



Peace-process infrastructure _ Constructing landscapes in-between Irelands

Over the course of 30 years the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland led to the rupturing of physical sites from people’s everyday environment. This thesis explores what is happening to these sites in a post ‘Good Friday/Belfast Agreement’ era and how they are being re-appropriated for civilian purposes and knitted back into their surroundings. This work does not pitch ‘landscape-as-picture’ against the action words — instrumental, strategic and operational — inherent in ‘landscape-as-process’. Instead, I investigate how both the physical and the imagined landscape work together to form what I call ‘peace-process infrastructure’: landscapes that maintain and support a peace-process.

My working theory considers the construction of common ground and the space of encounter as an instrument in peacemaking. I select three sites that illustrate a physical middle-ground where dialogue was an active part in the present landscape’s making — Divis Mountain next to Belfast City which was a military zone before becoming a public park, the Shannon-Erne Waterway and the watchtower hills about Slieve Gullion Mountain in South Armagh. Under the ‘practice strand’ of each site I am using movement as a tactic, also as a celebration, when it comes to exploring the physical encounter. I have specifically selected a series of traverses that were not possible to undertake as a civilian during the conflict. The garnered film footage from these acts works as testimony to a fragile peace-process, which in turn become an archive that spins the text.

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The tools that were specific to the sites for overcoming topographical distance in the past — limelight, lock and lens — are deployed once more to make what is considered remote and out of touch, close and tangible.

At its heart, this is a project of documenting particular sites, but it is motivated by the larger desire to contribute to a worldwide discussion about peace-process situations from a spatial perspective. People’s interpretations of and their reactions to the constructed encounter in the world around them are a direct consequence to the architectural systems that commandeer our surroundings. This thesis will offer one answer to how, today, physical landscapes are produced and organised, demonstrating the agency of landscapes within the peace-building process, and how landscapes have the potential to deconstruct toxic territorial organisation leading to creative production. 2016 marks the centenary of the 1916 Rising in Ireland. A time when it was understood that revolutions were not just a protest but a creative process — a tool for remaking states and societies — and that in world terms the ‘cultural’ Irish revolution preceded the political revolution galvanising world and Irish opinion towards independence for Ireland. This work creates a cultural milieu about the peace process that garners strength for its success.

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