely by acknowledging a state border and attributing certain values to it. When we stop adhering value to a state border, there would be no borders. But after thousands of years the state borders, our own imagination, have become institutionalized within our minds. Despite state borders being a human construct, the very construct has become an entity of its own and now influences people's practices. As different authors and the borderscape show these borders are not always, or necessarily, dividing along an 'us/them' boundary. With a border there is mostly a power balance, one that is not defined to any one sort of power.

How does the given fact that a border exerts power actually influence an individual's experience? When a border is collectively acknowledged and acted upon over the course of time, shared meaning is instilled on it. In this case the inhabitants of Northern Ireland all inscribed some kind of meaning to the Ulster border in conjunction with politics inscribing it with meaning as well. This creates an inter-subjectively shared meaning and perception of reality through being influenced by the same externalities and results in the 'life-world' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Schutz, 1970). However the individual perspective of and influence by this life-world can differ. 'while we have a shared past, we do not have a shared memory' is a quote found often throughout Northern Ireland. Putting this in the more theoretical terms of Lefebvre, the everyday life of an individual remains shot through and traversed by cosmic and vital rhythms (Lefebvre, 2004 in Huebener et al., 2016). The temporal rhythm of the border and ancillary or surrounding aspects of and to it exist alongside and influence the rhythm of the individual. Apparently immobile objects have also have a rhythm, only to the observing eye (Lefebvre, 2004). The seemingly static border has a rhythm and the observing eye of the borderscape concept has revealed it. While Lefebvre's work has a specific Marxist foundation and is not wholly applicable to borderscapes it does poetically illustrate the flow of people and things in a life-world and the 'scaping' of borders.

3   Methodology

The research field of social geography lends itself to a wide variety of research topics, thus also a wide variety of research methods, approaches and philosophies. Most notably qualitative inquiry and research design is prevalent in social geography. Within qualitative research there are a host of possible approaches and methods for the researcher to use to structure a research question and gather data (Creswell, 2013). It is quite possible that there are multiple viable methods for a research and even a combination of multiple methods, yet each one has its pros and cons. With the cultural turn an even larger amount of methods has become useable, even beyond the field of social geography. Ethnographic, anthropologic and historical methods, among others, have also become viable (Clifford et al., 2016). This wide variety opens up new ways of exploring and data gathering, but can also complicate setting up a new research. Therefore it is important for a researcher to deliberately choose and argument a specific method and to argue why other ones are not as viable. This chapter elaborates on the methodological approach of this research through first arguing a framework and then building on that framework selects a specific approach and explaining it to finally focus the methodology by augmenting it with the work of Brambilla.

3.1   Methodological framework

Previous chapters elucidate the research aim, namely to gain insights into the lived experiences and perceptions of reality of local border region inhabitants. Already a strong subjective, opinionated character emerges, one that is best researched through qualitative methods. A quantitative research might be an option, but it will lack depth and will likely only reinforce the status quo, contradicting with emerging opinions. Perhaps a solution to this is triangulation, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Thurmond, 2001), though this is beyond the scope of a master thesis. Another downside is that, when exploring people's opinions, follow up questions are not possible due to the nature of quantitative research; numbers [in policy] are 'frozen indicators' while the research subject of borders is ever changing (Knaap, 2006). The major benefit of a quantitative research is the large N value of the research, but it ties in with the lack of depth in a quantitative research. On the contrary, qualitative research is often smaller in scope (a much lower N value) and focuses on opinions and experiences, therefore allowing for a more in-depth understanding. Looking at the research aim, a qualitative research is most suited for uncovering lived experiences of border region inhabitants.

Creswell (2013, p.61-64) states that there is no set structure for (methodology in) qualitative studies, in an attempt to provide one, nonetheless, he mentions four different frameworks. Depending on the focus of the study one might be more suited than the other. The four frameworks are (1) constructivist/interpretivist, (2) transformative, (3) theoretical/interpretive lens and (4) Maxwell's nine arguments. The first three largely consist of the same structure, with each one a different focus. (1) And (2) for example lay a larger focus on the role of the researcher within the research but (2) places more emphasis on change through iterations. (4) Is based on 9 questions/arguments that provide the structure, in essence the questions constitute different parts of a research like data collection and data validity. (3) Differs from the other ones as it places a large emphasis on the situating of data collection in broader theory through selecting a specific approach and focuses on ethical and political considerations.

Especially framework (1) and (3) are closely related. When continuing reading this chapter, one might get confused as to what framework is most suited. Therefore a good argumentation beforehand is required. In chapter 3.2 an argument is made for a philosophical constructivist and interpretive line of thinking, much like framework (1) proposes. When choosing framework (1) the research is sharply being pushed in the direction of pragmatism and social constructivism, enticing strong sociological influences. This is not desirable because the spatial aspect, the social geographical aspect, will be pushed to the background. Without a predominantly geographical focus the research aim and question will be insufficiently achieved and answered due to a lack of methodological capabilities and creates an academic case of 'looking in the wrong direction'. This is where framework (3) provides the solution. Wagenaar (2015) argues that without a strong theoretical embedding an interpretivist research always fails to produce practical results, conclusions and recommendations. Therefore he proposes a strong understanding of theory, but most importantly a great focus on practice. This is where framework (3) provides the space and methodological options for theoretical concepts like borderscapes and a focus on the socio-spatial practices. While also leaving a bit of room for the interpretivist nature of policy analysis, combined with practical knowledge in the field.

3.2   General approach

Keeping in mind the philosophical backdrop, a specific methodological approach has to be chosen in order to further structure the data gathering and methodology. As mentioned in the introduction of this paragraph, a wide variety of approaches is available. Having a framework on its own, without any further focus, will most likely not result in a solid research; 'We need to identify our approach to qualitative inquiry in order to present it as a sophisticated study … so reviewers can properly assess it…' (Creswell, 2013, p.69). It is not feasible, or even reasonable, to argue each and every one about their pros and cons. A selection of the most suited ones is made and then compared to one another to argue the best approach. The approach to qualitative inquiry serves as a guide for reaching the research goal. It thus has to be in service of what one wants to accomplish. Keeping this and the research goal in mind, the different approaches can be more thoroughly assessed.

There are three main possible approaches for this thesis: narrative research, case study and phenomenological research. All three focus on a group, their experiences, commonalities, shared sentiment and/or a 'bigger picture'. To understand the content and differences Creswell (2013, p.69-110) is used for the comparison. Appendix A provides a summary of each approach.

Narrative research

A narrative research is about telling stories, converging information on a phenomenon to elaborate on people their experiences. Within narrative research there are multiple forms and are rooted mainly in different social and humanity disciplines (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004). It is about gathering individual stories and attempting to give account of and understand specific events or actions as experienced collectively. From these small stories a broader narrative emerges. Individual stories are about the experience of events or actions, shedding light on identity (Creswell, 2013). The stories don't necessarily need to be oral, many sources of data can be used in narrative research; observations, music, documents, movies, etc. are all viable. In combining the small stories, there is a large focus on the chronological order, a temporal change is conveyed. Thus this type includes the past, present and the future to build its case. The narrative stories are analyzed in varied ways:

thematically, structural or dialogic. Each analysis looks at the data differently, but there is often a turning point in the stories (Creswell, 2013). Concluding, the narrative research approach is most applicable to research that intends to capture detailed information on a specific object, event and/or action as experienced by a single individual or a small group of individuals.

Case study

A case study has a holistic nature and attempts to grasp all facets regarding a specific case. This type of approach is difficult, comprehensive and time consuming and can easily be ineffective when not demarcated properly. Creswell (2013, p.97) notes that a '[Case study research] is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system … through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information … and reports a case description and themes'. Case studies are used widespread in psychology and medicine, as a case study gathers data at several different moments in time and can be used to compare different groups (i.e. in medicine studies). The possible methods are not limited to strictly qualitative inquiry, quantitative data can also be acquired and/or utilized in conjunction with other methods to create a triangulation research. It is clear that a case study is very broad, but it does have main defining features. It always starts with the identification of a specific case, this may be as concrete as a group of individuals or less concrete a community. Depending on the subject of study it can be an intrinsic case (a peculiar event of action) or an instrumental case (to solve a specific problem). In either one there is a focus on acquiring in-depth understanding of the case. The data analysis contains a detailed description the researcher can identify specific themes, issues or situations to further focus on. Often a case study is strengthened by comparing it to other case studies or by presenting it as a theoretical model (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenological research

Phenomenological research describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experience (Creswell, 2013). This approach bases itself on the shared experiences of a certain event or topic, for example people's opinion on the refugee crisis or on the European Union. Phenomenological research combines individual experiences into a broader description and eventually into a 'universal essence', 'to grasp the very nature of thing' (van Manen, 1990; Creswell, 2013). In order to get to the essence, two questions are important to ask: *What* people experience and *how* they experience it (Moustakas, 1994). Asking these two questions will help to get the most direct and relevant information from interviews (Creswell, 2013). Questions of how and why are inherent to philosophy, the literature on phenomenological research thus includes different notions on the philosophical aspect. The notions range from gathering knowledge for the sake of knowledge (a traditional notion) to acknowledging that the reality of an object is only perceived through the superimposed meaning and experience of an individual. These might seems abstract, but are necessary to fully grasp the approach (Creswell, 2013). Main defining features of phenomenological research are that it explores a single concept as experienced by individuals to then combine small stories into a broader understanding and attempts to grasp the essence of the subject. Besides this there is an emphasis on the position of the researcher within the research object, he brackets himself and acknowledges his or her influence. The data gathering is mostly done through interviews, but other sources are viable as well. The analysis follows a systematic procedure to distill narrow units of analysis into eventually ever broader units.

Linking back to the research aim the most suitable approach is phenomenological research. It allows for many detailed facets to be included in the research required to uncover deeper knowledge on the way border regions are experienced. The narrative research approach asks the same questions, yet falls short when combining the small stories into broader and more general units. A case study provides a better approach in this regard, but is in general too holistic. Despite socio-spatial practices being complex and spanning multiple spatial layers, researching it through a case study would make the research aim unrealistic. The pros of phenomenology, that are not included in the other two, are that it provides a philosophical layer, places heavy emphasis on the essence of the small stories and that it attempts to create ever broader units of analysis. The nexus of the latter three alone already provides a sturdy approach to realizing the research objective. However the classical phenomenological approach has to be critically reviewed in order to apply it in contemporary border thinking, this has been done elaborately in chapter 2.2 *Lived experience*.

3.3   Phenomenology

Phenomenology is argued to be the most suited methodological approach, as compared to alternatives. Chapter 2 provided a substantial amount of theoretical insights into the workings of reality as socially constructed. The next step is the matter of how to exactly conduct phenomenological research. Opposed to the alternative approaches, phenomenological methods are not set in stone and require a unique attitude, creative insight, interpretive sensibility and scholarly preparedness (Van Manen, 2014). This paragraph explores the internal contradictory nature of phenomenological methodology and how to create favourable conditions for valid data gathering and illuminating moments.

In the traditional sense phenomenology is about extracting the essence of a phenomenon through analysing it in a transcendental manner. The observer is placed 'outside' the body and reduces the phenomenon to its true essence, to break through the taken-for-grantedness and get to the meaning structures of our experiences (Van Manen, 2014). At the same time phenomenology is about avoiding pre-descriptive typologies through abstracting, codifying and shortening. This seems very contradictory, but when taking a closer look at two important aspects it becomes clear that it actually isn't. It is stated that 'an observer *reduces* a phenomenon to its true essence', this is the first of two notions: reduction. Originating from re-ducere, one can return, or lead back, to the mode of appearing of the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014). Thus the notion is not about reducing a phenomenon to an abstracted or codified thing, but to trace it back to its origin. Through reduction of an experience it leads back to the originary, undeniable, factual or objective nature of the experience. Logically reasoning the result is not a deeper set of rules or underlying structure, it merely points to the origin of that specific experience and is restricted to that specific instance. Second, 'the observer is placed outside the body', or put otherwise, it suspends or removes what obstructs one's access to the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2014). This is called the epoché, or bracketing. Epoché is a Greek work and means 'to stay away from', abstention. In phenomenology this means abstention and suspension of the natural taken-for-grantedness attitude. Husserl introduced bracketing as an analogy from mathematics, in which the contents of a bracket in an equation are kept separate from the rest. In practice bracketing is used to put into brackets 'various assumptions that might stand in the way from opening up access to the originary or the living meaning of a phenomenon' (Van Manen, 2014). The seemingly internal methodological contradiction

in phenomenology is clarified through a critical linguistic definition and etymology of the key notions of reduction and epoché.

Having laid out the methodological groundwork on phenomenology brings about another contradiction and a major challenge. Reduction and epoché create the method of methodological reduction, yet as mentioned phenomenology is about opposing ready-made general structures such as a predetermined way of conducting phenomenological research. Besides, by looking at the highly individualized character of each experience, it is impossible to have such a general set of strategies because they have to be invented anew for each experience (Van Manen, 2014). There is a great focus on the researcher to adjust to the social setting of the experience being researched and requires sensitive interpretive skills and creativity of said researcher (Van Manen, 2014). The contradiction and the challenge become apparent at the same time. Then how to go about phenomenological research? There is a flexible rationality required to understand and conceptualise the phenomenon at hand, in this research a specific lived experience. The phenomenon has to be presented in a textual manner that allows for the 're-cognizing', making feelingly knowable, of that exact phenomena. The lived experience of an individual has to be captured in words through which the reader can understand it in its entire complexity. Reduction is not the goal in itself, rather it is a means to achieving the textual capturing of the lived experience. Therefore it is up to the researcher's ability to gain insight into the entirety of the lived experience and subsequently requires tact and sensibility in re-creating it in textual form. Careful wording is paramount in assuring that the lived experience is transferred through paper to the reader, without editing, or colouring, the story. The latter part is achieved through the bracketing of the researcher and his personal (previous) experiences.

Leaving one last phenomenological methodological question, how to actually achieve insight into the deep sense of meaning of a phenomenon? This is where the geographical application of the method might prove to be most beneficial. So far in theory and method quite some fine details and deeper layers of sociological, philosophical and psychological understanding have been left out, because this research is not about critically reflecting on sociological theory but to understand enough about lived experience to gain an understanding into the 'building blocks' of borderscapes. Van Manen (2014) describes two 'chronic ailments' of phenomenological human sciences, that of subjectivism and objectivism. The debate is about what phenomenology can actually know and what it can only assume to know. This does not concern borderscapes as it is of no use to understand the fine physiological details of experience, this research merely concerns with obtaining experiential accounts of individuals. These accounts are studied as plausible examples of possible human experiences, not ruling out different views and experiences on and of the same. There is no need to validate an individual's experience, seeing as it is their view on the matter and their experience of the matter. Whether this is true or false is not relevant, the individual will base his actions on this ill-informed or irrational information. Humans are after all not absolute objective beings, especially not in socially sensitive settings such as religion, descent or social status, all of which are argued to play a role in the long lasting Northern Irish situation.

Concluding, the method of reduction phenomenology is about reducing, retracing an experience back to its origin and in doing so the researcher must think of the epoché by bracketing factors that could limit access to the true meaning of said experience. It is a means to suspend the beliefs of taken-for-grantedness to pierce the veil of the experience. Critically reflecting on the method of

reduction phenomenology suggests that there is no such thing as a method in phenomenology, because individual experiences cannot be caught in pre-set structures (Heidegger, 1982). It is then up to the researcher to apply reduction and epoché as a means, not an end, to get to the true basis of an experience. Achieving access to the true meaning of experiences is contested in phenomenology. There is no consensus on what one can actually know. In applying phenomenology in borderscapes this is not relevant as individual's perception of reality based on their stock of experiences, thus their actual reality, is factual and informs their actions.

3.4   Spatially augmenting phenomenology

The basis of the methodology framework has been established, so far it is still a bit abstract and remains to be applied to the research topic. The phenomenological approach can be used widespread, though in border studies the exact application can be challenging. Borders and bordering are a multifaceted concept, studied from various angles and fields, for which there is no real 'standardized' way of approaching and researching them. Brambilla (2015) proposes in her critical reflection on the current academic paradigm that a way to move forward is to study the border from three axes: ontological, epistemological and methodological. The ontological axis is used as a starting point for questioning the where of borders, to support thinking 'beyond the mosaic of state' (Brambilla, 2015). The epistemological axis is used to think about border variation and borders themselves. Finally the methodological axis helps in recognizing experiences and representations of borders, focusing on humanizing and improving the visibility of borders (Brambilla, 2015).

Brambilla (2015) states that, with regard to experiences, great emphasis is placed on the need to 'humanise' borders, thus hinting at an under developed phenomenological dimension of border studies. In order to keep moving forward in border studies she proposes to utilize phenomenology slightly different. Instead of focusing on the essence (she argues to be deterministic and territorialist ontology), she proposes to focus on the existence. A slight adjustment of the frame means that instead of research *on* borders, one requires to research *with* borders. This proposition fits seamlessly with the notion of fluid socially constructed borders in an ever changing borderscape in the modern day of global flows of goods, people and data. Using this notion, the gathered data will not specify a definitive fixed knowledge on the Ulster border region, instead it can shed light on a space of negotiation between a multiplicity of actors through experience and representation. As Wolcott fittingly puts it; 'In qualitative research there are no right answers, just multiple stories' (Wolcott, 1994 in Creswell, 2013, p.52).

Epistemological axis
In the general theory section of chapter 2 the question was raised and answered on the *where* of a border, as well as the need to even pose the question. It concludes to state that borders are everywhere and should be viewed not as lines, but as spatial places in which culture, politics and economy converge. This is part of a new 'multi-sited' approach to borders, fostered in borderscapes, that composes a new ontological approach to borders. Brambilla (2015) embraces this viewpoint in her epistemological axis and defines it as a kaleidoscopic and double ontological gaze. Moving this viewpoint forward and applying it to practice means that borders and border variations are not static but move around, like a kaleidoscope. When in the field this means that borders, of any kind, could be uncovered all around, with different meanings to different people. Rumford writes about this and calls it the multi-perspectival approach (Rumford, 2012). Being aware of this multiplicity and utilizing

such a gaze makes it easier to grasp '… the configurations assumed by the border on a small and large scale, globally and locally, and taking into account not only the 'big stories' of the nation-state construction, but also the 'small stories' that come from experiencing the border in day-to-day life' (Brambilla, 2015, p.25). Approaching the Ulster border region in this manner helps to avoid a binary viewpoint and encourages 'seeing like a border' as opposed to 'seeing like a state' (Rumford, 2012). A second benefit of this gaze is, while being in the Ulster border region, one can consciously keep an eye out for the 'bigger stories', i.e. international (policy) discourses that influence that physical space and its spatial practices.

What the kaleidoscopic lens means for phenomenology is that through lived experience multiple 'variations' of borders can be identified in space and time, across different social, economic, legal and historical settings which go between different actors and not only the state (Brambilla, 2015). These categories, or dimensions, of borders conjoin nicely with the construction of the social life-world in the Chicago School and the externalities described. The variations Brambilla is speaking of, and the need to humanize the approach to borders by looking *with* the border, are thus the individual perceptions based on different experiences of the border. These are the highly individual border perceptions, coined the 'small stories'. They show the complexity of boundaries in their 'materialities, paradoxes, leakages, fractionalities and practical enactments (Mol and Law, 2005, in Brambilla, 2015). The true spear point for Brambilla in this approach is that it is now possible to not only become aware of geographical and territorial borders but also of social, ethnic and cultural boundaries. She argues this to be the true innovative epistemology of and from borders, in which the borderscape is a crucial means to an end (Brambilla, 2015). Brambilla touches upon an already existing body of work that looks from the border, by starting from the individual perspectives from the borders. One such author has already been mentioned, Gloria Anzaldúa. Looking as a border is thus not new, but it has not yet been sufficiently explored within the borderscape context.

Ontological axis
The epistemological axis suggests a novel way of looking with and as borders, which is a challenge in its own right. It suggests a way of *how* to do it, but at what is one supposed to look? The answer is simple, at *the border*. Inherently this raises the question: what is a border? In the general theory paragraph the literature regarding the ontology of borders and borderscapes has been provided and argued, but the definition has to be brought in line with the novel kaleidoscopic gaze and be applied to the case at hand.

The ontological axis defines and characterizes a new concept, borderscapes. The epistemological axis brings the concept into practice; looking at the definition and characteristics, what are the implications and possibilities in practice? First off, the concept of borderscapes includes, as argued, a static and a processual aspect. Brambilla (2015) writes about a *processual ontology* in which reality is actively being (re)constructed and what it means depends on human praxis. In the philosophy paragraph this is argued to be the refusal of the subject-object dichotomy, individuals' reality of a border is constructed through their experience of it (Creswell, 2013). Keeping this in mind, while in the Ulster borderscape, means that the current state of the border, the *being*, is closely linked to the future, the *becoming*. Further building on the ontological multidimensionality of borders is the reflexive dialogue of crossing a border. They allow for regulating or blocking flows of persons and goods and thus maintaining state control and its territoriality on the one hand. On the other hand the flows of persons and goods in an ever globalizing world undermine the state and territorial

sovereignty and the borderscape is being reconfigured and spatially re-inscribed (Brambilla, 2015). Placing further focus on the re-inscription of space in this regard allows for the uncovering of hidden and silenced borders made invisible by the state viewpoint. The epistemological axis helps to build an understanding of how to look like a border and at the same time be aware of the bigger stories, thus highlighting new learning opportunities for governmentality practices and policies.

Methodological axis

The traditional methodological approach in multidisciplinary research since the cultural turn has been to use ethnographic methods and combine those with desk research, archival research and other forms of data like maps, pictures, art and more recently digital sources (Brambilla, 2015). This served its purpose and led to great new insights into borders and the practice of bordering. But, so far this thesis mentioned the term 'lived experience' many times, how does one gain insights into this through desk research or by looking at pictures? This is where Brambilla (2015) proposes two new aspects in the borderscape concept to move the methodology on borders further: *experiences* and *representations*.

The previous two axes press the need to move away from 'seeing like a state'. The borderscape concept already provides a good starting point to do so. As a result, this concept clashes with international (geopolitical) discourses by including the smaller stories; the *experiences* of everyday life show a dynamic relationship with the rhetoric and policies of borders. The resulting friction is where the borderscape concept really bests the more rigid border concept, in the uncovering of the ambivalence. So, the methodological axis helps one point to the place where *bordering* is actually happening. This would be a place of claim and counter-claim, seeing as this creates a sphere of contestation and change where the social and political order (in democracies) is being produced. This sphere is best mapped through looking at individual experience and subjectivity, by looking at the phenomena constituting the whole. Strüver (2005) refers to this as performative acts, through narration, visualization and imagination and conceives it as *borderscaping*. Approaching the Ulster borderscape in this manner would allow for bridging the gap between practices and representations. The real novel contribution Brambilla (2015) makes, in methodological regard, is that in phenomenological border research the focus has to be not *on* (f)actors but *with* them. This notion helps to highlight sites in borderscapes where the *right to become* is expressed. As previously mentioned, the goal is not to distill the *essence* of lived border experiences but to map the *existence* and *becoming* of multiple stories located in the Ulster borderscape.

3.5   Data gathering and analysis

Choosing a framework for the methodology, selecting a specific approach and critically reflecting on that approach all help to structure the data gathering and subsequently analysis. One of the most common data gathering methods in qualitative, phenomenological, research is interviews. This thesis is no exception. Semi-structured and informal unstructured interviews will be the main method, as it allows for the collection of subjective information (i.e. the 'small stories'). Other sources are explored as well, like music and local literature. To start this paragraph an argument is made for interviews and an overview is given of the types of interviews, next a critical reflection is made on the sample selection and the potential of sources other than interviews is explored. Finally, because in phenomenology data gathering and analysis are closely linked, the approach to analysing the data is explained

Based on the theoretical concepts and phenomenological approach, one data gathering method is most suited; interviews. In understanding personal subjectivity on a range of topics, such as culture and social status, simply talking to them has proven to be the most fruitful (Creswell, 2013; Gentles, Charles, Ploeg & McKibbon 2015). It is no surprise that looking at statistics limits the researcher in getting to the root of a phenomena or problem (Creswell, 2013). There are three main categories of interviews; unstructured, semi-structured and structured interviews. Depending on the interviewee and setting of the interview a different type is chosen. For example when interviewing a government official it is likely to be of more use to develop questions in advance and thus use a semi-structured or structured style than when having a brief personal communication on the street. Creswell's (2013) next step after selecting the main data gathering method is who to interview, the sampling.

In choosing who to interview there are multiple possibilities, the most used one is that of sampling. Creswell (2013) mainly uses the purposeful sampling strategy, although in general this is a sufficient approach, there is some critical reflection required in regard to this research. In short, purposeful sampling (and sampling in general) bases its samples on mostly quantifiable or categorized factors. Through categories such as availability, language, expertise on a subject or experience with a certain phenomena, age, sex, culture group, etc. the interviewees are chosen and approached. Most of these categories are quantifiable or place one in a certain group beforehand and thus the data gathering is structured from the start. Using this approach to respondent selection results in two contradictions/implications for a research like this; conceptual and terminological (Yin, 2014 in Gentles et al. 2015).

In the conceptual sense (purposeful) sampling starts with selecting respondents, based on certain markers and thus places them in categories before going in the field. When going in to the field and conducting the interviews there is a clear division between groups, perhaps the researcher even asks different questions to either group. In phenomenological research it is impossible to make such empirical generalizations (van Manen, 2014). Besides this, the binary division directly contradicts the entire purpose of borderscapes and borders as social construct. As argued in chapter 2 borderscapes constitute of a multiplicity of actors influencing themselves, others and society in different ways and vice versa. Certainly in light of the Ulster border region placing people in categories beforehand, for example by religion or education, will almost certainly guarantee results that reinforce the status quo of international discourse. This will most likely be the case because it is easy to categorize people that are vocal about the opinions and beliefs and thus the researcher will end up with either sides of the spectrum. The 'grey' area of less vocal, more nuanced or less decided border region inhabitants pose a challenge in that they are not easily categorized and more likely to be underrepresented or excluded all together. In the conceptual sense, sampling is not going to contribute to the goals of this research.

The terminological implication of 'sample' is that it represents a part of society, a *slice of reality*. The goal of sampling is to test hypotheses on a part of the larger whole, be it society or a more specific whole such as a hospital or neighbourhood. Inherently by using the term sample there is a goal or intention to be able to speak for the entire whole, based on a part of the whole. This brings us to a relatively quantitative part of qualitative research in looking for a sufficient group size of subjects (sufficient N value) to actually get a picture of the whole. In the borderscape concept every single person contributes something else, in a different way, intended or unintended, to society. There is no 'whole' to be discerned. Thus why use the term 'sample' in a research like this? Yin (2014) proposes a

different terminology, which is more in line with the borderscape concept; selection. By using this term the need for arguing and defending a certain N value for validity disappears and one avoids descriptors that imply knowledge of an overall population (Gentles et al., 2015, p.1776). *Selection* only implies to know and conclude about the reality of persons that were interviewed or contributed to the research in other ways, only their *slice of reality*. This has implications of its own such as limited external validity, but when formulating the research aim and question in a precise way there is no need to make general conclusions about the Ulster border region in order to successfully achieve the research goal. Instead of arguing characteristics and markers of intended interviewees, a better approach might prove to be in arguing *places* and *locations* where important actors *might* be found. This leaves the door open for unexpected locations and sources of information and instead provides as a general starting point from which one can go beyond the surface of the subject and truly develop a deeper understanding through interaction. Such sites are the Ulster Museum, academic experts (at the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute) or a local community center.

The phenomenological approach in this research looks at borders from the perspective of the border and its inhabitants. Thus the stories they tell, the gathered 'data', are what constitutes the borderscape. Separating the stories from the analysis requires the stories to be objectively stated, to then later be analysed in a different paragraph. This poses two major difficulties: (1) How does one objectively state a subjective story? And, (2) separating a story from its analysis creates an artificial, by the researcher imposed, distance between practice and knowledge.

To start with the first difficulty; a story is inherently subjective, any way, shape or form in which a story is written already dilutes the actual experience of an individual (Van Manen, 2014). By rephrasing someone else's experience there is the ever present danger of injecting personal opinions in the account of the experience. Phenomenology attempts to prevent this by acknowledging the personal experiences of the researcher through bracketing, yet the fact that there is an influence by the researcher on describing and writing down the experience remains unchanged. It is of little to no use to attempt an objective description in this research because it is a geographical research focused on unveiling the Ulster borderscape, not a sociological research aimed at uncovering the true social mechanisms that constitute one's experience. By separating the data gathering and analysis this superimposed influence by the researcher magnifies even more. Ultimately the gathered data, the stories, create the thing that is being researched; the borderscape. Instead a better approach to data gathering and analysis is to combine the two. By systematically building an understanding of the past of the Ulster border region the stories of individual's can be understood in a broader context. Through an analysis of each story, without adding categories or values to them, bit by bit the extent of the Ulster borderscape comes into sight. There is thus a step by step approach in understanding the stories told by individuals. In the actual analysis of the stories there will be additional data sources that illustrate their experience, seeing as for someone initially unfamiliar with the region and its intricacies it is difficult to understand their experience to the full extent.

4 The Ulster Borderscape

Freeing border thinking from political primacy requires acknowledging and attributing more and other aspects then just politics and international relations. Borderscapes do such a thing, yet the re-politicization of the concept preceding and following the three axis approach of Brambilla returns the focus to mainly the political aspect of borderscapes, though in a broader context. This broader context is more inclusive then the old border thinking, yet the focus on the national border is still the starting point. If the borderscape is to truly remove border thinking from political primacy, the political aspect needs to be placed alongside society. Instead of including broader society in understanding the border, implicating that society is 'in service of' the border, society must be viewed on its own and away from politics. This does not mean that society will be viewed separated from politics at all costs, because of power relations within society that are reflected in politics and vice versa. Especially in regard to Northern Ireland it is safe to anticipate a major role for political topics within society. The starting point is entering the field with an open vision, thus not predetermining certain political or societal topics.

In an attempt to clarify the borderscape concept this research flips borders 'on its head' and approaches it from a bottom-up perspective. In a multivocal and kaleidoscopic fashion, as advocated by Brambilla (2015), this research starts by acknowledging actors 'beyond the mosaic of the state' in order to start building an understanding of the Northern Irish borderscape. This allows for going beyond scratching the surface and for an understanding as experienced and lived by the inhabitants of the Ulster border region. In a sense this research 'constructs' the Ulster borderscape based on phenomenological methodology and individual lived experiences. Beforehand it is already clear that there is a major interconnectedness between different areas in society like culture, religion, identity and politics. Yet instead of filling in these obvious connections and entering the field with preconceptions about Northern Ireland's reality, the lived experiences will tell the story. This might prove essential in truly understanding what creates people's perception and drive their actions, which in turn create the borderscape.

This approach seems rather transcendental, in that the researcher 'stands above' the topic of research. The opposite is true; this research gathers the stories of people by actively taking part in society among the people. The culmination of stories will form the understanding of how the Northern Irish borderscape looks, through the 'building blocks' provided in these individual stories. It aims to unveil the temporal rhythm of individuals and in larger context unveil the life-world of Northern Irish society in which people have 'a shared history, but no shared memory'. Not only will the stories be gathered, they are illustrated, supported or contested, depending on one's perception, by the 'silent' physical markers that litter the social space. All these seemingly singular accounts of individual reality are what ultimately make up the Ulster borderscape, a multivocal (many voices) account of reality as experienced by individuals.

In order to truly grasp which social, economical, political and cultural factors are driving contemporary Northern Irish society it is paramount to understand how the society came about in the first place. Thus the story of Northern Ireland begins with the run-up to and its conception in 1921 and paves the way for giving an account of contemporary society. Society as it is today bears a lot of markers from the past, perhaps more so than different European countries, and is overshadowed by the Brexit process taking place during the writing of this thesis. Having laid a basic

understanding of society the individual stories of lived experience are analysed and put into context. Finally the externalities of these stories and other secondary source material is critically analysed to uncover the true extent of the Northern Irish borderscape and to see which aspects prevail in the common perception and understanding of Northern Ireland.

4.1   The history of Northern Ireland

The history of Northern Ireland has its roots multiple centuries ago and is intricately intertwined with today's Republic of Ireland, England and the United Kingdom as a whole. Located on the Irish island it has been strongly influenced by Celtic language and culture as well as Anglo-influences such as the Anglo-Saxon language. These multiple influences set the precedent for the centuries to come. The best and clearest starting point for understanding the history of Northern Ireland starts with acknowledging this dual influence of culture and language, which laid the basis for the ultimate, but not unavoidable, establishment of Northern Ireland. In order to systemically and chronologically set out the history of Northern Ireland this paragraph starts by explaining the run-up to the establishment of Northern Ireland, then moves on to the time of the Second World War and the period before the Troubles and lastly goes over the Troubles.

Through the centuries
The island of Ireland has been a mainly rural area for centuries leading up to 1800 and being incorporated under the Tudor monarchy in the 16th century state consolidation (Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007). The geo-politics of the area were closely linked to religion in a patchwork of socio-economic and cultural boundaries rooted in religion and language through successive exploitation of English and Scottish plantations (Anders & O'Dowd, 2007). In European geo-political context of the time England, being Protestant, feared that its enemies France and Spain, being Catholics, would use Ireland as a 'backdoor' into the mainland. In an effort to combat this England suppressed any form of Catholicism in Ireland and even broader any expression of self-image, Catholic or Protestant, on the Irish isles. This left the Irish inhabitants without a way of self expression and fostered hostility towards the English. Despite forming a political Union of Ireland with Britain in 1801, any English attempts of nation-building failed due to an unwillingness of Irish people to align themselves with English culture and nationality (Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007). Instead, movements sprung up that advocated an Irish identity and sought after more autonomy for Ireland, fuelled even more so later on through the ideas of the French Enlightenment. In the fashion of that time, imperialism and expansionism, England placed a handful of pro-British Protestant elites to rule over Ireland despite a growing Catholic population and led to clashes between Irish oriented Catholics and a minority, in political control, of pro-British oriented Protestants.

While still remaining largely rural and small scale, society was riddled with (institutional) inequality and Nationalists, mainly Catholics, advocated for a revision of British institutions and the reinstatement of an Irish Parliament within the British Empire. Societal reaction entailed that the pro-British minority spoke up and was reflected in the growth of the Orange Order, a pro-British Protestant movement, creating a front against the Nationalists and resisting any concessions towards Nationalists and Catholics. With this backdrop in mind, the Industrial Revolution started to fire up and created a demand for workers in the bigger cities. In light of the Great Famine and general poverty in rural areas, more and more people started to flock towards the bigger cities such as Belfast. When settling in the new city it was common practice to settle near either Catholics or

Protestants, depending on an individual's religion. It is not a far stretch to understand that this stark (geographical) division based on religion continued to set the precedence for events later down the line. As the city of Belfast grew, working and living conditions remained abysmal and civil rights movements advocating better living conditions and fairer wages continued to grow.

England's politicians, struggling with Ireland's position within the Empire, fiercely debated in Westminster to come up with a solution to the growing demands of Ireland to regain sovereignty and divided its politics. From as early as 1880 proposals were made to settle the unrest in Ireland and regain balance, known as the Home Rule Bills (Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007). Without going into too much detail on the different bills and the impact of the First World War, the fourth Home Rule Bill, called the Government of Ireland Act 1920, passed in Westminster. In this bill Ireland was to be split up into a Southern part, the Republic of Ireland, and a Northern part, Northern Ireland. Up until around 1912 to 1914 no one in Ireland was keen on such solution, but the increasing stalemate forced hands and the option gained favour (Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007). Originally designed to be a temporary solution, as a united Ireland still was the ultimate goal for Nationalists and Unionists alike, it found its way into the Fourth Home Rule bill. Irish Republicans opposing home rule or any form of devolved government, chasing a true Irish Republic, attempted to end British rule in the 1916 Easter Rising. The attempt ended in failure and the sixteen of its main instigators were executed by the British government. Despite the failure the idea itself garnered support and the way the British government handled the ordeal, from the executions to subsequent political actions, did nothing but to strengthen the Irish sense of nationality and played Nationalism into its hand. The Easter Rising holds major significance for both Nationalists and Unionists to this day still, in the Ulster Museum the original proclamation of the Irish Republic is displayed on a large wall and illustrates the major impact it had and has (see image 2).
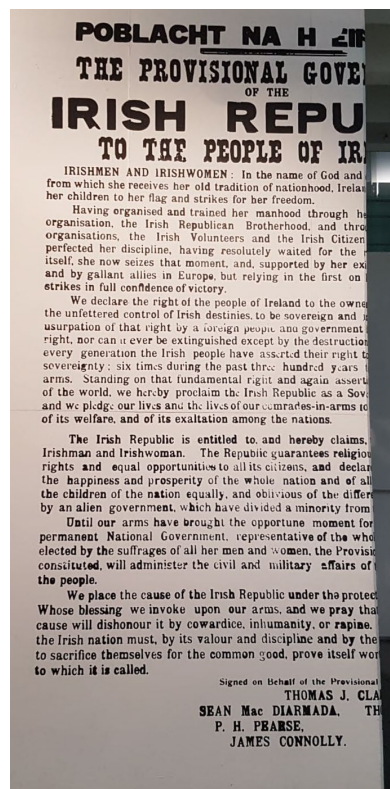

Image 2: Proclamation of the Irish Republic during the Easter Rising (Ulster Museum, 2020)

The exact partition, which counties to partition, was the next big challenge and cause of political division. There were two major plans for the division, the 9 county partition and the 6 county partition. Image 3 highlights the 6 county, plan with concerned the counties filled in with diagonal lines. An important note is the diagonally highlighted counties mainly house Protestant Unionists. Earlier it was stated that society was riddled with (institutional) inequality, the exact interpretation to partition is a prime example alongside the illustration that the Ulster matter is a political conflict above a religious one. The following two quotes show the political reasoning behind the proposed 9 county division and 6 county division by Unionists.

''*The Northern Ireland six-county area maximised the territory ... [for] Ulster Unionists ... and ... to give them a permanent in-built 'democratic majority' of two to one over nationalists*'' (Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007, p.945)

''*The Committee ... wanted to exclude the whole (nine county) Ulster (44% Catholic) from Dublin's jurisdiction as it 'minimise[d] the division of Ireland on purely religious lines' ... but the unionists had insisted on six counties (33% Catholic) to get a safer built-in majority.*'' (Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007, p.945)

In addition to this pre-meditated, arguably unfairly gained majority, Westminster opposed an earlier suggested plebiscite or election in fears that the unity of Ireland would be damaged beyond repair through civil unrest that such an election could bolster. Ultimately the faith of Ireland and the conception of Northern Ireland were dictated by politicians in Westminster. The Fourth Home Rule bill passed and partitioned Ireland into the Ireland and Northern Ireland in 1921.

In a critical reflection on the chain of events many people and authors argue that partition was not an inevitable outcome (Tonge, 2002; Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007; Coakley & O'Dowd, 2007). Due to political negligence, sectarian antagonism and social inequality differences among society created ever starker contrasts, a hardening political attitude and reduced willingness to concessions (Tonge, 2002). In short, there was an all-or-nothing attitude that didn't do much besides deteriorate an already volatile social and political situation. These themes continue to play a key role and emerge in one form or another in society to this day. In a run-up to lived experience the first signs of cultural heritage come into sight, heritage that can be felt and most importantly be seen to this day (the analysis of contemporary Northern Ireland's society will go into greater detail). The complex geographical nature of the 'Ulster' border also peaks through the lines of its history. Strongly based on international geo-politics in the ideology of nationalism and imperialism, the making of the border was solely the domain of the state. The impact 'on the ground', of the partition, on society intertwines with the way individuals perceive the border and impacts later generations in a seemingly perpetuating cycle, an aspect that will be set out in greater detail later on in this research.

Image 3: A detailed map of the isles of Ireland (Jones et al., 2001; Tonge, 2002)

Northern Ireland's 'antebellum' and the social justice movement

With the intended temporary partition of the isle of Ireland the political calm seemingly returned to Westminster. While this was definitely not the case, the matter was settled and it was up to Northern Ireland to get its affairs in check. The Protestants were at the political helm of the country and its society, albeit through contested and unfair systems in place to get and keep the Protestants there. All in all Northern Ireland entered the 20th century in a very fragile and volatile state. In the aftermath of the Easter Rising and the partition outings of Nationalism were quickly forbidden. Symbols such as the Irish green, white and orange flag and commemorations of the Easter Rising were banned. In general Northern Ireland's 'antebellum', lasting from 1921 to 1968, can be divided into three pillars of friction: institutional discrimination, economic imbalance and social inequality. The three general pillars are closely linked to one another and serve as an illustration of the extent to which society was impacted, down to the individual level. Perhaps remarkably, the difficulties that Northern Ireland faced during the early 20th century persisted throughout the decades and changed little.

The previous paragraph highlighted the Unionists' reasoning behind the 6 county plan as a way to secure a majority in government. After the partition the major party, over half the seats, was Protestant and the Catholic opposition was virtually powerless against any form of discriminatory legislation. The unfair voting system persisted to exist throughout the 20th century, further lowering Catholics' ability to create a political front while being a majority of the population (image 4 illustrates this by showing the amount of voters and Nationalist/Unionist elected). Directly after partition the imbalance in politics was reflected in civil unrest in society, in the first two years following partition over 400 people were killed and around 2.000 were injured (Tonge, 2002). The main institution responsible for dealing with any civil unrest, regardless of political belief or religion, was the police force. The police force of the time was called the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), the successor to the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), and remained intact until 2001, an important element to the Troubles. In a political response to regaining balance in the country the Special Powers Act was established in 1922 creating the possibility for searches, arrests and detention. Initially intended to be temporary legislation it remained in force until 1972, further reflecting the political and institutional indecisiveness and shattered society. For Catholic Nationalists the RUC formed a great threat because the RUC consisted of around 90% Protestant Unionists (Tonge, 2002). The RUC were and still are heavily criticized for their alleged sectarian violence and outing their political preference. In a more nuanced reflection of the RUC's policing activities, there was widespread poverty and poor living conditions where irregularities were met with active policing with no regard to sectarianism. It is important to note that the national government did not actively partake in any sectarian legislation, as it was bound to the Government of Ireland act. The true source of institutional discrimination came from local governments, enacting policies that divided society (Tonge, 2002).

Ward	Voters		Elected
	Catholic	Non-Catholic	
Derry North	2,530	3,946	8 Unionists
Waterside	1,852	3,697	4 Unionists
Derry South	10,047	8,781	12 Unionists
			8 Nationalists

Table 1: 'Electors and elected in Derry 1967' (Darby, 1976, adapted by Tonge, 2002)

Northern Ireland was a new country and had to get its economy up and running, yet with an indecisive government there was little support in economical regard. As a part of the United Kingdom it received considerable financial support from Westminster which kept the economy standing. In society it was mainly the Catholics that were not able to acquire a job because of the informal state of the economy. Oftentimes employers hired from within close circles or preferred 'own' religion above others. Seeing as the Protestants mainly held government functions and ran businesses, the Catholics were left out (Tonge, 2002). Arguably there are multiple factors playing into the absence of Catholics in the Northern Irish workforce, such as self exclusionism and poor education (Tonge, 2002). Another factor playing into the economic imbalance and division of society was the housing sector. As said the economic and living conditions in 1920's and 1930's Northern Ireland were abysmal, not bound to any religion or politics. In this regard both sides endured harsh conditions but it adds up to the imbalance between Catholics and Protestants. Housing, work and politics were closely related because in order to vote one must own a house and jobs at the government required one to own a house. This shows a negative feedback loop which is hard to break free from as an unschooled, low wage Catholic. Still, the higher class Catholics were actively fended from any position of power by simply not being allowed to partake in debates and hold governmental positions (Tonge, 2002). Once again this perception has to be nuanced based on the same arguments of self exclusionism and in general poorer education.

The latter two pillars show a great deal of societal imbalance in Northern Ireland between 1921 and 1968. The social inequality from Ireland pre-partition still remained after partition and the social rights movements kept advocating for fairer treatment of citizens. Despite the Catholic Church taking an acquiescent stance and Catholic opposition in government remained relatively powerless, change was required and social welfare had to be improved. The entire lower, working class endured under significant economic strain and at one time early 20th century Catholics and Protestants marched alongside each other in a protest against poverty. Unfortunately this did not last due to internal issues and conflict (Tonge, 2002). It, however, does show once again that the division is not necessarily based on religion but more so on politics and, depending on the situation, economy. It also shows that the contemporary societal divide has its roots in over a century of history. The persisting social inequality led to centuries of demonstrations, like the march earlier described. These protests and marches eventually boiled over the situation and are a major instigator for the eventual Troubles in 1968. In the years leading to 1968 the major social justice movement was the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ), formed as a result of a growing, but still minor, Catholic middle class. In light of some international developments in politics and religion the Catholics in Northern Ireland gained more confidence to stand up for themselves and reduce their acquiescence stance (Tonge, 2002).

Eventually the social justice movements grew in numbers and unified under the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), an organisation that played a central role in advocating social equality. Both CSJ and NICRA were essentially not advocating for civil unrest at the held marches but did not actively restrain their members in doing so (Tonge, 2002).

The NICRA demanded reforms and changes in the country in terms of 'one man, one vote', abolishing the unfair election boundaries, a fairer housing system, abolishing the Special Powers Act, disbanding the 'B-specials' (the notorious reserve force of the RUC) and the ability to complain about local institutional discrimination (Tonge, 2002). This sums up the majority of society's sore points for Catholics during the Northern Irish 'antebellum'. There is, however, one important demand that is not included by the NICRA: the reversal of partition or any demands about the border. This is particularly interesting from the borderscape perspective, it shows that either the border was incorporated and accepted by people or that any attempt at reconfiguring the border would be futile. Either way, the geographical aspect (initially) did not play a role in the run-up to the Troubles. Probert (1978) argues a different angle and states that the border issue was not raised by the Catholics because overall their demands were moderate and the Prime Minister (PM) at the time was running a moderate modernisation programme. Despite the moderate demands of the NICRA and the modernisation attitude of the PM there remained social and political friction. Prime Minister at the time, PM Terence O'Neill, found himself in a pincer between the two. Demands from society in regard to more rights for Catholics one the hand and any concessions towards Catholics being seen as weak and actively advocated against by Unionist politicians. Whichever way he went there was fierce critique. What has characterized the decades since partition also played an instrumental role in the escalation of the Troubles, the all-or-nothing mentality.

The Troubles

So far the run-up to partition, partition, the Northern Irish 'antebellum' and the social justice movement have been covered in great detail and with some spatial reflection. Instead of going over the Troubles in the same historical summation of events a few key events are highlighted and in more general the setting and way of thinking will be illustrated. The purpose is not to provide details about the Troubles, the purpose is to understand the contemporary sentiment in Northern Ireland where people have a shared history, but no shared memory. It is about understanding the basis and the multivocal perspectives of individual lived experience on Northern Ireland that make up its society, politics and the borderscape today.

The previous paragraph mentioned the social rights movements and marches held to attract attention to their cause. The exact starting date of the Troubles is contested, but the social rights movements did definitely kick-off civil unrest. Some state that the long march between Derry/Londonderry and Belfast in 1968, while being attacked at several points, marked the beginning. Others argue different starting points like the Battle of the Bogside. Despite the exact starting point the fact remained that there was major civil unrest across Northern Ireland and in August of 1969 the British government decided to send in the British Army to support local police forces in regaining peace. Initially welcomed by Unionists as well as Nationalists, the warm welcome did not last and frictions between Unionists, Loyalists and the British Army started to appear. In one of the most notorious events of the Troubles the British Army lost their neutral stance and became as much a part of the Troubles as other parties. On January 30th 1972 almost 13 unarmed civilians were shot dead by the British Army and many more wounded during a riot control attempt at a

demonstration against internment. This particular event created the feeling with Catholics that the British government was not on their side or neutral at all. In response, the Republic of Ireland set up refugee camps and denounced the killings.

Another key event, mentioned briefly, was the introduction of internment in 1971. Interment was meant to counter any paramilitary activity through enabling police and peace keeping forces to arrest and intern suspects of paramilitary activity without trial. While the times requested severe measures, this measure completely missed its goal. Lists were made of individuals potentially active in paramilitary activities, based on old information and by the criticized, sectarian RUC. The result was that interment only targeted Catholics, many of them were innocent and had to be released shortly after being interned. On top of the sectarianism of internment was the poor treatment of the individuals, they had to endure severe physical violence. Interment lasted between 1971 and 1975, during which close to 2000 people were interned, of whom approximately 1800 Catholics. The protests on Bloody Sunday, 1972, were intended to advocate and end to internment but instead turned into another key event in the escalation of the Troubles and the deepening of sectarian, hostile sentiment in society.

During the 1990's, especially in the second part, peace talks at Stormont were held to end the Troubles. Finally in 1998 after several years of talks an agreement was made up to end the civil unrest, the Good Friday Agreement (GFA). The signing of the Good Friday Agreement marked the ending of the Troubles for many, but the (sectarian) violence continued and the death toll would rise even further, albeit on a smaller scale. This is the 'last' key event of the Troubles, dealing with its events in politics, society and religion. To this day still there is a continuous attempt to foster peace and prosperity, generally called the 'peace process'. In light of everything that happened, individuals in societal groups are trying to cope with its legacy. The peace process is a peculiar thing, it is often presented as 'a thing of the Troubles' but in reality it is part of everyday life and politics. This becomes ever clearer when one is in Northern Ireland. All around there are initiatives that aim to promote 'community' and focus on 'bridging the divide'. Even the bigger chain of supermarkets in Northern Ireland promotes 'community' in their slogan, whether or not this is specifically aimed at different (religious) societal groups is not clear but the wording used does reinforce the countries past (see image 5). The Troubles might be in the past, as argued by some, and all the events leading up to the Troubles are all history but the reality is that Northern Ireland's society bears its historical, cultural and political heritage on its back every day, at every turn and in every social interaction. Therefore understanding the past is mandatory in understanding the present and to grasp the human aspect to the Northern Irish borderscape.

Image 4: Emphasis on community at the local supermarket (source: Marnix Mohrmann)

4.2   Building the borderscape

Today's society in Northern Ireland bears a significant amount of markers from the past. When walking around the city there are numerous places with great historical and cultural value, community initiatives, government funded initiatives, slogans, murals, posters, graffiti, language centres, various symbols, etc. that illustrate this rich past and the vibrant present. It also shows the particular importance of the region's heritage in contemporary society. In day-to-day practices these 'silent' markers and indicators come alive and are omnipresent, simple small talk at the groceries store or informal conversations elsewhere already unveil so much. Because of the long history, social intricacies and complexities there is much to explore in understanding people's perception of Northern Ireland and the Ulster borderscape. Through observations, interviews, informal conversations and other various sources individual lived experiences and perceptions of Northern Ireland are gathered. From these sources a few major, or key, themes emerge which provide the structure for exploring their potential role as building blocks in the borderscape. These major elements are by no means extensive and final, within each element many different angles are highlighted by individuals that contribute to their perception of Northern Ireland.

A stroll through Belfast

Taking a walk through the city of Belfast as a tourist is a pleasant pastime. There are many beautiful landmarks, plenty of churches and with a guide you will learn something about its history. Northern Ireland is gaining reputation as a good holiday destination because of this and certainly Belfast is growing and acquiring a skyline worthy of a modern and global city. While the latter is true, albeit for a small portion of the city centre, a critical gaze at those 'tourist sites' tells a whole different story. Moving from street to street there are markers that unveil the friction that used to exist during the Troubles and that influences new generations in today's societal divide. A local resident described Northern Irish people as '*very open and polite, but scratch beneath the surface and there are many unresolved issues and controversies that people are not willing to talk about*' (Personal communication, 2020). This quote captures the general attitude in society pretty accurately. In general there is a positive attitude towards the future, compared to two or three decades ago, but actually taking action to create a better future, scratches beneath the surface and then frictions start to emerge. In this section I want to take you on a tourist-like walk along Ormeau Road, crossing Ormeau Bridge, taking a left to Donegall Pass and finally end up in the South of the city centre at Belfast City Hall. The aim is to 'look with intention' (Van Melik & Ernste, 2019) and explore the externalities that influences the local community, including the youth, and the sway the past holds in a more or less subtle way. What is seen will be explained or illustrated by short quotes of local residents. In theoretical terms a preliminary sketch is made of the life-world and symbolized lived experiences.

Ormeau Road, like many other roads in Belfast, runs along alternating Unionist and Nationalist communities. The reason for picking this road over others is that Ormeau Road is perhaps one of the most notorious roads and illustrates the past, present and future rather well. It also serves as an example of the intricate social fabric, which is not as easily discerned from individual stories later on. When walking towards upper Ormeau Road from the West, you venture through a residential area just like any other. There are some apartment buildings, picket fences a small playground and a great view on the river Lagan. The tourist might find this a boring site to visit, apart from the river, because there is not much to see. The opposite is true, one only has to look up and around to see the how the

Ulster borderscape is being contested by action and counter-action. The first thing that I spotted when crossing the river was a British flag waving on top of one of the apartment buildings (image 5). It stands fierce and proud above everything else, a symbol of community for some and antagonizing to others. The presence of this specific flag clearly indicates that I am walking in a Unionist, probably Protestant, neighbourhood. Further inwards there is another marker that confirms the strong feeling of British identity within this community, an Orange Order lodge (image 6 and 7). Again here, there is a British flag along with a flag of Ulster. Although it is not particularly a large or high building, it is hard to miss. The flags draw attention from every visible side. If I notice it, the local community will definitely see it every day when they step out of their houses. This is what Alfred Schutz means with externalities, historical heritage and technique of life, all visible by just looking up and around in a single neighbourhood. Identity is an important marker here: the British flag represents the Unionists' desire to remain a part of the UK, the Ulster flag represents the Union of Ulster which is not part of Ireland and opposes that Republic and lastly the Ballynafeigh Apprentice Boys plaque holds historical heritage where William of Orange was a Protestant and delivered a victory over the Catholics. These three markers hold the values of Unionism and the local community is confronted with this sense of identity every day, including the new generation that has yet to experience life for itself. Karen Logan stated that 'the societal divide is not as *in your face* as it used to be, but that it is not gone either and that sectarianism can resurface at any given moment' (personal communication, 2020). In a sense the flags contradict this remark in that they are very clearly visible and present, purveying the message of Unionism in everyday life. However, they do confirm sectarianism is not gone and that it is present beneath the surface.

Image 5: An English flag on top of a building (source: Marnix Mohrmann)

Image 7: Ballynafeigh Apprentice boys plaque (source: Marnix Mohrmann)

Image 6: An Orange Lodge facade with flags (source: Marnix Mohrmann)

Passing through this neighbourhood you arrive at Ormeau Road. It is quite a long street, stretching from the South of Belfast all the way into the city centre and eventually goes over into another street leading to East Belfast. When moving even more down South along the road there are several spots that have frequently been the site of clashes and riots between police, Unionists and Protestants during the marching season and specifically the 12th of July marches. It being a regular street there is little to take a picture of, there are just cars and pedestrians, but scratch beneath the surface and there is a major symbolic value to this location and road. As a reporter as far back as 1997 stated 'On an ordinary day it's just another road used by thousands of motorists to go in and out of Belfast. But on the Twelfth the Ormeau Road because a sanity no-go zone' (Harkin, 1997). It is not as bad as it once was, but it still remains a no-go zone due to riots. In a nutshell the conflict revolves around the Protestants marching their historical route that crosses the Catholic community, the latter object this because Protestants are not welcome and the march is seen as provocative. The results are riots, injuries and a polarized community. Here there are no real physical markers of historical heritage but the events that occurred have been etched into the collective memory of society, each side and each person experiencing it differently with and from a different perspective. Due to the sensitivity of the topic the Parades Commission, charged with the planning and fair judgement of all marches and parades, was not allowed to share any information in regard to the current situation (Parades Commission, personal communication, 2020). Perhaps a noteworthy thing about this location is precisely its lack of physical markers, this will become clearer in the section after Ormeau Bridge.

Moving back up towards the city centre there is particularly interesting observation to be made. Not far from Ormeau Bridge there is another Orange Hall, the main Ballynafeigh Orange Hall, the 'seat of Orangism in the area' (personal communication, 2020), and across from it is a heavily fortified Orange Order building (image 8 and 9). It is quite a strange occurrence to see such a fortified building in the street, but it is required in order to prevent attacks to the building from 'the other side' of the community. It shows that there is a looming, not quite dormant, danger lying just beneath the surface of society. If there were truly peace and a reconciled society, there would be no need for these security matters. This shows yet again that the Ulster borderscape is a sphere of active claim and counter-claim from different angles in society.

Image 8: Ballynafeigh Orange Hall

Image 9: Fortified Orange Order building

The most peculiar thing about this location is that while the Orange Order Hall represents the past, through Protestantism and William of Orange, and is part of the present, the modern and trendy coffee shops surrounding these buildings seemingly oppose everything the hall stands for. They are symbols of consumerism and light entertainment, aimed at leisure time and void of any substantial societal meaning. These hip and modern spots convey an image of gentrification and globalisation. The tourist would, thus, see an up-and-coming neighbourhood filled with the amenities they look for, while the local residents have a completely different experience of the same place. A newspaper even stated that early adopters should be quick to act before the Ormeau Road is a 'hip and thriving gentrified neighbourhood' (The Guardian, 2019). This is in contract to how the local residents experience the area, based on what has happened; the riots, conflict, and sectarian violence, as said earlier. In a sense the Ormeau area is living in the past, present and future all at the same time. The stroll through the city has mainly focussed on the legacy of the Troubles and the historical heritage accompanying it, but contemporary developments such as the appearance of these cupcake stores play and equally important role in shaping the Ulster borderscape. The different, asymmetric temporal cycles are very clear and it shows that it is important to take into account the different perspectives on the same place and the interpretation of that place.

Before heading over the Ormeau bridge there was one thing that caught my eye. A simple side street is covered in British flags, there was no special occasion that day like a holiday. These residents, much like the residents of the earlier mentioned apartment block, want to show that they are Unionists (image 10). These are seemingly small things, but when critically reviewing those shows more than superficial cheer, it shows the deeply rooted feeling of nationality and identity. Being able to discern this from a simple stroll, without speaking to local residents, makes it abundantly obvious that a collective sense of Northern Irish identity is nowhere to be found. It would suggest that there is an 'us' and 'them' thinking quite in line with older border thinking and borders as lines of division.

Image 10: A side street decorated with
British flags (source: Marnix Mohrmann)

Moving along the cupcake stores, coffee shops and the flag filled side street I cross the Ormeau Bridge. The bridge crosses the river Lagan and is quite a beautiful sight in the city, this area is called Lower-Ormeau and is closest to the city centre. The endless rows of houses and shops continue, just as in Upper-Ormeau. When crossing the bridge I noticed a small plaque on the corner house and it commemorates someone named Michael McCartan (image 11). The plaque reads:

'Michael was a typical teenager… aged 16, [he] was playing cards with his mates… getting bored he painted a slogan on an adjacent wall. He was seen by two plainclothes RUC men. Michael was shot by one of the RUC men and died shortly after. Nobody was ever convicted of Michael's murder.' (Plaque, 2019)

Absolutely shocking in its own right, the plaque tells us we are probably no longer in Unionist territory, because the RUC were mainly Protestant and accused of partaking in sectarian violence. There is a stark contrast between the light hearted last couple hundred of metres and this. Even more shocking is that the plaque has been placed and revealed within the last year, it serves to show that the losses of the Troubles are still being mourned to date. The fact that no one has been convicted of this murder contributes to understanding the feeling of injustice and the powerlessness of this local community. Based on the plaque alone there is not enough reason to assume I am no longer in a Unionist area, but by shifting the gaze upwards slightly I can confirm my assumption. Just above the commemoration there is a street name sign. The confirmation lies not in the name of the street, but in that the street name is written in English as well as in Irish (image 12). The English name reads 'Dromara Street' and the Irish name reads 'Sráid Dhroim mBearach'. Language is an important aspect to culture and identity, especially on the isle of Ireland. Through language the Catholics expressed their Irish identity, although the relationship between language and religion is fading it still clearly indicates the political and cultural position of a community (F. Nic Thom, personal communication, 2020). The act of crossing a bridge results in arriving in a different world of perception of the Ulster borderscape. A remark made by Karen Logan suddenly makes sense, 'There is a lingering sense of injustice in regard to actions and accountability during and after the Troubles' (personal communication, 2020).

Image 11: Plaque of remembrance (source: Marnix Mohrmann)

Image 12: Bilingual street sign (source: Marnix Mohrmann)

Having barely set foot in the 'other' area a whole different story already starts to unfold. A bit more unique to Lower-Ormeau, as compared to the rest of the city of Belfast, is the amount of murals. These can be found throughout the city as well as other cities in Northern Ireland and the rural areas, but here there is a large concentration. For this reason the area is frequented by tourists in awe about the artistry of these images. Once again, the tourist gaze has to be replaced by a critical gaze to truly understand what the murals depict and how they could influence the local community on a day-to-day basis. Continuing walking from the remembrance plaque, a mere 10 metres away, there is a relatively small mural drenched in social and political meaning. The mural captures the clashes between Unionists and Nationalists, as described from a Nationalist point of view, called the Drumcree conflict (image 13). The previously described clashes between police, Unionists and Nationalists on the Ormeau road during the marching season have to do with the Drumcree conflict. The peculiar observation here is that in contrast to the Unionist area where there are no murals or other physical markers of the conflict, in the Nationalist area there is. Reasons for this left aside, this is an interesting observation.

Image 13: Lower Ormeau Road mural (source: Marnix Mohrmann)

The mural depicts a dark shadow man with an orange band around his neck wearing a club that says 'Drumcree' and another man holding a paper that says 'Lower-Ormeau'. The shadow figure symbolizes the Orange Order and their wish to march their route at any cost, hence the club. The insinuation here is that the Orange Order is not open for discussion and that force is the only way, hence the line 'stand off!'. The man holding the paper represents the Nationalists living in the area asking for a diplomatic, non-violent, solution to the conflict, a 'trade off!'. The local residents see the marches as glorifying the victory of William of Orange over the Catholics and request the march not to go through a Catholic area. As said, the conflict is not nearly as severe as it was three decades ago, but there still are clashes. The mural and the yearly clashes show that society is still divided based on historical heritage and technique of life varying per side.

The practice of critically looking at the city, not engaged with the community, is becoming a little bit repetitive at this point. For example when you take a left on Ormeau Road towards Donegall Pass you are met with a huge Union Jack flag, indicating that you are once again in Unionist territory.

Move northbound towards the city centre and Belfast City Hall and you will find yourself in another community, with different events having happened on specific locations, etcetera. The rapidly alternating communities with their long history of friction really show how society is intricately bound up with each other, history, culture and language. This stroll has given an impression of mostly the historical heritage passed down the centuries on society. The murals mark important events of the past and the present and unveil their relevance when viewed in the larger context of the 'classic' social divide of Northern Ireland. This by no means dictates that local residents experience the area and Northern Ireland in these terms of division, to know what really matters in regard to the Ulster borderscape requires one to take part in the society. The main takeaway for this chapter is acknowledging and understanding the context in which society and social interaction takes place in the present day, it is a forming factor in the life-world of society. Depending on which area you are in, there could be a different outlook on Northern Ireland because of a different recollection of history, upbringing and lived experiences. Again, 'there is a shared history, but no shared memory' holds true and shows the importance of perspective and the highly individual character of the borderscape.

Religion and Maps of Northern Ireland

Identifying trends from a less localized, city level, perspective might prove useful in understanding the national dynamics that make up the Ulster borderscape. In chapter 2 several approaches to understanding contemporary borders have been named, among them is cartography. This small section looks at a possible important trend in Northern Ireland based on data and maps made by a local journalist, Steven McCaffery in a mapping project exploring the geographical split between Catholics and Protestants. To emphasize once more, there is no and has not been a religious conflict in Northern Ireland, but religion can play an important role in the feeling of belonging, nationality and identity (Scott et al, 2017). Therefore taking a look at this project, its maps and what I have seen during the *stroll through Belfast* combined with people's experiences could prove useful in developing a deeper understanding of the building blocks of the Ulster borderscape.
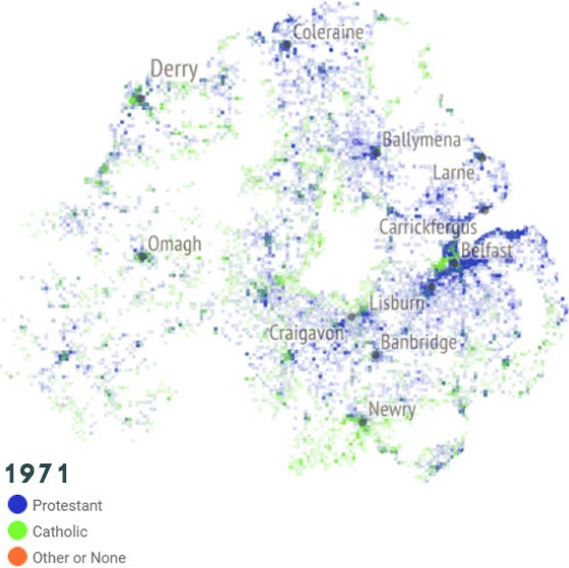

Image 14: Map of Northern Ireland's religious geography 1971 (Steven McCaffery, 2017)
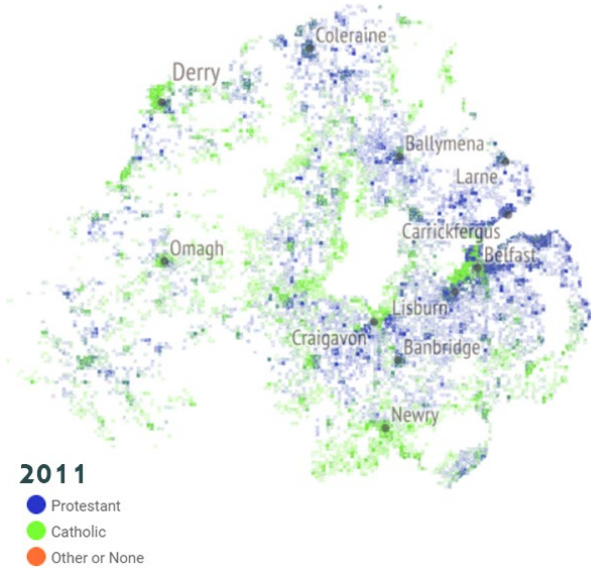

Image 15: Map of Northern Ireland's religious geography 2011 (Steven McCaffery, 2017)

As far as maps go this representation of Northern Ireland is fairly unbiased and does not subtly insinuate a deeper message. The map does not insinuate any form of threat by one religion or another or use colours to portray a specific stance, as opposed to maps identified by Van Houtum and Lacy that do contain such subtle stances (Houtum & Lacy, 2019). For this reason the representation can be taken as relatively neutral. A side note has to be made though, this is not an academic source but it is based on official data so this does accurately display the trend. Another note is that the society does not exist 100 percent of Catholics and Protestants, there are multiple minority groups present in Northern Ireland. The orange category shows other or no religions, but as seen these are so minor that they cannot even be seen in the total view of Northern Ireland.

The first and most obvious thing that the difference between the maps shows is the increase in percentage of Catholics and subsequently the decrease in percentage of Protestants. The change might appear minor, trivial even, but Northern Ireland is heading towards an unprecedented new balance between religious groups. The Protestants have always attempted to remain the majority, as explained, but now their majority is decreasing to the point where they might even become the minority. This trend is illustrated between these maps. There are two possible trends going on, either there has been a large scale conversion of Protestants to Catholicism or there has been a greater influx of Catholics as compared to Protestants. Nonetheless, the trend seems that by the next census in 2021 the Catholics are going to be a majority (McCaffery, 2017). Noticing this fact and trend are crucial in gaining perspective on Northern Ireland from a national level. The social justice movements of the '60s were based on the argued unequal treatment of Catholics and the way Protestants made sure to keep in power. Through clever systems and in establishing partition the Protestants have been the majority, in social space as well as in politics. The fact that the Protestants are now likely to lose their majority in society is a huge indicator that things are changing. Traditional Catholic and Protestant areas have continued to grow due to an increase in population and the places closest to the border are mainly Catholic, these are no surprise. Upon further scrutiny it is easily visible that in the cities of Derry/Londonderry and Belfast a significant 'block' of Catholics has emerged or grown. For the city of Belfast this means that in the city it is now, superficially, more easily to indicate Catholic and Protestant sides. In an informal chat with a resident of Belfast it was pointed out that 'The west [of Belfast] is definitely more Catholic, the east more Protestant and north and south are more mixed, including other religions' (personal communication, 2020) and as pointed out by Cathal McCall 'in general the East of Belfast is Catholic and the West is Protestant' (Cathal McCall, personal communication, 2020). This seems in contrast to the sharp distinction between areas as identified during the stroll through Belfast, but the map is from a general point of view and nuances are to be applied and the same goes for this individual's argument.

Another thing that the maps show, in both times, is the lack of a clear division between Catholic areas and Protestants on a national level. There are spots of green and blue dotted throughout the entire country. This synergizes more with the previous chapter that showed alternating communities. It seems that throughout the country the alternating pattern of communities continues. Not only in Belfast and on national level is this patchwork visible. People from many different towns have stated things like '… on the other side of town, the Protestant part…' (personal communication, 2020), 'I would say our house was very similar to a Loyalist house on the other side of town, except for the religion' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020) and 'there is an East-West divide in most cities, I grew up in one of those towns' (Cathal McCall, personal communication, 2020). They both identify

'another' part of town, indicating that most towns had a Catholic and a Protestant side. These maps reinforce the geographical two sides on a national level.

It would seem that religion is an important part in the perception of the Ulster borderscape, a theoretical building block being part of the life-world. McCaffery's maps show a trend, which are described as 'Two tribes' in a 'divided Northern Ireland' (Irish Times, 2017). His starting point for Northern Irish society is obviously religion, but this view point is heavily criticized. In society as well as academics the importance of religion in contemporary society is being strongly questioned. It seems that only the media still place a focus on religion nowadays, forming a catalyst for sectarian categorization. The general denominator in conversations about religion in Northern Ireland has been that religion is fading in importance in an ever secularizing society. Comments like '… there is the religious quest as well. But I see that becoming less important. It is definitely far less [important] then when I was a kid' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020) and 'Me? I could not care less about someone's religion, though I am a protestant born and raised, the younger generation is like this in general' (anonymous, personal communication, 2020). The former remark was made by someone that grew up during the Troubles, around the '80s, the latter remark was made by a teenager born after 2000. These are mere two excerpts from many conversations and they illustrate the fading importance of religion from different generations. Pól Deeds is CEO of the Irish language and community centre AnDroichead close to the city centre of Belfast and plays a big role in the Irish speaking community as well as general society because of promoting the Irish language. Mr. Deeds goes even further than to state that religion is fading in importance, he reduces it to a mere descriptive nuisance and a remnant of Northern Ireland's past.

'My daughter, my daughter is gay and her girlfriend is a Protestant. But it just is not a thing, it is just not a thing. When I was growing up it was such a definite concept in my mind of those people over there. … The concept of a Protestant was a thing [and] that is just nothing, it just does not register with me anymore' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020)

From a more general standpoint Karen Logan sees the importance of religion fading because the focus on difference between Catholics and Protestants is becoming less important. Especially for the newer and younger generation the difference between Catholic and Protestant is less important in a globalizing world. She argues 'why care about differences between Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants while there are nationalities from all over Europe and the world in your class. It makes our differences seems less important' (Karen Logan, personal communication, 2020). She thus bases her argument on processes of globalisation, modernisation and internationalisation of Northern Ireland, in specific the city of Belfast. There could very well be a geographical aspect to perception, in regard to the extent of globalisation varying between urban and rural regions. A comment made that reinforces a difference between rural and urban areas is for example 'There are two pubs in my village, a catholic bar and a protestant bar (anonymous, personal communication, 2020), indicating that religion plays a role in societal division.

In a critical reflection on the many conversations I had in regard to religion and Northern Ireland, I would argue that the primacy of religion is indeed fading. Religion thus does not play a role as building block in the Ulster borderscape. This might seem controversial but I think people nowadays confuse religion with political preference. Catholics are placed in the CNR camp, the Catholic, Nationalist and Republican side, Protestants are placed in the PUL camp, the Protestant, Unionist and

Loyalist side. When referring to either one of three, per side, there is still a quick classification made based on religion while actually political preference is being targeted. Pól Deeds said 'There may be political conflict, but is not going to be 'he is a Prod [Protestant], he is a Catholic'. And that is the way it was, it was so religiously based in the 1980's, I do not think we will go back there.' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020). There definitely is societal friction, but it is no longer based on religion. Especially in the lived experience and life-world of the new generation religion no longer holds absolute primacy in social interaction. Even when religion seems to play an important role, like in the following story:

'There is friend of mine that is strongly religious and abides the older generation's religious division. He gets mad, like mad in a grim way, when I say Derry. He very fiercely states it is Londonderry. Because I do not care so much I don't argue with him anymore, though I do avoid mentioning it at all, so there is some tension' (anonymous, personal communication, 2020).

The individual talking about the other explicitly mentions religion, yet I think that the true underlying grievance is political preference. The difference between naming the city Derry or Londonderry means that you are either 'British' or 'Irish' in some people's opinion. There is no religious dimension to this, there has been but is no more. I would even go as far as to state that political preference has replaced religion in the societal divide, a stance that not everybody agrees with. The critique voiced against secularisation of society is that it is just a trend and that through events religion can regain importance rather easily. A significant event could prove to be Brexit, reinforcing a polarisation of society based on religion. Yet for this critique again, I believe that what would truly happen is re-politicising and re-territorialising of imaginations and minds instead of reintroducing the religious aspect to the societal divide. Cathal McCall joins this stance and says that 'Brexit threatens Nationalist and Unionist identity, not so much religious orientation' (Cathal McCall, personal communication, 2020). It remains to be noted that religion is extremely important and omnipresent in regard to sense of community, belonging and day-to-day life. 'Even individuals that claim not to be religious at all are still affected by religion in Northern Ireland, religion has a residual influence on society and creates food for discussion' (Gladys Ganiel, personal communication, 2020). Religion is just becoming a less and less determining factor in the social division. This statement definitely is not extensive and has to be nuanced in a number of ways, but in regard to the border it means that perceptions of what Northern Ireland is are not determined by religion. Thus in understanding how the borderscape is constructed, both social and political, religion is not a contributing factor.

An Ghaeilge
The sense of community and belonging are not solely the domain of religion, language plays a major role as well. Language in Northern Ireland is a very peculiar aspect of life that has been subject to an almost cyclical paradigm shift, its role changing every fifty years or so, throughout the past few centuries. Specifically the Irish language has been responsible for contributing to the sphere of contestation in Northern Ireland's history and contemporary social and political life. In interviews and brief interactions people almost always mention language as important in Northern Ireland. This paragraph maps out different perspectives on the Irish language and its role as a building block of the Ulster borderscape

Traditionally there have been three languages in the Northern part of Ireland: English, Irish and Ulster-Scots. The former two are official languages and the latter one is not an official language and

is experienced as a dialect as such, someone described their experience with the dialect as ' It is just a dialect of Northern Irish [and] it is made up of Scot-Gaelic, Irish and English words. It is lovely to hear because it is old words, words to describe things in ways that Northern Irish people recognize' (Kellie Armstrong, personal communication, 2020). Nonetheless Ulster-Scots is, as the name says, a combination of English, as spoken in Ulster, and Scottish. The Scot-Gaelic the respondent is talking about refers to the Celtic strand of Scots, which differs from the Anglo strand. Throughout history British oriented people in the North of Ireland have associated themselves with the Ulster-Scots language to reinforce their feeling of belonging to the British Empire. By doing so they instilled language with a sense of nationality, making it a part of their identity. For the Ulster-Scots dialect and British oriented people the connection has never been particularly strong, perhaps because it is not an official language, but it mainly provided a 'counter' to the Irish language. On its own the Ulster-Scots dialect is not as interesting in understanding the Ulster borderscape because it is not contested or creates any form of societal friction. To state it generally, the dialect just 'exists' and whoever wishes to speak it does so.

These last remarks cannot be made about the Irish language, far from it. Irish is an official language, mainly spoken in the (now) Republic of Ireland. It contains within it a peculiar history, very closely related to Irish identity, in regard to Northern Ireland. Before partition the Irish language was spoken in some places on the island of Ireland, but it was on a steady decline due to processes like the Industrial Revolution. The places where Irish was kept alive was mostly the country side, 'probably due to the large distances to the cities, and served more as a necessity than anything else' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020). At this point in time the Irish language was neither political nor religious, in fact the Protestant Presbyterian Church even helped to keep the language alive and supported it throughout its communities (Kellie Armstrong, personal communication, 2020). Then around the decades of partition, roughly 1900 – 1925, a movement sprung up that started to shun the Irish language, depicting it as an expression of pro-Irish sentiment. It was Unionists that began associating the Irish language with Irish identity and thus introducing it into the political sphere. The result of this introduction was that Protestant Unionists wanted to oppress the language and remove it from the public sphere all together. With partition this is exactly what happened, 'The Irish language was shunned and taken out of the education system' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020). At the same time there was an Irish language revival taking place in the rest of Ireland with partition and the establishing of the Free State of Ireland. In the new Free State the Irish language became institutionalized, thus further politicized, and a mandatory part within the education system. In the North Irish was institutionally banned while at the same time in the South it was institutionally forced, further increasing the divide between Irish and British parts of society in Northern Ireland.

The introduction of Irish in the political sphere has been detrimental to society in the course of events for Northern Ireland. The Unionist government kept oppressing the language while private Catholic schools attempted to maintain the language. To the Unionists any form of Irish was seen as a Catholic attempt at overthrowing the 'Britishness' of Northern Ireland, as Pól Deeds poetically recalls 'every word of Irish spoken is a bullet in the struggle against the British Empire, which was one thing that Republicans said at one point' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020). Not only was the Irish language linked to politics but religion as well, further deepening the divide between Unionists and Catholics. Around the 1950's and 1960's the language was still quite politicized but it wavered in political spheres and a modest surge in interest in the language sprung up, with members from both sides attempting to learn the language. The language was still shunned institutionally so

the only places to learn Irish were Catholic schools and with Catholic brothers and sisters. Although this did not last long, with the Troubles starting end 1960's, the impetus it gave sprung up Irish language initiatives and communities that still exist today (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020). During the Troubles language was strongly saddled back in politics again through events like the H-block hunger strike in which Irish became a symbol of resistance towards Protestant, Unionist oppression. Kellie Armstrong adds that '[Irish language] is nothing to be feared, it just happens to be that in more recent years, the last thirty, forty years, that Unionists have turned their back on that language and politicized it as being Republican' (Kellie Armstrong, personal communication, 2020).

The view on Irish language nowadays is greatly influenced by events in the past, just like religion it finds its roots in history. In a sense the stroll through Belfast captured the intricacies of society which included religion, politics, language, identity and the greatly varying perceptions of what Northern Ireland is. The fact that almost all interviewees explicitly mentioned the history of the language in order to explain their current stance on the matter is peculiar. It really drives home the argument that contemporary perceptions of Northern Ireland are shaped by (individual) experiences in the past. Its history, and arguable cyclical movement of the paradigm, unveils the unique position the Irish language finds itself in nowadays. While now, after the Good Friday Agreement, the politicization of language has been wavering and Northern Ireland finds itself in a globalizing world and economy, the views on what Northern Ireland is becomes a more pressing matter. Irish language in this regard can be seen as a pillar in the Ulster borderscape, a true building block, because language expresses culture, history, identity and subconsciously paints an image of Northern Ireland. Based on the way one regards Irish language it can reveal a lot about their perception of society and the borderscape in general. The following quotes are densely packed with information that can reveal such perceptions and representations of the Ulster borderscape:

'… This is the whole interesting thing and links back to identity. The Irish language is a big part of Irish identity, whether if you have any interest in speaking the language or not, it has always been. Partly because of the [early 20th century language] revival … which led to the Irish revolution and independence for a part of the country and it has always been seen as a key part of Irish identity, to at least be proud of the Irish language' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020)

'… This is the problem with it all. The Irish language is a beautiful language and it has been politicized to be something that it never was' (Kellie Armstrong, personal communication, 2020)

'*Language is a way of expressing identity, that is Catholic and Nationalist identity*' (Karen Logan, personal communication, 2020)

The question to pose here is how does the Irish language actually represent perceptions of the Ulster borderscape? The core of the answer can be found in the historical position that the language held, that of Irish identity, as said earlier. Noteworthy is the point made by Pól Deeds in the first quote, 'Irish language is a big part of Irish identity, whether if you have any interest in speaking the language or not'. His point stretches further than just Irish identity. In the Irish language revival in the beginning of the 20th century Protestant Unionists took up the language as well, because it is part of their shared history with the culture of Ireland. In a more direct wording, the Irish language is as much part of Nationalist identity as it is of Unionist identity. Thus the act of learning and speaking the language means acknowledging the historical roots of the isle of Ireland, there is no inherent political aspect. The politicization of the language into something that it never was is responsible for creating

a representation of a divided Northern Ireland, turning it into 'bullets' towards to cause of the other. This representation has been taken to heart, by both Nationalists and Unionists, and over the decades thus became a means of expressing and identifying 'us' and 'them'. With the cyclical paradigm shift the language is gradually becoming de-politicized in the minds of people, removing the sharp edges in the controversy in the Irish language.

Then how does language nowadays portray the Ulster borderscape? This is the, not unprecedented, but certainly unique position of the language. In a sense there is a new language revival taking place, most likely as a result of the de-politicization and overall changing attitude towards the language. Post-Good Friday Agreement the language has been picked up by Unionists and no longer necessarily perceived as a means of expressing Irish identity. They start seeing the language as part of their own history, before it was politicized, and are curious as to what the language is about. During my attendance at an Irish class for beginners at the AnDroichead community centre people indicated to be learning the language because 'Irish is a part of my history and it is a dying language, I think it is a shame to let the language go extinct', his friend nodded in agreement in the back and added 'I just find it interesting to learn about it' (anonymous, personal communication, 2020). Another individual stated to be English and not having lived a long time in Northern Ireland and said 'while I am here I want to see what the fuzz is about and to set myself an extra challenge' (anonymous, personal communication, 2020), Linda Ervine from Turas said 'most people are just becoming curious, they want to see what the fuss is about' (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020). This by no means represents the general attitude but shows their intrinsic motivation for learning the language. The fact that one of them stated that the language is part of his history strengthens the remark made by Pól Deeds, claiming to have a good vantage point due to the geographical location of AnDroichead on the edge of communities, that there has been shift happening in society towards a broader acceptance of the language as part of a shared history. But, he notes, that he is afraid that in light of international politics and the Brexit there is a chance of slipping back into a politicized attitude.

The positive picture portrayed above is very fragile. The language is far from generally accepted. Linda Ervine runs an Irish language school and community, Turas, in the Protestant heartland of Belfast, at the East Belfast Mission. That the language is a hot topic in society and politics, hardening people's minds, is made explicitly clear by Linda's experience, 'A small number of people were really just out and out hostile, really hostile' (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020). Being a Protestant and Unionist herself she defies any categorisation by learning the Irish language. But before coming into contact with the language she very much fit the general discourse of a 'Unionist' and wanting to do nothing with the language. When talking about her initial experiences with the language, as seen from her Protestant background, she said:

'It was a shock, it was just a shock. It is hard to, to describe how sort of everything you believed was just wrong. You know I had the perception of the Irish language, I really had no knowledge of it, if you would mention it to me my perception would be it is a Catholic thing, it is a Southern thing. I did not see any connection to me, even when I started to learn it there was a wee bit inside me that wondered if I was doing something wrong here … am I being disloyal to my own side or whatever'
(Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020)

[Adding that] *'The more that I discovered and, again it just … I just felt so sad because I started to realize it is something that has been denied to me because of the tradition'* (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020)

There is much to discern here about her perception of Northern Ireland solely based on language. Describing Irish as 'a Catholic thing' she directly lays bare a division based on language. Irish is Catholic, it is 'theirs', and Protestants do not have any connection or claim to it. That is contradictory to the fact that the Presbyterian Church has kept the language alive over the centuries, even stating that Irish is 'our sweet and memorable mother tongue'. Thus the Irish language has been used by, undeniably, both sides of the community to demarcate an 'us' and 'them'. Realizing this, Linda then says that she 'felt so sad' because this part of her history was denied to her because of the weaponization of the language. Both historical heritage and technique of life, the Protestant tradition, have had a strong influence on her perception of Northern Ireland and her own identity within Northern Ireland. By breaking free from the usual classification she changed her perception of the language and the shared history between the people in Northern Ireland, describing it as:

'I think the language for me, [the Irish language] really does present a shared history and culture. We have a shared history and heritage and that we have linguistic history …, physically it brings people together … it does not matter what their religion of politics is, nobody has to damp down who they are, they are who they are' (Linda Ervine, Personal Communication, 2020).

Language is just another factor in the perception of what Northern Ireland is, according to who you ask. Maybe because it is so closely associated with religion people put a great emphasis on it when describing Northern Irish identity and the borderscape. The politicisation of the language has created this situation in which there is another basis for identification and division, yet it is 'just' a language. This is an argument put forth by many Irish speakers, stating that it is not harming anyone, that it is no IRA plot, that it is nothing to be afraid of, 'it is just a language'. A story, retold by Linda makes this abundantly clear and holds quite a symbolic meaning.

'She decided that if she ever had children, she would love them to go to this school. Hold on a few years and she had her first wee boy and she decided she would send the wee boy to the nursery school there. Her mother and father are horrified and said 'we will not be picking him up for you, oooh no'. Anyways, she persevered. Her mum relented and does pick the child up, her daddy does not no. Her father will not. What is interesting, now the wee boy is in the school and of course her family loves the children even though they are bilingual. And he plays hide and seek with them and he will go [Irish language], so he has to play with them in Irish. What was even funnier, she said she was in a shopping centre with her father one day and the wee boy was playing and she was talking to one his friends and they were sort of standing half way in a shop and the child was running in and out of the mall and she was worried about him running off. So she said, she finds if she speaks to him in Irish he react quicker because he associates it with school, so she shouted something at him in Irish, something like 'come in' or whatever, and the father's friend was in shock and said 'two languages I see?', was completely in shock.' (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020)

The older generation initially is appalled by the idea of their grandson being bilingual, diluting their British roots and identity, but it is still their grandson. A simple day-to-day activity of going to the mall with the family and the role language played in this situation is striking. As Linda beautifully concluded from this story 'that is the human side of it'. Yes religion, history and language play an

important role in the feeling of identity and the sense of belonging but it is the ordinary interactions and experiences that shape one's perception of Northern Ireland, the borderscape. Now it becomes clear why language is mentioned so often in relation to the border of Northern Ireland. It used to be something that demarcated societal groups, but now it is starting to become less of a pillar in Northern Ireland, fostering the basis for mixing communities and changing the representation, perception and reproduction of social and political space.

Identity, politics and the border

Whether it is taking a stroll through the city of Belfast, looking at numbers and maps of Northern Ireland or talking to ordinary citizens, it all portrays an image of different perspectives and reveals many identities. This is not strange, when looking at differences at any level or asking about individual experiences the result will be individual perceptions and their sense of community, belonging and identity. Despite this obvious fact these perceptions are the key to understanding a border as socially constructed. The question then is; which identity? There are many forms of identity and identifying oneself. The religion paragraph illustrated one form of self identification and touched upon a major aspect, that of community and sense of belonging. In regard to religion there are two clear communities distinguishable in Northern Ireland, Protestants and Catholics. Each group respectively has their own ways of doing, their technique of life, and (physical) markers that demarcate the in and out group. A form of these physical markers is the murals scattered throughout the city, holding historical value and passing on its heritage through generation. Both have been elaborately explored as building blocks of the Northern Irish borderscape. Another way of expressing identity is through language, which itself is carried through the centuries. It can also become contested when different senses of identity clash, like the identity of Protestants and Catholics. The inherent values of language became abundantly clear in the story about the bilingual kid at the shopping mall, creating shock in one person and compliance in another.

A differentiation has to be made between individual identity and communal identity. For example individual senses of identity may vary greatly among a communal identity like Protestants. This is where something remarkable can be observed, a difference in perception and discourse on different spatial and/or societal levels. Linda Ervine from Irish language centre Turas says 'when we started they would have all been very local. Now it is quite cross-community and the majority of learners would come from Unionists backgrounds and then smaller numbers from a nationalist background and some who designate as other' (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020). Her language centre is placed among the traditional heartland of the Unionist community, a specific geographical place where the sense of Unionist community is arguably strongest. The fact that Unionists are learning Irish, let alone that they are the majority in this centre, contradicts the 'traditional' Nationalist identity instilled within the language and challenges Unionist identity. Certain Individuals from the Unionist community have an intrinsic motivation to learn the Irish language, for various reasons as mentioned in the previous paragraph, and are confronted with their own sense of Unionist identity and the 'Irish' Nationalist identity. Responses within the same community are not always welcoming, rather some take a very aggressive stance and want to keep the language out of their personal sense of identity and their community. The ones that oppose the language maintain a certain view point on Unionist identity which is the general perception of Unionist identity. The ones that are curious to learn and learning the language are challenging the status quo. This is illustrated nicely by Linda Ervine:

'Some of them went 'what is this bloody Irish language' and some of them went 'what is this Irish language, I am going to find more about it'. Just about curiosity, what is this all about?' (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020)

'They are very proud of being part of Turas and they are on social media and challenging the nonsense. They are quite happy to have their photographs taken, be on TV and talk on the radio'
(Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020)

Not only in regard to language are there individual acts that challenge the communal discourse, in religion this happens as well. Although for religion there is a slightly different way in which individual identity conflicts with the discourse. Different generations have a different perspective on what religion is, for themselves, the community and the sense of belonging. This could partially explain differences within communities, but also shows the complexities as a result of a plethora of perceptions of reality. This is not exclusive to religion, as Pól Deeds puts it 'especially in terms of changing identities in border regions … you find that generational thing is absolutely crucial. It is the older generation that holds on to the past more and finds it difficult to let go' (Pól Deeds, personal communication, 2020). Combining these differences and understanding how the borderscape is built up and perceived is a challenge. Pól touches upon a central recurring theme that the older generation holds on to their experiences of the past and therefore cling to a different view on Northern Ireland than other generations. This holds true for any generation, but the difference in perception between the generation(s) after the Troubles and others is the greatest. This sheds more light on remarks made by the younger generation such as stated in the religion paragraph and provides context as to why they perceive Northern Ireland differently. A relatively obvious explanation could be that the older generation has experienced the border in a different way than the new generation, namely due to the Troubles. Their experience with the border in the past has forced them to choose a 'side' and therefore a political position in regard to the state border, while the younger generation has a different experience with the border. Their experience is that of a less physically contested border and more an experience of an already divided society based on religion and political orientation that they inherited.

Every individual has their own sense of identity, creating these (inter)communal differences and through specific actions challenging the status quo. The challenging of the status quo and how it is exactly done is a bit vague and could better be put as 'individual actions and bottom-up initiatives that, intended or not, cross communal divides through a myriad of activities of cross-community interaction on an individual level'. Linda Ervine's initiative Turas is a prime example, all she did was 'open the doors and provide a service'. Her intentions are to fire up and contribute to a conversation on the position of language within society and politics, 'I set out to raise awareness of the language, I set out to give people the opportunity, I never set out to be a cross-community project' (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020). By providing this service she contributes to shifting the perception of, as she calls it, 'the man in the street' and with it change perceptions of what Northern Ireland is because language is a big sticking point in society. When you talk language, you automatically speak religion, political preference and identity. By stating one, the other is implied. Therefore it is no surprise that in every interview politics was being brought up by the respondents when asked about their perception of Northern Ireland as a country. Either national politics or politics in general was brought up, indicating that both hold influence in individual perceptions of the country.

As complex as social interaction on any level is, religion, language, sense of identity and belonging, etc. all influence politics, just like politics influences them. The reflexive dialogue between these aspects generally constitutes the sense of identity, based on lived experience, and explains views on the borderscape. The final potential building block, political orientation, is yet to be explored. In both the religious paragraph and language paragraph many references to political orientation have been made and the general division of society has been portrayed as the PUL camp and the CNR camp. This classification combines all three building blocks and certainly nowadays it seems that referring to political orientation is the most telling about individual visions on the borderscape.

Politics is another way through which identity can be expressed, especially in Northern Ireland where there remains an unsettled constitutional question. There is thus a political identity, one that combines multiple other aspects of life. For example as stated by a respondent 'the Unionists are the protestant community' (anonymous, personal communication, 2020). As the previous paragraphs have shown, this imagination of society is a little bit more nuanced but this is the generalized perception within society. When everything is so starkly divided, Protestants that do not speak Irish will by default be Unionists and Catholics that speak Irish are by default Nationalists. This clear cut identification based on politics turns out to be imprecise, from conversations and data it appears this traditional classification is being contested.

During the interviews many different topics were raised and building on that one of the final questions posed was 'do you identify yourself as Northern Irish'? This question proved to be a difficult one for most, the answers started with a deep sigh and a moment of silence for most. In essence they had to answer the question 'what makes Northern Ireland unique from the Republic of Ireland and the UK?'. In their answers they attempted to reconcile 'Irishness' and 'Britishness' within the country of Northern Ireland and in light of its rich but brief history. Linda Ervine's answer to the question shows the struggle to formulate an answer but also clearly states the core of her believes:

'I do not identify as Northern Irish, I identify as British Irish. If I was asked about my identity I would put British [stroke] – Irish. Because I do not see myself as, I suppose a separate way...' (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020).
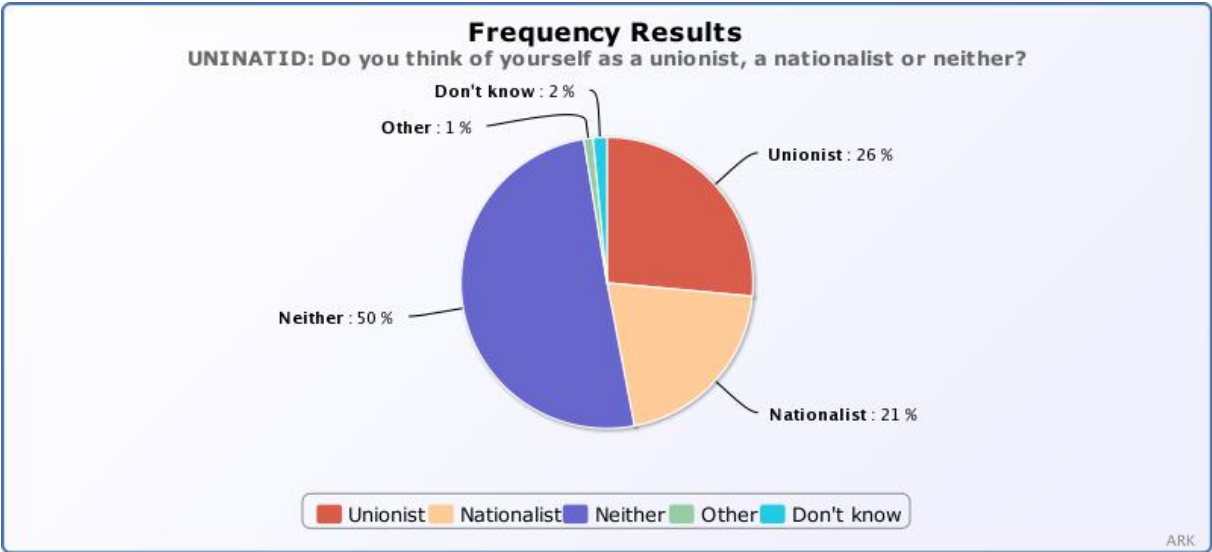
Upon asking for a clarification why she does not necessarily feel Northern Irish her argument wavers a little bit and shows her struggle in its entirety:

'I kind of am, but I do not see Northern Irish as an identity. If someone would ask where are you from, I would say I am from Northern Ireland but I do not ... maybe that is a strange thing to say, if somebody would ask to my identity, well I am Irish, my identity is Irish but I am British' (Linda Ervine, personal communication, 2020)

Linda is an outspoken Protestant and Unionist. She wishes to remain part of the UK and is against a united Ireland. At the same time she states to be Irish while being British, it is ambiguous to say the least. Her stance on the border can be summarized as Northern Ireland being a part of the UK but having historical roots in Ireland, thus creating a mix of both but which is still mainly British. She explains her perception of the border through her upbringing and close connections to England. Of course, it is not strange that when an individual grows up in a quite segregated community that their world view is shaped accordingly, only more recently post Good Friday Agreement are there movements of more structural cross-community interaction like Turas, AnDroichead and to some

extent the education system. It is only then, when communities mix, that there can be a basis for a mixed identity or a Northern Irish identity in which Northern Ireland is seen as an uncontested borderscape. Linda argues that this identity does not exist, but there are others that would very much say that it exists.

Kellie Armstrong, a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Alliance Party, defines the Northern Irish identity as one in which an individual is comfortable to be as Irish as British, but at the same time recognizing that one is distinctly different from both. She feels this way and states 'I am very comfortable to that I am Northern Irish, it does not detract from my Irishness or Britishness but it just helps to explain a bit more of who I am and where I am from' (Kellie Armstrong, personal communication, 2020). She goes on to argue that when people do not explicitly choose, or want to choose, a 'side' that they therefore have a Northern Irish identity. That differs from being comfortable with British and Irish identity and should be more nuanced. There is an annual survey called the Life and Times survey in which people answer questions in the areas of religion, politics, identity and more. In table 2 the results are shown of the question 'do you think of yourself as a Unionist, a Nationalist or neither?'. When taking the classification of the Northern Irish identity literal in her sense, that would mean that 50 percent of the population have a Northern Irish identity and inherently have a specific view on the Ulster borderscape. From the individual stories it became abundantly clear that the borderscape is still very much contested on many different spatial and social levels and within politics.

Frequency Results
UNINATID: Do you think of yourself as a unionist, a nationalist or neither?

Don't know : 2 %
Other : 1 %
Unionist : 26 %
Neither : 50 %
Nationalist : 21 %

Unionist   Nationalist   Neither   Other   Don't know

ARK

Table 2: Self identification results pie chart (NILT, 2018)

The data thus requires more clarification. The question is deceivingly simple, just tick a box and that is it. Dave Thompson made a very relevant remark; 'there is no singular Protestant or Catholic ethos, there is no singular Unionist or Nationalist identity. When asked the question about identity there is a varying degree of feeling a certain way, on a scale of 0 to 10' (Dave Thompson, personal communication, 2020). He continues to illustrate this by taking Protestants/Unionists as an example; 'if you identify yourself as a Unionist, you do not necessarily fly an English flag on your house. You might feel certain Britishness but it is just a matter of how strongly you feel'. This provides a nuance to the data. When posed the question about identity there are individuals that feel strongly one or the other and then a major group that does not feel as strongly and therefore are more prone to

answer neither just to avoid forced identification. In practice it could very well be possible that Unionists that attend Irish language classes feel somewhat Unionists, thus feel a connection to the UK, but do not hold it so dearly that they oppose anything that has to do with Catholicism/Nationalism. This is a more nuanced explanation of the 'middle ground', or as Kellie Armstrong says, the Northern Irish identity.

Northern Ireland is not a singular country, it is part of the UK, has close relations with the Republic of Ireland, is located on the European continent and has ties to countries across the world like the United States of America. Surprisingly international trends in politics were mentioned relatively often and served to illustrate shifting movements in political self identification, or in different terms, the movements of societal and political polarisation in the country. The most poignant international political development mentioned is the Brexit, because of which Northern Ireland leaves the European Union and the possibility of a hard border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland came up. Subsequently this means that either Northern Ireland is going to become more British, because there would be a physical division line on the border, or Nationalists that oppose leaving the EU will attempt to unify the isle of Ireland to re-enter the EU because of political or financial reasons. The historical divide that is being bridged nowadays is being threatened and, as Linda Ervine puts it, 'hardens the hearts and minds of people'. The implications for the becoming of the border could be that national politics polarize even more and that society returns to unrest about the constitutional question. A striking analogy was made in that 'Northern Ireland finds itself between two political tectonic plates, the Republic of Ireland and the UK' (anonymous, personal communication, 2020).

5   Conclusion

In this research I intended to explore a new theoretical and methodological approach, sociological phenomenology spatially augmented along three axes of reflection, to contribute to the development of the critical potential of the borderscape concept and to overcome the challenges that the concept currently faces by looking at societal processes and practices through lived experience. Based on the findings and results of the analysis I will attempt to answer difficulties faced and questions posed by Chiara Brambilla and Dina Krichker to see whether or not the chosen approach provides new insights to a constructive intellectual collaboration on the concept. At the end of this chapter I will discuss the shortcomings and limitations of this research and provide some suggestions for further research.

5.1   Lived experience and Northern Ireland

Borders have been regarded as political for centuries and recent trends in literature on borders are challenging this political primacy. The state is no longer the sole border-making entity, individuals and society contribute to border creation and create new ones as well. While borders remain highly political, new border thinking attributes border-making capacities to a broader spectrum of actors. Many attempts have been made to 'move away' from borders as political dividing lines and as such argued to be spatially diffuse zones in which more and more actors are attributed the ability to exert influence on said borders. Borderscape thinking is the latest iteration and has been rapidly embraced in the academic field. Within the concept a discussion on the role of politics in regard to borders in this new light is still going on. There is no consensus on what a border is or even a clear demarcation of the concept itself and who or what influences it. This led Dina Krichker to argue that the borderscape concept is too broad and unspecified to be of any workable relevance. In her critique she argues that this simultaneously is the charm of the concept and serves the current needs of border scholars, this critique is called the 'irresistible vagueness of the concept'. For the concept to become a solid academic way for border thinking it requires more focus and a clearer demarcation.

Dina Krichker attempted to do so by returning to the theoretical origins of the concept and asked the question how borderscapes are produced in the first place (Krichker, 2019). This research embarked on the same mission, but with a different approach. Krichker looks at the theory of production of space by Henry Lefebvre, I take to sociological phenomenology and lived experience by Alfred Schutz and the Chicago School. Krichker enquires into the interaction between space, imaginations and experiences. I enquire into the interaction between experiences, representations, perceptions and interpretations of the phenomena Northern Ireland. In short, this research concerns itself deeply with *perspectives*. Perspective is a very powerful word because it captures the entire life-world, stock of experiences and chain of experiences of an individual. It captures the past, present and the future and explains one's perception, representation and interpretation of events happening now. This is easily visible in the data, for example Linda Ervine's political stance and her seemingly contradicting acts as an Irish teacher in the traditional Protestant heartland of East Belfast. Her experiences in the past make her a Unionist, but also introduced her to the language, now she has a distinct view on Northern Ireland and the border and actively contributes to a changing social landscape in the future. Yet this view is very different from another fellow Irish teacher Pól Deeds, who is a Catholic and therefore more related to the language which is conform to the traditional communal discourse. In

both cases their perspective on the border is very distinct and tells more than just an opinion and at the same time their actions shape the future of the border, combining experience and action.

In terms of borders and the borderscape the actions of individuals like Linda Ervine and Pól Deeds can be seen as acts of resistance within the sphere of contestation of Northern Ireland that contains society and politics. Individual experiences, perceptions and interpretations of society and politics form perspectives on the border. A logical consequence of this is that for every individual there is a different definition of what Northern Ireland is, of how the borderscape looks like and therefore how it is constructed. Respondents that maintained less visible positions in society, the 'man in the street', stated different perspectives and laid bare intricacies that are important to their perspectives. When every single one of these perspectives, by any one actor, makes the borderscape then the lack of focus and scientific demarcation is illustrated quite nicely; anything and everyone matters. At the same time it shows that a borderscape is 'imagined, materially established, experienced, lived as well as reinforced and blocked but also crossed, traversed and inhabited' (Brambilla, 2015, p.30). Acts of power and resistance are found throughout the data, in all way shapes and forms. An example is a Protestant person from a rural area going to a Catholic pub because this person does not like the Protestant pub. This individual's perspective on the traditional religious division and a divided Ireland indicates that the person does not care about that and chases after the personal interest of fun. This is perhaps the simplest act of resistance, by a low profile individual, but also illustrates a lived, experienced, crossed and contested part of the borderscape.

The question that lingers then is 'acts of resistance against what, or against whom'? For there to be an act of resistance or protest there has to be an established order to resist against. In the case of Northern Ireland this can be identified as either the communal level or the national level. The former solely concerns society and the social world, the latter concerns society as well as politics. Both classifications are more general than the individual level, yet consist of those individuals. The communal level can generally be seen as Catholics or Protestants, each respectively having different histories, norms, values and techniques of life. Events like the Troubles have created and contributed to a segregated sense of (religious) identity within Northern Ireland that only recently is being contested, as indicated by the Life and Times survey results. The communal/political level is generally seen as the Nationalist/Republican or the Unionist/Loyalist division, each having a different vision of the present and for future of the country. The 'maps and religion' paragraph argued a reduced primacy of religion in regard to contemporary views on the borderscape, but in the sense of communal identity it remains poignant. This marks a difference in individual and communal/political discourse and further illustrates the complex nature of society, politics and borders. Based on lived experience two distinct levels become visible and show an interesting contradiction in perspectives on different levels.

It would be logical that individual perceptions form the dominant discourse, this does not seem the case in Northern Ireland at the moment. The dominant discourse within society and on political level is being contested through acts of resistance like mentioned before. An explanation could be that Northern Ireland, as a society and country, is undergoing a major shift in multiple regards; secularisation of society, overcoming their divided history and a changing political landscape. The amount of Individual acts of cross-community interaction and the growth of a political party that is neither Nationalist nor Unionist prove to support these trends. It remains to be said that the history of the country and experiences of the older generations still weigh heavy individually and that these

trends are mostly caused by the newer generations and more progressive older generations. Here as well a division can be identified, that of generation. From the data no clear point of generational division emerged, just that sense of identity and perspective on the border generally is the same within generations. But within generations there are once again many different perspectives due to religious background, lived experience and political orientation. What this diffuse information does tell is that the border in the traditional sense, a dividing line between states, holds little sway for local residents. When talking about 'the border', with any generation, rarely the actual border of Northern Ireland was mentioned. The crossing of the actual border has never been mentioned, only the difference within society in regard to religion and politics was mentioned.

The work of Chris Rumford is crucial in understanding the border in this regard. Without the respondents explicitly mentioning that state border, they did explicitly or inexplicitly talk about how they see Northern Ireland. To illustrate my point I will greatly simplify either extremes of the spectrum; a Catholic Republican sees Northern Ireland as part of the Republic of Ireland and does not want any Protestant influence, a Protestant Loyalist sees Northern Ireland as part of the UK and does not want any Catholic influence. This struggle forms borders away from the actual state border, as Rumford argues as well. For the city of Belfast it seems that the border runs through its streets, that the streets itself become a literal barrier dividing separate perspectives on the borderscape. Especially during the Troubles this was true, nowadays with different trends going on, as argued, this division is crumbling. Yet perspectives differ from individual to individual, community to community and generation to generation. By combining each perspective the various building blocks of the borderscape emerge and the sociological phenomenological method unveils the great complexities of the borderscape that moves way beyond politics or society in service of politics. However the political aspect needs not to be forgotten or neglected, as that would be detrimental to a study on borders.

Different perspectives of individuals are being influenced not only through experiences directly related to themselves but also by political events happening on an international level. Respondents have stated that their perspective on the border has been heavily influenced by the unfolding Brexit, the 'reopened' constitutional question and internationally polarizing politics in which populism plays a big role. The approach of lived experience and individual perspective shows that the (re)construction of the Northern Irish borderscape is not restricted to society and national politics, it also unveils connections with international politics. The intricate connections between the individual, society and politics, that are part of the borderscape, can now be used to link the local borderscape narrative to the global. This is a point raised by Krichker to argue the strength of the borderscape concept in the global bordering project and based on lived experience proves to successfully be able to grasp the complex social and political nature.

The different *perspectives*, as often mentioned by the community, are created by and based upon their lived experiences with the phenomena 'Northern Ireland'. These perspectives constitute the theoretical plurivocal/pluritopical view on borders used to *interpret* the border. The interpretation of the plurivocal view can be seen as *borderscaping*, the act of creating a border based on lived experience, which is done through analysing representations, perceptions and interpretations. The act of borderscaping then gives an insight into the *being* and *becoming* of a border from multiple perspectives, going beyond the 'modern territorialist (geo)political imaginary', in a kaleidoscopic fashion. Building on individual experiences the border is studied from a broader perspective and

interprets social life not merely as 'in service of' (geo)politics. This moves the borderscape concept beyond solely political borders and the state in a manner that has previously not been possible.

Despite the borderscape being portrayed as a completely open and unbounded concept there are certain structuralist elements identifiable, meaning that perhaps we can derive a boundary. This potential boundary becomes most visible when dissecting individual acts of borderscaping. Part of the information one bases their action upon is that of a chain of experiences, technique of life and historical heritage. For example in Northern Ireland someone is 'born into' the conflict and raised in the results of it in current times, thus creating and influencing representation, perception and interpretation. This societal aspect might be crucial for the borderscape concept, by understanding the social lay of the land a possible demarcation of the concept can be made. This is not necessarily a political demarcation, or solely social demarcation for that matter, it is a demarcation build on history and current trends, either social, political or a combination. A borderscape could thus be seen as a diffuse zone of different types of borders (national, social, local, intergenerational, racial, cultural, the list goes on) for various individuals. This is not particularly a new insight, but helps redefine what a borderscape can contain. However this reiteration provides insufficient support to shape the concept into a workable theory. I propose to look for something more substantial that every application of the borderscape can have in common.

Perhaps looking *from*, *as* or *with* a national border provides the theoretical anchor the concept needs to combat the irresistible vagueness. Taking the national border as anchor point and looking at socio-spatial and political practices from this point might introduce some form of uniformity the concept eagerly searches for. No matter the type of research or subject, it all starts by thinking from the national border. However this means that there still is no outermost (spatial) demarcation, but does there have to be one? Every region is different, every border has its own characteristics so the openness of the borderscape concept is vital for the discipline. Instead of looking for an outermost boundary for the concept, I suggest this anchor point, a common starting point. Taking this even further, the outer *edge* remains unclear and diffuse and overlaps with other borderscapes without a clear transition zone. Looking from the national border out into the borderscape is like looking out at the *horizon* of the border, borrowing the terminology of Edward Casey's recent work, opening a new way of reflecting on borders and their influence and influences.

5.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research

The results of this research explore a new path to develop border thinking along the borderscape route, yet there are some shortcomings that have to be mentioned. Both in theory and practice there are limiting factors pertaining to the conclusions drawn in this research. Based on these limitations recommendations are made for future research.

Firstly, the chosen theoretical and methodological approach of sociological phenomenology has been spatially augmented which alters the original methodology. So from a methodological standpoint this research is not a 'true' phenomenological research because it does not solely focus on lived experience and the physiological dimension of said experience. However, as argued in the methodology chapter, phenomenology is adjusted, or redirected, towards suiting the geographical aspect of this research. It does focus on singular accounts of the 'event' Northern Ireland and therefore allows for viewing the border from the citizens that inhabit its region, humanizing the approach to borders in Brambilla's terms. However the conclusion shows that this altered version of sociological phenomenology can deliver practical insights into a region. In order to validate its potential a similar research should be carried out that continues to build on this methodology and in different spatial contexts.

Secondly, the current situation in Northern Ireland is very volatile and unique. While it shows how people perceive the border it remains contested what the border is, because it is part of Ireland and the UK at the same time in different fields of policy. Its government has only just been reinstated after a three year period, during which the country was technically run by England. Besides this the country does not even exist for a hundred years and the constitutional question is actively being debated. This volatility creates polarized border perceptions, therefore there are in general two 'versions' of the border within society and politics. While it could be argued that this is in fact beneficial because the concept maps the sphere of contestation, I argue it to be detrimental exactly because of widely varying versions of the border. In an extreme, but ever more tangible scenario, the country of Northern Ireland and with it its borders will disappear within a few decades because of the international politics regarding the country. A more long term relevant research could be on its wider context, that of the Republic of Ireland and the UK.

Lastly, I interviewed as many 'regular' citizens as possible, individuals that do not hold high profile positions and make up the bulk of society. While I have interviewed quite a lot of this group it is always better to interview more because more interviews can reveal new intricacies that remain hidden at this moment. Besides this it would have been valuable to delve into the communal perspective more and really go beyond the surface. I think a more detailed research into the communal/political level and the individual level could provide information that can be used directly in policymaking and conflict resolution. Related to this is that the majority of interviewees are living in Belfast. While about one third on the respondents have spent some time living and or grew up in rural areas their perspectives might differ from those living exclusively in rural areas or the city.

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7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix A: Summary of the three qualitative approaches to inquiry

Contrasting Characteristics of Five Qualitative Approaches			
Characteristics	**Narrative Research**	**Phenomenology Research**	**Case Study**
Focus	Exploring the life of an individual	Understanding the essence of the experience	Developing an in-depth description an analysis of a case of multiple cases
Type of Problem Best Suited for Design	Needing to tell stories of individual experiences	Needing to describe the essence of a lived phenomenon	Providing an in-depth understanding of a case or cases
Discipline Background	Drawing for the humanities including anthropology, literature, history, psychology and sociology	Drawing from philosophy, psychology and education	Drawing from psychology, law, political science and medicine
Unit of Analysis	Studying one or more individuals	Studying several individuals who have shared the experience	Studying an event, a program, an activity or more than one individual
Data Collections Forms	Using primarily interviews and documents	Using primarily interviews with individuals, although documents, observations and art may also be considered	Using multiple sources, such as interviews, observations, documents and artifacts
Data Analysis Strategies	Analyzing data for stories, 'restorying' stories and developing themes, often using a chronology	Analyzing data for significant statement, meaning units, textual and structural description and description of the 'essence'	Analyzing data through description of the case and themes of the case as well as cross-case themes
Written Report	Developing a narrative about the stories of an individual's life	Describing the 'essence' of the experience	Developing a detailed analysis of one or more cases

Source: Creswell, J. W. (2013). '*Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*'. Sage, (3ed)

7.2   Appendix B: Questionnaire, notes and reflection interview Karen Logan

Questionnaire and notes interview Karen Logan, curator Ulster Museum; the Troubles and beyond exhibition

Pre-reflection

Due to the setting it was not possible to capture the audio of the interview and following conversation. The interview was held among the exhibition and allowed for clearly pointing out and thus supporting statements made by Ms. Logan. The alternative option to an audio recording was taking notes, these have been made in great detail.

Questionnaire

- How did the Troubles exposition come about?
    - Which sources?
    - Which people, initiatives and/or institutions contributed?
- What is the general view on the societal division today?
- Is socio-economic status an important factor in societal frictions?
- Would you say the division is mainly political or religious?
- How do you experience Northern Ireland?
    - In light of the Troubles
    - In light of the Brexit
- Do people in general feel Northern Irish of mainly stick to Irish of British?
- What do you think is the impact of Brexit on this identity and nationality matter?
    - Do you think there will be a societal reaction when the Brexit concludes? (riots or otherwise)
- In what regard does identity and nationality play a role in contemporary Northern Irish society
    - Subsequently, what role does language, most notably Irish, play in society?

[In regard to the 'lived experience wall']

- How did the Lived Experience Wall come about?
- What have been the reactions to the Lived Experience Wall?

Notes and reflection

- Towards understanding and healing; this is a project that focuses on recognition and reflection of an individual's experience by providing the opportunity to tell their stories
- The general societal feeling is that there is a positive progression in healing the wounds of the past
- The negative sentiment on the other hand is that there is:
    - a lingering sense of injustice in regard to actions and accountability during and after the Troubles
    - More to be done to restore the balance

- The socio-economic aspect definitely plays a role in today's societal division, this is mostly found in East, North and West Belfast
    o These areas coincide with the most active regions during the Troubles
    o That is logical because those communities suffered comparatively more than other regions in Belfast/Northern Ireland
- The demographics of the Troubles indicate that mostly young men participated in the violence, this is based on the percentage of young men being detained, interned or jailed during the Troubles
    o 'Young men' refers to the age group approximately 18 to 35, while younger is not necessarily and exception
    o This demographic trend looks like to have been continued today, with young individuals mostly accountable of sectarian violence
- There is a certain spatial aspect the Troubles, it was *not* a civil war or a war, it mostly effected specific neighbourhoods and hotspots of antagonism
    o This is reflected in the previous note that some communities were comparatively more affected than others
    o This holds true not only for the city of Belfast but generally Northern Ireland
        ▪ This is illustrated by attacks on Catholic enclaves in small villages across Northern Ireland or specific marching routes throughout different towns and cities
- That said, the Troubles were sporadic and chaotic in its nature
    o There was a general fear of not knowing when or where something would happen, it lingered among people in society, no matter the degree of involvement or impact
- To be clear and illustrate the uncertainty remaining in society today, take for example the bomb at the golf club in 2019. This is how it used to be and thus in a sense still is today
- In general people were either not affected at all by the Troubles or deeply affected by losing members of family or community
- This brings me to the way people experienced the Troubles and thus how they view it today and with it Northern Ireland's society
    o Everybody has a different perspective, the youth, the older generations, the Protestants, the Catholics, each community
    o In a way today's society is very individual while also being dictated by communal discourses
- Another dimension to perspective is that Northern Ireland is a small country, therefore about everyone knows someone or is related to someone affected by the Troubles. It hits home to everyone in society, in varying degrees and from different perspective
- At the moment the societal divide is not as much 'in your face' as it used to be, but do not mistake it for being gone, it is ever present, not dormant, and has the potential to erupt and dislodge at any moment
- There is a trend coming up in recent years in which the difference between Catholic and Protestant is being reduced in importance, certainly for the newer generation. That is that Northern Ireland, in specific Belfast, is rapidly modernising, internationalizing and globalizing.
    o The result of this is that there are so many different and 'other' cultures that the Catholic/Protestant difference is lessened in primacy.

- - - 'Why care about differences between Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants while there are nationalities from all over Europe and the world in your class. It makes our differences seems less important'
- Yet, there is another 'looming danger' complicating the dynamics in Northern Ireland's society and that, at the moment, is Brexit. It makes people feel forced to state their preference on leave or remain and therefore emphasize their 'side' in society
    - This definitely has (had) a re-polarising influence in society
- Once again it comes down to perspectives, nationality and identity much like religion is an individual thing
    - There is to note that religion is becoming less important, but still remaining very important, and mostly less determining
- Linking back to the globalising of Belfast, the youth sometimes describe themselves as 'European' to avoid having to choose any side and getting a social label stuck to them by society
    - There is a strong geographical aspect to the societal divide based on which primary school you went to, which neighbourhood you grew up in, etc.
- In light of the Brexit, Unionists that are worried about its impact and their ability to travel throughout Europe and the world have requested an Irish passport (which they are entitled to in most cases due to the strong family ties for over centuries with Ireland)
    - It is easy to imagine that this is difficult for some Protestants that are mostly Unionist, yet they hold a utilitarian approach to the matter
        - This is a very interesting dynamic that definitely deserves more research and could be closely linked to the case of nationality between Moldova and Romania
- Language is seen as a way of expressing identity, in the case of the Irish language that is the Catholic and Nationalist identity
    - Yet, there is a language movement going on in which Protestants are starting to learn Irish
        - This is seemingly contradictory in a segregated society, yet it still occurs
- There are research connections between the city of Belfast and Barcelona, where they face a similar language based identity and feeling of nationality
    - Perhaps Cataluña provides a good example of inclusive society, in which dual languages are common and not creating friction in society

Appendix C: Notes and reflection on seminar 'Religion and dealing with the past in Northern Ireland'

'Religion and dealing with the past in Northern Ireland, learning from Presbyterian responses to the Troubles' seminar notes and reflection

Pre-reflection

Initially this was supposed to be a listening session for me, to gain academic information on the topic and to get familiar with the topic, though it turned out to be a very interactive and critical reflection of processes and perspectives in society. Recording the seminar was impossible due to the amount of people and setting it occurred in, therefore I made detailed notes and transcribed some stories and discussions from memory directly after the seminar. Although this is not ideal in any way, it serves as an illustration of the seminar and provides some interesting insights.

Introduction

''Does religion have a role to play in dealing with Northern Ireland's contentious past? How might Northern Ireland's churches be equipped to contribute to healing in their communities and wider public conversations and policies on apologies, forgiveness, mercy, reconciliation and grace?''
(Official event description, 2020)

There were three distinct parts to the seminar, (1) introduction and general overview of 'Considering grace, the Troubles and the Presbyterian Church' by Dr. Gladys Ganiel, (2) a brief talk from Dr. Nicola Brady on the challenges that the Churches of Ireland (from now on 'the Church') faces, what they are doing to heal the wounds of the past and the shortcomings in their actions and policies and (3) a general discussion in which people very openly discussed the sensitive topic of dealing with the past

Notes and reflection

- The first part was very straightforward, just an explanation and highlighting some paragraphs of the book 'Considering Grace'
- The talk from Dr. Nicola Brady was more insightful, in the way that an important institution in society copes with and engages with everyday life and society
- A major link topic and link between the book and the Churches of Ireland is the focus on 'intergenerational trauma', the way the societal divide is constantly being perpetuated and has only slightly changed throughout history
- An important quote is 'remembering the future'
  - This is an attempt to use the past to reconcile the present and create a better, more inclusive, future
- There is a role for the Church in helping the society cope with the aftermath of the Troubles, one such instance of the aftermath is the sharp increase in mental health problems and suicides in Northern Ireland since the Troubles
  - Many people have experienced trauma's, ranging from being injured to losing close ones. This led to a sharp increase in mental health problems throughout the country and suicide rates are at an all time high, also compared to the rest of the UK.
  - This issue clearly shows the need for 'hope', a clear role for the Church to provide

- At the same time the Church recognizes that religion is, certainly nowadays, a very personal thing and that therefore there is no 'Presbyterian' response to the Troubles
  o She illustrates this through stating that the type of counselling, sermon or community engagement that might work in the border region does not necessarily work in other parts of the country. There is a local response.
    ▪ This once again points towards the argument of 'perspective', how one looks at the past, present and the future
    ▪ In practicing and experiencing religion there is an important role for perspective, just like in other areas of life, either now or in the past
- Continuing exploring the role of the Church and its response is the recognition that the Church is largely federalized, each county or district has a great amount of freedom in which to express 'their' Protestantism within Presbyterianism, thus further impacts the ability of the Church to create a unified community in which they can support communities and cooperate across those communities
- A part of mental health is religion, about faith, hope and lament. Nowadays youth is struggling with mental health issues because they are torn between the past, the things that happened to their family, the way they perceive religion and their social life
  o A distinction is made between 'church life' and 'real life'
    ▪ This, to me, is a significant part of the perception of individuals of the country of Northern Ireland and its society, politics and borders
    ▪ It is the way in which society in Northern Ireland seems to be extremely individual, not in an egotistical fashion but in a perception fashion. Add to that the general discourse of each community superimposing certain morals and values on their community and a volatile and instable political arena
    ▪ The Church argued that the mental health issues under young people also springs from uncertain relationships, anxiety, stress, home situation and the sense of belonging and involvement
    ▪ In many of the aforementioned topics can the Church play a role in providing support and societal understanding and eventually maybe even societal resilience
- In the seminar there was a remarkable focus on the role of women during and after the Troubles, for example in the book there were 50 women interviewed. Although they did not partake in any fighting, they were the ones left at home and having the pressure of raising the next generation
  o It was being argued that the role of a mother is crucial in breaking the perpetual negative cycle in society through which it cannot overcome its past, therefore mothers play a role in '[creating] a vision of a shared future'
  o These insights by the Church lead to the comment by Ms. Brady that 'it's about more than just theology, it is about society, culture and politics'
- In the experience of the Church 'there is a lot to talk about, there is a lot left to be said. People want to talk, there is a need. It just needs to be facilitated, because people will not initiate the conversation by themselves (yet)'
- The generation that is open to talk, when facilitated, is the generation is raising kids or have raised kids that are now growing into adulthood and forming the new ranks of society

Notes and reflection PowerPoint sheets

At the beginning of the seminar everyone received a handout of the sheets to be displayed. This reflection is based on the story and sheets combined.

There is an apparent appetite for talking, yet the discussion is not initiated voluntarily. A major role the Church plays is in facilitating this conversation. This can be and is done through evenings and projects that systematically brings together people to speak about their experiences. The Church has to provide supporting conditions for this conversation, for example a non-judgemental attitude or being respectful towards individual grievances. Mostly the older generation is benefitted by these conversations seeing as they have to bear the cultural and historical heritage because they lived through it. By talking and sharing stories the grievances can get a place and talking about it seemingly provides a good way to do so.

Then raises the question, how does one get from individual stories and recollections that make up lived experience of contemporary society to a definition of the Ulster borderscape?

- In an abstract answer; use lived experience as 'building blocks' to build the borderscape. But how does one do this?
  o The individual experiences can be viewed as short term asymmetrical cycles, as described in terms of Lefebvre
  o These temporal cycles then culminate into the life-world of Northern Ireland's society, as described in terms of Schutz

Whether or not this way of thinking proves useful, it is useful to distinguish between individual, or local, level vs. Community level. Putting it in terms of the Church these two levels indicate the 'level of acceptance'. In my reflection, dealing with the past in today's society is something for the older generation because they lived through the Troubles and that has impacted their lives significantly. The newer generation does not have to cope with this burden as explicitly or as much and that frees them from the societal divide shackles, truly being able to focus on their individual position in life and society. The Ulster borderscape, in this line of reasoning, is thus a combination between perceptions of generations, each with its own challenges. On the one hand the Ulster borderscape is a divided culmination of societal groups on a contested piece of land and on the other hand it is a country being bogged down by the past but full of opportunities with a prosperous future.

Notes and reflection discussion

As stated, the discussion was a very honest, well articulated and open dialogue between academics, the Churches of Ireland and the audience (consisting of academics, community members and more). The major theme in the discussion revolved around the historical heritage that is being bestowed upon the new generation, in particular the role of parents and parenting during childhood and how this is also key in creating a better future together.

One man made a statement saying 'parents share their experiences and sentiment with their kids, but they don't tell or teach how they coped and solved them. This leaves kids with the bitter sentiment and no tools to cope with it'. He argued that this is where parents play a role in community and showed the limits of the Church in regard to support and fostering inclusivity.

- This can be an absolute crucial aspect in how Northern Ireland is experienced. Again it is highly individual, everyone experienced history differently and dealt with it differently. It also shows that it is a matter of perspective, inherent to the high degree of individuality.
- At second glance it seems like that society is actually completely individual but that the stories told and the experiences shared only represent a fraction of the actual sentiment and perception. People are not entirely open and keep things for themselves, which in turn creates a superficial society in which transparency of ideas and values is repressed
  - Might this be to 'please' other members of society?
  - What is holding people back?

Continuing on the topic of the parental role in shaping the future for the better a member of the audience argued that parents need not tell their kids about what happened and thus not burdening them with the past. In response to that another person told a story, I believe not his own but intimately shared with him, in which he argued that parents actually should share their stories and sentiment.

''I grew up in a house as a kid, had a good family and home situation. My parents were affected by the Troubles, they just didn't talk about it. I spend my childhood in the same home, never moved. In the ceiling on the ground floor there were some cracks and damage, only until I was a bit older I asked my parents where they came from. Because I never really thought about it, it was just part of the house. Then my parents told me the damage was caused by a bomb which exploded during the Troubles and damaged the house. It was the first time my parents talked about the Troubles and what they had experienced, I was as unconcerned as can be when I was a kid. But that moment made me realize, we are all affected even if I was not present at the moment of the bombing. The damage to the ceiling is a part of my childhood, and as it turns out it is part of the Troubles. Because of this I think it is important that parents talk to their kids about what happened and share their stories. It is not wise to raise children letting them believe everything is over and all fine. Kids grow up in the remnants of the Troubles and among the people that were a part of it.'' (Anonymous, 2020)