

The Political Economy of Sustainable Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland

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Abstract

This work examines the role equitable economic development plays in ensuring the sustainability of peacebuilding processes. In so doing, it illuminates how economic inequality in a conflict-affected region can intensify unrest and distrust within and between communities. This paper begins by highlighting the context of the Northern Ireland conflict and its historical roots. Next, we explore how socioeconomic and political inequality contributes to the emergence and sustenance of varying levels of conflict. We also consider the importance of addressing these inequalities as an essential part of peacebuilding and development approaches that seek to be sustainable. The paper's final section outlines the findings from the analysis of the data collected and suggests that effective and sustainable peacebuilding in Northern Ireland must entail such a process involving businesses that facilitate equitable development as well as providing opportunities for the socioeconomically excluded to acquire employment and training.

Introduction

This article emphasizes the essential role that equitable economic development plays in facilitating the sustainability of peacebuilding processes. This is done by showing how economic inequality experienced by a population in a conflict-affected region can intensify unrest and distrust and make peacebuilding unsustainable. Youth living in such conditions of poverty and inequality are often unemployed or underemployed, leaving them vulnerable to be manipulated and/or recruited by non-state armed groups (Mc Evoy-Levy, 2017). This analysis explores the Northern Ireland peace process, based on information provided by study participants who lead Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) funded through the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) or the European Union (EU) Peace 3 Fund.

In this vein, this article begins by highlighting the context of the Northern Ireland conflict and its historical roots. Next, we explore how socioeconomic and political inequality contribute to the emergence and sustenance of varying levels of conflict. We also consider the importance of addressing these inequalities as an essential part of peacebuilding and development approaches that seek to be sustainable long after the peacebuilders have exited and taken their economic aid with them. We then present the research methods with which the data used in this study was collected. The final discussion section outlines the findings from the analysis of the data collected and suggests that effective and sustainable peacebuilding in Northern Ireland must entail a process of ensuring that marginalized individuals and groups be re-included socioeconomically. Such a process could involve supporting social purpose businesses that facilitate equitable development by focusing not just on making a profit but providing opportunities for the socioeconomically excluded to acquire employment and training.

The context of the Northern Ireland conflict

The roots of the Northern Ireland conflict intensified during the sixteenth century. Ulster was the most militant part of the island of Ireland, and it was settled by Planters in 1603, and this led to the flight of the Earls and the 1641 rebellion as local people slaughtered the planters (Byrne et al., 2010). The planters were English and lowland Scottish Calvinists who abhorred the Catholic religion and used counterinsurgency warfare against the Ulster Gaels (Cairns & Darby, 1998). They did not intermarry with the Ulster Gaels, leading to the development of a siege mentality in which the settlers believed they were surrounded by religious enemies.

The apartheid 1692-1830 Penal Laws meant that Irish Catholics couldn't practice their religion, hold land or public office, or receive an education (Rahman et al., 2017). In 1745, the Irish supported Bonnie Prince Charlie Stuart's attempt to retake the British throne. Irish nationalism became more militant during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The 1790 United Irishmen rebellion was led by political dissenters connected with the ideals of the French revolution. The rebellion was crushed by the English army and the leaders were hung. The 1844-1850 famine witnessed 1 million tenant farmers perish and 1 million others take the coffin ships to the US, Canada, and Australia as the British government exported food out of Ireland as the poor tenant farmers starved (Rahman et al., 2017). The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and the Fenian Brotherhood grew in America and provided aid for the IRB in Ireland.

The Unionist bourgeoisie in Ulster drove an ethnoreligious wedge between Catholic and Protestant tenant farmers as the land question stimulated constitutional nationalism (Bew et al., 2002). The slogan of land for the farmer became Ireland for the Irish. The Irish Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons put pressure on the British PM, William Gladstone to grant home rule to Ireland so Ireland would have its own parliament in Dublin while remaining under the UK political umbrella (Byrne, 2009). The Ulster Protestant political and economic elite did not favor home rule, and they beat the sectarian drum to keep the working class divided on sectarian lines as they connected land ownership with Irish Catholic nationalism (Byrne et al., 2009). Ulster Unionism and protecting the union with Britain arose in opposition to home rule and land reform.

Violent Irish nationalism emerged through the poetry of Padraig Pearse who organized the IRB's 1916 Rising with socialist James Connolly that was defeated and the leaders executed by British General Maxwell (Hyde & Byrne, 2015). In 1912, the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant was signed by Loyalists in their own blood in city hall in Belfast cementing their loyalty to the British monarch. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was also created at this time, and at the outbreak of WWI, many northern and southern Irishmen enlisted in the British army (Byrne et al., 2009).

Michael Collins commanded the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) guerilla warfare against Black and Tan British forces during the 1919-1920 war of independence. The resulting 1921 treaty partitioned the island into the 26 county Irish Free State, and the six county Northern Ireland under control of the Ulster Unionist Party. The Treaty was marginally ratified in the Irish Dail and the 1922-1923 civil war was fought between the pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty IRA (Creary & Byrne, 2014).

Populist Unionist policies prevented a working-class alliance as Catholics opted out of the governance of the Northern Ireland statelet (Bew et al., 2002). The liberal Northern Ireland Prime Minister Terrence O'Neill sought to modernize the statelet in the 1960s and include Catholics, which was perceived by the Catholic Nationalist community as cosmetic politics (Bew

et al., 2002). Dr. Ian Paisley and radical Protestant Loyalists objected to O'Neill's positive signals to the Catholic community, and they began to mobilize (Bew et al., 2002). In 1967, students from Queen's University of Belfast led by Bernadette Devlin, Eamonn McCann, and Michael Farrell organized the Belfast to Derry nonviolent march that was attacked by Dr. Paisley's Loyalists. The conflict escalated into violence and British troops were put on the streets. The British government suspended the Belfast Stormont parliament and introduced direct rule from London (Byrne et al., 2009). British paratroops killed 14 nonviolent marchers in Derry city in 1972. None of these troops were found guilty of criminal acts and this escalated the violence (Byrne, 2009).

The IRA split into the Provisionals (PIRA) and a more mainstream Marxist oriented Official IRA (Maiangwa et al., 2019). In the 30 year's long war, the PIRA fought with the state's security forces and the Loyalist paramilitaries, with over 3,000 people killed during the 30-year Troubles (Byrne, 2001). The British policy toward Northern Ireland during this period was one of crisis management (Bew et al., 2002). The ceasefires in 1996 allowed the three-tier negotiation process to move forward under the leadership of US Senator George Mitchell. Strand one of the talks dealt with the relationship between both the British and Irish governments, strand 2 addressed the relationships between Northern Ireland's mainstream political parties and the political representatives of the paramilitaries that renounced the use of violence (Hyde & Byrne, 2015).

The 1998 Good Friday or Belfast Agreement brought an end to the political strife in Northern Ireland. Over \$4 billion was allocated to Northern Ireland from the IFI and the EU Peace and Reconciliation Fund to build the peace dividend (Murtagh, 2016). The aid has made a difference, yet Northern Ireland remains a deeply segregated and polarized society as both communities live in their own enclaves, attend different schools and churches, and play separate sports (Todd & Ruane, 2012). The key issue of two ethnic identities tied to the same territory has not been addressed and lies at the very core of the conflict (Maiangwa et al., 2019). The recent Brexit debacle with Britain withdrawing from the EU and the Irish Sea border taking place with the Covid global pandemic means that Ireland and Northern Ireland continue as before in terms of allowing the free flow of trade across the Border while Northern Irish goods face inspection and control processes going into the UK. In effect, Brexit may have sped up the process of Irish reunification and the break-up of Britain as Scotland may soon vote to leave and become an independent country within the EU.

Socio-economic and political inequality and ethnic conflicts

This section considers how socioeconomic and political inequality contribute to the emergence and persistence of conflict, to underscore why peacebuilding interventions must be intentionally designed to address these forms of inequality if they are to be sustainable.

Inequality and conflict

The causes of violent conflict are complex and diverse, and their dynamics and relevance are often transformed over time (Mac Ginty, 2008). Hence, while poverty and economic inequality are not the only cause of conflict, they can constitute important contributing factors. When expressed in significant gaps between the rich and poor, who may also be divided across intergroup lines of ethnicity and religion, economic inequality contributes significantly to direct violence and is also a sign of structural violence. Economic causes of conflict are not necessarily

based on greed, as Collier and Hoeffler (2004) assert but can be brought about by legitimate injustices (grievances) in the form of economic inequality within and among groups. The basic human needs theory sees the denial of both material and non-material needs as resulting in violence when people attempt to force the system to meet these needs (Burton, 1990). Absolute or relative deprivation, whether in the form of poverty, income inequality or unequal distribution of revenue from natural resources, can cause and/or intensify violence (Kett & Rowson, 2007; Jeong, 2021). A situation of relative deprivation or poverty can also initiate or sustain violent conflict in the way that it may inflame existing divisions in society. Even in situations where economic inequality does not cause direct violence, it creates a form of structural violence (Galtung, 1969) where individuals whose economic needs are unmet cannot fully accomplish their potentials. This is especially significant for socioeconomically excluded youth, who are deprived of critical opportunities for advancement at a crucial age.

Economic inequality engendered by neoliberal ideals of unburdened economic liberalization and individuals' sole responsibility for their economic success has contributed to interethnic conflict in several states (Chua 2003). While economic liberalization may produce some level of economic growth, it also often brings substantial inequality (Harvey, 2005, Bräuchler, 2021). This inequality is typically considered a useful trade-off for economic growth, and so liberal peacebuilding has often promoted an approach to community development that ignores socioeconomic inequities that results from policies of economic liberalization. While the inequality produced by policies of unrestrained liberalization may be mitigated in more stable societies that can provide substantial social welfare services to poorer citizens, this is not always the case in fragile states where such inequalities may inflame already existing sectarian divisions (Chua, 2003; Selby, 2008, Huber & Mayoral, 2019).

In fragile, sectarian states, inequality that emerges as a result of neoliberal peacebuilding's approach to development often worsens "the social tensions that resulted in violent conflict in the first place" (Newman, 2011, p. 1748). Such inequality, where specific ethnic groups, social groups and/or classes benefit more than others can hinder peacebuilding, leaving citizens dissatisfied with the existing system and potentially available to be recruited by non-state armed groups claiming to fight for their interests (Pugh, 2011; Smith, 2010; Selby, 2008). Economic inequalities engendered by ideals of unburdened economic liberalization have outrightly resulted in interethnic conflict in several states in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and South Africa (Chua, 2003). Such conflict is contrary to the claims that free market ideals and democracy will generate prosperity and end intergroup conflict (Chua, 2003; Richmond, 2014). Hence, impactful peacebuilding is not just about facilitating economic growth, it is also about ensuring that such economic growth emerges in an equitable manner that all members of society benefit from.

Significant state support is needed if peacebuilding is to bring about sustainable development, especially in communities that have suffered extensive violent conflict. People living in communities that have experienced conflict require state support to acquire economic and social goods and/or skills required to improve their lives (Sen, 1999). Economic inequality that emerges out of an ideology that people are solely responsible for pulling themselves out of poverty with no assistance furthers socioeconomic divisions in fragile states, as citizens question the purpose of a state that cannot supply necessary social safety nets (Newman, 2014). Such citizens dissatisfied with the state can provide a greater pool for non-state armed groups performing resistance against such ineffective states to recruit from (Huber & Mayoral, 2019;

Petrasek, 2000). This is especially so for youth who are unemployed, poor and altogether excluded socioeconomically (Agbiboa, 2015).

Hence, nongovernment organizations do not preclude and cannot replace a developmental state that directs macroeconomic affairs and creates an enabling environment for local development initiatives to prosper. Effective economic development often involves a strong state immersed in various areas through the creation of essential industrial policy, export promotion policy, innovation policy and so on (Desai, 2011; Moyo et al., 2016; Patnaik, 2016). Friedman (1992) argues that while most approaches to local development tend to position the state as inefficient, peacebuilding processes seeking to expand local capacity for development require collaboration with the state, and conflicts cannot be contained locally. Effective developmental states can support local actors to determine priorities, build their capacity to implement these priorities, and adopt supportive policies that create a favourable environment for local development projects (Friedman, 1992). Local people's knowledge and agency produces a plurality of nonviolent peacebuilding practices that de-silences marginalized groups voices (Kroecker, 2020).

Socioeconomic inclusion and sustainable peacebuilding

Addressing economic inequality is an important part of peacebuilding in conflict-affected societies especially when such inequality is one of the underlying causes of direct violence. While minimizing economic inequality may not totally incapacitate the recruitment capabilities of non-state armed groups carrying out violence, it can at least reduce the pool of those who can be easily recruited into such groups. This approach to peacebuilding is in line with Burton's (1990) conception of "provention," which involves removing the structural causes of conflict and creating new structures that facilitate peace. Such structures include those that perpetuate economic inequality.

Peacebuilding should take into consideration the fact that activities of non-state armed groups have often flourished in societies that are socially conducive for such acts and there is often a need for fundamental changes to address the injustices in the society (Jeong, 2005). As Burrowes notes, "entire systems of structures, nationally and globally, will need to be changed, if human needs are to be universally met" (1996, p. 75). Further, addressing economic inequality could also allow the government to regain the support of a population that has thrown its support behind non-state armed groups which have promised them a better life if they are able to overthrow the government (Duyvesteyn & Fumerton, 2009). This can hamper armed groups' recruitment capabilities and win the people's trust on issues surrounding poverty and economic inequality.

Peacebuilding interventions that ignore the economic and social needs and the inequality that the intervention may be creating or contributing to are typically unsustainable (Newman, 2011). A more sustainable approach such as the human security perspective envisions peacebuilding as a process of empowering individuals to address the inequalities that have contributed to the conflict by first securing their economic and social rights (Cahill-Ripley, 2016; Newman, 2011; Sottini & Ciambotti, 2020). The human security approach also goes beyond needs language to conceptualize economic concerns as essential rights that peacebuilding must first secure to succeed (Cahill-Ripley, 2016). These economic and social rights are considered critical to the accomplishment of the political and civil rights typically touted as the totality of human rights in the liberal statebuilding approach. Citizens cannot genuinely fulfil political rights such as the right to vote or contest in elections when they do not have access to economic

rights like the right to food or health care. Fulfilling economic and social rights empowers individuals to be more authentically engaged in political and civil processes (Richmond, 2014; Sen, 1999).

Post-conflict development seeking to avoid the continual perpetuation of inequality must look beyond simply creating economic growth to ensure that such growth is equitably experienced across the concerned society. Richmond (2014) argues that to create a truly emancipatory peace, peacebuilding and statebuilding endeavors must address the socioeconomic inequality produced by neoliberal ideals of business that focus only on profitmaking. Studies have found that disadvantaged youth in conflict-affected regions are resilient, often possessing the ability to engage in ingenious, entrepreneurial activities to secure their economic rights (Agbibo, 2015). Sustainable peacebuilding should explore this capacity for community development by supporting such disadvantaged youth to develop and maintain socially minded business or be integrated into existing ones. Such social-purpose businesses are concerned not just about making profit, but also producing positive impacts within societies. Hence, social-purpose business can be seen as an attempt to put human security ideals into practice, in that they seek to integrate disadvantaged people into the mainstream economy in a way that contributes to diminishing economic inequality (Oloke et al., 2018; Oloke, 2021). Peacebuilding requires the development of such institutions that are focused on generating economic growth that is equitable and experienced tangibly by individuals at all social levels.

Political inclusion and sustainable peacebuilding

Economic inequality, which is often an outgrowth of exclusion from the mainstream economy, goes together with political exclusion. Political exclusion here refers to both exclusion from the peacebuilding process and from being involved in determining the political fortunes of the state. Neoliberal peacebuilding, typically carried out through state institutions, often unfolds in a top-down fashion that seeks to develop economic, political, and social institutions that purportedly make for peace, while excluding local actors (Burke, 2012; Duffield, 2010; Richmond, 2009). This is the political equivalent of the process of entrenching free-market, self-help ideas of economic development that ignore inequality and poverty while supposedly facilitating economic growth.

When peacebuilding is based only on the ideas of external actors, whether they are donor states or organizations, it tends to be ineffective in addressing the systemic issues that have caused and continue to perpetuate the conflict (Galtung, 1996; Murtagh, 2016). It is often easier for external actors to control peacebuilding processes, and even attempts to ensure local ownership of such processes are often not able to effectively do so (Arandel et al., 2015; Creary & Byrne, 2014; Hasselskog & Schierenbeck, 2015; Thiessen, 2013). In some cases, only the elites within a population are included in the process of developing the peacebuilding processes, and often end up benefitting disproportionately from the projects implemented (Rosser & Bremner, 2015).

For peacebuilding to be sustainable and efficient, it must include community members' inputs. Local ownership contributes to the sustainability of peacebuilding in the sense that when communities are involved in the peacebuilding process in authentic ways, they tend to be more dedicated to ensuring the success of such reconstruction efforts (Byrne et al., 2010; Reimer et al., 2015). Participation in local peacebuilding also increases the chances that community members will be satisfied with the development process and consider the process successful, which in turn increases the legitimacy and stability of the agreement reached (Bercovitch, 2009; Bangura,

2019). Similarly, Leatherman and Griffin (2009) suggest that when governments take part in the planning stage of interventions and NGOs are accountable to the communities where they operate, the capacity of development aid to be sustainable is increased. Ultimately, involving community members in peacebuilding allows them to gain the skills to not only address the current conflict, but also to prevent or mitigate future conflict and facilitate development (De Coning, 2016, 2018; Hyde & Byrne, 2015).

Further, the local ownership of the sociopolitical aspects of the peace process can also contribute to addressing economic inequality if genuinely implemented (Jeong, 2005; Bangura, 2019). Inclusion in local peacebuilding is not restricted to either socioeconomic or political concerns; both forms of inclusion work together to influence each other and generate sustainable development (Sen, 1999). Political inclusion, which gives people a voice, also provides such individuals with the capacity to clamour for policies that address their economic needs. Equally, economic freedom attained through the satisfaction of basic human needs also provides people the capacity to participate in democratic processes (Thiessen & Byrne, 2018).

Further explicating the importance and interconnectedness of political and economic inclusion, Friedman notes that capitalism has essentially excluded several poor people from effective economic and political participation since “to be economically excluded is to be politically excluded” (Friedman, 1992, p. 20). Galtung (1996) conceptualizes both political and economic exclusion as structural violence, which refers to unjust societal structures that cause individuals to achieve below their potentials (cited in Byrne & Thiessen, 2020, p. 131). Positive peace or social justice focuses not just on stopping overt violence against persons, but also on facilitating the development process by addressing human needs (Galtung, 1969; Jeong, 2020). Hence, authentic local ownership of the peacebuilding process has the benefit of addressing both economic and political inequalities.

Addressing the socioeconomic and political exclusion disadvantaged individuals, particularly youth, face is an essential way of transforming such individuals from easy recruits for violent groups to agents of sustainable peacebuilding and development (Agbibo, 2015). Based on the foregoing, when determining what local actors’ capacity is (Schirch 2013), external actors providing aid must focus on supporting actors whose primary objectives are to facilitate development that is equitable.

Practitioner experience and research has indicated that when external peacebuilders support programs at the local level rather than at national or regional levels, the sustainability of peacebuilding is increased. For such local level peacebuilding processes to be successfully implemented, the political structures of the state must provide for decentralization (Arandel et al., 2015). In this situation, external actors must carefully tread the line between respecting local autonomy by allowing for authentic local ownership and ensuring that structural problems are addressed in the peacebuilding process. This is important to prevent these processes from being coopted by local elites. The role of external peacebuilders is not to impose development projects or policies on a given community, but to stabilize it and support it in building the resilience needed to manage and avoid future conflict. Ideas from all levels must be interwoven in a way that ensures that peacebuilding is geared towards identifying and addressing inequalities (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2016). External actors must find the balance between providing material resources to address violence and allowing the local system to adapt to address challenges in a way that creates the ability to withstand future pressures without resorting to violent conflict (De Coning, 2016).

Methods

The qualitative data below is from 120 semi-structured interviews carried out by the second author with CSO leaders building cross community relations in Derry and in the Border counties of Armagh, Cavan, Derry, Donegal, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Louth, Monaghan, and Tyrone. The second author interviewed 107 local NSO leaders involved in peacebuilding, and three IFI community development officers and ten EU Peace 3 development officers during the summer of 2010. These leaders' experiences and perceptions of the funding process, cross community peacebuilding and reconciliation activities, and the peace process itself shed light on the effectiveness of the economic assistance from the EU Peace and Reconciliation or Peace 3 Fund and the IFI on building the peace dividend in post peace accord Northern Ireland. All the recorded interviews took between 60-120 minutes to complete, and they were transcribed verbatim. The respondents were from both the Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) and the Catholic Nationalist Republican (CNR) communities. The second author did not experience any difficulties during the field research.

The following research propositions, developed based on the conceptual framework highlighted in the literature review above, were explored in this study: economic underdevelopment and inequality worsened ethnic tensions in Northern Ireland and allowed violent groups to easily recruit members; economic inequality is intertwined with political exclusion; developmental state support, coupled with local ownership of peacebuilding, is integral to sustainable peacebuilding.

Findings

Themes emerged inductively from the interview transcripts. The following data focuses on how youth are impacted by the peace process and economic assistance from the IFI and the EU Peace 3 Fund.

Structural inequality as idle hands throw stones

It is important for young people to have employment opportunities that supports their hopes for their future. These opportunities will engage young people productively, and prevent a brain drain of young talent from leaving their communities. A CSO leader noted that inequality, discrimination, and sectarianism are the core issues that started the conflict and continue to divide the community.

Ciaran: There's a regeneration process going on across the city, and we have argued at the center of that is equality, fairness, and targeted initiatives into the most deprived areas. This city will never grow, thrive, and prosper if we have people that don't benefit from the absence of war. And the peace process, and the IFI, and the Peace money haven't tackled that enough. It didn't look at the injustices or the inequalities that existed pre-conflict and look to eradicate them, if that has been their core mission.

Civil rights started here about jobs and housing, and all of that and Galtung could probably have been here in 1966, 1967 to forecast conflict. Because what you had was serious inequality, serious discrimination, and all the rest that bubbled. And then there was a wider thing in sight, and the two came together and that's what the conflict in the late 1960s was about.

The external funders and both governments frame the division as a solely ethno-political conflict, ignoring other crucial precipitating factors around the intersection of class, poverty, inequality, and the relationship with Britain.

A CSO leader communicated that despite the influx of resources from Peace funding, inequality exists as an impediment to good community relations and is something community development workers tackle daily.

Aidan: I'd see the values of community development as being simple equality, inclusion, and participation. Around equality a longer conversation about whether we are genuinely equal or are we all sharing the same levels of inequality, equality in around health and education within the Northwest is as ripe as it ever was. Whatever levels of equality have been achieved, can you paint a direct line between that and Peace?

For most people in this city who probably would self-perceive as Nationalist/Republican/Catholic, the fact of the city being registered somewhere as [X] does not stop people from being included, does not stop people participating, does not stop people displaying acts of citizenship, and feeling civic pride. Some would say there is a political dimension within that coming through.

Why should we feel as if any change to the name of the city could be used as a legitimate excuse for a percentage of the community to withdraw in any sense.... There is something there about civic responsibility and looking for reasons not to feel included and claim that you know why we should participate or that's an example of equality.

As people from both communities share and negotiate their living space daily, they retain civic pride in their community that transcends sectarian politics.

A CSO leader argued that Peace 3 resources should be used to fund community development work by creating as many jobs as possible in the community, even if the new jobs do not last. This is because unemployment is a key issue and young CNR people are being targeted by dissident paramilitary groups. Local entrepreneurs can stimulate the local economy and break the dependency welfare culture.

Fintan: [X town] has the worst employment in Northern Ireland. The employment was very high in 2005, and I don't see it getting back to that lower level until 2020. And it is one of the areas that has strongest dissident Republican activity, and that is still going on there. And those issues with disengaged young people. So, employment is a real issue, and we must do whatever we can. Northern Ireland has a huge dependency culture. We think that we are such nice people that somebody else should solve our problems for us.

We should be creating our own companies and our own jobs, that's the surest and the best way to do it, and less depending on the world... The world will not come here to give us a living. We must be out. We must go the marketplaces and find the work and create the jobs back home. But we don't even really accept that. We just kind of assume that somebody is going to solve the problems for us. It's a bit like the welfare state will look after us, you know. But the welfare state must be paid for by someone.

People in Northern Ireland tend not to take risks or do anything innovative without assuming that somebody else will pay for it. While people have overcome the worst of the immediate problems, they must now identify and address other major issues that need to be solved and stop resting only in their accomplishments to date. The community needs to face the scale of what they still must do to create a just and equitable society.

A CSO leader noted that sectarianism is deeply entrenched in the society, and the political leaders in Stormont are not fully committed to supporting the peacebuilding and community development work that CSOs are actively engaged in.

Callum: In terms of sustainability, I do not feel there is a meaningful political buy-in to this work, not at all. So, if it doesn't sustain afterwards who's going to say we don't believe in peace and reconciliation, everyone believes in it. But in a meaningful way, no there's no time limit, no policy for community relations activities in the schools. In education all programs have been stopped, because they can't agree on a policy. So, if they can't agree on a policy, they can't commit to consultation, they can't consult on it. They can't do an initiative for people to apply for funding.

It's crazy to have a big party that is Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) particularly a religious party, saying vote for me first because I'm a Protestant. So, there's a logic of people going back to this that reflects the attitude, "well I'm Protestant so I have to vote DUP." So, how to get through that? I think we are a generation away from that. You do have pockets where people vote for good people because of their policies. You don't vote for people because of where they go to church or mass. Its crazy, daftly crazy.

Engagement in politics along sectarian lines remains entrenched and it may take at least a generation for the public to begin to vote on socioeconomic and political issues. The conflict between political parties over education policies has made it difficult for CSOs who work with schools to apply for funding.

A CSO leader communicated that the voluntary third sector was very active during the Troubles when they used the little or no resources available to establish community centers that support youth to get off the streets. Yet even though today's professional peacebuilders are comparatively well funded for their services, this leader feels such funding dollars are being poorly spent.

Gary: You think about all the groups throughout the worst years of the conflict here in the North like small community groups and stuff like that, and most of it was purely voluntary by certain people within the community. They weren't getting a wage. They weren't given anything. They were just very passionate. They'd seen the young people involved in conflict on the streets and so on. And they went ahead and setup wee community centers just to bring the young boys in off the streets because we would have been young then too and we remember that.... But by today the groups that are in place today they're called the voluntary sector, but they are not voluntary they are funded. They're well paid for it, and maybe to a certain extent there is some commitment and belief in it, but it is motivated by the money you know.

Re-imaging Your Community, and it was the British government's money, spent 1.3 million pounds towards the eradication of paramilitary and sectarian murals. But ever

since that has gone up now, they have spent something like four million pounds on it.... There was an outcry right across this city, and I'm sure it was the same in Belfast and other regions. It was that there were more worthy groups within these communities like people that are dealing with alcohol addictions, drug addictions, woman issues, people that are dealing with an array of issues within the community but were struggling on a shoestring budget just to get by, and they were enraged by that...

I would say that the powers that be, the institutions, the funders, the reconciliation groups including the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in their eagerness to present a positive and a respectable face in Northern Ireland are creating a vacuum. When the funding dries up, they are going to reap it. There is an underbelly and the real work and the real reconciliation, and the real mutual understanding that used to exist is not really reaching the right people. And it is not really impacting the communities that are suffering the most, and have suffered the most and probably will go on suffering the most because of a lot of what is happening here in the North...

There is a politicization of peace as the paramilitaries and their political representatives have taken over community development and peacebuilding to implant firm roots in the community. Some CSOs are jealous and compete with other CSOs. The developing peace is cosmetic and superficial as communities that suffered during the Troubles and have real needs are not receiving the resources needed to lift them out of dire poverty.

There is an underbelly in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties as inequality causes great distress for communities. Young people who finish school find few employment opportunities available to them and they become targeted by the paramilitaries. In addition, some political leaders are more interested in engaging in sectarian politics rather than in securing the economic rights of youth needed to lead Northern Ireland into a brighter economic future.

Develop the individual and the peace in the individual

Real peace takes time. CSOs need resources to continue the much-needed work to transform relations and structures and instill peaceful values in the people, as Northern Ireland continues to remain a highly segregated society. CSOs are important vehicles in the reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts on the ground.

A CSO leader proclaimed that the making of real peace takes time; it takes time for people to see and feel the intangible as well as the tangible benefits of peacebuilding. Hence, the CSOs working on the ground in local communities must be supported so that their legacy is sustainable.

Ronan: I think it is a serious concern because obviously that expectation is there that the current round of funding will finish. Peacebuilding is a long-term process, it's something that you can't just flick over a few years. It is a major mindset in individuals and in communities, and in families that's required. So, there is quite a mind change that needs to happen that is a slow process, it is an incremental process, and is only achieved if individuals involved will see some benefit. And incremental benefits won't always apply to everybody at one point in time, so it will take time for everybody to see the actual benefit.

So, an example, as I said is with older people. This is the first time when we have specifically targeted older people to make sure that they see a benefit out of the peace

process and the communities. So, I think as we go down through it, we certainly could think of other groups within society that would merit targeting in terms of a particular intervention around the benefits of peace and that there's an argument for that to be continued.

There are other excluded and marginalized communities around the Border region that need to be brought into the mainstream to enjoy the benefits of the peace process.

A CSO leader avowed that relationships and networks will continue despite the loss of resources from external funding agencies, and that some CSOs are not sustainable.

Grainne: Well obviously with some of the actions that we have done, the fact that the relationships are built up already we would hope that they would be sustainable in that sense. And that sometimes its not all about money. Sometimes its all about you know baiting the networks there, getting people to know each other that didn't necessarily know each other before. And in other cases what you would be looking for would be that it would be mainstreamed.

And you would like to see kind of the Irish government in particular kind of recognizing that this was something that had to be done in Border Counties, and it needs now to be supported. And sometimes I feel it's looked on as, "ah, that's their work up there, they're doing that. They have the money for it." And I don't think the work on the ground is appreciated at the national level, and therefore it doesn't look as if a lot of the projects will be sustainable with mainstream funding.

The Irish government does not appreciate the dedication and voluntary contributions made by CSOs to make a positive difference in local Border communities.

An EU Peace 3 development officer contended that local Councils and central government expect the voluntary sector to continue to run these projects for free, and that this is their idea of sustainability, instead of funding good worthwhile local projects. As the older generation who started these CSOs begin to retire or become too tired to continue, a vacuum may emerge, as young people are not inclined to replace that leadership. In his view, it is difficult for young people to change over from working for themselves to work for the community and the sustainability of the local economy. He also revealed a duplication of CSOs providing similar services in a very tight and competitive community development and peacebuilding market.

Darragh: Well in terms of the work with the immigrants, with the Nigerians and the Kurds and so on. If they are at a point where they see themselves as just the same as anybody else in the community then that's the exit strategy, that's done, its happened. It won't be perfect; it never will be. But it's happened. So, I mean it is sustainable then, and in fact it increases the sustainability of the local economy because you have got more people participating actively in society, and contributing to voluntary groups...

It is sustainable. It is bringing people from a level of the old saying was "you keep your head down." The Protestant community keeps its head down and does its business and carries on. And they realize now they don't have to do that, and there are these opportunities that will arise with the European money.... But once they're at that stage and in quite proximity to the ex-prisoner organizations that they'll recognize one another's differences, and that they're moving ahead. And once they're working on their

own issues there's a relationship, which is not a hostile relationship now, so that's all sustainable.

This participant noted that Protestant community groups are working with ex-combatant groups on joint projects. He also reported that most cross-cultural exchange visits between towns in the Border Area and throughout Northern Ireland are not sustainable because once the funding ends, people will lose interest in participating.

A CSO leader articulated that the interlinking of community development and peacebuilding work is one of the great successes of the funding. The CSOs became the vehicles for reconciliation, providing essential services and building shared relationships on common issues and rich local history around the Border Counties. CSOs are making a positive impact on the next generation.

Fiadh: But it is a bit more difficult now because of the climate we're in financially. And while you hear of other core programs that aren't necessarily for peacebuilding that are suffering now. It is a worry because like they are all very essential services...Three or four years ago we wouldn't have seen the problem.

Now we have a problem, I think. But I suppose that reinforces that we can make the best of what we can now when we have the funding. But I suppose the answer is it depends on the current economic situation nationally, and in Europe at the time as to what other supports will be available to maybe have a lesser level of input. Because some will say it will survive, but you know you can't take out that level of funding and expect them all to survive totally.

Some may survive and I think they will, like some of our programs anyhow are run by volunteers, trained volunteers and they in goodwill may continue doing what they're doing on a voluntary basis. But they do need some support whereas we will not be able to employ specialist facilitators as we do now. There needs to be, even with volunteers, they need a bit of support.

Some CSOs will have to close due to a lack of funding, yet others with a strong volunteer component will survive and continue to provide essential services to their local community. Community development is an ongoing process that volunteers will participate in regardless of resources. Sustainability is not about funding; it is about the capacity and goodwill of people to work for their community in an ongoing community development process.

A CSO leader highlighted that an ethnic conflict impact assessment needs to be done to see whether the resources from funders were positively used or were making things worse. He noted that it was as important to build relationships through dialogue as it was to provide jobs for people. Measuring the intangible benefits of CSO peacebuilding activities was difficult and the donors determined where their resources went. He argued that it was irresponsible for the funders to abandon those CSOs where people have taken out mortgages and run up debts to keep their projects going.

Bernard: There's a whole number of areas where you can have a positive impact at community level and not all of them are about jobs. It could be about intersubjective dialogue, building empathy, all that kind of stuff. And in some way that is more important you know, increasing employment on its own isn't going to solve the legacy of

the conflict. I'm not sure I'd be so kind of utilitarian as they say, jobs are the only thing that matters because I don't think its true. Now I really do think that a lot of this is kind of intangible and very hard to measure, and so no. I'm kind of glad in some ways that that wasn't the main criteria.

You know the other thing as I have said is that you only have the jobs very often if the money is coming in, and if the money is cut off in three, six years-time then you know sometimes you leave people in a worse situation. They have taken out mortgages and run up debts and so on, and then suddenly the money is taken away from them. I think its almost irresponsible, you know, sometimes more thought isn't given to this issue.

Well, it's this thing of first this donor captures. So, the donors determine where the money goes. So, the donors determine what gets priority, what are the areas that are important, and that distorts to a degree what is happening at the grassroots level. And then there's the abandonment that comes after the distortion. So, you know they can have a serious impact on the dynamics of the kind of peacebuilding.

The best way to get peace in a modern state between different ethnonational groups is through "generalized affluence" (Gellner, 1996). When people begin to feel better off and notice that they have a future in a society they may be less likely to turn to violence to solve their problems. Socioeconomic inclusion done well and combined with encouraging political inclusion can transform relations and build a just and sustainable peace.

A CSO leader believed it takes time to transform relationships and structures, as peacebuilding is a gradual incremental process of changing society. Like the previous participant, they also emphasize the importance of building relationships and values, noting that economic sustainability is not the only factor that should be focused on.

Oisin: So, what is economically sustainable and who measures it, and who determines it? The people who up until now have been determining what economic sustainability is have been shown to be charlatans. So, let's not have them judging us whether we're economically sustainable. I don't think life is about economic stability or economic sustainability. Life is much more about building relationships and building on values and ethos, and moving it on and in the hope and trust that you get the resources to do it...

And the IFI is reconsidering putting more money into what is happening here and redefining it and putting the money towards areas where people are less well off, or the most disadvantaged or whatever the jargon is. You know this is a welcome development that IFI themselves are thinking, "well the work is not over in 2013." So, of course the work will never end in a sense of peacebuilding in our lives whether we are from a war-torn society or living in a peaceful society like Canada, peacebuilding must continue every day and in every way we can.

CSOs continue to work at peacebuilding because violent conflict can flare up unpredictably and get out of control in a short period of time. Substantial efforts can assist a society in reaching a tipping point to change things and advance the peacebuilding agenda, although it may take time.

A CSO leader explicated that when the funds come to a natural end, any community structures that were put in place on the ground will disappear. Peace 3 and the IFI have funded core innovative projects that must be built into government departments and their strategies.

Seasoned CSOs with their experience must continue to deliver peacebuilding and reconciliation projects in the grassroots so that the community can have a shared future together.

Ashley: ...Some of them are very, very good projects. And I would have to say some of them are very, very bad projects, because there are people on projects out there that are not delivering what they should be delivering, and to meet their outputs. Ten small projects sometimes can make more of a difference than one huge one, and sometimes one huge project can make a difference better than ten small ones. It depends where the people are at that minute. My concern is that the infrastructure and the projects that are out there now are being nearly dilapidated to such a degree that by 2013 will there be anything there to pick up the pieces?

And will the people with the experience be there or will they have become so disillusioned by it? A primary example is here the Special EU Programs Body (SEUPB) which was going to go through the local Councils... It may not have been perfect, but it was workable, it built capacity, it showed inclusion, it allowed grassroots voices to be heard.... less bureaucracy, less chance, less risk taking, less nothing. But they then didn't want any social partners even on their Peace boards. They were quite happy with only statutory departments, Councils, and representatives of SEUPB.... Look there must be inclusion of social partners.

How could you deliver on Peace, set your objectives, set your action plans without social partners? And if you want to be involved in one of them projects you must go in with the lead partner and the statutory agency to tell you how to deliver your Peace project, it was quite bad. And I think that is when a lot of people turned their back on it and said that really is not peace and reconciliation work. The community sector was up in arms about this here. Yes, you will have external evaluation, who's going to evaluate it to see if it made an impact or not?...

And we look around now and just say it doesn't make any difference they have taken the Peace money, and put it inside the government structures, put the government there to run the thing through the departments and the main agencies with people again being marginalized. Yeah, we have no objections to it. But we weren't consulted on it, and we don't think Peace money should have been used on it. It should have been local government money if you want to put infrastructure in....

She noted that SEUPB included statutory Departments and Councils and excluded social partners to streamline the administration of Peace 3. The resources were used to subsidize government projects while deep reconciliation projects that could have made a difference were excluded. Ashley felt that the safe middle-class hands of greenism and orangeism in the civil service had their hands all over the distribution and administration of the funds. The British and Irish governments took Peace 3 resources to fund government projects rather than getting those resources out to CSOs to run local projects that are essential for the betterment of the community.

A CSO leader articulated that the peace work in the city needs resources to sustain the peace on the streets.

Sorcha: Everybody is wary of Peace funding drying up, but it must end sometime, and we are all realists, and we know it must end sometime. We know that peace needs to be

fought with more voracity than a war was fought. And like a war needs resources like weapons, peacemakers need resources to build peace, so we can never take our eye off that ball.

But I do think we're hearing with our new coalition government in place, there will be future cuts in the public sector funding.... Bureaucracy and red tape and the very fact of middle management or top management within the public sector. And like we just heard in yesterday's news that the top civil servant in Northern Ireland is earning 175,000 pounds per year, which is more than the Prime Minister, so you know that needs addressing.

There needs to be more equality.... The similarities between a Russian missile and a civil servant are they don't work, and they can't be fired.... A government must be for all the people. And you must get it right particularly for the most vulnerable within our societies and communities because they need the most help.

In the wake of future cuts to public sector funding, CSOs working for the most vulnerable members of society must be supported by government. This is because young people, for example, are crossing the peace bridge in Derry and going into each other's communities as a result of the cross-community projects funded through Peace 3 and the IFI.

Relations will continue to flourish despite the loss of funding. Both governments want the CSOs to continue the peacebuilding and reconciliation work for free. The CSOs' core innovative and creative ideas must be embedded in government departments. The sustainability of the voluntary sector is threatened not just by the loss of funding but by the loss of older activists that are not being replaced by youth who are not being trained and mentored for those positions. Local government was also coopting Peace 3 resources for their own agenda rather than using the aid for what it was intended for in building cross communal relationships.

Discussion and Conclusion

When adequately equipped, youth in conflict-affected regions have the potential to contribute significantly to the positive transformation of conflict that has raged decades before they were born. However, if such youth are excluded socioeconomically and politically, they can perpetuate the continual persistence of conflict (Schwartz, 2010). In line with the first research proposition presented in this study, the discussion of study participants shows that youth in Northern Ireland continue to experience significant socioeconomic exclusion as evidenced in significant rates of unemployment and underemployment, as well as political exclusion. This suggests that these youth's capacities for positive development are not being properly harnessed through peacebuilding endeavours, leaving such youth easy targets to be manipulated by paramilitary groups. Participants note how inequality, discrimination, and sectarianism contributed to the Northern Ireland conflict in the first place and how patterns of inequality have continued in the peacebuilding process. Economic benefits of peacebuilding are not accruing equally to all members of the community and patterns of inequality continue especially with youth facing significant unemployment as they leave school.

Hence, it is important to assess the trajectory of inequality that contributed to the conflict in the first place. Violent conflict is often caused by multiple factors interacting in dynamic ways and gaining varying levels of relevance over time (Mac Ginty, 2008). The causes of the Northern Ireland conflict at its most basic can be seen as the political conflict unfolding between the PUL

and CNR communities, alongside a mix of other interrelated historical, religious, political, economic, cultural, and psychological factors that contributed to the conflict (Cairns & Darby, 1998; Hyde & Byrne, 2015). And so, while it is fallacious to reduce the cause of the Troubles to poverty and economic inequality (McGarry & O'Leary, 1995), inequality played a significant role. External inequality exists in the way that Northern Ireland is one of the least affluent regions of the United Kingdom (UK), but there is also internal inequality across religious and social groups that has also furthered divisions (Cairns & Darby, 1998; Todd, & Ruane, 2012). Youth that have experienced violence also tend to live in communities experiencing significant poverty and underdevelopment (Cairns & Darby, 1998; Pruitt, 2017).

Young people aged 16-24 in Northern Ireland “have suffered most during the Troubles” in terms of the high rate of unemployment they experience; their susceptibility to criminal activity; their increased likelihood to have witnessed, perpetrated and/or been victims of sectarian violence; and their exclusion from meaningful political participation (Hargie, 2011, p. 881). The issue is not just about unemployment, which has reduced to some extent, but there is also significant underemployment in Northern Ireland. A significant portion of the population barely survives on poorly paid jobs and the benefit of peace seems to accrue more to the wealthy and less to the poor (Coulter, 2014; Kelly, 2012).

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected youth in Northern Ireland by increasing unemployment and aggravating pre-existing inequalities, and youth unemployment is poised to continue increasing even as the economy recovers (Community NI, 2021). For example, 4.1 percent of the economically active people aged 16 and above in Northern Ireland were unemployed between June-August 2021 while 71.1 percent of people aged 16 to 64 were employed (NISRA, 2021). The economic inactivity rate (proportion of people aged 16 to 64 who were not working and not seeking or available to work) was significantly high, at 25.8 percent (NISRA, 2021). Northern Ireland had the fifth-lowest unemployment rate, the lowest employment rate, and highest economic inactivity rate within the UK (NISRA, 2021).

Given that economic inequality contributed to the Northern Ireland conflict in the first place, effective and sustainable peacebuilding in the region must focus on engendering equitable development. This is in line with the second and third research propositions presented in this study. While addressing economic inequality is not the singular remedy for the conflict, it “can be an integral part of an overall multitrack peacebuilding process that tackles the deep roots of structural conflict that have contributed to the protracted nature of the Troubles” (Byrne et al., 2008, p. 122). As the CSO leaders cited above note, peacebuilding funding must be spent on more sustainable and productive activities that address poverty especially with regards to the youth. Peacebuilding cannot be sustainable when a community has large numbers of unemployed and underemployed youth that have limited opportunities for economic development. Those who feel socioeconomically excluded will at best be largely uninterested in seeing the success of the peace process and at worst, may actively work against the success of such processes or be easily recruited into new paramilitary groups like the New Irish Republican Army (NIRA) or the Orange Volunteers and Protestant Action Force (PAF). In this way, inequality can hinder peacebuilding and development.

Aid to Northern Ireland can be more effectively spent on the provision of employment and/or opportunities to engage in entrepreneurial activities for disadvantaged Northern Ireland youth. This is important, to ensure that peace dividends are being spread equitably across society and reaching the marginalized members of society, instead of being concentrated in the hands of only a few (Schnabel et al., 2014). Funds spent on creating jobs for young people and funding

relevant business activities would stimulate the economy and protect these individuals from being easy targets for paramilitary groups to recruit. This is a more sustainable way of using development funds that is more likely to result in the production of tangible outcomes.

Concentrating funding only on intangible work around facilitating dialogue and building relationships carried out by community-based organizations is unsustainable. Such activities must be accompanied by initiatives that directly impact youth's lives by creating employment opportunities and promoting socioeconomic inclusion. Some studies have even found that during such economic development processes, divisions within societies that have experienced sectarian conflicts can be bridged (Bratberg, 2013; Sentama 2017). This suggests that there is some link between economic inclusion and the political and social inclusion it can also facilitate. Hence, organizations in Northern Ireland should not just be funded because of their closeness to Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries that purportedly allows for stability (Edwards & McGrattan, 2011). Rather, economic aid should go to those who have the potential to carry out work that addresses poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

Social purpose businesses like social enterprises may be especially suitable for creating a form of economic development that is equitable because they either provide jobs to marginalized individuals or constitute sites for them to gain training and experience needed to acquire mainstream employment (Oloke et al., 2018). The Northern Ireland social enterprise sector has been successful in building trust in the community, while also providing jobs to those excluded from the mainstream economy (O'Shaughnessy & O'Hara, 2016). However, most Northern Ireland social enterprises seem to be largely reliant on funding and are registered as charities (O'Shaughnessy & O'Hara, 2016). Hence, managers of new and existing social enterprises should be supported to become more sustainable by acquiring improved business and commercial skills. Youth can also be encouraged and supported to begin their own social purpose businesses that have the capacity to become self-sustaining at some point after they have been established (Özerdem & Sukanya, 2015).

Also important is the public sector's support for social business by creating policies that ensure that a percentage of government procurement of goods and services goes to social enterprises and other social purpose businesses. Social purpose businesses that are too small to take on public sector contracts by themselves can partner up to take contracts with other similarly minded business. The public sector can also be flexible in handing out contracts suitable to the sizes of smaller organizations. Social purpose businesses are particularly involved in the process of facilitating development that is equitable because they focus not just on making a profit, but they also concentrate on positively impacting society. Hence, supporting the emergence and viability of these businesses is a major way of developing a sustainable approach to community development that rewards those who create social impacts and provides opportunities to include the socioeconomically and politically excluded.

The impact of an economic development approach focused on the most marginalized groups in Northern Ireland (including unemployed youth) may not be immediately evident, but this does not mean that these processes are not making an impact. For true peace to be experienced in Northern Ireland, equitable, sustainable peacebuilding must take place. Northern Ireland must go beyond envisioning peacebuilding as "capable only of asking ordinary people to name the constitutional arrangement under which they would like to be unemployed, underemployed, underpaid, forced to into zero hours contracts or split shifts..." (Coulter, 2014, p. 774). Rather, the structures that cause disadvantaged youth and other marginalized groups to

be excluded from the mainstream economy must be replaced with structures that facilitate their inclusion and allow them to achieve their potentials.

The whole of Northern Ireland will benefit when all members of society, particularly the youth, can explore and improve their existing capabilities. Inclusive development processes ensure that previously marginalized individuals are socioeconomically and politically included into the peacebuilding process and are better capable of preventing or addressing future conflict (De Coning, 2016; Friedman, 1992; Sen, 1999). The need for such sustainable peacebuilding is important so that positive outcomes gained from peacebuilding do not immediately disappear once economic aid has ended.

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