THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION FOR PROMOTING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Liam O'Dowd and Cathal McCall

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION FOR PROMOTING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Liam O'Dowd and Cathal McCall

Institute for British-Irish Studies
University College Dublin

IBIS Working Papers
No. 55, 2006

(also printed as
MFPP working paper no. 5)

ABSTRACT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION FOR PROMOTING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

This paper focuses on the significance of the cross-border dimension in promoting peace and reconciliation. Its central argument is that cross-border co-operation can help undermine the territorial "caging" which has been so central to the conflict in Northern Ireland. The paper begins by making the case that borders and border change are integral to conflict and its resolution. Secondly, it traces how the recent re-configuration of cross-border relations has challenged the architecture of "containment" which has both limited and intensified communal conflict in Ireland. Thirdly, it reports on some empirical research into the cross-border co-operation promoted by voluntary sector organisations funded under Peace II. Finally, it draws some tentative conclusions about the importance of transnational cross-border co-operation across the external and internal borders in undermining the territorialist zero-sum conflict which has long characterised Northern Ireland and which now assumes its most visible and antagonistic form at the interfaces bordering the two communities within the province.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Liam O'Dowd is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Centre for International Borders Research (CIBR) at Queen's University, Belfast. Recent publications include *Culture and cooperation in Europe's borderlands* [European Studies, 19] (Rodopi, 2003); *New borders for a changing Europe: cross-border co-operation and governance* (Frank Cass, 2003), both co-edited with James Anderson and Tom Wilson, and "The changing significance of European borders", *Regional and federal studies* 12 (4) 2002, pp. 13-36.

Cathal McCall is Lecturer in European Studies at Queen's University, Belfast. Recent publications include *Identity in Northern Ireland: communities, politics and change* (Palgrave, 2001), and "Shifting thresholds, contested meanings: governance, cross-border co-operation and the Ulster unionist identity", *European studies: a journal of European culture, history and politics* 19, 2003, pp. 81-103.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION FOR PROMOTING PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Liam O'Dowd and Cathal McCall

INTRODUCTION

The cross-border dimension has come to be accepted by all sides as part of the framework for resolving the Northern Ireland conflict. In its previous incarnation as the "Irish dimension" it goes back to earlier initiatives in this area. Since the early 1990s at the level of high politics it has become identified with Strand 2 in the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. From the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985), it has been strongly supported by the US and the EC/EU.[1] The emphasis has been on promoting cross-border economic cooperation of mutual benefit to the peoples on the island, but also as a potential driver of peace-building and reconciliation. The EU Commission, in conjunction with the British and Irish governments, has gone further by initiating the Peace 1 and Peace II programmes to underpin the paramilitary ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement respectively. This has taken the form of multi-level partnerships involving the Commission, government departments on either side of the border, voluntary sector agencies and grassroots community groups in a process designed to build bridges between the two communities in the North and between both and communities in the border counties of the Republic.[2] The Peace programmes have been heavily criticised by participants, sometimes on grounds of sectarian imbalance, more often on the basis of their funding priorities, excessive bureaucracy and effectiveness. Yet, few of those involved question their net benefit. For example, the voluntary sector, all the political parties in Northern Ireland and the government in the Republic favour a Peace 3 programme.

This paper focuses directly on the significance of the cross-border dimension in promoting peace and reconciliation. Its central argument is that cross-border cooperation can help undermine the territorial "caging" which has been so central to the conflict in Northern Ireland. As such the paper is primarily concerned with the state border while also raising the question of links between it and the internal borders which separate Catholics and Protestants within Northern Ireland. It suggests that the contribution of cross-border cooperation to conflict resolution must not be seen

---

[1] The impact of the EU on promoting cross-border cooperation has received more attention than that of the USA (See for example recent work of Hayward, 2004 and the EU border conflicts research programme). The USA has relied more on supporting private business through the International Fund for Ireland. Comparative studies of EU and US promotion of cross border cooperation suggest that heavy involved of state institutions at all levels characterises European efforts while US sponsored cross-border cooperation (as in across the US-Mexican border for example) is focused on private sector initiatives (Blatter, 2004).

[2] The specific *raison d'etre* of the Peace II programme that has funded the "Mapping Frontiers" project of which this paper forms a part includes "addressing the legacy of the conflict" and "taking opportunities arising from the peace". Like Peace 1, Peace II has allocated 15% of its total budget to promoting cross-border co-operation.

in isolation from the building of bridges between both communities in the North. The thrust of the peace process has been to separate two sets of issues, the first to do with North-South (i.e. cross-border) relations, the second to do with cross-communal relationships within Northern Ireland. This separation can be justified pragmatically on a political level and is a major part of the architecture of the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. This paper argues, however, that the relationship between cooperation across the external and internal borders of Northern Ireland needs to be explored and developed as it is critical to furthering peace and reconciliation.

The paper begins by making the case that borders and border change are integral to the conflict and to its resolution. Secondly, it traces how the recent reconfiguration of cross-border relations has challenged the architecture of containment which has both limited and intensified communal conflict in Ireland. Thirdly, it reports on some empirical research into transnational cross-border cooperation carried out by the voluntary sector and funded under Peace II. Finally, it draws some tentative conclusions about the importance of transnational cross-border cooperation in undermining the territorialist zero-sum conflict which has long characterised Northern Ireland and which now assumes its most visible and antagonistic form at the interfaces bordering the two communities within Northern Ireland.

STATE BORDERS, BORDER CHANGE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

A growing international and interdisciplinary literature on borders and border change helps illuminate the connection between state borders, border change and conflict resolution.[3] Ironically, the stimulus for this new interest in borders has been the challenge posed by new forms of economic, political and cultural globalization to existing territorial borders. "Strong" theories of an increasingly "borderless" world have been confronted by the empirical recognition that borders are not so much disappearing as being reconfigured in new ways (Nederveen Pieterse, 2002). There has been a simultaneous occurrence of "de-bordering" and new forms of demarcation (Albert and Brock, 1996: 70). General accounts have noted that the declining salience of national borders and inter-state conflicts have often coincided with the increased salience of internal borders and intra-state conflicts (Tilly, 1990; Bauman, 1992) New forms of globalization have unsettled and reconfigured national borders while providing new opportunities and rationales for ethnonational groups wishing to challenge existing state borders while often demanding their own states in the process.[4] At the same time, a patchwork of international and transnational organisations seeks to develop, however imperfectly, a form of governance aimed at managing

---

[3] See, for example, Diez, Stetter and Albert, 2003; Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson, 2003a, 2003b; Wilson and Donnan, 1998; Anderson, 1996.

[4] Anderson and O'Dowd (1999) argue that new forms of globalization such as the growth of US direct investment and the spread of the mass media played a part in unsettling the border in Ireland, creating new opportunities for contacts between both administrations, stimulating internal tensions within Northern Ireland and providing a means of publicising internationally the grievances of Northern Irish nationalists.

global trade, violent conflicts, boundary disputes, and promoting human rights and ecological protection (Held et al, 1999).

Border change has assumed two forms which occasionally coincide—geographical or locational, and functional. The geographical boundaries of states are variable. Lustick (1993: 1) observes that "no fact about states is more obvious than the impermanence of their boundaries". He writes in the aftermath of the implosion of the Soviet Empire but is also registering the replacement of great empires by the interstate system in the twentieth century and the burgeoning intra-state tensions generated by ethnonational secessionists and nationalists defending the boundaries of the existing state.[5]

The long history of state formation reveals no universally agreed criteria, imperialist, nationalist or ethnic, of where and how state borders should be drawn and who should draw them. Neither are there agreed guidelines for how many states should exist or on what basis groups might affiliate to, or secede from, existing states. Border creation therefore is frequently arbitrary, coercive and violent—the outcome of the capacity of powerful states and elites to impose their "solutions" on weaker groups. As national states have proliferated in the twentieth century, these questions have become more rather than less pressing. At this level, border conflict in Ireland is scarcely unique—it marked a form of conflict resolution imposed by the British government of the time. What is more remarkable, perhaps, is the subsequent longevity of the Irish border which now qualifies as one of the oldest in Europe, despite being continually contested by its opponents since its inception.

The variable territory demarcated by state borders, however, is only one form of border change. While misplaced or displaced groups may contest border lines, even more pervasive, and certainly more continuous, is the change in the function and meaning of state borders. Like many other state borders, the function and meaning of the Irish border has changed in tandem with the decline of imperial power, the growth in the institutional power and infrastructure of states within a globalised interstate system, and with new forms of economic, political and cultural globalization over the last four decades. In one sense, the functions of state borders have become more specialised and less all-embracing even if they still remain symbolic markers of collective identity. The meaning and salience of territorial borders varies, however, across states, time periods and social groups. The capacity to cross state borders, either as migrants, tourists or workers also varies greatly across time periods and by income, occupation, class, racial group or nationality. Information and finance capital cross borders more easily than goods. Borders, therefore, are regulators of movement and make movement possible although often in a highly restricted and structured manner. It should not be surprising, therefore, that it is the

---

[5] O'Leary (2001: 2) notes "'in the twentieth century borders were moved, re-moved, taken, re-taken, and abandoned, and peoples were moved, re-moved and slaughtered on an epic 'scale". In his revised definition of the state, he defines it as having a variable border or territory in contradistinction to Weber's emphasis on a "'fixed territorial boundary'" (2001: 3). He suggests that it would be remarkable if the territoriality of states was immune to the variables that have shaped modernity arguing for a programme of research that examines the causes and consequences of moving borders.

most disadvantaged communities in Northern Ireland which are most constrained by internal territorial borders.

Any approach to understanding borders in general, and the Irish border in particular, must develop a framework which recognises their highly complex, ambivalent and changeable nature.[6] At the same time, it must acknowledge that groups, nations and states invest heavily in the permanence of borders even as they remain contested in one form or another as people try to create, maintain and transcend them. However, popular conceptions of the Irish border have tended to see it in rather one-dimensional and static terms—asmarking competing and exclusivistic claims to territory and as a barrier between "us" and "them". Scholarly studies of the nature and the impact of the Irish border have been remarkably scarce. In part, this is due to a broader tendency of history and the social sciences to take state borders for granted as units of analysis, thereby equating state and society. Academic avoidance may also have something to do with the emotions and myths generated by the Irish border and the almost sacred place it has assumed in the contending ideologies of Irish nationalism and Ulster unionism (Coakley and O'Dowd, 2004). Those studies which have been undertaken have been quickly assimilated into traditional unionist or nationalist positions on partition without addressing the broader dynamics of border change.

RECONFIGURING THE IRISH BORDER: DISRUPTING "CONTAINMENT"

The conflict in Ireland and attempts to resolve it since 1970 may be understood in terms of the dynamics of border change. By the 1960s, the architecture of containment designed in 1920-21 was beginning to be undermined. This architecture involved a particular configuration of relationships between the inter-state border and the internal borders between the "two communities" in Northern Ireland. While "the border" remained a matter of dispute *de iure* between the British and Irish governments, they had come to take it for granted, *de facto*, i.e., in that it served to "cage" competing ethnonational and territorial demands within Northern Ireland. The arrangement seemed to deliver stability for long periods and, for the most part, served as a *cordon sanitaire* which prevented overspill of the conflict from Northern Ireland to the 26 county state and the rest of the UK. This stability was achieved without ethnic cleansing or a mass displacement of populations. But stability was also dependent on a highly systematic form of internal "caging" which caused the conflict to fester. Within Northern Ireland "caging" embraced a micropolitics of territorial control involving elections, government policies, popular intimidation and cultural practices. It sustained, and was sustained by, a culture of voluntary apartheid between the "two communities". The zero-sum politics of territorial control were privileged while the occupation and control of territory was the ultimate metaphor and measure of the state of the conflict between the two sides.

---

[6] One way of conceptualising borders is to see them as barriers (both protective and exclusionary), bridges, resources and symbols of identity (O'Dowd, 2002).

From the 1960s onwards a great variety of often contradictory developments began to disrupt the form of territorialist politics which had stabilised the conflict for 50 years. These developments included the growth of North-South cooperation in the 1960s, the emergence of the civil rights movements and popular unionist attempts to regain control of the streets, the growth of communal conflict, the imposition of direct rule, the militarisation of the conflict which further enhanced the internal borders within Northern Ireland and the growing inter-governmental partnership between the British and Irish governments, and the eventual involvement of the EC/EU and the USA in the search for a new solution. As the outline of such a solution emerged it became clear that it would involve a re-configuration of the state border and of its relationship to the internal borders within Northern Ireland.

The Good Friday Agreement is designed to reduce the problematical territorialism at the root of the conflict by multiplying the arenas for dialogue, interaction and persuasion thereby circumscribing the zero-sum politics which has characterised Northern Ireland. It seeks to transform the external and internal borders of Northern Ireland from coercive to contractual or negotiated relationships. At the heart of the Agreement is a consensus among all the parties that the line of partition be accepted unless there is a majority in both jurisdictions on the island to bring about a single Irish state.[7] Thus, there is agreement on the relevant electorates qualified to bring about border change. This provision and the power-sharing, cross-border and equality dimensions of the Agreement provide a possible peaceful and democratic way forward to bring about border change and some form of Irish unity in the future through dialogue and persuasion. On the other hand, it provides similarly for the same means to be used to confirm the Union.

The Good Friday Agreement provided for the revision of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution by removing their territorialist claims and replacing them by a more voluntarist conception of Irish nationhood. This was informed by an explicit recognition that Irish culture does not map precisely on to the borders of the Irish state. The removal of the so-called constitutional claim, while hardly embraced enthusiastically by unionists as a major concession, given that they argued it should not have been there in the first place, nevertheless may have had long term and subtle effect on unionist elites' view of the South and of cross-border relations. The Agreement included explicit recognition of partition by both the Irish government and northern republicans and nationalists while acknowledging that change could come about only by a majority voting for change in both parts of Ireland.[8]

---

[7] Distrust remains among the parties as to their respective commitment to this principle—much of it crystallizing in the conflict over the decommissioning of arms. Some unionists have attempted to retreat from this position by arguing that constitutional change should only come about by the agreement of the majority of both unionists and nationalists. This begs the question of whether the double majority requirement should apply to the maintenance of the status quo also or to innovations like the Good Friday Agreement.

[8] Moreover, plausible speculation might suggest that prolonged interaction with southern governments have persuaded even extreme unionist politicians of the absence of any enthusiastic lobby in southern political circles to "take over" Northern Ireland, even if they sometimes warn of "slippery slopes" and creeping unification. Similarly, it might be estimated that prolonged interaction of southern politicians with northern unionists has reduced their enthusiasm for extending the Irish government's responsibility for Northern Ireland.

More general processes of change also shape unionists' perception—notably the rise of the Celtic Tiger and the loss of influence by the Catholic Church in the South. The impact of these factors is difficult to measure or quantify but this does not mean that they are insignificant. Even a cursory survey of unionists' traditional perceptions of the South reveals the emphasis placed on factors such as economic retardation, the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church, the "inward and backward looking" romanticism of Irish nationalism, and the territorial claim on the whole island. While all these factors have been cited as markers of difference by Ulster unionists, their removal or diminution does not herald a desire to join the Irish republic. Indeed, this narrowing of differences, strongly supported by northern nationalists, may be compatible with the increased tendency of unionists since the 1960s to see themselves as British, i.e. as part of an imagined British nation and as identifiers with the historic and ceremonial aspects of the British state. Nevertheless, arguably the changes do improve the climate for cross-border cooperation for mutual benefit. However, there is some evidence that southerners have now distanced themselves from Northern Ireland, perceiving people there as very different from themselves.

Debates remain over cross-border cooperation—at the political level as the DUP tries to ensure a form of accountability that gives the unionist majority a veto North-South cooperation. But the low key and low profile nature of cross-border cooperation has in general proved less than politically controversial. The EU in particular has played a significant role in creating a more favourable context for cross-border cooperation by funding multi-level partnerships involving governments, voluntary sectors and community groups (Hayward, 2004). Research in the early 1990s by one of the authors in the border region displayed a remarkable degree of support for cross-border economic cooperation among border councillors, including 86% of nationalists and 47% of unionists (O'Dowd, 1994a, 1994b). Unionists were less actively engaged in local authority networks and insisted that cross-border economic cooperation should have no political agenda of creeping unification. They cited the Republic's constitutional claim, the IRA campaign and the Anglo-Irish Agreement as inhibitors of practical cooperation, but were more favourably disposed towards EU sponsored cooperation. Unionists were insistent that cross-border economic cooperation or integration should have no political agenda or spill-over into closer economic ties. Nationalist representatives in the border region, on the other hand, saw economic cooperation as a means towards closer political links.

There are signs that at a number of levels the Irish border is now less of barrier to cross-border cooperation while it is also less highly charged as a stake in the conflict. The road closing and opening campaigns of the early 1990s ended with the ceasefires. The "completion" of the Single European Market meant the removal of the customs posts which had been *in situ* since 1923 and military installations began to be removed as part of the peace process. The invisibility of much of the border suggests that it is now less of a territorialist marker than before. By contrast internal borders within Northern Ireland, and particularly in parts of Belfast, have became more visible and clearly marked by peacelines. They have seemed to be emblematic of deepening inter-communal divisions which can also be gauged from evidence of increased spatial segregation, opposition to the Good Friday Agreement, and growth of inter-communal distrust.

A conventional analysis of the "peace process" (including the Good Friday Agreement) would be that it has improved cross-border relations and brought about enhanced cross-border cooperation while either sharpening internal borders between the "two communities" or, at least, failing to provide any impetus for their amelioration. At one level, this interpretation seems to support international research findings on the reduced salience of inter-state conflict generally and the increased prominence of intra-state conflicts. One consequence is that the cross-border dimension to conflict resolution has been downplayed in an understandable desire to prioritise the improvement of inter-communal relations within Northern Ireland. Both governments seem to have agreed that the future development of the peace process is now dependent on agreement between the political parties representing both "traditions" in the North. While clearly such agreement is critical, what seems to be lacking is an adequate appreciation, or a sense of urgency, *vis a vis* the role of the cross-border dimension in building peace and reconciliation and in facilitating the improvement of inter-communal relations within Northern Ireland.

A plausible reason for this relative neglect of the cross-border dimension is that the North-South strand of the Good Friday Agreement has been on the whole less controversial than Strand 1—the working of the Assembly. However, this lack of controversy should not be taken to mean that the cross-border dimension to peace building is non-problematical or less urgent. Indeed, its low profile may have something to do with the institutionally fragmented cooperation envisaged under the— cooperation further disrupted thereafter by suspensions of the Agreement.[9]

As the Good Friday Agreement remains becalmed, both governments have fallen back on a new version of "containment" policy by placing the onus on the Northern Ireland parties to resolve the deadlock as if it had little to do with inter-state or cross-border relations. Unionist opponents of the Good Friday Agreement have sought to re-interpret the peace process in the zero-sum terms of internal territorial conflict. Thus, they see the peace process, and the Agreement in particular, as marking a series of gains for nationalists at the expense of unionists. According to this view, a new Agreement is needed to provide fairness for both communities. This narrowing focus on internal communal borders, however, rather obscures the potential of the cross-border dimension in building peace and reconciliation.

EU involvement in the peace process, and its sponsorship of the Peace Programmes in particular, allows us to probe further the links between the cross-border cooperation and cooperation across the internal borders within Northern Ireland. Most of the EU Interreg and Peace funds, have been channelled into supporting cooperation between the two states and governments on the island. While this has promoted a considerable cooperative agenda, it has certain built in limitations to do with the territorial imperative of the two jurisdictions, the mismatched competencies

---

[9] A Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) document on designing a successor programme to Peace II noted: "there is no body, architecture or system in place to sustain or to drive north-south cooperation apart from ad hoc arrangements and the joint north-south bodies, which have important, but specific and limited remits" (NICVA, 2004: 8). The potential role of the North-South Ministerial Council has been stymied by suspensions of the Agreement.

of different institutional structures and the different orientations and priorities of both governments *vis a vis* the EU. The process tends to be heavily biased towards "economic" cooperation and has been characterised by elite-level contacts at governmental and business levels.[10] While the "trickle-down" or informal effects of this form of cooperation remain to be explored fully, it is in general more border-confirming than border transcending. In other words, it advances a more benign territorialisation of divisions on the island based on the two governments dividing up the "fixed cake" of EU funding between them.[11]

The distinctiveness of the EU's contribution, however, lies in the extent to which it seeks to de-territorialise the conflict, i.e., to build cross-border networks of cooperation around issues of common interest. In this sense, it seeks to move beyond bounded territory to the creation of a cooperative transnational space. This form of cooperation is more transnational rather than international or inter-governmental. As in the case of the Good Friday Agreement, EU promotion of cross-border cooperation has been biased in favour of inter-governmental cooperation.

PROMOTING TRANSNATIONAL CO-OPERATION VIA THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR: EXAMPLES FROM RESEARCH ON PEACE II

Several aspects of the Peace I and Peace II programmes have sought to involve the voluntary sector in attempts to build multi-level partnerships around cross-border issues (Hayward, 2004). A recent study by the authors explored cross-border cooperation under the Peace II programme EU focusing on Measure 5.3. This measure aimed at building cross-border peace and reconciliation *via* the voluntary and community sector.[12] While the vast bulk of Peace 1 and 2 funding was allocated to building peace and reconciliation between the two communities in Northern Ireland, 15%

---

[10] The Commission rejected the initial proposal from the two governments for the Peace II programme for, among other things, imprecision, lack of demonstrable links to peace building, and for insufficiently linking North and South. The voluntary sector argued for a more direct focus on peace and reconciliation, the British government and the Ulster Unionist Party stressed economic cooperation, the SDLP the social dimension and the DUP argued for the stronger presence of elected representatives at the expense of the voluntary and community sector. The revised programme in the end was more heavily geared to economic cooperation than Peace 1 although it demanded greater clarity on how the various measures would promote peace and reconciliation (Harvey, 2003: 32-35).

[11] Acheson and Milofsky (2004: 3) are highly critical of the shift in priorities from Peace I to Peace II. They claim that a definite move has been made to favour macro-economic and political changes as the dominant peace-building strategy over the alternative of further strengthening community-based organisations and the civil society networks they foster. They argue that Peace II money has tended to be channelled to area-based, sectarian community organisations, with more money going to economic and private sector interests and to intermediate funding bodies than to lower level organisations (2004: 11).

[12] The research was funded by the Royal Irish Academy's Third Sector Research Programme and focused largely on Measure 5.3 (Peace II) entitled "Developing cross-border reconciliation and understanding". It also draws on ongoing research in the Centre for International Borders Research at Queen's on the changing significance of state borders and cross-border cooperation in Europe and elsewhere. We used our interviews to explore key themes such as the role of cross-border cooperation in promoting peace and reconciliation, different types of cross-border cooperation, the meaning of partnership, peace-building, and the key issues and problems as perceived by key actors at various levels within the Peace Programmes.

was allocated for building cross-border partnerships between North and South.[13] The discussion below draws on findings which help illustrate the importance of "transnational" cross-border cooperation in ameliorating communal divisions in Northern Ireland. At one remove from the state, the voluntary sector might be expected to be less "territorial" than state agencies and more likely to escape the exclusivist politics of territorial control. Measure 5.3 was one of the few measures in the overall Peace programme concerned with building peace and reconciliation directly rather than as a by-product of economic development or social inclusion. As such it was close to the ideological heart of the Peace programmes.[14] Its cultural and educational focus meant that it had to grapple directly with the meaning of peace *and* reconciliation and it brought into focus the relationship between cross-community links in Northern Ireland and cross-border links between North and South. Translated into the parlance of the Good Friday Agreement, it interfaced Strand 1 issues and Strand 2 issues, cross-community relations within Northern Ireland and North-South relationships. Fourthly, it had a history as a direct descendant of the measure 3.4 on Cross-Border Reconciliation under Peace 1 where the same voluntary sector bodies ADM/CPA, Co-operation Ireland and Community Confederation for Northern Ireland also played a leading role. Our research on measure 5.3 draws primarily on evidence gathered from interviews with EU and member state government officials, Peace programme managers and third sector intermediary actors, as well as with the providers of 27 projects funded under the measure.

Limitations

A few prior caveats must be entered, however, before presenting the research findings and analysis. First, the relatively narrow focus and short time span of this research project is an inadequate basis for generalising about the overall impact of the Peace programmes as a whole. It is not, therefore, an "evaluation" as understood in the parlance of EU, government and third sector programmes.[15] Secondly, funded third sector activity is not confined to this measure and hence it would be misleading to claim that our study provides a sufficient basis for assessing the success or otherwise of the third sector as a whole in advancing peace and reconcilia-

---

[13] Peace I had funds totalling €503m. Peace II is worth approximately €741m with the EU contributing €531m, national contributions amounting to €177m and private contributions totalling €33m. 15 per cent of this budget is €79.4m with €39.7m of that for Northern Ireland (representing 9.3 per cent of the total allocation in Northern Ireland) and €39.7m for the border counties of the Republic of Ireland (representing 37 per cent of the total allocation for the border counties of the Republic).

[14] In its "Ex-post Evaluation of Peace I and Mid-term evaluation of Peace II" (November 2003) PriceWaterhouseCoopers recommended that funds be transferred to Measure 5.3 and Measure 2.1 ("reconciliation for a sustainable peace") from the other 54 measures of Peace II because both measures related directly to reconciliation and were over-subscribed. The EU commission official responsible for Peace II observed: "Measure 5.3 is an ideal illustration of what the Peace Programme should be about: making an impact, putting people together at the grassroots level" (interview with DG REGIO official, Brussels, 21 April 2004).

[15] Although "evaluations" are now part of the conventional wisdom surrounding such programmes and imply a measure of accountability and criteria for future policy, they remain a highly problematical exercise—especially where the outcome, i.e. facilitating peace and reconciliation, is a long-term aim that is relatively intangible and highly contested. It is extremely difficult to measure the impact of short-term projects with limited resources in terms of their contribution to such broad long-term goals.

tion. Finally, building peace and reconciliation is a long-term process that continues to be contested. The projects researched here are relatively small-scale and time-limited by the Peace II funding regime, hence it would be unreasonable to expect immediate and tangible outcomes or, much less, to expect them to provide a stand-alone alternative to the stalled peace process.

Nevertheless, despite the relatively narrow focus of our research, our interviews with those involved at various levels in the process revealed glimpses of the potential for cross-border cooperation in building peace and in creating conditions for ameliorating communal division within Northern Ireland. It also illustrated a whole range of issues about the meaning of cross-border cooperation, partnership and sustainability, much of which is outside the scope of this paper. In particular, our findings suggest that alongside border-confirming practices, there needs to be border transcending strategies—international (or inter-state) cooperation needs to be supplemented by transnational cooperation if the rigid zero-sum mindset fuelling division in Northern Ireland is to be moderated.

Projects

The projects we examined were predominantly related to a variety of cross-border educational and cultural exchanges, community arts training initiatives, multi-media projects and recreational programmes aimed at increasing mutual understanding and promoting reconciliation. All had a track record in that they had been funded under Peace I, while many had also secured funding from other sources, notably the International Fund for Ireland. Uptake of Peace I's measure 3.4 had been slow initially, with unionist groups reluctant to become involved. By 1999, however, unionist involvement had increased, in part due to a determined promotion by the intermediary funding bodies and the optimism generated by the 1998 Agreement.

One of our more interesting findings was that some unionist groups seemed to prefer cross-border rather than cross-community projects with neighbouring groups in Northern Ireland.[16] One member of a unionist project provider in the Shankill described the exchanges with groups in Drogheda to discuss the meaning of the Somme and the 1916 Rising for unionists and nationalists:

> People in Belfast are comfortable to go south and talk about their history and their culture and their heritage and so on. Absolutely no worries. Largely because they're received as such. You know they're accepted as such … they're accepted by people who basically do want to explore, that haven't been caught up in the immediacy of what was, what's been going on here. But they do want to explore it and they're interested and that debate goes on and friendships are created, positions are stated and accepted but the friendships go on, you know. Here, the end result of a debate has to be a victor, has to be a winner … in fact it's comforting to, you know, even

---

[16] An EU Commission official dealing with Peace II noted: "sometimes it's easier to have cross-border rather than cross-community, sometimes it can be the other way around … it's a case by case thing. The important thing is making contact … working with people from the other side" (interview with DG REGIO official, Brussels, 21 April 2004).

stand back and hear someone from the South articulating, you know, your rights to Republicans here.[17]

Another unionist group was heavily involved in bringing children from working class areas of Belfast to Sligo, where they had taken part in St Patrick's Day parades and been duly impressed by the profusion of flags and other cultural paraphernalia:

you've seen kids leaving Belfast with a, like, protective shield around them, the wee hard man image, and they get down to the South it basically falls away. I suppose it's like going on holiday anywhere you come away from a territory where you've, it's a bit like an animal in the jungle, you protect your territory. Once you go down somewhere where you don't have to protect this territory you become a different person in a sense and the shell falls away. I watch most of the kids come back to Belfast on the bus I can see the attitude will change and their behaviour and they start punching each other and pulling each other by the hair. They're reverting back to the people they where when they left, "I'm still a hard man now so don't you come to my street", and then they get punched in the face. So you can see the attitudinal change in the kids when they come back to Belfast that the shield's gone back up again.[18]

This respondent was realistic, however, about the limits of holiday type exchanges and argued that the development of the project's work meant that sustainability needed to be a priority:

OK you can take kids down to Sligo but unless it's an ongoing, week to week, community relations programme with them, this notion of taking kids for 10 weeks as a project it's useless … you need to take them for a year or two or three year programme where you are going to work with them kids every couple of years cause it's what you have to do. It can't be … cross border stuff will not work in isolation. You need to do some sort of link in with other organisation where once you do the cross-border work with like the kids down the South, there should be then some sort of follow up of things where you actually work with the kids from Belfast. So there needs to be some sort of link. But again that involves man hours and people being involved and volunteering and doing things so it's a lot of heavy work you know. I think the funders must need to have a look at that. That's something they need to have a look at that in the future.[19]

Another interviewee working with youth exchanges agreed that it was easier, initially at least, to bring people from Northern Ireland together in the South, for sporting and other informal events. Nevertheless, the stalled peace process has also complicated Protestant unionist attitudes to cross-border and cross-community cooperation at the grassroots level. One respondent from a project provider observed that, "there is apathy here with the way Stormont has failed—the Protestants would be more keen to keep to themselves".[20] Another commented:

---

[17] Interview with Jackie Hewitt, Farset/Inishowen Project, Belfast, 7 May 2003.

[18] Interview with John Dean, South Belfast Cultural Society, Belfast 16 May 2003.

[19] Interview with John Dean, South Belfast Cultural Society, Belfast 16 May 2003.

[20] Interview with Gordon Speer, Border Arts, Castlederg, 10 September 2003.

there definitely has been resistance to cross-border linkages and that resistance re-
mains, to a point. I don't think it's as strong as it was because they are able to see
that it's not a political thing—we try to avoid talking politics. I think it is a little bit eas-
ier but it changes from time to time depending on what's happening on the political
scene.[21]

Several reflected the reluctance of Protestant schools to become involved in some
projects. Opposition to such contact was influenced by factors such as the breaking
of links between loyalist and republican ex-prisoners groups in the wake of "Stor-
montgate", by disputes over marches and the Holy Cross School.[22] However, many
Protestant respondents also displayed an attitude of perseverance exemplified by
the comment:

> The most comfortable place to be if there's a row going on is among your own peo-
> ple and agreeing with your own people and keeping your door closed and stuff like
> that … a lot of people who are committed and do want to see change can be coaxed
> out, you know, and we do that, but it takes time.[23]

There was some evidence of different attitudes between minority Protestant groups
in rural and border areas and those in more homogenous urban areas. Confirming
other research findings, we found some sense that rural Protestants believe Catho-
lics to be more proficient at community development and perceived such activity to
be "largely a Catholic thing". Urban working-class groups, on the other hand, have a
track record in community development projects and involvement in cross-border
links and have gained confidence as a result. More defensive attitudes persist in ru-
ral border areas that have experienced high levels of politically motivated violence.
In a report by the Rural Community Network on the attitudes of South Armagh Prot-
estants one respondent commented, "if you are the bog standard Protestant and
you see the word 'reconciliation' in the paper, it's off-putting; that's mixing and we
don't want to do it".

However, in other rural areas the situation is changing. According to one respon-
dent from a rural Protestant group on the Tyrone-Donegal border:

> the Protestant community is at a totally different position from where it was at in 1997
> in terms of community development. I could have counted on my hand how many
> groups there were in Tyrone. Now we have a lot of groups. People said that we need
> this for our young people, for women, for whatever. There is a lot more things hap-
> pening now so it is a lot easier.[24]

---

[21] Interview with Derek Reaney, Derry & Raphoe Action, Newtownstewart, 5 June 2003.

[22] "Stormontgate" refers to a PSNI raid on the Sinn Féin offices at Parliament Buildings, Stormont in October,
2002. Documents and computers were seized and a number of party workers were arrested on suspicion of
subversive activity. In December 2005, charges against the party workers were dropped "in the public inter-
est". The following week one of those arrested, Denis Donaldson, admitted that he had been a British agent
since the 1980s and denounced Stormontgate as "a scam and a fiction invented by the police Special
Branch"; http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/4536826.stm.

[23] Interview with Jackie Hewitt, Farset/Inishowen Project, Belfast, 7 May 2003.

[24] Interview with Derek Reaney, Derry & Raphoe Action, Newtownstewart, 5 June 2003.

A respondent from a nationalist project provider claimed that there was as much need to reconcile North and South as there was to reconcile Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland, mentioning, in particular, the apprehension of southerners at the prospect of coming north of the border. This grassroots view was confirmed by one intermediary funding body leader recalling his attempt to engage in an exercise of prejudice reduction with a cross-border group comprising 26 nationalists from either side of the border. The result led him to abandon the discussion having elicited the following: "Northerners leave dirty nappies on our beaches"; "Southerners are over here taking our jobs and working for buttons"; "Southern drivers are Padre Pio drivers, they close their eyes and trust to God"; "Derry women wear too much make-up".[25]

This respondent, one of the main managers of the 5.3 measure, emphasized the distinct value and need for cross-border reconciliation both in its own right and as a detour on the way to better cross-community relations in the North. He also stressed his experience of the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the southern establishment in seeing the Peace programme as a challenge to southern society.

The Irish border created economic, political, social and cultural schism between North and South, and 80 years of partition culminating in 30 years of violent conflict has served to exacerbate such schism. One intermediary funding body leader commented that, "partitionism … is extremely deep-rooted in the Republic of Ireland, arguably as much as or even worse than in Northern Ireland". There is some evidence to suggest that political élites and sections of society in the Republic of Ireland now imagine North and South as economically, politically and culturally separate. For example, in *Through Irish Eyes: Irish Attitudes Towards the UK,* a 2004 report commissioned by the British Council of Ireland and the British Embassy in Dublin, one southern respondent went so far as to comment: "Northern Ireland is just different. Everything about it—the people, the infrastructure, even their clothes, their way of life, they are different people" (Pollak, 2004). However, geographical location and historical relationships can impact upon southern perceptions of "Northerners". According to one project provider in Dundalk, "people [in Dundalk] are closer mentally [to Newry] than they are to Drogheda … there is a mind set there that is much more similar to Newry than Drogheda". He believed that his project, linking the museums in Dundalk and Newry, helped cement historic ties.

There can be no doubt that the border has acted as an effective barrier between North and South and engendered a sense of estrangement between Northern and southern co-nationals and between the two communities in Northern Ireland. However, this sense of estrangement is arguably weaker in the Irish border region. Moreover, it is important not to underestimate durable cultural ties, especially those that bind the Irish nationalist imagined community island-wide. The Catholic Church, the Irish language, Irish music and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) are key cultural resources that continue to be identified with an Irish nation. These common identifications remain despite evidence of prejudice between northern and southern

[25] Paddy Logue, ADM/CPA, in focus group hosted by the authors, Belfast, 30 January 2004.

nationalists in ways that are not readily available or accessible to Protestants. However, the creation of bodies such as Tourism Ireland Ltd under the 1998 Agreement, for the promotion of tourism on an all-Ireland basis, supports the representation abroad of North and South as one and the same place rather than as separate places. This represents a transcending of internal borders and the North-South border simultaneously and constitutes a transnational rather than inter-national form of cooperation.

One of the features of the projects researched here was the emphasis on innovative and creative ways of engaging people in joint projects. Thus one Strabane –Lifford project used the medium of drama "to bring people out of their box, in terms of their thinking and outlook." Another Belfast project was using media, photography, video multi-media and the internet to empower people to campaign on issues that affected them. These projects while developing methods of cross-border and cross-communal communication were less concerned with product or outcome than with process. One project, in seeking to involve young people from the South with both communities in the North and an immigrants centre in Dublin, felt constrained by the territorial limits of the Peace Programme, which embraced only six of the 26 southern counties.[26] Many of the projects employed innovative means of cooperating while "expressing difference" by creating new spaces for interaction and dialogue across the border. Both the relevant intermediary funding bodies and the grassroots organisations involved in Measure 5.3 tended to emphasise the acceptance of difference and the promotion of diversity as a prelude to building trust, confidence, respect, understanding and reconciliation. To this end, storytelling emerged as a key activity.[27] Story-telling has been identified by Rothman (1998) as a particularly important mechanism for reconciliation in identity-based conflicts—self-perceptions being constructed through stories. Developing a peace building strategy based on local expertise and storytelling enables it to become embedded in the local community.

Such a strategy requires "space" beyond the sometimes claustrophobic structures of inter-communal interaction in Northern Ireland, yet a context in which some of the stories resonate. Here the opportunities provided for transnational, cross-border networks are valuable. This research and previous examinations of cross-border cooperation suggests that it may be worth making a distinction between territory and space. Territory involves the bordered geography of both states and the communities within Northern Ireland. Space, on the other hand, is the space of networks, and may refer to Northern Ireland and the border counties, to the all-island context, or to a British-Irish, European or more global context. Space has elastic boundaries, depending on the reach of the networks involved—networks which may be concerned

---

[26] The geographical limiting of the peace programmes to 12 counties in Ireland was criticised by several respondents although occasional derogations were allowed subsequently in order to facilitate links with other counties.

[27] This occurred in several Measure 5.3 projects, including: Community Visual Images, South Belfast Cultural Society, Ballymacarrett Arts and Cultural Society, Border Arts, the Pushkin Prizes Trust, Cumann Gaelach Chnoc na Ros Doire, Co. Museum Dundalk/Newry and Mourne Museums, and the Downpatrick/Listowel Linkage Group.

with specific functional interests that are economic, political, or cultural. Networking projects in cross-border space, like many of those studied here, are conducive to escaping the zero-sum nature of territorially based conflict. They represent a shift away from state-centred activities—the island of Ireland as a space is not a territorial state but it is an arena conducive to developing networks of cooperation. Co-operation across borders is also a growing necessity with respect to human rights, the global economy, environmental issues and new forms of communication which have in large part escaped the containers of territorial state boundaries.

TWO TYPES OF CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

Cross-border networking as practised by intermediary funding bodies and grass-roots bodies under Measure 5.3 is, however, much less prominent than the other form of cooperation between states and state agencies. The latter has been territorial rather than spatial, intergovernmental or international rather than transnational, in character. Inter-governmental cooperation marks a major advance on the decades when formal cross-border contacts were almost non-existent. It renders the border more permeable by building linkages across it. However, as argued above, these activities are also border confirming. Co-operation between, for example, government departments and local authorities serves to remind participants of their differences as well as their similarities, and exposes the different competencies, cultures and practices of accountability which have developed throughout over eighty years of separate state development in the UK and the Republic. These differences can be built in inhibitors of flexible and creative forms of cross-border cooperation—serving to maintain borders as much as to transcend them. As such, territorial forms of cooperation may be a necessary but insufficient element in promoting peace and reconciliation.

Cross-border networking, the other form of cooperation, involves the creation of common rules, discourses and practices geared to a common functional purpose. It is thus less state-centred, less border confirming and more directly focused on transcending territorial borders in pursuit of shared objectives. While the first (international) form of cooperation can underline and preserve differences, the transnational form may remind people of what they share, i.e. of their similar characteristics, interests and opportunities in a broader context. In Euro-speak, the first form of cooperation may involve "mutual recognition" and the second, a degree of harmonisation. The distinction we make here is analytical—neither form of cooperation may exist in a pure form. In practice both of these forms of cooperation can co-exist with and complement each other.

Within the Peace Programmes we can see the evolution of a certain division of labour—the voluntary sector has assumed, or has been delegated, a key role addressing questions of "peace and reconciliation" directly at both a trans-community and transnational level. The sector is seen to be at one remove from territorial government and better placed to network with grassroots organisations on the ground. Indeed, one of the features of our research was the positive views expressed by

grassroots project promoters regarding the help provided by intermediary funding body personnel.

WEAK INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Whereas the two states, potentially at least, provide strong and durable institutional support for inter-governmental or international cooperation, the institutional support for transnational, cross-border networking is very weak. A skeletal institutional framework for transnational cross-border cooperation does exist comprising the EU Commission, the SEUPB, the voluntary sector and some cross-border projects at grassroots level. Our respondents underlined the consequences of the stalled, and somewhat fragmented, North-South dimension to the Good Friday Agreement, the negative consequences of the gap in funding between Peace I and Peace II, and the long-term inadequacy of short-term projects to tackle long-term issues of peace and reconciliation.

While the EU Commission itself promotes transnationalism and the creation of a common European space of which the island of Ireland is a part, the EU as an entity promotes both internationalism and transnationalism at the same time. However, the great bulk of EU funding is channelled directly through member states rather than transnational bodies. Indeed, despite the transnational agenda of the Commission, there are signs that the balance of influence in the EU is shifting towards the re-nationalisation of European programmes.[28] The UK government is to the fore in this process in ways which directly impacts on the peace programmes and on any successor to Peace II. The EU Commission official responsible for Peace II noted the contradictory position of the UK government.[29] It is arguing for a re-nationalisation of the structural funds (of which Peace II was a part)—in other words, it wants to abolish the EU level distribution system which channels money to needy regions—in favour of a system where national states get their share of the pot and then distribute internally according to their own criteria. This approach contradicts any arguments that the UK might make for the extension of Peace II on the basis that other member states should recognise Northern Ireland as a special case.[30] Despite its role in rejecting the initial Peace II proposals and its insistence on establishing the "distinctiveness" of the Peace II programme, the Commission's role has been more "hands off" than under Peace I. However, it has sought to promote the role of the SEUPB and to work closely with it.

The SEUPB is seen by the Commission as a transnational agency capable of delivering EU level programmes. However, apart from the stalled peace process and its initial organizational problems, it too faces the tension between international and

---

[28] The pressure to re-nationalise the Structural Funds is in part an attempt to limit the claims of the many new underdeveloped regions in the ten new member states on a EU level redistribution of resources from richer to poorer regions.

[29] interview with DG REGIO official, Brussels, 21 April 2004.

[30] interview with DG REGIO official, Brussels, 21 April 2004.

transnational approaches and remains in danger of being renationalised, i.e. being made subordinate to government departments. A staff member acknowledged that it is working in a very difficult policy environment with the suspension of the North/South Ministerial Council. He suggested that "there can be no strategic development of policy on the part of our organization, so that automatically puts us into a management role of the Peace II programme and confines us very much to that box".[31] Although voluntary sector organisations acknowledge the potential of the SEUPB, they tend to experience it as just another layer of bureaucracy in the circumstances.[32]

Without direct partnership links to the EU Commission and a strategically oriented SEUPB, the voluntary sector intermediary funding bodies, capacity to engage in transnational cooperation is very circumscribed. The capacity to innovate and promote transnational cross-border projects is also reduced if the voluntary sector is confined to the role of implementing the programmes of either state. This has led some intermediary funding bodies to argue that Peace III be a EU wide programme where the promotion of peace and reconciliation through cross-border networking might be normalised and where cross-cultural learning would become possible.

The European Commission endorses partnership on the basis that it would challenge the territorial paradigm of European politics and provide a new and effective approach to transnational EU-wide socio-economic problems. On the surface at least, the peace programmes are an embodiment of the EU commitment to multi-level social partnership which includes the third sector. These programmes appear to represent a shift from government to governance since they traverse sectoral, communal and state borders and multiple agents are involved, including the Commission, the government departments, local authorities, private sector organisations, intermediate level voluntary networks, and grassroots voluntary and community groups. Such a trans-border network is predicated on an inclusive principle. The European Conference for Conflict Prevention argued that governments have been reluctant to admit non-state actors to the business of peace and security—a position which runs counter to the growing significance of civil society in other areas.[33] However, the EU Commission has generally endorsed the principle of partnership with voluntary sector organisations, the business community and research institutions, a principle put into practice in the context of the peace programmes. It remains to be seen, however, if there will be a significant shift of power from the Commission to the Council of Ministers and the Parliament in the 25 member EU, thus reducing the inclusive transnational approach in favour of more discretion for national governments.

---

[31] SEUPB official in focus group hosted by the authors, Belfast, 30 January 2004.

[32] The NICVA consultation document on "Designing Peace III" notes that administration costs have risen from 2% in Peace I to 9% in Peace II. Although it suggests that SEUPB was valued as a cross-border body, it arguesthat it should be reconstituted as a smaller strategic, funding and policy body operating under a partnership model, with a board made up of elected representatives, government and voluntary and community representatives (2004: 22).

[33] See papers of European Centre for Conflict Prevention Conference, Dublin Castle, March 2004.

Even when states do not directly control activities within their borders, they exert a powerful undertow on the activities of others, including the voluntary sector. This undertow tends to pull everything back into the territorial cage. Such a tendency is magnified in the Irish case by a "territorial fix" in which both states allow the pace of peace building to be set by the political representatives of two increasingly separate communities within Northern Ireland. While internal political agreement is critical, peace-building beyond the cage of the national state can create long-term supportive conditions for such agreement. There is a danger, however, in the evolution of an implicit division of labour, whereby government departments charge the voluntary sector with the "residual" role of tackling peace-building directly while shedding such responsibility themselves.[34]

CONCLUSION

One of the recurring and unsurprising findings of our research was the lack of consensus over the meaning of peace and reconciliation. Some of our respondents suggested that real progress was difficult until there was agreement on the causes of the conflicts; others suggested that if there was such agreement, then there would be no need for peace programmes. One of the consequences of voluntary sector involvement in measures like 5.3 has been the production of a literature recognising that peace and reconciliation are processes rather than easily measured products—a viewpoint confirmed in our interviews with project providers. One of the key questions, therefore, is what strategies might be best employed to advance the process. Needless to say, this paper can offer no easy solutions. However, it does suggest that whatever else the Northern Ireland conflict is about, it is certainly about borders in both a material and metaphorical sense. Therefore, any viable peace and reconciliation strategy must develop a process which confronts the paradoxical nature of borders and seek to redress the balance between their positive and negative features.

Violence, intimidation, coercion and exclusion inhere in most state borders even when overt coercion belongs to a distant and largely forgotten past. Yet, such borders also have positive functions in facilitating democracy, social inclusion, citizenship, cultural identity and diversity. Northern Ireland is a factory of internal territorial borders, some violently contested, other scarcely visible. They serve as markers of difference and as measures of communal autonomy and control. They also measure shifts in what many perceive as a zero-sum game to claim or control the fixed territory bounded by the state border with the South. The Good Friday Agreement promised a transition from violence to politics as a means of pursuing this struggle. However, the struggle, even if non-violent, is unlikely to promote long-term peace

---

[34]A leading SEUPB official interviewed by us pointed to this problem, suggesting that if the voluntary sector was to become the sole recipient of future peace and reconciliation funding, it would let the public sector "off the hook". He felt that it was essential that government departments, North and South, should be involved in actively promoting peace and reconciliation. The "good relations" consultation document produced by the Northern Ireland Office seem to indicate some acceptance of this point. However, significantly for the argument advanced in this paper, it made no reference to promoting cross-border peace and reconciliation.

and reconciliation or easily overcome the emotions engendered by violent conflicts and how they are remembered. As one of our respondents indicated, in Northern Ireland one side has to "win".

State institutions improve conditions for peace-building by reducing inequality and promoting human rights. However, operationally, they are forced to recognise sectarian borders for political and administrative purposes. Moreover, the British state management of the conflict involved caging it within clearly de-limited territorial areas, thereby intensifying it in those areas. This too was the policy of an Irish state committed, understandably, to preventing the conflict spilling over the border. Border stabilisation and maintenance are plausible strategies for limiting or avoiding conflict but they are implausible to the extent that they imagine borders as static entities. In a context where state borders are being constantly reconfigured by economic, political and cultural globalisation, this makes little sense.

In this changing global context, our research suggests that there are some clear advantages to voluntary sector promotion of transnational cooperation in building peace and reconciliation. It allows an escape from state frameworks where borders are contested and viewed in static terms. In the process, it encourages a culture of cooperation—common cross-border organisations, shared goals, discourse, rules, and a focus on positive sum or mutual benefit outcomes. In the case of some unionist groups, it provides a welcome escape from the relentless, conflictual interaction with republicans and nationalists in the North. For some such groups, cross-border links may provide a useful detour on the road to improving links with nationalist or republican communities in the North. For some nationalists, cross-border projects illustrated the need to reduce ignorance, fear and prejudice between nationalists on either side of the border.

The projects we examined varied in the strength of their transnational dimension. Nevertheless, they challenged in a variety of ways the co-incidence of cultural and territorial borders so characteristic of the Irish conflict. While cultural and educational activities were the objects of cooperation, they were also the means of developing a culture of cooperative practices. Nevertheless, project-based transnational cooperation, promoted by the voluntary sector needs a stronger and more durable institutional framework to sustain what is inevitably a long-term process of peace-building and reconciliation.

None of the merits of transnational cooperation detracts from the necessity of inter-state cooperation. The latter has contributed to an overall rhetoric of cross-border cooperation which has largely replaced the "cold war" which used to characterise relationships between both jurisdictions in Ireland. Transnational cooperation, however, provides a necessary counter-dynamic by transcending and helping to reconfigure borders and by providing an arena for flexible project based activities organised by the voluntary sector intermediary funding bodies and grassroots groups. Our research demonstrates that such activities combat territorialism by creating a space in which difference can be explored and mutual interests advanced. The voluntary sector can play a key role here but its efforts needs to be bolstered by an institutional partnership framework involving a proactive EU Commission, a strength-

ened SEUPB, and two states willing to support a long-term cross-border networking, using innovative methods, embracing grass-roots organisations and transcending the borders which define the Northern Ireland conflict.

REFERENCES

Acheson, N and C Milofsky (2004) "Peace building and participation in Northern Ireland: marginal social movements and the policy process since the 'Good Friday' Agreement", paper presented at the Sixth International Conference of the International Society for Third Sector Research, Toronto, Canada, 11-14 July

Albert, M and L Brock (1996), "Debordering the world of states", *New political science* 35: 69-106.

Anderson, J and O'Dowd, L (1999) "Contested borders: globalisation and ethno-national conflict in Ireland", *Regional studies* 33 (7): 681-696.

Anderson, M (1996) *Frontiers: territory and state formation in the modern world.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Anderson, M and E Bort, eds (1998) *The frontiers of Europe*, London: Pinter.

Anderson, J, L O'Dowd and TM Wilson, eds (2003a) *New borders for a changing Europe: cross-border cooperation and governance*. London: Frank Cass

Anderson, J, L O'Dowd and TM Wilson, eds (2003b) *Culture and cooperation in Europe's borderlands,* special issue of *European studies: a journal of European culture, history and politics* vol. 19

Baumann, Z (1992) "Soil, blood and identity", *Sociological review* 40 (2): 675-701.

Blatter, J (2004) "From "spaces of place" to "spaces of flows"? Territorial and functional governance in cross-border regions in Europe and North America", *International journal of urban and regional research* 28 (3): 530-548

Coakley, J and L O'Dowd (2004) *The Irish border and North-South cooperation: an overview*. Dublin: Institute for British-Irish Studies, UCD [IBIS working papers 47]

Diez, T, S Stetter and M Albert (2003) "The European Union and border conflicts: the transformative power of integration", EU BorderConf Project, unpublished paper [details]

Harvey, B (2003) *Review of the Peace II Programme.* York: The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust

Hayward, K (2004) "Defusing the conflict in Northern Ireland: pathways of influence for the European Union", Birmingham: University of Birmingham EU Border Conflicts Series, working paper no. 2]. Available www.euborderconf.bham.ac.uk/publications/workingpapers.htm [2006-03-16]

Held, D., D Goldblatt, T McGrew and J Perraton (1999) *Global transformations: politics, economics and culture*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Lustick, IS (1993) *Unsettled states, disputed lands: Britain and Ireland, France and Algeria, Israel and the West Bank Gaza*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Nederveen Pieterse, J (2002) "Globalization as reworking borders: hierarchical integration and new border theory", paper presented to the Annual Conference of the International Studies Association, New Orleans, 18-22 March

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) (2004) *Designing Peace III.* Belfast: NICVA

O'Dowd, L (1994a) "Negotiating the British-Irish border: transfrontier cooperation on the European periphery", Final Report to the ESRC, Grant Number R000 23 3053, April

O'Dowd, L (1994b) *Whither the Irish border? Sovereignty, democracy and economic integration in Ireland*. Belfast: Centre for Research and Documentation

O'Dowd, L (2002) "The changing significance of European borders"*, Regional and federal studies* 12 (4): 13-36.

O'Leary, B (2001) "Introduction" in B O'Leary, I S Lustick and T Callaghy (eds) *Right sizing the state: the politics of moving borders.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pollak, A (2004) "Why North-South cooperation makes perfect sense", *Irish Times*, 17 February

Rothman, J (1998) "Dialogue in conflict: past and future", pp. 217-35 in E Wiener (ed), *The handbook of interethnic coexistence.* New York: Continuum Publishing Co.

Tilly, C (1990) *Coercion, capital and European states AD 990-1990*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Wilson, TM and H Donnan, eds (1998) *Border identities: nation and state at international frontiers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press