

**COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND CONSENSUS-BUILDING IN NORTHERN
IRELAND: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PEACE I PROGRAM DISTRICT
PARTNERSHIPS**

By

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A Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF CITY PLANNING

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Winnipeg, Manitoba

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has been strongly characterized by lack of trust, ethnic conflict, and violence. More recently, there have been supra-national and intergovernmental initiatives based on creating and maintaining peace, and pursuing reconciliation, around principles of collaboration, cross-community cooperation, and social inclusion.

The District Partnerships established in Northern Ireland, under the auspices of the European Union funded Special Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Irish Border Counties, were designed to use communication, or discourse, as the basis for mediating conflict in contested space. Through an inclusive process, the collaborative partnerships sought to build institutional capacity through convergence on a common focus – grass-root socio-economic development as the basis for community empowerment through transformative politics.

The development of collaborative, consensus-based partnerships recognized and valued differences amongst stakeholders and sought to create a shared understanding of the conflict, and possible solutions. The success of the District Partnerships can be attributed, in part, to the commitment to collaborative planning and consensus-building. The collaborative approach enabled trust and respect to be built among members of communities previously characterized by distrust and conflict.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The nature of economic, political, and cultural life is becoming both more globalized and, at the same time, more localized. Decreased economic sovereignty of states, increased regionalization within states, and the development of overarching supra-national organizations are changing political space and challenging traditional governance structures. Local and regional governments are increasingly unable to address these pressures in isolation. Stakeholders are developing a network approach, rather than a hierarchical approach, to identifying complex social issues. Through these networks, stakeholders are able to build institutional capacity as well as address contentious issues affecting daily life.

These networks are not limited to the confines of existing boundaries and jurisdictions. Cross-border cooperation has emerged as a form of transnational network building and the Irish border region can be better understood today within the context of network-based cross-border cooperation. The relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland has been strongly characterized by lack of trust, ethnic conflict, and violence. More recently, there have been supra-national and intergovernmental initiatives based on creating and maintaining peace, and pursuing reconciliation, around principles of collaboration, cross-community cooperation, and social inclusion. The District Partnerships established in Northern Ireland, under the auspices of the European Union funded Special Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Irish Border Counties, highlight how stakeholders have developed networks based on principles of collaboration and consensus building to address conflict within the region.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is two fold – i) to examine the emergence of current literature on collaborative planning in the context of the Special Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Irish Border Counties (Peace I Program) and ii) an examination of the development of the Peace I Program.

The main research question relates to the nature of the relationship that may be established. The District Partnerships were designed to use communication, or discourse, as the basis for mediating conflict in contested space. Through an inclusive process, the collaborative partnerships sought to build institutional capacity through convergence on a common focus – grass-roots, socio-economic development as the basis for community empowerment through transformative politics. Transformative politics, like collaborative planning, recognizes the value of participatory democracy and social inclusion in community building. The development of collaborative, consensus-based partnerships recognized and valued differences amongst stakeholders and sought to create a shared understanding of the conflict, and possible solutions. The networks developed based on face-to-face contact and communication among a diverse range of interdependent stakeholders. These networks enabled stakeholders to overcome political differences and thus move towards peace and reconciliation.

The failure of the rational planning model to effectively address place-based challenges caused planning theorists and practitioners to search for an alternative. Communicative action and collaborative planning theory have emerged in part in response to the inadequacy of rational planning, and failure of planning practice based on the rational model. Communicative action and collaborative planning are grounded in

the belief that, through discourse, shared understanding can be established. This shared understanding can then act as a basis for collective action. Community empowerment and institutional capacity building are key activities in a collaborative planning process (Healey, 1998; Innes and Booher, 1999). Institutional capacity building then becomes the goal of planning. Institutional capacity refers to intellectual capital, social capital, and political capital.

Institutional capacity building and community empowerment can be best established through the development of networks, rather than conventional hierarchy-based approaches. Through the inherent institutional capacity building, stakeholders are better able to address the needs and challenges in their community and the networks established can be a force for social change. The goal of the research is to identify how networks of stakeholders contribute to the emergence of initiatives promoting peace and reconciliation in the Irish border region despite the historic conflict. In addition, collaborative planning and networks will be examined to understand how a diverse group of stakeholders can transcend not only traditional decision-making structures and boundaries, but also enable stakeholders to transcend the politics of Northern Ireland and the ethnic conflict in the region. The main research questions include:

1. Whether, and if so how collaborative planning and consensus building contributed to the development of the Peace I Program and District Partnerships?

Collaborative planning theory is considered as providing a framework for understanding the emergence of cross-border cooperation and the development of the Peace I Program. More specifically, the development of grass-roots initiatives is examined to attempt to gain a better understanding of how the Peace I Program has

affected communities in Northern Ireland and to what extent cooperation, or collaboration, occurred. Thus, the Peace I Program and District Partnerships will be specifically analysed for responses to the following sub-questions:

2. How did the Peace I Program and District Partnerships develop?
3. How inclusive were the District Partnerships? How were stakeholders involved in the process? To what extent was consensus-based decision-making used?
4. To what extent was institutional capacity created? How did institutional capacity, through the development of networks, contribute to the Program?

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study will be limited to the development and implementation of the Peace I Program (1994-1999). While a general background to the case will be presented, the study will focus on the District Partnerships established in Northern Ireland under the auspices of the EU funded Peace I Program. The study attempts to understand the development process of the Peace I Program and the lessons learned from that process. The study will also focus on the development and implementation of the partnerships in Northern Ireland, specifically the process of building each partnership, how institutional capacity was built, and how the partnerships affected the members.

The scope of the study is limited to a specific time – from 1994, when the EU approved the program, to 1999, when the funding for the Peace I Program ended. While the program did continue as the Peace II Program, the District Partnerships established under the first phase will be examined and the lessons learned from the Peace I Program will be addressed.

While the scope of the research is focused on the Irish border region, the potential for informing the emergence of cross-community initiatives in other regions, including North America, is significant. There is increased discussion of cross-border cooperation in Canada and America, and states in the southern United States of America are seeking to develop stronger ties with their Mexican counterparts. In addition, the process of consensus building can be applicable to a variety of situations where conflicting values exist in a geographically defined area.

1.4 Research Methods

A case study was selected as the empirical research method. Case study research enables the researcher to gain an understanding of a complex social phenomenon by drawing on a variety of sources of data (Yin, 1984). The development of the Peace I Program, in response to the desire to achieve peace and reconciliation, is a complex social phenomenon. “How” and “why” questions are best addressed through case study research. Since the majority of the research questions posed are “how” questions, an exploratory case study will be utilized to address these questions.

A case study method lends itself to utilizing various sources of information. Yin highlights the ability of case study research to incorporate a variety of sources of information including documents, artefacts, interviews and observations (Yin, 1984, 30). For the purpose of this research, two sources of data were drawn upon: documentation and information collected through surveys.

Existing documents include publications by the European Union as well as reports and academic journals. The primary objective of researching existing documents is to corroborate information gathered, to provide a chronology of events, and to provide key

inferences about the case. The information derived from documentation was used to inform the surveys.

A survey was conducted to collect information from representatives of the local government that were involved in the District Partnerships. It was anticipated that these informants would be able to provide context-specific information relating to the development and implementation of the case study. The purpose of the survey was to identify both factual responses and opinions on the process and outcome of the District Partnership. Therefore, the survey was divided into three sections: the development of the partnership, the role of institutional capacity, and outcomes.

Questions related to the development of the partnership sought to identify which stakeholders were involved in the process, how they became involved and factors contributing to, as well as barriers to, the development of the partnerships. The consensus-based decision-making process was also addressed. To identify the development of institutional capacity, the questions addressed what the stakeholders learned, and what contributed to that learning, the development of relationships, and the activities of the partnerships. Finally, the key informant was asked to identify if, and how, the partnership influenced the community.

Before sending the survey via electronic mail, the researcher contacted each district to identify the key informant and to explain the nature of the research. Three District Partnerships could not be reached. A survey was then sent to 23 of the 26 District Partnerships in Northern Ireland (23 were sent by electronic mail and one was sent by fax) and a separate survey was sent to the Special EU Programmes Body. The Special EU Programmes Body was unable to respond to the survey. Five District

Partnerships responded (22 percent response rate). Of these five, three partnerships provided responses and two were unable to provide information due to staff turnover and loss of corporate knowledge. While the responses may not be statistically significant, the quality of the responses is significant. These responses do provide a sample of how the partnerships developed, their outcomes and the role of institutional capacity. The high quality responses contain considerable amounts of information that enabled the researcher to conduct an analysis and formulate conclusions.

Each member of the District Partnership had a unique experience and it is not possible to present the experience of each member. Because the survey was sent to staff representatives from the local county council, additional fragments from other partnership members will be used to highlight common themes. This information will be used to corroborate information gathered in the survey and strengthen the conclusions in the survey. Using discourse fragments from representatives from other sectors will enable the researcher to provide richer conclusions that can be used to formulate generalizations about the experience of the District Partnerships.

The research utilised key secondary interview sources contained in two documents. While the research questions are not identical to the research questions posed by the researcher, the responses are useful in gaining a greater understanding of the Peace Program and corroborate the information gathered in the survey responses, as well in the more general literature review. In *Partnership Governance in Northern Ireland: Improving Performance*, Greer focuses on District Partnerships as a “collaborative arrangement operating at the local level” (Greer, 2001a, 71). Greer sought to analyse the District Partnerships and factors impacting their performance. Greer limited the research

to six of the 26 District Partnerships due to limited time and resources. The cases studied were selected based on key variables identified through secondary data analysis and semi-structured interviews with seven key informants. The variables included: geographical spread, urban/rural mix, projects supported by the partnerships, level of deprivation, Protestant/Catholic divisions, and the impact of the conflict (Greer, 2001a, 79).

In “A shared common sense: Perceptions of the material effects and impacts of economic growth in Northern Ireland,” Byrne and Irvin (2002) analysed the perception of the politics of international aid and the possibilities of this aid in promoting peace and reconciliation. Byrne and Irvin interviewed senior Irish and Northern Irish civil servants, funding agency development officers, and local community leaders. The local community leaders were from the border region as well as Belfast and Derry. While the authors analysed the role of the International Fund for Ireland and Peace Program aid, this researcher has included information that related specifically to Peace Program funding.

In order to differentiate the sources of direct quotes, this researcher has established the following classification: Respondents A through C refers to District Partnerships surveyed by the researcher, “Greer Respondent – Unspecified” to those interviewed by Greer, and Respondents E through K are those interviewed by Byrne and Irvin. In some cases, Greer identified the respondent by profession. When this occurred the respondent is further identified by their profession e.g. “Greer Respondent – Councillor”. In most cases, however, there is no way to identify the respondents. Greer

Respondent does not refer to one specific individual, and the direct quotes so identified could be from any of Greer's interviewees.

There was no overlap between the District Partnerships surveyed by the researcher and those interviewed by Greer. Greer included a list of the District Partnerships surveyed. When combined with the three survey responses attained by the researcher, three border regions, three coastal regions, and three interior regions were surveyed. Three of the regions were north of Belfast, and the remaining six were south of Belfast. Byrne and Irvin interviewed individuals in Belfast, Derry and Dublin and representatives from both the Irish and Northern Irish side of the border region. The researcher believes the primary and secondary sources of data are adequate for gaining an understanding of the development, outcome, and impact of the District Partnerships throughout Northern Ireland.

1.5 Limitations

The limitations to this study largely deal with scale and scope. The Irish-Northern Irish border region must be considered in the context of political and religious strife. An in-depth analysis of the conflict itself and the impact is not within the scope of this paper. Instead, an overview of the historical background leading up to 1995 is provided.

Furthermore, District Partnerships represent a fraction of the actual cross-border and cross-community initiatives within the scope of the Peace I Program, and the Peace I Program is only one of the many initiatives to address peace and reconciliation in the region. There are many and varied other sectors involved in a variety of initiatives such as business, transportation, trade and tourism, and agriculture. The study is limited to the Peace I Program and does not take into account the further development of the Peace II

Program and the local strategic partnerships that were established. Additionally, the County-council led Task Forces in the border counties of the Republic of Ireland are not examined.

The researcher faced significant constraints in time and finances for this study. As such, the survey was conducted with the representative from the local council involved in the District Partnership. It is recognized that these individuals do not reflect the view of the entire partnership; instead, the survey responses and quotes from secondary sources reflect the particular respondent's opinions of the program.

The limited number of responses is also a constraint. While the responses may not be statistically significant or representative of all of the partnerships, the responses do provide a sample of how the partnerships developed, their outcomes and the role of institutional capacity.

Two omissions in the research method can be identified. First, the inability of the researcher to contact a representative from the Northern Irish Partnership Board (NIPB) is a limitation. The researcher believed the NIPB would be able to provide details about the development of partnerships in general. In addition, the researcher was unable to conduct a key informant interview or receive a survey response from the Special EU Programmes Body. It was believed this organization could provide information on the context of the cross-border cooperation and detailed information about the development of the Peace I Program.

The study is necessarily limited by the availability of information. Case study research is dependent upon the availability of research. The geographic separation between the researcher and study area may result in some documentation being

inaccessible. However, the researcher believes that key documents were accessed. Most of these documents were readily available either in hard copy or electronically.

Additionally, the development and implementation of the Peace I Program and the District Partnerships took place between 1994-1999. Due to staff turnover, a good deal of corporate knowledge appears to have been lost. This is evidenced in part by two partnerships being unable to provide survey responses.

1.6 Outline of the Thesis

This research examines the development and implementation of the Peace I Program – and the development and outcomes of the District Partnerships – in terms of collaborative planning and institutional capacity. Chapter Two presents the theoretical underpinnings of collaborative planning, consensus based decision-making and cross-border cooperation. Varied literatures are discussed and contribute to the establishment of a framework for analysis. Chapter Three details the context of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, including inter-governmental and supra-national cross-border initiatives leading up to the establishment of the Peace I Program. The development of the Peace I Program is discussed. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the Peace I Program and the District Partnerships based on the framework for analysis established in Chapter Two. Finally, Chapter Five provides a synthesis of the findings.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Collaborative planning has emerged to address the inadequacies of the “rational model” of planning. Collaborative planning theory is rooted in Habermas’ theory of communicative action and the role of consensus in decision-making. The central influence of communicative rationality is the belief that, through inclusive discourse, stakeholders are able to achieve shared meaning and knowledge. It is argued that through the associated networks, stakeholders are empowered to achieve social change based on shared knowledge and meaning.

This mobilization of networks is not limited to planning theory. In addition to collaborative planning and consensus building, the role of partnerships and the development of cross-border cooperation will also be addressed as forms of network mobilization.

2.2. Communicative Planning

Communicative rationality argues, “emancipatory knowledge can be achieved through dialogue that engages all those with differing interests around a task or problem” (Innes and Booher, 1999, 418). Habermas identified key three methods of knowing: (1) self reflection, (2) knowing through discourse, and (3) praxis (Innes, 1995). Self-reflection requires that stakeholders understand their own rationale and have the ability to communicate that source of knowledge. Knowledge can be created through discourse, or discussion. Discourse helps to highlight different perspectives and can address existing power relationships. Finally, praxis involves practical knowledge and learning through experience.

The communicative approach to planning is inclusive of these different ways of knowing. These different sources of knowledge influence how planning is practiced. Each stakeholder brings differing interests, practices and experiences with them. Essentially, each stakeholder has a different way of knowing and understanding. By engaging in knowledge exchange and face-to-face dialogue, shared knowledge can be created.

Common factors of communicative planning theory can be summarized (Healey, 1992). Planning is an interactive and interpretive process. Planning is inherently place-based and communication is used to identify and mediate conflict. Planning occurs within diverse and overlapping communities of interest. Each of these communities has their own understanding of the situation, framework of analysis, knowledge forms and reasoning. Based on the differences within the community, communicative action then focuses on addressing these different ways of knowing and seeks to reach a mutually agreeable outcome. The process can be inclusive and can allow all relevant parties to be involved, and can incorporate both formal and informal ways of knowing.

In order for the planning process to be effective, communication within and among stakeholders needs to be respectful. This requires that stakeholders recognize and value different sources of knowledge and seek a common way of understanding the process. Stakeholders are required to evaluate differing claims for action without disregarding an interest group or an alternative argument before it is heard. The process requires that stakeholders are reflexive and critical in order to evaluate and re-evaluate the information presented. The process will result in stakeholders gaining knowledge and

building networks. Ultimately, it could lead to the development of new ways of understanding.

Stakeholders are empowered and have the ability to influence and change their situation. With the construction of shared understandings, agreement upon action can be achieved. Communicative action theory encourages stakeholders to go beyond agreeing on objectives to seek practical means of implementing decisions.

Thus, the planner, and planning practice, is a means of facilitating open and honest communication between stakeholders. This communication can lead to empowerment and is a venue within which differences can be recognized. Collaborative planning and consensus building theories reflect these ideals. A successful collaborative process would incorporate the views of community members, provide a framework through which to analyse the situation, and build institutional capacity.

2.3. Collaborative Planning

Collaborative planning and consensus building are conflict resolution processes involving stakeholders. Collaborative approaches to planning are useful in addressing situations where there is political and social fragmentation and conflicting values. While collaboration on projects is not new, it is argued there is a need to collaborate on policy development.

Four factors which contribute to collaborative planning can be identified: (1) integrative place making, (2) collaborative policy making, (3) inclusive stakeholder involvement and local knowledge, and (4) building capacity building through networks (Healey, 1998a). The context within which planning occurs and how knowledge is created needs to be considered. Interrelationships are already formed and dictate which

stakeholders are involved, or could be involved, and the relationships between them. In a conflictual situation, the positions of stakeholders should not be perceived as fixed interests. This makes it possible to move away from the adversarial nature of the problem.

Involvement of stakeholders in collaborative efforts is based on the desire to influence and shape the views of key policy-makers. This requires that voices of multiple and varied stakeholders are heard. By incorporating stakeholders in the process and allowing their voice to be heard, a variety of ways of defining the problem will be incorporated and various ways of knowing and understanding can be incorporated. Stakeholders will want to be involved in the process if their voice is heard and if they will be able to influence the decision-making process.

One of the strongest arguments for collaborative planning is institutional capacity building through the development of networks of local stakeholders. Institutional capacity refers to the “overall quality of the collection of relational networks in a place” (Healey, 1997, 61). This includes social, intellectual, and political capital. Intellectual capital is the ability of the network to gather information. Social capital refers to relational resources and the quality of relationships established between stakeholders in the network. Political capital is the ability of the network to mobilize and advocate for policy change. Networks can be a force for change by allowing stakeholders to better define their common interests and can result in inclusive planning practices. By establishing networks, the ability of individual stakeholders to influence decision-making is enhanced. Through the development of networks, stakeholders will be better prepared

in the future to address situations as they arise and it is likely that consensus and cooperation can be achieved outside of the planning process.

Collaborative planning not only results in specific decisions, it can have a spill over effect into governance structures. Governance institutions, based on collaboration with stakeholders, are likely to result in more benefits for the community than individual organizations functioning primarily in their own self-interest. Through networks, stakeholders are able to build political capital. It is argued that collaborative planning is more efficient because the outcome is viewed as more legitimate and the potential spill over effects of capacity building could result in further cooperation.

There are four processes that can aid collaboration: (1) initiation of the process, (2) routines and discussions, (3) making policy discourses, and (4) maintaining consensus (Healey, 1997). The collaborative process can be initiated by stakeholders who either have a stake in the problem or the decision-making process. The initiators can be existing groups. However, this also creates the possibility of entrenching already existing power structures and could exclude potential stakeholders from the process.

Routines and styles of discussion refer to the specifics of the process. These factors incorporate how stakeholders express their views and how this is understood. It can include factors such as how people speak or how different cultures are represented.

In typical decision-making activities, the information that influences the process is filtered. However, in a collective decision-making process, the information will not be filtered; instead the individual stakeholders will need to decide for themselves which information should influence their views. This will result in an understanding of potential options and consequences of each stated position or argument. The

stakeholders are then able to identify the best strategy for addressing the problem. This also ensures that options are not neglected and stakeholders' positions are not assumed.

2.3.1. The Role of Information in Collaborative Planning

Information plays a large role in the collaborative planning process. A variety of forms of information are included. In a collaborative planning process, meaning is given to information and knowledge by the participants in the process (Innes, 1998). Socially constructed information can be useful in transforming the decision-making process. This information becomes embedded in the process and institutions, as well as in comprehension of the issues and practices of stakeholders. This creates value and a shared understanding of the information. It is through the process of consensus building that information is validated and can become influential in the planning process.

Within the consensus building process, technical, formal and scientifically validated data is combined with information from the participants' experiences, through story-telling and through the images and representations which stakeholders use to frame their analysis (Innes, 1998). The influence of information on the process is indirect. Information influences the institutions, practices, and assumptions of those involved in the process.

However, in order for this information to be utilized in the consensus building process, some basic criteria need to be met (Innes, 1998). Representation of all stakeholder groups is required and these stakeholders must be informed and empowered to share their information. They must be a legitimate representative and be able to speak from their experiences or expertise, and use language that is accessible and inclusive. Once these requirements are addressed, the participants must work to achieve consensus.

Summary:

Collaborative planning and consensus building theory provides a framework for analysing planning initiatives that claim to be inclusive and collaborative. The framework would evaluate how collaborative and inclusive the process was. However, in order to be able to develop an effective framework of analysis, the critiques and weaknesses of collaborative planning theory need to be considered.

2.4. Collaborative Planning and Consensus building

Consensus building, as a form of collaborative planning, provides an effective framework for analysing the initiatives in the Irish border region. Consensus building is “an array of practices in which stakeholders, selected to represent different interests, come together for face-to-face, long-term dialogue to address a policy issue of common concern” (Innes and Booher, 1999, 412). Within consensus building, majority rule is replaced with consensus amongst participants. Consensus building is a means to overcome potentially conflictual situations by taking into account the various positions of stakeholders. The consensus building process uses discourse to find a mutually agreeable situation by transforming the position of stakeholders. Effective consensus building is likely to result in high quality agreements and tangible as well as intangible products.

Consensus building tends to result in higher quality agreements that are inclusive, durable and perceived to be fairer. One of the strengths of consensus building is that it can bring together stakeholders who might not otherwise communicate and - through open communications - agreement can be reached. This form of decision-making includes not only a diversity of stakeholders; it also enables their different views to be taken into account. This not only incorporates a variety of forms of knowing, it also

brings a variety of ways of understanding and defining the problem. This too contributes to the development of innovative solutions.

Consensus building is not only about achieving the end goal of a high quality agreement; the ability to build new relationships and develop innovative practices, policies and ideas can be of greater importance than the ability to achieve a pre-determined goal, such as reaching an agreement or implementing the project. Failure to reach an agreement and failure to implement the decision does not necessarily highlight a failure of the process. Thus, it is the process – not the outcome – that is of greater importance.

2.4.1. Benefits and Outcomes of Consensus building

While high quality agreements supported by stakeholders are a benefit of consensus building, there are other informal benefits. These are categorized as tangible and intangible products (Innes and Booher, 1999). Intangible products are outcomes that are less visible, such as the development of trust, building relationships and institutional capacity building. These factors are more difficult to identify but are often as important, if not more so, than tangible products. Of great importance to the process is the development of trust that facilitates effective communication and common problem solving. This facilitates the development of intellectual capital in terms of mutual understanding, agreement on information and shared definitions. This in turn helps to reduce potential conflict and allows stakeholders to move towards consensus. Lastly, individual stakeholders build relationships that enable them to work outside of the consensus building process. Stakeholders, through working collectively, can have a greater ability to influence the decision-making process.

Tangible products are clearly influenced by the consensus building process.

Tangible products include formal agreements, plans and policies, legislation or new regulations. Formal agreements also often lead to spin offs such as informal agreements and sharing of knowledge. Tangible products also include other spin-off activities such as collaboration on projects and the development of partnerships. The ability to learn and change opinions and actions is recognized as one of the most significant outcomes of consensus building.

Agreements reached through a consensus building process tend to be more durable and implementable. The stakeholders in the process are able to support the outcome if they feel it took into account their positions. Because the process of consensus building is inclusive of stakeholders, the agreements tend to be fairer. Also, they tend to be perceived to be fairer than processes that are not as inclusive. In instances where the process is consensual and inclusive, those stakeholders who did not have their goals met are more likely to support the process if they feel it is inclusive and took into account their interests and problem definition. In addition to the outcomes being more implementable, the process takes into consideration a variety of sources of information. For example, often the consensus building process incorporates technical knowledge. This form of information tends to be trusted by more stakeholders, as it is perceived to be apolitical. Consensus building has the ability to change the views and actions of key players in the process through the creation of new ideas, practices and relationships. The benefits of the process include the achievement of shared knowledge, trust, and networks, which require stakeholder collaboration and respect for others.

A definitive timeline cannot be established for the consensus building process because of the tangible and intangible benefits of consensus building. The development of new relationships and spin off activities highlights the forms of trust and relationships that can be developed. The relationship may begin with informal discussions followed by a formalized relationship and the possibility for further collaboration once the project is complete.

A framework for evaluating the success of consensus building, which incorporates tangible and intangible products, has been established (Innes, 1999, Innes and Booher, 1999). This process provides a framework for analysing the initiatives of the District Partnerships established under the Peace I Program. Criteria are categorized as process and outcome criteria. An effective consensus building process includes the following criteria:

- Includes representation of all relevant interests;
- Has a purpose and tasks are real, practical and shared by participants;
- Is self-organizing;
- Engages participants;
- Encourages innovative and creative thinking that may challenge the status quo;
- Utilizes high quality information; and
- Seeks consensus after discussion.

A good consensus building process will meet a variety of criteria and if a process fails to meet the suggested criteria, it is considered a weaker process.

Outcome criteria include:

- Develops high quality agreements;
- Potentially ends stalemate;
- Develops favourable outcomes in terms of costs and benefits;
- Produces creative ideas;
- Learning and change in, and beyond, the group occurs;
- Creates social and political capital;
- Stakeholders understand and accept information;

- Results in changing attitudes and actions;
- Creates partnerships, practices and institutions; and
- Allows the community to creatively respond to change and conflict.

Initiatives of the PEACE I Program will be evaluated in terms of process and outcome to better identify how effective consensus building and collaborative approaches to planning have been in the Irish border region.

Summary:

A framework for analysis based on collaborative planning and consensus building needs to take into consideration the critiques of the theory. Critiquing planning theory can highlight general insufficiencies in the theoretical argument; however, the weaknesses do not necessarily result in a flawed process because the theory is generalized and practice deals with a specific case, and is context sensitive.

2.5. Critiques of the Communicative Turn in Planning

Many of the critiques of communicative action in planning theory focus on the division between the theory and practice. Collaborative planning is criticized for failing to effectively address issues of power, inclusion and public participation, and the motivation of stakeholders.

2.5.1. Power

The concept of power in collaborative planning is problematic and the failure to adequately address the inherent nature of power is a weakness of the theory (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Huxley, 2000; Neuman 2000; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). In collaborative planning theory there is no provision for effectively dealing with power. Instead, power is recognized as something that can be redistributed through changing the relationship among stakeholders.

Communicative action theory suggests that, by restructuring power relationships and building trust across stakeholders, power structures can be altered through collaborative social learning. This restructuring of power relations is only established by altering the relationship among stakeholders but this fails to address “power inherent within the individual” (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). Thus it fails to incorporate the potential that individuals or stakeholders may withhold information, or not present information accurately, thus creating an imbalance of power.

Collaborative planning focuses on the role of process and procedure to influence power structures and to transform the views of stakeholders, ultimately achieving consensus. There are inherent power structures that exist within and between stakeholders in a community and a failure to adopt collaborative or associative forms of governance could result in the entrenchment of hierarchies and existing power structures.

The ambiguous nature of communicative action fails to address some factors that might influence the process, including intra- and inter-agency or institutional conflict, the influences of external forces, and overestimation of the role of institutions in structural change (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). What may be considered collaboration may actually be cooperation (Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). What differentiates collaboration from cooperation is shared identity and authority that is created in the partnership beyond that of the individual stakeholder. Stakeholders are from different individual organizations but are fully committed to the collaborative process.

Cooperation is characterized by informal relationships with little structure and no planning efforts. There is no shared authority to act. There are informal trade offs and the rewards and risks of being involved in the partnership are specific to each

stakeholder. When collaboration occurs, there is usually an organizational structure with shared authority. Collaborative relationships tend to be longer lasting but do pose a greater risk to the stakeholders involved.

While the acceptance of communicative action into planning theory has incorporated the possibility of communication as the basis for institutional capacity building, it does not focus attention on power and politics, and how that plays out in practice (Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). Power is context-specific and having an understanding of the context within which the planning process takes place is important for understanding the social action and outcomes of collaborative and associative forms of governance. Fundamentally, practice highlights the role that politics and power have within the planning process. Failure to identify or address the role of politics and power in the theory highlights a weakness of the theory when applied to planning practice.

Having an understanding of the context is important because what is presented as collaborative forms of governance could actually be representations of already-existing power structures (Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). One of the dangers of collaborative planning is that the stakeholders involved are an elite group of decision makers. A successful process needs to pay attention to stakeholder participation and representation, the way in which collaborative planning occurs and what means were established to create legitimacy. There needs to be a clear understanding of the interactions – specifically, the political dynamics, power structures, and the intention and the motivation of stakeholders – if a process is to develop in a collaborative manner.

A further weakness of the theory is that it advocates an alteration in existing power structures yet it fails to take into account the possible implications of altering the

structures (Huxley, 2000; Fischler, 2000). It fails to address the potential impacts, both positive and negative, that the new form of decision-making may have on existing governance structures. The political cost of challenging traditional power structures is not taken into consideration.

Power will influence the planning process. Failing to address the nature of power and politics is a weakness of the theory when applied to planning practice. By gaining an understanding of the context within which the decision-making process will occur, planners will be better able to identify inequities amongst stakeholders, ensure that the decision-making process is not dominated by an existing elite, and can allow planners to understand the motivations and intentions of stakeholders.

Power and motivation of stakeholders are closely related. Collaborative planning fails to address the motivation of stakeholders (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). It cannot be assumed that all stakeholders are working towards participatory democracy. Instead, stakeholders will each have their own values, interests and goals. While the process is inclusive of different values, perceptions and understandings, stakeholders may not be working to achieve a common goal. Instead, stakeholders may be acting in their own best interest.

Under the pretences of acting within the public good, powerful stakeholders may still be promoting self-interest. Their interests are not necessarily transformed in as much as they are reconfigured to express the norms within the group. This is based on the argument that power defines knowledge and, therefore, power is rationalized in the decision-making process. It is possible that a stakeholder is agreeing to work towards achieving consensus but is using power to influence the process and therefore maintain

their interest or influence. Through the politicisation of the decision, they actually may be entrenching power relations and creating a similar situation to that which they sought to counteract, including the re-establishment of power structures.

The theory fails to address how stakeholders may move from their own personal interests and self-desire to that of a common goal. By using the existing structure, the norms of communications are already established – the existing structure dictates whom stakeholders should talk with and whom they should not talk with. This could result in distortion of the process and entrenched power relations by using established structures and existing forms of social interactions, despite their stated intentions of engaging in open communication (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). The motivation and intention of stakeholders can be problematic. While stakeholders indicate they are engaging in a collaborative process, powerful stakeholders may promote their own interests at the expense of the weaker stakeholders.

2.5.2 Inclusion and Public Participation

Collaborative planning argues that all relevant stakeholders need to be included in the process. However, the theory fails to prescribe how to identify the interests that should be involved, how they will become involved, and how to incorporate those that are marginalized (Abram, 2002; Phelps and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). Public participation is based on the assumption of homogeneity within the community or within the stakeholder groups. Representatives speaking for an entire community can be problematic, if it is assumed that all interests are presented.

The assumption that communities have the capacity to develop and implement such programs is a drawback of the theory (Healey, 1998a). It is assumed that those

involved have the capacity to act and have access to resources. Without effective guidance, support or existing capacity, it is difficult for collaboration to occur. The assumption that stakeholders will have the ability to communicate openly and effectively is also problematic (Huxley, 2000). Thus, any framework for analysis must take into consideration not only the representativeness of the process, but also the capacity to act and access to resources.

A further critique of public participation, based on examples of collaborative planning in the UK, indicates that participation cannot be assumed to translate into altered decision-making (Abram, 2002). It is argued that, while the public may participate in the planning process, the stakeholder is not assured that their views and concerns will be taken into consideration in the final decision. Additionally, the difference between hearing and understanding the perspective of one stakeholder is fundamentally different from agreeing with that opinion. Based on the experience of planners, it was identified that collaboration can, instead of seeking to resolve conflict, simply disguise the conflict (Abram, 2002).

Inclusion and public participation can be problematic. There is no clearly defined method for ensuring that stakeholders who should be involved are involved, especially when these groups traditionally may be marginalized from the decision-making process. Furthermore, there is an assumption that stakeholders will have the resources or capacity to become involved in the process without support and training. This assumption can compromise the process. If a stakeholder does not have the capacity to be a full participant, the process is weakened.

2.5.3 *Achieving Consensus*

The motivation of stakeholders, the role of power, and the inherent difficulty of social inclusion can be problematic when trying to achieve consensus. In collaborative decision-making processes, the decision is based on transformative arguments and, instead of the concept of majority rules, consensus is established amongst members. The process will necessarily alter the views of participants through re-framing the problem and presenting other sources of information. Through this discourse, knowledge is created.

Consensus is assumed the best method of decision-making in the collaborative planning process, as it enables stakeholders to have parity in decision-making. However, there may be instances when consensus may not be the best option. For example, when groups are facing difficulty in agreement, they may avoid having to deal with the issue. As such, this could result in decisions being made on less controversial issues, and the more political or sensitive issues may not be addressed, thus weakening the process.

However, other mechanisms for decision-making, notably voting, bargaining and deliberation, are used in policy development and decision-making. The use of these techniques is context-specific and one method may be preferred over another. Often it is not made clear why consensus is preferred to other methods, such as voting, deliberation, or bargaining (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). It can be further argued that if the basis of communicative action theory is to build intellectual capital and an understanding of the views of other stakeholders in the process, then there is no requirement for consensus to be achieved (Huxley, 2000).

Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that consensus on action can be reached and it is argued that there is no direct link between the discussion, decision-making and action

(Abram, 2002; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). This can serve to undermine the confidence stakeholders place in the process – if the opinion of a stakeholder is not reflected in the decision, they may be compelled to question the legitimacy of the process. Whereas, if their opinion is heard and reflected in the final decision, they are more likely to consider the process to be valuable and legitimate.

It is assumed collaborative planning will result in consensus building, which in turn will influence future actions. This spill-over may not occur. Because planning is a political process, there will be winners and losers, as it is not possible for all stakeholders to act purely in the best interest of the community (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998). While a successful collaborative process should convince stakeholders of an alternative discourse and the benefits of collaboration, it is only successful within the context that it is discussed. While a stakeholder may agree to this alternative, there is no assurance that the same stakeholder will agree to other actions or will be willing to compromise outside of the process.

While consensus has been achieved, there is no guarantee that the stakeholders will work collectively in other areas. A weakness of consensus building is that the decisions can be fragile and may not last once the process is over. If the collaborative process has reached consensus, there needs to be sufficient political will to implement the decision. This can be problematic when those involved in the process are not those who can actually make the decision - again highlighting the divide between communicative theory and power (Neuman, 2000).

2.6. Networks and Network Power

One of the key outcomes of collaborative planning and consensus building is the creation of networks and institutional capacity building. The establishment of networks is a strength of the collaborative planning and cross-border cooperative processes. Network power is developed when stakeholders work collectively to alter their environment.

Thus, stakeholders are able to develop power by working together and enhancing their potential to influence change. Network power is based on the possibility of stakeholders within the process to increase their potential and options for dealing with the dispute.

Power within the network is not a result of one key player – power is achieved through stakeholders working together to achieve results they would not be able to achieve individually. Power within the network thus rests with the power to act and synergy within the network. Part of the process of developing network power is listening to and understanding the other positions of stakeholders. This enables stakeholders within the process to deal with differences and create innovative responses. This also acknowledges that, within the network, there are factors that not only create power, but that power can also be limited.

Three criteria for the emergence of network power have been identified: (1) stakeholders in the process are diverse and representative of the full range of interests and positions within the process, (2) interdependence exists and is recognized by stakeholders, and (3) the position presented by each stakeholder is accurate and trusted by other members of the process (Innes and Booher, 2002).

Diversity of stakeholders is an essential factor in achieving innovation: by sharing information and their interpretation of the problem, stakeholders can create intellectual

capital. Sharing this information reinforces the different means of understanding the problem. Listening to, and understanding, others enables the stakeholder to address various concerns and can lead to the creation of an innovative solution to the problem.

Interdependence of stakeholders, based on self-interest and reciprocity, is important in achieving network power. Stakeholders need to be able to both bring inputs to the process and require outcomes from others in the process. Trust is also essential in the development of reciprocity – stakeholders need to be able to openly bring what they have to the table and can trust that they will gain from others. It is argued that this mutual trust is what encourages stakeholders to work towards achieving mutual goals, and betterment of the group and the process, instead of working on their own to meet their own goals. The ability to gain more acting collectively is fundamental to the process. Social capital will be established through networks and is defined by the relationships established.

Lastly, the position presented by each stakeholder must be accurate and trusted by other members of the process. This is inherent in both the development and recognition of mutual trust and interdependence but also in working effectively towards consensus. Collaborative planning ensures that those in the process are able to build upon the diversity of the program. This is required for political capital and the ability of networks to develop and implement their goals and objectives.

Face-to-face contact developed over a period is required for stakeholders to be able to believe the other stakeholders are acting in good faith and to develop trust (Innes and Booher, 2002). This “authentic dialogue” occurs in formal and informal contact. In order for stakeholders to invest in a process, especially when they are in competition with

these stakeholders, they need to have a sense of trust and believe that the other stakeholders will follow through with the process. In order for effective dialogue to develop, stakeholders are able to understand and comprehend the information that is presented. Part of this requirement is that the stakeholders are perceived as being legitimate sources of information. As such, stakeholders should have some form of experience or expertise in what they are discussing. This form of knowledge and legitimacy is required to allow participants to share information and challenge their existing assumptions. Stakeholders will be able to identify other perspectives, opinions and rationalizations and build intellectual capital.

2.7. Collaborative Planning and Partnerships

Partnerships, as a form of network building, are increasingly popular internationally as a method of dealing with economic, social, political, and institutional change. This has resulted in a general movement to cooperation and collaboration as individual organizations are facing difficulty in addressing issues in isolation. By sharing resources and capacity, organizations are developing partnerships as a means of addressing common issues.

Partnerships involve a variety of stakeholders including different levels of government, the public and private sector, and the voluntary and community sector. They highlight the interdependence between the public, private and voluntary sectors - and the development of networks. Partnerships tend to be viewed as politically neutral and are seen by governments as a way to enable public participation and inclusion in the development of public policy, to ensure specific goals are created and met. Partnerships can enable the local community to have a voice on an issue and can create an inclusive

decision-making process. Partnerships also enable stakeholders to pool resources, skills, and capacity to address an issue.

A partnership is an arrangement between two or more organizations and the relationship is based on a desire to address a common issue or problem (Greer, 2001a). Partnerships are formed to establish institutional capacity to develop and implement specific objectives based on common functional interests. Partnerships are case-sensitive and context-specific. Each exists for a different reason, incorporates different stakeholders, works under different conditions, and has different goals and objectives. Partnerships can be characterized by different coalition-building processes. These processes are based on a continuum from cooperation to collaboration (Greer, 2001a).

Cooperation is characterized by informal relationships with little structure and no planning efforts. In this relationship, information is shared; however, the authority to act is maintained by each stakeholder. There are informal trade offs; the rewards and risks of being involved in the partnership are specific to each stakeholder. Coordination involves a more formalized relationship with combined planning and there is some movement towards crossing traditional organizational boundaries. However, there is no shared authority. Finally, collaboration is the highest level of partnerships, usually with an organizational structure. Authority is shared. Though the stakeholders come from separate organizations, they are fully committed to the partnership process. Resources are shared and focused on a longer-term effort. These relationships tend to be longer lasting but do pose a greater risk to the stakeholders involved. Thus, what differentiates collaboration from other forms of partnership is the identity and authority that is created in the partnership beyond that of the individual stakeholder.

2.7.1. Models of Partnerships

There are three models of partnerships: (1) facilitating partnerships, (2) coordinating partnerships, and (3) implementing partnerships (Carter, 2000). Facilitating partnerships generally involve a diverse range of stakeholders and differing opinions. Often the stakeholders involved are powerful. These partnerships tend to deal with sensitive, deep-rooted issues and have broad objectives. The District Partnerships established in the PEACE I Program are an example of this form of partnership.

Coordinating partnerships are developed to oversee projects or other initiatives, implemented by the partnership or other bodies. They tend to be managed by one stakeholder. Unlike facilitating partnerships, these partnerships tend to deal with less contentious and more politically neutral issues that are relatively new.

Implementing partnerships tend to be short-term arrangements. These partnerships are generally established to deliver a clearly defined specific objective. These partnerships might also involve securing resources, including funding.

2.7.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Partnerships

Advantages and disadvantages of partnerships can be identified (Carter, 2000; Greer, 2001a). In partnerships, synergy is created allowing stakeholders to achieve more collectively than they might individually. By forming networks, stakeholders will be presented with other views and options that they might not have identified if working alone. Partnerships enable local democracy and can be used to empower stakeholders who are traditionally excluded from the decision-making process. Partnerships can also open lines of communication and allow for future cooperation on projects.

Partnerships can be venues for learning and transformation. Opinions, options, and values can be shared and new ways of understanding can be created. Inequities amongst stakeholders can be minimized and working in a partnership can decrease pressure and demands on organizational resources. Partnerships can result in more effective and coordinated policies and can create an organization that is flexible and capable of dealing with changes and adapting to new situations. Partnerships can result in improvements of local services and delivery mechanisms. Partnerships may enable increased access to funding opportunities.

The disadvantages of partnerships are also well documented. Developing a common approach with diverse stakeholders can be challenging. In cases where there is disagreement over principles, the members may avoid the issue and instead focus on areas where they agree. This weakens the partnership and limits possible areas of collaboration. Partnerships must avoid developing into a 'lowest common denominator' approach, such as avoiding contentious issues and remaining solely a venue for discussion and debate without action. Partnerships can be weak and unsustainable, especially when securing external funding is a key factor in the development of the partnership.

The prevalence of partnerships in one area, which overlap, can lead to confusion, fragmentation, and increased lack of coordination. Partnerships may be elitist and undemocratic. Membership may be based on traditional norms and power relations and this can be exclusive or elitist. The partnerships may not represent the community they are trying to represent. Partnerships also experience participant fatigue and could lose some of the initial energy for achieving goals.

2.7.3. Conditions for Partnership Governance

There is no single method or model that can act as the basis for a successful partnership. Because partnerships are context-sensitive, the advantages and disadvantages may not be present in all situations. However, four sets of conditions of the partnership can be identified that can influence the success of the partnership: (1) contextual condition, (2) stakeholder/organizational conditions, (3) decision-making conditions, and (4) operational conditions (Carter, 2000; Greer, 2001a).

Contextual conditions include the belief that synergy can be achieved and there is geographical proximity to facilitate communications and relationship-building. Trust and respect are a basis for the relationship, enabling recognition of the various priorities and outlooks of stakeholders. The partnerships need to be aware of the socio-economic realities of the situation within which they are involved. This will ensure that the objectives and goals of the partnership will benefit the community. The stakeholders must also have an idea of the types of resources they can bring with them and the resources the partnership will be able to utilize. Conditions, which may negatively influence the development of partnerships include a history of conflict that may increase tensions and economic decline that may result in an unwillingness to share resources.

The stakeholder/organizational conditions relate to the role of the stakeholders. The stakeholders need to believe in the process and need to be willing to work to maintain the partnership in the long term. Conditions that might negatively influence the partnership include unequal balance of power amongst stakeholders and reluctance to share information or resources if there is a lack of trust.

Autonomy of the stakeholders can benefit as well as limit the process. If the autonomy rests in the central organization and not with the stakeholders, their ability to act is limited. Decentralized agencies are often closer to the public and their communities, making them more prepared for partnerships.

The decision-making process can also influence the partnership. Consensus-based decision-making methods are highlighted as the best method of decision-making for the partnerships. The role of the individual organizations acting as decision makers can harm the process. While it is noted that consensus building lengthens the process and makes reaching a decision more challenging, it is inclusive, enables stakeholders to communicate, and establishes relationships based on trust and respect.

Strong networks will strengthen the relationships, and the ability for the partnership to act. Developing trust and maintaining respect during the process is also based on the skills each stakeholder has in terms of discussions and negotiation. The partnership needs to be able to engage key stakeholders who have an understanding of the local context and are willing to collectively work for change. The stakeholders will require equal access to information and decision-making powers.

Finally, the operational conditions will influence the development of the partnership. Creating a strategy for the partnership is required early in the process of building the partnership. This will define the scope of activities and outline the aims and principles of the partnership. The partnership also requires some form of evaluation and assessment to identify if their goals and objectives have been met. Within this process, the partnerships are required to utilize inclusive planning practices. Partnerships will

require adequate resources for their tasks and will benefit from knowledge of potential sources of funding.

Participants in partnerships will be required, at an early stage of development, to display confidence and aptitude in the issue as well as to legitimate their involvement in the issue. In addition, acquiring a competent staff is critical for the success of the partnership, and can result in institutional capacity building.

2.7.4. Development of the Partnership Process

While each partnership is unique, there are steps that should be taken in order to establish a successful partnership. There are five basic stages ranging from the initial communication to achieving the final objective (Carter, 2000). Stakeholders need to identify a common problem and begin to develop a relationship based on trust and respect. This should enable stakeholders to address differences amongst themselves. During this initial phase, the partnership may seek to obtain funding or training to build capacity within the partnership.

In the second phase, the relationships that were built in the initial phase should help facilitate the fashioning of a common vision. During this phase, the partnership will identify the needs and objectives of their activity and can develop an agenda. At this time, the partnership may also expand to incorporate other stakeholders.

In the third phase, the partnership will begin to formalize the structure of the organization and establish a framework to achieve the identified goals and objectives. It is during this phase that executive or management arrangements are established, if needed.

The implementation of the action occurs in phase four. Though an executive has been established, the stakeholders are still involved in the partnership through decision-making and evaluating the actions of the partnerships. In the final phase, the partnership needs to identify a new strategy for the continuation of the work and this might include transferring ownership to the community.

Summary:

There is overlap in theories of collaborative planning, cross-border cooperation, and partnerships. This is noticeable in the Irish border region and specifically in the District Partnerships established under the PEACE I Program. Thus, the District Partnerships can be analysed as a form of partnership and a mechanism for cross-border cooperation through the framework of collaborative planning.

2.8. Collaborative Planning and the Irish Border Region

The Irish border region serves as an example that place is important. Networks are established across borders and across communities. These networks do not respect national boundaries. Cross-border cooperation is one way of establishing networks that span these boundaries. As such, cross-border cooperation becomes a process of place making and in “generating enduring meanings for places which can help to focus and coordinate the activities of different stakeholders and reduce levels of conflict” (Healey, 1998b, 6).

These established interrelationships shape how stakeholders perceive the problem and the process. Their interrelationships also prescribe who to contact and who not to contact. The interrelationships of stakeholders in the Irish border region would be

strongly influenced by the history of ethnic conflict. This would then influence how the local identity of the region, and individuals living within the region, developed.

Partnerships are developing throughout Northern Ireland, and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. These partnerships are developing at various levels of government and across various sectors. However, the Northern Irish example does highlight some problems with partnerships: they can be complex, ineffective and lack coordination. This is due to the fact that many of them developed rapidly, in diverse sectors and in an ad hoc manner (Greer, 2001a).

The development of partnerships in Northern Ireland is facilitated by institutional, spatial and sectoral factors (Greer, 2001a). As with cross-border cooperation, both the British government and the European Union have been influential in the development of partnerships in Northern Ireland. Accessing additional resources is a factor in the promotion of partnerships by the British government. The British government also recognizes the role of the voluntary and community sectors in addressing local issues. This sector also has a role in minimizing the democratic deficiency in Northern Ireland. By engaging the voluntary and community sector, the British government can create a partnership process that is inclusive and empowering, and allows for local ownership.

Participation is not limited to the public sector and the community and voluntary sector. By engaging the private sector in partnerships, the government can capitalize upon the skills of the private sector. Partnerships between the private sector in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are increasingly common. By involving the local community and traditionally marginalized stakeholders in the decision-making process, the government hopes to address cross-community conflict. The peace process has also

helped to strengthen the role of partnerships in Northern Ireland. The 'Good Friday' Agreement established a partnership form of governance including the Nationalists, Unionists and Republican political parties. These parties would be responsible for ten departments. The process also established partnerships between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The European Union actively promoted partnerships as a means of addressing the socio-economic situation in the lesser-developed regions, and as promoting local involvement and subsidiarity. An example of this is the District Partnerships involving the community and voluntary sector, private sector, trade unions and local government, created under the EU sponsored Peace I Program.

The partnership experience in Northern Ireland is characterized by a wide range of stakeholders involved in diverse policy areas. Most partnerships are built across policy areas between government departments, whereas others have a strong community focus and seek to include and empower the local community. Some of the partnerships are developing across the Irish-Northern Irish border. The voluntary and community sector, private sector, trade unions, local governments, and governments departments are engaged in partnerships.

Summary:

Collaborative planning, partnerships, and cross-border cooperation share similar theoretical underpinnings. The unifying foundation is the development of networks, which enable stakeholders to achieve social change. Collaborative planning provides a framework, based on inclusion, discourse, and participatory democracy, to enable

network mobilization. Cross-border cooperation, it is argued, is the creation of spatially defined networks.

2.9. Cross-Border Cooperation

2.9.1. Introduction

Some scholars argue that state borders are becoming irrelevant, whereas other academics note a decrease in the role of borders as barriers. Those who argue that state borders are irrelevant point out that “international borders are becoming so porous that they no longer fulfil their historical role as barriers to the movement of goods, ideas and people, and as markers of the extent and power of the state” (Wilson and Donnan, 1998). This decrease in borders as barriers is related to the development of new political identities within states and across state borders. For example, statehood and citizenship are being considered in the context of ethnicity, language, races and religion (Anderson 1996b; Wilson and Donnan 1998). This newly emerging sense of identity can be problematic when there is a disconnect between state borders and nations or cultures.

Border regions were recognized by the EU as some of the most disadvantaged areas in the Union (European Commission, 1991). The EU also noted that each region is unique and is influenced by physical, demographic, social, linguistic, and cultural characteristics. The regions were identified as peripheral and challenged by poor communication across borders and differing legal and administrative systems. Consequently, the EU focused on improving the socio-economic situation in border regions. This was determined by three factors: advancement of economic integration, investment in the border regions, and changes in the legal and administrative nature of

the border regions allowing for increased cross-border cooperation (European Commission, 1991).

2.9.2. Theories of Cross-Border Cooperation

Though cooperation among nations has been occurring for centuries, cooperation among non-central government actors is a relatively new phenomenon. There is no universal definition of cross-border cooperation. However, it is widely identified as the transnational approach to regional development pioneered in border regions of Western Europe in the 1950s, specifically the border regions in Scandinavia, Germany, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland. These border regions actively sought to develop a practical transnational response to barriers to development in border regions, peripherality and imbalances, and lack of co-ordination between state authorities.

Cross-border cooperation is typified by “flexible cooperative agreements and networks, which may contribute to a more dynamic process of institutional development in border regions” (Church and Reid, 1999, 644). These interactions are the basis for increased horizontal relationships among local governments and the most vibrant cross-border regions are a result of municipal and inter-municipal interaction (Perkmann, 1999).

Despite the lack of a universal definition, some basic principles of cross-border cooperation can be identified (Church and Reid, 1996; Ricq 1995; Scott, 1999). The basic principle of cross-border cooperation is to develop networks and linkages in cross-border regions through which local actors are able to address common problems and find joint solutions. Cross-border cooperation has often developed as a means for exchanging information and knowledge and for securing resources, including EU funding.

Cross-border cooperation can be viewed as a form of networking. The development of cross-border cooperation has been linked to the development of networks and coalitions based on common policy interests (Church and Reid, 1996). The development and formation of networks could influence the subsequent cross-border initiatives. Cross-border cooperation enables intellectual, social and political capacity building.

2.9.3. Factors Influencing Cross-Border Cooperation

Cross-border cooperation is essentially policy making at the local and regional level of government. Cross-border cooperation cannot be based solely on good will alone, there needs to be compelling economic, administrative and operational reasons for entering into a transboundary relationship. In addition to this, there is also the need for mutual trust and knowledge when taking a multilateral approach to common issues. Joint historical and cultural values support cross-border cooperation (Cappellin, 1993a). In order for border regions to effectively establish regional policy for cross-border cooperation, they require: (1) the capacity to participate, (2) common priorities and objectives, (3) collaboration at the regional level between public and private institutions, (4) the concentration of available resources in transnational programs, and (5) gradual and continued efforts towards cross-border cooperation (Cappellin, 1993b).

The quality and intensity of cross-border interaction can be determined by the following factors: (1) the motivation, (2) symmetry and asymmetry, (3) asynchronous change, and (4) the basic context of cross-border cooperation (Scott et al., 1996). The need for cross-border interaction based on economic and environmental security is highlighted. There is a desire for peace if conflict exists and a desire to solve mutual

economic, political and environmental problems. Often economic gains play a role in developing cross-border cooperation and the desire to decrease the negative externalities of globalisation. The intensity of the cross-border relationship will depend on the intensity of actors investing the time, effort and financial resources in the region.

Issues of symmetry and asymmetry will influence how the cross-border relationship develops and functions. Similarities and differences in the standard of living or other socio-economic indicators, demographics, fiscal resources available to local and regional governments and their ability to make decisions will influence cross-border cooperation. Similarities and differences in political culture and legal arrangements, the development of industry and the degree of cultural and linguistic differences are further influencing factors. In addition, when economic, systemic or societal changes do not occur at the same time, the potential for cross-border cooperation can be greatly affected.

Lastly, the supranational context of conflict and cooperation influences cross-border cooperation. Conflict in the border region challenges the ability to develop long-term transborder relationships, trust and mutual interest. However, if the transborder relationship is supported, there is the real ability for the border regions to develop into interdependent and functional units with formalized relationships.

2.9.4. Benefits of Cross-Border Cooperation

There are many reasons to encourage sub-national government involvement in cross-border initiatives (Cappellin, 1993; Church and Reid 1995, 1996; Scott et al., 1996). A bottom-up form of region building can be effective as there is close proximity between the local actors and the population. A strong regional level of government can contribute to the economic success of a region. From a practical perspective,

governments need to work collectively to deal with common problems, such as the environment, spatial planning and transportation. Typical cross-border initiatives include information exchanges, lobbying for and promotion of the region, cultural and educational exchanges, encouraging private sector investment and funding, and political positioning vis-à-vis central government. Cross-border cooperation can also play a role in reducing conflict based on national borders. It may be possible to achieve areas where borders are no longer significant and are no longer dividing lines in the traditional sense.

Consequently, cross-border cooperation within the EU has emerged as a popular way in which regions can define their own interests. It is a means of removing the barriers between regions and allows these regions to function at a bilateral level. It represents a new level of inter-state cooperation. Transnational regions participating in cross-border initiatives are developing in a new political space, allowing sub-national actors to play a role in international competition and international relations.

2.9.5. Barriers to Cross-Border Cooperation

Despite the numerous benefits, there are barriers and drawbacks to cross-border cooperation (Church and Reid, 1995, 1996, 1999; Cappellin 1993a, 1993b; Scott, 1999; Perkmann, 1999). Cross-border cooperation could simply be a means of political opportunism and strengthen the role of existing political elites, creating an exclusive or selective group. Stakeholders may not have the capacity to engage in the planning process. This might reinforce the implicit hierarchy despite grassroots involvement.

In addition, one of the dangers is the possibility of cross-border cooperation focusing solely on economic development. It is likely that only the most developed regions will be able to participate effectively in this form of sub-national diplomacy.

Administrative complexity can be a barrier to emerging cross-border initiatives and a lack of knowledge in terms of potential partners could prove to be a barrier to cross-border cooperation. The ability to engage in cross-border cooperation is dependent upon the establishment of mutual trust. When the motivation of stakeholders is unclear, the legitimacy of the process is called into question.

2.9.6. Forms of Cross-Border Cooperation

Some theorists argue that a general institutional form cannot be established due to the context-sensitive nature of cross-border cooperation. However, it is possible to highlight typical stages of cross-border cooperation. The Handbook on Transfrontier Cooperation for Local and Regional Authorities, suggests there are six levels of cooperation: (1) total lack of relations, (2) information exchange, (3) consultation, (4) cooperation, (5) harmonization and (6) integration. Total lack of relations is often like traditional forms of international relations where the border is viewed as a dividing line. However, in the past five decades, cross-border cooperation has emerged as a viable option for redefining this relationship.

Initial familiarization is essential for effective cross-border cooperation and this can be achieved through establishing networks, forums or other mechanism for information exchange. As the relationship develops, there is a greater need for joint working groups or parallel bodies for implementing projects such as commissions or councils and secretariats. When these bodies are permanent, it can lead to a more stable process capable of achieving long terms goals. More advanced transborder regions will deal with a broader range of issues including program development, cross-border

initiatives or joint management. This form of cross-border cooperation would benefit transborder regions by conferring some form of financing or decision-making capacity.

The first contact made across international borders is often information exchange. In order to move towards effective cross-border cooperation, the border regions will need to share information and knowledge of the differing political, economic, cultural or social systems. With better knowledge and information of these areas, the actors will better be able to appreciate what needs to be done and how to achieve it. It also provides the foundation for a real cooperative relationship.

Consultation also plays a role in achieving the next level of cooperation. It is argued that local policy development and delivery cannot be effective until real cooperation is established. The experience of border regions highlights that joint solutions may be the only effective response to common problems in transnational regions (Ricq, 1995). At this level then, the cross-border region is functioning as an interregional organization with the purpose of achieving cooperation.

Harmonization and integration of policies were identified as the highest level of cooperation though this has not yet been achieved in most cases. The major barrier to this level of cooperation is the different legal systems in place.

2.10. Cross-Border Cooperation and Networks

One of the effects of cross-border cooperation is the creation of spatially-defined inter-regional coalitions or networks (Perkmann, 1999). Local networks have a role in delivering the EU programs. The EU favours the devolution of projects to the local and regional level and this can be due to the organizational and legal limitations to

supranational policy implementation. Generally, cross-border networks are responsible for policy delivery, but it is the member states that implement the project.

Consideration should be given to the impact that cross-border cooperation can have on political space. Cross-border cooperation can be viewed not only as local and regional institutionalisation but also as a process of integration. National authorities are still the main actors in terms of international relations. However, with the development policies and strategies of the EU, globalisation of economies, and increased decision-making power at the local level, local and regional authorities are enabled to play a large role in the evolution of cross-border cooperation (Church and Reid, 1999, 1995).

Cross-border cooperation has been viewed by some as a movement towards a networked society (Church and Reid, 1999, Perkmann, 1999, Scott, 1999). Because there is no decision-making authority across borders, traditional lines of public administration are not effective. As a result, it is likely that some form of network will emerge.

Networks are defined as inter-organizational relationships (Perkmann, 1999). These networks are spatially defined and they work within the cross-border region. These relationships enable actors in the cross-border region to engage in cross-border cooperation. Both vertical and horizontal networks are created. These networks evolve to influence interactions and can provide a linkage between the newly defined political space and the traditional institutional structure. Because there are a variety of actors, there may not be one single vision of what the nature of the cross-border relationship should be. In this sense, cross-border cooperation can be viewed as a network where local actors are working towards cross-border cooperation and face opportunities and constraints that are not within their control.

Opportunities and constraints will influence the networks and institutions and these networks will change, creating context-specific cross-border cooperation. While institutions or networks are established, they will need to be flexible and evolve with the changes in the organization. The circular relationship of the actor and institution could result in the co-emergence of cross-border actors and cross-border institutions or governance structures (Perkmann, 1999).

Thus, when considering cross-border cooperation, there is a need to focus on the cooperative process, the power relations involved in the process, the stakeholders involved, and the emergence of new political space and institutions in relation to the existing institutions (Church and Reid, 1999).

2.11. Cross-Border Cooperation and the European Union

The role of cross-border cooperation in the EU is significant. EU regional policies focus on creating greater cohesion within member states. Essentially, this has three meanings – convergence of macroeconomic indicators, equalizing regional disparities, and the emergence of an integration – and interdependence – of production systems.

The EU is the most advanced region in the world in terms of cross-border cooperation. Cross-border cooperation in the EU was established post World War II to minimize the possibility of a recurrence of national conflict and was a movement towards rebuilding ties between nations. However, cross-border cooperation has recently emerged as a means to achieve global economic competitiveness (Anderson, 2002). In these cross-border regions, local governmental and non-governmental actors are promoting cross-border cooperation and, as such, the border regions are being redefined.

Currently, issues facing cross-border regions are not based on interests defined in terms of national boundaries. Instead, cross-border regions are now defining their interests across borders and are favouring policies that benefit the cross-border region. The regions are developed because of the border that divides them and there is a focus on addressing common issues in the cross-border context. The main factor in these cross-border regions is the cross-border institutional links. These links have some of the characteristics of networks, including no clearly defined borders, and their meaning is usually defined by their function (O'Dowd, 2002).

2.12 Collaborative Planning, Partnerships and Cross-Border Cooperation

Theories of collaborative planning, partnerships, and cross-border cooperation share some common themes, many of which are requirements for creating an inclusive collaborative process, effective partnership or high quality cross-border cooperation. Collaborative planning, partnerships and cross-border cooperation, if inclusive and involve a diverse range of stakeholders, are recognised as being effective means for addressing social or political fragmentation. Effective collaborative planning, partnerships, and cross-border cooperation require that the stakeholders identify beyond themselves as individuals and establish a common focus and work collectively towards that goal. The interdependence of stakeholders in partnerships, cross-border cooperative processes and collaborative planning is recognised. Through involvement in collaborative planning, partnerships or cross-border cooperation, stakeholders can build institutional capacity.

In an effective process, stakeholders are involved not only because of goodwill, there is also recognition that they can contribute to the process and will benefit from

involvement. If these processes are effective, stakeholders are able to develop high quality relationships with other stakeholders. These high quality relationships are based on trust and the recognition of interdependence – each stakeholder is focused on a common vision, dedicated to the process and has an understanding of the benefits, and risks, of being involved. The stakeholders are able to engage in information sharing and learning. Finally, in collaborative planning, partnership and cross-border cooperation, the stakeholders are able to build networks to mobilize and advocate for change.

Summary:

The District Partnerships established through the Peace I Program focus on collaboration, partnerships and cross-border cooperation. In order to be able to analyse the development of the District Partnerships, the framework must take into consideration collaborative planning, cross-border cooperation, and the development of partnerships. The District Partnerships may be interpreted as a form of collaborative planning – they are inclusive place-based organizations in which stakeholders work collectively to mediate conflict. The process is inclusive of a variety of ways of knowing and each stakeholder has their own way of understanding the situation. Despite this, stakeholders work collaboratively to build capacity to develop their own forms of knowing and reasoning.

The framework for analysis will be developed in three stages: i) the development, ii) implementation, and iii) the outcome, of the Peace I Program and District Partnerships. The conditions within which the partnerships developed need to be taken into consideration. The context conditions and stakeholder/organizational conditions will be identified. The implementation stage will take into consideration the criteria for the

emergence of network power – diverse stakeholders, recognized interdependence, and development of mutual trust. Factors to be considered include the role and motivation of stakeholders, the inclusive or participatory nature of the partnership, the recognition of interdependence and the development of mutual trust, and consensus-based decision-making. The outcomes of the District Partnerships will address the tangible and intangible outcomes, the development of institutional capacity, and the lessons learned in the process.

Chapter Three: The Irish-Northern Irish Context

3.1 Introduction

The border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland represents not only a physical but also a psychological divide between the two communities. This has resulted in political turmoil, ethnic unrest and violence - the "Troubles". The border is a visual reminder of the conflict – based on political, cultural and social factors (European Commission, 1998).

The movement towards a network approach to addressing the conflict in the Irish border region has been encouraged at both the supra-national and intergovernmental levels. The EU funded Peace I Program highlights how networks of diverse stakeholders were developed to support the movement toward lasting peace and reconciliation. In order to be able to effectively address the inter-community conflict, the violence would need to stop and inter-community dialogue needed to begin. Fundamental to the success of the Peace I Program was the ability to rebuild linkages across communities and include the marginalized communities in the decision-making process.

3.2. Background

The Irish border region was typified by economic and social disadvantage (McCall and Williamson, 2000). In addition, this region was peripheral, had inadequate infrastructure, difficulty accessing markets, poor land and small uneconomic farms, and there was no centre for socio-economic development. There was a lack of social capital in the region. The economic disadvantage was reinforced by negative social factors. The negative social factors included the concentration of violent conflict within the region. The relative disadvantage and marginalisation contributed to the continued struggle.

There is a clear link between the socio-economic discrimination and deprivation and inter-community tension. The inter-community conflict and mistrust has resulted in a limited cooperation across communities and across the border. The border became a clear barrier between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The two main communities involved in the conflict are the Protestant/Unionists and the Catholic/Nationalists. The Unionist regime, from 1920 – 1972, engaged in economically discriminatory policies (Byrne and Irvin, 2002; Tannam, 1999). These discriminatory policies led to significant economic inequity. Economic disadvantage, social exclusion, distrust and sectarianism characterize the experience of a large section of the population in Northern Ireland (European Commission, 1998). In developing the Northern Irish state, Unionists sought to establish a Protestant state and began discriminating against the Catholic community, including restrictions on voting rights, housing, and employment. The conflict has resulted in division not only in terms of religion; it has also resulted in divisions between economic participation and the distribution of wealth.

The outbreak of violence in the 1960s reinforced the belief that, while the border has been long established, it was not viewed as legitimate. The border was viewed as undemocratic, illegitimate, and as a form of British imperialism that favours Unionists over Nationalists (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999b).

The role of the border in the Irish context is significant, yet until recently there has been very little research conducted on the meaning, development, and significance of the Irish border (Anderson et al., 2001). The partition of Ireland and the establishment of the border created an erratic dividing line that cut across agricultural land, roads, villages,

and in some cases, even houses (Anderson et al., 1995; Tannam, 1999). Communities and ethno-national groups were divided. Communities within the border area share many of the same characteristics and concerns: geographical and socio-economic disadvantage, the border as a barrier to trade, and the feeling amongst the minority ethno-national groups of marginalisation from their community on the other side of the border.

Nationalists viewed the border as the basis for the conflict and a division of the Irish population. The basis of the conflict in Northern Ireland is a result of the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty (Anderson, 1996a). The nationalists believed their right to self-determination was undermined by British claims to Northern Ireland in the Government of Ireland Act and the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Thus, for the nationalists, the basis of the conflict was British claims to Northern Ireland. The Unionists argued that Ireland should be included in the British Isles. Thus, the Unionists identified the Republic's desire to abolish the border and establish an Irish Catholic state as the basis for the conflict.

The Republic of Ireland was declared in 1949 and while some links between the two states were maintained, the constitutional links between the Irish and British government were ended. In 1969, the British army was called to Northern Ireland to help contain civil disobedience. In a reaction to this, the IRA began a terrorist campaign. The ethnic violence, which has characterized the Irish border region, has made engaging in cross-border cooperation more difficult.

3.3. Historical Development of Cross-Border Cooperation

Generally, cross-border cooperation occurs between two states; however, Northern Ireland is not a state. Northern Ireland is a region, with specific devolved

powers within the UK. The Republic of Ireland is a state with autonomous decision-making powers. This legislative difference is not problematic in terms of EU funding; both the UK and the Republic of Ireland are member states and are consequently affected by the same common community policies and represented in the European Parliament. As such, cross-border cooperation effectively occurs between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom

The lack of communication between the Stormont and Dublin administrations from 1920 to 1972 acted as a barrier to the emergence of cross-border cooperation (Anderson et al, 2001; Tannam, 1999). However, since the 1970s, initiatives of the British and Irish governments, as well as international governments and organizations, to support cross-border cooperation have occurred. Cross-border cooperation has often been characterized by information exchange and cooperation amongst voluntary and community organizations.

There are common characteristics within the region that act as the basis for cross-border cooperation - both face economic and political marginalisation in addition to other common problems (O'Dowd et al., 1995; Tannam, 1999). They were both identified as disadvantaged regions within the EU, had low economic growth and high unemployment, and are separated from continental Europe by sea, therefore increasing transportation costs. Both areas received Objective I status indicating that the EU views the region as sharing common problems, including the potential negative impact of the Single European Market (SEM). The SEM served not only to increase the trade between Ireland and Northern Ireland; it also established common interests that would facilitate economic cooperation. There has been increased cross-border cooperation in discrete

areas and de-politicised sectors, such as tourism and infrastructure. These initiatives were designed to identify and enhance common regional interests.

Barriers to cross-border cooperation in the Irish border region include funding, political structures and ethno-national conflict (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999b; O'Dowd et al., 1995). Complexities within the actions of both the nationalist parties and unionist parties exist. Barriers to this development include initiatives being mostly based on EU or other forms of intergovernmental funding as well as barriers in terms of political and administrative systems. Limited local government authority and the reliance on central government also prove to be barriers to transborder initiatives. In addition, failure to coordinate actions of the government can be problematic. While some departments support cross-border cooperation, others departments take measures which prevent it. This is also true of the nationalist and unionist political parties.

There are two main arguments about the factors that influence the cross-border relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Tannam, 1999). The European Union influenced and provided a framework for cooperation through the common Community policies, including economic interdependence. Thus, the cross-border cooperative relationships could develop based on an economic rationale and the desire to cooperate to address common problems and shared interests.

On the other hand, it is argued that the increased economic interdependence and the role of the EU is not significant and it is only through the political will of the British and Irish governments, and improved Anglo-Irish relations, that the relationship will be changed and cross-border cooperation become a viable option. This view is based on the history of ethnic conflict and related issues of sovereignty and national identity.

The cross-border relationship within the Irish border region is, in fact, influenced by both Anglo-Irish policies and European Union policies. Specific Anglo – Irish policies include the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985), the Joint Framework Document (1995) and the Good Friday Agreement (1998). The Anglo – Irish approach has been characterized by the belief that both sides should express national aspirations and self-determination, the enforcement of non-discrimination, the validity of the Irish dimension and power sharing as a means of governing Northern Ireland, and cooperation (Anderson, 1996a). While intergovernmentalism did not have a history of consistent support for cross-border cooperation, it did provide a framework for addressing the role of the border and supported negotiated settlements (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999b). Addressing the conflict in Northern Ireland strictly through internal power sharing processes is problematic. It is potentially contradictory, as it can reproduce the British status quo (Anderson and Hamilton, 2002).

International support for cross-border cooperation in the Irish border region tends to focus on economic development and establishing economic cooperation to support the movement towards peace and reconciliation. The regional policy reform and development of the Single European Market (SEM) have influenced the development of the cross-border cooperation. The EU recognized both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as priority regions for cross-border cooperation and as such, they benefited from regional aid. EU programs, specifically the Peace I and II programs and INTERREG, support the development of cross-border links.

Both the International Fund for Ireland, an outcome of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the EU have supported the development of major infrastructure and

industrial development, economic and small business development, tourism, transportation, and cross-border cooperation. The funding has resulted in the development of local cross-community initiatives, some cross-border, involving multiple levels of governance. The EU members felt that efforts towards peace and reconciliation in the region required community support. The Peace I Program was promoted as a community initiative. While violence and ethnic conflict does represent a barrier to cross-border cooperation, the EU-sponsored Peace I Program was recognized as a politically neutral push to achieve a lasting peace and was broadly supported by community members.

3.3.1. Anglo-Irish Initiatives

The historic development of Anglo-Irish initiatives leading up to the development of the PEACE I Program can be viewed in three stages: 1921-1959, 1959-1968, and 1972-1995 (Tannam, 1999). Each phase is characterized by different relationships between the British and Irish government, as well as attempts at improving the cross-border relationship.

1921-1959: Protectionism, Apathy and Non-Cooperation

During this period, the cooperative relationships were characterized by distrust, state-building and territorial claims. A cross-border political meeting took place in 1925, the last cross-border meeting for 40 years. The Unionists viewed cross-border cooperation as a process of Irish unity and the Nationalists viewed the cooperation as an ineffective means to achieve national unity. While cross-border cooperation had occurred on a voluntary basis before this, political will was lacking. The relationship can

thus be characterized by protectionism, lack of political will, and non-cooperation. The relationship between the two nations was strained.

The border was also a source of conflict. The Unionists viewed the border as a means of protecting Protestant identity. The border was viewed as a weak barrier and the Unionists felt the need to strengthen their stance against Irish expansionist policies.

Nationalists viewed the border not in terms of inter-state cooperation but in terms of disunity given their sense of the state's regions. The political parties in Ireland lacked the will to cooperate with those who did not support Irish unity and there was a lack of perceived benefits of engaging in cross-border cooperation. Essentially, the Republic of Ireland was focused on surviving as a separate state, though it did claim that Northern Ireland and Ireland should be part of the unified island of Ireland.

1959-1968: Fledgling Economic Cooperation

The protectionist economic policies of both governments were changing in the 1950s due to evolving economic circumstances and, despite a lack of political will for cross-border cooperation, there was the realization that the island as a whole had to modernize (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999b; Tannam, 1999). The Republic of Ireland was applying to become a member of the European Economic Community (EEC) and as such had to move away from economic protectionism. Northern Ireland also faced economic decline in its traditional industries and began to see the benefits of engaging in economic cooperation with Ireland. Recognition that both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland could no longer maintain their economic protectionist policies, plus a mutual desire for modernization, led to increased interest in cross-border cooperation. Cross-border cooperation then became politically feasible, as it could improve the economic

situation. This provided the background, and established a framework, for discussions on cross-border cooperation.

In early 1965, the Irish and Northern Irish Prime Ministers met secretly. The meetings were of great symbolic importance, highlighting the possibility of establishing cross-border cooperation. The talks focused solely on issues of economic cooperation and did not deal with the political issues of cooperation. Because of the focus on economic issues, it was viewed as a pragmatic and common sense approach to economic development. However, the Irish Prime Minister viewed cross-border cooperation as ultimately political in that it could evolve from economic to political unity (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999b; Tannam, 1999).

Suggested areas of cooperation included economics, transportation, environmental issues, and local development and planning. Despite the economic focus, there was evidence of conflict emerging in the cooperative process, including transportation and trade. This serves to highlight that, while there might have been a strong economic rationale for cooperation, this did not prove to be a sound enough rationale for overcoming existing political barriers.

The initial response to the meetings was positive. These talks created the possibility of economic cooperation, and potential future political cooperation. The business sector responded positively to the possible emergence of cross-border cooperation; however, individuals within the public sector as well as community groups questioned the process. Cross-border cooperation did not increase significantly and there was conflict in terms of certain economic interests.

While there was movement towards cooperation in the 1960s and 1970s, ethno-national violence emerged. The Northern Irish Prime Minister resigned in 1969 and the British army was sent in to deal with the increasing civil unrest. Over thirty years of civil unrest ensued. While the EU was moving towards de-territorialization, the Irish border region was re-territorializing, strengthened by a further geographical divide

1972-1995: Intergovernmentalism

Direct rule from Westminster was imposed in 1972. Direct rule was established as an interim measure in the movement towards devolution and this acted as the basis for cross-border cooperation in the 1980s and 1990s (Tannam, 1999). Cross-border cooperation would not be established between Ireland and Northern Ireland, but instead between Irish and British governments.

Anglo-Irish intergovernmentalism was established to address common issues of preventing cross-border terrorism and economic issues, including membership in the EEC. The British government was responsible for Northern Ireland; however, the nationalists in Ireland felt they had a role in protecting the rights of the nationalist minority in the area. It was believed that issues within the Catholic and Protestant communities could be addressed through an intergovernmental approach. The unionists were not supportive of the intergovernmental approach, arguing that it was a step towards Irish unity. Despite their disagreement, intergovernmentalism became the dominant policy approach of the British government. Thus, cross-border cooperation would be necessary because of the Irish dimension in British policy (Tannam, 1999). Economic cooperation was viewed as the first step in resolving the conflict by improving cross-community relations. This could then lead to a wider acceptance of political cooperation.

In 1973, the Sunningdale Agreement sought to establish a form of devolved power sharing in Northern Ireland, with the statement that the people of Northern Ireland had the right to self-determination. This was agreed by the British and Irish governments, as well as by the major political parties in Northern Ireland and Ireland. Political upheaval in Northern Ireland called into question the potential for cross-border cooperation, and eventually contributed to the abandonment of the Agreement. The Agreement eventually failed and the envisioned Council of Ireland was never established.

After the failure of the Agreement, British policy changed. It shifted away from intergovernmentalism and towards focusing on the population in Northern Ireland to find a solution to the conflict. The British government attempted to treat Northern Ireland like its other regions within the UK, through a focus on addressing the internal conditions within Northern Ireland, specifically discriminatory policies. However, these policies of the British government were highly criticized both nationally and internationally for failing to effectively address the situation. Again the British government sought intergovernmentalism, incorporating the Irish dimension, and therefore establishing the potential for future cross-border cooperation.

The governments agreed to work towards cross-border cooperation in the early 1980s and commissioned joint reports, including ways to enhance mutual understanding. This highlighted the possibility of engaging in further cross-border cooperation. The process failed due to other intergovernmental issues external to the Irish-Northern Irish conflict. In response to the failure of the process, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland introduced a process of devolving power, known as the Prior Initiative. There was no explicit Irish dimension but it did include power sharing with minority representation.

It would re-establish the Northern Ireland Assembly, with a few powers, until full devolution took place. Because of the failure to incorporate the Irish dimension, the nationalist assembly members refused to be part of the Assembly. The Unionists dominated the Assembly.

Through the establishment of the New Ireland Forum, the Irish dimension was once again introduced into the process. The New Ireland Forum was established with representatives of constitutionalist nationalist parties. Unionists were not involved nor were other nationalist parties and, as such, the Forum was neither intergovernmental nor cooperative. The Forum proposed three alternatives for governance structures including joint authority, a federation or confederation, or unity. While the Forum preferred the latter, the British government began to consider the notion of joint authority, once again increasing the possibility of cross-border cooperation.

In 1985, intergovernmentalism increased through the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was designed to: address the inequity between the communities in terms of employment; support economic cooperation; and promote cross-community communication. It sought a devolved governance structure with representation of national minorities. This was designed to deepen the intergovernmental approach, create the potential for effective cross-border cooperation, and address perceived injustices with Northern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Agreement recognized that the desire of the majority of the population was to maintain the current constitutional status of Northern Ireland and any changes to that status must be based on the consent of the majority of the population. It secured the right to establish a united Ireland through ensuring both parliaments would support this decision. Only through mutual agreement

could the Agreement be ended. This was entrenched as an international treaty through ratification at the United Nations.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement enabled cross-border economic cooperation and a secretariat was established, representing political cooperation between the British and Irish governments and civil services. The Anglo-Irish Agreement specifically addresses issues of cross-border cooperation in terms of security, economic, social and cultural matters. The Agreement supported social and economic development, targeted regions that suffered, and sought to secure international support. In 1993, it was agreed that cross-border cooperation would occur in the fields of trade, tourism and business. Cross-border cooperation in these fields was believed to encourage economic gains and community benefits for both the north and the south, and not represent a marked departure from the form of cross-border cooperation promoted in earlier cross-border meetings. This decision was also influenced by involvement in the EU and the possibility of securing EU funding for cross-border cooperation (Tannam, 1999).

The Anglo-Irish Agreement did increase cross-border cooperation; however, it can be argued that the Agreement did nothing to achieve real and meaningful political cooperation. While the Anglo-Irish Agreement did not bring about political cooperation, it was believed that, over time, the extremist elements within the political parties would be required to make compromises or face marginalisation (Tannam, 1999). It has been argued that the 1994 ceasefires are an example of the influence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (Tannam, 1999).

In 1991, there was another attempt to address the Northern Irish issue. The Strand Talks focused on dividing the negotiations into three processes. During the first phase,

talks with each party and the Secretary for Northern Ireland were held separately. In the second phase, the nationalists and unionists engaged in discussion and, finally, in the third phase, all party talks with unionists and Irish politicians were held, indicating possible cross-border political cooperation. In addition to these talks, the Irish and British Prime Ministers corresponded regularly.

In 1994, a combined Loyalist and paramilitary ceasefire was established. The ceasefire was supported by the Downing Street Declaration negotiated between the British and Irish governments in May 1994. A Joint Declaration was negotiated between the two governments and in conjunction with the Social Democratic Loyalist Party and Sinn Fein. In this Declaration, the British government indicated that they had no selfish or strategic interest in Northern Ireland and that the people of Northern Ireland would have the ability to engage in a process of self-determination.

With the announcement of the ceasefire and the Downing Street Declaration, the potential for meaningful cross-border cooperation increased. The 1995 Anglo-Irish Joint Framework Document, based on supporting the ceasefire, emphasized the establishment of a joint authority with executive powers to govern Northern Ireland and the need to engage in cross-border economic cooperation. In order to achieve local accountability, a Northern Irish institution would be established based on proportional representation and cross-border institutions.

The cross-border institution established between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland was designed to promote cooperation in specific agreed-upon areas and to promote agreement between the communities. In order to determine in what fields there would be cross-border cooperation, the objectives included areas of common

interest, mutual advantage or benefit, or the establishment of economies of scale to avoid duplication. Recommended areas of harmonization included industrial development, economic and social policy, agriculture and fisheries, trade, and transportation.

The early stages of the cross-border relationship were characterized by distrust and little political will to cooperate. Despite this, the economic rationale for cross-border cooperation was strong and political support increased. Since then, significant steps have been taken towards establishing cross-border cooperation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The intergovernmental initiatives provided a basis for the development of supra-national cross-border initiatives.

3.3.2. Supranational Initiatives

From the emergence of ethnic conflict in the 1960s, it became apparent that the 'Troubles' were not solely intergovernmental issues. Though there were already movements towards transboundary planning initiatives, the EU had a significant role in advancing cross-border planning in the Irish border region. The EU has a direct role in influencing the cross-border relationship between Ireland and Northern Ireland as EU common policies increase cooperation. The development of the SEM, regional policy reform and financial support for cross-border initiatives supports transboundary cooperation. The Special Support Program for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland (Peace I Program) also provided financial support for cross-border cooperation.

The EU acts as a neutral forum for decision-making and is removed from the central governments, allowing regional identity to be expressed and economic issues to be addressed. The European Union itself is based on trust, cooperation and partnership

and can provide an example of how relationships can be forged between former enemies. The EU acts as an example of how it is possible to bridge the divide and is an effective framework for delivering the program (Tannam, 1999; McCall and Williamson, 2000).

The 1987 Single European Act, and the movement towards the SEM, had implications on the Irish-Northern Irish cross-border relationship. The overall effect of the SEM was not only to increase trade, it also moved towards abolishing economic barriers as well as developing a degree of policy harmonization, thus improving the possibility for cross-border cooperation. The EU perceived both Ireland and Northern Ireland to be economically disadvantaged regions, including high unemployment and slow economic growth. Without a fixed link to the rest of the EU, the transportation costs were higher. As such, the regions were perceived to be likely amongst those hardest hit by the emergence of the SEM, and thus required additional attention.

The 1988 reform of EU regional policy also influenced cross-border cooperation. With the implementation of the SEM, it was likely that the wealthier regions would benefit while economically disadvantaged regions would suffer and would not be able to access the benefits of the SEM. Based on this, the EU recognized the need to support the economically disadvantaged regions and compensate them for their losses. As a result, the regional policy was reformed.

Funding was concentrated in the weaker regions through a variety of funding mechanisms. The poorest regions were recognized as Objective One regions. Projects within these regions could receive up to 75 percent of the funding from the EU and further incentives were provided if the member states cooperated with Commission officials. The reforms enabled the Commission to have greater control over how funding

was allocated and the EU required that central governments consult with sub-national actors. The programs supported subsidiarity and the establishment of partnerships.

With the abolition of internal borders, the EU recognized the need to address the border regions. INTERREG, an EU funded Community Initiative, supports cross-border development in border regions within the EU. In order to be granted funding, the governments worked together to establish the Irish-Northern Irish INTERREG program. Included in the aims of the program was the desire to engage in cross-border cooperation through establishing networks across the borders. The types of initiatives supported included developing tourism infrastructure, transportation, and rural development.

These programs were complementary to the Joint Framework Document and provided a framework within which a variety of local actors could become involved to ensure the projects would be sensitive to local needs and provide areas of cooperation. The focus on local issues helps diffuse the contentious issues of political cooperation (Tannam, 1999).

3.4. The Peace I Program

After the establishment of the Joint Declaration for Peace, the ceasefire in Northern Ireland and the Framework proposals, the EU proposed the establishment of a Commission Task Force to study practical ways in which the EU could offer support to the ceasefire. The Task Force concluded that the EU does have a role and should continue to be involved in promoting and supporting continued peace in the area. The Task Force recognized that this not only would benefit the Irish border region directly, but there would also be benefits to the EU as a whole.

The governments of Ireland and the United Kingdom were part of the preparation of the Peace I Program. Members of the European Parliament from Northern Ireland were actively involved in the process from the beginning. The program focused on practical economic assistance to the region. The multi-annual program (1995-1999) was developed to support and reinforce the ceasefire evolving in Northern Ireland at that time. It was implemented as a Community Initiative under the Structural Funds. Community Initiatives are programs proposed by the EU to member countries to help support the resolution of problems that impact both at the national and European level. Community Initiatives are different from Structural Funds; they are a bottom up approach to funding that support cross-border cooperation or inter-regional cooperation; they are localized and have visible programs. This highlighted the desire of the EU to build institutional capacity at the local level.

The Peace I Program has made an important contribution to reinforcing peace, stability, and reconciliation in the Irish border region. Through an innovative decentralized approach to program implementation and delivery, the Peace I Program allowed the EU to work in conjunction with other bodies in order to target funding to areas and groups that need it most. The program was designed to reinforce peace and reconciliation by promoting cross-border cooperation, social inclusion and encouraging economic development in the areas that were hardest hit by the ethnic conflict.

The program required a decentralized administrative structure to provide a neutral forum for policy development. It is inclusive, sought participation from local community groups, and sought to develop institutional capacity. In addition, significant levels of funding were directed to decentralized agencies and partnerships, reinforcing local

involvement. It highlighted the role for local autonomy, subsidiarity and the desire to move away from the politics of central government. Within this program, social exclusion was highlighted as a priority and funding was targeted to the communities, especially disadvantaged communities. This program was significant because it addressed ethnic conflict at the local level.

The program was designed to become a real partnership as it incorporated government ministries and agencies, voluntary bodies, County Council-led Task Forces in Ireland and the District Partnerships in Northern Ireland. The EU favours the partnership model as a means to bring various stakeholders together to achieve effective solutions to local problems (Birrell and Williamson, 2001).

The basis of the Peace I Program is the assumption that social and economic need can be best addressed through cross-sectoral, multi-level government involvement in social partnerships. The program has been described as unique and innovative:

It was designed for and by people with a profound knowledge of, and empathy with, the situation on the ground. As a result, the program was acutely sensitive to specific and local needs whilst strongly reflecting broadly based consensus across the political spectrum and amongst the private, public, voluntary and community sectors (European Commission, 1998b, 9-10).

The Peace I Program is recognized as an innovative and unique program in the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as in the EU as a whole. This is based partly on the inclusive nature of the program as well as the diverse nature of implementation. However, the factors that made the program unique and innovative have also been identified as drawbacks of the program.

3.4.1. Origin of the Program

The mandate of the program was to reinforce peace and promote reconciliation through social inclusion, cross-border cooperation, economic development and employment. The goals were to focus on social inclusion, particularly of those marginalized by the conflict, and to capitalize on the ceasefire through economic development and social regeneration.

The program was designed to provide up to 75 percent of the total project cost (European Commission, 1998b). The remaining funding was provided by a variety of sources including central government, local authorities, the private sector and community and voluntary organizations. The program was designed to have a specific focus on Northern Ireland as it was hardest hit by the "Troubles"|. Up to 80 percent of the funding was targeted to Northern Ireland with no less than 20 percent of the funding for the six border counties in Ireland (European Commission, 1998b). There is a strong focus on cross-border cooperation. A minimum of 15 percent of the funding is focused on cross-border cooperation (European Commission, 1998b).

In order to determine what form the program would take, a consultation occurred. The consultation, conducted by the European Commission, three members of the European Parliament from Northern Ireland, and the Irish and British governments, generated a great deal of interest in the process. The consultation included a broad range of people and groups including representatives from the "voluntary and community sectors, local government, employers' and employees' associations, women's groups, educational, agricultural and fishing organizations, public sector bodies and other interests" (European Commission, 1998b, 9).

The consultation has been described as the key element of the process and highlighted the belief that lasting peace can only be achieved in an open and inclusive society. The consultation process supported the idea that the program should have an immediate and visible impact. Other key priorities of the program include economic growth and employment, cross-border development and advancing economic and social development. It was decided that priority should be given to local initiatives supporting social inclusion.

In the spring of 1995, three conferences were held to consult individuals involved in promoting peace in the area. The outcome of the consultation was the desire for the program to include grass-root involvement and to focus the funding and programs in those areas most adversely affected by the ethnic conflict and violence.

The consultation that occurred at the beginning of the program continued while the program was established. A Consultative Forum was established with a broad range of stakeholders in order to exchange information. The consultation resulted in the recognition that the EU should play a role in reinforcing peace and reconciliation. It highlighted the need to promote social inclusion and foster economic growth through advancing social and economic regeneration. The focus is on those areas and groups in society that are most directly affected by the ethnic conflict and strife. Because of the strong focus on grass-roots participation and social inclusion, it became apparent that new mechanisms needed to be developed in order to deliver and implement the program. With the strong focus on grass-roots participation, there was a need for organizations familiar with the local communities to be involved in the program.

Grass-root participation was highlighted as a means to encourage local involvement, to build capacity within the community, to build upon local knowledge, and to capitalize on the opportunities present through peace. However, this also meant that some risk needed to be taken in working with stakeholders who are not normally part of EU programming.

3.4.2 Implementation

Two departments took the lead in the program – the Department of Finance and Personnel in Belfast and the Department of Finance in Dublin. Other government departments and agencies were involved in instances where there was overlap between the program priorities, goals and operation, and those of the department. The European Commission provided Technical Assistance to the organizations, especially those without previous experience in administering EU funding programs.

The program was designed to be decentralized, focusing on grassroots empowerment and participation, and formalized consultation. The decentralized nature of the program is evident in the involvement of roughly 45 organizations independent from either the British or the Irish government. The organizations include Intermediary Funding Bodies, Sectoral Partners, District Partnerships and County Council-led Task Forces. These were tasked with administering over half of the total program funding.

Decentralization is important as it allows for decision-making and implementation to involve those with intimate knowledge of the specific communities. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) became involved in the program and worked with specific governmental departments. The skills and expertise of the NGOs assisted in the development and implementation of the program. The voluntary and community sector

stakeholders were important players in the process. These organizations were already aware of the unique local context and could identify needs within the community. They were also viewed as credible, legitimate organizations that were representative of the local population. To highlight the decentralized nature of the program, 60 percent of funding was managed by NGOs.

Intermediary funding bodies (IFBs) include trusts and cooperatives, and focused on working with the identified groups. These were independent organizations working with the specific community groups. There were five IFBs operating in Northern Ireland and two IFBs in the border counties of Ireland. One IFB worked across the border. Collectively, they administered about 30 percent of the Program funds (European Commission, 1998b, 11). Their role was to select and administer funds to projects. The specific details of their goals and objectives were outlined in the contracts with EU departments. The key strengths of the intermediary funding bodies are their autonomy and independence from government and their ability to deal with local context-specific needs and communities.

The sectoral partners are similar to the intermediary funding bodies but function only in Northern Ireland. Five sectoral partners were identified based on their special expertise. These groups work more closely with the government departments and agencies.

3.4.3. Objectives and Priorities

Seven sub-programs were developed to achieve the goals: (1) support for employment, (2) rural and urban regeneration, (3) cross-border cooperation, (4) social inclusion, (5) industrial development and productive investment, (6) creation of local

partnerships, and (7) technical assistance. The allocation of the funding to the sub-program was designed to reflect the objectives of the program and focuses largely on social exclusion.

3.4.4. District Partnerships

The Northern Ireland Partnership Board was established with twenty-two members, and membership was balanced in terms of religious and political affiliation and gender. They are representatives from political parties, trade unions, business and the rural community, and voluntary sector organizations. In addition to these members, observer status was created for representatives from Government Departments, and the European Commission, as well as the Society for Local Authority Chief Executives. The Department of the Environment staff provided administrative support. The Northern Ireland Partnership Board was responsible for overseeing the District Partnerships and approving the strategies and action plans.

The 26 District Partnerships and 6 County Council-led Task Forces are area-based organizations. The County Council-led Task Forces were established in Ireland. One District Partnership is established in each district council area in Northern Ireland. The partnerships' aim was to build networks across the sectarian divide to support the peace process. The partnerships sought to empower the local population and ensure the local projects met the needs of the community. The partnerships were tasked with identifying and addressing the needs of a range of stakeholders, support the development of a peace building vision, and act as a model for cross-community relations.

In order to effectively deal with decentralization, new management and administrative approaches were established. The District Partnerships are required to

have equal representation from local councillors, voluntary and community sector representatives, and business and trade unions. Each Partnership is required to develop a strategy and action plan, based on the objectives of the Peace I Program. These were approved by the Northern Irish Partnership Board. This requires that they establish a model for urban and rural regeneration that includes economic development, social inclusion, peace and reconciliation, and cross-community initiatives. Funding is allocated based on the population and a deprivation index to ensure that the hardest hit communities received adequate support.

The Northern Ireland Planning Service, a part of the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland), is responsible for planning. Planning has been typified by centralized regulation and policy supporting development controls (Crawford, 2003, 357). The 26 local authorities act in a consultative role. Because planning decisions are not made by these local government, there is the limited ability to encourage representation or public input. This “raises serious issues of transparency, accountability and fair representation” (Crawford, 2003, 361). It has been suggested that the development of a planning agenda is weakened by political instability that does not enable the development of institutional capacity building (Crawford, 2003, 357). The emergence of the District Partnerships acts as a means to engage the local community, encourage cooperation and the development of institutional capacity.

3.5 The Experience of the District Partnerships

3.5.1 Meeting the Objectives of the Peace I Program

The basis of the Peace I Program was to facilitate community capacity building, to enable socio-economic development, and to support peace and reconciliation. The

administering civil servants believe there has been an increase in cross-border cooperation as a result of the process (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 79). They also valued establishing a cooperative relationship with community members. They indicated that this enabled them to better serve the community. This cross-community contact facilitated communication and cooperation.

However, stakeholders expressed concern that the focus on cross-border and cross-community cooperation was limited. It was suggested that the actual development of this aspect of the program did not meet the initial expectations of central government. This is reinforced by the belief that many of the projects were “single identity” and failed to have a cross-community or cross-border aspect (Byrne and Irvin, 2001a, 75-76, 79).

Because of the focus on socio-economic development as the basis for achieving lasting peace, at times the focus on peace and reconciliation was overshadowed by socio-economic development projects. A weakness of the Peace I Program during the early phase was the small number of truly cross-community and cross-border initiatives (Williamson et al., 2000). This contributed to the difficulty in addressing the sectarian divide within the Irish border region as well as detracted from the need to build capacity within the organizations before effective cross-community and cross-border cooperation could occur. Respondent G indicated:

I think that the reconciliation was left out and I think that you could argue that bits are missing from the programs. And really the programs some would say is just another regional investment program without having any reconciliation imprint in every aspect of it's being and that's one of the things I am worried about ...The EU Peace and Reconciliation package is a very conservative program compared to other EU programs and as I say there isn't this explicit peace building thing built into it (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 64)

Greer Respondent - Unspecified alluded to the perceived lack of focus on peace and reconciliation and cross-community cooperation:

There was a willingness at the start to do a lot more peace and reconciliation work. Where projects were not coming forward that engendered peace and reconciliation principles some partnerships were even thinking about ways to organize festivals, sporting competitions and drama festivals themselves which were cross-community. With a deteriorating political environment, the huge volume of applications and limitations about how far peace and reconciliation could be pushed locally, the momentum was lost. (Greer, 2001a, 83).

Additionally, it can be argued that peace and reconciliation, and cooperation, were missing from the general day-to-day interactions of the partnerships and project development. A limited amount of funding was targeted to cross-border cooperation and cross-community reconciliation projects. The funding was targeted more towards individual projects designed for individual community development.

The inclusive program was designed to enable traditionally marginalized groups' access to the decision-making process and to ensure stakeholders were drawn from across the community. The grass-roots approach to program implementation allowed for participative democracy. The European Commission highlighted the "development of mutual respect between social partners, elected members, local authorities, the public and voluntary and community sectors," and "the dialogue generated and relationships forged have brought benefits which will last long after the funds have disappeared" (European Commission, 1998b, 11). This highlights not only inclusion but also the development of networks. Respondent E argued the Peace I Program has been successful in using community processes to meet the objectives of social inclusion:

the EU Peace and Reconciliation has been more successful at reaching the marginalized within the two communities in the North than it has

been in generating a great deal of new cross community contact. (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 63).

The inclusive nature of the program ensured that those groups traditionally excluded from EU funding were provided with the opportunity to become involved. The funding was encouraged to be targeted to the people "on the ground." This created a sense of ownership as many of the projects and actions were developed by the local community. This led to the community having a greater stake in maintaining peace. It was believed that having a common focus and an understanding of other communities would foster cooperation and strengthen the momentum for peace. The practical focus of the program highlighted areas where cooperation could occur and this would enable participants to focus on what they had in common, instead of their differences. Additionally, it was hoped that this process of communication, understanding and network building would encourage spill over of cooperation into other areas.

The political goodwill and willingness of the participants to engage in the process ensured that the program would be supported at the grassroots level. Respondent I argued that the program would only be successful if there is buy-in from the community.

I think we also have to be building from the bottom-up, so therefore I think we need to have an investment in capacity building of grassroots organizations ... the absolutely only way I can see you doing that is to have a structure that builds up the social and economic elements together (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 66).

Respondent F believed that, in order for the communities to effectively engage in cross-community cooperation, the communities would first need to be strengthened through community capacity building and economic development.

economic development is an essential ingredient of any peace and reconciliation process ... there is a massive economic reconstruction which has to take place, and that has to take place on a very targeted

basis. Areas that have been at the cold face of the conflict are invariably areas which exhibit the highest incidence of inequity, unemployment, poor health, and low education, such as this area. And in turn there must be a commensurate investment of resources in those societies (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 76).

Another respondent believed that the Peace program embraced grass-roots involvement and participatory democracy. The Partnership Boards were pointed to as examples of how cross-community cooperation could be established. Respondent G stated:

people can become part of a Partnership which is cross-sectional and representative ... they have to work together and that they are looking at issues. Whereas before they wouldn't have looked at cross community issues because they all came from 'single identity' backgrounds ... That money from Europe is coming with a message. It's coming with a process. (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 77).

However, there has also been concern that there was not enough local involvement in the funding process. Given the focus on grass-roots involvement and social inclusion, local representation was identified as a major focus of the district partnerships. There was concern that in some partnerships members representing the local and voluntary sector were not from the community. The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action selected members to be involved in local partnerships from regional organizations. As a result, some of the partnership members were not from the community. It was felt this might compromise the ability to build trust and develop relationships. It also would compromise the ability to develop a local network that might spill over into a longer-term approach to community development.

The partnerships were required to ensure that the program was accessible to the wider community. A diverse range of groups interacted with the partnerships including: elderly groups, youth groups, childcare groups, victims of violence groups, ex-prisoners groups, and special needs groups (Greer, 2001a, 103). For example, one of the

partnerships developed and implemented a consultation process. The consultation was designed to engage as many groups as possible, including businesses, church groups, trade unions, community and voluntary organizations, and local councillors. The partnership used media coverage, community meetings, surveys, and interviews to gain an understanding of how the community felt the funding should be allocated (Greer, 2001a, 103). By engaging the community in this way, the partnership was able to ensure that there was a grass-roots approach to funding allocation and economic development. This promoted the role of the partnership while engaging the local community. The partnership also established transparency and accountability in the decision-making process.

Achieving social inclusion objectives was problematic for some partnerships. While the program sought to include traditionally marginalized groups, some partnerships found it difficult to incorporate these groups. There was also concern that community capacity in certain areas, notably the border communities, was weak. The impact and the outcomes of the conflict, including poverty and high unemployment, acted as barriers to community empowerment (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 79). Other challenges include: funding not targeting or reaching the most marginalized, perception of inequity in terms of funding each community, time constraints, and lack of communication.

3.5.2 Challenges of Implementing the Peace I Objectives

There was concern in the initial phases that existing organizations were being funded and that the funding was not reaching the marginalized community groups. One respondent highlighted how the partnership was not always able to target funding to the most marginalized. Greer Respondent - Project Officer suggested that there were

marginalized groups with whom the partnerships did not engage and consequently they received limited or no funding and development:

There are groups that are not being assessed, for example, ex-prisoners. It may be the case that they don't want to be involved. There's only so much that can be done and we're always depending on the community groups' interest in accessing our funding (Greer, 2001a, 107).

In addition to concerns of not specifically targeting the most marginalized groups, barriers to applying were also identified as factors that might limit funding reaching the local community. The technical requirements of the application were criticized and it has been suggested that this acted as a barrier to the program. If communities did not have the capacity to pull together an application, they were unable to effectively lobby for funding. Respondent J articulated this:

What happens in a lot of communities I think – particularly in the Protestant communities more so – is that they are not well versed in the whole process of applying for money because they have certain barriers to get over (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 72).

It was further suggested that the Catholic community was better prepared to access funding, since they had already had experience in organizing to get resources from the government.

The perception of funding inequity could destabilize the momentum in favour of peace and reconciliation. Respondent H highlighted the perception that the Catholic community was funded to a greater extent than the Protestant community, noting the potential destabilizing effect this could have:

In fact, the distribution of the funds is likely perfectly just and reasonable. But, the perception on the Protestant side is that it is not just and reasonable and if all this money is going to help the long term peace process then everyone involved in these programs has got to make sure it gets to the pockets of deprivation in Protestant areas (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 77).

The interview responses from community leaders also highlight scepticism of the role of central government in enabling all of the funding to target the areas that are most in need. By contrast, the administering civil servants believe that the funding is bypassing the central government bureaucratic process and is being targeted towards needy communities.

Because of the push to get the money on the ground, the partnerships did not always ensure that the projects they were funding reflected the strategy they had established and community need. Some partnerships were forced to be reactive and not proactive in determining what needs existed. Because the partnerships were not able to seek out the marginalized communities, often larger, established groups knowledgeable in developing funding applications were able to develop applications quickly (Greer, 2001a, 107).

Consequently, in order to launch the program, some short cuts were taken to get the program underway in phase one and they were reviewed and reconsidered only after the applications came in and funding was approved. The impact of this remains unclear. Because there was such a rush in getting the program started, there were no uniform application process, selection criteria, deadlines and amount of funding available for the projects. For example, one partnership consulted with the government and other agencies to minimize duplication of projects and to capitalize fully on the funds (Greer, 2001a, 112).

Some partnerships had a difficult time determining which groups should be targeted. However, as the partnerships developed and gained capacity, they sought to distribute funding more equitably. In Phase II of the program, some partnerships

reviewed funding allocations in Phase I and attempted to fill in any gaps that were noticed. This highlights how the partnerships were able to learn in the process and build capacity. For example, one partnership limited the focus in Phase II to three areas: interfaces and contested spaces, social inclusion, and encouraging cross-community cooperation, social economy, and employment (Greer, 2001a, 108).

Another partnership focused the Phase II funding after it was decided that another general call for proposals would lead to applications for short term funding that did not really relate to the program strategy. The partnership therefore decided to establish working groups to consult with interest groups and experts. From that, the partnership established a strategy and selected delivery agencies to implement the majority of the programs. Funding was set aside for local initiatives that would not fit into the established program areas.

Other partnerships faced difficulty coordinating funding processes within their own organization. Miscommunication was an issue within the partnerships when sub-committees were established. These sub-committees were not reporting back to each other in an effective way and this resulted in overlap in funding. Greer Respondent - Unspecified explained: "Money was allocated in all the sub-committees which were unsure what the other was doing. As a result the District Partnership gave generously to some areas" (Greer, 2001a, 90).

3.5.3 External Relations

At the outset of the program, it was anticipated that there would be cooperation or information sharing between the District Partnerships and external relations developed with other organizations, such as the Northern Irish Partnership Board. At times, this

proved to be difficult. The tight time constraints and significant workload were identified as a barrier to developing collaborative relationships with other organizations. Greer

Respondent - Unspecified stated:

I am not aware of any discussion, co-ordination, collaboration between the Boards of any Partnerships in terms of joint training, away days etc. There have been virtually no projects developed between Partnership Boards by Partnership Board members. The secretariats have developed individual contacts – but this is the extent of collaboration. There is no forum for the Boards to share issues and ideas. This has not been encouraged actively and it hasn't happened. There is a need for a forum to speak to NIPB with one voice (Greer, 2001a, 113).

Time constraints were also identified as a barrier to facilitating collaboration and network building across partnerships. Greer Respondent - Project Officer explained:

I found government departments and agencies to be quite distant I suppose I would contact them if there were projects that I needed to clarify with them ... Other than that, that would be about it...yes, I should be finding out more about them, but I don't have the time at the moment to go to them fishing for information (Greer, 2001a, 112-113).

Central governments have been criticized for not having an understanding of the local community and this again proved to be a barrier to accessing funding. Respondent H argued central government failed to fully embrace the nature of the program; that governments did not have the political will to fully support the program; and that the role of central government was one of limiting local autonomy. Responded H stated:

It has certainly been noticed by us that the British government departments and the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) specifically have utterly failed to absorb the ethos of the Special Support program or to demonstrate any appreciation for building a peace process ... they were neither demonstrating political commitment to the actual Special Support program, the European money, and they were not bringing to bear the flexibility and communication and participation with this society to make sure that we are not left out to derive from the Special Support program. (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 65).

Some members of the partnerships felt the Northern Irish Department of Finance and Personnel had a conventional economic focus that did not necessarily mesh well with the objectives of local groups and community development. Respondent K stated: "When applications come in from these organizations, they don't understand them. So what they do is put up hurdles in their way, and it is very, very difficult ... it is extremely difficult to get money out of the system." (Byrne and Irvin, 2002, 74).

The role of the Northern Irish Partnership Board has been criticized. It was suggested that the NIPB was too prescriptive and its requirements of the District Partnerships were too great. It was suggested that those directly involved in the Partnership Board had an understanding of local socio-economic development but they were under pressure from civil servants and this created an overly bureaucratic process (Greer, 2001a). The partnerships felt this acted as a barrier to exercising their autonomy, and employing their own decision making process.

Lack of communication was also highlighted as a factor in the relationship between the Northern Irish Partnership Board and the District Partnerships. The lines of communication between the two were poor and this caused frustration. Greer Respondent - Unspecified explained:

Application forms were not cleared unless the NIPB received further information. Then the District Partnership passed the information on to the NIPB and the NIPB maintained that it was not enough. The NIPB gave no guidance to the District Partnerships as to what information was required (Greer, 2001a, 90).

However, not all partnerships experienced such open communication and in some partnerships there was no real venue for dealing with difficult issues, such as sectarianism.

3.5.4 *Challenges of Building Social Capital*

The collaborative process can be weakened if members do not feel they are involved or if they feel that they are being under-represented. Ensuring that all the participants were engaged in the process was challenging. In part, the large size of the partnership and the diversity of members required that a concerted effort be made to ensure members felt they were participating to their full potential, and that they were receiving the perceived benefits. Greer Respondent - Unspecified highlighted how their District Partnership sought to include all the members:

You could see the potential for conflict with twenty-one members representing such diverse backgrounds ... it was then decided that the only way the District Partnership could work was if all the members participated in the partnership. The District Partnership was structured into three committees to ensure representation within the partnership. It was important that all representatives were part of the decision making process (Greer, 2001a, 88).

Another partnership member reflected on the diversity of stakeholders and argued that tight time constraints actually were a key factor in ensuring that the District Partnerships were not stalled by conflict. Greer Respondent - Unspecified stated:

we had to establish a board of over twenty people, all from very diverse backgrounds, who were not used to working together to make decisions within a time-frame which was crazy. Ironically that probably turned out to be our salvation because people had to get on with it. The spirit of the partnership was not squandered through inter- or intra-sectoral personality clashes. It really did put people under pressure (Greer, 2001a, 87).

Equal representation not only enabled members to participate fully, it facilitated the development of intellectual capital. Working together allowed other members to gain an

understanding of the mechanisms the other sectors work within. Greer Respondent -

Unspecified summarized the learning process:

The voluntary sector is best characterized by the phrase 'give me.' 'Give me the hammer and the bucket and let me get on with the job.' They were not interested in the process and often regarded funding bodies with disdain and a hindrance to the real work which had to be done. But now the voluntary sector is part of the decision making process. They can ask questions like: 'is this the best hammer; is this the best wood to use; where is it going to be made; who is going to make it; can we design it ourselves' etc? It is the most exciting adult education process that has ever happened in the voluntary sector (Greer, 2001a, 89).

The practice of holding meetings in neutral venues facilitated the development of one partnership, though not all District Partnerships held meeting in neutral venues.

Some District Partnerships held their meetings in the Council Chambers. Members of the community and voluntary sector felt uncomfortable with this and felt the meetings were council-led, involved party politics, and put them in a position of relative disadvantage.

Greer Respondent - Unspecified explained:

The shift from the Council Chamber to a neutral venue has created neutral space and prevented councillors from attending to business during partnership meetings. At the neutral venue, a strong sense of people getting together has been created with the District Partnership members relating to one another as individuals, not as individuals within their own attached boxes (Greer, 2001a, 85-86)

Greer Respondent - Councillor also addressed this issue when stating that the real benefit of the program is that it:

forces people to work together on the board. Councillors leave their political baggage in the City Hall and deal with other political parties and community activists, who know the issues in a very focused way. The District Partnership is much less restrictive – these people make up the life of Belfast and I, therefore, have to have a bit more give and take. You are there as an equal partner; if you don't like it you can leave, then your own community is disadvantaged. (Greer, 2001a, 89).

Local councillors and local community groups found working together to be problematic at times. The local community and voluntary sector wanted strong representation on the partnerships, given the bottom-up, grass-roots approach to economic development. And the members of council believed that because the constituents directly elected them, they were better suited to take a leadership role. There was also a sense of competition between the different members – for example, councillors felt threatened as the local and community sector members became more confident (Greer, 2001a, 85).

The motivation of some participants was, at times, called into question. Greer Respondent - Unspecified stated: “Councillors were seen as trying to stamp their authority on the partnership and organize everything. When they didn’t get their way they engaged in dirty tricks by leaking stories to the press about squabbles in the partnership over one project” (Greer, 2001a, 85). Similar concerns were raised over the openness of local councillors and their behind-the-scenes actions. Greer Respondent - Unspecified explained:

Councillors have sat through many of the discussions with clenched teeth. However, when it came to project selection, that’s when the political astuteness and experience of the councillors of doing deals and compromising came through. There were done deals before we even got to the matrix analysis of project assessment. These reflect local knowledge of the constituencies and, therefore, are not far off the mark (Greer, 2001a, 95).

Vested interest became an issue in some partnerships, and has been identified as one of the most problematic areas for the partnership. It was suggested that members of the voluntary and community sector were promoting their own projects, and that these groups were “more political than the politicians ... [they] blatantly ignore vested interest

protocol and champion projects with which they are known to be associated” (Greer, 2001a, 95-96).

In addition to the relationship between the community groups and voluntary organizations and local councillors, the business sector was challenged by the nature of the partnership. The partnership themes of social inclusion, community capacity building and peace and reconciliation proved to be difficult for some members of the business sector to embrace. Greer Respondent - Councillor stated:

The business sector has difficulties with partnership; the business sector has a different background and want to go to meetings with an agenda and have something completed. It's the nature of their mind and the way it focuses. In the District Partnership there is more discussion, there is more give and take, and it is not clear-cut. The business sector had difficulty with the District Partnership, especially with terms such as community development (Greer, 2001a, 86).

Greer Respondent - Unspecified indicated that the tension and challenges were not based on an unwillingness to work together. Instead, perceived differences in mandates and differing contexts were the challenge:

Community organizations believe that they are instantly accountable to their communities and are in better touch with the feelings of their communities. The public sector is there to competently deliver a set of services and depoliticise the process. The business sector believes it is the only one able to stand on its own two feet. I don't think the tension is between elected and representative participants but between four divergent cultures (Greer, 2001a, 86-87).

Despite the well-documented differences between the political parties, there was a willingness to work together to develop the partnerships. Momentum was established and the common goals enabled partners to focus on specific tasks and objectives. This contributed to social capital. Greer Respondent - Unspecified articulated the sense of hope that was established:

The District Partnerships captured the imagination of the cease-fire era and lots of people entered these arrangements in the hope that things could be slightly different. There was scope to make a contribution to change in Northern Ireland (Greer, 2001a, 82).

Additionally, the momentum that was created after the establishment of the ceasefires, and the development and implementation of the Peace program, contributed to a sense of hope and a willingness to work collectively to improve socio-economic development and move towards establishing lasting peace. The common focus also provided a focal point for the groups and a basis for collaboration and cooperation. Greer Respondent - Unspecified stated, "although partnership members came from different political, religious, and social backgrounds, what they had in common was a vested collective interest in tackling the needs of their districts" (Greer, 2001a, 82).

Despite the lack of extensive cross-community and cross-border cooperation, the significance of the partnership members' willingness to work together should not be underestimated. This also contributed significantly to the learning process. The partnerships were designed to enable members from different communities to engage in meaningful dialogue and discussion. It was hoped that focusing on common goals would improve the relationship between communities. Greer Respondent - Unspecified clearly stated this:

A lot of people around the table that I sit with, I wouldn't have anything to do with in my ordinary life. They come from perspectives that I don't hold or I don't agree with, but we sit around the table and I have had a lot of myths challenged. I never would have sat down with a Sinn Fein councillor, never could have understood what they were trying to do, except be afraid of what they were doing; but listening to them talking about their families and their lives, their backgrounds and things that have happened to them makes it all very different (Greer, 2001a, 84).

The momentum of political goodwill and the desire of partnerships to actively promote peace and reconciliation was challenged by the failure of the 1994 ceasefire and the tension over the years when an Orange Order was prevented from marching through Nationalist areas. The conflict was significant in 1997 when a march was forced down Garvaghy Road, a Nationalist area, despite the 'stand off' at the Drumcree Parish Church. However, the District Partnerships continued to conduct business. This served as an example to the local community that there was significant political will among members of the partnerships and a strong desire to continue. Greer Respondent - Unspecified explained:

I believe the events at the time of Drumcree would have been worse if it was not for the good relationships and consensus building atmosphere built by the District Partnership. The consensus and agreement among the local councillors in the partnership managed in some ways to hold the line in the local communities. The board members were in their communities reconciling, thus building a stronger community relations base (Greer, 2001, 83).

The Partnerships also continued through three elections. The political goodwill of partners, and the belief that more could be achieved collaboratively in a network than individually, were factors for the continued operation of partnerships through challenging political times. The District Partnerships' efforts to enhance cross-community communication and de-escalate tension were significant.

3.6 Outcome of the Peace I Program

A mid-term review of the Peace I Program highlighted the benefits of the program including the:

1. transparent inclusive style of decision-making about policy and activity;
2. insistence on local and bottom-up input, thereby fostering a sense of ownership;

3. importance of partnerships and consensus building;
4. empowerment of new levels of society, through decentralization and involvement; and
5. concentration on practical advances rather than questions of principle, using all the above to bring a new approach to the search for peace and reconciliation (European Commission, 1997, 12).

The EU highlighted some of the factors which contributed to the success of the program and those that were particularly challenging (European Commission, 1998b, 19-21): (1) accessibility, (2) inter-community cooperation, (3) coordination and communication, (4) clear monitoring procedures, (5) realistic timelines, and (6) the need to make the most of short-term funding.

The inclusive nature is highlighted as one of the key factors contributing to the success of the program. The decentralized approach to program implementation ensured that a wide variety of stakeholders, including those traditionally marginalized, were able to take part. The inclusion of NGOs was a key factor in ensuring the program reached the targeted group and NGOs were described as “user friendly” and “inclusive” (European Commission, 1998b, 19).

Inter-community cooperation was highlighted as a further strength of the program. It was hoped that through creating effective partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, the benefits of cooperation would spill over into other arenas and would act as an example for the wider community. In addition to the cooperation, the Peace I Program also established new ways of having the community work together through the multi-stakeholder collaborative approach of the District Partnerships.

Co-ordination and communication were challenges in the program. This was particularly true for the government departments and District Partnerships. The

disjointed application process called into question the cohesion of the program and implementing organizations. This was addressed once the program was established.

Clear monitoring procedures needed to be established at the outset of the program. In addition, clear accounting procedures needed to be established. This required clear top-down communication of the responsibilities of each organization, especially in cases where the organization may not have had the capacity to develop monitoring or accounting methods.

Realistic timeframes needed to be established. The complexity of implementing the program and engaging so many stakeholders was underestimated. Organizations had to develop the capacity before they would effectively deliver the program. The Commission has 'hands on support' and 'development' grants available to community groups, to help them develop capacity and implement the program.

Finally, the challenge of thinking long-term and strategically while using short-term funding was problematic. The program was established for five years, however, at the start of the program, partial funding was made available. This was problematic for both the organizations and projects. It was challenging to attract staff members to work on short-term projects since there were so many projects developing at the same time and funding bodies were required to take on more responsibility than anticipated. The IFB noted that a minimum of three years project funding, not the two that was available, is required for community groups to ensure that they develop the capacity to implement the program and address local needs.

After the completion of the Peace I Program the Commission for European Communities outlined nine main lessons learned in the development of the program (European Commission, 2001, 17-18):

- (1) formal coordination procedures between EU programs in the same area and covering similar topics needs to be established;
- (2) criteria to select projects should be formalized and ranked hierarchically to highlight the aims of the program and target specific sectors or stakeholder groups;
- (3) projects should be appraised based on the selected criteria and applications should require a minimum level of information;
- (4) procedures should be open, fair, and transparent based on the selected criteria;
- (5) clearly defined role, responsibility, and area of jurisdiction for funding bodies and creation of a network amongst funding bodies is required;
- (6) information, including financial information, should be coordinated and a database developed to coordinate EU programs and projects;
- (7) clear procedures should be established in terms of allocation of funding and procedures to follow up with the projects, and assisting projects;
- (8) information sessions and training courses should be provided at the outset of the program; and
- (9) a coherent publicity and communication strategy to reach a wide variety of stakeholder groups is needed.

The development of expertise in the Peace I Program was significant in the Peace II process, and will likely continue to influence the development of other programs that focus on socio-economic development in regions with a history of ethnic conflict.

However, these lessons learned are generic and do not appear to take into consideration how stakeholders were able to come together and work as a partnership. While consensus building was highlighted as a benefit of the program, the EU failed to identify the institutional capacity that was built nor does it highlight that collaboration and consensus building was a factor that contributed to the success of the program.

3.7 Was it a Success?

Critics argue that the Peace program was not a success, indicating that there was a lack of clarity of objectives and focus on the program, implementation was too quick, the program was too ambitious, the indicators used to evaluate the program were problematic, and there was little cross-border cooperation that actually occurred (Byrne and Irvin, 2002; Greer 2001a). It has been suggested that the goals of the program are too ambitious. The partnerships were unclear as to what they should have been funding. Based on the objective of funding a wide range of projects, some funding was targeted to projects that are “a mile wide and an inch deep” (Greer, 2001a, 111).

In 2000, KPMG Consulting reviewed the impact of the District Partnership expenditure. The conclusion of the review based on document analysis, key informant interviews and surveys, reflect the beliefs of the respondents. District Partnerships are believed to have had a positive impact on peace and reconciliation. The projects were targeted equitably. The majority of the projects included a component of cross-community cooperation and a quarter of the projects had a cross-border component (KPMG Consulting, 2000, xiv). There was the general belief that the programs were equitable and targeted effectively.

Cross-community cooperation and network building were highlighted as the main outcome of the process. While it was noted that not all partnerships were able to fully overcome the sectarian divide, it was suggested that this level of cooperation would not have occurred outside of the District Partnership process (KPMG Consulting, 2000, xii). The main success factors identified by partnerships include: inter-personal trust and networks were established; recognition of common needs and problems; ability to deal

with contentious and difficult issues; and engaging other community organizations and actors (KPMG Consulting, 2000, xiii). Many participants highlighted how their involvement in the process challenged their views of the other community members and they noted how their perception of members from different backgrounds changed (KPMG Consulting 2000, xvi). Many felt the partnerships resulted in closer cooperation between the Catholic and Protestant community and improved community relations were highlighted.

Interviews conducted with senior Irish and Northern Irish civil servants, funding agency officers, and community leaders illustrates the impact of external funding to support peace and reconciliation (Byrne and Irvin, 2002). This research indicates that the aid was important in the de-escalation of conflict. However, failure to establish the link between the economic development and political cooperation and equality between communities, is a weakness of the program. The respondents indicated that, through the program, peace and reconciliation has been promoted, illustrated by consistent cross-community communication. However, the lack of specifically cross-border cooperation and wider spread political cooperation has been identified as a significant weakness of the program.

The EU has recognized the success of the Peace I Program. However, the EU also noted that, “despite its innovation and targeted intent, [the program] cannot substitute for a meaningful political process and that its impact would be greatly enhanced if such a process were taking place” (European Commission, 1997, 10).

Community economic development has been identified as a means of moving away from ethnic conflict and can act as a stabilizing force within the community. With

local economic development, the individual communities will be better prepared to engage in cross-community and cross-border cooperation and move towards achieving peace and reconciliation. While it is recognized that the Peace I Program cannot effectively address all the issues surrounding the long ethnic conflict in the region, the program does support the movement toward achieving peace and reconciliation through socio-economic development. The EU itself provides an example of how divisions between and within states can be addressed and meaningful cooperation can be achieved. The EU argues that the funding will provide opportunities for groups within the Irish border region to develop programs targeted to the communities' specific needs. In the process, relationships will be built and networks established. This will serve to strengthen the momentum for lasting peace in the region. The program was also viewed as a success by the EU itself and the model established in the Irish border region could be used in other regions. Further research indicates that the partnership approach to community development was viewed as a logical step in moving towards political cooperation (Birrell and Williamson, 2001).

Summary:

The movement toward cross-community and cross-border cooperation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is complex and includes formal and informal networks and partnerships developed between different levels of government, trade unions, the public and private sector, and the community and voluntary sector.

The Peace I Program was established to provide practical support at the community level built upon the achievements of the 1994 ceasefire. The Peace I Program sought to achieve peace and reconciliation through establishing cross-border

institutions and collaborative, consensus-based partnerships that addressed local issues.

The program was designed to highlight that, by creating economic, social, and cultural parity, the chasm between the two communities can be minimized. In the process of developing partnerships, it was believed that through creating a common vision and common objective of community capacity building, stakeholders at the local level would be able to overcome political differences and thus move towards peace and reconciliation.

Chapter Four: Analysis of the Peace I Program and District Partnerships

4.1. Introduction

Grass-roots, socio-economic development was one of the main objectives of the Peace I Program. The basic argument is that economic development will lead to community empowerment through transformative politics. Transformative politics, like collaborative planning, recognizes the value of participatory democracy and social inclusion in community building. Through the process of cooperation and collaboration, the differences among members can be recognized and respected. When the stakeholders engage in this form of networking, they are able to build institutional capacity.

In attempting to fulfil the objectives of the Peace I Program by developing a network of stakeholders based on principles of partnerships, collaborative planning and consensus building, the District Partnerships faced several challenges. These challenges include the diversity of stakeholders, differing levels of capacity, building institutional capacity, tight time constraints and lack of support. Despite these challenges, the stakeholders had a willingness to participate in a partnership based on principles of collaborative planning and consensus building and commitment to the process of building cross-community relations and cross-border cooperation.

4.2 Initiatives of the District Partnerships

The general focus of the Peace I Program was community development and social inclusion, as stated in the goals of the program. While, the program had initially allowed for activity and projects in terms of employment and urban and rural regeneration, such involvement decreased over time. The District Partnerships engaged in a broad range of initiatives to meet local needs including:

- Training
- Capacity building in under-developed areas
- Capital projects
- Specialist projects
- Childcare
- Development programs for youth, especially from areas of disadvantage, or disaffected youth
- Development of partnership members through best practice exchanges and team building
- Employment projects
- Interface initiatives
- Information and communication technology

The diverse activities highlight the differing conditions within which the District Partnerships worked.

4.3 Development of the District Partnerships

4.3.1 Factors Influencing the Development

A variety of factors supported the development of the partnerships including: the European Union context, District Council support, the paramilitary ceasefire and the hope for a lasting peace, the grass-roots focus and history of community development, and the ability to engage in cross-community work. Respondent A stated that a key factor was “the exciting new opportunity to do something new and different together, across community divisions, and really help to move Northern Ireland further forward by action at local level”.

Respondent B also highlighted the community focus and unique opportunity the Peace I Program provided. Respondent B indicated factors for involvement included: “a willingness by the sectors to participate – a need to try something different” and “an interest in being representative and targeting social need where it emerged within local communities by working together.” The partnership members also recognised that the

way forward to achieving lasting peace and encouraging reconciliation was through community capacity building, and cross-community collaboration and network building.

Respondent C focused on the role of possible cross-community collaboration and highlighted “the novelty of the disparate groups working together who have never had the opportunity to do so before” as a key factor in developing the partnership. Respondent B also highlighted the role of the European Union, and indicated a willingness to participate based on: “the recognition that Europe was behind the model and that this might be part of the way forward for Northern Ireland.” The responsibility for funding was also highlighted as a factor for facilitating involvement. The District Partnerships were empowered to build the capacity to address the needs within their community.

Given the conflict in the region, the partnerships faced significant barriers including tight time constraints, ensuring representation, perceived lack of support from the Northern Irish Partnership Board (NIPB), and the diverse nature of the stakeholders. There was general suspicion among the different sectors and suspicion about their rationale for involvement. Some partnership members were working within an existing framework. This lessened as the partners interacted and worked together. The jargonistic nature of the program was problematic and challenged certain sectors. The differing level of capacity was also, at times, problematic.

4.3.2 Stakeholder Involvement

There were between 18 to 30 members in each partnership. For the most part, members were selected from the local community. For example, one District Partnership had 24 members – 12 were statutory and elected members and 12 were ‘social partners.’

Members included statutory and elected members, representatives from the community and voluntary sector, and trade union, business sector, and rural representatives.

Generally, members were nominated by the organizations they were members of or were involved in. Elected members were chosen by the local council and reflected the political representation on the council. Statutory members were identified by the council as 'key' local partners and were therefore invited into the partnership.

Another partnership had 21 members: 7 district councillors, 7 members from the community and voluntary sector, 2 trade union members, 2 business representatives, and 3 government departments or regional statutory agency representatives. In addition to the 21 members, the partnership also had up to six 'observers' from other government departments and regional statutory agencies.

The partnerships sought representation in terms of geographic location, religious affiliation, and political affiliation. For example, in one partnership geographic location was a factor in nominating councillors and the community and voluntary sector representatives. Despite this, the main political party had the majority of the seats. In this partnership, smaller political parties tended to be excluded. The perceived religious affiliation was also a factor in nominating community and voluntary representatives.

However, there was concern expressed over council nominations and how representative they were. There was also concern about the community and voluntary representatives, that they did not have mandates. Despite the concerns over representation, the fact that the groups were willing to participate was significant. Respondent B states:

This was a major process in terms of addressing a democratic deficit at [the] 'local' level, which was never going to be an easy process in N. Ireland. Even the fact that these sectors bought into the process by sitting on the partnership was in itself a major achievement.

Because there were many members in the group, the balance of power and desire for leadership positions can be problematic. Members with higher levels of capacity may feel more comfortable taking on leadership roles and other members may feel disadvantaged by this. The particularly active or inactive role of members may influence the nature of the partnership. While this does depend on the individual, some general observations were made. Respondent C noted that most members participated, especially in the task of project evaluation. However, the community and voluntary sector representatives and local councillors tended to take on key roles. Respondent B noted that: "Community people were close to the ground and were passionate about making sure the ethos of the program in terms of addressing disadvantage was adhered to."

Respondent A supported this analysis:

Community and voluntary sector members were generally the most active. Often this was because the emerging working remit of the Partnership was focused on community development and combating social exclusion, areas of work familiar to community and voluntary sector organizations. Indeed many such nominees would have had contact with beneficiary organizations. Active councillors tended to be those with a background of community/voluntary work rather than business.

Individual capacity also contributed to the role the member had in the partnership.

Respondent B noted:

The input from the business people became very important during project assessment and their business acumen assisted other members to look objectively at the investment which the partnership was making and the outputs which could be achieved.

When asked how the role or involvement of a stakeholder might have influenced the process, one member noted that the role of the business sector was important in minimizing the initial conflict between the community and voluntary representatives and the council members. Respondent B explained that the business sector representatives “continued to be a ‘buffer’ between the community and elected representatives which makes for a good mix on the board.”

Despite the common focus, stakeholders did experience some difficulty working together and tension existed. With such diverse interest groups and sectors participating in the partnership, the members faced difficulties. The balance of power and desired leadership role among stakeholders was problematic at times. In addition, the role of the different sectors was challenging. Two members highlighted the challenges of working with members of the local council. Respondent C felt “the initial desire of the local council to take it over” was problematic. However, Respondent C also noted “this was overcome by the strength of character of the members.” Respondent A also highlighted the challenges of working with members of the local council and explained how the partnership overcame this:

At the start, Councillors would address each other as “Councillor” and try to keep the style and terms of debate as if it was still in the Council Chamber. It was agreed that the Partnership would not be chaired by a Councillor and this helped to take some of “politicking” out of the debate.

Despite these barriers, the significance of working collectively was recognized.

Respondent A illustrated how the involvement of stakeholders can develop relations and networks.

An additional effect for community and voluntary members was to focus their attention on local issues, and local bodies such as the District Council. Previously, many community and voluntary organizations tended to seek funding from or deal directly with regional bodies and / or Government departments and had had little contact with the local council / councillors.

These relationships and networks are some of the most important outcomes of the process. While the process may not have established a lasting peace, these relationships and networks are based on a foundation of shared understanding and common vision. Thus, these relationships and networks can act as a basis for further collaboration.

4.3.3 Stakeholder and Community Capacity

With such a diverse range of stakeholders, there was also a range of capacity. It became clear that capacity building was necessary. Not all members of the partnerships had the same level of capacity to act in the partnership and some members had, at times, felt in a position of relative disadvantage. Some partnerships engaged in training, however, participants expressed they did not feel they received the training required to be fully prepared for the work. Some training on group dynamics, given the diverse nature of the partnership members, was suggested as such training would have facilitated the decision making process.

Because of time constraints, often training and development were neglected. Team building was highlighted as something missing from the partnerships, but members stated that the time crunches and the basic need to get work done minimized this.

Respondent A explained:

Barriers were broken down largely by people having to undertake a lot of early work together. Surprisingly no “teambuilding” sessions of an

organized kind were undertaken until a residential planning session some 2-3 years into the life of the Partnership.

Another member highlighted the role teambuilding had in developing the District Partnerships. Respondent B explained: "Team building was central to building the partnerships and it was interesting to watch people from very diverse backgrounds and perspectives starting to 'gel' together."

In order to build social and intellectual capital, time is required. However, the partnerships were facing significant time crunches. The tight time frame was a barrier to the development of a strategy for funding. Pressure from the EU to get the "money on the ground", in conjunction with the demands of the program, meant that the funding had to be delivered as quickly as possible. One of the key problems identified was the lack of capacity that existed at the beginning of the program. The time constraints and lack of capacity made it difficult to target the resources to the marginalized groups that were supposed to be targeted for the funding, and often the groups were forced to build capacity and implement the program at the same time.

Involvement in the District Partnerships was demanding. The demands were greater on specific sectors, such as the community and voluntary sector. Most members had minimal, if any, support and resources, both in terms of time and finances. Some partnership members, especially those with minimal resources, were concerned they were put into a position of relative disadvantage. Respondent B discussed the time constraints faced in the partnership:

The time factor became a growing concern particularly when it came to the assessments of projects which was quite an in-depth process – questions started to emerge about remuneration for time and the 'value' placed on the work which was being done. This issue remains unresolved in Peace II.

However, the tight timeframe in which the program was delivered helped avert some potentially significant barriers.

The inclusive program was designed to enable involvement of traditionally marginalized groups. This would enable groups with intimate knowledge of the local context to address local needs, build capacity and engage in activities with other community groups. In some cases, the marginalized groups did not have the capacity or resources to apply for funding or fully implement the projects. Community capacity was a challenge and communities without the capacity to engage in the process were disadvantaged. Respondent A explains:

The relative lack of community development activity in majority Protestant areas tended to make it difficult to get "Protestant" community activists to participate in the numbers or at the level of 'well developed areas' (predominantly Catholic) which had a history of community development activity.

Once this was recognized, the partnership engaged in a process of targeting the funding to these groups to address the imbalance of capacity. Respondent A clarified the actions of the partnership to foster inclusion:

This led to a focus on programmes designed to stimulate and support community development activity in areas of "weak community infrastructure", many of which were majority Protestant, particularly geographically isolated, or both.

Another partnership member discussed the lack of capacity in the Protestant areas.

Respondent C indicated that they operated in essentially a single identity area and noted the unique challenges this posed:

The biggest problem for Protestants is one of cultural identity which is diffuse and not clearly defined. Community development has been largely discouraged by local councils in Protestant areas so there is a lack of cohesion in the communities leaving them open to takeover by

paramilitaries. Similarly we support local credit unions which keeps the most vulnerable away from unscrupulous paramilitary moneylenders who just don't want their money back.

The ability to engage in a collaborative planning exercise, such as cross-border or cross-community cooperation requires an existing level of capacity or the ability to build the capacity required to engage in the network. The lack of capacity was recognised and the District Partnerships attempted to focus resources to enable capacity building.

4.3.4 Consensus-based Decision Making

Consensus acted as the basis for the partnerships. The ability to engage the different groups within the community has been identified as the basis for the success of the program. The District Partnerships provide an example of how consensus and collaboration was encouraged in communities where the potential for cooperation had been severely limited as a result of the ethnic conflict. Respondents B and C indicated that at all times consensus was achieved and voting did not take place. Respondent B provided further explanation:

In my time on the program, which has been since the start of Peace I, I have not yet witnessed a vote on a decision. This has been one of the key factors in partnership building where no one sector can 'sway' a decision. Members were keen not to vote but rather find a solution that everyone could accept and which they together as a body could stand over and justify to the general public. This concept of joint decision-making and joint responsibility remains at the core of the peace partnerships.

Respondent A reinforced this point when explaining that consensus was almost always achieved:

It was recognized that the partnership was operating in [a] much more consensual way, than Council voting allowed for. The Partnership sought to come to agreement on issues, and never voted on issues to

resolve them (although this existed in the constitution as a fall back position).

In this specific partnership, special consideration was given to ensuring that the voices of minority representatives were heard. Respondent A explained:

The relative weakness of 'Protestant' input into the Partnership overall, was often balanced by a recognition that the one Democratic Unionist Party politician (a particularly active member of the Partnership) was speaking for an under-represented group. Considerable efforts were made to accommodate his proposals, and at times, objections to others' proposals.

Equal representation of the different sectors was a factor in the success of the partnerships. The need for balanced representation was recognized in the process. There was concern that because of the large size of the Board, ranging from 18 to 30, that some individuals or the role of a sector could be overshadowed. By creating an environment in which everyone could engage in the partnership process, trust, understanding and inclusiveness developed.

4.3.5 Relations with External Organizations

It was believed that the partnerships might establish relationships with other partnerships or organizations. Generally speaking, this has not happened, or – if communication was established – it was done so regionally. The relationship between the District Partnerships and the Northern Irish Partnership Board was challenging.

Respondent B felt:

One of the main drawbacks was the inefficiency of back-up to the partnerships delivered through the Northern Ireland Partnership Board. When advice and guidance was requested it was slow to come and non-conclusive – this was wholly inadequate to support voluntary people in the role that they were executing.

Respondent A also indicated the lack of communication, despite the initial expectations.

An original expectation of the overall PEACE I program was that the large number of delivery bodies would coordinate between themselves and signpost other more appropriate agencies for particular projects. This did not happen – coordination between the IFBs, who were a very disparate group of agencies, did not appear to take off – and levels and complexity of administration did not assist moving applications for funding from one Implementing Body to another. The Partnership was generally unable to liaise with IFBs and had no knowledge of where Government Departments' PEACE I funding was going.

Respondent B discussed the local linkages but did not experience similar challenges: "My experience would be that IFBs or government departments that had a role in 'your' district council areas tended to develop the closest links with the local partnership."

The experience of District Partnerships working together with other organizations, levels of government, or other partnerships was inconsistent. Some partnerships developed linkages with other partnerships, whereas others functioned without them. Some partnerships were proactive in seeking out collaborative linkages.

In developing partnerships and engaging in collaboration and consensus building, communicating openly and effectively is essential. It was suggested that some members did not report back to, and did not discuss the partnership with, their sector. Consequently, the sectors were not able to participate fully in the process and were not part of the learning process.

Despite the noted lack of communication or barriers to communication, open, honest communication between members of the same partnership was highlighted as a factor in the success of the partnerships and enabled trust and relationships to be developed. The ability and willingness of members to deal with difficult and contentious issues enabled the partnerships to develop and work through difficult situations.

4.3.6 *Institutional Capacity*

The barriers that faced the development of the partnerships were significant. The ability and willingness of the partnerships to work through difficult times and the dedication of members to the partnership enabled the partnerships to develop. While the partnerships might not have developed into the initially anticipated roles, the impact of the partnerships in the region is undeniably significant.

Participants have drawn on a broad range of experiences and learned a significant amount by being involved – either through their myths and perceptions being challenged, or gaining a deeper understanding of the community. Some members focused on how the decision-making and socio-economic development progressed. Respondent C highlighted the fact that “important decisions can be made in an apolitical way.” Respondent A highlighted the role of the partnership in generating greater understanding. Respondent A stated that: “bringing people with wider varying perspectives and opposing views together, to seek agreement on joint actions that will benefit all, can work.” These members reinforced their belief in what could be achieved through a multi-stakeholder process involving the local community. This is significant in the region.

However, the partnership members also highlighted how the District Partnerships are not the solution to all the issues in the community and the community needs to be empowered to build capacity. Respondent B highlighted how the partnership can best function:

they cannot be seen as the solution to all local problems merely because they are representative and have some additional monies. They need to develop prongs into the local community through their organizational

structure. The critical aspect to this is that the structure is supported locally by the key organizations...

The partnerships should not be viewed solely as administrators of funding; instead they can facilitate community empowerment. The partnerships require not only community support but also it was recognised that partnership members needed assistance in capacity building. This would enable the partnership, as well as the individual members to gain as much as possible from the process. Respondent B highlighted how attracting the right members is critical to the development of the process:

A strong chairperson and staff team is essential. Members have got to be helped to build their own capacity as part of the process and develop as individuals as well as forming part of the team. There needs to be a framework/compact to draw in the 'right' people on to such boards whether that is through an application process for some sectors and a commitment from others to send people at an appropriate level that can influence decision-making within their own organization.

The members indicated that there were a variety of factors which contributed to this learning, including: interaction with members and local agencies, the pressure to get work done as quickly as possible and as fairly as possible, and the need to meet short-term program time-scales to use the funding.

4.4 Outcome of the Partnership Process

The conflict in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland was characterized by distrust, anger and fear between the communities. In this context, establishing a local collaborative partnership that is inclusive of community groups might be considered to be difficult, if not impossible. Despite the paramilitary ceasefires, significant inter-community tension existed - during the initial phases of the Peace program there was resentment, and an unwillingness to cooperate. However, local involvement is necessary. It has been argued that the local community groups have a better understanding of their

constituents and their unique needs. Respondent A highlighted how the inclusive nature of the partnerships has impacted future development:

It is now broadly recognized that any community development project will have to demonstrate a considerable level of 'inclusivity' credentials. This is now 'de rigeur' in most government / quasi – government funding programs...The need to work together is recognized by all on the ground although this, for some, may remain a pragmatic response to funding criteria and may indicate a degree of scepticism.

It is clear that the District Partnerships have influenced their communities. The role of grass-roots involvement and decentralized decision making is significant. Respondent B stated: "Certainly the partnership model has taken decision-making closer to the community and people are more aware of who makes the decisions – this has helped to engage local people to a greater degree in the development of their area." This was supported by Respondent C who stated that the "model for good governance has been established and has laid the foundation for a radical new form of decision making." Respondent A also highlighted the significance of a multi-stakeholder approach. Respondent A articulated that for majority of local groups and funding the inclusive community based approach is "effectively now a feature of the landscape in which community and voluntary groups in particular work."

Summary:

The District Partnerships were faced with a difficult task, developing a collaborative network of diverse stakeholders to address social issues in Northern Ireland. While the partnerships were faced with significant challenges, they were able to collectively work together to build social, intellectual and political capacity. In addition to the success of decentralized decision-making through an inclusive process, the main

success of the District Partnerships was the ability to build bridges between the diverse stakeholders based on a common interest. While the partnerships alone will not be able to establish and maintain lasting peace in the region, the role of the institutional capacity building through the collaborative partnership process should not be underestimated.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

5.1.Synthesis

Collaborative planning, partnerships and cross-border cooperation focus on building institutional capacity to address social and political fragmentation.

Collaborative planning, partnerships and cross-border cooperation share common themes, many of which were present in the District Partnerships. The District Partnerships were inclusive and made up of diverse stakeholders. The partnership members had a common focus – the promotion of peace and reconciliation – and members recognised the need to work collectively.

The interdependence of the stakeholders was recognised and the partnerships developed with shared responsibility and a shared consensus-based decision-making process. The District Partnerships developed an identity beyond that of the individual stakeholder. Stakeholders were involved in the District Partnership not only because of goodwill, but also each partner was able to contribute to the process and recognised the benefits, and risks, of involvement.

Trust was established among stakeholders through open and honest communication and information sharing. The trust and relationships that were developed in the District Partnerships enabled collaborative planning. Mobilized through these networks, members built institutional capacity. Members engaged in cross-community relations and, in some cases, cross-border cooperation - a significant outcome given the history of conflict in the region.

5.2. District Partnerships

The District Partnerships were designed to use communication, or discourse, as the basis for mediating conflict in contested space. Through an inclusive process, the collaborative partnerships sought to build institutional capacity through convergence on an issue – the need to promote grassroots socio-economic development as a key factor in establishing lasting peace. The development of collaborative, consensus-based partnerships recognized and valued differences amongst stakeholders and sought to create a shared understanding of the conflict, and possible solutions. The networks developed based on face-to-face contact and communication among a diverse range of interdependent stakeholders. This shared understanding provided a solid foundation for the development of effective relationships between the stakeholders. This social capital is significant in maintaining the political will to push for peace.

The context for developing the partnership is significant. A variety of factors supported the development of the partnership including: the European Union context, District Council support, the paramilitary ceasefire and the hope for a lasting peace, the grass-roots focus and history of community development, and the ability to engage in cross-community work. European Union involvement in the program was essential. The EU is viewed as a neutral forum and this was a contributing factor to the acceptance of the program by all political parties. The involvement of the EU, as compared to possible projects initiated by the British or Irish governments, is viewed as non-partisan and neutral.

Additionally, the belief among members of the partnership that there was real potential for developing synergies cannot be overlooked. The sense of hope and belief in

the process was a significant factor in the development of these partnerships, especially during politically contentious times. There was a belief that this process would improve the socio-economic context in the region and provide a basis for cross-community and cross-border cooperation.

In addition to this belief that the partnerships could make a difference, there was also a willingness to work together. The fact that these stakeholders would actually sit around a table together is, in itself, a huge success. The history of ethnic and political conflict was significant and the willingness of members not only to work together, but also to trust each other, speaks to the success of the partnership.

However, the process was not without challenges. Cross-border initiatives and, to a certain extent, formal cross-community initiatives, were limited. It was argued that the groups were unable to effectively work across borders or in a cross-community context until they developed capacity within their own community. Other challenges the partnerships faced were highlighted as weaknesses of the collaborative process.

Capacity, power, motivation, and inclusion proved to be problematic.

The differing levels of capacity proved to be a barrier to certain groups accessing resources and funding. Because the partnerships were faced with time constraints, they were unable to ensure that all the groups who should be targeted for funding received that funding. In some cases, the partnerships developed innovative practices to encourage those that were marginalized to access the application process and possible funding.

One of the challenges of developing the collaborative process is the potential for entrenching established power relations. To a certain extent this happened. Some members felt disadvantaged when local councillors tried to impose their sector-specific

norms onto meetings. Additionally, it has been suggested that the community and voluntary sector representatives might be in a position of relative disadvantage because of their limited resources and supports.

The use of power and motivation was also identified when it was suggested that political appointees might have been involved in “backroom dealings” and promoting projects within their own jurisdiction. It appears that factors other than the objectives and goals of the partnership were motivating some of their decision-making.

Despite these challenges, the partnerships did maintain support for a collaborative and consultative process based on consensus building. The process of consensus-based decision-making was effective. It included representation of relevant interests and encouraged participation. It was based on the principles of grass-roots involvement and stakeholder inclusion. Generally speaking, participants demonstrated commitment to the goals and objectives of the partnership, as well as respect for other partnership members. The work of the partnerships provides an example to other community members. They exemplify how cross-community cooperation could occur. Stakeholders developed intellectual capital through the creation of shared meanings. The experience of the District Partnerships provides practical insight into how collaborative planning enables the mobilization of networks.

5.3. Collaboration and Consensus Building in the District Partnerships

Though some factors used to evaluate the process could not be analysed, the District Partnerships are effective partnerships based on collaboration and consensus-based decision-making. What differentiates collaboration from cooperation is shared identity and authority that is created in the partnership beyond that of the individual

stakeholder. When collaboration occurs, there is usually an organizational structure with shared authority. Collaborative relationships tend to be longer lasting but do pose a greater risk to the stakeholders involved. Stakeholders are from different individual organizations but are fully committed to the collaborative process. Cooperation is characterized by informal relationships with little structure and no planning efforts. There is no shared authority to act. There are informal trade offs and the rewards and risks of being involved in the partnership are specific to each stakeholder.

The District Partnerships are an example of collaborative partnerships. These partnerships are made up of members from diverse backgrounds that are working collectively and are committed to the process. Decision making authority is shared and is based on consensus. There is a formal organizational structure and resources are shared among the members. Fundamentally, the members are moving away from their existing positions and are acting in the best interest of the partnership.

These partnerships facilitated the emergence of network power. The network power is based on the ability of these diverse stakeholders to come together to create relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Members recognized the interdependence that existed and the need to work collectively towards creating a lasting peace.

Consensus building, as a form of collaborative planning, was developed by the District Partnerships. Evaluating the consensus building process is useful in gaining a deeper understanding of the development of institutional capacity and networks, as a goal of the planning process. An evaluation of consensus building based on assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the process has been established (Innes, 1999, Innes and

Booher, 1999). This evaluation goes beyond evaluating the outcome; it also seeks to evaluate the secondary effects of the process, including the development of networks and institutional capacity. While evaluating the tangible and intangible effects of consensus building is challenging, the District Partnerships are examples of a good consensus building process.

An effective consensus building process likely will not fully meet the criteria established; however, the District Partnerships did meet most of the criteria. The process was based on a practical purpose – grassroots socio-economic development – and the members of the partnership were committed to this process. The partnerships were, to a certain extent, self-organizing. While they worked within the framework and goals established by the EU, the partnerships were able to develop their own objectives to best meet the needs of the local community. They developed their own ground rules and tasks. The partnerships also had the ability to evaluate, and re-evaluate, their funding priorities – to best target their resources. This ensured that the District Partnerships, while working within an EU framework, were able to address local needs.

The consensus building process was inclusive of almost all of the relevant stakeholders. There were some instances where representation was not possible because of a lack of capacity. In order to address this, some partnerships actively sought to engage the most marginalized, or the District Partnerships recognized that one member of the partnership spoke for an under-represented group. The process was based on open and honest face-to-face communication. This facilitated relationship- and network-building. This communication enabled partnership members to engage in dialogue with other members, including actors they typically would not communicate with. This also

enabled information exchange and learning, allowing members to think “outside the box.” Through working with others, members were forced to challenge their assumptions and work collaboratively with others. Members were required to think beyond their own community’s interest, and think in terms of promoting peace and reconciliation.

The consensus building process was successful at engaging the participants and kept them “at the table.” The partnerships worked through politically contentious times including the failure of the 1994 ceasefires, elections, and the ‘stand off’ at Drumcree. The members clearly were committed to the process of consensus building and the promotion of peace and reconciliation.

Finally, the partnerships made decisions based on consensus. This enabled members to evaluate a variety of sources of information and different forms of knowledge. Consensus was highlighted as one of the key outcomes of partnership. Members indicated the desire to find a mutually agreeable solution so the partnership could collectively justify actions in the public’s interest.

As with the process criteria, a good consensus building process will meet most of the outcome criteria established. The process did establish agreement upon how funding should be allocated; however, the District Partnerships were working within the context of objectives and goals established by the European Union.

The process was inclusive of social, economic, and community development initiatives. It enabled innovative, grassroots involvement and capacity building in working towards peace and reconciliation. These projects were designed to meet the needs of the local community.

The consensus building process was effective in engaging community members from across the sectarian divide. While this does not address the source of conflict throughout Northern Ireland, it does enable partnership members to overcome issues of distrust and conflict. Members were able to gain knowledge and understanding of different perspectives within their community. Assumptions and attitudes were challenged and members were able to focus on a common vision and goal. Fundamental to the success of the partnership were the networks that were established and the creation of institutional capacity.

The consensus-based decision-making process was flexible and networked. This enabled the District Partnerships to react to the unique situations in their region. By being able to address the specific needs within the community, the District Partnerships were able to serve the wider public interest in the community. The outcomes of the District Partnerships were generally viewed as just, though there was some concern over the appearance of supporting one community more than the other.

There are additional factors that contribute to the consensus-based decision-making process; however, these factors cannot be evaluated based on the research conducted. While it is unclear how information flowed, and if it flowed freely among participants, it is clear that information was shared and new meanings created. It is unclear if any spin-off partnerships or collaborative activities occurred as a result of the District Partnerships.

It is difficult to evaluate if the learning and knowledge that was produced was shared with others beyond the immediate group. It is recognized that there was some information sharing in terms of best practices with other District Partnerships. However,

some partnerships did not engage in relationships with external organizations. The extent to which information sharing occurred is unknown. In addition, it is difficult to evaluate the costs of this consensus-based process in relation to the benefits. While the benefits have been outlined, the costs have not been evaluated. Participants did indicate there were significant amounts of time spent on the partnerships. This was particularly difficult for the community and voluntary sector members as they often did not have the resources and support available to them that representatives from other sectors had. Despite these factors, the District Partnerships did emerge as an effective form of partnership based on principles of collaborative planning and consensus building.

5.4. Levels of Cooperation

While true cross-border cooperation was not achieved, other forms of cooperation were developed. Cooperation ranged from cross-community cooperation to, albeit limited, cross-border cooperation. In order to understand the collaborative nature of the networks established through the District Partnerships, it is necessary to understand these different forms of cooperation. Cross-community cooperation occurred among various partnerships members within each District Partnership. This was significant in that this cross-community cooperation enabled networks to be established among a group of stakeholders. This contributed to learning and understanding “on the ground” and provides a solid foundation for achieving a lasting peace. The next level of cooperation, inter-district cooperation, relates to cooperation between District Partnerships and regions. Finally, cross-border cooperation refers to cooperative relationships built across borders, such as cooperation between District Partnerships in Northern Ireland and the County Councils in Ireland.

While cross-border cooperation was a focus of Peace I Program, there was a limited amount of cross-border cooperation that actually occurred. Additionally, ensuring cross-community cooperation was, at times, difficult. Representatives of the District Partnerships highlighted the challenges they experienced in having truly cross-community initiatives requesting funding. This was due, in part, to a lack of capacity within each of the communities and a high number of single-identity projects.

In order for cross-border cooperation to become more fully realized, the border region needs, among other characteristics: the capacity to participate, collaboration between public and private institutions, common priorities and objectives, resources available to concentrate on transnational programs, and gradual and continued efforts towards cross-border cooperation.

In the Irish border region, while there had been cooperation between public and private institutions, common priorities and objectives, and resources available, it can be argued that, during the Peace I Program, the capacity to engage in cross-border cooperation was limited. Within each District Partnership, the strategic need to first build capacity at the local level was recognised. Thus, the ability to participate in cross-border cooperation may have been limited. However, that is not to say that cross-border cooperation did not occur or could not occur. In the responses from the District Partnerships it became clear that the focus on cross-border and inter-district cooperation was overshadowed by the need to build community capacity and cross-community cooperation at the local level. Thus, while cross-border cooperation was recognised as one of the goals of the program, the Peace I Program focused largely on facilitating cross-community cooperation.

However, this cross-community cooperation is significant. Thus, the success of the Peace I Program should not be measured solely by the ability to develop cross-border cooperation. The success of the program should be viewed in terms of the ability to engage a wide range of actors – most of whom would have not, under typical circumstances, worked collectively with other actors – and foster a common vision. While this cross-community cooperation is less ambitious than cross-border cooperation, cross-community contact is building a foundation upon which cross-border cooperation can be established. The District Partnerships should not be seen as the solution to all local problems, or as a solution to all the ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland. Instead, these partnerships should be viewed as a pre-requisite, and as part of the gradual and continued efforts, for achieving full cross-border cooperation.

5.5. Recommendations for Future Research

Recommendations for future research are based on the outcomes of the research as well as gaps in the research. Research could be conducted to highlight whether, and if so how, the experience working in the District Partnerships has influenced the professional development of partnership members and whether these members have engaged in other collaborative or consensus based processes. In addition, the membership partners indicated that their involvement in the collaborative process has changed their perspective of each other and their community, however, it is unclear whether, and if so, how the partnerships have affected the community at large. Possible research topics include whether, and if so, to what extent that capacity was built, the extent to which the program influenced the attitudes in the community and if there has been continued cross-community cooperation. For example, a survey respondent

indicated that inclusion is now considered a pre-requisite of socio-economic development. Research could be conducted into the extent to which this has occurred, how these inclusive processes have developed and how these compare to the District Partnership process.

The significance of the District Partnerships has been recognised in Northern Ireland and in the EU. The Peace I Program influenced the Peace II Program. However, it is unclear if, or to what extent, the District Partnerships have influenced the development of the Peace II Program. Moreover, the EU has recognised the significance of the innovative approach. Research could be conducted to see if the Peace I Program has had a direct or indirect influence on EU policies and processes.

The Peace I Program is one of many programs to address the sectarian divide. A comparison could be conducted to evaluate the characteristics and outcomes of other supranational or intergovernmental approaches to identify the similarities and differences. Finally, it would be interesting to compare the District Partnerships and Peace I Program development and outcomes to other programs and processes developed to address ethnic conflict and sectarian divide in other regions. This might illustrate whether the District Partnerships or Peace I Program process could develop as a model for addressing other conflict.

Summary:

The focus of the research has been threefold: (1) to identify whether, and if so how, collaborative planning and consensus building contributed to the development of the Peace I Program and District Partnerships, (2) to determine how inclusive the partnerships were and (3) to evaluate the extent to which institutional capacity was built.

The aim of the Peace I Program was to encourage cross-community relations, build a stable society and facilitate economic development. The District Partnerships were designed to empower local community members through a process of network building and developing projects to address local needs. The success of the District Partnerships and Peace I Program can be attributed, in part, to the commitment to collaborative planning and consensus building. Consensus acted as the basis for the partnership. The strong focus on collaboration, consensus building and network building provided a solid foundation for the development of the partnerships.

Social inclusion and engaging traditionally marginalized groups was an underlying principle of the District Partnerships. Social inclusion, and participation, resulted in a sense of ownership within the community. This common focus and desire to improve the socio-economic situation in the regions fostered collaboration. The networks established are recognised as having a lasting impact upon the development of future planning initiatives.

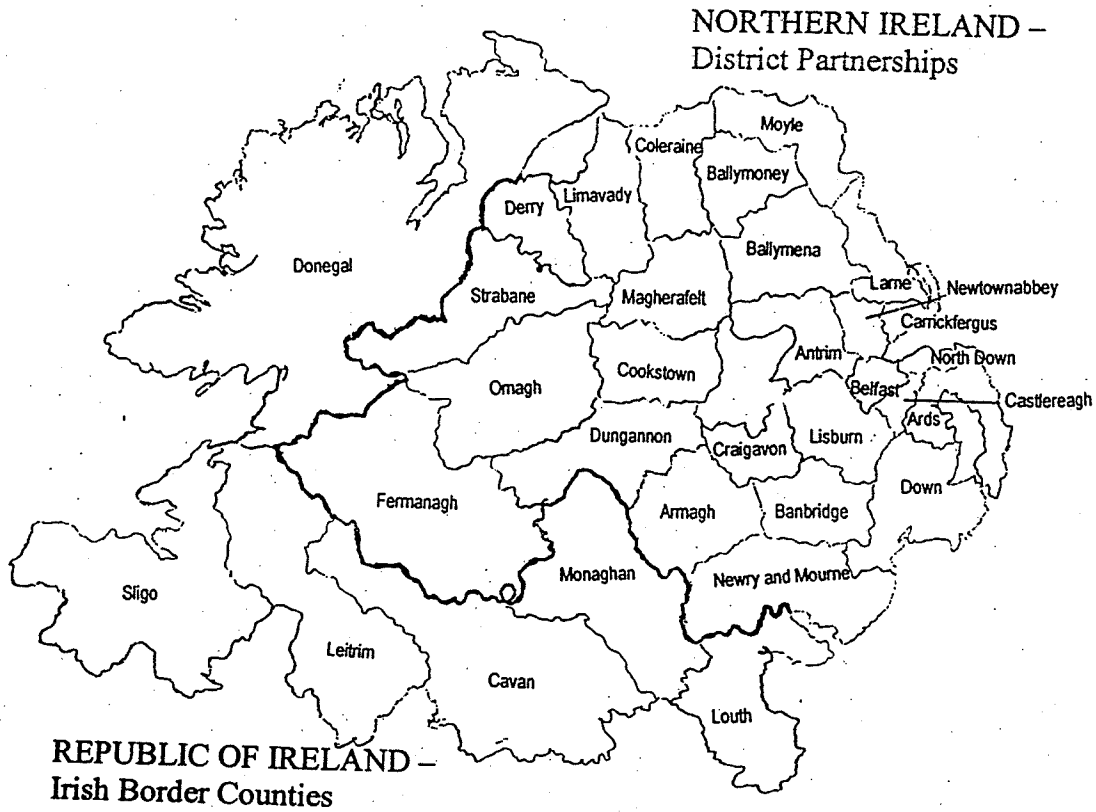
Social, political, and intellectual capital was built in the collaborative process. The networks and relationships established enabled partnership members to build political and social capital. Partnership members developed the capacity to mobilize and work together to seek change in their community. The members of the partnership came together to address the sectarian divide and to promote peace and reconciliation. It was recognized that the only way this could be achieved was through the development of collective political capital. Political capital was strengthened by the social capital that was created. It is through the establishment of social capital that the members were able to challenge their attitudes and assumptions and learn collectively. Intellectual capital

was established by using local information and knowledge as the basis for consensus-based decision-making.

The collaborative approach enabled trust and respect to be built among members in a community characterized by distrust and conflict. By engaging in a process where differences are recognised and addressed, partnership members were able to think outside of their traditional frame of reference and to focus on what could be attained through working collectively with other partnership members. No particular sector was given the ability to sway to decision and thus the decisions reflect what the partnership members believed best addressed needs within the community. The collaborative approach to planning will provide the basis for future cross-community relations can be developed.

The significance of this research is not only the success of a network-centric approach in Northern Ireland, but also the fact that collaborative planning and consensus building can be effective in conflictual situations where the context does not appear to fit the scope of communicative action. Despite the paramilitary ceasefire, the Northern Irish – Irish context is characterized by a history of distrust, ongoing ethnic conflict, and violence. This context does not contain many of the characteristics required for communicative action. Despite this, the process engaged community members, encouraged relationships to develop across the sectarian divide, and provided a process that partnership members remained committed to, despite politically challenging conditions. The success of the District Partnerships and the Peace I Program is significant because the success indicates that collaborative planning and consensus building can be effective despite a history of conflict.

APPENDIX A: MAP OF THE DISTRICT PARTNERSHIPS



APPENDIX B: PEACE I PROGRAM SUB-PROGRAMS

Sub-Program	% of Total Funding	Definition
Employment	13.4	Geared towards economic development, job creation, improving accessibility to, and higher quality services in terms of, training, education and recruitment.
Urban and Rural Regeneration	16.7	In Northern Ireland, rural regeneration focused on economic development, tourism, fishing and aquaculture. In Ireland, the program focused on tourism, development of rural communities, and the renovation of towns and villages.
Cross-Border Cooperation	16.2	Cross-border cooperation was highlighted as a means for achieving peace through encouraging links across the border. Trade, cultural links, infrastructure and cooperation of public organizations were highlighted as a means for reconciliation across communities.
Social Inclusion	22.8	The social inclusion sub-program was developed to address issues of social exclusion. This program targets vulnerable groups including: women, youth and children, victims of ethnic violence and ex-prisoners.
Investment and Industrial Development	14.5	Industrial development and productive investment focuses on improving the environment for private investment. This program seeks to create lasting jobs, promoting investment, industrial development services, and trade.
District Partnerships	14.3	One partnership is established in each district council area. They are tasked with developing a strategy and action plan to establish a model of regeneration.
Technical Assistance	1.5 to 2.1	Technical assistance was provided to local groups to assist in developing projects, to provide information about the program and provide support in managing, monitoring and evaluating projects.

APPENDIX C: ETHICS APPROVAL AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM
HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE



RESEARCH SERVICES &
PROGRAMS
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Winnipeg, MB R3T 5V6
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APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

26 March 2003

TO: **Fiona Foster**
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Wayne Taylor, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

Re: **Protocol #J2003:050**
**"Collaborative Planning in Northern Ireland and the Republic of
Ireland: Cross-border Cooperation and the Special Programme for
Peace and Reconciliation"**

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

Please note that, if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

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HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH
Ethics Protocol Submission Form (Ft. Garry Campus)

Psychology/Sociology REB ☐ Education/Nursing REB ☐ Joint-Faculty REB ☒

Check the appropriate REB for the Faculty or Department of the Principal Researcher. This form, attached research protocol, and all supporting documents, must be submitted **in quadruplicate** (original plus 3 copies), to the Office of Research Services, Human Ethics Secretariat, 244 Engineering Building,

If the research involves biomedical intervention, check the box below to facilitate referral to the BREB:

Requires Referral to Biomedical REB ☐

Project Information:

Principal Researcher(s): FIONA FOSTER

Status of Principal Researcher(s): please check

Faculty ☐ Post-Doc ☐ Student: Graduate ☒ Undergraduate ☐ Other ☐

Specify: _____

Campus address: City Planning Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email address: fiona.fostere@alumni.sfu.ca Quickest Means of contact: email

Project Title: Collaborative Planning in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: Cross-border Cooperation and the Special Program for Peace and Reconciliation

Start date April 2003 Planned period of research (if less than one year): Aug 2003

Type of research (Please check):

Faculty Research:

Self-funded ☒ Sponsored ☐

(Agency) _____

Administrative Research:

Central ☐

Unit-based ☐

Student Research:

Thesis ☐ Class Project ☐

Course Number: _____

Signature of Principal Researcher: _____

This project is approved by department/thesis committee. The advisor has reviewed and approved the protocol.

Name of Thesis Advisor Dr. Ian Nigh Signature _____
(Required if thesis research)

Name of Course Instructor: _____ Signature _____
(Required if class project)

Persons signing assure responsibility that all procedures performed under the protocol will be conducted by individuals responsibly entitled to do so, and that any deviation from the protocol will be submitted to the REB for its approval prior to implementation. Signature of the thesis advisor/course instructor indicates that student researchers have been instructed on the principles of ethics policy, on the importance of adherence to the ethical conduct of the research according to the submitted protocol (and of the necessity to report any deviations from the protocol to their advisor/instructor).

Ethics Protocol Submission Form (Basic Questions about the Project)

The questions on this form are of a general nature, designed to collect pertinent information about potential problems of an ethical nature that could arise with the proposed research project. In addition to answering the questions below, the researcher is expected to append pages (and any other necessary documents) to a submission detailing the required information about the research protocol (see page 4).

1. Will the subjects in your study be UNAWARE that they are subjects? ☐ Yes ☒ No
2. Will information about the subjects be obtained from sources other than the subjects themselves? ☐ Yes ☒ No
3. Are you and/or members of your research team in a position of power vis-a-vis the subjects? If yes, clarify the position of power and how it will be addressed. ☐ Yes ☒ No
4. Is any inducement or coercion used to obtain the subject's participation? ☐ Yes ☒ No
5. Do subjects identify themselves by name directly, or by other means that allows you or anyone else to identify data with specific subjects? If yes, indicate how confidentiality will be maintained. What precautions are to be undertaken in storing data and in its eventual destruction/disposition. ☐ Yes ☒ No
6. If subjects are identifiable by name, do you intend to recruit them for future studies? If yes, indicate why this is necessary and how you plan to recruit these subjects for future studies. ☐ Yes ☒ No
7. Could dissemination of findings compromise confidentiality? ☐ Yes ☒ No
8. Does the study involve physical or emotional stress, or the subject's expectation thereof, such as might result from conditions in the study design? ☐ Yes ☒ No

9. Is there any threat to the personal safety of subjects? ___ Yes ☒ No
10. Does the study involve subjects who are not legally or practically able to give their valid consent to participate (e.g., children, or persons with mental health problems and/or cognitive impairment)?
If yes, indicate how informed consent will be obtained from subjects and those authorized to speak for subjects. ___ Yes ☒ No
11. Is deception involved (i.e., will subjects be intentionally misled about the purpose of the study, their own performance, or other features of the study)? ___ Yes ☒ No
12. Is there a possibility that abuse of children or persons in care might be discovered in the course of the study?
If yes, current laws require that certain offenses against children and persons in care be reported to legal authorities. Indicate the provisions that have been made for complying with the law. ___ Yes ☒ No
13. Does the study include the use of personal health information? The Manitoba Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) outlines responsibilities of researchers to ensure safeguards that will protect personal health information. If yes, indicate provisions that will be made to comply with this Act (see document for guidance - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/phia/index.html>). ___ Yes ☒ No

Provide additional details pertaining to any of the questions above for which you responded "yes." Attach additional pages, if necessary.

In my judgment this project involves: ☐ minimal risk
☐ more than minimal risk

(Policy #1406 defines "minimal risk" as follows: "... that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater nor more likely, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in life, including those encountered during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

11 / 03 / 2003
dd mm yr

Signature of Principal Researcher

INFORMED CONSENT FORM – SURVEYS

Research Project Title: *Collaborative Planning in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland: Cross-Border Cooperation and the Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation*

Researcher(s): *Fiona Foster*

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the development of the Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and Border Counties of Ireland (PEACE I Program), and the Northern Irish District Partnerships as well as gain an understanding to the extent to which collaboration occurred in the development of the program, and partnerships.

The information gained through the research will be used to inform the researcher's Major Degree Project (MDP) for the completion of the Masters of City Planning, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba (Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada).

2. PROCEDURES

Within this survey, you will be asked to answer questions regarding the development and implementation of District Partnerships.

The survey is conducted by E-mail. These emails will be saved in digital format. A hard copy of each email will also be kept on file. All electronic files and hard copies of the emails will be destroyed at the completion of the project.

Data will be presented in such a manner that no identifying characteristics of the individuals will be reported in the final study. Instances where information such as direct quotes from the interview transcript will be used, your name and other information which may identify you will be omitted.

If you are interested in viewing the final report, it will be made available for you to read in September 2003. This work will result in a thesis being placed in the Architecture and

If you have read and understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject, please reply to this email stating your name, date and indicate that you have read and understood the information and consent to participate as an interviewee.

Advisor: *Dr. Ian Wight*
Department of City Planning
Faculty of Architecture
University of Manitoba
Canada, R3C 2N2
Phone: 204-944-2822
E-mail: ian.wight@umanitoba.ca

Researcher: *Fiona Foster*
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Thank you for giving your time to participate in this survey. Your responses are very valuable to this research project and are greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX D: DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP SURVEY

The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the development of the Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and Border Counties of Ireland (PEACE I Program), and the Northern Irish District Partnerships as well as gain an understanding to the extent to which collaboration occurred in the development of the program, and partnerships.

Thank you for agreeing to respond to the questionnaire. Please type your responses below the question. Should you require further information or explanation of the questions, please email Fiona Foster at fiona.foster@alumni.sfu.ca (or fiona.foster@umanitoba.ca).

Development of the District Partnerships

1. How many members were in the District Partnership during the Peace I programme?
2. How did the members become involved?
3. Was representation in terms of geographic location, religious or political affiliation achieved?
4. Did any of the members take a particularly active or inactive role in the District Partnership? How do you feel this influenced the Partnership?
5. In decision making, was consensus sought and achieved? If so, generally do you feel there was strong consensus amongst members of the District Partnership in the objectives and actions of the Partnership?
6. What factors do you feel facilitated the development of the District Partnership?
7. What were the barriers in developing the Partnership? How were they overcome?

Institutional Capacity

8. What do you feel you have learned as a result of involvement in the District Partnership and Peace I programme?
9. What contributed the most to that learning (sources of information, interaction with other members etc.)?
10. How do you feel the District Partnership's relationship developed with other organizations involved in the Peace I programme?
11. Please identify the types of projects and initiatives the District Partnership has been involved in (cross-community meetings, examples of projects, etc.):

Outcomes of the Partnership

12. Do you feel the work of the District Partnership has influenced the attitudes and actions of members of the District Partnership or the community? If so, how? If not, why not?

Thank you for giving your time to participate in this survey. Your responses are very valuable to this research project and are greatly appreciated.

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