

Seán Brennan, Branka Marijan

Contested Spaces and Everyday Peace Politics in Northern Ireland

In 2022, the United Kingdom downgraded the security threat in Northern Ireland from “severe” to “substantial”, first set in 2010. The latter means that an attack is likely but not highly likely. For many analysts and political observers, the twenty-five years of peace that followed the signing of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (B/GFA) though interspersed with periods of political stalemate, have led to an overall external sense the conflict has ended. This downgrading of the security threat in Northern Ireland appears to confirm this sense of a settled peace. Still, the type of peace that has been achieved, and particularly the political dynamics regarding contentious spatial issues, continue to shape the quality of peace experienced by the local population. In turn, it is precisely this everyday quality of peace that reflects the real success, or failure, of various peacebuilding efforts as such practices produce the empirical evidence of sustainable reconciliation or continue sectarian divisions in a post-conflict space.

Keywords: contested spaces, everyday peace politics and practices, peacebuilding.

Sporna področja in vsakodnevna mirovna politika na Severnem Irskem

Leta 2022 je Združeno kraljestvo oceno varnostne grožnje na Severnem Irskem s stopnje “resna”, ki je veljala vse od uvedbe ocene leta 2010, znižala na “znatna”. Slednje pomeni, da je napad sicer verjeten, ne pa zelo verjeten. Za mnoge analitike in politične opazovalce petindvajset let miru, ki je sledil podpisu Velikonočnega sporazuma, kljub vmesnim obdobjem političnega zastoja vsaj navzven vzbuja splošen občutek, da je konflikt končan. Ta občutek še dodatno krepi omenjeno znižanje ocene varnostne grožnje. Kljub temu pa vrsta doseženega miru in zlasti politična dinamika v zvezi s spornimi področnimi vprašanji še naprej vplivata na kakovost miru, kot ga vsakodnevno doživlja lokalno prebivalstvo. Ravno v kakovosti miru se kaže dejanski uspeh oziroma neuspeh posameznih prizadevanj za vzpostavitev miru, saj tovrstne prakse ponujajo empirične dokaze bodisi o spravi bodisi o nadaljevanju sektaških delitev tudi v post-konfliktnem času.

Ključne besede: sporna področja, vsakodnevne mirovne politike in prakse, vzpostavitev miru.

Correspondence address: Seán Brennan, 73 Monagh Road, Belfast, BT11 8EF, North Ireland, e-mail: jbreennan07@qub.ac.uk; Branka Marijan, Project Ploughshares, 140 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, N2L 3G6, Canada, e-mail: bmarijan@ploughshares.ca.

1. Introduction

Peacebuilding literature has increasingly highlighted the importance of the everyday practice of peace (Mac Ginty 2021) and over the past decade significantly more focus has been paid in the literature on the way in which ordinary people impact on peace processes beyond the control of political and civil society elites. This article builds on this literature, as well as the “spatial turn” in peacebuilding (Brigg & George 2020) to further highlight how continued political uncertainty in post-conflict contexts shapes the experience of peace at the everyday level: both for the population and their quality of life long after peace agreements are signed.

This article draws on decades of participant observation, engagement in local civic space and interviews with key informants and residents of different communities to highlight how they work together on functional matters in which they have a common interest, which helps build up enough trust to deal with the more divisive issues. In building on the spatial turn, the article follows the literature in moving beyond the post-liberal approach to peacebuilding towards developing a better understanding “of what causes negative and positive forms of peace to arise, in hybrid forms, and of how local individuals, actors, and organizations engage intersubjectively with the question of producing a positive peace connected with a progressive form of politics” (Richmond 2016, 7)? In taking this spatial turn the article aims for the analytical focus in peacebuilding to move beyond the critique of (geo)political and civil society elites towards the experiences of the people and places in Northern Ireland attempting to build the peace at the everyday level. With this shift in focus, from the geopolitical to the biopolitical, to the everyday “politics of life”, this article adopts key insights from post-structuralist theory to world politics thus producing an analytical orientation, in the sense that all reality is structured first by language with discourses then creating a coherent system of knowledge, objects, and subjects (Guerra-Barón 2017, 1). Establishing this system of knowledge on the post-conflict subject then develops biopolitical insights on how peacebuilding can begin to do what it was conceptualised for, to develop an associative and multi-sectoral peace framework that can sustainably reduce direct violence and structural violence by addressing a lack of basic human needs (Galtung 1976). Developing this biopolitical insight on post-conflict peacebuilding, through the rhizomatic realism of the everyday, and its subaltern agency, then opens a new analytical space, to deepen understanding on what helps build a positive peace formation that emancipates and sustains transformative peacebuilding at the everyday level.

2. The Northern Irish Peacebuilding Model

Norther Ireland is often seen as a successful model of peacebuilding in policy making circles and one to be emulated by other post-conflict contexts. However,

there remains a tension between the top-down political engineering of the society and the everyday life in the post-Agreement Northern Ireland. The peacebuilding process that emerged in Northern Ireland from the B/GFA, in 1998, was a consociational model of power-sharing (McGarry & O'Leary 2003). However, with the ethnic extremes of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin challenging its governance structures, the St Andrew's Agreement, in 2006, amended the B/GFA governance structure on how to select a First Minister and a Deputy First Minister. Moving from cross-community consent to the ethnic party with the most elected Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), the DUP leader Rev. Dr. Ian Paisley, who opposed the B/GFA, was made First Minister and Martin McGuinness, from Sinn Féin, made Deputy First Minister. Under a power sharing Executive led by both ethnic extremes, this new Assembly aimed to make the Northern Ireland "peace process" a global success despite the initial setbacks. Having received almost \$2 billion from "global foreign investment" this new Executive determined a focus on economic transformation would take precedence over "community relations" (Nagle 2009). At first this approach appeared successful and under the political leadership of the DUP and Sinn Féin, between 2007–2010, the Northern Ireland Executive completed the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration process with all the main paramilitary groups who had been violently active during the conflict. Then, with a focus on economic regeneration, spatial dimensions began to transform the everyday territorial spaces for those people, and places, that suffered the most from the violence. As Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) increasingly changed the built environment so too did its neoliberal practices transform the politics of life for those attempting to take opportunities arising from the peace at the everyday level.

With the peace process in Northern Ireland governed both by the United Kingdom (U.K.) and the Irish Republic, mediated by membership of the European Union (E.U.), Roger Mac Ginty describes the peacebuilding experience of the polity as "an example of liberal peace-lite" (2011, 13). Namely, that Northern Ireland, unlike many other so-called post-conflict states, was reintegrating into, rather than rebuilding, a democratic system of government. One that linked the Northern Ireland Assembly into other systems of government, in London, Dublin, Brussels and Washington. The E.U. in providing funding for various peace projects, shaped the approach to the projects carried out through its policies and norms (Hughes 2009). Implementing its monitoring and evaluation processes, E.U. policies in Securitization, Governance, Democratization and Development transformed contested spaces, and ethno-national power imbalances, across Northern Ireland and the Border Regions within the Irish Republic.

As the B/GFA provided a balance of views on the status of the polity, either as part of the U.K. or a part of Ireland, the place of Northern Ireland within the E.U. became a seemingly less contested space. This allowed for the possibility, if the majority wishes it, to hold a referendum and vote on the region joining Ire-

land. This unclear resolution formed the “constructive ambiguity” of the Agreement (Dixon 2002, 736). It also formed the transition of Northern Ireland from a 1970s British Welfare State model of government into a twenty-first century global neoliberal marketplace.

As Roland Paris (1997) established, within this global system of liberal internationalism, peacebuilding would have its limitations. While not under United Nations governance, the B/GFA followed the liberal international model of peacebuilding by regenerating people, place and property through the market. This neoliberal approach appeared successful as, with the restoration of power sharing in 2007, a functioning government was in place, the paramilitaries decommissioned and, despite the 2008 collapse in the Global Banking system, between 2010–2015 the number of millionaires in Northern Ireland increased by 40% (Barclays 2016). And yet, despite the peacebuilding funding and programs, research demonstrated that 28.5% of the population, that is 213,000 people, out of a population of 1.82 million, were suffering mental illness as a direct result of the conflict, some of it transmitted transgenerationally (O’Neill et al. 2015). This type of transgenerational trauma, which epidemiological studies identified as “a lifetime prevalence of mental health disorders” (Bunting et al. 2012) then contributed towards a form of societal PTSD, where “a substantial proportion of the adult population continue to suffer the adverse mental health effects of chronic trauma exposure” (Ferry et al. 2014). Therefore, and not surprisingly, the rates of suicides doubled after 1998, placing Northern Ireland among the 15 countries with the highest suicide rates in the world (Yeginsu 2019). Within this contested space, through the double transition to peace and neoliberalism, old identity tags, of Catholic or Protestant coexist in a new contested space between haves and have nots. And in Loyalist communities, the rise of a growing Catholic technocracy reinforced feelings of loss, and betrayal as working-class Protestant boys were increasingly identified as educational under-achievers (Shirlow 2012).

Within this neoliberal internationalist model, with its *mentalité* of “peace as conflict management”, after 1998, Audra Mitchell observed the creation of two “political worlds,” the Nationalist world led by Sinn Féin, and the Unionist world led by the DUP (Mitchell 2012, 202). The emergence of the two worlds reflected the constructive ambiguity of the B/GFA and allowed government to function, to promote peace and reconciliation, and to attract further FDI and global capital accumulation. However, as Mitchell (2012) noted, rather than produce a shared space and a positive peace this neoliberal model produced a “violent peace.” That is, through the double transition a new space opened into peace and neoliberalism, where the new political and peace industry elites got wealthy while those people and places that suffered the most from the violence were increasingly demonised, as spoilers (Stedman 1997; McCabe 2013), thereby failing to attract their share of the peace dividend. With the ability to control civil

society in the Nationalist world through the distribution of both governmental and peace funding, Sinn Féin used the DDR process to transition former political prisoners through the contested space of Northern nationalist politics from violent paramilitaries to elected politicians.

As one former Loyalist ex-combatant described it, this process was “like a conveyor belt, from prison to parliament” (Personal Communication, October 2014). From policing the sectarian interfaces and stopping recreational rioting between local youths to overseeing the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin ensured what had been a violent and contested Nationalist world remained stable and peaceful. However, due to the divisions between the DUP, who had opposed the B/GFA, and the Loyalist paramilitaries who had supported it, there was no conveyor belt from prison to parliament in the Unionist world. Instead, and despite emerging as a grassroots “party of protest” (Tonge et al. 2014) the DUP employed a British class-based *mentalité* to governing their post-conflict Unionist world. While using the peace dividend, and the neoliberal marketplace, to increase capital accumulation through acts of public malfeasance (McBride 2019), in a bid to establish a new order, the DUP used DDR to reimagine loyalist ex-combatants as paramilitary peacekeepers who could maintain internal order in marginalised working-class Unionist communities in return for peace funding to keep local Loyalist paramilitary leaders in paid employment. To the outside world, with political stability, an absence of overt paramilitary violence, growing FDI and reconciliation, this liberal internationalist model of peacebuilding was valorized (White 2013). Yet, as John Nagle (2009) discovered, with closer inspection at the everyday level the neoliberal model of peacebuilding emerging in Northern Ireland looked more like a Potemkin Village rather than a positive peace.

3. Political Transformations in Post-Agreement Northern Ireland

Crucially, the two political worlds that emerged did not provide the resolution of long-standing issues among the local population. For many Nationalists, with Sinn Féin in power, it was hoped they would hold the British to account and deliver a peace dividend that would help heal the hurt from centuries of colonization and 70-years of ethno-sectarian domination by Ulster unionists. Similarly, for many Unionists, with the DUP in power, they too planned for a peace dividend that would usher in a more just British society: where all British citizens in Northern Ireland would experience the same quality of life as any other part of the U.K. Based on this ethnonational power sharing paradigm, of conflict managing a series of geo-spatial transformations, through an international liberal peacebuilding program, both the DUP and Sinn Féin aimed to maintain their dominant electoral positions, and post-conflict political stability, at the local

level. However, managing this space, between the needs of ethno-national party politics and the needs of people, at the community level, proved challenging, particularly in Loyalist communities where questions were increasingly asked, “where is the peace dividend” (Knox 2016)? As the peace stabilized, after 2007, those neighborhoods with high rates of unemployment and poverty that had experienced the most violence remained the most deprived despite the peace-building efforts to transform these areas. And, with the failure to transform the quality of life of those people, and places, who suffered the most from the violence rather than experiencing positive conflict transformation the double transition meant that some segments of society felt left out of the top-down peace process. This was also reflected in the lived landscape where communities in disadvantaged areas had prominent markings of space, through flags, symbols and walls or barriers separating them from the other community.

Therefore, and not surprisingly, in 2012, “the Flags Dispute” erupted as Loyalists objected to Belfast City Council restricting the flying of the Union Flag on U.K. government buildings to the minimum of 18 days (Nolan et al. 2014). Once again, the symbolic marking of space reflected identity dynamics as the council’s Nationalist councillors supported the change and the Unionist councillors opposed the move. Moreover, the Flags Dispute reinvigorated many groups and activists in Unionist communities who were dissatisfied with the failure of the peace process to deliver the health and security of a safe living space many had been promised in 1998. As this dissatisfaction grew, a series of scandals involving the DUP exposed issues of malfeasance in Public Office, from the Red Sky social housing maintenance scandal to the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) property sell-off and the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme (McBride 2019). Cast in this negative light, and attempting to regain political control and moral authority, the DUP saw the upcoming Brexit Campaign, in 2016, as a means to re-establish their Loyalist credentials at both the local and national level. Viewed, by many, as a calculated move, this DUP strategic development exposed a wider space, of more challenging territories ahead.

As the issue of Brexit developed between the U.K. and the E.U. the DUP played a central role in taking the U.K. out of Europe, first through the formal agreement to support the Theresa May Government between 2017–2019 and then by supporting the European Research Group (ERG) to have Boris Johnson elected Prime Minister and get Brexit done, in January 2020. However, following Brexit, the DUP discovered an internal border between Great Britain and Northern Ireland was the only way to resolving the legal withdrawal of the U.K. from the E.U. and meet the international commitments given by London in the B/GFA. Rather than re-militarize the border between Ireland and Northern Ireland as many DUP supporters hoped, Unionists now found the DUP had led them into a dead-end. The ensuing Windsor Framework (2023) concluded that the U.K. withdrawal from the E.U. ensured Northern Ireland would remain outside Brexit Britain and still within the European Single Market.

With Sinn Féin historically, and ideologically, opposed to the E.U., the 2016 Brexit vote was seen as an “internal” British matter and the party did not campaign for the vote. Embroiled in its own scandals, where, following the murders of two former Provisional IRA members, in 2015, the Northern Ireland Executive’s Fresh Start report (Alderdice et al. 2016) confirmed that all republican and loyalist “paramilitary groups continued to exist” despite claims they had disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated back into the community. The report also noted that, in assessing those groups on ceasefire, while they were no longer engaging in “retaliatory cycles of sectarian attacks” they continued to “engage in violent activity to intimidate and exercise control in communities where they operate” (Alderdice et al. 2016, 8). In addition, the report noted that such is their standing within their communities the police regularly “engage with the individuals concerned to ensure peaceful outcomes to parading disputes and other issues, including flags and anti-social behaviour even though they are members of proscribed organisations” (Alderdice et al. 2016, 10). Then, in 2017, the Sinn Féin Deputy-First Minister Martin McGuinness resigned due to the DUP First Minister Arlene Foster refusing to step aside and allow an inquiry into RHI and the Northern Ireland power sharing Assembly collapsed. In the absence of local government, Sinn Féin changed position on the E.U. and opposed Unionist attempts to have the whole U.K. Brexit from the E.U. As this local crisis developed into an international issue, Sinn Féin entered a new space as it positioned itself to become “a government in waiting” following the 2022 Assembly election which saw it overcome the DUP and become the largest ethno-national party and eligible to become First Minister in accordance with changes made in the St. Andrews Agreement (2006).

However, while the conflict management of these ethno-national parties dominated the news cycle what went un-reported was the biopolitical impact this political uncertainty produced for the post-conflict population at the everyday level. In December 2019, for the first time in British history 20,000 health and social care workers, including about 15,500 nurses, went on strike in Northern Ireland (Carrol 2019). This outcome exposed the limits of neoliberal peace-building and threatened to undermine the ethno-national conflict management *mentalité* employed to govern people, property and peace after 2007. Having suffered a significant decrease in electoral support in the December 2019 Westminster election, which saw Boris Johnson elected Prime Minister, in January 2020, both DUP and Sinn Féin leaders were forced to recognise they were losing their core ethnic base and announced they would be reforming the Northern Ireland Executive. However, soon after, the global COVID-19 pandemic descended to transform the political landscape and Sinn Féin re-established their electoral support and emerge, in 2022, as the biggest ethno-national party in the Assembly and therefore eligible to make their leader in the Assembly First Minister (designate). As the DUP continued to oppose any Brexit settlement between

the U.K. and the E.U. the Assembly was not re-formed at the time of writing in Spring 2023, the differing political goals between DUP and Sinn Féin has meant the Executive remains suspended once again and showing little resolve to move towards a reconciled and shared future.

The latest dysfunction has prompted some Belfast residents to express their frustration with the political stalemate and the concern that violence could erupt again. In an interview for the *Globe and Mail*, a West Belfast resident notes that “If things keep going the way they are and nothing happens, I think people will come out on the streets again,” she said. “I think paramilitaries are going to be given the chance to come back. That’s the worst thing” (Waldie 2023). This sense of potential violence, and wishes to avoid it, do shape the types of practices that individuals engage in and particularly, the efforts to mark spaces with symbols of their own communities.

3.1 Everyday Peace Practices and Spatial Tactics

As such, the everyday and spatial turns in peacebuilding literature provide important insights into the quality of peace that has been achieved in Northern Ireland. Extant literature on the Northern Irish context provides important insights into the way the local population navigates through these lived spaces, of neoliberal peacebuilding and paramilitary peacekeeping. Oliver Richmond and Audra Mitchell (2012) draw on Michel de Certeau’s tactics to point to what they term “everyday agency” in response to dominant peacebuilding approaches. They note that the tactics are an appropriation of the different strategies by ordinary citizens. Thus, these tactical negotiations of everyday spaces are shaped by the lived experiences of these communities and reflect their understandings of the spaces and their communities within these spaces. As such, external peacebuilding strategies that attempt to impose particular understandings of these spaces, or to transform them according to their own imaginings or interests, are often disconnected from local practices of meaning-making that the local population finds most relevant in their everyday life. Yet this is not to suggest that these everyday spaces are completely disconnected from the national, regional or global processes. In post-conflict societies, national, regional and global dimensions also shape the local context. Dominant peacebuilding mentalities, like neoliberal peacebuilding, attempt to embed a particular vision of the polity, its institutions and symbols, into the daily lives of the population. However, these dominant peacebuilding approaches tend to depoliticize the everyday, overlooking the importance of contestation and the agency of the local population (Richmond 2011; Richmond & Mitchell 2012). This dominance is visible when examining citizens’ mental maps of the territory that at times contradict the official maps and boundaries. For example, in Belfast the actual spatial activity of ordinary citizens is shaped by perceptions of the areas as safe, or not, to members of their

group. Individuals largely stay in areas deemed safe or acceptable for that community.

However, peacebuilding strategies that aim to transform spaces traditionally seen as the domain of one group to more inclusive spaces are in turn faced with subtle ways of maintaining the previous divisions. Mitchell and Kelly (2011) assess the extent to which the focus on creating “peaceful spaces” in Belfast have impacted the spatial sense of the conflict. They found that the various peacebuilding initiatives aimed at transforming conflictual spaces have, in fact, created “bubble spaces” that often remain removed from the issues in surrounding areas. Indeed, sometimes they are designed in ways that allow those using the spaces to remain oblivious to the “conflictual” spaces that surround the “bubbles.” Nonetheless, these spaces are impacted by the local patterns of social divisions and thus contest the vision of these spaces as peaceful or integrated. In some areas of Northern Ireland, there are very clear barriers or walls signifying division. Scholars of political geography exploring the significance of such divisions note that walls can represent both “conflict infrastructures” as well as “infrastructures of peace” (Till et al. 2013, 52). As such they emerge as part of the struggle between the communities for “control of the symbolic landscape” (Dowler 2013, 60), yet also as responses to the broader goals of transformation. The negotiation of such contested spaces is contrasted in two examples that follow the Girdwood Regeneration Project and the Cathedral quarter, both located in Belfast. Both are attempts to provide transformations of local dynamics but are interestingly subsumed by everyday political life in a context where there remains an incomplete sense of peace.

3.2 Girdwood Regeneration Project and the Cathedral Quarter

Situated in North Belfast, which experienced the worst of the sectarian violence (Shirlow & Murtagh 2006), the Girdwood Regeneration project attempted to impose a new structural space not just onto a local territorial patchwork quilt of abutting and violent sectarian interfaces but onto the whole Northern Ireland peace process itself. Following “the Holy Cross dispute” in 2001 the Northern Ireland Executive commissioned the Dunlop Report (Dunlop et al. 2002), which authorised the a cross-departmental body, to consult and co-design a community regeneration project that would transform both the built and social environment of North Belfast and Northern Ireland. Based on a former British military installation, adjacent to Crumlin Road gaol, the Girdwood Project aimed, not only to regenerate that part of North Belfast which included some of the worst derelict sectarian interfaces but produce an exemplar project that would become a global visitor attraction. While Crumlin Road gaol, under government ownership, was transformed into a global visitor attraction the surrounding territorial expanse of Girdwood remained a work in progress. From the outset, the space

was contested as it offered the local Nationalist population an opportunity to build new houses, a key priority. However, with an aging and decreasing Unionist population, many local unionists saw any building of housing more as a loss of their territory rather than a social prerequisite in establishing a just society.

Therefore, work with the local communities became problematic and with “vested” interests struggling to gain political power, and financial control, “the Girdwood Hub” project emerged more as a necessity to either spend or lose E.U. Peace funding. Managed by Belfast City Council (BCC), “the Hub” followed international models of “best practice” to co-design and co-produce a “shared space” on one of Northern Ireland’s most dangerous interfaces (BCC 2011). This expansive facility provided a diversity of sports, health and community facilities, spread between the divided ethno-sectarian areas of unionist Lower Oldpark and nationalist Cliftonville. However, while the Hub received much publicity, and did attract visitors and users, the prevailing and underlying socio-economic conditions of the local community did not change.

Rather than experience peace and an economic benefit, local residents saw the regenerated space become another meeting place for gangs of young people to confront each other, often violently. While this neoliberal regeneration project did transform a derelict space, empirically, it did not transform the quality-of-life for those who lived there and instead of transforming the everyday quality-of-life of local people, local community groups who had co-designed and co-produced the Girdwood Hub were now faced with new challenges. Having agreed to the physical regeneration of the area these groups were now tasked with securitizing the shared space and received government funding from the Department of Justice Peace Walls Programme to employ interface workers and implement community peacebuilding approaches to reduce sectarian violence at the interface. With much of the local Unionist community refusing to take ownership of the Girdwood Hub, at the everyday level, the project appears to have stalled in its neoliberal objective to kick-start the regeneration process of North Belfast. This failure of the Girdwood Hub to transform both the direct violence and structural violence that impoverishes those living there demonstrated the contested mentalities of peace shaping the regeneration process, from the E.U. objective of market-led entrepreneurialism to the community objective of emancipatory peacebuilding that would improve their quality-of-life through the production of basic human needs.

In contrast, the Cathedral Quarter, situated a half mile down the Crumlin Road from Girdwood, is an increasingly recognised vibrant area full of pubs and restaurants and has become a shared space for both the local and the global community. In addition, and through an overspill of arts and cultures in the Cathedral Quarter, a new space, of alterity, has also opened for the LGBTQ+ community just across the road from the Cathedral Quarter. With this growing shared space linking into the relocated Ulster University, and its 15,000 students, now

positioned on the regenerated land of old Sailortown and the Docks, the Cathedral Quarter has become a shared space for all Northern Ireland communities.

With this international, and local, success the Cathedral Quarter appears to have broken down many of the old barriers that once prohibited the sharing of space in Northern Ireland society. The area shows possibilities for neutral zones in highly contested cities and communities. These areas offer ordinary people places to interact with different communities and individuals of different backgrounds. However, the challenge is that aside from a select group of relatively young, urban individuals, most ordinary people return to live in areas that are segregated. Still, the neutral zones are important buffers to constant division and can be important for those who strive to establish a more inclusionary view of their community. The Cathedral Quarter also portrays an interesting engagement with the scalar analysis of space (Hameiri & Jones 2018), in the way the space is tied to global identity. Yet rather than simply a top-down imposition, this allusion to globalism is a way for some local actors to reassert agency over identity that is often reinforced through the official politics and local activities presented as divisive. This imposition can be seen on the edge of the Cathedral Quarter where the nationalist Carrick Hill area, existent since the 1700s, has seen vacant land allotted for social housing to meet local community needs being redesignated for property developers to construct high rise student accommodation that will destroy a historic neighbourhood and its vibrant community spirit. Here is to be found the everyday juxtaposition of the (neo)liberal peace where the needs of the local and international political elites to develop such entrepreneurial activities over-riding the everyday needs of the local community seeking the basic human need of affordable housing and a supportive community in which to live in peace.

4. Conclusion

The article sought to highlight the enmeshed ways that political decisions, economic realities and local practices interact and offer ways of coping for the ordinary citizens. Rather than seeing the everyday as removed from the party politics and the broader geopolitical context, we aimed to show that the everyday is entangled with the broader transformations that are occurring. Further study and examination of this entanglement in Northern Ireland is necessary. Observing the spatialized everyday peace politics shows the limitations to peacebuilding efforts that do not account for localized understandings of different communities. At the same time, it is important not to view these everyday practices in isolation from the governance of the post-Agreement polity.

Simply, local practices of demarcating spaces through use, such as walking in certain areas and avoiding others or using one entrance and not another, need to be examined within wider dynamics. Practices of place-making can provide

a sense of security and predictability in contexts where there is a high degree of uncertainty about the future of the polity. They can also be enforced sometimes through discrete or invisible ways by local strongmen and community norms. As such, the practices are not necessarily emancipatory. Indeed, some of the everyday peacebuilding practices can promote injustice and be manipulated by various actors (Ware & Ware 2022). The practices are just one way to negotiate the everyday life in these contexts. In supporting Séverine Autesserre (2021), and her global assessment of peacebuilding, we believe, if it is to move beyond the current “crisis” a new “spatial turn” is required, towards biopolitical peacebuilding (Brennan 2022), one that builds peace from the body up rather than trickles down to those most in need. Ultimately, a focus on these everyday practices and the ways in which communities engage with the peacebuilding process is critical to examining the condition of the peace that has been achieved and the peace agreements that have been key to the process. Overlooking them provides an incomplete picture of the realities on the ground.

References

- Alderdice, J., McBurney, J. & Williams, M., 2016. *Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland*. Northern Ireland Executive, Belfast.
- Autesserre, S., 2021. *The Frontlines of Peace, an Insider's Guide to Changing the World*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Barclays, 2016. All Regions of UK More Prosperous Than Last Year, 30 September 2016, <https://home.barclays/news/2016/08/all-regions-of-uk-more-prosperous-than-last-year/> (accessed 11 March 2023).
- BCC – Belfast City Council, 2011. The Girdwood Community Hub – A New Beginning, September 2011, <https://minutes.belfastcity.gov.uk/documents/s33560/Appendix%202%20Girdwood%20Community%20Hub.pdf> (accessed 11 March 2023).
- Brennan, S., 2022. Biopolitical Peacebuilding. *Peacebuilding* 10 (1), 1–16, DOI: 10.1080/21647259.2021.1895610.
- Brigg, M. & George, N., 2020. Emplacing the Spatial Turn in Peace and Conflict Studies. *Cooperation and Conflict* 55 (4), 409–420.
- Bunting, B. P., Murphy, S. D., O’Neill S. M. & Ferry, F. R., 2012. Lifetime Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders and Delay in Treatment Following Initial Onset: Evidence from the Northern Ireland Study of Health and Stress. *Psychological Medicine* 42 (8), 1727–1739.
- Carroll, R., 2019. Northern Ireland Nurses Strike Over Pay and Patient Safety. *The Guardian*, 18 December 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/dec/18/northern-ireland-nurses-strike-over-pay-and-patient-safety> (accessed 11 March 2023).
- Dixon, P., 2002. Political Skills or Lying and Manipulation? The Choreography of the Northern Ireland Peace Process. *Political Studies* 50, 725–741.
- Dowler, L., 2013. Cracks in the Wall: The Peace-Lines of Belfast, Northern Ireland. *Political Geography* 33, 60–61.
- Dunlop, J., Adams, R. & Toner, T., 2002. *North Belfast Community Action Project: Report of the Project Team*. Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, Belfast.

- Ferry, F., Bunting, B., Murphy, S., O'Neil, S., Stein, D. & Koenen, K., 2014. Traumatic Events and Their Relative PTSD Burden in Northern Ireland: A Consideration of the Impact of the 'Troubles'. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 49 (3), 435–446.
- Galtung, J., 1976. *Peace, War and Defence, Essay's in Peace Research Volume II*. Christian Ejlers, Copenhagen.
- Guerra-Barón, A., 2017. Biopower and International Relations. *International Studies: International Studies Association and Oxford University Press*, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.80.
- Hameiri, S. & Jones, L., 2018. Against Hybridity in the Study of Peacebuilding and Statebuilding. In J. Wallis, L. Kent, M. Forsyth, S. Dinnen & S. Bose (eds.) *Hybridity on the Ground in Peacebuilding and Development: Critical Conversations*. ANU Press, Canberra, 99–112.
- Hughes, J., 2009. Introduction: The Making of E.U. Conflict Management Strategy –Development through Security. *Ethnopolitics* 8 (3/4), 275–285.
- Knox, C., 2016. Northern Ireland: Where Is the Peace Dividend?. *Policy and Politics* 44 (3), 485–503.
- Mac Ginty, R., 2011. *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Mac Ginty, R., 2021. *Everyday Peace: How So-called Ordinary People Can Disrupt Violent Conflict*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- McBride, S., 2019. *Burned*. Merrion Press, Kildare.
- McCabe, C., 2013. The Double Transition. *Social Justice Review*. Trademark, Spring Belfast.
- McGarry, J. & O'Leary, B., 2003. *The Northern Ireland Conflict, Consociational Engagements*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Mitchell, A., 2012. *Lost in Transformation, Violent Peace and Peaceful Conflict in Northern Ireland*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Mitchell, A. & Kelly, L., 2011. Peaceful Spaces? "Walking" through the New Liminal Spaces of Peacebuilding and Development in North Belfast. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 36 (4), 307–325.
- Nagle, J., 2009. "Potemkin Village: Neo-Liberalism and Peace-Building in Northern Ireland?" *Ethnopolitics* 8 (2), 173–190.
- Nolan, P., Bryan, D., Dwyer, C., Hayward, K., Radford, K. & Shirlow, P., 2014. *The Flag Dispute: Anatomy of a Protest*. Queens University, Belfast.
- O'Neill, S. et al., 2015. *Towards a Better Future: The Trans-generational Impact of the Troubles on Mental Health*. Commission for Victims and Survivors, Belfast.
- Paris, R., 1997. Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism. *International Security* 22 (2), 54–89.
- Richmond, O. P., 2011. *A Post-Liberal Peace*. Routledge, London.
- Richmond, O. P., 2016. *Peace Formation and Political Order in Conflict Affected Societies*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Richmond, O. P. & Mitchell, A., 2012. *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Shirlow, P., 2012. *The End of Ulster Loyalism?* Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Shirlow, P. & Murtagh, B., 2006. *Belfast – Segregation: Violence and the City*. Pluto Press, London.
- Stedman, S., 1997. Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes. *International Security* 22 (2), 5–53.
- Till, K. E. et al., 2013. Interventions in the Political Geographies of Walls. *Political Geography* 33, 52–62.

- Tonge, J., Braniff, M., Hennessey, T., McAuley, J. W. & Whiting, S. A., 2014. *The Democratic Unionist Party from Protest to Power* Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Waldie, P., 2023. Northern Ireland Sees Growing Angst about Sectarian Strife and Brexit. *The Globe and Mail*, 2 January 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-northern-ireland-election-brexite/> (accessed 20 February 2023).
- Ware, A. & Ware, V. A., 2022. Everyday Peace: Rethinking Typologies of Social Practice and Local Agency. *Peacebuilding* 10 (3), 222–241.
- White, T. J. (ed.), 2013. *Lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process*. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison (WI).
- Yeginsu, C., 2019. “I Wanted to Die:” Northern Ireland Confronts a Suicide Crisis. *New York Times*, 2 December 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/01/world/europe/northern-ireland-suicide.html> (accessed 20 February 2023).