Hybrid Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties

The Impact of the International Fund for Ireland and the European Union's Peace III Fund[*]

Julie Hyde & Sean Byrne[**]

Abstract

This article draws upon a wide qualitative study of the experiences and perceptions held by 107 community group leaders and 13 funding agency development officers within the liminal context of Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. These organizations received funding from the European Union's Peace III Program and/or the International Fund for Ireland. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key figures in these groups and agencies during the summer of 2010. This data is explored in relation to the concept of hybrid peacebuilding so as to better identify and articulate the potentialities and challenges associated with grassroots macro-level interactions. The empirical findings indicate the necessity of flexibility in empowering local decision makers in a hybridized peacebuilding process. Local people should be involved with the funders and the governments in constructing and in implementing these processes. The theoretical findings are consistent with previous research that favors elicitive and local rather than top-down bureaucratic and technocratic processes. More attention needs to be paid to how local people see conflict and how they build peace. The prescriptive/practical implications are that policymakers must include the grass roots in devising and implementing peacebuilding; the grass roots need to ensure their local practices and knowledge are included; and external funders must include local people's needs and visions in more heterogeneous hybrid peacebuilding approaches. The article is original, providing grass-roots evidence of the need to develop the hybrid peacebuilding model.

[**] Julie Hyde is a Ph.D. Candidate in peace and conflict studies at the University of Manitoba. Her research focuses on critical approaches to peacebuilding, peace education, and indigenous/non-indigenous relationships. Sean Byrne is professor of peace and conflict studies and director of the Arthur V Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba. He has published extensively in the area of critical and emancipatory peace building. He was a consultant to the special advisor to the Irish Taoiseach on arms decommissioning. He is a consultant on the Northern Ireland peace process to the senior advisor for Europe and Eurasia at the U.S. Senate foreign relations committee. His research was funded by SSHRC and the USIP.

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1   Introduction

Since the 1990s, civil society actors have been working to foster development and consolidate peace in post-war contexts (Pouligny, 2005; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren, 2012; Thiessen, 2014). Recognition of this phenomenon has led many researchers to explore the constructive and deconstructive potentialities of these actors as well as the conditions that both help and hinder their ability to effectively undertake sustainable peacebuilding (Carey, 2010; Foley, 2010). Many scholars have noted that these groups do not operate in isolation; rather, they are part of a system of peacebuilding tracks characterized by complex and often tense relations between actors operating at different strata of social organization (Lederach, 1997; Senehi, 2008). Some authors refer to these intricate chains of influence, support and constraint as manifestations of hybrid peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2010; 2011; Richmond, 2009; Richmond and Mitchell, 2011).

Examination of ongoing peacebuilding in Northern Ireland provides evidence of such complexity and tension between grass-roots-level actors and the two central funding bodies that support their work: (1) the European Union (EU) Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Armagh Cavan, Derry, Donegal, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, Sligo and Tyrone (hereafter 'Peace I, II, III and IV' with III as the focus of this study) created in 1995 after the paramilitary ceasefires and (2) the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) created in 1986 with $895 million to support over 5,800 projects (Buchanan, 2014: 88). This article draws upon a qualitative study of the experiences and images held by 13 funding agency development officers (10 from the EU Peace III Fund and 3 from the IFI) and 107 community leaders in Derry and the Border Counties whose organizations have received funding from these sources. This data is explored in relation to the hybrid peacebuilding framework so as to better identify and articulate the potentialities and challenges associated with grass-roots and macro-level interactions in the region. It is hoped that such empirical, practical and general theoretical insights can assist in the development of policy, which better reflects the inherently elastic, many-sided and nebulous nature of peacebuilding practice. The article explores the significance of the hybrid model of peacebuilding within the liminal context of Northern Ireland and the Border Counties.

2   Models and Types of Peacebuilding

Numerous scholars have conceptualized peacebuilding as a long-term, multilevel and multi-sectoral process that requires efforts to end overt violence, resolve outstanding conflicts constructively, encourage and nourish parity and symmetry, empower local actors, raise local capacity and heal damaged relationships within and between communities (*e.g.* Jeong, 2005; Lederach, 1997). Many of these

authors emphasize that if peacebuilding practice is to be efficient and practical, it must be grounded in the visions and needs of local populations (Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty, 2008; Roberts, 2011).[1] In other words, it must employ an "elicitive approach" (Lederach, 1995: 63). Such efforts would be rooted in a realization of how peace may be evidenced in the everyday social realities of local communities (Richmond, 2009; 2011; Richmond and Mitchell, 2011; Roberts, 2011).

These perspectives contrast sharply with those espoused by adherents of the liberal peace paradigm or the pre-eminent post-Cold War peacebuilding plan that has been increasingly and aggressively pursued by states in the global north, international financial institutions and regional organizations (Richmond, 2005; 2006). While there is some diversity within liberal peace thought and praxis (Selby, 2011: 16), several general characteristics of this dogma can be identified (Selby, 2011). Liberal peace forays generally involve the top-down application of a set program that includes the imposition of electoral democracy, the provision of aid under the condition of free market reform, local capacity building, and promoting Western liberal values (individualism, autonomy, civil and political rights, etc.) (Mac Ginty, 2008; 2009; 2010a, 2010b; 2011; Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009; Richmond, 2006; Selby, 2011). Indeed, this paradigm highlights an accepted liberal form of Western values (Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009: 50) and, consequently, can result in an ethnocentric and elitist bias on the part of policy developers; inadequate programs that do not address local needs; reduced creative space for alternative approaches; a disempowered populace; and decidedly illiberal, security-centric policies and practices (Goodhand and Walton, 2009; Jabri, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2008a, 2008b; Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009; Selby, 2011).

Within this archetype, building peace becomes a highly regularized exercise in technical problem-solving processes (Roberts, 2011: 3), the effects of which are often out of sorts with reality (Roberts, 2011: 32) and to the continued deprivation of the majority of the population (Jabri, 2010). This raises the possibility of the escalation of rejuvenated conflict as a mediocre peace (Mac Ginty, 2010: 395) is produced that lacks legitimacy at the local level (Mac Ginty, 2008; Richmond, 2011; Richmond and Mitchell, 2011; Roberts, 2011). Many scholars go further to argue that liberal peacebuilding is ineffectual, inept and neocolonial, ensuring the regulation of surplus labour that drives the global economy, ameliorating its political and economic elite (Carey, 2010; Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009).

Given this substantial criticism of the liberal peace paradigm, it may be tempting to cast preference to the parochial and metropolitan level, privileging all that which is time-honoured, customary and indigenous within peacebuilding practice. Indeed, it has been suggested that a grass-roots-up strategy is more

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1   Peace can best be understood as negative (the absence of war) or positive (social justice) as individuals, groups, states and the international community address direct, cultural and structural violence (Byrne and Senehi, 2012: 34-37). The transitional and "prosaic peacebuilding" process is complex, emancipatory, uncertain, untidy and multidimensional (Mac Ginty, 2010). It includes a myriad of "everyday actors" and stories that sometimes collaborate with international actors and donors in a hybridized way, and in other contexts work in localized visible and invisible ways as people make meaning and contest what the international community sells them in terms of peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2014).

likely to be sustainable, cost efficient and acceptable to local communities, helping, for example, to provide necessary capital goods and social services, monitor government activities, foster a broader civic commitment and shore up constituencies for peace (Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty, 2010; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren, 2012). However, in the search for effective peacebuilding game plans, it is crucial to subject grass-roots labour to a substantial level of interrogation and avoid ascribing to a universalist discourse, which assumes the authenticity and inherent goodness of all localized practices (Mac Ginty, 2008; 2011).

This critique is necessitated partly by several commonplace characteristics of a grass-roots approach that may actually inhibit the achievement of an adequate peace. For example, local peacebuilding practices tend to rely upon and augment actual all-powerful relations and are generally conservative in nature, a reality that may prevent social transformation (Mac Ginty, 2010; 2011). Relatedly, such approaches may not offer desirable levels of answerability, clarity and democratic representation (Carey, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2010). Indeed, some local indigenous practices may in themselves be unjust, violent or disempowering to some groups (*e.g.* gender, LGBTTQ or interethnic relations) (Mac Ginty, 2008; 2010). Further, local organizations can fuel conflictual relations by organizing around sectarian lines, which is common in Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Sri Lanka, among others (Foley, 2010).

In addition, it must be remembered that local peacebuilding takes place in a complex milieu that is formed and created by liberal peacebuilding values and organizations (Mac Ginty, 2011: 68-69). Grass-roots actors have been progressively incorporated into liberal peace interventions, becoming agents to transmit norms and ideas that are essential to its dominant power (Herring, 2011; Mac Ginty and Williams, 2009). However, this co-option is a very contentious process as these diverse actors who have their own ideas, outlooks and relationships (Van Leeuwen and Verkoren, 2012: 89) often engage in practices that are not congruent with the dominant idealized image of a tidy, professional and service-oriented local sector (Carey, 2010; Mac Ginty, 2010). To address this issue, considerable resources have been devoted to civil society capacity building in post-war situations, encouraging urbanized professionalism, standardization and formalization among diverse grass-roots actors (Van Leeuwen and Verkoren, 2012). This disciplining of the local has the negative impact of impeding social action and creating a civic culture that effectively does not seriously engage each individual in a collaborative way (Richmond, 2009; Van Leeuwen and Verkoren, 2012). In this manner, civil society and the civic culture become a standardized bureaucracy that is dependent upon external funding and unreflective of the creative ingenuity and entrepreneurial acumen across the grass roots (Mac Ginty, 2011: 196). Hence, it is inaccurate to claim a bifurcated relationship between the liberal peacebuilding paradigm and local–indigenous knowledge and standpoints, as neither exists in a homogeneous pure state (Mac Ginty, 2011: 196). Indeed, in employing this divaricated binary, pracademics risk overvaluing the liberal peacebuilding model's equilibrium and imperium (Mac Ginty, 2010: 395) and romanticizing the activities of local actors. Not any of these approaches provide a suitable dais for either analysis or policy development.

The image of hybrid peacebuilding provides a new framework that moves outside of the macro–micro trap. The notion of hybridity refers to the complex practices and experiences that arise from multiple groups' interactions and comprehensive images of their reality (Mac Ginty, 2011: 20). In hybrid peacebuilding, the people's cosmologies and schematas are altered as a result of their interaction with other endogamous and exogenous parties (Mac Ginty, 2011: 20), creating an interface between macro-level and local actors, each of whom work within, challenge, change and/or ignore the policies and practices of the other (Goodhand and Walton, 2009). Thus, no abettor within these situations has complete autonomy; rather they must respond to a series of distortions and deviations that occur from these interactions (Mac Ginty, 2010; 2011; Richmond and Mitchell, 2011). That is,

> Within this (interface) space a unique range of responses, practices, tactics and forms of agency emerge – including plural forms of acceptance and appropriation, resistance and the exertion of autonomy – and they "hybridize" the "blueprints" for peace advanced by international actors. (Richmond and Mitchell, 2011: 33)

The resulting state includes external and indigenous actors embroiled in a complex and non-motionless mechanism (Mac Ginty, 2011: 21).

In an effort to capture this complexity, Mac Ginty conceptualizes hybrid peacebuilding as an ongoing interaction between four factors: (1) compliance power (including coercive power) of the liberal peace; (2) incentivizing power of liberal peace (maintained through external funding); (3) recalcitrance of grassroots stakeholders (their ability to subvert interventions by the liberal peace actors); and (4) alternatives provided by localized civil society actors (Mac Ginty, 2011: 85-86). The interactions between these four factors are ongoing in a hybrid peacebuilding process whereby the four factors interact to deform and dragoon the energetic movements of the other three in a manner that manifests differently depending upon context (Mac Ginty, 2010: 404).

Mac Ginty illustrates this nexus of interaction through an exploration of the transformation of Northern Ireland's sectarian Orange Order offering an interesting example of hybrid peacebuilding in practice (Mac Ginty, 2011). This Unionist–Loyalist organization represents a very aggressive element of Protestant civil society, reflecting strong popular sentiment, which contrasted with the official rhetoric of reconciliation and tolerance proffered by the Northern Ireland state in the post-GFA period (Smithey, 2011). Due to the local legitimacy of this organization, the British and Irish governments sought to encourage its reform rather than delegitimizing or repressing it outright hoping that such a change would bring more ultra Loyalist groups within the Protestant Unionist community back in from the fringes (Mac Ginty, 2011: 202). This organization was gradually accepted as a legitimate member of civil society, notwithstanding its obvious sectarian tendencies. In response, the Orange Order, drawn to the offerings of legitimacy, respectability and financial reward, did alter its activities, engaging with other groups and actors across lines of difference and attempting to rebrand

the contentious and often violent Twelfth of July parades as the tourist-friendly Orangefest (Shirlow, 2012). Thus, these parties undertook a process of reassembling their cognitive dissonance (Mac Ginty, 2011: 207), wherein the definition of legitimate civil society was expanded to incorporate this identity-based group and the group itself sought to, at least partially, align itself with the accepted macro-level vision. This is a common expression of hybridity as it is often necessary for macro-level actors to work with identity-based groups who have ample local legitimacy (Foley, 2010).

As this example demonstrates, the visionary and chimeric schema of hybrid peacebuilding provides a helpful mechanism for identifying and articulating the aforementioned friction between macro-level policy and micro-level reality found within the Northern Ireland and the Border Counties context. The article seeks to explore the validity of the hybrid peacebuilding model within the context of post-peace accord Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. Like Cyprus, Bosnia and Sri Lanka, the people of this region are trying to navigate the transition from war to a cold and frosty peace. Thus, understanding hybrid peacebuilding and local ownership within the Northern Ireland liminal context would be illuminating.

3 The Northern Ireland Conflict

The conflict's roots emerged from a nexus of historical, political and social grievances that include the Ulster Plantation, the Penal Laws and deep economic disparity between the South of Ireland and the Lagan valley, a situation that was reinforced by partition in 1921 and continues to manifest as endemic social inequality (Byrne *et al.*, 2009). There was no monolithic Unionist government from 1972 to 1994 as devolved government was suspended in the wake of protests by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and direct rule was introduced by the British government to end Unionist populist discrimination, and to address the political violence of Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries (Bew *et al.*, 2002). In the contemporary era, punishment beatings, shootings and bombings by rogue Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries provide clear evidence that the long-term resolution of this conflict requires an ongoing process of deep reconciliation (Byrne *et al.*, 2010; Frampton, 2010). This is particularly vital for the communities residing in the areas of North and West Belfast on both sides of the Irish Border as they have unjustly suffered from sectarian violence (Byrne *et al.*, 2009: 641).

Consequently, the concept of reconciliation has become a central component of policy developed by both domestic and third party actors amid a rapidly changing political and socio-economic terrain including the 1998 Belfast or Good Friday Agreement (GFA) (Mac Ginty & Darby 2012). This document dedicates and binds all of the parties together to achieve reconciliation, build trust and tolerance and protect everyone's human rights (GFA, 1998). These goals will be achieved through a variety of political, social and economic mechanisms intended to foster a more tolerant culture (GFA, 1998: 36). These key ideas are reiterated within the power-sharing government's document *A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic*

Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland that identifies intercommunal conflict and sectarianism as blocking socio-economic headway ('A Shared Future…', 2005: 12) and repeats the GFA's call for tolerance through the fostering of cohesive communities, equality, dialogue, trust-building and a bicommunal partnership ('A Shared Future…', 2005: 9). Both of these documents recognize the important work undertaken by community-based organizations and make a commitment to supporting these achievements.

This emphasis on reconciliation and the significant roles played by grass-roots actors in this process are also evident within the policies and practices of the EU's Peace I, II, III (and now IV) Funds and the IFI, the two main funding bodies supporting localized peacemaking and peacebuilding work (Buchanan, 2014). A sum of $895 million from the IFI supported over 5,800 projects between 1986 and 2010 (Skarlato *et al.*, 2013: 221). Peace I received €500 million from the EU and €167 million from the Irish and British governments, while Peace II was given €531 million from the EU and €304 million from both governments (Buchanan, 2014: 91). Peace III received €225 from the EU and €108 from its structural funds. The EU is particularly dedicated to both communities reconciling with each other and building a shared community through funding projects that promote peaceful coexistence (SEUPB, 2012: 4) as both funds support grass-roots work that fosters cross-community contact and deconstructs stereotyping and social inequality (Buchanan, 2014; Byrne *et al.*, 2009).

Since the civil rights non-violent movement of the late 1960s, a vibrant voluntary sector and local intercommunal associations were developed, and robust and tenacious intracommunity support structures were created during the Troubles especially in working-class Republican communities (Mac Ginty, 2011). The aforementioned policies and financial commitments made by both domestic and third party actors have moulded the work undertaken by these local groups, shaping their projects in the image of the broader macro-level vision espoused by the GFA (Birrell and Williamson, 2001; Mac Ginty, 2011). Part of this change has involved encouraging grass-roots organizations to base their activities upon civic rather than sectarian politics, while many groups still organize themselves along the lines of intracommunity identity (Belloni, 2009).

As of the late 1990s, the voluntary sector boasted over 5,000 community-based organizations with a total estimated gross annual income of £514 million (Birrell and Williamson, 2001: 212; Cochrane, 2001). In addition, Intermediary Funding Bodies (IFBs) were drawn from local NGOs and county and district partnerships to facilitate the implementation of 11,000 reconciliation projects approved and resourced by the EU's Peace I Fund (Gormley-Heenan and Fitzduff, 2000: 64). Community organizations were also mobilized in the development of the British government's statutory regeneration policy under the assumption that this would help it better fulfil the basic needs of the local population (Cebulla, 2000: 110). Overall, there is recognition that sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation in Northern Ireland requires extensive work by grass-roots organizations and, as a consequence, substantial financial resources have been committed to these bodies by third party actors that have developed an extensive peace business within Northern Ireland (Brewer, 2003: 69).

However, macro-level third party actors have also developed policies and practices that have intensified and entrenched intergroup hostilities. For example, from 1969 to 1994, Britain provided a £18.2 billion economic subvention to Northern Ireland, affording the Unionist government the resources necessary to maintain a large security force tasked with containing paramilitary violence (Tomlinson, 1995).[2] This militaristic approach did not take care of the deep roots of the conflict and created a contrived war economy that maintained the political status quo (Byrne and Irvin, 2002: 61). In addition, from 1989 to 1994, $1 billion was provided to Northern Ireland from the European Structural Funds via a funding allocation process that centralized identity-based criteria within its application and disbursement procedures (Irvin and Byrne, 2004: 135). As a consequence, while these funds may have sought to foster intercommunity collaboration, the communities' rival ethnonational identities further exacerbated the cleavages the peacebuilding projects sought to transcend and reinforced the reciprocal dehumanization that sustains this protracted conflict (Byrne *et al.*, 2010: 31).

The funder's emphasis on group identification within funding allocation has impacted the perceptions and experiences of local communities in Northern Ireland. For example, a study found that Catholic respondents were considerably more buoyant regarding the reconciliatory potential of cross-community economic integration projects compared with their Protestant counterparts (Byrne *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, Unionist respondents have a tendency to perceive Nationalists as unfairly benefiting from both IFI and EU Peace funding (Byrne *et al.*, 2009), and to believe that their stories of victimization by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) are being ignored and suppressed within public discourse (Simpson, 2008). More broadly, there is much disagreement among grassroots actors regarding the overall effectiveness of cross-community reconciliation projects, with many fearing that these have been, thus far, insufficient and/or shallow and frivolous in their approach and reach (Byrne *et al.*, 2010). Such concern is certainly warranted when one acknowledges that housing, education and politics remain highly contested social arenas (Cambell *et al.*, 2008; Shortall and Shucksmith, 2001). Indeed, the sectarian nature of politics within Northern Ireland continues to hinder attempts to develop effective methods for intertwining social capital across different lines and between different strata of government (Campbell *et al.*, 2008: 35).

Overall, third party actors have tended to support those components of civil society whose goals and practices are compatible with their own. That is, macro-level (Irish, British and international) support for local actors has also served as a mechanism to filter these organizations, delegitimizing those groups whose work

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2   The Barnett block grant and formula system introduced by the Labor government in 1970 does not apply to all of the Northern Irish, Scottish and Welsh devolved government's budgets with regard to the net transfer of funds towards public expenditure that are adjusted by the HM Treasury. During the Troubles the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had more discretion compared with her/his Scottish and Welsh counterparts over how the subvention (taxes–public spending for the region) was used in terms of security. See Cunningham (2001), and Gaffkin and Morrissey (1990).

is incongruent with macro-level policies (Mac Ginty, 2011: 183-205). An obvious case of this appraisal occurred in 1985 when the British government proscribed those community groups (primarily from the Catholic Nationalist Republican community) connected to paramilitary organizations (Birrell and Williamson, 2001: 207). Hence, programs such as the short-lived Community Relations Commission that aided voluntary organizations addressing both socio-economic issues and intergroup stereotyping may also be perceived as a means to supersede local community organizations with a government-controlled process of community organizing (Birrell and Williamson, 2001; Buchanan, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2011: 201). In the past, many Catholics perceived such efforts as an attempt to hamper metamorphic social action and further Unionist interests (Mac Ginty, 2011: 201), while in the present day such disparagement stems primarily from the Protestant community (Karari *et al.*, 2013).

As these examples demonstrate, peacebuilding in Northern Ireland is hardly a uniform process with foreseeable outcomes and results. While the current overarching macro-level vision appears to be grounded in the concept of reconciliation, the practice of these third party actors and funders has, at times, had apparently antithetical and irreconcilable outcomes. Indeed, it remains unclear whether the economic assistance provided to grass-roots actors has, in fact, encouraged viable cross-community contact, deep reconciliation and sustainable peacebuilding.

4   Methodology

This article draws upon a qualitative study of the experiences and perceptions held by 120 grass-roots/civil society actors and both funders' development officers from Londonderry or Derry and the Border Counties of Armagh, Cavan, Derry, Donegal, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan and Tyrone.[3] Specifically, the second author, Sean Byrne identified and interviewed 107 local leaders who work for community development, economic development, peace and justice, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and conflict transformation and reconciliation organizations funded by either the IFI and/or the EU Peace III Fund, 3 IFI development officersand 10 EU Peace III development officers, 5 each from County Councils in the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland and District Councils in Derry and the Border Counties of Northern Ireland. Completed over the summer of 2010 in a 10-week period, this study utilized in-depth, semi-structured interviews to generate respondent images and perceptions regarding the impact of external funds on reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts in Northern Ireland and the Border region. Each interview lasted approximately 90-120 minutes and was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The semi-structured questions explored the process of applying for aid, the sustainability of funded projects, building intercommunal contact and reconciliation, the GFA, building cross-

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3   The Counties that the interviewees belong to include all of the Border Counties except for Co. Sligo.

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communal trust and the respondent's hopes and fears for the future. Data analysis employed an inductive process (Druckman, 2005) whereby themes were identified from the transcribed interview data. This article employs a coding scheme to differentiate respondents; D and BA are used to refer to Derry and the Border Area, respectively, when referring to each respondent, while numbers differentiate respondents within the study area. D, BA and numerals are used to protect the interviewers' identities as they asked to remain anonymous.

5   Findings

The findings from this study centre on the respondents' images and experiences of the IFI and the EU Peace III Fund to illuminate the complex hybridity of peace-building approaches in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. The findings are categorized under the following key themes: (a) IFI and Peace III administrative structures; (b) IFI and Peace III application and reporting requirements; (c) bureaucratic mechanisms for ensuring accountability and transparency; (d) funding availability; and (e) the intended purposes of the IFI and Peace III Fund.

5.1   IFI and Peace III Administrative Structures

Many study respondents perceived the overall administrative structure of the Peace III Fund as rigid, prescriptive and overly formalized. In contrast, the IFI was considered far more accommodating of local realities. A community leader (BA8) claimed that:

> Under Peace III programs...the rules and regulations are a hindrance. IFI [structures] are more supportive in relation to the development of projects and they are more flexible in their approach to the changing needs of a project...They'll take a chance and if it doesn't work they'll not crucify you... They'll applaud you for trying to make things work.

This is indicative of the perception that the IFI is far more supportive of innovation and the development of new, alternative programming. This flexibility is partly due to the decentralized administrative structure of the IFI wherein local NGOs are able to actively participate in decision-making processes. For instance, a community leader (BA32) highlighted that:

> The EU Fund was very time consuming in terms of paperwork and administration, [there was] a lot of bureaucracy involved in it. You were more of an administrator...[The] IFI application process was easy...They had confidence in [you]...and they let you decide and shape what the program is about and have the confidence to realise that you are the person on the ground and you know the needs of it.

Thus, the IFI appears to empower local actors, respecting both their knowledge of local realities and their ability to make competent decisions regarding community needs. In contrast, the EU Peace III Fund employs a hierarchical approach wherein local organizations must continuously offer proof of their capacity to utilize funding in an appropriate manner. Further, the IFI was perceived to be far more people-oriented, as indicated by this community leader (D38):

> The IFI [staff] were very supportive and you got a real sense of people who are actually interested in what you were doing and have a good sense of what you were doing…[They saw] the value in what we were doing…Peace III is much more bureaucratic…it is much more to do with satisfying accountants.

As this statement indicates, there is a sense that IFI staff members are more closely engaged with actors at the local level, offering genuine interest and invaluable support. In contrast, the EU Peace III Fund centres on the maintenance of a bureaucracy staffed with disconnected accountants and administrators. Numerous respondents indicated that working with Peace III demanded a level of professionalism that many local organizations could not match. As a consequence, many became dependent upon outside consultants who were more adept at operating within these structures – a situation that forced some local groups to direct funding away from on-the-ground work. Many respondents employed the term 'peace industry' to refer to this formalized system.

5.2   IFI and Peace III Application and Reporting Requirements

The general distinctions made between both funds were further reflected in respondent assessments of the application and reporting requirements of each funding body. Overall, respondents perceived the EU Peace III Fund's application process to be very bureaucratic and difficult to complete, especially for those organizations staffed by people with limited educational qualifications and administrative expertise. In contrast, the IFI application process was described as more accessible. A community leader (D34) stated the following:

> The IFI would be more approachable…The European Union stuff is so bureaucratic…[it has a] forty-page application form…I think it is very difficult for people on the ground; people who maybe haven't got third level education and no qualification in accountancy, [to complete].

This statement indicates a perception that the EU Peace III Fund privileges formal organizations staffed by civil society professionals, while the IFI is more accessible to organizations based in less privileged communities. Relatedly, the IFI is perceived to have a more accommodating reporting structure that encourages local innovation. For instance, a community leader (D4) observed that:

> The IFI…funding mechanisms are flexible…they are more interested in good ideas and good programs than specific targets and outputs…Their field officers work very closely with potential projects…they keep an active interest…

> Their reporting structures are very effective but aren't as intensive as the Peace III methods.

This respondent has also highlighted the important role played by IFI field officers in supporting local projects, again reflecting the perception that it is a more humanized, people-oriented body that works collaboratively with local groups. In contrast, the EU Peace III Fund appears locked in a linear target/output paradigm that hinders creativity and innovation.

5.3   Bureaucratic Mechanisms for Ensuring Accountability and Transparency

The interviewees believed that both funds used a variety of systems to hold civil society actors accountable, requirements that drew various reactions from respondents. Thus, a community leader (D23) opined that while such mechanisms were important, they also inhibited effective local work:

> I understand…every role and every regulation that exists under the Peace funding and under European funding is created because somebody has tried to exploit the system …but it makes it very difficult sometimes and [the] IFI seems to have a more flexible structure and [is a] more, kind of, 'real world' organisation to work with sometimes.

While respondents identified that both funding bodies have stringent accountability standards, the IFI was again perceived to offer processes more readily and realistically applied at the local level. Other respondents noted that working through these requirements provided vital opportunities for local capacity building, as indicated by this community leader (D29):

> The [EU Peace III] administration was a nightmare but at the end of the day we got through it and we learned from it and we got our capacity building through it, and if you want the money do the work.

Overall, the respondents appreciated the need for ensuring accountability, but also stated that it is important to ensure flexibility in these processes so as to help community groups that have minimal administrative structures or training.

5.4   Funding Availability

Many respondents, particularly those from newer organizations, expressed dissatisfaction with the requirement that they cost-share their resources with other organizations and/or provide evidence that they have secured complementary funding from other sources. Consequently, a community leader (D5) highlighted:

> Sometimes it is difficult to access IFI or European funding if you haven't got a package… If you can source funding from other places then IFI and European funding will come in and be part of that wider proposal. But in communities like ours where you are starting with a zero baseline…it can often be impossible to get started.

This exemplifies the perception that it is difficult for organizations to garner funding unless they already have a track record of success from previous work. Such requirements curb the potential for innovation at the local level by making it very difficult to begin new initiatives. Other respondents confirmed this observation by noting that having local groups match funds is a means for donors to minimize risk. Moreover, a community leader (D6) asserted that:

> You know, no funder likes to give 100% of anything… If you have two funders backing you it allows you then to go and look for a third because you're saying these people trust this idea, [that] it's not a bad idea…Funding bodies don't like to take all the chances.

Thus, this respondent describes a kind of vetting process wherein funding bodies prefer to support organizations that have already been recognized as legitimate and competent by other macro-level actors. This has the effect of circumscribing innovation at the local level by hindering the work of newer organizations.

5.5 The Intended Purposes of IFI and Peace III Funding

Respondents generally perceived that both funds' resources were directed towards very different albeit complementary purposes. Thus, a community leader (BA6) included the following in her story:

> I think [the two Funds] have been complimentary…The IFI would come in as more the infrastructural type of stuff and the softer community development stuff…would have been done more through the EU monies.

Numerous respondents perceived that the IFI focused upon infrastructural and economic development, while 'soft' projects (reconciliation work, arts-based programming, etc.) were under the auspices of the EU Peace III Fund. Indeed, Peace III was recognized for promoting cross-community contact, endeavouring to build trust, renewing relationships and nurturing reconciliation. For instance, a community leader (BA12) stated:

> [The IFI] primarily took an economic focus on their activities whereas the Peace Fund was very much [about] soft community [work]…The IFI would deal with bricks and mortar type projects…the educational and economic and enterprise type initiatives, whereas Peace focuses itself on community, individual reconciliation, building harmony…building communities, shared relationships, [and] shared spaces.

Interestingly, many respondents were critical of the IFI's focus on economic and infrastructural development, believing that it did not sufficiently address the need for regenerating community relationships. Moreover, a community leader (BA18) was of the opinion:

> The IFI…has its strengths and it has its weaknesses…I understand why they went for a lot of economic regeneration…[but]…an economy doesn't create a community, a community creates an economy…If there was a peace index that we could create…I don't think we would see any significant recalibration of peace within those communities.

This indicates an interesting contrast: while the IFI was perceived to be more people- and community-oriented in its administrative structure, bureaucratic requirements and support services, the actual initiatives that it supported were decidedly economic in focus. Meanwhile, the EU Peace III Fund's support of community-building activities contrasts with the hierarchical nature of its structure and practices. Relatedly, both funds were critiqued for offering unclear or changing visions for the future. A community leader (D35) suggested:

> In each case what is lacking is some kind of clear vision of what you want out of the process…in terms of investment. What is it are we investing in here?… Would we know it if we saw it in terms of outcomes? How would we recognise it if we saw it?

Other respondents were particularly critical of the Peace Fund in this respect, identifying changing demands and goals as a central problem. In addition, a community leader (BA15) had the following to say:

> The European one…has a habit of changing the goal posts, and in some instances they have a habit of actually moving a football field, you know?

Thus, the EU Peace III Fund is criticized for regularly changing its underlying goals (the goal posts) and broader vision (the football field), a situation that causes difficulties for organizations seeking to structure programming in a manner that is appealing to these potential funders.

Overall, respondents indicated preference for the IFI, claiming that it was more responsive to community needs and open to the contributions of local actors. The EU Peace III Fund, while supporting projects meant to foster community building and reconciliation, employed practices believed to be detrimental to this broader goal.

6   Discussion and Conclusion

Peacebuilding is important in societies transitioning out of violence, and involves the local knowledge and experiences of people as well as external actors and resources. This study is one of the first of its kind to examine the validity of the hybrid model in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties. Its findings further illumine and delineate the process of hybrid peacebuilding within Northern Ireland and the Border Counties, and point to a variety of policy and practice modifications that could help third party actors better respond to this intricate reality.

6.1 Empirical Contribution

The article adds empirical evidence from Northern Ireland and the Border Counties in support of the development of the hybrid peacebuilding model.

While respondents were critical of the bureaucracy that has come to structure peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties, they were not completely dismissive of all outside influence. Indeed, many recognized the need to develop mechanisms that would ensure responsibility and integrity, and transparency and clarity on the part of local actors. They were well aware of the diversity of local groups, and recognized that some leaders might use financial resources for their own personal gain and power. This indicates that these grass-roots actors do not romanticize their sector; they consider the growth and progress of accountability mechanisms to be an acceptable and beneficial addition to their practice so long as these are flexible, suitable and applicable for groups that do not have high levels of administrative capacity.

Thus, local grass-roots voluntary NGOs in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic's Border Counties have been incorporated into the ongoing liberal peace intervention being undertaken that has resulted in the restructuring of the voluntary network. However, this is not to imply that all of the resulting changes are inherently negative or that local groups are absolutely lacking in agency. Rather, this process has been shaped by contextual realities as well as the actions and accommodations of grass-roots actors, that is, peacebuilding is better characterized as an interface between the macro and the micro, rather than a simplistically homogeneous top-down process. The interviewees' perceptions further indicated that the particular components of the IFI with its dispersed decision making, provision of on-the-ground support and flexible application process and reporting procedures allowed for more productive macro–micro relations that resulted in better on-the-ground results. Therefore, developing macro-level policies that better reflect the realities of hybrid peacebuilding can help magnify the practical potential of this process. Overall, it is imperative that peacebuilding initiatives embrace rather than ignore the diversities of both local communities and macro-level agents.

While critical of the bureaucracy, the respondents recognized the need for accountability and stewardship of resources using flexible mechanisms in consultation with local people. The EU's funding application form reinforced group identities, while the state used the application process to weed out applicants who were not congruent with its macro-level policies. In contrast, the IFI's localized decision-making process and flexibility have engaged local communities, resulting in better outcomes from funded projects.

6.2 Theoretical Contribution

The article moves the theoretical debate forward between supporters of the liberal peace school of peacebuilding and the critical peace school regarding the role of local emancipatory peacebuilding and its relationship to top-down elite-driven interventions.

The perceived distinctions between both funds demonstrate the considerable heterogeneity that exists among liberal peace actors reinforcing the work of other

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scholars who identify the internal inconsistencies of the liberal peace approach (Mac Ginty, 2011). Specifically, the practices of the IFI were more congruent with the work of scholars who stress the need to employ an "elicitive" orientation within peacebuilding that draws directly upon the needs, goals and visions of local people (Lederach, 1997). In contrast, the EU Peace III Fund appears to be more indicative of liberal peace orthodoxy in its insistence upon top-down bureaucratic control, and the enforcement of professionalism among local grass-roots voluntary actors, thereby limiting inclusion for grass-roots innovation (Skarlato *et al.*, 2013). Further, peacebuilding in this context has not involved the broad foundational alterations and adjustments (*e.g.* the imposition of electoral democracy) that have been imposed and enforced upon other post-war societies such as Afghanistan (Thiessen, 2014). This reality has led Mac Ginty to term the Northern Ireland approach "liberal peace-lite" (2009: 691). Consequently, he is indicating that liberal peacebuilding is not a monolithic phenomenon; rather, it is modified conditional to the particularities of the post-war context and is employed differently by various macro-level actors.

Thus, in examining the Northern Ireland case we can identify elements of Mac Ginty's model of hybrid peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2010a, 2010b; 2011; 2014). Macro-level incentivizing, micro-level adaptation and micro-level alternatives have interacted in a complex fashion to produce peacebuilding that is constantly morphing into something new that is also rough-hewn and unhinged as well as challenging to characterize and chronicle (Mac Ginty, 2011: 21). It should be further noted that the IFI has provided more space for micro-level alternatives and that many respondents believed this promoted more productive peacebuilding practice.

Funders involved in other post-peace accord societies need to engage and empower local grass-roots communities employing an elicitive rather than top-down technocratic and bureaucratic approaches that they impose on local people. This is consistent with Mac Ginty's argument that the IKEA one-size-fits-all peacebuilding models need to adapt to local conditions and include local people who are active agents in hybrid models that are inclusionary and sustainable (Mac Ginty, 2014). Hybrid peacebuilding offers multiple practices and experiences, and bridges external and indigenous actors.

6.3   *Prescriptive Contribution*

In terms of policymaking suggestions for funders, policymakers and peace activists, this case study sheds some light on and provides an important synthesis of the criticisms made by local grass-roots peacemakers (Buchanan, 2014).

It looks like an unevenness and imbalance exists between the espoused goals of both funds' various practices and policies, which these bodies employ. That is, Peace III is meant to facilitate sustainable community development, intergroup relationship building and deep reconciliation. However, many respondents implied that its emphasis on bureaucracy often minimized and demeaned the work of grass-roots organizations (Fissuh *et al.*, 2012). Meanwhile, the IFI was perceived as more responsive to people's local needs and visions, albeit its emphasis upon economic and infrastructural development was perceived to be far too

limited in capacity and size. This indicates that even if a liberal peace actor employs the rhetoric of relationship building and community empowerment, it may not manifest these in its structures, methods and systems as the form of its operations may actually contradict these goals. Conversely, so-called brick-and-mortar projects can, in fact, be implemented in a manner that empowers local communities. Overall, these observations are congruent with the work of scholars who note that the rhetoric of capacity building and local people's empowerment are well integrated into the liberal peace paradigm, although this had not necessarily resulted in significant changes to the practice of all macro-level actors (Mac Ginty, 2011).

The respondents indicated that their organizations have been able to work within the parameters offered by both funds, and to employ resources in the service of their communities despite the challenges associated with the funder's bureaucratic impediments. This is indicative of the capacity of local actors to modify and work within the liberal peace paradigm, even though it appears the IFI offered more space for this micro–macro negotiation. However, the recognition of many respondents that a peace business or industry has been developed in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties implies that the structure of the voluntary sector has been altered towards greater formalism and the privileging of professionals (*e.g.* consultants) with upper-level educational and administrative experience. This change was the result of the liberal peacebuilding processes stimulating mastery and leverage (Mac Ginty, 2011: 85) rather than direct pressure and control. Local actors adapted their work so as to garner the financial resources necessary to make positive change within their communities, an assuagement that limited innovation and creativity. Further, the cost-sharing requirements demanded by the funders have had the effect of circumscribing the diversity of the grass roots; organizations can receive funding only if they have already been given a stamp of legitimacy from other macro-level bodies. These restrictions were identified as being far more severe when dealing with the EU Peace III Fund.

Funders should respond to local people's needs and visions rather than overwhelm voluntary community organizations with the technocracy, efficiency and standardization of prescriptive top-down bureaucratic practice. Local voluntary grass-roots organizations must consult with central government and the funders to ensure that their practices and knowledge are included in a hybridized peacebuilding model that is grounded in their everyday living. Policymakers need to include the local community in a dialogue with the funders so that the actual needs and visions of everyday peacemakers are included in a pragmatic peacebuilding process recognizing that not all local peacebuilding practices are inherently good as some may be undemocratic, conservative and disempowering.

To conclude, the article contributes empirically, theoretically and prescriptively to the peacebuilding literature. Even though the interviews that this article is based upon were completed in 2010, the findings are also valid today as similar issues discussed above and below continue to plague the peacebuilding process (Buchanan, 2014; Mac Ginty, 2014). The wide database (120 interviews) provides strong validation to these findings. The article highlights a necessary and needed debate between funders and the global and local communities about the effective-

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ness and impact of external economic aid intervention as a legitimate liberal peacebuilding tool to build the peace dividend in societies attempting to transition out of violent conflict. The track 2 efforts of local social, economic and community development, reconciliation and peacebuilding organizations may indeed build positive local cross-communal relationships and change people's attitudes, yet unjust hidden violent structures that create unequal opportunities for people may remain intact and must be fully addressed in order to truly transform and resolve protracted ethnopolitical conflicts. Critical and emancipatory peacebuilding points to the real necessity of believing in local people, their ideas and knowledge, and the way that they make peace that is sustainable.

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