Economic Assistance to Peacebuilding and Reconciliation Community-Based Projects in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties: Challenges, Opportunities and Evolution

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Abstract The International Fund for Ireland and the European Union (EU) Peace III Fund have provided external economic resources to local community projects in Northern Ireland and the Border region to support intercommunal relations, community development, economic development, peacebuilding and reconciliation. The British and Irish governments, the EU, and the USA see the economic aid as their commitment to support the peace process, nurture the local voluntary sector, and build the peace dividend. The research findings demonstrate that the reality on the ground is more complex. Some believe that the economic assistance has created employment opportunities, built capacity, and localized peacebuilding knowledge. Others are more sceptical and perceive that the aid has created dependency, facilitated a competitive milieu, and has not transformed relationships in a sectarian environment.

Keywords Peacebuilding · Northern Ireland · Economic assistance · Reconciliation · Community relations · Community development · Economic development

Introduction

The partition of territory, contested sovereignty claims, and oppositional nationalisms lie at the very core of the Northern Ireland conflict resulting in two deeply divided and segregated communities (Byrne et al. 2009a, p. 630). The 1607 Ulster Plantation, the industrial revolution, and the modernization of Ulster during the nineteenth century created deep social and economic differences intensified by the 1921 Anglo Irish Treaty and partition (Byrne et al.

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2009a, p. 634). The populist sectarian politics of the Stormont government in employment, housing, and voting between 1922 and 1972 were felt more harshly by the Catholic Nationalist Republican (CNR) community leading to the 1967 mobilization of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association to advocate for equality for all citizens that was met by Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) violence and state repression (Byrne et al. 2009a, p. 634). A resurgent Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) necessitated direct intervention by the British government by deploying the army to restore civic order and to defeat PIRA that resulted in direct rule in 1972 (Byrne et al. 2009a, p. 634).

A large British subvention in support of a local security apparatus failed to address the deep social and economic roots of the conflict as unemployment skyrocketed and was felt more severely by the CNR working class (Byrne et al. 2008). The Troubles distressed the economy and the economic infrastructure of Northern Ireland and the Border area as both communities socially distanced themselves through voluntary segregation while mutual suspicions, mistrust, and misunderstanding structured the nature of their relationships in urban and rural areas (Byrne et al. 2009b). Poverty, inequality, social and economic deprivation, educational disadvantage, and social exclusion have negatively impacted people living in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties, "exacerbated by the Border itself and their close proximity to the conflict" (Buchanan 2014, p. 74). Consequently, the international economic aid has sought to address economic grievances, structural inequality, and sectarian relationships by nurturing social and economic development, and reconciliation.

This article examines the challenges, the opportunities, and the dilemmas facing external economic aid funders in developing and implementing peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties through the support of the European Union (EU) Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland (Peace III) and the International Fund for Ireland (IFI). Both Funds were established to support economic and social development in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties in order to address the legacy of violence and conflict and promote peacebuilding and reconciliation between the CNR and the PUL communities. The people in this region suffered disproportionately from economic deprivation, migration, and sectarian violence (Byrne et al. 2009a, p. 341).[1] Peace III (2007–2013) funded operations and projects including cross-community initiatives, which promote reconciliation and contribute to a shared society in Northern Ireland (SEUPB 2014). The IFI was established in 1986 by the governments of Britain and Ireland and with the support of the USA, EU, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in order to provide funding to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border region (International Fund for Ireland 2014).

External economic assistance has had numerous, assorted, surprising and in some cases unidentified consequences, not all of which are affirmative. For example, the aid has promoted local agency in the cocreation of knowledge and economic development has generated jobs while at the same time the aid may have undermined the voluntary sector. With regard to community/economic development and community relations, the aid has either facilitated shared spaces or intensified segregation as group identity is still salient, promoted human

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[1] "People living in the Border area, including South Down, South Tyrone and Fermanagh have experienced the conflict and the violence differently from people living in Belfast" (Byrne et al. 2009b, p. 341). Derry city with a large nationalist unemployed community was at the apex of NICRA struggles in the 1960s for equality and jobs while the conflict devastated the economic infrastructure of Border communities as the Bann border divide became increasingly significant (Byrne et al. 2009a, p. 631).

rights, and created a milieu where local people are more empowered to act. Specifically, the article critically explores EU Peace III and IFI funding challenges as well as community/economic development and community relations work in Northern Ireland and the Border Area.[2]

Methods

The second author, Sean Byrne, conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews during the summer of 2010 to explore the perceptions, images, and lived experiences of 120 respondents from Derry/Londonderry and the Counties of Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Londonderry, Louth, Monaghan, and Tyrone regarding how peacebuilding projects are implemented and how they are working out. In particular, the interview questions addressed the process of applying for financial assistance to conduct peacebuilding projects; project evaluation; sustainability of peace projects; building cross-community contact, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and development; the Belfast Agreement and the peace process; building trust and understanding; and the hopes and fears of the respondents regarding the peace process. The participants in this study included 13 development officers and 107 community group leaders from Derry/Londonderry and the Border region. The study participants were involved in peacebuilding programs and were recipients of economic assistance from the IFI and/or the EU Peace III Fund. Interviews were conducted over a period of 10 weeks, and each interview lasted between 80 and 120 min. All of the interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The responses were further analyzed qualitatively using a grounded approach as themes emerged inductively from the transcribed data. Pseudonyms are used to protect the interviewee's identities.

The question of generalization is also important in the context of the discussion about peacebuilding and peace funding. While research based on interviews with a sample of 120 respondents allow for some generalization, one needs to be cautious in moving from specific examples to general conclusions. The issue of generalizability is also relevant for constructing project evaluations and for using evaluation results for planning future peacebuilding interventions.

Economic Assistance and Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is an interdisciplinary, cross-sector, long-term, and dynamic process (Lederach 1997; Diamond & McDonald 1996; Sandole et al. 2009). Building a lasting peace after a peace accord is signed or violence has subsided involves a combination of various approaches,

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[2] Liberal peace advocates envision peace as trickling down and this paper suggests that peacebuilding strategies should be interpreted within the context of Northern Ireland and the Border Counties, and should consider local people's voices and agency (Mac Ginty 2014, p.550). Everyday politics in Northern Ireland and the Border region includes local people's "inclusionary and exclusionary political practices" that are grounded in the cultural practices (e.g., language, stories, graffiti, etc.) of their everyday living that shapes the local peacebuilding milieu that in turn is framed by the "transitional liminal" peace process (Marijan 2015, p. 40). Everyday peacebuilding is complex, emancipatory, uncertain, and untidy and includes a myriad of local peacebuilders working in "visible and invisible" ways to own, and contest their peace as the society transitions from war to a cold peace (Marijan 2015).

including reconciliation, rebuilding relationships and trust, capacity building, economic recovery, and conflict transformation (Boutros-Ghali 1995; Mac Ginty 2008; Jeong 2010). In the context of the Northern Ireland peace process, a number of steps were taken to address the legacy of a long-lasting conflict characterized by violence, sectarianism, social exclusion, economic disparity, and mass unemployment (Dixon 2008; Byrne 2001). In particular, the peace process included high-level political negotiations between the Irish and British governments as well as Northern Ireland's local political parties that resulted in the signing of the 1998 Belfast or Good Friday Agreement (GFA), which included a powersharing government in Northern Ireland (Coakley 2008; The Agreement 1998).[3] Furthermore, the cease-fires declared by rival Loyalist and Republican paramilitary groups brought an end to the Troubles in Northern Ireland (Jarman 2009, p. 208). The 30 years of conflict devastated the lives of many while more than 3000 people lost their lives as a result of the Northern Ireland conflict (Mc Kittrick et al. 2004). CNRs were disproportionately unemployed compared to PULs (Gaffikin & Morrissey 2010; Osborne & Shuttleworth 2004). Young Protestants have become more proliferant in the unemployment statistics that were also impacted by the recent global financial downturn (Smithey 2011; Shirlow 2012).

The International Fund for Ireland and the European Union Peace Funds

The EU, the USA, and the Irish and British governments advocated that external economic aid was a key ingredient to deescalate conflict and build the peace dividend in Northern Ireland and the Border region (Creary & Byrne 2014a, p. 6). In the process, extensive consultations took place with the voluntary and community sector in the development of Peace I (Buchanan 2014, p. 89). Both the IFI and EU Peace Funds were administered through the British government who partnered with the voluntary sector, and the Irish government on cross-Border peacebuilding issues (McCall & O'Dowd 2008). Both funding agencies financed and saturated projects in historically deprived urban and rural communities targeting economic conditions that escalated intercommunal conflicts in the 1960s (Buchanan 2008). At the same time, Britain's annual subvention to Northern Ireland dwarfs the resources from both funds (Byrne et al. 2009c, p. 163). The PUL working class perceives that the CNRs have benefitted more from the funds and from public sector employment in general (Byrne et al. 2009a).

The resources from both funds clearly demonstrated the commitment of both the EU and the USA to encourage political dialogue and to move the peace process forward. President Clinton appointed Senator George Mitchell as his Special Envoy and he chaired the 1996–1998 peace negotiations. The supranational working peace context of the EU facilitated constructive British and Irish government relationship building while influencing both communal identities and problem-solving approaches (Hayward 2004, p. 2; Tannam 1998) The EU structural funds have also contributed to building important networks and relationships on both sides of the Irish Border (Hayward 2007, 2009; Tannam 1998). The EU cooperative supranational model devolved power to the grassroots voluntary civil society sector in Northern Ireland and the Border region through county and district councils, Intermediary Funding Bodies (IFBs), and the Special EU Peace Program's Body (SEUPB) (Hayward 2004, p. 12; Racioppi & O'Sullivan-See 2007; Tannam 1998). The resources from both funds have

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[3] The DUP was the only major political party to oppose the GFA while the PIRA was forced to abandon its military campaign so that Sinn Fein could be included in the talks (Evans & Tonge 2013, p. 55).

encouraged the growth of a community development and peacebuilding industry whose experience and knowledge may have import for other societies transitioning into more peaceful relations with social capital as a critical link between the economic assistance and its outcomes (O'Dowd & McCall 2008).

Article 10(a) of the 1985 Anglo Irish Agreement (AIA) signed by the British and Irish governments indicated their commitment to work together to promote "social and economic development" and "dialogue and reconciliation" between both communities on the island in areas most devastated by the conflict (Anglo Irish Agreement 1985). They created in 1986 the IFI to advance these objectives. The AIA was rejected by PUL who saw it as a slippery slope into a united Ireland as well as the IFI, which was perceived as blood money from the USA while it was accepted by John Hume's SDLP and Sinn Fein (SF) (Byrne & Ayulo 1998, p. 230). Both governments appointed a chairman and a six-member board representative of both communities while the secretariat comprised of civil servants from Belfast and Dublin administer the fund aided by ten local consultants liaising with the grassroots and an advisory committee appointed by both governments to advise the board (Buchanan 2014 p. 88; International Fund for Ireland 2014). Between 1986 and 2010, US$895 million went to support over 5800 projects (International Fund for Ireland 2014) with the US as the major donor.

IFI's initial focus was in local economic regeneration to build grassroots capacity through its Communities in Action program to empower young people and women and the reconciliation oriented Building Bridges program as well as a Community Leadership training program (International Fund for Ireland 2014). In 1999, IFI placed its programs under Community Capacity Building, Economic Development, and Regeneration of Deprived Areas (International Fund for Ireland 2014). In 2006, its Sharing this Space strategy restructured its programs into Building Bridges, Building Foundations, and Integrating and Leaving a Legacy (International Fund for Ireland 2014). The Strategic Framework for Action (2012–2015) is focused on conflict transformation, reconciliation, and social advance through its Peace Impact, Peace Walls, and Completion and Sustainability programs (International Fund for Ireland 2014).

In contrast, the EU Special Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation or Peace I Fund (1995–1999) was created by the EU Commission as a community initiative under the structural fund in the wake of Loyalist and Republican cease-fires. The improved bilateral relationship between Britain and Ireland within the EU functional framework was critical to the creation of the Peace program, the 1995 Framework Document proposing cross-Border cooperation and devolved powersharing, the 1998 GFA, the 2006 St. Andrews Agreement (Hayward 2009; Tannam 1998), and the 2010 Hillsborough Agreement. The EU Commission sought to address the impact of the Troubles on the Border region in terms of social and economic issues underlying the Northern Ireland conflict to imbed the peace process (Buchanan 2014, p. 90). Peace I promoted social inclusion through employment, urban and rural regeneration, cross-Border cooperation, productive and industrial development, district partnerships, and technical assistance (SEUPB 2014; Tannam 1998). These seven priorities had 24 measures. Peace 1 received over €500 million from the EU and €167 million from the British and Irish governments to support 15,000 projects (Bush & Houston 2011, p. 28).

The finance departments in Belfast and Dublin, 57 IFBs, district partnerships, and county councils delivered the fund (SEUPB 2014). The consultative and interactive approach of Peace I created "increasing awareness of the views and experiences of the 'other', and the personal relationships that developed helped to strengthen not just decisionmaking structures for

PEACE funding, but governance structures which demonstrated the importance and utility of consultation, transparency and accountability" (Bush & Houston 2011, p. 41).

The North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) set up by strand two of the GFA that included SEUPB as one of six cross-Border bodies to deliver Peace II through both finance departments, 15 IFBs, 26 local strategic partnerships, and six county councils also brought local NGOs into the peacebuilding process (SEUPB 2014). Twenty-six district council areas comprised of one third each of the community voluntary sector, elected council members, and business and trade union members were also involved (Buchanan 2014, p. 92). NSMC executive authority was agreed upon by the Irish government and Northern Ireland executive supported by CNRs, and resisted by anti-GFA PULs sceptical that north-south cooperation was a "process of creeping unification" (Tonge 2005, p. 8). The PUL parties and SF tended to be more critical of "deeper European integration" while the SDLP was a more Euro-optimist party (Bush & Houston 2011, p. 60).

Peace II and its extension (2000–2006) incorporated the positive feedback from the EU Court of Auditors, and Colin Harvey's reports to restructure the application process. The EU donated €531 million and €304 million was supplied by the British and Irish governments to Peace II with extensive consultation facilitated by SEUPB (Creary & Byrne 2014b, p. 71). Peace II supported civil society funded projects to promote local reconciliation and regional development as well as social bridging and cross-Border partnerships (Racioppi & O'Sullivan-See 2007) with the Peace extensions to 2006 of £160 million, £82 million donated by both governments and £78 million contributed by the EU (Buchanan 2014, pp. 90–91). Peace II's objectives were to promote reconciliation to forge a peaceful society by addressing the legacy of conflict in areas most impacted by conflict and to take advantage of opportunities arising from peace focusing on cross-Border cooperation, economic renewal, inclusion, locally based regeneration and development, outward and forward looking region, and social integration (SEUPB 2014). These five priorities comprised of 34 measures.

Peace III integrated the peace dividend into the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of each project (Bush & Houston 2011, p. 61). Peace III's objectives were to promote reconciliation by building constructive relationships and a shared society for both communities in Northern Ireland and the Border Area through addressing the legacy of the past and by facilitating shared spaces (SEUPB 2014). The Peace III (2007–2013) phase had €225 million donated by the EU regional development fund and €108 million furnished by the British and Irish governments (SEUPB 2014, p. 4). SEUPB managed the fund and appointed Border Action and the Community Relations Council in Belfast as a new IFB to deal with the past (Buchanan 2014, p. 94).

Over time, OUP suspicions of the creation of an all island economic forum have diminished while it resists any territorial changes and this is especially so for the DUP who believes that cross-Border activity will result in the reunification of the island (Tonge 2005, p. 22). "There remains a sceptical Unionist constituency, which regarded the cross-Border dimension of the GFA as part of a process of British withdrawal by instalments" (Tonge 2005, p. 22). The SDLP supports the all-Ireland framework of the GFA within the spillover process of European integration (Tonge 2005, p. 18). SF now favors Irish unity within an integrated EU (Tonge 2005, p. 18). The Peace IV Fund (2014–2020) bestowed €200 million for cross-community peacebuilding with €150 million earmarked to educate and train young working class Loyalists alienated and marginalized politically and economically by the peace process.

However, both local actors and conditions influence the impact of the EU. "When it comes to more subtle, normative community-level work, however, the EU's lack of independence

becomes much more of a liability" (Hayward 2007, p. 691). The legacy of the Troubles remains deeply ingrained in the people of the Border area where antagonistic identities often keep people apart (Diez & Hayward 2008, p. 48).

Community Development and Community Relations

The voluntary sector and cross-community networks emerged in the late 1960s in Northern Ireland while strong support structures developed in the CNR working class community (Cochrane & Dunn 2002; O'Hearn 2000). Both external aid agencies have built on the contributions of these groups as some new funded projects have advanced the GFA's macro vision (Birrell & Williamson 2001) as their activities focus on civic rather than sectarian politics (Belloni 2009). Voluntary NGOs are nurturing the community sector in civil society despite the fact that in education, housing, and politics, voluntary segregation is plaguing community development and attempts at localized reconciliation (Karari et al., 2013; Murtagh 1999; Shortall & Shucksmith 2001).

The voluntary sector has over 5000 civil society NGOs with an annual income of £514 million (Birrell & Williamson, p. 212). The British government also used these voluntary organizations to support its statutory regeneration policy while the composition of IFBs were drawn from these organizations as well as county and district councils to assist in the selection of applicants who met the criteria and the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Programs (Cebulla 2000).

Transformational Conflict Resolution in Northern Ireland

There is no government policy framework to conceptualize and institutionalize multi-faceted transformational conflict resolution in Northern Ireland and the Border region (Buchanan 2014, p. 214). Organizations like the Community Relations Council and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action among others have been at the forefront of thinking and acting to build a transformational conflict resolution architecture (Ibid, p. 215). Such a macro level approach is needed to build on the 1998 GFA and become "embedded in mainstream activities" to sustain the peace process and the work of the plethora of IFI and/ or EU Peace funded projects on the ground (Ibid, p. 216). Such a process would address the deep-rooted causes of the conflict especially social economic issues that includes citizens and partnerships in the design and the implementation of projects to tackle structural violence (Ibid, pp. 220–237).

The external economic aid has nurtured community relations as well as community/ economic development in Northern Ireland and the Border Area.

Critique of EU Peace and IFI Funding

The Bureaucratic Process and Funding Applications

The process of designing a peacebuilding initiative and applying for funding that could assist a community project is a critical but challenging task for many local community groups and organizations. In the context of peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland and the Border region, the bureaucratic process of applying for funding has troubled a number

of study participants. They noted such concerns as numerous repetitions within the application forms, the overall complicated language of the application forms, as well as limited opportunities to fully explain their proposed initiatives. The application process was characterized as very time-consuming, tedious, and complicated, especially for the applicants with limited prior knowledge and experience in applying for external funding. Moreover, the task of reporting, monitoring, and evaluating projects takes a lot of time out of the actual peacebuilding work on the ground.

For example, a community group leader from Derry who has been involved in all three Peace programmes described his experience with the funding application process in the following way:

> TOM: [It is] extremely difficult to meet their [expectations] and also what they call "benchmark indicators," "horizontals," and "verticals" and all this sort of jargon that they use to assess whether some projects should get money […] sometimes the amount of work that you [put in] for getting the amount of money is not really worth it.

Another community group leader from Derry noted the burden of putting together the project budget according to the funder's very specific criteria and emphasized that for smaller peacebuilding initiatives it is especially difficult to overcome the bureaucratic hurdles:

> MATILDIA: We are in a fortunate position. We are a larger organisation. We have an administrative team. Small organisations with low capacity and low experience of trying to get access to these funds […] would find [the funding process] extremely prohibitive. It probably means that the same groups would be funded on a repeat basis because they will be the only ones that really have the ability to manage the administrative burden of the application and the funding process.

In addition, a community group leader from County Cavan perceived that the reporting and accounting tasks within the funding process have become more and more demanding over the past years:

> MARY: All the reporting and procedures and all the accounting procedures that go along with it, [are] […] more rigorous than Peace II funding. I have no doubt I'm spending more time now on admin than I am on programme delivery because [the] level of accountability is so much higher, and there is so much less discretion in terms of the amounts that you can spend without having […] a high level of backup documentation.

Several other respondents perceived the bureaucracy as a major drawback to the Peace III and IFI funding process. For example, a community leader from Derry expressed his concern about the amount of money spent on bureaucracy, which could have been allocated towards grassroots peacebuilding work:

> WILLIAM: I would love to know from the research that's [been] done on how much the government [has] spent on solicitors… how much of the fund is spent on [administration], and I would say we are getting the pittance of the fund compared to the so-called work that is being done by the bureaucratic systems that are set up…. But in any case governments need to look at efficiency, value for money. […]. People that the IFI are training on these things need to be put under the microscope the way we were. But we are treated sometimes as if we were criminals having to justify ourselves […].

The concerns regarding the highly bureaucratic nature of the application process voiced by the study participants revealed their frustrations and worries about the potential influence these

processes may have on the effectiveness of the outcomes of peacebuilding initiatives. In particular, many respondents feared that the increasingly demanding application process would discourage community groups from applying for funding, which could lead to narrowing down the scope and capacity of grassroots peacebuilding efforts.

In terms of framing and addressing conflict and peacebuilding, technocracy in the shape of efficiency and neutrality have promoted certain actors and their activities strengthening the "democratic turn" or certain solutions with a transnational neoliberal ideological bent that excludes local practices and capacity in the peacebuilding process (Mac Ginty 2012, p. 288). "The proximate factors, which are supported by the structural factors, relate to the professionalization of the 'peace industry,' standardization of peacebuilding through 'best practice,' increased opportunities for peace-support interventions (and thus technocracy) and an increased use of technology" (Ibid, p. 289).

Thus, the technocratic instrumental and prescriptive top-down bureaucratic practice and discourse of donor agencies to civilian peacebuilding has hampered projects and depoliticized peace (Goetschel & Hagmann 2009, pp. 56–57). It has become devoid of any meaning and has ignored the local knowledge and experience of people in a just peace process (Ibid, p. 58). Critical peace research must therefore, "conceptually re-politicize peace and social transformation" (Ibid, p. 67) to "understand how peacebuilding operates as a system of rules, how it is organized institutionally and how it is reproduced socially" (Ibid, p. 68).

The respondents highlight that the bureaucratic technocracy of both funder's evaluating, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms and criteria has overwhelmed local peacebuilding NGOs.

Evolution of Peace Funding

A number of respondents shared their concerns as well as the lessons learned regarding the evolution of peace funding over the past 10 to 15 years. At the beginning stages of peace funding in Northern Ireland, a lot of resources were allocated towards economic and social development, social inclusion as well as the economic revival and regeneration of communities (McCall & O'Dowd 2008; EU Programme for Peace n.d.). However, as these programs evolved the focus shifted towards relationship building and reconciliation attempted largely through designing and implementing cross-community initiatives. Most recently, Peace III has had a renewed focus on reconciliation (SEUPB 2014).

As the priorities of IFI and EU Peace funding evolved so did the peacebuilding initiatives and projects. In particular, a community group leader from County Monaghan shared the following insight in her narrative:

> JENNIFER: When initially I worked for Peace I it was very much focused on the economic bit of it, and the immediate needs within the local community was a facility or a person to do something or whatever. But now I think it has moved on very much to the relationship building and the peacebuilding part of it and definitely those types of projects and the funding that has gone into it has made a huge, huge difference, a positive difference. And definitely in terms of cross Border relationships as well have made a huge difference. People getting together, working together and even the understanding of where each other are coming from you can see that now starting to build up. But it has been a long and slow, slow process and we have a lot more to do, an awful lot more to do.

Another example of the outcomes of evolving funding priorities was shared by a community group leader from Derry, who noted that as time went by local communities were given more opportunities to participate in setting goals, planning, and implementing projects, which aim at making longer-term contributions to building peace locally:

> HEATHER: What I say about Peace III I suppose specifically is that they have learned a lot since their conception in '94 or '96 under Peace I. I think there was a time then where their criteria was very much led by aspirational objectives in terms of what they [wanted] to achieve […] [as] Peace II and Peace III […] evolved, […] they tended to listen more to what the community themselves required.
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> The current round of Peace III funding […] was probably our most successful […]. It's safe to say now that the playing field is very much level and the community structure […] right across the city is quite strong so that has allowed Peace III to [be] more effective in terms of dealing with the hard issues. They were very good in terms of the research prior to Peace III in a sense that they did wide consultation around what the key things (criteria) would be and how groups like that could make most impacts local.

In terms of the evolution of IFI funding throughout the peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland, a community group leader from County Fermanagh noted the following observation:

> IAN: It's been interesting looking in at the International Fund, how that has evolved in more recent years to its latest strategy, which is more around investing in people rather than capital and across things like education etc., there has been a number of very significant investments and recently we benefited from a major grant towards a shared education programme.

Peace funding and the projects that benefitted from the assistance programs have evolved throughout the past two decades reflecting the changes in funding priorities and the shifting needs of some communities. A number of study participants observed the shifting of the funding focus moving away from economic and social development towards the goals of reconciliation, community building, and the development of shared society values. However, these changes did not satisfy all respondents, who expressed concern that the current funding priorities do not reflect their present needs and interests. In particular, some respondents noted the significance of economic development, building individual skills and capacity, as well as establishing cross-community partnerships within the overall framework of peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives.

Peace and Reconciliation, and Economic Development Funding

The process of reconciliation and conflict transformation is complex, dynamic, lengthy, and multidimensional (Kriesberg & Millar 2009). Conflict transformation and reconciliation are particularly challenging and at the same time especially critical in the areas that are affected most by violence and conflict, for example, Belfast and what CNRs call Derry or Daoire and PULs describe as Londonderry in Northern Ireland (Atashi 2009) and along the Border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The peacebuilding and reconciliation process requires significant internal support and funding and may also be enhanced and sustained with the assistance of external economic aid. External economic assistance may have the capacity to support both large-scale and local initiatives aimed at economic reconstruction, community

development, and in encouraging cross-community reconciliation and cooperation in addressing conflict and in building peace (Byrne et al. 2009a; Byrne et al. 2009b).

Economic assistance to facilitate the peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland has taken on a number of different forms and covered several key areas. For example, two different priorities that emerged throughout the funding process were supporting projects engaged with peace/reconciliation and assisting with economic/infrastructure development. Peace and reconciliation funding assisted communities in Northern Ireland and the Border region in various ways including supporting personal development, adult education, individual and community capacity-building, skills training, acquiring knowledge about the Troubles, community building, communication and dialogue, building relationships and trust, empowerment[...], giving hope, and enhancing cross-communal understanding. For example, a community group leader from County Monaghan shared the following reflection about the peace projects and their empowering capacity:

> SEAMUS: [...] have they from an economic perspective brought a return for the investment made? The answer in quite a number of [instances] is likely to be "no" [...]. [...] going back pre the Peace programme monies, the IFI were in town, they were bringing without a doubt a sense of hope and a [...] can-do attitude to many communities that were just at the end of their tether in terms of survival. They were [...] kind of a threat away from local anarchy maybe breaking out and a breakdown of many relationships and I can't overstress that. But the IFI did do that, they came in and [provided support].
> I think it was Kavanagh [who wrote] in his poem, "is there music playing behind the door of despair oh Lord give us purpose," and purpose is critically important to communities coming out of conflict. So the monies did do that without a doubt.

The other area of focus of the external aid was economic development, through which the funding built infrastructure, supported local businesses and new business initiatives, as well as created jobs. There are mixed perceptions about the role of economic regeneration as a peacebuilding tool. Some of the concerns expressed by the study participants are reflected in the following story shared by a community group leader from County Cavan:

> PAULA: I think that in the first place the trouble is just under the surface. I think that these initiatives have been too indirect, they haven't been closely connected with the people, they have been building roads and bridges and buildings that [have] nothing to do with peace and bringing peace together and I think they have been a disaster… Because from my experience locally there [have] been a number of initiatives here and I honestly don't think they have brought the people here closer to people, say, in Enniskillen or Lisbellaw or on the other side of the Border where they should be.

At the same time, research findings indicate significant connections between peace/reconciliation initiatives and economic development projects in the framework of peacebuilding funding. For example, a community group leader from County Louth shared the following narrative:

> TADHG: Well I suppose we're very clearly in the economic development camp so for that reason any funding that we've drawn down has been on an economic development platform, which has been the focus on micro enterprises [...]. I quickly learned [...] that this was definitely a mechanism [through] which you can actually achieve social

interaction, improve communication I suppose, and just give people experiences. And obviously our core mission would be to improve the economic situation whoever the participants are. […] that to me is a method by which you can improve the social condition as well.

Another community group leader from County Louth also spoke about the potential of economic regeneration projects to bring divided communities together:

FIONA: I think that the International Fund should go back to economic regeneration of towns and villages along the Border assisting communities. You know, I just think that there [are] community facilities in towns and villages along the Border that wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the International Fund funding but it also united the community to come together – to work together – and united both communities to do that.

A community group leader from Derry also emphasized the significance of both capacity-building and economic regeneration for reducing violence and building peace especially in the most deprived areas:

AOIFE: And the absence of the threat of violence does create a space for people to talk and people need the spaces where they can talk, so how do you make that happen? You know, it takes a myriad of different approaches and I see some things that work and some things that they are just ok. […] the most powerful stuff that I see is storytelling giving people that space to tell, relate what happened to them […]. I think we need projects to stop or divert young people from getting involved with paramilitaries. It's no coincidence that most of the Trouble is in the most deprived areas, […] you don't get much trouble in the leafy suburbs, so there is a correlation there […]. […] the places where the paramilitaries are strongest are the most deprived areas so it's not rocket science.

Another community group leader from Derry discussed how creating employment opportunities might address people's sense of hopelessness and build peace:

NIAMH: I personally know a lot of people who, when they became employed, it built their skills to move on, so in a way it had this huge economic benefit and I have seen that played out. So I know that there are many young people [who] would have come through these doors and it played out in that they were able to build up skills and get other employment on the back of starting off voluntarily, getting a paid position and then moving on, so that was the big almost a side effect of the peacebuilding and I don't think you can knock any of that. It gives hope to others as well.

In addition, a community group leader from County Monaghan explained how a project aimed at building a new community-owned hotel supported by external funding agencies resulted not only in revitalizing the local economy, it also initiated community building. She shared the following insight in her story:

GLADYS: The impact of that community project [made] possible through those funding agencies… it has acted like a hub for the local community, and it has been a catalyst for people setting up their own businesses around it like, you know, new taxi firms were setup, and local people doing DJ'ing, and services that weren't needed before. And believe it or not when we challenged the local authority about building the houses, they said "you get us millions of people who want houses in Knockatallon." So we did that

and low and behold they built a new local authority housing estate and then the private sector came in […] and they have also built a big estate. So that's the effect of projects like these that are funded. It just totally revitalised that area. It changed perceptions of that area. Instead of it being looked at as the bandit country of County Monaghan it suddenly became known for a very active community organisation that had managed to draw down a lot of funding and totally revitalise the area.

Some respondents observed that the funding has facilitated local economic development and built local capacity while others were of the opinion that these initiatives are not building peace.

Sustainability of Peace Projects and Peace Funding

What happens when the external funding runs out? This critical question was discussed by many community group leaders who reflected on how the funding has created a certain degree of dependency and discouraged local communities from exploring internal resources. Interventions that fully depend on external funding are difficult to sustain after the financial assistance has subsided. Concerns were also expressed regarding the negative influence of external funding on the voluntary sector, which is also connected to the sustainability of both peacebuilding efforts as well as the sustainability of peace funding. Short-term interventions may bring about quick results but may not be very effective or sustainable in the long run.

Another important component of peacebuilding includes economic aid to empower local communities to build their own capacity by using their own knowledge to develop their skills in order to build peace (Lederach 1995). One way of achieving this goal is through community mobilization, which can be conceptualized as "tapping into the knowledge and resources of the local community and fostering a spirit of community ownership" (Erasmus 2001, p. 251). In terms of economic aid, the challenge here is in allocating resources reasonably in order to assist, yet not prescribe communities to build capacity and use local experience, knowledge, and resources to bring about long-term sustainable results. For example, this goal could be achieved by investing in training local peacebuilders and by helping local communities divided by a protracted conflict to (re)build relationships and understanding of each other (Lederach 1997, p. 109; Arnold 2001; Svensson 2001).

A community group leader from County Fermanagh provided the following overview of the way funded projects worked out in terms of their long-term sustainability and in meeting the needs of local communities:

> RONNIE: […] when you look at the business plans and look at the success of many of these projects they were not sustainable. They ultimately all have to stand on their own feet, otherwise they become a liability to their community, having to find money to put a coordinator in to run this project, or run this peace centre, or run this community centre or do something there. Now, some of them have produced really useful benefits… So some of the most basic [projects] in isolated communities have brought real community benefit but many others – some of the more ambitious tourism projects, big centres – never achieved sustainability.

Economic assistance may be driven by best intentions yet it may also lead to unexpected outcomes and complications. For example, a community group leader from Derry was

concerned that the Peace funding created unmanageable expectations among both participants and the funders. This is what he had to say on the issue:

LLOYD: There are some projects that have been totally funded through Peace and Reconciliation money, through Peace 1 and 2, extension 3, with no clear way of how they'd be funded afterwards. Some have been very good, some have been very purposeful, and others have not. Where we would work very closely with projects where [there] may be youth development projects, [there] may be arts [projects], where we come in and provide the Peace and Reconciliation helmet, sometimes it can be viewed as a nest egg put into securing the funding as opposed to the intrinsic part of the project merit.

At the same time, subsiding funding support may seriously affect the progress that the local communities already achieved in building peace and reconciliation. In particular, a community group leader from Derry noticed that the funding must continue to ensure the continuation of the peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland:

SINEAD: […] what we have got now is a situation where the violence is less but the conflict is not over, and for me if we don't continue getting funding, we become complacent. We create a vacuum that allows the spoilers of the peace process to come back.

However, with the understanding that external funding is not unlimited and will gradually subside, an important question is how to ensure that the present levels of funding focus on the long-term benefits for local communities.

Several respondents suggested that the Peace funding should focus on supporting longer-term projects, for example, with the time-span of 5 to 7 years instead of 1 to 2 years. The need for involving academics in the process of designing and continuous evaluation of peace projects was also emphasized. A community group leader from Derry shared the following reflections on this matter:

CAMERON: I think the problem with all funders of this kind of work is that it is always short term, a maximum of three years […], sometimes less depending on who's funding. And we all know from our own work that that sort of real change at the grassroots, whether you call it peacebuilding or transformation, you know takes much longer than that. So maybe to fund a project for longer, fund fewer projects but for longer, you know.

Another community group leader from Derry talked about the importance of exploring additional funding sources in order to be able to sustain peace projects in the long run:

PAULINE: I think it is uneven, I think it has been patchy, I honestly wonder at times how much impact on the ground is being felt. I mean, we have been involved in the peace programmes now since 1999, 2000 and the important thing is to try and impact change at a very grassroots level with the people who are marginalised and for whom the peace dividend may not have always trickled down to.
The amount of money and the way it has been phased in and the current position that we are in now whereby that it is almost being phased out again… There [were] for us lessons to be learned in not making the Peace money absolutely the core funding. It was [about] making sure that there [were] other pockets of funding as well that supported our work, because if we had been reliant solely on Peace money I think we would be looking at ourselves in a very grim position today as I know a lot of groups are.

The sustainability of peace funding and peacebuilding interventions is interrelated. While peace and reconciliation projects often require external funding to initiate their work, it is equally important that they generate internal support and seek additional funds, which would sustain them in the long run. These initiatives are within a large spectrum balancing between strong dependence on external funding and becoming entirely self-sufficient. The issue of project sustainability is becoming more pressing with the present gradual decline of external funding, which supports peace and reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.

Community Development/Economic Development Versus Community Relations Work Critique

Peace Projects Criteria: Top Down or Bottom Up?

Lederach (1997) developed an important classification within the peacebuilding process that distinguishes between three major types of peacebuilding actors and their specific approaches to addressing conflict and building peace. First, the focus is on the influential and powerful top leadership, including political, military, and religious leaders who generally focus on high-level negotiations and cease-fire agreements within a "top-down" approach to peacebuilding (Lederach 1997, pp. 44–45). Second, middle-range leadership is highlighted, which includes respected leaders within specific sectors, for example, education, the arts or business, as well as academics, intellectuals, and ethnic group leaders with a strong peacebuilding capacity due to their influence within their respective groups. Middle-range leaders may contribute to building peace and reconciliation by various means, including conducting problemsolving workshops and conflict resolution skills training, as well as establishing regional peace commissions (Lederach 1997, pp. 46–51). Finally, grassroots leadership includes local community-group leaders who work at the grassroots level and use a "bottom-up approach" to build peace and encourage reconciliation by conducting community workshops and training, and by establishing local peace commissions and other peacebuilding initiatives (Lederach 1997, pp. 51–53). In the context of this study, both middle-range and "bottom-up" approaches to peacebuilding are emphasized.

It is important to explore the ways peacebuilding initiatives are planned and designed and, in particular, to examine who is responsible for developing criteria for supporting peace projects. Is it the responsibility of external funding agencies, local government authorities, or grassroots communities to determine the criteria, according to which projects and interventions nurturing peacebuilding are supported or not? Or should this process be a joint effort by multiple actors? To answer these questions, it is important to consider who benefits from the funding and to learn about the needs of these communities. The resources that are already available, as well as the peacebuilding capacity and accumulated knowledge of local organizations, groups and individuals must also be taken into account.

The frequently used top-down approach to peace funding was also discussed by a number of study participants. For example, a community group leader from Derry expressed concern regarding the limited opportunity for local community members to participate in planning,

designing, and developing peacebuilding initiatives from the bottom-up. He shared the following ideas and perceptions in his story:

> MICHAEL: […] plans handed down from above rather than emerging from below, all this in the view of many people including myself has changed the character of community organization in the North […]. I think many community organizations [do not represent] the people of that community but [have become] conduits for government policy. […] it would seem to me that they have long ceased to be organs for campaigning or for struggle on behalf of people in communities […].

Another community group leader from Derry, who was also concerned about the top-down approach to funding, was at the same time aware of improvements throughout the years of the peacebuilding process. This is what he had to say on the issue:

> NIALL: If you look at the whole peace process one of the major problems has been the extent to which it has been top down… So if you like, one of the missing dimensions in the whole process was the extent to which grassroots were involved in helping to invent the peace, and if you go back to the Anglo Irish Agreement of 1985 out of that came the International Fund for Ireland and if you look at the reports of the International Fund for Ireland there are a couple of things that hit you between the eyes. One was the extent to which it was seen as a Nationalist project to begin with and only people from the Nationalist community were taking advantage of it, and the second was the extent to which community groups did not have the expertise to put in proper projects. Now all of that has improved immensely both in terms of both communities trying to participate and in terms of the Protestant community… So what I think IFI and Peace money has done is that it has given community groups a sense of their own self-worth and it has allowed them to prosper and I think that has been very important and under reported.

Another concern shared by several respondents was about the extensive use of consultants throughout the entire process of developing, applying for and carrying out peace projects supported by external funding. A community group leader from Derry reported the following in his story:

> GEORGE: I suppose people might regard it as bittersweet […] it was important funding to allow a lot of good work to be done but at the same time people felt that maybe so much was gained from consultations and consultants and that the actual beneficiaries maybe didn't get as much […] the actual ground work funding […] was sort of jeopardised because other people, consultants, might have benefited more because it was a whole new set of systems, procedures and European guidelines and so on and people needed to be made aware of it and therefore everybody more or less had to sort of commission consultants to help them through that process.

Echoing the previous respondent, a community group leader from County Tyrone perceived a number of problems and the lack of vision in the manner the funding was allocated and used:

> YASMIN: My underlying thought is that it's money that hasn't been used as wisely as it could have been… they didn't have the depth of vision that I thought that perhaps they should have. They're employing someone as a consultant to come in which in this particular occasion basically gave them their strategy and unless they were quite vocal about it they basically signed up to what this person thought they needed… And that

particular money wasn't put in on a needs basis. It was put in almost as a "we need to have four of these, because there are four areas in this Local Strategic Partnership and they all need to get sort of an equal amount," which is not how the world works. Because the greater need may be in area A, and area C may be affluent and [have] none of that [poverty] issue at all.

Several study participants also voiced the ideas that envisioning, planning, and designing peace and reconciliation projects should emerge from the grassroots. Reconciliation was poorly defined in terms of funding policies and in 2007 received a working definition only in the Peace III process (Hamber & Kelly 2004). However, the mechanisms that would ensure a participatory approach from the earliest stages of planning the funding projects and in facilitating dialogue and cooperation throughout this entire process are not always available. For example, a community group leader from Derry emphasized the significance of developing a clear understanding of what is peace within local communities as a first step towards moving forward and expanding the peacebuilding potential across other communities:

> LUCIA: I think that we are starting with our own community and developing an understanding, and an understanding of peace and reconciliation within our own community groups […] I think people are only beginning to feel more comfortable now reaching out to other communities […] if you don't understand your own community and […] the differences within your own community, you are never going to understand the differences in [the] other community.

Overall, many respondents expressed concern about the appropriateness and effectiveness of using a common top-down approach in developing criteria and procedures of external funding support for peace projects. The significance of grassroots-initiated peace projects was emphasized. At the same time bottom-up grassroots efforts require dedicated leadership, coordination, space, and resources available for all community members to work together throughout the entire process of a peace project's development and implementation.

Evaluating Peace Projects

An important question is how to evaluate the effectiveness and the success of projects and initiatives aimed at building peace and fostering reconciliation among communities divided by conflict. The study participants shared important insights regarding assessing peacebuilding initiatives and the process of delivering economic assistance to local peace projects.

Several specific points arose within the discussion of the methods and ideas regarding project evaluation. A point shared by many respondents was also voiced by a community group leader from County Leitrim who said that "the main thing about the projects that we were involved with is first of all they would not have happened if it weren't for the funding we received, they wouldn't have happened without being subsidised in some way." Further, Cormac, who is a community group leader from Derry, noted the generally positive impact of both Funds, specifically in terms of the investments into local economies, addressing the problem of unemployment, and helping to regenerate communities that were significantly important:

> CORMAC: Well I think in general terms they have made a significant contribution towards building the peace here. They have brought investment into areas of greatest need within this society, within our communities, and they generally have had a positive

impact on development aligned to the conflict but also historically as well. There are a lot of pockets with concentrations of multiple depravations in communities. There is a lot of poverty, a lot of unemployment and it has been historical in nature and sometimes multigenerational and I think a lot of the Peace funding in so far as it can, because there are clearly limitations to that, […] has had a positive impact. It has enabled communities to organise themselves over the years, and I think it has made generally a positive impact.

However, another community group leader from Derry emphasized that the success of external investments into peacebuilding efforts is difficult to measure because it should be considered as only a portion of a greater and broader peacebuilding effort that engaged various participants and employed a number of methods and approaches to address conflict and build peace. This is what he shared on this issue:

FREDERIC: I'd be looking for if you are going to talk measurables: how many people could you engage with through this intervention that weren't engaged with previously? How did it work and why did that approach work? So that was almost like a journey back and forwards through various reiterations of the Peace interventions and some observations. What I can't do is directly say it was because of the way Peace was structured because I think that the complexity of our society is such that you can't put it just down to… Well the reality is that Peace money, […] even at its height, still only represented a small portion of the investment in community and voluntary activity.

At the same time, a number of respondents noted the inconsistent and incomplete evaluation of Peace projects. How is it really possible to measure progress? For example, a community group leader from County Donegal noted the difference between the focus and the outcome goals of peacebuilding initiatives. She had this to say on this subject:

LORRAINE: I'm now working on a Peace III programme and I have worked on two previous Peace III programmes as well […] what I would find with the Peace is it is very target driven and it's very spend orientated and there is not as much focus on soft outcomes and what I mean by that is the actual change in attitudes, attitudinal change – that is less of a focus – whereas with the IFI there is more of a focus on attitudinal change rather than the [spending] and the targets […].

Moreover, a community group leader from Derry who wondered about the appropriate measurement criteria for the projects aimed at fostering reconciliation and in building peace:

FRANK: It's quite hard to measure. I'm not sure if you use […] business standards and you use the same language and sometimes that can be the problem. The problem is that people are saying […] "what's the value for money," or "what's the return on the investment" and I'm sometimes a bit concerned that we are using the wrong phraseology for what it is that [we are] trying to [do].

Another community group leader from Derry stated that it is critical for peacebuilding projects to incorporate research, structure and evaluation into their programs:

KATIE: Northern Ireland has been what I tend to call a "peace industry," [and] has been in receipt of funding for the exploration of ways of dealing with conflict… historically a plethora of organizations grew up in the course of the conflict here seeking to address the problem and the result has been a rather chaotic amalgam of issues. [The] donor sector

[creates] competition for funding and a focus understandably on delivering the product, which is what the donors require, but in terms of strategic engagement and in terms of the research that is required to ensure that lessons are learned from what has been done, [it is] quite awful really, quite deficient to put it mildly.

A community group leader from County Monaghan also reflected on a number of specific project analysis questions that have come up throughout the process of funding local peacebuilding initiatives:

JESSICA: I would think that certainly it was only in the last decade that the whole area of "ok so what are you doing different about the infrastructure you're building? Are you building on the same sectarian lines as you might have previously done? Is the makeup of the management structure a quality approved at a local level? Does it reflect or represent the percentage of the population that is from another tradition or another minority? Are you actually targeting and supporting [socially] inclusive perspectives within what you're doing?" And all of these questions I think have become part of the peacebuilding analysis and the peacebuilding appraisal process and the peacebuilding challenge.

Peace money is one component within a broader peacebuilding context. A possible approach to measure project effectiveness is to do it quantitatively by exploring how many people were involved and how many initiatives were conducted. Another approach is to apply a qualitative evaluation of projects, for example, what impact have the initiatives had on local communities in terms of increasing cross-community contact, building relationships, or addressing historical injustices and sectarianism through dialogue and exploring the shared and divided history of both communities. The impacts of peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts require a type of measurement criteria that would have the capacity to reflect subtle and intangible changes in people's perceptions, attitudes, interests, or needs. It is important that these criteria are based on local factors and are designed and further developed collectively by the local communities with the assistance of academic researchers.

Working with Youth

Another issue raised by a number of respondents involved the significance of focusing on young people within the peacebuilding process. For example, a community group leader from Derry reflected on the importance of involving youth in a peacebuilding project, which empowers young people between the ages of 18 and 25 to work together on designing peace, reconciliation and community building initiatives:

ROSE: I suppose young people have inherited the legacy of the conflict that we have come through, and for a lot of them, they would have lost loved ones […] their lives have been touched in some way by the conflict. And the idea was to give them hope for their lives, and the main areas that we looked at were unemployment and some kind of education for employment, and then… addiction, drugs and alcohol, that's another big thing.

Another community group leader from Derry discussed the deep-rooted emotions and attitudes that are transferred to young people from their parents and grandparents, and emphasized the need to address that through peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts:

GARRY: So we have an institutionalized structure for peacebuilding now, so we have legislation, we have funding, but in terms of the emotional […] engagement, it is not

doing that, because we see the children at the primary schools – eight- and nine-year-olds – they still have […] fairly entrenched attitudes that they have received from their parents. An eight-year-old might have a parent who's 31, [who would] have been fairly young when the Good Friday Agreement was signed, so they shouldn't have those sectarian attitudes, but [there is] a transfer that's going on, in which I don't see the peace expedition money really hitting that.

According to a community group leader from County Leitrim, investing in youth is a critical component of the peace process:

LIAM: […] what's coming up all the time is lack of investment in youth. All the time at all the meetings and up to now what we have done […] was a very small amount under the first phase, you know, directly to use support, and we developed our Youth Council and organised cross Border activities with the Youth Council to Carrickfergus, which has opened eyes significantly amongst, not only amongst the kids but the leaders. They're quite startled about what they've seen.

An important point was also raised by the community group leader from Derry who emphasized the significance of giving the young people from both sides of the Border an opportunity to meet and learn about each other and help them to build trust and understanding:

COLIN: […] it gives the young people here living in Londonderry […] the opportunity to meet with other young people, particularly young people from Donegal […] often the Border is seen as a great barrier between Protestants and Catholics so [in] this way and through the Peace money we can bring young people together [so] they can learn about each other's culture and they can learn about each other's history, but they can also see how each other exists in their own community.

Today's young people are affected by the legacy of conflict through their own experiences with peers as well as through learning from their parents and grandparents. It is critical to address this sense of hopelessness to assist youth to find hope for the future despite the history of conflict, injustice, sectarianism, and violence. Peacebuilding projects with a focus on youth have the potential to nurture young people to learn more about the conflict by interacting with people from other communities, through dialogue, communication, and participation in joint activities and events. They get a chance to experience, learn about, and contribute to the shared knowledge about conflict and to find their own ways of addressing the legacy of conflict. Peace IV has dedicated €150 m to empower young working class Loyalists who feel disempowered by the peace process (Shirlow 2012; Smithey 2011).

Discussion and Conclusions

Overall, there are mixed perceptions among funding recipients regarding the effectiveness and the implications of peacebuilding projects funded through the EU Peace III Fund and/or the IFI as well as their critique of community development/economic development versus community relations work.

There are four key findings with regard to the IFI and EU Peace III Fund. First, economic assistance to nurture the Northern Ireland peace process has generated an extensive knowledge base and expertise within both funding agencies and the people who have implemented

peacebuilding projects. One of the lessons learned from this research is the importance of co-creating knowledge acknowledging and including the experiences learned by all actors involved in the peace process. The implications for peace funding involve the significance of identifying the communities' needs as well as their goals and vision for their peacebuilding projects, and the scope required to sustain their projects. Moreover, it is important to determine how the peace projects can be delivered through the cooperation of various actors including top leadership, mid-level leaders, grassroots, as well as the funding experts, and Peace and Conflict Studies pracademics. In this case, it would not be a strictly top-down or a bottom-up approach, but a cooperative process of mutual learning and participation in the peacebuilding process. Important components within the peace funding process include on-going project evaluation as well as sustainability, and scope and depth of the proposed peacebuilding initiatives.

External economic assistance alone cannot bring about peace and security to an area affected by protracted conflict. External economic aid as an integral part of a liberal peacebuilding process is not a panacea to resolve the complex deep roots of conflict (Ryan 2007; Mac Ginty 2008). The technical liberal peace generally includes the promotion of liberal western values, local capacity building, providing economic assistance within free market reform, electoral democracy, and human rights (Mac Ginty 2008, 2010; Richmond 2005, 2006). Its peacebuilding programs may not suit the needs of local people and may be neocolonial in nature transmitting the values of the dominant powers (Mac Ginty & Williams 2009). The "compliance and incentivizing power" of the liberal peace can create dependency and squash the creativity and ingenuity of local people (Mac Ginty 2011, p. 196). Economic developmental aid as a core of liberal democratic peacebuilding "confers a techno-cratic structure to peacebuilding that is based on donor-driven rules, schemas, language and logics" (Creary & Byrne 2014b, p. 69).

Local people must define and own the peace so that hybrid models that link local economic initiatives with national and international funding initiatives may be more appropriate to institutionalize in the grassroots (Mac Ginty 2011; Richmond 2011). Development assistance can be especially significant for promoting peace due to its contribution to long-term conflict prevention, supporting peace processes, and in addressing localized violence (Leonhardt 2001). In terms of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties, the need for assistance in reducing violence and promoting local cross-community peace initiatives is critical.

Second, mutual learning is important for all actors involved in the peacebuilding process. Another critical component is connection to research including access for researchers to peace projects and the availability of findings and evaluation results to both peace funders and communities that develop and implement peace projects. In order to optimize current peacebuilding projects and assist future initiatives, information from the grassroots needs to be analyzed in a variety of ways, including both qualitative and quantitative methods, which would cover both the tangible and intangible results achieved by these initiatives.

Third, the findings indicate that there are a number of linkages between both funders supporting projects with a peace/reconciliation focus and those with an economic regeneration focus. In particular, assisting economic development projects and creating employment opportunities may generate a peacebuilding capacity at the local level. And at the same time, building individual skills and knowledge, as well as encouraging cross-community dialogue and cooperation may lead to developing the capacity and potential for initiating business projects and contributing to local economies.

At the same time, providing international economic aid to regions affected by protracted and violent conflicts may have an adverse effect as the competitive funding process

exacerbates tensions (Mac Ginty & Williams 2009). For example, the aid may "exacerbate, reinforce, or prolong conflict by feeding into and worsening intergroup dividers or by ignoring and undermining intergroup connectors" (Anderson 2001, p. 258). Further, the problems related to building cooperation at the community level in Belfast include the top-down approach and reducing this task to economic development and creating local jobs, as well as supporting single identity initiatives that may reinforce cultural separation and encourage competition for resources (Shirlow & Murtagh 2006, p. 50).

Fourth, several respondents were more critical of the peace funding and noted that in some ways, the funds have prevented real sustainable change from happening. In particular, a number of respondents noticed the influence of external funding on the declining capacity of the voluntary sector in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. One of the respondents' key concerns is related to what will happen to the community peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland and the Border region when the external aid runs out. In particular, more than half of the respondents wondered how they could carry on the peace work without continuous funding from both international donors.

There are three key findings with regard to community development and economic development versus community relation's work. First, the present research indicates that peace funding from both agencies has in some cases facilitated the creation of shared spaces and in others has exacerbated segregation by doubling up on conveniences in single identity communities in which PUL and CNR communities are able to interact and even collaborate together on building bridges between both communities who were separated due to the Troubles. This process has also allowed both communities to realize that they share similar experiences of hopelessness, mistrust, discrimination, and sectarianism while sometimes they had no idea that people "on the other side of the Border" felt the same way.

Thus, human rights remain a critical issue in the post-accord peacebuilding phase, and despite a number of serious weaknesses, the GFA "offers the best hope for peace in generations, [and] draws heavily on human rights standards…" (Beirne & N'Aolain 2009, p. 229). Overall, the establishment of institutional and political arrangements along with the participation and involvement of numerous actors ranging from political and international leaders to non-governmental organizations, grassroots community groups, and individuals is required in long-term peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland and the Border Area (Buchanan 2014).

Second, the individual and group identity of members of both communities in Northern Ireland and the Border Area seem to play a major role in their views and attitudes about conflict and their perceptions of the peacebuilding process. In particular, the respondents' images regarding the accessibility of funding and the evolution of the funding process over the past few years seem to reflect their identity and personal beliefs. In this context, an understanding of "transgenerational trauma" whereby "chosen glories" or "chosen traumas" are passed orally from one generation to the next is important for grasping issues related to the individual and group identity of people deeply affected by protracted conflicts (Volkan 2001). Even though young people growing up in Northern Ireland today might not have witnessed or experienced the same degree of violence as their parents, the suffering and trauma of the Troubles is transmitted through destructive stories intergenerationally (Senehi 2009). Moreover, social transformational inclusive initiatives in civil society to build cross-communal connections are much needed in Northern Ireland and the Border region so that the people involved have a stake in, and are optimistic about their shared future (Knox 2015, p. 26).

Third, as the external economic funding to Northern Ireland declines, communities on both sides of the Border are developing strategies to increase the sustainability of their peace initiatives, seek alternative resources, and learn from their experience and from evaluations of previous and current projects. One method to address this problem seems to be integrating peace/reconciliation and economic development projects within joint peacebuilding interventions. Another approach shared by many respondents in this study was to focus on youth and in particular to assist young people to learn about, and meet people "from the other side of the Border," as well as to build their skills and capacity and facilitate addressing their hopelessness about the future. The benefits of the peace dividend can often be elusive especially when it comes to young people who may be marginalized or omitted or whose representation is subsumed within the larger grassroots (Creary & Byrne 2014a, p. 9). Democracy as a central tenant of liberal peacebuilding tends to ignore youth "who cannot vote and the illusion of a peace dividend creates other more harmful conflict-causing ills" (Creary & Byrne 2014a, p. 19). Finally, research and project evaluation (Bush & Duggan 2014) are critical to identify what worked well, what did not work, and what changes need to be implemented to develop future successful cross-community peacebuilding initiatives in Northern Ireland and the Border Area.

Finally, critical peace research is needed because it points out that the liberal peace's conflict transformational ethos and approach to peacebuilding may create a "conflict-in-transformation" that both shapes and changes the forms of conflict and violence that can be explored by an "ethio-phenomenological" approach to identify these new forms of conflict such as trauma, depression, and alienation (Mitchell 2009, p. 681) as well as the nuances of political graffiti in contested spaces (Bush 2013), and local parades that set "the limits to compromise" (Hayward & Komarova 2013, p. 778).

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