Consolidating peace: Rethinking the community relations model in Northern Ireland

Colin Knox
Nazarbayev University, Kazakhstan

Seamus McCrory
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council,
Northern Ireland

Abstract

Northern Ireland has now moved from 'negative' peace (the absence of violence, largely) to 'positive' peace (confidence-building measures to consolidate gains in voting practice and in reducing discrimination against the minority community in employment and housing allocation). This transition has involved funders at the European, regional and local levels investing in peace and reconciliation measures to consolidate political gains made since the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998. This paper examines the achievements made to date, the extent to which they have resulted in a peace dividend for those most impacted by the violence, and whether the focus of peace-building interventions should shift away from the traditional community relations model. It finds that the reformed local authorities in Northern Ireland and the border regions could play a pivotal role in making a significant difference to peace-building through new legal powers in community planning.

Keywords: PEACE IV, community relations, quality of life, community planning, peace-building

Introduction

The latest, and probably final, phase of EU funding (PEACE IV, 2014–2020) aimed at assisting Northern Ireland towards a post-conflict, reconciled society was approved for implementation in 2017, after a long period of delay occasioned by the UK's intention to leave the EU. One of the key implementing stakeholders in the programme is the restructured local government in Northern Ireland. Each of the eleven councils has a significant budget to implement interventions in three thematic areas: children and young people, shared spaces and services, and building positive relations at the local level.

At the same time, councils in Northern Ireland have been given new legal community-planning powers, the aim of which is to improve the well-being of their citizens by working collaboratively with statutory partners in government. Statutory partners, in turn, are part of the Northern Ireland Executive's *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016–21*, which has adopted an outcomes-based model for improving public services and people's quality of life.

This paper assesses the extent to which there is synergy between these initiatives at the EU, regional and local levels, and whether they are more likely to result in the long-awaited peace dividend, a more cohesive society and improvements in public service outcomes, so desperately needed in areas significantly impacted by the conflict in Northern Ireland and the border counties. The paper is structured in three parts. First, we locate peace-building in Northern Ireland in the wider international literature, including the distinction between 'positive' and 'negative' peace. Second, we unpack and critique the three current initiatives aimed at building lasting peace and reconciliation in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Finally, we consider an alternative approach, which aims to improve and sustain peace outcomes and secure a peace dividend for those most impacted by the conflict.

Peace-building

Peace-building as a concept can be traced to Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former secretary general of the UN, in his 1992 *Agenda for Peace* paper to the UN Security Council (UNSC), although Galtung first used the term in 1975. He saw the UNSC as having different roles as follows: to seek to identify at the earliest possible stage situations that could produce conflict, and to try, through diplomacy, to remove the

sources of danger before violence resulted; where conflict had erupted, to engage in peace-making aimed at resolving the issues that had led to conflict; through peace-keeping, to work to preserve peace where fighting had been halted, and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers; and to stand ready to assist in peace-building in its differing contexts, and to address the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political oppression. Post-conflict peace-building, he argued, 'was action to identify and support structures which would tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict' (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 823). The UN included both intra- and inter-state conflicts.

The definition and operationalisation of peace-building have also attracted significant scholarly attention (Knox & Quirk, 2016; O'Connor, 2014). Francis (2012), for example, argued that there are two contrasting but linked definitions of peace-building – a narrow and a broad definition. In the former, peace-building involves interventions aimed at capacity-building, state reconstruction, reconciliation and societal transformation. In the latter, peace-building comprises security, political, economic, social and development interventions which attempt to strengthen political settlements and address the cause of conflict. Francis (2012, p. 5) concluded, 'in effect, though peace building has a normative orientation, i.e. reconstructing a secure, peaceful and developed society, it is a largely value-laden project that apportions disproportionate powers to those who prescribe, fund and implement peace building programmes'. This is a particularly apposite assertion in relation to this paper, which examines three funding bodies who are simultaneously engaged in delivering peace-building interventions. Hamber & Kelly (2005, p. 38) see reconciliation as a core component of peace-building, which they define as the 'process of addressing conflictual and fractured relationships and this includes a range of activities. It is a voluntary act that cannot be imposed'. Lederach's (1997) seminal work on peace-building described the process as hierarchical rather than organic. At the top level, politicians, the military/police and appointed officials/ advisors engage in high-level negotiations with the aim of reaching some kind of political 'solution' or compromise. At the middle level there is input from civil society sectoral leaders, e.g. the business community, trade unions, religious leaders, academics and think tanks. At grassroots level, NGOs, the voluntary and community sectors, and local activists are involved. Lederach concluded: 'my basic thesis would be that no one level is capable of delivering and sustaining

peace on its own. We need to recognise the interdependence of people and activities across all levels of this pyramid' (Lederach, 1996, p. 45).

Galtung (1996) delineates between 'positive' and 'negative' peace. The latter is the absence of violence whereas the former seeks to address the multiple manifestations of structural and cultural violence or the conditions which led to the conflict in the first place. Brewer (2013) operationalised these two concepts of positive and negative peace at the social and political levels (see Table 1), highlighting the fact that social transformation and societal healing are crucial elements of moving beyond conflict.

Table 1: Peace-building in practice

	Positive	*Negative*
Social	Involves civil society and grassroots groups working in areas of expertise to focus on social transformation and societal healing in pre- and/or post-agreement phases	Involves civil society and grassroots groups working in areas of expertise to focus on conflict transformation by intervening as mediators in specific instances of violence and/or campaigning to end violence generally
Political	Involves political parties, negotiators and politicians incorporating social transformation and societal healing into the terms of the accord and/or using the new political structures to address social transformation and societal healing	Involves political parties, negotiators and politicians negotiating ceasefires and campaigning for all factions to desist from killing

Source: Brewer (2013, p. 166).

Aiken (2013) synthesises the work of other scholars but adds significant value through a social learning model which connects transitional justice and reconciliation in divided societies (Beirne & Knox, 2014). This connection, he argues, is heavily mediated by social learning: 'transitional justice strategies will be successful in promoting reconciliation to the extent that they are able to facilitate changes in the antagonistic identities and hostile systems of relations between former enemies developed during past violence' (Aiken, 2013, p. 50). He expands on several components of the social learning model

(transformative dialogue, acknowledging the injustice to victims of past violence, truth recovery, and tackling structural and material inequalities). In particular, however, he emphasises the role of inter-group contact as follows:

> Positive intergroup contact is the essential mechanism of social learning and reconciliation. Contact must be of non-adversarial quality; groups afforded equal status; over a long period of time; and in pursuit of cooperative or superordinate goals. In addition, context should have supportive institutional structures, the agreement of authorities and broader normative climate of improved intergroup relations. (Aiken, 2013, p. 50)

This focus on inter-group contact draws on a significant body of social psychology literature known as the 'contact hypothesis' (Allport, 1954), which emphasises the critical importance of building relations between opposing groups through sustained high-quality contact. Those who support the behavioural approach are more likely to emphasise the contact hypothesis, communication and cross-community dialogue, and the need to tackle sectarianism at both the individual and group levels (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). At its most simple, the contact hypothesis argues that contact (under the right conditions) between members of different racial or ethnic groups leads to a reduction in prejudice between the groups and an increase in tolerance and mutual understanding (Hewstone & Swart, 2011). Contact must be non-adversarial and cross-community groups must be afforded equal status over a long period of time. The problem with this approach is that it can sometimes appear contrived in practice. Equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants are brought together for the explicit purposes of improving community relations (disparagingly referred to as 'hug a Protestant/Catholic'). The encounter may have the sole purpose of meeting funding requirements, and the nature of the activities is therefore wholly superficial and rarely sustained or high quality in nature. Those involved see it for what it is and may be prepared to 'play along' in the interests of obtaining funding but in the firm belief that it will change little. This represents a huge waste of resources, but there is also a more sinister aspect at play. Paramilitaries and drug dealers can use the cover of community groups to establish or consolidate their stranglehold in disadvantaged, single-identity communities, the outcome of which is to destroy the quality of life for families living in these areas.

At the macro level, critics also see significant limitations in placing better community relations at the heart of peace-building in Northern Ireland. Such an approach, they argue, is concerned with relationship-building over the challenge function, ignores power differentials between those being reconciled, and neglects the role of the state in creating or maintaining divisions (Lamb, 2010; McVeigh, 2002). McEvoy et al. (2006, p. 82), for example, argued that a successful peace process in Northern Ireland has been achieved 'which effectively side-lined a significant reconciliation industry' because reconciliation became synonymous with healing relations between two religious blocs ('two tribes' approach) without acknowledging the role of the British state in the conflict. Hence the term 'reconciliation' was seen as a 'dirty word' used and abused, which was 'anti-ex-combatant, weak in rights' protection, and geared towards creating an imagined middle ground' (McEvoy et al., 2006, p. 98).

Broadly, therefore, the international literature on peace-building endorses two main approaches: a behavioural and a social trans-formation model. In the former the conflict is seen as dysfunctional relations between two groups which create negative stereotypes of 'the other' ethnic group (Cochrane, 2001). The resolution is sustained, high-level contact to break down these perceptions and rebuild trust, an example of which is the current initiative on shared education where children come together to share classes, short of integrated education (Borooah & Knox, 2015). In the latter the emphasis is about changing political institutions to make them inclusive, and tackling issues of inequality and the human rights of the minority community who precipitated the conflict (Dickson & Osborne, 2007). While these approaches are not mutually exclusive, they do require very different policy interventions. We now examine three such significant peace-building interventions at the EU, regional and local levels of government.

PEACE IV

The PEACE IV European Programme (2014–2020) is a cross-border initiative amounting to €270 million, which is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (85 per cent) and matching non-EU funding (15 per cent, from national, regional and local government). This is the fourth tranche of European funding, which began in 1995 when PEACE I was launched in direct response to the paramilitary ceasefires. The aim of PEACE I was to 'to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation by

increasing economic development and employment, promoting urban and rural regeneration, developing cross-border co-operation and extending social inclusion'. Further support from the EU followed. The combined funding provided under PEACE I, II and III amounted to €1,995 million, of which €1,334 million came from the European Commission and €661 million from the British and Irish Governments (European Commission, 2016).

The PEACE IV Programme is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) and has four key priorities 'where it wants to make significant and lasting changes': shared education, children and young people, shared spaces and services, and building positive relations (SEUPB, 2016a). The overall objective of the programme is to promote social and economic stability in the region by actions to facilitate cohesion between communities. The 'region' includes Northern Ireland and the border counties of Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Sligo.

Specific objectives under the four key priorities are as follows:

• Shared education: to provide direct, sustained, curriculum-based contact between pupils and teachers from all backgrounds, through collaboration between schools from different sectors, in order to promote good relations and enhance children's skills and attitudes to contribute to a cohesive society;
• Children and young people: to enhance the capacity of children and young people to form positive and effective relationships with others of a different background and make a positive contribution to building a cohesive society;
• Shared spaces and services: to create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces;
• Building positive relations: to promote positive relations characterised by respect, where cultural diversity is celebrated and people can live, learn and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

The eleven (new) councils in Northern Ireland and restructured councils in the border Republic of Ireland region were invited to submit local authority action plans which addressed three of the above thematic areas (children and young people; shared spaces and services; and building positive relations). The indicative budget for the implementation of the local councils' action plans is €69 million, or approximately one-quarter of the overall PEACE IV budget.

The PEACE IV model emphasises sustained contact between the two main communities, and hence encourages activities and events where head counts of community balance are critical. This model of peace-building takes as its starting point that 'separate but equal' communities will not encourage long-term reconciliation. In other words, the mantra that 'high fences make good neighbours' is at odds with the ideal of building a shared society and the goals of government policy. The SEUPB has placed an emphasis on the quantification of outputs and results for local authorities at the programme level across the three thematic areas. These are listed in Appendix 1. Individual local authorities have set their own project-level output indicators, which cumulatively should contribute to overall results (or impacts) of the PEACE IV Programme.

Together: Building a united community

The devolved government of Northern Ireland also has its own policy on peace-building, entitled *Together: Building a United Community* (TBUC), launched in 2013. Its strategic policy antecedents were *A Shared Future* and *Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* (Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, 2005 and 2010, respectively). The former was devised by British ministers during one of the periods when devolution had collapsed, but took its policy direction from the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (p. 18), which argued that 'an essential aspect of reconciliation is the promotion of a culture of tolerance at every level of society, including initiatives to facilitate and encourage integrated education and mixed housing'. This policy was subsequently discarded by the returning power-sharing Executive, largely because it was associated with Direct Rule ministers and replaced by the locally owned *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy* (CSI), which promised 'to build a society where people can live, work and socialise in safe, shared and accessible facilities' (Kelly, 2010, p. 1). The document was heavily criticised by the voluntary and community sector as being too aspirational, lacking in specific progress targets and attracting no financial commitment by the devolved government (Knox, 2011). TBUC replaced CSI as the latest peace-building strategy by the devolved government.

The TBUC strategy document envisions 'a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation… where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance' (Northern Ireland Executive, 2013, p. 3). The policy has four priorities:

i.   Children and young people: to continue to improve attitudes amongst our young people and to build a community where they can play a full and active role in building good relations;
ii. A shared community: to create a community where division does not restrict the life opportunities of individuals and where all areas are open and accessible to everyone;
iii. A safe community: to create a community where everyone feels safe in moving around and where life choices are not inhibited by fears around safety;
iv. Cultural expression: to create a community which promotes mutual respect and understanding, is strengthened by its diversity, and where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced.

The indicators for this programme are listed in Appendix 2.

The European Commission noted that TBUC provided 'a strong Northern Ireland policy context for the development of the PEACE IV programme' (European Commission, 2016, p. 5). See Table 2 for a summary of the timelines.

Table 2: Timeline of initiatives

Strategic documents	*Administration*
Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement (1998)	Agreement initiated devolved power-sharing government
A Shared Future (2005)	British government initiative
Programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (2010)	Devolved government
Together: Building a United Community (2013)	Devolved government
PEACE IV (2014–2020)	European programme
Draft Programme for Government: 2016–21	Devolved government, currently suspended (at time of writing: May 2018)

Programme for government

The *Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016–21* also incorporates peace-building and reconciliation as part of a wider outcomes-based approach, captured by forty-eight indicators, as the

mechanism to track social and economic change. One of fourteen key outcomes listed in the programme for government (PfG) is: 'we are a shared society that respects diversity'. This outcome aims to promote mutual respect between the two main communities and strengthen diversity. The document notes:

> In particular, it means making space for greater sharing between traditionally divided communities. *Together: Building a United Community* has established a strong foundation for this work. By continuing to work with communities, we can continue to develop shared spaces in education, in housing, and in society in general. (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016, p. 33)

The PfG includes five outcomes of direct reference to peace-building:

i.   A safe community where we respect the law and each other;
ii. A shared society that respects diversity;
iii. A confident, welcoming, outward-looking society;
iv. A place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest;
v.   A society that will give our children and young people the best start in life.

These outcomes are captured in PfG indicators listed in Appendix 3.

Table 3: Peace-building initiatives – Commonalities

| PEACE IV	Together: Building a United Community	Draft Programme for Government
Children and young people	Children and young people	Children and young people
Shared spaces and services	Safe community	Safe community
		Place where people want to live, work, visit and invest
Building positive relations	Shared community	Shared society
	Cultural expression	Confident, welcoming and outward-looking society

Looking across these three peace-building initiatives, there are a number of common themes (see Table 3). Not surprisingly, three parallel programmes offer the potential for complementary and self-reinforcing measures to consolidate peace. However, from the perspective of public expenditure there may well be the possibility of duplication or overlap despite the best efforts of funders. Some beneficiary groups are skilled grant applicants and can craft compelling bids which simply repackage the same or very similar interventions. In addition, the typical problems of causality, sustainability of interventions, and the counterfactual apply (could outcomes have happened in any case without the interventions).

Impact to date

Do these three initiatives offer a long-term prospect for 'positive' peace? Given the political significance of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998, the various peace-building funding interventions which preceded those outlined above and the attempts to address some of the structural issues which fuelled the conflict (inequality, policing, cultural identity, victims, etc.), one would expect some evidence of progress towards sustainable peace and reconciliation. However, to date, positive peace has been elusive. If one looks at attitudinal survey evidence on community relations collected over time, the results are not particularly impressive. In a probability survey of some 1,200 adults (conducted since the Belfast Agreement), respondents were asked if they thought relations between Catholics and Protestants were better, worse or the same as five years ago. The results (see Figure 1) show a fairly consistent trend that community relations are much the same over time or fluctuate depending on the wider political milieu. Some 50 per cent of those questioned in 1999 (following the Belfast Agreement, 1998) felt relations were better. Since then, the average is 51 per cent who consider relations are better than five years ago.

One of the assertions made about the peace process was that those communities most impacted by violence, and under the influence of paramilitary groups, would reap a peace dividend (Knox, 2016). In other words, quality of life would improve in socially disadvantaged areas where terrorism had been most acute, and had resulted in poorer public services, and limited education and employment prospects. However, the limited snapshot of the data does not bear this out. If, for example, we consider the achievements of school-leavers who have obtained at least five GCSEs (including English and

Figure 1: Relations between Catholics and Protestants
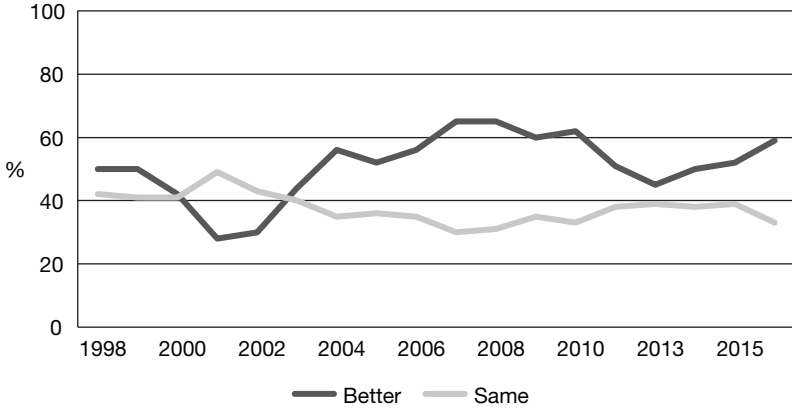
Source: Calculated from Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey data (see http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/).

Maths) at grades A*-C (referred to as level 2 education), and disaggregate between those receiving free school meals entitlement (FSME) and others, the trend is revealing (see Figure 2). Here the variable FSME is used as a proxy measure of disadvantage. The figures show that in 2005/6 the gap in educational performance between school-leavers was 31.2 per cent. In 2015/16 the gap was 31 per cent.

Figure 2: School-leavers achieving level 2 education
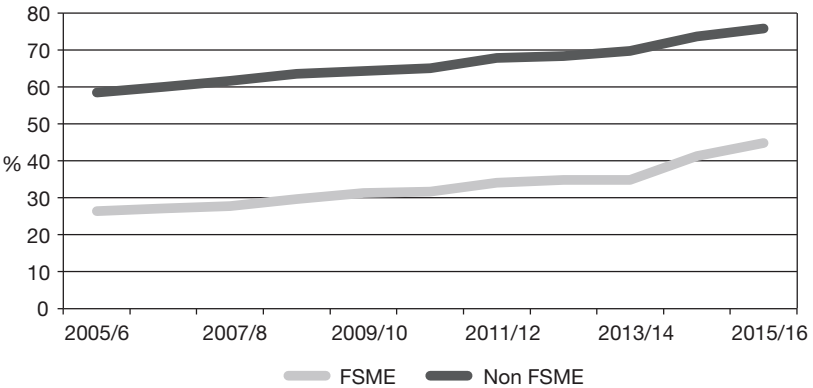
Source: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2017).

In a similar vein, if we consider the number of people claiming the 'Jobseeker's Allowance' social welfare benefit, the picture is comparable (see Figure 3). Here the data show those people who are claiming Jobseeker's Allowance as a percentage of the population, disaggregated by neighbourhood renewal areas.[1] The gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in 1999 at the time of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement was 2.9 per cent; in 2016 the gap remained significant at 2.3 per cent.

Figure 3: Jobseeker's Allowance as % of eligible population
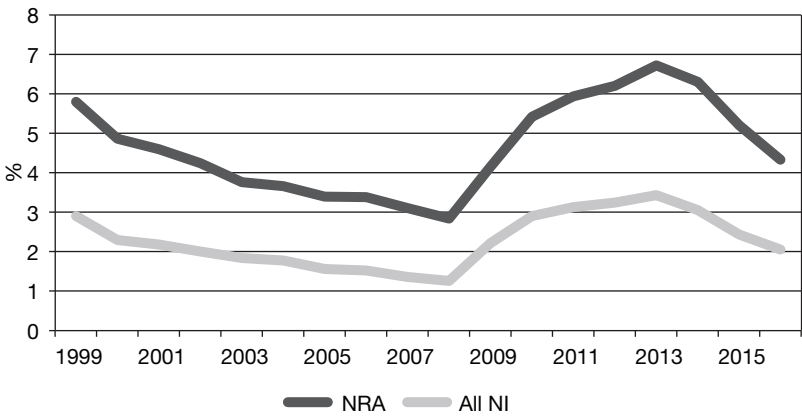
Source: Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information Service (see http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/Home.aspx).

In short, little has changed that would constitute a peace dividend for people living in areas impacted by the conflict. That makes young people easy targets for paramilitary groups. Despite years of funding from European and regional initiatives, the wicked and interrelated problems of sectarianism, divided communities and social deprivation remain stubborn. This conclusion may appear unduly pessimistic, not least because these policy interventions were conducted against a backdrop of declining macro-economic conditions, austerity in public budgets and social welfare, and increasingly polarised political tensions between the two broad communities (as characterised by the nature of the stand-off between Sinn Féin and the Democratic

[1] Neighbourhood renewal areas are thirty-six of the most deprived electoral wards in Northern Ireland. There are fifteen in Belfast; six in the north-west, including four in Derry; and fifteen in other towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

Unionist Party, and collapse of the devolved institutions, as well as, most recently, Brexit).[2]

An alternative approach?

PEACE IV has now involved local government as a key stakeholder in implementing peace-building interventions (as described above) across the eleven recently reorganised council areas and the border regions of the Republic of Ireland. The approach used, however, is based almost exclusively on the sustained contact behavioural model, which has been criticised as limited. An alternative approach might be described as a common needs model, which is significantly different in its conception and implementation. In this approach, the focus of attention is on the common needs of the two (main) communities in a hybrid behavioural and social transformation approach. The questions asked are as follows: what needs do both communities have in common (e.g. poverty, poor educational performance, low employment prospects, etc.), and how can these be addressed collectively? This is described as the pursuit of cooperative or superordinate goals, which, in so doing, will improve community relations organically rather than in a contrived way. Catholic and Protestant parents, for example, both want better educational outcomes for their children. Both communities want to escape the clutches of poverty and the control of paramilitaries. The underpinning principle involved in this approach is that to achieve lasting peace and build reconciliation, there is a need to address the structural and material inequalities which contributed to or caused the conflict in the first instance. If this is done collectively, then the two communities will grow in confidence and establish trust as a result of their pursuit of common goals.

But what could be the mechanism for delivering this model? In 2015 the pre-existing twenty-six councils, which had limited functional responsibilities, were reduced to eleven local authorities with extended powers and responsibilities. Although still relatively minor players in the public sector landscape, one significant legal power which they now have is community planning. The legislation – Local Government Act (Northern Ireland), 2014 – describes community planning for a district as 'a process by which the council and its community-planning partners identify long-term objectives for improving: the social, economic and environmental well-being of the

---

[2] We thank one of the referees for this important point of qualification.

district'. The overall aim is for councils and their community-planning partners in health and social care, education, policing, housing, investment, tourism, libraries and sports to collectively improve the well-being of their citizens (Knox & Carmichael, 2015). According to the Department for Communities, which has overarching responsibility for local government, 'the partners will develop and implement a shared plan for promoting the well-being of an area, improving community cohesion and the quality of life for all citizens' (Department for Communities, 2017, p. 3). The eleven councils have now developed community plans for their areas after extensive consultation with all key stakeholders. Community planning could become the vehicle for a common needs model where councils play a *primus inter pares* role with other statutory organisations that deliver key services across the three thematic PEACE IV areas (children and young people, shared spaces and services, and building positive relations). Councils could therefore lead and coordinate all public services in their areas with the aim of addressing those common needs that blight segregated communities equally. Community planning becomes the mechanism for doing this, drawing on the extensive local knowledge which councillors have of their electoral areas, the needs of their constituents and what is politically feasible to achieve in practice.

Although the EU made reference to the opportunities for community planning in the delivery of PEACE IV, little came of it. As the Commission's document stated:

> Local Authorities will be required to ensure that activities are integrated with other initiatives that are being delivered at a local level by local authorities. The community planning approach, which is being adopted in both jurisdictions, offers the opportunity for this co-ordination. (European Commission, 2016, p. 70)

What is missing in the local council peace plans, guided by SEUPB, is any obvious reference to the community-planning mechanism and the opportunities it presents for a well-being agenda which transcends the much narrower confines of cross-community events. In short, PEACE IV local authority peace and reconciliation action plans are replete with interventions that are measured by head counts of cross-community events, missing the wider well-being agenda, which could tackle the common social, economic and environmental needs. So a typical example of PEACE IV interventions from one local authority

plan under the thematic area of building positive relations is as follows:

i.   120 individuals will be supported on a one-to-one basis. This will include cross-community contact and participants will be signposted to further programmes or initiatives over 2 years.
ii. 19 dialogue programmes to support community dialogue around issues such as bonfires, flags, parades, etc. over 3 years (228 participants).
iii. 72 engagement and development programmes aimed at marginalised and isolated groups/individuals from all community backgrounds, including black and minority ethnic communities. These will include accredited and non-accredited programmes over 3 years (864 participants).
iv. 10 community sport and personal development programmes, which will encourage participation from a range of community backgrounds over 2 years (200 participants).
v.   12 'Decade of Commemorations' programmes, which will involve delivery of a series of activities aimed at exploring history (144 participants).
vi. 8 residentials to develop civic leadership and support participants to engage and work towards making safer, more peaceful, cohesive and integrated communities.

Such interventions, while entirely well meaning, emphasise activities and policy outputs with no obvious causal peace-building outcomes. Associated with these head count events will be a strict monitoring process to ensure the 'right mix' of participants are involved. Councils and SEUPB could use the framework of community planning as a way in which superordinate goals in health, education, social welfare, etc., could be addressed. These issues have thwarted progress in areas most impacted by the conflict and could be tackled using PEACE IV and community planning. Rather, councils have opted for high-level strategic goals in their community plans, which have not captured the short-term electoral interests of councillors. One example includes the strategic goal: 'Everyone has opportunities to engage in community life and shape decisions – we have a strong sense of community belonging and take pride in our area.' While entirely commendable, such visionary statements have made councillors rather indifferent to the merits of community planning as an exercise in collaborative leadership. SEUPB, in turn, has reverted to the traditional contact

model interventions, which build on previous iterations of the programme (PEACE I–III). The problem is that community groups receiving funding know how to 'play the numbers' – ensure proportionate involvement of Catholic, Protestant, cross-border and minority ethnic groups regardless of a clear causality to social change as indicated by the evidence above. What is surprising about this is that there has been a shift in the devolved government's approach towards outcomes-based accountability, most obviously on display in the draft PfG (Friedman, 2009). This would suggest much less emphasis on process and outputs, and greater attention on outcomes, in this case improving the well-being of the citizens of Northern Ireland. Although widely promoted as the new way of delivering public services, outcomes-based accountability does not appear to be well understood or conversely it may be viewed that 'there is nothing new' in it (Social Change Initiative, 2016). Peace-building interventions therefore appear at odds with the devolved government's approach to wider public services improvement.

Conclusions

The community relations model of sustained contact between the two main communities which informs PEACE IV and its antecedents is premised on a behavioural model of peace-building. This model sees interventions based almost entirely on mixing religious groups as the superordinate goal. This overt emphasis on religion as the rationale for contact is contrived, and participants find it superficial and hollow in terms of its outcomes. Community groups are now well practised in using this model to secure funding but, in effect, engage in facile activities as a way of supporting their own wider interests. The EU, the devolved government in Northern Ireland (or, in its absence, support from the UK Government) and local authorities could come together in a shared community-planning platform to deliver a hybrid (structural and behavioural) model of peace-building aimed at tackling some of the most difficult legacy problems of the conflict. The continuing stranglehold of paramilitary groups in socially vulnerable interface communities is typical of these enduring problems. Cross-community contact programmes will not, in themselves, address these wicked problems, many of which are cross-departmental in nature. PEACE IV, still at the early stages of implementation, has an opportunity to maximise the full potential of community planning as a way to tackle the superordinate goals of poverty, poor health and

education outcomes that persist despite the absence of violence ('negative peace'). Instead, contact interventions are more concerned with meeting financial accountability requirements (for good reasons) and measurable head count goals to meet cross-community targets. This model fails to appreciate the common needs of those most impacted by the conflict and the potential for social transformation, operationalised through community planning, to build lasting peace. Equally, councils have not realised the full potential of community planning to tackle the most deep-rooted problems they face. A bold council (or councils) needs to take a radical approach, eschew the risk-averse or 'safe' option of cross-community head counts and, with the support of councillors and officers, lead the way and demonstrate that well-being or an improvement in the quality of life of its citizens is what matters. In so doing, it will tackle both limitations of pre-existing approaches, which thus far appear to have made little progress in shifting the peace-building metrics.

References

Aiken, N. T. (2013). *Identity, reconciliation and transitional justice: Overcoming intractability in divided societies*. Oxon: Routledge.

Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice.* Reading: Addison-Wesley.

Beirne, M., & Knox, C. (2014). Reconciliation and human rights in Northern Ireland: A false dichotomy? *Journal of Human Rights Practice, 6* (1), 26–50.

Borooah, V., & Knox, C. (2015). *The economics of schooling in a divided society: The case for shared education.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Boutros-Ghali, B. (1992). *An agenda for peace: Preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peace-keeping* [A/47/277-S2411]. New York: UN.

Brewer, J. (2013). Sociology and peace building. In R. Mac Ginty (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of peace building* (pp. 159–170). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Cochrane, F. (2001). Unsung heroes? The role of peace and conflict resolution organisations in the Northern Ireland conflict. In J. McGarry (Ed.), *Northern Ireland and the divided world: Post-Agreement Northern Ireland in comparative perspective* (pp. 137–56). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Department for Communities. (2017). *Community planning*. Retrieved from https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/articles/community-planning [3 October 2017].

Dickson, B., & Osborne, R. (2007). Equality and human rights since the Agreement. In P. Carmichael, C. Knox & R. Osborne (Eds), *Devolution and constitutional change in Northern Ireland* (pp. 152–66). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

European Commission. (2016). *Cooperation programmes under the European Territorial cooperation goal*. Brussels: European Commission.

Francis, D. J. (2012). Introduction. When war ends: Building peace in divided communities – Core issues. In D. J. Francis (Ed.), *When war ends: Building peace in divided communities* (pp. 1–26). Farnham: Ashgate.

Friedman, M. (2009). *Trying hard is not good enough: How to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities*. Booksurge Press.

Galtung, J. (1975). Three approaches to peace: Peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building. In J. Galtung (Ed.), *Peace, war and defense – Essays in peace research* (pp. 282–304). Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers.

Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilisation*. London: Sage.

Hamber, B., & Kelly, G. (2005). *A place for reconciliation? Conflict and locality in Northern Ireland.* Belfast: Democratic Dialogue.

Hewstone, M., & Brown, R. (Eds) (1986). *Contact and conflict in intergroup encounters*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Hewstone, M., & Swart, H. (2011). Fifty-odd years on intergroup contact: From hypothesis to integrated theory. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 50* (3), 374–86.

Kelly, G. (2010). *Junior ministers launch consultation for cohesion, sharing and integration* [Press release]. Belfast: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Knox, C. (2011). Cohesion, sharing and integration in Northern Ireland. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, 29* (3), 548–66.

Knox, C. (2016). Northern Ireland: Where is the peace dividend? *Policy and Politics*, *44* (3), 485–503.

Knox, C., & Carmichael, P. (2015). Local government reform: Community planning and the quality of life in Northern Ireland. *Administration, 63* (2), 31–57.

Knox, C., & Quirk, P. (2016). *Public policy, philanthropy and peace building in Northern Ireland*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lamb, M. (2010). Loyalty and human rights: Liminality and social action in a divided society. *International Journal of Human Rights, 14* (6), 994–1012.

Lederach, J. P. (1996). *Remember and change. Peace and reconciliation conference*. Enniskillen: Fermanagh District Peace Partnership.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace.

McEvoy, L., McEvoy, K., & McConnachie, K. (2006). Reconciliation as a dirty word: Conflict, community relations and education in Northern Ireland. *Journal of International Affairs, 60* (1), 81–106.

McVeigh, R. (2002). Between reconciliation and pacification: The British state and community relations in the north of Ireland. *Community Development Journal, 37* (1), 47–59.

Northern Ireland Executive. (2013). *Together: Building a united community*. Belfast: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Northern Ireland Executive. (2016). *Draft programme for government framework 2016-21*. Belfast: Northern Ireland Executive.

Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. (2017*). PfG 2016-21 measurement annex – Gap between % of non-FSME school leavers and % of FSME school leavers achieving at level 2 or above including English and Maths.* Retrieved from https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/pfg-2016-21-measurement-annex-gap-between-non-fsme-school-leavers-and-fsme-school [28 May 2018].

O'Connor, K. (2014). *Public administration in contested societies*. Palgrave: Basingstoke.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. (2005). *A shared future: Policy and strategic framework for good relations in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister. (2010). *Programme for cohesion, sharing and integration: Consultation document.* Belfast: Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

SEUPB. (2016a). *A local authority partnership guide to peace and reconciliation action plans.* Belfast: SEUPB.

SEUPB. (2016b). *Citizens' summary: Peace IV programme (2014–2020). European Territorial Cooperation Programme Ireland–United Kingdom (Northern Ireland – Border Region of Ireland).* Belfast: SEUPB.

Social Change Initiative. (2016). *Turning curves*. Belfast: Social Change Initiative.

Appendix 1: Local authority peace and reconciliation action plans (PEACE IV)

Thematic area	Output indicators	Target by 2023	Results
Children and young people	The number of participants aged 0–24 completing approved programmes that develop their soft skills and a respect for diversity	21,000 persons	An increase in the % of 16-year-olds who socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community 'very often', from 43% to 50%, 'sometimes', from 24% to 28%
			An increase in the % of 16-year-olds who think relations between Protestants and Catholics are better than they were 5 years ago, from 45% to 50%
			An increase in the % of 16-year-olds who think relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in 5 years time, from 38% to 45%
Shared spaces and services	Local initiatives that facilitate the sustained usage on a shared basis of public areas/buildings	17 local initiatives	An increase in the % of people who define the neighbourhood where they live as neutral 'always or most of the time', from 64% to 68%, and 'sometimes', from 22% to 26%
			A decrease in the % of people who prefer to live in a neighbourhood with people of only their own religion, from 20% to 16%
			An increase in the % of people who prefer to live in a mixed-religion environment, from 71% to 75%

Appendix 1: Local authority peace and reconciliation action plans (PEACE IV) (contd.)

Thematic area	Output indicators	Target by 2023	Results
Building positive relations	Local authority action plans that result in meaningful, purposeful and sustained contact between persons from different communities	17 action plans	An increase in the % of people who think relations between Protestants and Catholics are better than they were 5 years ago, from 45% to 52% An increase in the % of people who think relations between Protestants and Catholics will be better in 5 years time, from 40% to 48% An increase in the % of people who know quite a bit about the culture of some minority ethnic communities, from 30% to 38%

Source: Compiled from SEUPB (2016a).

Appendix 2: TBUC indicators

Our children and young people	*Our safe community*
% of people who think that relations between Protestants and Catholics are better than they were five years ago	Number of hate crimes

Number presenting as homeless due to intimidation |
% of people who are favourable towards Catholics, Protestants, minority ethnic groups	% of people who feel annoyed/intimidated by Republican/Loyalist murals
% of young people who regularly socialise or play sport with people from a different religious community	% of people who see town centres as safe and welcoming for all walks of life
% of young people who have: shared sports facilities or equipment; shared classes; done projects with other schools	% of people who feel safe going to events in a: Protestant secondary school, Catholic secondary school, Orange hall, GAA hall
	% of people who would like to see the peace line(s) come down now or in the future

Our shared community	*Our cultural expression*
% of people who think that Protestants and Catholics tend to go to different local shops or use different GP surgeries and other services in their area	% of people who feel a sense of belonging to: their neighbourhood, Northern Ireland

% of people who feel they have an influence in: their neighbourhood, Northern Ireland |
% who think that leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres in their areas are 'shared and open' to both Protestant and Catholics	% of people who think that the culture and traditions of Catholic, Protestant, minority ethnic communities add to the richness and diversity of Northern Ireland
% of those who have children at school who think that their child's school is a shared space	
% of schools that have done projects or shared education with other schools	% of people who believe their own cultural identity is respected by society

Appendix 2: TBUC indicators (contd.)

Our shared community (contd.)

% of people who see the area they live in as Protestant, Catholic or mixed
% of people who define their neighbourhood/workplace as a shared space
% of people who would like mixed-religion neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools
% of first-preference applications, and % attending integrated schools

Source: Compiled from Northern Ireland Executive (2013).

Appendix 3: Selected programme for government peace and reconciliation indicators

Safe community	Shared society	Confident, welcoming and outward-looking	Place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest	Children and young people get the best start in life
Prevalence rate (% of the population who were victims of any NI Crime Survey crime)

Reoffending rates

Average time to complete criminal cases | % who think all leisure centres, parks, libraries and shopping centres in their areas are 'shared and open' to both Protestants and Catholics

% of the population who believe their cultural identity is respected by society | A respect index

Confidence (as measured by self-efficacy) | Better job index

Nation brands index

Total spend by external visitor | Gap between % of FSME school-leavers achieving at least 5 GCSEs at A*-C, including English and Maths, and non-FSME leavers who achieved the same level

% of care-leavers who, aged 19, were in education, training or employment

% of school-leavers achieving 5 GCSEs at A*-C or above, including English and Maths

% of schools found to be good or better

% of children at appropriate stage of development in their immediate pre-school year |

Source: Compiled from Northern Ireland Executive (2016).