Peace Networks: The Story of Peace

Macro-level Considerations and Critical Reflections

Working Paper

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Abstract

The Peace Network/Story of Peace document, which has been commissioned by the SEUPB, presents an opportunity to innovate in how reflections on peacebuilding practice are presented to policy makers and practitioners seeking potentially transferrable lessons from one conflict arena to others. The inclusion of non-academics in the target audience, the imperative to compile a document that is to be ‘of use’ to those who wish to understand and learn from the Northern Irish experience present a conceptual challenge to the author(s). Notwithstanding the need to include obvious components such as background context and a description of the PEACE programmes and their broader objectives, there is considerable scope for the inclusion of complementary theoretical approaches that draw out other important themes. These other themes are envisioned as an aid to understanding, rather than as a prescriptive formula for success. Indeed, given that PEACE III is still some years away from completion, and given ongoing tensions within the Northern Ireland context, we should studiously avoid any claims to such success. As the third sector, or Track III actors (grassroots and voluntary community organisations) were and are the recipients of funding, as well as being the capillary point instruments of EU peacebuilding initiatives, we might consider the inclusion of emerging insights into the nature of advanced democratic governance in the overall analysis. A key contribution of this paper is consideration of the macro-level dimension, the broader perspective of the EU and the debates and tensions relative to it. This is not to supplant other analytical frames, but rather to complement them. The following is a considered (and evolving) reflection on the scope of the proposed document, which approaches the task from an oblique angle of inquiry.
New relationships across the internal and external territorial borders of the EU have been driven by economic considerations, facilitated by political adjustments and legitimated through conceptual change – Katy Hayward

Introduction

Buchanan noted that the Peace programmes were activated without any thorough conflict analysis being conducted by the funding instrument of the EU. The programmes were ‘not conflict transformation proofed’ at any point (Buchanan, 2008: 388; see also Hughes 2009: 294, 302). However, as McCall and O’Dowd note:

The approach of the European Commission to the design of the Peace programs for Ireland, consciously or unconsciously, adopted many of the recommendations made by peace-building theorists, particularly the onus of responsibility placed on ‘middle range’ or intermediary Third-sector actors […] (McCall and O’Dowd, 2008: 49).

In addition, Hayward notes that an early analysis of the Northern Ireland conflict was conducted by the European Parliament in 1984 (Hayward, 2006b). The Haagerup Report had two overriding tasks

- To explain the situation of conflict in Northern Ireland to ‘non-British and non-Irish’ MEPs
- To see how the EU could be of assistance in addition to the economic support ‘already rendered’ within its regional policy and social fund (quoted in Hayward, 2006b: 268ff).

There was an extensive consultation procedure prior to the establishment of the Peace I and II programmes (Buchanan, 2008: 396ff, Harvey 2003: Ch. 1). The evolution of structural funding into peace programmes can be seen in light of the development of peace interventions more broadly in the international system. For example, Ghali’s ‘Agenda for Peace’ outlines a more sophisticated – and ambitious – direction for peace interventions following the end of the bipolar era (Agenda for Peace 1992), one that took such interventions well beyond the confines of traditional ‘Westphalian’ premises. We can surmise that an overall guiding rationale for the Peace programmes was that by financially supporting Track III actors whose organisational imperatives centred on community development (and the broad aim of ‘peace’) the EU programmes could draw on and foster existing social capital in order to consolidate the Track I and II processes (on social capital see Putnam, 1995, 2000; see also Acheson and Milofsky, 2008). The EU’s intervention at this level is consistent with the principle of ‘subsidiarity’, which became a prominent theme in the intergovernmental negotiations preceding the Treaty on European Union (TEU, also the Maastricht Treaty) of 1992-3. Subsidiarity is the guiding principle within EU governance that delimits the extent of supra-national intervention in the national arena, on the premise that decisions and actions should taken as close to the citizen as possible. Furthermore, any intervention should be proportionate to the problem, policy or issue concerned (Bache and George, 2006: 326). Building on the premise that social capital, civil society, participatory democracy and conflict transformation are all important components of the underlying rationale, several theoretically informed approaches can be delineated and brought to bear

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1 Hughes notes the influence of Putnam’s thought in the Northern Ireland context (Hughes, 2009: 294ff).
on the analytical teleology of the proposed document. These will be considered in turn, their merits and demerits discussed in light of the Peace programmes, and a discussion/conclusion will draw these various aspects together. In addition, other critical dimensions will be admitted into the following discussion.

The normative imperative and normative background

Fundamentally, the Peace programmes were initiated in order to embed political efforts to end decades of violent internecine conflict that, although generally located within the geographical confines of Northern Ireland, also encroached upon British urban centres and border counties of the Irish Republic. One guiding question we need to consider from the outset is: what potential did the EU see in the Track III approach? Regional funding for both Northern Ireland and economically disadvantaged areas of the Irish Republic were not new (see EESC, 2008, para. 5.3), but such funding emanated from the EU’s ‘cohesion’ policy, designed to balance economic disparities across Europe in order to facilitate greater functional and, ideally, political integration. It is often omitted from much consideration that the EU itself is the manifestation of a very sophisticated – and successful – ‘peace process’, which commenced shortly after the conclusion of WWII (see Duchêne, 1994). The concentration on economic issues, underdevelopment and job creation seemed a predictable role for the EU in what was essentially an interstate-led peace initiative. Nevertheless, from the perspective of conflict research the EU was also a significant background element (Arthur, 2010). The ‘spillover’ effect of European integration from the late 1950s had blunted the sharp interstate distinctions that had dominated European politics up to that point (for discussion see Haas, [1958] 2003). Neofunctional practices, shaped by economic realities had begun the process of ‘hollowing out’ the state (Hoffmann, 1966), transferring significant numbers of policy competencies into institutions mobilised around a vision of ‘pooled sovereignty’. This process had been interrupted in the 1970s but commenced with some urgency under European Commission President Jacques Delors throughout the 1980s and 1990s, culminating in the Single European Act (SEA) and the most significant restructuring of EU decision-making through the Treaty on European Union (TEU, also known as Maastricht) in 1992-3. Despite some media noteworthy setbacks, such as the failure of ratification plebiscites in France and the Netherlands, and the Irish No vote in 2008, the exponential expansion and deepening of European integration has remained steady. These developments cannot be seen in isolation from the Northern Ireland question. Notwithstanding the crisis of European integration following Maastricht there has been general erosion in the sharp boundaries between states. Social practices and behaviour have altered dramatically as a result of the transformation of quotidian aspects of citizen life such as travel and economics (the Schengen Agreement, the Euro currency, standardisation of cell phone roaming charges). ‘Europe’ has begun to affect individual lives in very tangible ways. Citizens are primarily ‘national’ citizens, but indicators point to the complementary – if subordinate – position of a European affectivity, bolstered by technological and transportation capacity (see Lutz et al, 2006). Borders have, arguably lost their salience beyond the island of Ireland, which in turn has led to a reconfiguration of political space, both within Ireland and throughout Europe (see Hayward, 2006a, 2006b; Diez and Hayward 2008).

It is useful to examine the insights of a discursively-based study of the impact of European integration processes on the Northern Ireland context, specifically its effects on peacebuilding (Diez and Hayward, 2008; this builds upon the insights developed in Diez et

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2 The term ‘document’ is used in view of the absence of clarification on what the end product of research and analysis will be.

3 On the EU’s cohesion policy and regional development see the DG Regio website (Europa 2010a)
The Westphalian premises of the ‘Border’ conflict have, with the increasing density of EU cooperative processes, become blunted through the process of functional interstate relations (Mitrany 1943, 1948, 1965). As Diez et al note:

The lines of division in Northern Ireland have not disappeared but moved to the micro level of specific boroughs or streets which the connective impact of the EU has not yet permeated (Diez et al, 2006: 582).

On this basis, therefore, we can propose that the Track III dimension of peacebuilding has increased in importance, and the somewhat ironically named ‘peace walls’ reflect this shift in antagonistic emphasis. Diez et al provide a highly relevant conceptual framework through which our understanding of the central issues of relevance to the operation of the Peace Programmes can be enhanced. Diez et al define conflict as ‘the articulation of the incompatibility of subject positions’, which we observe:

[W]hen an actor constructs his or her identity or interests in such a way that these cannot be made compatible with the identity or interests of another actor. Conflict is therefore discursively constructed (Diez et al, 2006: 565).

Latent incompatibilities (or mere objective differences) are insufficient for conflict to exist, and violence need not be present. The border ‘issue’ is not now the main locus of dispute. Dispute has been ‘de-centred’ to include a range of contentious fracture points, including the naming of places (for example, London/Derry). Diez et al then go on to outline the means through which the EU might impact on a conflict, which are refracted through two dimensions. First, is the impact generated by concrete EU led measures or are they an effect of integration processes not directly within the conscious remit of EU institutions? Second, is the impact on concrete processes or wider social implications? We might note, for example, a banal fact recorded in the Operational Programme of Peace III. The programme notes that a range of North-South implementation bodies were re-established following the restoration of the devolved institutions in 2007, such as inter alia the Food Safety Promotion Board, the Trade and Business Development body, Waterways Ireland and the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (SEUPB, Undated: 9). The functional nature of these bodies, representing as they do very real, non-political and pragmatic links between two political entities reflects the stress on functionality within the EU’s approach. There is no conflict relative to these functional dimensions of North-South cooperation. When considering the impact of conflict intervention initiatives, the role of broader socio-political trends are a critical variable. For the EU, ‘functionalism’ is not a by-product of peacebuilding, it is central to it. This has been the case since the inception of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. The extent to which attitudes change as a result of actual intervention needs to be balanced against the potential influence of broader (and even extraneous) social and political changes, and the transformation in intergenerational attitudes that they produce.

The EU as a Normative Power

This throws into relief a vitally important dimension to any study of the EU’s intervention in Northern Ireland and the Border region – Europe as a ‘normative’ power (Manners, 2002). It is critical that any study of the EU’s role through the Peace Programmes be examined with an eye towards the geo-political context of the early and mid-1990s. Hedley Bull pointed out nearly three decades ago: ‘“Europe” is not an actor in international affairs, and does not seem likely to become one [...]’ (quoted in Manners, 2002: 235). Bull’s criticism was brought sharply into focus as the Yugoslav Republic descended into internecine war in the early and mid 1990s. Stung by criticism of its failure to prevent genocide on European soil only four decades after the end of World War II (Tannam, 2007: 339), the EU’s response was the
inclusion of the Common Foreign and Security Policy pillar in the Treaty on European Union (TEU) in 1993-4. This was followed latterly by the conclusion of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), agreed in 1999.\(^4\) 

Diagram 1: The EU’s Pillar Structure. Europa Website

The CFSP was an attempt to coordinate and harness collective responses to crises that directly affected European interests, particularly those on the border with the EU. However, the idea of normative power also included the capacity of the EU to exert transformative influence on states that envisaged applying for application to the EU. Enlargement, in fact, is still recognised as the cornerstone of EU policy. Candidate countries (Turkey, Croatia) must meet the ‘accession criteria’ established at the Intergovernmental Conference at

\(^4\) This provided for the establishment of the 60,000 strong ‘Rapid Reaction Force’ by 2003 (see Manners, 2002: 237).
Copenhagen in 1993. As the former European Commission President, Romano Prodi, stated:

In the current enlargement, the prospect of membership has had a big impact. It has bolstered democracy, peace and stability across the divide that split Europe in two for fifty years. The European Union's soft power has provided impetus for economic, social and political reforms in the candidate countries. And it has fostered respect for human rights and democratic values (Prodi, 2004).

Manners makes a clear distinction between various forms of political power (Table 1), whereby the idea of normative power operates in the sphere of ideas of what is normal and therefore desirable. In short, normative power is the capacity of an entity (in this case, the EU) to project its values beyond itself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civilian Power</th>
<th>Military Power</th>
<th>Normative Power</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to use civilian instruments</td>
<td>Ability to use military instruments</td>
<td>Ability to shape conceptions of normal</td>
</tr>
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Table 1: Civilian, military and normative power. Adapted from Manners, 2002: 240.

The projection of this normative power is secured, not through the threat of military action (Manners, 2002: 242) but rather in the enticement offered to neighbouring states through the potential of enhanced trade links or (as mentioned) EU membership. As Manners puts it:

The EU has gone further towards making its external relations informed by and conditional on, a catalogue of norms which come closer to those of the European convention on human rights and fundamental freedoms (ECHR) and the Universal declaration of human rights (UDHR) than most other actors in world politics (Manners, 2002: 241).

Diez makes the point that, at the heart of this more positivist reading of EU normative policy, there is an implicit assumption held by all key decision-makers that the EU is a normative power. With that, the projection of the EU as a normative force is an aid to the implicit continuation of European construction.

This normative discourse is one that most EU politicians – in Council, Commission and Parliament as well as on the member state level – engage in unless they are committed Euro-sceptics [...] the representation of Europe as a force for peace and well-being is nearly consensual (Diez, 2005: 620).

The implications of this discussion for the current research concern the extent of external influences upon the EU – as a political entity – in its decision to intervene in conflicts generally, and in Northern Ireland in particular. Intervention, no matter how it is viewed or received by the target actors in a given conflict zone, is always viewed as an intervention by Europe. Europe, the idea of Europe, is reinforced and continued through the distribution of resources among conflict actors, which is in turn tied to a normative vision. The provision of resources by Europe and their benign acceptance by the range of actors in a conflict zone establishes Europe as a political entity. The banality of intervention through primarily economic development and support, which is then latterly linked to 'Peace' and

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5 These criteria have since become known as the ‘Copenhagen Criteria’.
6 Speech delivered at the University of Ulster, Magee Campus, April 1st.
‘reconciliation’, allows such external intervention to be palatable, even to those who are Euro-sceptics.

**Government and the ‘Governance’ Turn**

The insertion of European funding into the Northern Irish peace process through third sector organisations must also be seen in light of an overall EU policy of reliance on civil society for legitimacy. Despite the absence of any clear definition of the term ‘civil society’ (see Fischer, 2006), EU institutions, particularly the European Commission, have in some ways circumvented national/supranational distinction by connecting with non-state actors at various levels of European government in the delivery of services (see Knox, 1998). This re-orientation from ‘rowing’ to ‘steering’ – or governance (Kooiman, 2003, 1993) involves the state (or supra-state) administering public policy through what are known as Public Private Partnerships (frequently PPPs). The EU’s engagement with voluntary sector bodies within Northern Ireland and in the Irish Republic reflects a continuation of praxis that had emerged only since the early 1990s (Williamson et al, 2000). In its White Paper on governance (European Commission, 2001) the Commission set out its vision of more effective supranational functioning. Governance, in essence, is the functional amalgamation of public/state policy and private interests and capacities. It involves the delivery of public policy through private and/or voluntary bodies as opposed to public services only. The advantages for the EU, beyond issues of economic efficiency, are manifold. Chiefly, they revolve around the broader issue of acquiring legitimacy from among a range of non-state actors within national jurisdictions, thus consolidating the EU’s institutional legitimacy. In addition, there are also practical reasons for the incorporation of civil society into the two key levels of public policy praxis: policy formulation and policy delivery. Civil society can provide an institution such as the European Commission or Parliament with invaluable technical expertise, which in turn aids in the formulation of viable policies. The fact that civil society actors have participated and had input into the process means that the prospects for fostering ownership and success in effective policy delivery are enhanced. The institutions of the EU, contrary to hostile press representations, are remarkably under resourced given the extent of their supranational role. They do not have teams of experts ready to deploy technically informed analysis to the formulation of policy across its expansive range of policy competencies. Consequently, the EU relies heavily in consulting expertise and affected interests from outside the institution. Similarly, the implementation of policy ranges across some salient modalities peculiar to the European context. EU policy can emerge along a continuum from directive, regulation and decision to co-regulation and soft law (see European Commission, 2010). The more recent Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is, in effect, a form of peer review across EU member states and sectors, allowing for greater flexibility in method but much closer integration of policy goals and indicators of success. The OMC method is a more subtle, flexible but arguably more effective method of governance. It is, as Walters and Haahr (2005) note, the most overt and sophisticated rendering of Foucauldian governmentality yet devised.

These aspects of EU decision-making bear directly on the administration of the Peace programmes. Despite the *sui generis* nature of the programmes, Peace I, II, III are manifestations of EU governance and policy delivery, albeit one limited to Track III level actors operative within a non-standard environment. As McCall and O'Dowd note, peace building and reconciliation are deeply interwoven with practices of transnational governance (McCall and O'Dowd, 2008: 30). The added dimension, peculiar to the Northern Ireland context, is the question of reconciliation in a divided society. It is to this component that we now turn.
Participatory (and Deliberative) Democracy

Emerging from this shift towards a ‘governance’ modality, and the inclusion of non-state and non-political actors is the normative value placed on participatory democracy (see Held, 2006). It is clear that participatory democracy is a prominent normative paradigm within the Peace Programmes. Active citizenship and engagement through (voluntary) organisations is a good in itself, usually in the sense that citizens learn to appreciate participation at any level. However, participation is not the same as deliberation (Mutz, 2006). Deliberation, in the Habermasian sense, is where opposing, antagonistic or incompatible perspectives are exposed to one another in a public sphere and a working consensus is the objective. Therefore, as Mutz points out, they are not only different – they may even be antagonistic (Mutz, 2006). Arguably, the imperatives of the Peace Programmes, and Peace III in particular, towards ‘reconciliation’ are reflective of this latter approach. It is important, therefore, to be conscious of the distinction as less specialist treatments of these tend to use participation and deliberation interchangeably. It was Sunstein (2002) who drew attention to the risks inherent in relying on ‘deliberation’ in what he referred to as ‘enclave’ settings, that is, those settings where only like minded participants are present (see also Sunstein, 2000). Group polarization occurs because, Sunstein argues:

Groups, and group members, move and coalesce, not toward the middle of antecedent dispositions, but toward a more extreme position in the direction indicated by those dispositions. The effect of deliberation is both to decrease variance among group members, as individual differences diminish, and also to produce convergence on a relatively more extreme point among predeliberation judgements (Sunstein, 2002: 178).

The relevance here for any analysis of Peace Programmes lies in the ongoing question marks over single community initiatives. Single community organisations, defended on the assumed need to build internal community capacity prior to cross community engagement, are arguably classifiable under Sunsteins ‘enclave deliberation’ concept. The issue for the Peace programme is whether enabling enclave deliberation through building up the capacity of single community bodies inadvertently strengthens the polarisation of communities.

The Conflict Transformation Imperative – Reconciliation

One key axiom underpinning the Peace programmes’ normative dimension, which distinguishes it from standard regional development policy, is the issue of moving Northern Irish and Border communities towards closer and more benign, if not positive, inter-community relationship. It is interesting that one of the most contested elements within the Peace Programmes is that of single community initiatives (Acheson and Milofsky, 2008: 76). These are initiatives that are not designed to foster contact across the sectarian divide, but rather to build capacity within a particular community. As such, and given the implicit emphasis placed on inter-community relations, we can surmise that a variant of Allport’s ‘contact hypothesis’ is operative within the Peace programme rationale (see Allport [1954] 1979; see also Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). The basic premise is that regular contact between antagonistic or conflictual social groupings serves to undermine preconceptions and prejudices, foster cooperation and harmonise social relations. Notwithstanding the agreements and levels of cooperation manifest at political elite level it has been noted that physical barriers remain between interface areas since 1998 (EESC, 2008, para. 1.2) and have been strengthened and extended in some cases. Elite-led initiatives are conceivably placed in jeopardy in the absence of grassroots engagement, with dissident paramilitary activity lurking in the background. We might reflect briefly on some of the correlates of this disparity.
The question applicable at this stage is: to what extent are Track III initiatives capable of overcoming structural and policy inhibitions to a more cohesive political space? The number of Track III actors is extensive (see SEUPB, 2010). It is almost a cliché to point out that societal cleavage, although exacerbated by several decades of violent conflict, has deep historical roots. Social practices that have become normalised over the course of time, such as segregated residences and confessionally based education, are highly resilient in the face of tentative ‘cross-community’ peace initiatives. Despite being heavily involved in supporting the peace process in Northern Ireland, the New Labour period in government has overseen domestic UK policy that is antithetical to the imperatives of peacebuilding. Despite a desire to realise the contrary, some argue that the UK is now more divided along ethno-religious lines than before (see Hasan, 2009; Sen, 2006). Riots in Bradford and Oldham in mid-2001 exposed the existence of ‘parallel lives’ (Cantle Report, 2001) New Labour’s policy on enhancing the role of ‘faith schools’ in education policy delivery have led to the increasing categorisation and classification of children along a ‘multi-faith’ spectrum. This wider UK driven policy has significant implications for the integrated education movement potentially impeding precisely the shared space envisaged by Peace III in the Northern Ireland context. As Bruegel notes, the contact hypothesis, when mediated through cultural-religious gatekeepers has – at best – no positive impact on attitudes, and may even exacerbate ideas of difference and ‘othering’ (Bruegel, 2006). The imperative to transform conflict is not just coming up against resilient attitudes among those not directly participating in Peace programme projects. The entire Peace programme is operating in a structurally hostile environment, where the potential of the ‘contact hypothesis’ to have any transformational effects is significantly mediated and diluted through structurally embedded sectarian/identitarian claims.7 Our analysis of the Peace programme’s impact can hardly avoid examining the structural inhibitions to transformation and the perpetuation of societal cleavage.

The Actors – An Institutional Perspective

An important element perhaps less frequently considered is the fact that the empirical base envisaged for the document is garnered from actors involved in the delivery of (cross-) community organisations and initiatives. These actors, despite their often small size, are classifiable as organisations. Organisations, or associations, are very particular kinds of social actors (Scott, 2008). They provide simultaneously a horizon of meaning, a normative framework and strategic rationality for those participating in and reproducing organisational life and goals. New (or sometimes ‘Neo-’) Institutionalism can offer theoretical guidance in engaging with the complexities of inter organisational relations, and provide new avenues of analysis. It is also imperative that this analytical framework be brought to bear on the supranational institutions supporting the Peace Programmes, the institutions of the EU itself. Without an extended exposition of its theoretical complexities, or their internal theoretical tensions, New Institutionalism, as an approach, prompts us to consider the rationalities of the various actors implicated in the Peace Programmes more closely. This is consistent with the prescriptions of Lederach, who cautioned against the imposition of universal concepts of peacebuilding. Instead, the conceptual frames and horizons of local (and supra-national) actors should be harnessed as a peacebuilding resource (Lederach, 1995: 26). In short, a ‘situated’ knowledge of various actors is required, one that accounts for their perspective on the various obstacles to cross border and cross community peacebuilding identified by McCall and O’Dowd (2008: 36ff). These obstacles included:

- Currency differentials
- Different systems of taxation

7 For a discussion of the religious and sectarian dimension in this regard see Fulton (2002).
• Lack of good coordination between statutory and voluntary agencies on either side of the border
• Poor community infrastructure
• Lack of human resources
• Time to effectively implement projects
• Lack of project management skills
• Lack of innovative design skills
• Fear of resistance to cross-border community development
• Lack of experience in managing relations with a cross-border partner
• Paucity of cross-community, cross-border trust and social exclusion (McCall and O'Dowd, 2008: 36).

Discussion on Methodology

Inhibiting a more focused consideration of methodology is the ongoing and incomplete process of pinning down the precise nature of the end product and the appropriate target or level of readership. The following section considers the options in document form and offers an oblique reading of the project with a view to opening up a new vista on product form, one that incorporates the input of Track III actor narratives. The ‘Draft Preface’ has ruled out several obvious contending formats:

• A ‘how to’ manual
• An evaluation
• Publicity brochure
• Academic analysis

While cognisant of these parameters it is clear that some evaluative ‘framing’ is unavoidable. It is also useful that some academic or theoretical insights be brought to bear, at least insofar as it prompts consideration of new angles of inquiry. By admitting the ‘reconciliation’ dimension, assumptions and axioms of a normative nature are inevitable, even if their definition remains problematic. In fact, for the EU itself, it is questionable whether a clear definition of reconciliation is of paramount importance. The concept of reconciliation is perhaps less an objective than it is an instrument. Everyone seeks ‘reconciliation’, despite the lack of definitional clarity, because it encapsulates an alternative to conflict. The reconciliation criterion, the Peace Programmes distinctiveness, might be more to do with making the intervention palatable and banal (as mentioned above) rather than merely distinct. An obvious question, emanating from this, is to query the extent to which ‘reconciliation’ has been achieved. Is ‘reconciliation’ measurable? It requires that we define our concept of reconciliation (see Hamber and Kelly, 2004; also Daly and Sarkin 2006) and determine a method of comparison with extant indicators from empirical research. This is fraught with methodological difficulties, not least of which is the daunting objective of measuring a contested and amorphous concept such as reconciliation between peoples and/or groups. Still more daunting is the necessity of determining some normative anchor, if the interests of the primary funding body are excluded. The question we need to ask, in this case, is whether this agonising is necessary. The EU might not care, as long as people in conflict zones define ‘reconciliation’ broadly, subjectively and in opposition to manifest conflict.

A more urgent question, from the perspective of the author(s), is the extent to which author evaluative frames are imposed, and whether this imposition should supersede participant normative perspectives. The title of the study, *The Story of Peace*, connotes the implicit desire to permit the maximum level of self-exposition by Track III actors; allowing, in effect,
the participants to tell their own story and offer situated perspectives on how the Peace programmes impacted their activities. Participant perspectives on the Peace programmes form the cornerstone of empirical analysis. However, several dangers lurk here. First, we might question whether this will facilitate the exposition of precisely the information that is ‘of use’ to the perceived target readership. Second, in view of the chronological scope of the study (from the commencement of the Peace I programme in 1995 to the present) there are questions of continuity to be considered. For example, given the significant numbers of participating bodies, we must reflect on whether our empirical data can capably reflect the continuity of the programme through the same community organisations. Are the organisations that were funded under Peace I sufficiently involved in the Peace II and III programmes to offer a stable comparison? Are the same actors involved from the beginning to the present? The main strategic objective of Peace I, retained throughout the Peace programmes to date, was:

To reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation by increasing economic development and employment, promoting urban and rural regeneration, developing cross-border co-operation and extending social inclusion (Peace III Operational Programme, para. 1.4).

However, the sub-objectives altered over the roll out of the three programmes (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Sub-objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Peace I</td>
<td>Economic growth and progress towards social development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace II</td>
<td>Addressing the legacy of the conflict  &lt;br&gt; Taking opportunities arising from peace and paving the way to reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace III</td>
<td>Reconciling communities (building positive relationships at local level &amp; acknowledging the past);  &lt;br&gt; Contributing to a shared society (creating shared public spaces &amp; developing key institutional capacity for a shared society)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2: Outline of programme sub-objectives for Peace programmes (PriceWaterhouseCooper, 2007, pp. 42-43).

Several important differences emerge from this exposition of sub-objectives, and they are not inconsequential for The Story of Peace project. First, the wholly socio-economic emphasis in Peace I reflected a need for the programme to remain aloof from ongoing Track I and II initiatives. By engaging primarily (if not solely) in the economic and development sphere Peace I avoided politicisation, a characteristic enough strategy by the EU. When Peace II commenced tentative stability allowed a more explicitly normative dimension to emerge, with the provision of space for community and voluntary initiatives centred on post-conflict cross community relations, in this case by dealing with the legacy of the conflict. Peace III attempted to move beyond ‘recognition’ of differences and acknowledgment of mutual affliction to concentrate on a future focused process or (re-) engagement and relational transformation. A corollary question at this point is: what impact has the evolution of Peace programme sub-objectives had on Track III actors?
We might make a determined effort to include Track III perspectives that have participated over the life of the Peace programmes since 1995, but it must be questioned whether success in doing so is necessarily a strength or a weakness. Does the extended analytical timeframe mean that those Track III actors that have dissipated over the period will not be included? If so, what perspectives might be lost? While the continuities may prove difficult enough to account for, the dis-continuities – equally valuable – may prove even more so. The three phases of the programme to date reflect shifts in normative priorities. Arguably, the Peace programmes do not so much follow a definite teleology as they do an impersonal logic of conflict and post conflict processes. This is not planned. It is processual. Given this subtle shift in normative focus the flexibility and capacity of Track III actors to remain relevant becomes a very necessary consideration. Did smaller associations retain relevance to the evolving Peace programmes given the alterations throughout, or was relevance retained by organisations through a reflective alteration in their ontology?

Second, the normative grid of each of the various organisations may not sit easily with macro level evaluations of peacebuilding and reconciliation. This is not to assert the de-legitimisation of any of these perspectives. Some organisational objectives may well blend sufficiently with concepts such as peacebuilding, reconciliation and cross-community relations, but others may not. As E. E. Schattschneider pointed out some decades ago, all organisation is the ‘mobilisation of bias’ (Schattschneider, 1960, pp.24ff). We might consider asking: what biases informed the organisations that mobilised and developed either prior to the Peace programmes or in response to them? To what extent are these more localised rationalities strategically compatible with the objectives of the Peace programmes? It is, in light of this, unsurprising to find contestation over single community versus cross community initiatives. These considerations prompt us to critically reflect on whether community organisations are any better at gauging the strategic success or otherwise of Peace programmes. A pertinent distinction to be made at this point is elaborated upon by Ross (2004, pp. 7ff) where he discusses the difference between the internal criteria of a project’s success and external criteria, although the precise definitions of these require some modification. In our case, the former evaluation is made from the standpoint of the organisations engaged at grassroots level, and their more localised evaluative grid serves to classify success or failure through available indicators, even anecdotal ones (see Byrne et al, 2009a, pp. 57ff). Ross’s original definition of internal criteria demarcated the extent to which a project achieved its immediate goals (Ross, 2004, p.9). For our purposes, we might further clarify this to mean the immediate goals envisaged by the grassroots actors. The external criteria are understood here as the evaluative framework or grid of the main strategic actor, in this case, the EU. Ross defines external criteria as linking ‘the specific effects of an intervention to the wider conflict in which it occurs’ (Ross, 2004, p. 10). This is modified for our purposes to the purvey of the funding/governmental body, which is concerned with strategic indicators of demonstrable attitudinal and behavioural change (reduction in sectarian incidents or a reduction or elimination of conflictual rhetoric).

Furthermore, Ross has elsewhere (Ross, 2000, pp. 1022-1023) outlined the major theories of practice concerned with conflict resolution. These include: community relations, principled negotiation, human needs, identity, intercultural miscommunication, and conflict transformation. As Ross points out:

[E]ach one has a very different emphasis in how they define conflict, what concrete steps they take to address it, what are its indicators of success, and how they presume cross-level transfer will occur (Ross, 2004, p. 4).

Given the lack of systematic analysis of the conflict at the outset of Peace I it is fair to say that assigning any one of these to the rationale of the Peace programme is problematic. However, different elements can be said to drift into and out of the practical assumptions
underpinning the three main phases. What we as analysts need to take from all this is that even macro level normative frames may not be consistent or continuous. The appropriate, and not insignificant, question to confront at this point is: for who were the Peace programmes successful or not? To that end, our analysis, to have any long lasting relevance, needs to bring something different to the arena.

**The Original Terms of Reference**

Paragraph 3.2 of the original terms of reference sketch out the parameters of the research project:

> [D]evelop a handbook which will effectively collect, share and analyze the the experience of managing EU PEACE funding in a complex political environment and in particular explore the challenges of balancing sound programme and financial management with the goals of peace and reconciliation (TOR, 2010: para. 3.2).

It is important, in light of the forgoing discussion, to examine the implications of the task(s) presented. First, the definition of a ‘handbook’ includes a book of instruction or guidance, a reference book or a scholarly book on a specific subject. Although the instructional potential has already been ruled out it is clear that the document is intended to draw lessons from the Northern Ireland example with a view to deepening understanding of third party Track III interventions in a specific context and offering a conceptual contribution to other potential interventions. This suggests, furthermore, an implicit transferability of experience from one context to others; a form of ‘lessons learnt’. Emphasised in the original parameters is the process of managing, both programmatically and financially, a peacebuilding programmes in the context of a complex political environment. The distinctiveness of the programme – its normative goals of peace and reconciliation – need to be related to the analysis of these processes.

Some reflections on the original terms of reference:

**A ‘handbook’** The key question here relates to for whom the handbook is intended. It may not be possible to construct such a document with all the stakeholders in mind. What is pertinent for voluntary bodies might be less so for senior policy-makers at regional, national or supra-national level. There is a balance to be struck between breadth and depth of analysis, but it is not possible within a limited document to include critical reflections for all perspectives.

**Collecting, sharing and analysing** The archival task is a significant one in itself. The analysis of the archive could be extensive without some parameters in place. The question of target readership/audience is again important as is the rationale of the document.

**Complex political environment** It is impossible to confine any analysis of European-funded PEACE programmes to the complex environment of a divided society like Northern Ireland, or even the complexity of bilateral relations between the UK and Ireland. The European dimension is critical to any understanding of what drove the Peace programme. The macro-level and geopolitical context is a vital dimension. What was happening in Europe and internationally in the run up to the IRA ceasefire and the initiation of the Peace I programme? In short, the conditions of possibility for the Peace programme need to be revisited, particularly in light of any desire to make the experience transferable to other conflict intervention scenarios.

**Programme management** To what extent is the day to day management of the Peace Programme transferable to contexts beyond the Northern Ireland-Border context? Given the
specific nature and structures in N. Ireland we might be able to draw some direct lessons, but not all.

**Financial management** The policy-makers providing direction to the Peace Programmes drew on already existing practices in the establishment of Peace I (the IFI, INTERREG, etc), the notable difference being the inclusion of more grassroots bodies in the consultation process. Ultimately, there is perhaps much less to be learned here given the EU’s existing expertise in resource delivery mechanisms.

**Peace and reconciliation** The amorphous nature of these terms may actually be a positive. If the EU – or indeed any other high profile political actor – had insisted on defining reconciliation in may well have been seen as an unwelcome imposition. This is precisely what happened when Archbishop Desmond Tutu attempted to replicate the Truth and Reconciliation experience of South Africa in the Rwandan context after the 1994 genocide. The EU, wisely, extricated itself from any assumptions on terminological definition.

**Evaluating Impact**

Whether explicit in the TOR or not, implicitly evaluations will be made, and it is suggested that the criteria for evaluation be made explicit at the outset. How then do we determine the tangible impact that the Peace Programme interventions have had in the Northern Ireland-Border context? As McCall and O’Dowd note

> [P]eace building and reconciliation is a long term process rather than a tangible and clearly defined product. The meaning of both terms continues to be contested (McCall and O’Dowd, 2008: 32).

Even the choice of words used to describe the exercise is problematic and contested, not least in view of the analytical practices they assume. ‘Measuring’ or ‘evaluating’ implies an external calibration point that claims, or is assumed to have, a normative hegemony. This section endeavours to consider the parameters of this contested terminology – rather than resolve the disparities. While an explicit evaluation has been ruled out it is clear that a mere descriptive account of the implementation of the Peace Programmes is not sufficient. The document therefore occupies an ambivalent and ambiguous position between description and evaluation. Nevertheless, it cannot – and arguably should not – be a value free document. The proposed inclusion of the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (hereafter PCIA; see Bush, 2009) connotes an assessment of some kind. Bush (2009) does not use ‘evaluation’ in his definition of the term (Bush, 2009: 4). Therefore, he is consistent when his principle definition of PCIA includes:

1. Mapping the peace and conflict environment within which an initiative is set
2. Identifying the impacts of conflict or peace on an initiative in a violence-prone setting
3. Identifying the impact of an initiative on peace or conflict in a violence-prone setting (Bush, 2009: 4).

The recourse to ‘identifying’ impacts draws back somewhat from a judgemental position on the elements that become the subject of analysis. ‘Identifying’ is more neutral, less intrusive in normative terms. Nevertheless, evaluative frames are inevitable. Should these emanate from a Peace/Conflict research/studies framework or a European Union framework? Another potential avenue is to emphasise the EU Peace Programme’s contribution to the overall peace-making and peace-building efforts
A potentially fruitful approach to consideration of the history and development of PEACE is through the concept of ‘experiment’. PEACE was an experiment in the sense that the EU, while it had intervened within states via structural funding previously, had not done so in the context of a recently established ceasefire in a conflict theatre. The idea of experiment once again draws back from overt normative and ideologically informed judgement, and provides a useful frame through which to examine PEACE as an innovative instrument of supranational intervention. It must be stressed that we, as contemporary observers, are not engaged in the conduct of the experiment. Our function is to observe the EU and the associated national and sub-national actors as they conduct – and observe – their own experiment. The EU, in conjunction with the state actors, had noted (or had been alerted to) an avenue of intervention opened to them below the higher profile Track I and II initiatives. It had, in effect, hypothesised that an intervention was viable and could have a beneficent impact within the wider peace process. It then designed an innovative intervention instrument, in consultation with state and non-state actors, and deployed it over an extended time period with intermittent monitoring. Throughout PEACE the EU, and latterly the state and intermediary funding actors, made informed adjustments on both the mechanics and sub-objectives of the intervention on the basis of considerations of evolving circumstances, reflectively drawing conclusions on their own view of intervention effectiveness. Our analytical task is to follow that experimental process and the EU’s own reflections upon it, as well as the reflections of other state and non-state actors, and outline some informed conclusions that may prove relevant to other cases.

Conclusions

Will policy makers, should they be the primary category of consideration, be interested in the same elements of the Peace Programme as the grassroots organisations? Should our data organisation and analysis reflect an emphasis on lessons learnt and implementation strategy, or should it be an advisory document for grassroots activism? If it is both then the task becomes considerably more complex. This analysis has thrown into relief a greater emphasis on macro-level aspects to the Peace Programmes and to foreground some critical reflections on the nature of the proposed document. Several key conceptual elements have emerged, which bring with them important theoretical insights that might better inform any final document, and provide for a greater level of ‘value added’ for the client. The following offers a summation and further critical reflection on future direction of the project.

One key question that emerges at this point is the extent to which the Peace Programmes themselves were an innovation or a continuation of existing or developing praxis. There is no doubt that some aspects of the Peace Programmes were innovative, but it would be inaccurate to say that they offer a unique approach to peace-building. As discussed above, many individual components of the Peace Programme were already in place through other aspects of EU integration and changes in political praxis throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. This is to say nothing of other relevant examples such as the International Fund for Ireland and INTERREG. Regional funding was already extant, especially to NI and the BMW region. This had been the case for some time. The utilisation of voluntary and community associations and initiatives, more generally known as ‘civil society’, was an extension of the shift in emphasis from government to governance. This approach also drew heavily on concepts of ‘social capital’ and the untapped resources and capacities of the voluntary and community sector as a valuable point of contact with grassroots. The eventual codification of this template in the European Commission’s White Paper in 2001 had already been preceded by the growing reliance of two of the main EU institutions (EP and Commission) upon the input of interest representatives and lobby groups. An implicit rationale within the implementation of Peace programmes, which augmented still further this inclination towards non-state actors, was the emerging concept of ‘participatory’ democracy.
Participatory democracy, while laudable as a concept, embodies some significant risks. As Sunstein has pointed out, the exposure of participants to stronger versions of their own inclinations within like-minded groups results in the strengthening of extreme attitudes. Mutz has shown that participation correlates negatively with deliberation, where the latter is designed to permit the reformulation of views in light of the ‘better argument’. Deliberation, or what Parekh called ‘thoughtful and cerebral’ discussion, is not a natural disposition among activist members of mobilised biases. The utility of participatory mechanisms is ultimately grounded in the ‘contact hypothesis’, whereby sustained contact between disparate groups fosters familiarity, the normalisation of relationships and the transformation of prejudice and antagonism.

It is precisely at this point that the limits of the Peace programme intervention become apparent. In the face of considerable structurally embedded divisions, the EU intervention comes up hard against the reality of segregated residence, segregated schooling and what Diez et al refer to as ‘incompatible subject positions’ (Diez et al 2006). The capacity of EU interventions to engage meaningfully with these inhibitions needs to be reflected upon much more realistically, and the EU would be among the first to recognise the limitations of its own conscious efforts. Ultimately, any analysis needs to acknowledge the primacy of actor ownership of the conflict. Modelling peace-building initiatives, whether by the EU or otherwise, on the basis of the Northern Ireland/Border area experience does need to be circumscribed by more limited claims-making for its success. While we should not underestimate the contribution of the programmes, overstating their case, or assuming a causal role where evidence does not support it, does not aid understanding. What distinguishes the Peace Programmes from other financial interventions is its explicit insistence upon the distinctiveness criteria: that is, the emphasis placed upon the ‘peace and reconciliation’ dimensions. Here we might draw an instructive lesson from the most basic fact concerning the Peace Programme’s objectives – their incremental alteration over the extended time period. While Peace I was primarily economically impelled, Peace II began the process of dealing with historical trauma, while Peace III propelled funding towards rebuilding an integrated socio-political space. An implicit, if perhaps sub-conscious, logic was at work here, reflecting the processual nature of peace-building, and in particular its refusal of easy categorisation. If one vital lesson can be read from the Peace Programmes at this point it is the open ended nature of the intervention, which is evinced in two key respects. First, there is the open ended nature of the sub-objectives, which wisely altered in the face of the prevailing political context, and even avoided any explicit normative formulation in the early stages with the exception of economic re-distribution. Second, the Peace programmes seemed content to operate with more nebulous definitions of some if its key concepts, particularly ‘reconciliation’. Typically, the EU may well have decided to concede definition of such contested terms as ‘peace’ and ‘reconciliation’ to the conflict actors, as any attempted definitional imposition from ‘above’ may well have de-legitimised its role. ‘Reconciliation’, like so many other ideas within the wider peace process, would have to be agreed upon.

I therefore propose an outline for further consideration as follows:

**TITLE: The PEACE Contribution to Peace-building in NI**

*Concept*

**PART I: Conditions of possibility**

- This outlines the specific micro, meso and macro level factors and variables – and their confluence – at the point where the Peace Programme was established in 1995.
PART II: Rationalities of intervention

- This section explores the prevailing normative and attitudinal culture that shaped the nature of intervention, and also explores the practical goals designed and articulated at salient points in the evolution of the Peace Programme.

[Practice]

PART III: Operating PEACE Programmes

- This section outlines – in illustrative form – specific examples of the refined methods of funding distribution peculiar to the Peace Programme. It examines, in accessible form, how monies moved through the distribution system, the processes that were established and the end point of expenditure.

PART IV: The Contribution of PEACE

- The final section essentially asks the question ‘what worked?’ – along with the necessary correlate ‘what didn’t?’ – in order to frame an overall presentation of the Peace Programme to interested external observers and actors.


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