Reconciliation in a World of Diversity:
Looking for a Shared Future in the Local Context of Post-Conflict Belfast

Final thesis – Bachelor project 2012-2013
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"Happiness can exist only in acceptance."
- George Orwell (1903 – 1950)

Acknowledgements

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Spirit of Belfast on Arthur Sq. by Dan George (2009) – Artist : "I wanted the coloured lighting to reflect the texture and lightness of linen, while the metal reflects the strength and beauty of shipbuilding,"[1][2]

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[1] Source: BBC News: 'Artist to capture Belfast spirit'
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/7118968.stm (viewed 28-06-2013).

1. Introduction

"Men hate each other because they fear each other, and they fear each other because they don't know each other, and they don't know each other because they are often separated from each other." - Martin Luther King (1958)

"If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity." - John F. Kennedy (1963)

Diversity is a common characteristic of the world around us that tends to increase within societies due to globalising processes. This is because of the compression of the world and the intensification of worldwide social relations where ordinary citizens can be influenced and imagine themselves as being a part of events happening worldwide. Due to this intensification of worldwide connections, made possible by the current options surrounding communication and travel technologies, notions of space and distance have become more and more abstract in the current interconnected globalised world. As a result, migration has become easier and societies are often composed of ethnic Others whom used to live miles away (Eriksen 2007:4-5; Kearny 1995:548; Kinnvall 2004:742-3; Robertson 1992:8). People cope with this in many different ways as it affects the way people perceive and identify themselves (Kinnvall 2004:742). The quote by Martin Luther King above shows that diversity can result in mistrust and misunderstanding between people and groups as long as they do not get into contact with each other. This goes hand in hand with the second quote that states that as differences between people will always exist, we need to open up space for diversity in a welcoming way so that these differences are perceived equally, thus removing the possible dangers resulting from diversity. Diversity, however, is not only caused by globalisation processes as this can for instance also be caused by (internal) conflicts possibly dividing a society.

This study will focus on diversity within the local context of post-conflict Belfast, Northern Ireland. Diversity in general is not something specific to the case of Northern Ireland, but the strong sense of sectarianism that is still present in this post-conflict society, however, is. This is an indication that Northern Irish society is not only divided by globalisation processes that enforce phenomena like multiculturalism, but more importantly, by a former identity conflict, namely the so-called "Troubles" that went on from 1969 until 1998 which led to the deepening of already existing entrenched divisions within two conflicting identities in society. Expressions of issues that were at stake during this conflict

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[2] All pictures in this thesis photographed and owned by authors, Ilse Korving and Nathalie van der Aar, unless mentioned otherwise.

that officially ended fifteen years ago are still present in Belfast today. Recent riots and protests due to the political decision to reduce the number of days the British Union flag flies above Belfast city hall[3] is a clear example of this since old conflicting identities were stirred up. Identity thus remains a sensitive subject within Northern Ireland. This sensitivity has impacted the course of this research greatly, which will be further explained below.

From an interdisciplinary approach of cultural anthropology as well as conflict studies, this research will look at the themes of 'reconciliation' and 'unity and diversity' that are present in the context of post-conflict Belfast. That is to say, reconciliation, as a peace building process that tries to bring unity in a society divided by conflict (Bloomfield 2006:12), has been particularly studied in the current socio-economic and political milieu of Belfast which has been influenced by The Troubles but also by a multitude of cultures. Attention has also been paid to the way this current context influences the process of reconciliation. By specifically looking at how different organisations try to promote peace and reconciliation in this particular context and in what ways unity and/or diversity are dealt with so that antagonistic relationships between (former) enemies disappear, we want to make recommendations on where the reconciliation process can be improved. Furthermore, this study may contribute to the debate whether these type of reconciling processes, namely from a conflict studies approach, are also applicable to diverse and possibly divided societies in general, like societies characterised by multicultural diversity. This will be done using not only theories on unity and diversity, but also theories on identity, identification processes, reconciliation and corresponding processes like negotiating identity. The question that is central to this research is: How do different reconciliation organisations try to pursue unity and/or acceptance of diversity through their activities and goals in the current socio-economic and political context in Belfast?

So, studied here is the way organisations at different levels, especially on the local level, try to help move away from a violent past where Catholic and Protestant identities were more prominent towards a shared future and what role the current local context has within this process. A rough distinction has been made by the researchers between different approaches of peace and reconciliation organisations, namely direct and indirect. The direct approach, as we understand and define this, is an approach where sectarian attitudes, behaviour and other conflict related problems are being addressed and tried to be solved with explicit acknowledgement of the problems. The vehicles used to do this are often dialogue,

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[3] See for example the BBC News: 'National identity still a source of deep division in Northern Ireland'. Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20951202, viewed on: 20-01-2013, last updated on 08-01-2013.

discussions and conversations about the issues, but the direct approach can also be used in a broader sense, for example by writing and improving governmental policies surrounding the topic or spreading more information on sectarianism and other conflict related issues like traumas. With an indirect approach we mean that issues of sectarianism and racism, as well as other types of discrimination, are addressed in an indirect manner by means of non-conflict related activities and platforms. Different tools that are used to do this are among others media and creative activities, like (internet)radio, theatre, music and games. By doing this, we want to research whether a different approach also leads to other differentiations, like a different organisational structure, different participant groups or different goals for reaching a more reconciled future.

As is stated above, the high sensitivity around identity issues impacted this research greatly. Instead of focussing on the current socio-economic and political context, this research was first set up to analyse participants of peace and reconciliation organisations. The interest was to find out if and how the two roughly different approaches of organisations would also impact the people that take part in these activities differently, whether this would have been demographic, like age and gender, or whether this would perhaps also lead to differences in the way participants identify and/or perceive themselves and others by taking part herein. The high sensitivity around identity issues, however, made it for the authors, as two rather inexperienced fieldworkers, very difficult and nigh impossible to get into close contact with participants of most reconciliation organisations. Since sensitive topics related to conflicting identities, e.g. sectarianism in the workplace, are often – directly or indirectly – addressed, organisations want to create a safe space or environment where people feel free to say what they think and do what they want without being judged or criticised. Therefore, access to activities of these organisations were often denied to us in order to protect participants and indirectly also the possible progress they had made so far in trying to reach reconciliation. Besides realising that we would not be able to get our necessary data for answering all of our former research questions about these participants, it also made us more aware of the vulnerability of the reconciliation process and the high tensions that are still present in this society. As a result, the focus of this research shifted towards the current local socio-economic and political context in which sectarian elements are still very much present, whether this would be spatial segregation by means of peace walls, within segregated education or the still existing link between the conflict and social and economic deprivation in certain areas of Belfast. This study is thus complementary in nature in two different ways. Besides the distinction that has been made in direct and indirect approaches to pursue

reconciliation amongst organisations, more importantly, two aspects of the same phenomenon are also studied here, namely the pursuit of reconciliation by organisations and the influence of the current socio-economic and political context of Belfast and Northern Ireland as a whole on this process. A deliberate choice has been made not to conduct a comparative research, since we were aware of the difficulties to measure the effects of activities that aim to stimulate reconciliation. We therefore also did not aim to determine if organisations succeed in reconciling different groups as it is almost impossible to assess levels or reconciliation, especially when looking at small groups within a society.

This qualitative anthropological study can be divided into two main research sections: a literature study and results of fieldwork. The theoretical framework and context paragraphs below are based on a series of scientific debates and can therefore be seen as a literary research[4]. The empirical chapters, on the other hand, are derived from data that is collected by the two authors of this thesis in a fieldwork period of approximately ten weeks in Belfast[5] which have been linked to theories in the literature study. During this time, a range of different research methods and techniques were used that are further explained in Appendix III. The thesis is further structured as the following. After this introduction, the theoretical framework of this research will be addressed first, where, as is already stated above, theories on unity, diversity, identity and reconciliation and their interconnectedness will be discussed. After that, these theories will be applied to the local context of Belfast in chapter three. This will be done firstly in the context of The Troubles and afterwards in the context of post-conflict Belfast. Subsequently, three empirical chapters will follow. The first one deals with the socio-economic and political context of present-day Belfast, while the other two are focused specifically on reconciliation organisations using either a direct or indirect approach. Then, the discussion and conclusion will follow in chapter six. After the literature list, the research questions and used codes in found data will follow in Appendixes I and II. An overview of peace and reconciliation organisations and programmes that are researched here, although some more profound than others by the lack of access, just as a summary of this thesis are also presented in Appendixes IV and V.

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[4] The sources used for this literature study can be found in the literature list.
[5] This fieldwork period in Belfast, Northern Ireland, took place from 01-02-2013 until 21-04-2013.

Flag Protests in front of Belfast city hall (02-02-2013)

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Unity in Diversity

This chapter will look at the way people cope with a changing world around them where among others cultural and religious diversity increases. The focus will lie on how people identify themselves within societies not only divided by phenomena like multiculturalism but also by conflict, in particular identity conflicts. Do people in general hold on to existing ethnic or national groups that were important during the conflict or do they perhaps create new identities that are extended to this relatively new multicultural post-conflict society? What will these new identities look like and how do people shape these new identities? Or in other words, is there unity to be found within diversity?

2.1.1. Identity in Divided Societies

Even though the process of globalisation is not something new, use of the term has increased significantly in the past couple of years when describing modern societies (Robertson 1992:8). Many descriptions of this phenomenon can be found within anthropology. A key characteristic that is stressed in many definitions, is the fact that globalisation as a concept and process consists of a compression of the world and the intensification of worldwide social relations, just as consciousness of *the* world as a whole (Eriksen 2007:4; Kearny 1995:548; Kinnvall 2004:742-3; Robertson 1992:98). This can be felt among ordinary citizens as local events (real or imagined) are influenced by events happening many miles away and vice versa. Implicit in this notion is the assumption that globalisation is accelerating and deepening (Eriksen 2007:4-5; Kearny 1995:548; Kinnvall 2004:742; Robertson 1992:8). Due to this intensification of worldwide connections, made possible by the current possibilities surrounding communication and travel technologies, notions of space and distance have become more and more abstract in the current interconnected globalised world. However, as Bauman (2000) understands it, the population in this postmodern world is polarised by stratification: "Those 'high up' and 'low down' are plotted in a society of consumers along the lines of mobility – the freedom to choose where to be" (Bauman 2000:17) The 'high ups', or tourists, exist mostly only in time, because in the hyper-reality where the virtual and real are inseparable, space can be crossed instantly. The 'low downs', or vagabonds, live in the physical space, tied down, as they do not have the means to choose where to go (Bauman 2000:17).

Globalisation does not automatically mean the homogenisation of cultures. Although some aspects do become more homogeneous (e.g. the standardisation or comparability of standards where there previously were none, like the increased use of English as a foreign language (Eriksen 2007:8)), globalisation also incorporates local and regional adaptations to and resistance against these global flows (Appadurai 2003:42; Lewellen 2002:7-8). Eriksen points this out by stating that globalisation entails the organising of heterogeneity and not the production of a global uniformity (2007:10). So, due to this continuously increasing compression of *the* world, societies are forced to deal with internal and external forces that foster both the tendency towards (cultural) homogenisation as well as heterogenisation. This duality that manifests itself for instance through multicultural nations, constantly challenges individuals in the way they identify themselves as individuals, but also as part of collective identities (Robertson, 1992:98).

The fact that people are sometimes unwillingly forced to share a space with the so-called social, cultural, religious or ethnic Other, has an impact on identity issues as globalisation defies the way we define who we are and where we come from (Kinnvall 2004:742). Identity is a complex concept that is often approached from an essentialist view, as something reified or fixed (Jenkins 2008:19). Academics have been shifting away from this view as it does not take into account how the process of identification works in reality. Identification is seen as an on-going process of 'being' or 'becoming', while identity is believed to be constructed through social interaction. Jenkins (2008) emphasises that someone's identity is always multi-dimensional in the sense that it is both singular as well as plural at the same time and that you are never done with constructing your identity (2008:17). Besides the fact that people identify themselves with multiple identities that are fluid and can change over time, identities are never constructed in total abstraction since identification is also a process that can only occur in relation to others. So, identity is not something that someone *is*, but is an understanding of knowing who we are as well as knowing who other people are (Buckley & Kenney 1995:23; Jenkins 2008:18). In other words, identity is a social construct that is negotiated during social interaction when individuals move from discrete world to discrete world and is therefore constantly being redefined (Buckley & Kenney 1995:5, 23).

It is at this point that the issues of similarity and difference come into play. As is stated above, the process of identification is not fixed. Instead, it is the outcome of the constantly negotiated relationship between similarity and difference, of agreement and disagreement with social others. There can only be an 'us' if there also is a 'them' (Jenkins 2008:18, 20).

This pinpointing of someone or a group as the Other is also referred to as "othering" (Eriksen 2007:19). In other words, people help construct their identity by perceiving themselves as that which the other is not and vice versa. When looking at collective identities, it is often the difference with other social groups that is seen as the defining characteristic of that collectivity. Social boundaries between groups are created at the social spaces where groups clash, so that it is this boundary that defines the group and not the "cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth 1969 mentioned in: Sanders 2002:328). Jenkins (2008) states that by emphasising only this side of the identification process, the interdependence with 'similarity' is unjustly denied as identification requires both the similarities with in-group members and the differentiation from out-group members; both the content as well as the boundaries are thus important (Jenkins 2008:20-21).

Globalisation and associated processes like the increasing flow of economics, politics and people which enforce multicultural societies, has a major influence on identity and identification issues. This has to do with the fact that these processes foster a sense of insecurity and uncertainty among individuals and groups about their future existence which often triggers a wish to reaffirm their self-identity which is perceived to be under threat. A common response to this, is to move towards a collective identity that is believed to be able to reduce these feelings of insecurity and existential concerns and give a sense of security in return as identity can provide a sense of belonging in a community (Kinnvall 2004:741-742; Rieffer 2003:218). Two of these particularly powerful collective identities are nationalism and religion, because these collectives have the ability to communicate a sense of security, stability and simple answers that are depicted as solid and true which can create "a sense that the world really is what it appears to be" (Kinnvall 2004:742). Religion and nationalism also have other characteristics in common, like the reliance on symbols (e.g. flags or crosses) to provide a shared meaning for members of that specific collective identity or the shared characteristic of an imagined community (Anderson 1983:6 in Rieffer 2003:216). These social identities are constructed through interaction with other identities as is explained above, which causes for them to be both intrinsically exclusive as well as inclusive in nature as the content and boundaries of these identities determine whether someone is part of a particular group or not. Even the creation of new overarching identities will be formed in relation to other identities, and will therefore also be exclusive to some extent. Identifying with (new) collective identities can thus provide a sense of security, belonging and unity, but their exclusive nature will maintain diversity within modern societies today (Kinnvall 2004:742).

The next paragraph will look at how unity and diversity in relation to (collective) identity can be present in societies divided by conflict.

2.1.2. Unity and Identity in Societies divided by Conflict

Most theories related to conflict are based on Galtung's (1969) model of conflict, violence and peace, where conflict must be seen as a dynamic process, presented as a triangle, with the interplay of contradiction, attitude and behaviour, as can be seen in figure 1.1. "The contradiction refers to the underlying conflict situations [...], attitude includes the parties' perceptions and misperceptions of each other and of themselves" which in conflict are often negative and stereotypical, and conflict behaviour "is characterised by threats, coercion and destructive attacks" (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:10). All three components need to be present in a full conflict, as well as all need to be addressed in obtaining peace. The full conflict situation is defined by Mitchell as: "Any situation in which two or more social entities or 'parties' (however defined or structured) perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals" (Mitchell 1981:17). This is the definition which will be used in this study. The different types of violence, as presented in the second triangle are directly linked to the corresponding concepts in the first triangle, where direct violence ends by changing conflict behaviour, etc. These relate to the greater strategies of peacebuilding, peacemaking and peacekeeping, as shown in the third triangle. "Resolving the conflict must involve a set of dynamic changes that mean de-escalation of conflict behaviour[: peacekeeping], a change in attitudes[: peacemaking] and a transformation of the relationships or clashing of interests that are at the core of the conflict structure[: peacebuilding]" (Galtung 1969 & 1990 in Ramsbotham et al. 2011:10-11).

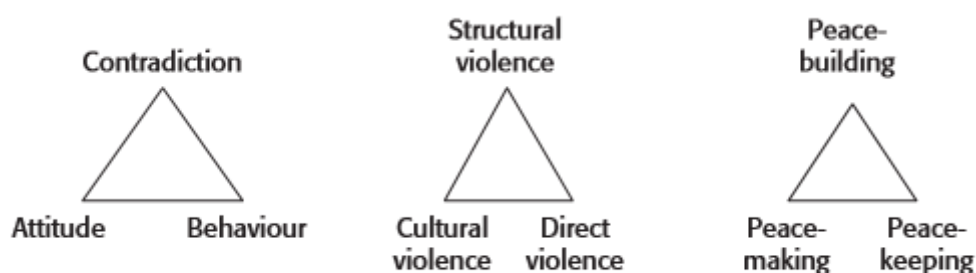Figure 1.1 Galtung's models of conflict, violence and peace [6]

Questions of unity and identity are relevant today, not only because of the above mentioned multicultural societies as a result of globalisation, but also because of the constant conflicts throughout history. This is especially the case because of the characteristics of the New Wars.

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[6] Figure 1.1 (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:10).

Since the ending of the Cold War, the nature of conflicts has drastically changed. Interstate conflicts (when a state fights another state) have nearly disappeared and made room for intrastate conflicts (where the conflict is situated within a state). Societies are left deeply damaged on many levels (e.g. political, economic and cultural) due to the violent and all-inclusive nature of these intrastate conflicts where it is often different identity groups that fight each other or the state (Killingsworth 2010:127-130; UCDP).

Violent conflict damages both the state as well as the nation, which has a direct effect on the way people identify. It transform peoples' identities dramatically, as well as the attitudes about and the relationships between groups. People tend to identify more strongly with what they perceive as their own group because of fear of domination, existential concerns and security reasons, even though it is often extremists that weaken the in-group as well by causing imbalances within the group. This can also enforce negative perceptions of others due to created identity myths about the Other that are often dehumanising (Arthur 2009:5). Finally, in the theory of the hierarchy of human needs, Maslow (1954) recognises the drive for esteem, respect and recognition as one of the basic human needs. "Since an individual's personal sense of worth is tied to the collective identifications he or she has, denial of the value of those identifications through discrimination, repression, and worse should be seen as a root cause of conflict" (Arthur 2009:5). It could intensify the tensions between the groups and its members (Arthur 2009:3-5). This is what Taylor (1994) claims as well in his 'The Politics of Recognition'. He describes that the need for recognition is often one of the driving forces behind nationalist movements and minority groups. He states that our identity in part is shaped by the recognition, the lack of recognition or the deforming recognition by others, so that when society reflects an image of our identity which is confining or demeaning, this can be damaging. By assigning different worths to the images of these groups, they might want to oppose this, demanding the respect and recognition that will make them equal to the other groups (Taylor 1994).

When conflict at its height has sparked these tensions between groups and has created a deeply divided society, a process of conflict de-escalation should be implemented, as can be seen in the following figure[7].

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[7] Originally the terms 'peacekeeping' and 'peacemaking' were the other way around, but I changed them in this figure to fit the terms Ramsbotham et al. (2011) use, which are exactly the same in content, as can be seen in chapter 6-10, but where the two terms are switched as well.
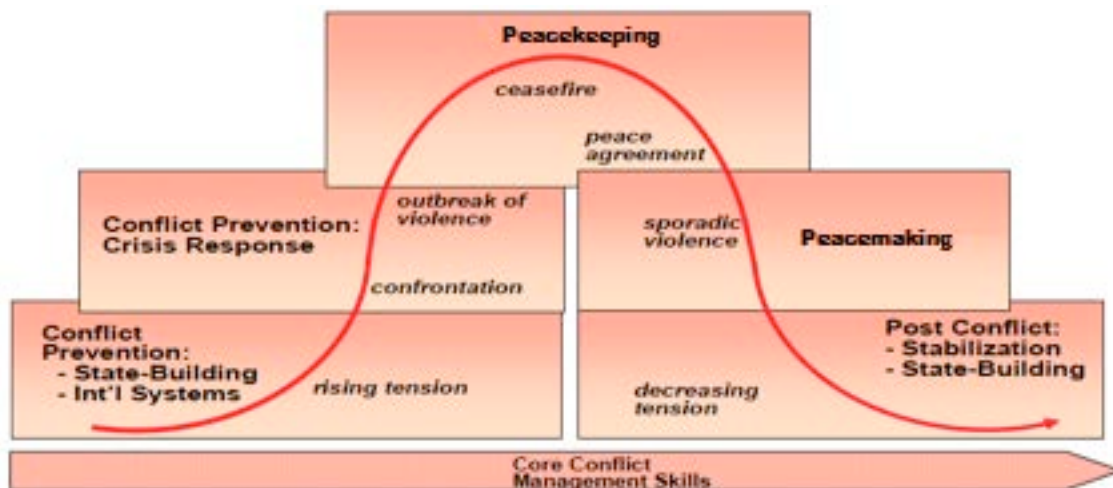
Below the curve are the stages of conflict escalation and de-escalation, whereas above the curve the stages of intervention strategies are displayed. Together they can be viewed as the peace process, of which the relationship between the components are explained in the above mentioned triangle models of Galtung (1969 & 1990). Peacekeeping is a part of the peace process called conflict containment, where the conflict is being negotiated or mediated on an elite-level, peacemaking belongs to the concept of conflict settlement, where the conflict is officially over, but sporadic violence still happens. The last phase of conflict de-escalation is conflict transformation, which is comprised of the deepest levels of structural and cultural peacebuilding in the forms of post-war reconstruction (nation- and state-building) and reconciliation (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:10-15). This last phase will be looked at in this (post-war reconstruction) and the next paragraphs (reconciliation).

To enable sustainable peace in a post-conflict society, the society must be (re)constructed. This is done through state- and nation-building processes. State-building refers to (re)establishing and strengthening self-sustaining institutions of governance within a public structure capable of delivering those essential public goods that are required to underpin perceived legitimacy and bring forth an enduring peace (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:199; von Bogdandy et al. 2005:583-584). It is premised on the recognition that accomplishing security and development in post-conflict societies in part depend on these institutions of governance (Paris and Sisk 2009:1-2 in Ramsbotham et al. 2011:199). However, in a context of widespread violence inspired by different group identities, state-building measures alone will not succeed if they don't react to the changed patterns of social identity. Processes of nation-building are essential for unity as well. Nation-building is a process of collective identity formation. It aims to produce "a cultural projection of the nation containing a certain set of assumptions, values and beliefs which can function as the

legitimizing foundation of a state structure" (von Bogdandy et al. 2005:586). It both relates to the future as well as the past in a meaningful way, by drawing on preceding traditions and institutions, redefining them in as new national characteristics. A combination of both state- and nation-building measures could stop the erosion of the nation in a divided society, sustain opportunities for re-connecting the separate identities, restore areas of cooperation and strengthen the existing institutions in order to turn them into widely accepted institutions (von Bogdandy et al. 2005:586-587). More on turning a divided society in a more unified one will follow in the paragraphs about reconciliation.

These definitions of state-building and nation-building coincide with both the ethnic and civic definition of nationalism as understood by Ignatieff (1994), as these aim to create a collective identity either on (pre-existing) ethnic or cultural fault lines or based on a newly created civil society where membership of the state determines whether you are included within society or not. Following civic nationalism, in this newly built nation, all members will be equal under the political structure as citizens. This was preceded by the political idea of the nation-state, in which the boundaries of both the nation and the state coincide, which isn't possible nowadays since many nations co-exist within one state for instance because of the earlier mentioned processes of globalisation (Ignatieff 1994:3-6; Eriksen 2002:107; Ommen 1997:143-145). Because within a multicultural society (as well as in other diverse societies, such as those divided as a result of conflict) different nationalities and their ethnic traditions exist, citizenship is found by many researchers (Eriksen 2002; Ignatieff 1994; Ommen 1997) to be able to unite a divided nation and state in an equal and solidified way. Appointment of citizenship can take place at birth, or after emigrating to a host country, after meeting the requirements made in constitutions and/or public law (e.g. proficient understanding of the language). Officially, citizens are granted public protection, privileges and rights under public law, e.g. the right to vote and the receipt of a passport. However, not all citizens are treated equally in practice. While group identities can only be made in relation to others, as is mentioned above, some will always be excluded. Even within an encompassing group identity like citizenship, "all […] are equal, but some will be more equal than others" (Orwell 1956:133). Non-citizens and minority group members will have less rights or none at all. Whether the rights of minority group members can be protected by a constitution at all is a point of discussion (Griffiths et al. 2008:31-34).

Kymlicka (1995 in Griffiths et al. 2008:32) proposes to level the playing field for national minority groups by instating a group-differentiated systems of rights: national

autonomy, poly-ethnic rights and special representation. He substantiated this system, arguing that:

> (shared) cultural values and beliefs are intrinsic to how we define our political loyalties and attachments to the nation-state. This explains why many individuals, who have suffered a long history of discrimination and abuse, have not elected to assimilate into the dominant national culture, and why many express their loyalties to the immigrant communities or ethnic groups, as opposed to the state or higher international political authority. [Kymlicka 1995 in Griffiths et al. 2008:32]

However, with this system, national minorities believe they are entitled to provincial autonomy and special representation. We could wonder how much unity this would provide in a society divided by a preceding conflict. As this isn't exactly a stable situation and civil conflict often breaks out again after sustainable peace isn't reached in an unstable society (Collier 2007 in Crocker et al. 2007:202), another way to deal with diversity and to create unity needs to be examined than just instating special group rights. Many different views on how to deal with diversity within a society exist. One could consider for example full assimilation: conforming to another or a new collective identity, such as the majority of the nation (as often is expected of migrants). This leaves the minority group without any marked cultural differences, which could possibly eliminate tensions (Eriksen 2002:20). In the next chapter, we will look at the reconciliation process that strives for unity as well, but has the very important deeply rooted difference that it needs to deal with grievances caused by war in the past, instead of only current clashes between identity groups.

2.2. Reconciliation and a Shared Identity

Here, the focus will shift towards the role of identity within reconciliation processes in a post-conflict divided society. How do societies deal with a violent past towards a possible shared future? An often pursued goal is reconciliation between (former) conflicting parties to overcome divisions grounded in conflict. First there will be looked at what reconciliation exactly is, why this is often promoted by states and in what ways this long-term process can be carried out in reality. After that, the role of identity within these processes is analysed.

2.2.1. Reconciliation Processes: Dealing with the Past

The complex concept of reconciliation is difficult to define, as it is both the goal and the process of reaching it (Cohen 2007 in de la Rey 2001:6), applicable in many situations and differing post-war contexts, as well as in other types of divided societies. Combining several definitions, we will understand reconciliation as a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future, overcoming hostility and mistrust between divided peoples. It describes a coming together, but also has a normative aspect: it is a coming together of things that should be together. Damaged relationships between peoples are central to the division in post-conflict societies, so policies surrounding promoting reconciliation need to focus on changing the relationship between parties in conflict (de la Rey 2001:3-4; Bloomfield et al. 2006:12; Daly & Sarkin 2007:3-5; Sarkin 2008:13). It's a promise of returning to a normality, as known before the conflict or disruption, or to something new and unifying, which makes it so appealing for states to pursue. It is often seen as the goal of conflict resolution, as it is a long-term process, constituting the heart of lasting transformation and positive peace, as understood by Galtung (1990) in the dichotomy of negative and positive peace, whereas negative peace is mainly the stopping of direct violence and positive peace is the overcoming of structural and cultural violence as presented in his model of conflict in figure 1.1 (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:11-12, 32, 147, 246; Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:456).

States pursue reconciliation for different reasons, sometimes simply because it's demanded, but mainly to establish truth, for justice, the value of deterrence, to consolidate the democracy and to deal with the past. It is as Lederach states: "We have to deal with the past in order to clear the ground in the present for the building of a shared future" (1997:27 in Ramsbotham et al. 2011:249). The post-conflict society is fragile and leaders are often afraid of a relapse or emergence of a new despotic situation. They will act in symbolic ways of

reconciling at a political level in the hope this has a deterrent effect, but reconciliation will only happen if this is promoted at an interpersonal or community level: , since a group identity is continuously constructed in relation to others, as is mentioned above, one must work toward changing that relationship on that level. Change cannot be forced upon interpersonal or inter-communal relations from above (Daly & Sarkin 2007:17; Jenkins 2008:19). Reconciliation does takes place at several levels of the society, and can be promoted and encouraged throughout all of them. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission distinguished four levels of reconciliation: the individual level of personal healing; the interpersonal level; the community level; and at the national level, the role of the state and non-state institutions are examined (Parmentier et al. 2008:352 in Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:456). Daly & Sarkin also recognise the international level, compassing the role of the international community (2007:96-120). The individual level of personal healing won't be examined in this text, as this is a subject more intended for psychology, but the interpersonal level and the community level will be discussed below.

At the interpersonal level, reconciliation between victims and perpetrators, several challenges arise. Reconciliation on this level is often promoted by some sort of truth commission. This is an effective way to promote reconciliation, but sometimes it just doesn't work. This is often because there's no common ground, no shared identity base between the victim and perpetrator to be able to communicate with each other effectively. Critique is voiced on truth commissions promoting interpersonal reconciliation this way, because the success of reconciliation is most often found in the character or transformation of an individual, not in the truth commission itself. However, the fact that it provides structures and common ground between the victims and perpetrators, as well as a language approaching neutral in which to communicate the past, is progress in itself (Daly & Sarkin 2007:72-79).

Establishing truth, by instating truth commissions, is a way of honouring the past and moving toward a better future. However, the relationship between reconciliation and truth is a complicated one. From the perspective of the truth commissions, the truth will set both the victim and the perpetrator free. However, what kind of truth is this? A factual or forensic truth of evidence and legal procedures, a personal or narrative truth told by victims and perpetrators, a social or dialogue truth experienced through interaction, or the reconciling restorative truth, "the kind of truth that places facts and what they mean within the context of human relationships – both amongst citizens and between the state and its citizens" (TRC Report vol. 1, 114 in Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:451)? By simply gathering evidence, opposing people won't come to understanding each other, in fact, attitudes of victims and

opposing people won't come to understanding each other, in fact, attitudes of victims and perpetrators can harden because of this truth process, strongly reducing forgiveness and empathy. However, constructing dialogue and listening between perpetrators makes the latter mentioned truth possible. It is the one worth striving for as it holds the most potential of reconciling the communities (Daly & Sarkin 2007:6; Ramsbotham et al. 2011:253-255; Sarkin 2008:14; Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:451).

Next to truth, establishing justice is an important factor in moving on to a shared future. Retributive justice – justice aimed at persecuting and punishing perpetrators – can stand in the way of reconciliation, as the latter is often subordinated to justice. The very natures of justice –punitive– and reconciliation –forgiving– seem to collide. However, they can be mutually reinforcing, in the case of restorative justice. In this, crime is reconceptualised as a violation against the victim, instead of against the state or society in an abstract way. Because of this shift, the process now focuses on the parties most affected, intended to be transformative, rebuilding and strengthening (Daly & Sarkin 2007:6, 12-14).

However, one of the problems with the above used terminology, is the undefined use of the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator'. The United Nations define victims of political violence as "anyone who has suffered harm as a result of violation of criminal laws, regardless of whether a perpetrator has been identified or is being dealt with by the criminal justice system." This may also include the immediate family or those dependent of the direct victim "and others who have suffered harm in intervening to help victims or prevent victimization" (Criminal Justice Review Group 2000:322 in Knox 2001:184). This may be a theoretically plausible definition but in practice the concept of 'victimhood' is blurred, highly contested and politicised (Bloomfield 2003:64). Within a widespread and protracted intrastate conflict, the question whether or not all of the population may have suffered and thus have become a victim of the conflict may arise. Perhaps, all can be considered perpetrators as well, as all may have "given support to acts of violence by […] covert support or at least for not vocalising opposition" (Smyth 1998:41 in Knox 2001:185). Becoming a victim and a perpetrator at the exact same time is also possible, being forced to use violence (Bloomfield 2003:64). This ambiguity becomes even more blurred if one of the conflict parties is the state, which has the monopoly of the legitimate use of force during rule (Weber 1919), allowed by law to use violence, e.g. the army (Knox 2001:184-186). In relation to the ambiguity of victims and perpetrators, different hierarchies of victimhood have risen, mostly in case specific studies. Rolston (2000) makes the distinction between deserving, undeserving and innocent victims, arguing that it would be too easy to only focus on 'innocent' victims of state

violence and not look at victimised (i.e. killed) perpetrators as well. 'Innocent' victims are understood in Nils Christie's (1986) stereotype of 'the ideal victim[8]', whereas deserving and undeserving victims may be viewed in other situations as perpetrators, by being an active member of one of the conflict parties or perhaps a combatant (Rolston 2000:*x, xi* in Knox 2001:185-186) at one point or the other. This latter brings another subject to attention, namely where the role of combatant and civilian, thus perpetrator and victim can alternate over a period of time as well (Bloomfield 2003:64). In post-conflict societies, acceptance of responsibility and clear recognition of victimhood are often contested but needed. Responsibility will often not be taken: "Peoples who believe themselves to be victims […] have an understandable incapacity to believe that they also committed atrocities. Myths of innocence and victimhood are a powerful obstacle in the way of confronting unwelcome facts" (Ignatieff in Bloomfield 2003:64). Often, penal or truth systems are not adequately constructed make sense or bring about justice in these unclear situations (Bloomfield 2003:64-65).

At the community level, reconciliation within and between local communities is perhaps better promoted. In a divided society, communities are torn apart and/or hostile. Leaders of the community have drawn up agreements, but this doesn't necessarily reconcile the peoples. Reconciliation among and within these communities rebuilds the bonds within and between them, permitting them to co-exist without one threatening the other (Daly & Sarkin 2007:82, 88-90). Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) emerge after the ending of a conflict, emerging from the grassroots as the need arises. This way they are very effective at promoting community reconciliation, as they understand these needs and weaknesses of the community (Daly & Sarkin 2007:89-90). Reconciliatory issues are sometimes addressed head on by these organisations in direct dialogue or discussion, while others promote reconciliation indirectly, through non-related activities. These could be based on anything, e.g. art projects, as long as it has any intercommunity interaction, since this will

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[8] "Christie perceptively identified six attributes that – at the level of social policy –are most likely to result in the conferring of complete, legitimate and unambiguous victim status on someone who has had a crime committed against them. Paraphrasing Christie, the six attributes are:

1 The victim is weak in relation to the offender –the 'ideal victim' is likely to be either female, sick, very old or very young (or a combination of these).
2 The victim is, if not acting virtuously, then at least going about their legitimate, ordinary everyday business.
3 The victim is blameless for what happened.
4 The victim is unrelated to and does not know the 'stranger' who has committed the offence (which also implies that the offender is a person rather than a corporation; and that the offence is a single 'one-off' incident).
5 The offender is unambiguously big and bad.
6 The victim has the right combination of power, influence or sympathy to successfully elicit victim status without threatening (and thus risking opposition from) strong countervailing vested interests." (Dignan, 2005:17)

reinforce the strengthening of a positive relations between communities (Daly & Sarkin 2007:88-91).

2.2.2. Reconciliation and Identity

As is stated in the paragraph above, reconciliation refers to the long-term process of restoring broken relationships. Hostilities and mistrust are overcome so that a society learns to live with differences without the use of violence in order to turn a divided past into a shared future (Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:456; Ramsbotham et al. 2011:246). Although not all initiatives that try to promote reconciliation focus on identity in particular, identity issues are indeed often (directly or indirectly) related to it. In order to establish peaceful relations between former enemies or conflicting parties, the relationship between them needs to be transformed from hostile and antagonistic into a more harmonious one where difference is tolerated and appreciated instead of problematised (Aiken 2010:168; Ramsbotham et al. 2011:261). Strong identity boundaries and cultural differences breed mistrust and misunderstanding between groups which can endanger a peace process as antagonistic feelings towards each other continue to exist, while feelings of uncertainty need to turn into certainty in order for a peace process to be successful. It is therefore possible that societies experience a relapse into violence even after a formal political settlement has been reached because identity boundaries have not been addressed in the reconciliation process (Maney et al 2006:84, 196).

Reconciliation is often seen as the coming together of two things, of the adjustment of these two things with the aim of matching them to a point that differences between them cease to exist so that a perfect unity is created (Daly & Sarkin 2007:181). Applied to identity, reconciliation should thus eventually results in the erosion of group boundaries, the loss of distinctive identities of former conflict parties and the emergence of a new whole as group qualities are melted together. This, however, may be too extreme for many people within diverse societies and is therefore often a futile way to pursue sustainable peace (Daly & Sarkin 2007:181-182). A growing number of scholars nevertheless do state that "reconciliation after periods of mass group-based violence in divided societies must necessarily involve an element of 'identity negotiation'" (Aiken 2010:168-169). As is explained in paragraph 2.1.1., identity is a social construction that is constantly negotiated at the social spaces where groups clash and boundaries of similarity and difference are created (Jenkins 2008:18; Buckley & Kenney 1995:1). Identity negotiation as an element of reconciliation encompasses therefore the redefining of antagonistic identities that caused for violence in the past and the (re)creation of positive interaction between these former

conflicting identities (Aiken 2010:169). Identities need to be softened and transformed to a point that they incorporate both an understanding of the self as well as a new perception of others, not as enemies but as fellow human beings (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:261). The fact that identification is an on-going process of 'being'/'becoming' and identities are constantly redefined, makes it possible to transform (group) identities to a point where differences are more accepted (Jenkins 2008:17). One of the main advocates of this vision is Herbert Kelman who states that reconciliation goes further than just restoring broken relationships; it represents the need for changing group identities (Kelman 2006:23). By doing so, feelings of mistrust and misunderstanding caused by strong identity boundaries can thus be reduced so that either diversity is accepted or a more inclusive identity is created incorporating diversity, or in other words multiple axes of identity.

Collective identity is a prime contributor to violent conflicts in divided societies. It therefore makes sense that identities need to change, at least tacitly, after identity conflicts so that relationships between former conflict parties are transformed and a possible relapse into violence is prevented (Aiken 2010:169). In order to achieve this, identities in divided societies need to be compromised through a process called 'social learning'. This entails the negotiation of identity among former enemies by "changing the motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of the great majority of society members regarding the conflict, the nature of the relationship between the parties, and the parties themselves" (Kelman 2006:22; Aiken 2010:169). A key characteristic of that change in (group) identity is the acceptance that the Other is a central component of each party's own identity which requires a certain degree of acknowledgement of the other's identity (Kelman 2006:23). This refers to the way people socially construct their identity as is explained above, namely as that which the other is not and vice versa (Jenkins 2008:18). Essential to identity negotiation within reconciliation, then, is that each party reconsiders its own identity to a point that it adapts to the identity of the other. Or in other words, the identity of the other is integrated in their own identity. By doing so, former conflict parties are able to internalise their newfound relationship which enables the gradual transformation of old conflicting attitudes to new harmonious ones towards each other (Kelman 2006:23). Intergroup barriers are reduced and understanding of the Other is obtained by bringing people together so that communication is possible and a peaceful togetherness can be created (Yanay & Lifshitz-Oron 2008:275). This is also pointed out in the quote by Martin Luther King in the introduction. He explains that misunderstanding is in the end caused by separation from each other, which can thus be reduced by getting into contact with each other.

Especially after identity conflicts, there is an urgent need for changing identities so that a relapse into violence is prevented. Instead of literally reconciling multiple identities to a point that diversity ceases to exist, an extreme approach which is difficult to achieve, incorporating processes of 'identity negotiating' and 'social learning' in the reconciliation process can be effective to promote a sustainable peace. Although a new unity does not necessarily emerge, identities are accommodated so that the transformed relationships between different groups cause for antagonistic attitudes to disappear and perceptions of the Other to be changed. Although feelings of fear and uncertainty may reappear, these processes make these relationships less vulnerable to situational changes and can therefore help ensure a stable peace (Kelman 2006:23).

Diversity and antagonistic relationships, however, are not only caused by conflict. Since reconciliation encompasses the overcoming of mistrust and hostilities that are created by strong identity boundaries, it is imaginable that this post-conflict peacebuilding process can also be applied to diversity caused by phenomena like multiculturalism. This can be done for instance by the emergence of a national unity based on citizenship where civic nationalism becomes the collective identity that supposedly unifies divided people in a nation. This collective identity, however, also results in exclusion and oppression of those who do not fit into this unity since the social and cultural space is closed for different others as is also explained in the paragraphs above. These different others are in this way thus excluded in the discourse of reconciliation (Yanay & Lifshitz-Oron 2008:275). Other alternatives therefore need to be employed in order to avoid this 'either this or that' dichotomy. Yanay and Lifshitz-Oron, for instance, propose the idea of reconciliation on the basis of friendship as this promotes movement between social and cultural identities and not the diffusion of these different identities (2008:275).

The above shows that reconciliation and the process of identity transformation go hand in hand, whether a reconciliation process is initiated after a conflict or in a diverse society due to globalisation processes. These concepts are strongly connected to issues of unity and diversity as collective or unifying identities created by reconciliation processes are intrinsically inclusive and exclusive in nature, creating a new unity but still maintaining diversity to some extent. Diversity in itself, however, is not a bad thing as long as people accept these differences without any antagonistic feelings which can be achieved by processes like 'social learning'. As John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King stated in their quotes above: by bringing people together and moving away from separation, misunderstandings about the Other are reduced so that the world can be made safe for diversity.

Church at the base of Cave Hill, Belfast's identifying mountain

3. Context

Reconciliation and Identity Formation during and after "The Troubles"

In this chapter, the specific context of post-conflict Belfast will be set out in relation to identity issues and reconciliation processes. First, "The Troubles" are briefly discussed in order to provide a historical context. After that, identity formation both during as well as after the conflict in Northern Ireland will be examined, just as the themes of unity and diversity. A specific focus is put on the importance of religion and nationalism in the leading up to the conflict. Finally, existing reconciliation processes in Belfast are examined to assess if a shared or unifying identity is pursued and in what ways.

3.1. Identity within "The Troubles"

"The Troubles" refer to a period of unrest and violence in Northern Ireland from approximately 1969 until 1998. In this intractable armed conflict, the IRA (Provisional Irish Republican Army) and the British Government could not agree on the status of Northern Ireland; whether it should remain part of the United Kingdom or become part of Ireland. During this period, the IRA carried out bombings and shootings while sectarian murders took place as well as Protestant violence. The signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998 marked the end of the conflict (Juergensmeyer 2003:37; Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Date of retrieval: 2012/12/17)).

This conflict is characterised by the complex interconnectedness of religion and nationalism within a political context since Irish nationalists, mostly Catholic, wished "to absorb all the six counties of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland" while British Protestants who had lived in Northern Ireland for generations wanted to "maintain the loyalty of the region in the British Union" (Juergensmeyer 2003:37). These are clear mutually (perceived) incompatible goals between two parties that Mitchell speaks of as being necessary in a full-scale conflict (1981: 7). Due to the different views on the role of religion within the conflict, The Troubles have been framed in many ways. Some see it as a purely religious conflict while others as an ethno-nationalist conflict or colonial struggle with religious sentiments and explain the violence on both the British Protestant as well as the Catholic Irish side to the renewed role religion came to play in the public life of Northern Ireland (Juergensmeyer 2003:37, 42-43). This intertwining of religion and nationalism is referred to by Rieffer (2003) as 'religious nationalism', indicating the fusion of nationalism and religion to the point that they are inseparable. It refers to "a community of religious people or the

political movement of a group of people heavily influenced by religious beliefs who aspire to be politically self-determining", where, among others, the influence of religious beliefs and symbols are essential to the (successful) development of the religious national movement (Rieffer 2003:225).

The roots of this division in religious nationalist identity can be found in the 17th century when the British tried to control Ireland by encouraging Scottish and English Protestants to settle and concentrate in the northern part of Northern Ireland, forcing Catholic Irish to displace in that area. The British in Northern Ireland thus already incorporated a Protestant dimension from the beginning of settlement. Due to religious discrimination and economic deprivation during that time, the Catholic dimension of Irish nationalism increased, since the Irish Catholics felt united by their religion and oppressed as a nation by the British Protestants (O'Brien 1994:11 in Rieffer 2003:223). Religious nationalism was therefore strengthened as they felt that their group identity was under threat. The religious homogeneity of the territory during Irish resistance to the British throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century made the situation also more prone for religious nationalism to evolve. Another impetus for this is the fact that the four counties of Ireland (Connaught, Leinster, Munster and Ulster) are seen as the sacred space where Saint Patrick christened the Irish into their faith (Rieffer 2003:225-226).

The importance of the interlocking of these two powerful collective identities during The Troubles indicate that the conflict was essentially an identity conflict. Multiple identities were united within two bigger unities of religious nationalist identities whose mutually exclusive natures lead to violent conflict. As is explained above, both collective identities were, and still are, constructed in relation to one another, but also give a sense of security and stability by providing a common identity for members to relate to and, moreover, offer a frame of reference in a complex world (Jenkins 2008:17; Kinnvall 2004:742; Rieffer 2003:216-218). Some authors like Poole (1983) therefore state that the source of the conflict lies within Northern Ireland itself as sentiments to either stay a part of the United Kingdom or being incorporated in Ireland came from Northern Ireland's society itself. This is because the Catholic as well as the Protestant communities are both a minority and a majority in relation to different territorial unities. Poole refers to this as the "double minority" or "double majority" (Poole 1983 in Buckley & Kenney 1995:3).

The division between Irish Catholic and British Protestant identities was enforced by the existing rule of endogamy in Ulster, which made the space for 'identity negotiation', which is important to (re)create positive relations between possible conflicting identities

(Aiken 2010:169), very restricted and in this way divided society in two. This strong distinction between two collective identities was reflected in social segregation, not only spatially like residential segregation, but also in areas like school/education and recreation. This social division, that was created by social interaction, maintained social boundaries and generated the need for distinctive cultural markers, like national flags, in order to be able to tell which person belonged to which side (Buckley & Kenney 1995:6, 9). These communities were nevertheless heterogeneous in nature. The Protestants for instance were divided by denomination (e.g. in the Presbyterian Church, the Church of Ireland and the Methodist Church), but social class and a strong existing sense of local identity (referring to the plurality of identity (Jenkins 2008:17) also enforced division within these two powerful collective identities (Bryan 2000:13-14). So, even though it seemed that society in Northern Ireland was divided by two powerful uniting collective identities, diversity not only existed between these two collectives but can also be found in their heterogeneous nature. In the next paragraph there will be examined whether Northern Ireland has now moved away from these strong existing identity boundaries that were enforced by social segregation and how identification processes have changed after 1998.

3.2. Identity and Reconciliation in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland

The ending of The Troubles was a successful example of a multilevel peace settlement as it entailed a paramilitary ceasefire, the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (or, Belfast Agreement) on 10 April 1998, as well as the development of a power sharing government (UCDP; Racioppi & O'Sullivan See 2007:361). The European Union had reinforced the peace-building process by starting up the European Union's Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (EUSSPPR). This followed a decentralised approach which focussed on civil society, which is necessary as it is mentioned above, because long-term peace-building and reconciliation requires the collaboration of not only elite level officials, but also of peace advocates and community activists. Without paying attention to the social identity dimensions of the conflict, especially at the grassroots level, it would be hardly possible to sustain a peace process (Lederach & Saunders in Racioppi & O'Sullivan See 2007:361-363) and solve the long-term consequences of the conflict: sectarianism, a divided and segregated society.

Many initiatives are committed to see this change. The Programme has been running for more than a decade, as well as several decentralised programmes (such as the PEACE III Programme Belfast), competing results are found in relation to identification processes and reconciliation. The

Streetscape of East Belfast, with characteristic 'Samson and Goliath' cranes in the background, where the harbour is.

Programme, as well as its decentralised aspects, is claiming great success, measured in the great surplus of participants, but admit the work isn't over (The Belfast Peace III Plan 2011-2013:6-15). Reconciliation will not be reached as long as there's a divide between the two communities and reconciliation can't be measured by the number of participants. The divide will stay as long as the past won't be addressed.

Baumann (2010) argues, in contradiction with what politicians claim above, that the current situation in Northern Ireland is one where political settlement has been reached, but where the process of dealing with the past isn't implemented. "Because of that, the (short-term) political achievements of the Northern Irish peace process might prove irrelevant in the long-term if the divided communities will not find a way to overcome their hostility and learn to live together." (Baumann 2010:171-172). The current politicians are very keen to ignore or leave the past alone in order to move forward with the political strengthening of progress, ignoring the clear structures of division in society. The debate about dealing with the past rose again when "recognition payment" was paid to the nearest relatives of all killed victims. Maurice Morrow from the Democratic Unionist Party [DUP] argued that not all victims are equally innocent, by stating that the tears of the mother of a killed paramilitary member and those of a mother of an innocent bystander aren't the same. This led to the politicisation of the term victimhood and the hierarchy of victims, as mentioned in the theoretical chapter. The Troubles were a conflict where the lines between civilian and military actors and identities were blurred as well, so that the implementation of truth and justice commissions, like those described above, could lead to the danger of discriminatory truth-seeking, where only those

most innocent victims would be looked at, whilst others would feel left out, though identifying as a victim as well. Baumann (2010) argues further that putting an end to conflict and starting reconciliation in Northern Ireland must include losing any hierarchy of victims, instead proposing the concept of recognition. This is the basic unmet need at the moment, on both sides of the societal divide. Mutual recognition of each other's victimhood and suffering could lead to a decrease in voluntary separation, bringing forth a fading of the group boundaries and unity (Baumann 2010:172-176).

However, the creation of a new national 'Northern Irish identity', as one of the proposed possibilities of dealing with diversity, is not likely to unite the two communities in the near future. Religious and national identification seem to be interwoven, but where the overlap is perceived between identities, this isn't positively valued. Religious membership continues to be an important self-identifier for both communities, as was found in the past[9]. The Catholic identity was defined by what they were not: British, thus contra-identifying or Othering, as can be explained in paragraph 2.1.1. This isn't positive in a reconciliation process, since, as Kelman stated above as well, "central to reconciliation is the removal of the negation of 'the other' in people's identities" (Kelman 2008 in Bakke et al. 2009:3). The meaning of British identification for Protestants, however, was often connected to the British state, to passport ownership. Next to these findings, much evidence was found for boundary-crossing, boundary-blurring and strategic use of identities as well, especially around the border and within mixed marriages (Muldoon et al. 2007:99-101).

The vision of Belfast after the current peace programme is "of a city where sustained progress on peacebuilding and reconciliation has enabled a more stable, tolerant, fair and pluralist society, where individuality is respected and diversity is celebrated" (The Belfast Peace III Plan 2011-2013:22) This vision that is respectful of diversity may be possible in the future and it's one the government and organisations work hard to achieve. How they do this near the end of phase II of the Peace Programme and what has been achieved until now, the following presentation of our empirical findings will set forth.

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[9] "The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey in 2003 found that […] eight per cent of their sample identified themselves as not having a religion. […] The Census data in 2001 indicated that 84 per cent of the population identified themselves with a religious group" (Muldoon et al. 2007:91).

Flag Protests- Unionist protestors arriving in front of Belfast city hall (02-02-2013)

4. Empirical chapter: Socio-economic and political milieu of Belfast
"Legacies of the conflict: Sectarian divisions in everyday-life Belfast"

It is the first morning of our stay in Belfast and our fieldwork has not even officially started. What seems like a normal Saturday at first sight to us, quickly turns into our first experience with some local tensions that are present. On our way to grab some lunch, we are suddenly overtaken by a small group of men and women covered in flags and scarves with the British flag on them. We decide to follow the group cautiously along one of Belfast's main roads past shops, but also some noticeably decaying buildings, as we know from our preparation for this research that this demonstrating of the British flag has a local symbolic meaning concerning issues that were at stake during The Troubles; the British and Irish flag within the context of Northern Ireland during the conflict were markers of two collective identities, roughly speaking Irish Catholic and British Protestant[10]. We find out that these men and women are definitely not the only ones flashing the British flag all over the place as they join a large group of about two hundred people at the end of the long shopping street in front of Belfast city hall. A few banners are posted on the gate in front of the building which are difficult to read from afar, while the by now familiar red-white-blue patterns prevails the scenery.

Although the atmosphere does not feel tense, there are a lot of policemen on the scene, noticeable because of the bright fluorescent yellow jackets most of them are wearing. The huge amount of so-called crime-stopper vehicles, which in our eyes resemble urban army tanks with cameras on top of the roof, makes it look as if the police expects the situation to go out of control any minute. In front of the group of protesters, a long row of policemen and women separate them from the on-looking crowds. At the same time, some twenty crime-stopper vehicles are parked on both the left and right sides of the impressive building whilst a helicopter is constantly hovering above us. Tensions temporarily rise when another large group of, again clearly visible, protesters are marching up to us from the left side to join in.[11]

Flag Protests (02-02-2013)

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[10] Buckley & Kenney 1995:6, 9.

[11] Vignette derived from data collected by Nathalie van der Aar and Ilse Korving on 02-02-2013.

It is exactly fifteen years after the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement that officially marked the end of The Troubles. This chapter deals with the influence of this former conflict on the current socio-economic and political milieu in Belfast and Northern Ireland and examines some so-called "legacies of the conflict". There will also be looked at how this current context has an effect on the reconciliation process. First, the recent flag protests and related identity processes are analysed. After that, some areas in everyday-life where sectarianism is still present will be discussed, e.g. social and physical, after which the politics on a national and local level regarding issues of sectarian divisions and reconciliation are analysed.

Flag protests and conflicting collective identities

The described experience above shows that expressions and tensions relating to issues and divisions that were prominent during the conflict are still present in contemporary Belfast and Northern Ireland as a whole. This particular protest was part of a series of protests and riots concerning the political decision to reduce the number of days the British Union flag flies above Belfast city hall[12]. As has been explained in the theoretical chapter, the two powerful collective identities of religion and nationalism share the characteristic that they both rely on symbols (e.g. flags and crosses) (Rieffer 2003:216). The British and Irish flags within the context of Northern Ireland are symbols and distinctive cultural markers that determined to which side a person belonged to during The Troubles: roughly speaking British Protestant or Irish Catholic (Buckley & Kenney 1995:6, 9). Within the context chapter above, it has been explained that The Troubles are characterised by the complex interconnectedness of religion and nationalism within a political context (Juergensmeyer 2003:7). Rieffer introduced the concept 'religious nationalism' to refer to the intertwining of these two collective identities as "a community of religious people or the political movement of a group of people heavily influenced by religious beliefs who aspire to be politically self-determining" (Rieffer 2003:225). Here, the Irish and British flag thus also refer to other axes of identity besides nationalism, e.g. 'religion', that are incorporated within these two overarching collective identities.

These two old conflicting collective identities are still very much present in contemporary Belfast and Northern Ireland as people still refer to these two existing communities within society. These, however, are not only referred to as Protestant and

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[12] See for example the BBC News: 'National identity still a source of deep division in Northern Ireland'. Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20951202, viewed on: 20-01-2013, last updated on 08-01-2013.

Catholic communities. Other denomination that incorporate the politically perceived incompatible goals (referring to the wish to either stay part of the United Kingdom or unite with the Republic of Ireland) are also often used indicating the same two communities. The multiple denominations we encountered that fall under this divide, are: the Irish/Catholic/Nationalist/Republican-community and British/Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist-community[13]. So, when people for instance speak about the Protestant community, implicitly they mean the entire collective identity including all the other denominations as well.[14] In this way, these collective identities are somewhat reified as different axes of identity, e.g. religion and political view, are pinpointed under the same overarching category.

Segregation: sectarian divisions
Socially constructed dichotomy

According to Darren Ferguson, manager of peacebuilding organisation Beyond Skin, the strong reaction to the political decision to take the British flag down was in its essence triggered at the community level because people from the British Protestant community felt they were losing their identity in a way.[15] This decision thus stirred up feelings of existential fears and uncertainty within one particular identity group, which caused for some individuals within this group to reaffirm their self-identity which is perceived to be under threat and move (back) to a collective identity that is believed to be able to reduce these feelings (Kinnvall 2004:741-742). Rab McCallum, coordinator of the North Belfast Interface Network [NBIN], in addition, attributes the violent reactions to the fact that people in certain deprived areas lack something they can derive self-esteem from, e.g. education or a profession, and therefore get this sense of self-esteem from their collective identity and by protecting their community they perceive is under attack.[16] Claire Whelan, also from Beyond Skin, perceives this slightly different as she believes that, in regards to the flag issue, people tend to latch onto these smaller issues because they are discontent with their lives and are bored.[17]

As Alan McBride, manager of the Wave Trauma Centre in Belfast, describes it, something like the flags issue reignites old conflicting identities within Northern Irish society

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[13] For the sake of this research, we will most of the time refer to these communities with just one denomination.

[14] This became clear talking to a lot of our informants that used different terms for the same "two communities" interchangeably or talked directly about this pinning together of multiple denominations, like: Maurice Maccartney (20-02-2013), Junior ministers Jonathan Bell and Jennifer McCann (28-03-2013), Jayme Reaves from Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013), Alan McBride from Wave Trauma Centre (04-04-2013) and Darren Ferguson from Beyond Skin (10-04-2013), Claire Whelan from Homely Planet – Beyond Skin (11-04-2013).

[15] Interview Darren Ferguson, manager Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

[16] Formal conversation Rab McCallum, coordinator of the North Belfast Interface Network (20-02-2013).

[17] Interview Claire Whelan, Homely Planet internet radio station of Beyond Skin (11-04-2013).

as people here would immediately take sides in the matter.[18] The identity boundaries between old conflicting identities are thus strengthened and maintained by issues like this, which points towards the way identity groups are socially constructed as is described above. It has been explained that identification processes can only occur in relation to others, so that identity incorporates not only an understanding of the self but also the knowing of who others are (Buckley & Kenney 1995:23; Jenkins 2008:18). Here, people identify with that which the Other is not and vice versa and a strong "us"-"them" dichotomy is created. The flag protests are thus an example of the constant underlying tensions between old conflicting collective identities that can trigger very easily but that also cause for identity boundaries between these two communities to strengthen. In order for Northern Irish society to be peacefully reconciled, however, these strong intergroup boundaries need to be softened (Yanay & Lifshitz-Oron 2008:275). The following chapters will look at how various peace and reconciliation organisations try to do this using different approaches.

Institutionalised sectarianism

The existence of these seemingly opposing two communities in Northern Ireland that still exist fifteen years after The Troubles officially ended can be seen as a so-called legacy of the conflict. This is because strong sectarian attitudes towards the other community are in fact also present amongst a lot of young people who have not lived through the conflict themselves and therefore do not suffer directly from the conflict. Alan McBride points out that this legacy is maintained through what he calls a 'trans-generational trauma' in Northern Irish society. By this, he means the trauma that exists within those old conflicting identity groups that have become a part of the shared history of that group, which has then been passed on to younger generations. Combined with influences from family and/or peers that fuel and maintain feelings of mistrust and hatred towards the Other community, it causes for sectarian attitudes to be engraved in everyday-life.[19] Darren Ferguson goes even further by stating that the Catholic-Protestant division is ridiculous as it has nothing to do with religious differences or political desires, but that people have been kind of institutionalised to hate the Other within the current climate of Northern Irish society. He says: "They don't tell you why you hate them, but you just do because they are different".[20]

This goes hand in hand with the issue Darren raises about the lack of understanding people have of not only other identity groups, but more importantly, also their own cultural

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[18] Interview Alan McBride, manager of Wave Trauma Centre (23-05-2013).
[19] Idem.
[20] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

identity. He sees this problem especially with young people in the Protestant community and stresses that this causes a lot of issues and problems regarding identity. On social media, like Twitter and Facebook, Darren recognises a lot of this lack of understanding amongst young people about their own cultural identity, "almost to a point where it is funny". For instance, comments from young people in relation to the flag protests stating they want to remain British which, as Darren underlines, is not the same as being Protestant, shows that they do not understand the history of Protestantism or of Northern Ireland at all.[21] This example also demonstrates that the incorporation of multiple axes of identity within the two old conflicting identities are often not understood by people as it is regularly believed that being either a Catholic or a Protestant also indicates whether you want Northern Ireland to become part of the Republic of Ireland or want to remain with the UK. This lack of understanding about the difference of these denominations is also expressed concerning Darren's own personal background. Part of his family is Catholic whilst living in England, but Darren explains that young people in Northern Ireland just cannot compute that fact as they do not understand why someone can be Catholic and British at the same time.[22] Identity problems thus arise due to the use of different labels to indicate the two old conflicting identities, but are also separate axes of identity. The above shows that the lack of knowledge and understanding about these collective identities causes for the two communities within Northern Ireland to be reified and identity boundaries to be strengthened.

Sectarian divisions in facilities

This social division between two communities is not only limited to the social realm, but these sectarian divisions are engraved in other areas of everyday-life as well. The most noticeable one is the physical segregation, e.g. peace walls, that separates one community from the other in different neighbourhoods which will be further analysed below. Another main area where sectarian divisions are still present, is within facilities. This includes many public places, like pubs, leisure centres and supermarkets. These public facilities are often just several hundred meters apart from one another, but are commonly labelled as Catholic or Protestant as they are often intended for one of the two communities, are located in one specific area and/or are hardly ever used by the Other.[23]

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[21] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).
[22] Idem.
[23] Interview David Robinson, Good Relations Officer of the Good Relations Unit in Belfast City Council (27-02-2013).

One other important type of facility that is highly segregated, however, can be found within the educational sector. The above discussed lack of understanding of people's own identity can, according to Darren, be attributed to flaws within the formal educational sector as children are not learning about identity issues due to the top-heavy-down approach in school's curriculum.[24] Furthermore, the entire school system is divided to a certain extent. Timothy Cairns, Special Advisor to the First Minister, explains that there are five different education sectors within Northern Ireland which can be all further broken down into two or three subsets and are all governed very differently. The so-called 'state' or 'controlled' sector is primarily Protestant, the 'maintained' sector is largely Catholic and then there are the shared or integrated schools. Strikingly, only around five per cent of the children are educated in this last type. Timothy Cairns believes that even though people tend to portray this school system almost as trans-sectarianism, there is more to it than that, as it is also a case of affinity with schools within families that is passed on through generations.[25] Nonetheless, a vast majority of children within Northern Ireland are still educated separately from the Other (even though there are plans to implement a single education system) and encounter somebody from the other community for the first time at university at (usually) the age of 18[26], which is something not everybody is able to do[27] and by then sectarian attitudes already will have had enough time to be firmly rooted in people's mind-sets. This can possibly enforce existing sectarian attitudes as the lack of understanding about the Other is fostered in this manner. In a way, the space for identity negation is in this way thus limited to some extent as social interaction between the

Catholic school children waiting for the school bus to pick them up and get them to their neighbourhood.

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[24] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

[25] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from DUP (28-03-2013).

[26] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from DUP (28-03-2013). This is also related to the physical segregation explained below.

[27] As mentioned above and below in Bauman's (2000) theory dealing with social mobility

two communities is scarce, which can cause for identity boundaries to strengthen (Buckley & Kenney 1995:5, 23).

Physical segregation

The fact that after only being one week in Belfast two informants[28] told us we had probably already seen more of Belfast than most people living their whole lives here had, reflects some issues concerning the current geographical make-up of the city as it shows how much the city and its population are segregated and attached to certain areas. As has been mentioned above, the most noticeable area of sectarian divisions is the physical segregation. This, however, is often merely the visual representation of the existing social divisions between the two collective identity groups since most physical boundaries or obstacles are placed at the intersections of neighbourhoods that are primarily Catholic and Protestant. These fault lines where the two communities meet are the so-called 'interface areas', which represent the social space where collective identities clash and social boundaries between groups are created (Barth 1969 mentioned in: Sanders 2002:328).

The peace wall along Cupar Way, dividing the Catholic and the Protestant Neighbourhoods, as seen from above.

The physical boundaries at the borders between the two communities (Protestant and Catholic), thus geographically defining these boundaries, are not always prominently visible. This is most often the case with the more symbolic borders that are not physically separating groups from each other, but those that people simply won't cross because of the meaning

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[28] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013) and Interview Joe Law, Trademark (12-02-2013).

behind it. The Antrim Road in North Belfast is an example of one such border where people apparently refuse to walk on the other side of the road as this is considered to be a contested area of the other community group. This example did had to be explained to us by Paul Braithwaite, programme coordinator for 174 Trust, however, since we –as outsiders- were not aware of these symbolic boundaries when we passed this street when walking up to their office.[29]

Visual markers of physical segregation that are more obvious, are for example: peace walls, wastelands, painted curb stones, murals and waving flags within the streetscape. Some peace walls that are dividing sectarian interface areas have gates that either close every night or just at times when tensions rise, while wastelands are surrounding them as to ward off people from the Other side from settling in the neighbourhoods they perceive is their territory. These boundaries at the borders of the two community groups thus geographically define the space where collective identities clash and social boundaries between groups are created (Barth 1969 mentioned in: Sanders 2002:328). Social identities that are fluid and changeable in nature (Jenkins, 2008:18), are thus as a result rather geographically fixed.

The peace walls have become an even more hot topic than they already were since Sinn Féin, the Catholic ruling party, and the Democratic Unionist Party [DUP], the Protestant ruling party, outlined their plans for a shared future in which they see the walls coming down by 2023[30]. However, many people have expressed feelings of uncertainty about this decision, not only in the neighbourhoods itself, but also within politics and by different reconciliation organisations. This because it is rather broadly believed that society is not ready for the walls to come down yet as people, especially those living in the vicinity of those boundaries, still feel like they are necessary in order to prevent possible sudden increases of tensions between the two communities. Or how Ashley Holmes, drama youth art worker for Crosslinks, puts it quite frankly: "I mean, we're looking to take down big massive walls, but we can't even take down a flag."[31]

> **Ashley Holmes:** I don't think they're ready to come down. They are talking about bringing them down in 2015, it's too soon for them to come down. […] They're not peace walls, they're mental walls. They're crazy walls. I know all that you do is see what you can throw over them, but I

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[29] Interview Paul Braithwaite, programme co-ordinator of 174 Trust (19-03-2013).
[30] BBC News: 'Community Relations Week 2013 offers 'hope' during challenging period'. Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-22586118, viewed on: 28-05-2013, last updated on 28-05-2013.
[31] Interview Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (10-04-2013).

mean, no they don't need to come down yet. They need to be done up, they need to be painted a bit nicer, that's just my opinion.[32]

Jennifer McCann: So to be honest with you, the peace walls, I would love to see them coming down, but at the minute I think that they offer people a wee bit of security. It's ok for me saying that, I don't live beside them, do you know. And that- you always have to go back to that, you have to be practical. They actually make people feel more secure in them walls. And I mean, if you're an old age pensioner and you're living there and you feel secure that way, why would you- why would I be saying 'Oh, it has to come down', you know?[33]

Claire Whelan: Yeah, there was a report on the peace walls not that long ago that kind of said that there was people living by them still kind of felt they wanted them there and they still felt there would be trouble without them. I don't know, I think the peace walls aren't helpful particularly at this stage. They have been there so long, but again I can't imagine them coming down any time soon. […] People aren't ready and it is kind of a

Peace Wall along Cupar Way gate closed that day 7:00 p.m.

combination of people aren't ready and also the time has kind of passed, the opportunity to take them down is kind of gone and now they are just sort of an accepted part of life here. […] But now is definitely not the right time.[34]

The question will remain though, of what needs to be done in order for the time to be right to take the walls down as one of many reports said that up to 80 per cent of the people do want them gone (and so did everyone we spoke to, eventually). What is considered that needs to be done to make circumstances right as soon as possible:

Try to increase the confidence between peoples and communities in order to deal with, like the peace walls. […] And one of them is about creating confidence within and between communities to tackle the issue of separation walls […] How do we begin to do that? And one of the things that is clearly seen as being the most physical manifestation of division are the walls. And therefore, how do we begin to address the issue of separation […] This isn't about removing the walls, it's about increasing the confidence of people on all those sides of those walls, so as to make the walls redundant, if you like.[35]

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[32] Interview Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (10-04-2013).
[33] Interview Jennifer McCann, Junior Minister from Sinn Féin (28-03-2013).
[34] Interview Claire Whelan, Homely Planet/Beyond Skin (11-04-2013).
[35] Interview Rab McCallum, North Belfast Interface Network (20-02-2013).

In order to be able to do this eventually, Darren states that this needs to be done at a local

grassroots level by engaging the people who live there, instead of it being forced top-down, by politicians as a PR-stunt of some kind.[36] Whereas David Robinson from the Good Relations Unit in Belfast City Council further explains that people need to feel safe and secure in their neighbourhoods, this is paramount, but at the moment, people don't feel that they would be as soon as the walls come down. The barriers in reality can only be drawn down when the barriers in people's minds have gone first.[37] Despite this wish to break down physical barriers, the mental barriers that are still very much present need to be reduced as in a reconciliation process.

Other clearly visible expressions of group identity have often to do with the retelling of the past or the territoriality of the groups (or both). Peace walls mark the territories sometimes, but they are also used to show murals that depict a retelling of the past, in this way framing it in either one way or another. Alan McBride (Wave), sees it as re-rating how history is understood and how it is reframed:

> And you'll see this [reframing] a lot, I mean, if you're just on the ground in Belfast and look at the murals, I mean, we do a lot of storytelling through the art and on the walls. And [when] you go into Republican West Belfast and see how they portray the conflict, you know, the IRA are seen as heroes, and they're sort of like Zorro almost. Where if you go into Unionist areas and Loyalist areas you'll see a very different take on that. And I think what happens is that both communities are trying to spin [the past].[38]

We experienced a lot of visual expressions of territoriality belonging to either one of the two communities. Most often by means of the British or Irish flag or just their colours (red-white-blue or green-white-gold) on for instance curb stones. Most visual expression of group identities we saw were in the Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist areas, as they have expressed

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[36] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).
[37] Interview David Robinson, Good Relations Officer of the Good Relations Unit in Belfast City Council (27-02-2013).
[38] Interview Alan McBride, Wave Trauma Centre (04-04-2013).

themselves more strongly in reaction to the perceived attack on their collective identity regarding the flag riots. Here, whole streets are marked by Union flags, while this is less within areas that are predominantly Catholic/Republican/Nationalist. Some Irish flags, or 'Tri-Colours', can be seen, but this is much less and is often in reaction to the flaunting of the Union flags in the Protestant areas. This is especially the case in interfaces, where the two communities rub right up next to each other[39]. Existing symbolic identity markers make it immediately clear for outsiders with which collective identity a neighbourhood identifies itself. In Belfast, the strong existing "us"-"them" dichotomy is thus physically and geographically played out as both the boundaries as well as the content of collective identities are made visible within the city's streetscape.

Deprivation and social mobility

One of the numbers that shocked us at first was the fact that one third of young people in Belfast live below the poverty line[40] However, this wasn't hard to believe seeing that deprivation is one of the more visual elements in the city. Not only in the interface areas, where wastelands stretch beside peace walls in order to discourage the Other to move into their territory[41], too close for comfort – but also in the busier areas, such as the city centre, where squatters moved into historical buildings and where shopping arcades have become ruins. Segregation, thirty years of war, in combination with the current economic crisis that almost no country can escape in this postmodern interconnected world, results into high levels of poverty. The old industries Belfast specialised in - the linen, ropes, mill work and the shipbuilding industry – are now often located elsewhere in the world, where the production is cheaper and where a civil war hadn't been raging for decades.

You can notice the correlation between the conflict and the levels of socio-economic deprivation best in interface areas like North Belfast. The unemployment rates are high and education is low In the theoretical chapter the analogy of 'tourists' and 'vagabonds' was explained, related to mobility. This is applicable to these interface areas as well. Because the conflict was mostly fought amongst those in the lower classes and because they still live at these same interface areas in which the conflict intensity was the highest, the current sectarian problems are seen as theirs. Although one living in such area can choose not to participate in current sectarian clashes, many cannot leave the physical area where these clashes can be

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[39] Informal conversation Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (05-02-2013).
[40] Interview Jennifer McCann, Junior Minister from Sinn Féin (28-03-2013).
[41] Interview Joe Law, Trademark (12-02-2013).

found, as well as where the other legacies of the conflict are noticeable, such as poverty, high unemployment and suicide rates. You can't leave for holiday during the height of the Marching Season and the annual problems resulting from it, as some of our informants do.

Mural next to Shankill Road, Unionist Area

You still live in an area that is flanked or surrounded by physical or symbolical borders, where the gates of the peace walls close in times of sectarian tensions, or every night. The middle and upper classes, or the 'higher ups' live in safer areas, have the means to move if desired (Bauman 2000). It is as Chris O'Halloran, project co-ordinator at the Belfast Interface Project [BIP], said: "most of the interfaces in the city, just about all of them, would be largely working class communities on both sides of the interface because the middle classes, if they can, move out. There's no need for them to stay there."[42]

Multiple informants said that reconciliation isn't only necessary because of the divided society, but also because of the necessity of uniting the nation to restore the local and national economy. Belfast and even Northern Ireland as a whole can't afford it to be divided in these times. Rickie McQuillan, musician and city guide, looked at it in a more way, seeing the current economic situation as a chance to feel more united with the opposing groups as well, as they are in the same deprived situation: they also have small houses, no job, bad education, few opportunities[43].

Combining the current economic situation with the still existing tensions between the opposing parties, this is a very fragile situation which could easily result in the re-emergence of conflict, as was seen to a lesser extend with the Flag Protests. People look at the government for political leadership, but this often isn't found as will be explained later[44].

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[42] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).
[43] Informal conversation Rickie McQuillan (14-04-2013).
[44] Interview Jennifer McCann, Junior Minister from Sinn Féin (28-03-2013).

Politics and Policies

"Peace building is easy, politics are hard"[45]

In the Good Friday Agreement one of the described obligations of the government, both local and national, is to promote good relations in every public body, David Robinson (Good Relations Unit, Belfast City Council) explained to us. This is a significant part of the City Council and they run a large number of programmes battling sectarian divides[46]. Nationally, Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister from the DUP, the promotion of good community relations transcends sectarian divides, as it also looks at promoting good relations with ethnic minorities. This is an understandable approach to strife for a shared future, because since the ending of The Troubles after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, migration flows have risen and society became more diverse. The original dichotomy of society had to deal with a new group of people, different from local communities and the current policies surrounding the promotion of unity need to include them as well, as identity boundaries in the Northern Irish society strengthened when confronted with these newcomers.[47] However, this part of diversity doesn't cause as much problems as the sectarian division in society, which is why we don't look at this strand of diversity as much as sectarianism.

The funding for promoting reconciliation within the national government was over the period 2011-2015 more than in the previous period, which shows that promoting reconciliation is a priorities since Northern Ireland got four billion pounds less than before from the UK. They spend it in a number of ways, funding local councils and nongovernmental organisations, voluntary organisations and other institutions that promote reconciliation. The policies surrounding reconciliation are often focused on the bringing about of shared space. This can be understood very specifically, where they directly oppose the segregation, especially in interface areas, in form of parks or shopping areas.[48]

Timothy Cairns says that there are two things that need to be tackled to bring about unity: housing and education. He thinks however, that the issue of segregated housing won't be solved in terms of people sharing community space together until education is solved.[49] The current segregated education system is explained above, and even though 78 per cent of

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[45] Informal conversation David Mitchell, Good Relations Officer of the Lisburn City Council (25-03-2013).

[46] Interview David Robinson, Good Relations Officer in Good Relations Unit in Belfast City Council (27-02-2013).

[47] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

[48] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the DUP (28-03-2013).

[49] Idem.

the people want a fully integrated education system, it is still very hard to bring this about. People want the system, but they don't want to sacrifice their own school to do it:

> Now, see if I ask the next question, ok: so your child's [Protestant] school is the school that is gonna close and you're gonna go to the Catholic school down the road. Then it's like 'oh, no no no no no, the Catholic school is gonna close and they're gonna come to our school'. […] It's the old 'not in my backyard'-scenario.[50]

Even within the government parties are still divided on the matter. This is also because 'integrated education', which is the current example of shared education, is a tarnished brand, as it is associated with one particular political philosophy. The 'shared education' that is the goal, actually means one education sector, breaking down the current five sectors. Attitudes need to change first and that's not happening overnight, but it is necessary to start now:

> So I think […] [that if] at the age of four we integrate children more fully, then I think the problems over sharing community space, sharing housing, [I] actually think those are starting to disappear within that generation.[51]

One of the other initiatives that the government is currently working on is CSI, the Cohesion Sharing and Integration strategy. This is an agreement on how issues related to sectarianism should be dealt with that will be implemented for all public bodies on a national level. Junior Minister Bell presents it still as a work in process, where a working group is set up who will try and gain consensus amongst all the political parties to buy into it, whom then can sell it to their followers on the ground. This results in building a strategy that is based on the lowest possible common denominator that all parties that can agree on. However, Chris O'Halloran (BIP) explains CSI differently from his end of the reconciliation process.

Stormont, national parliament.

He tells us of the disconnect, a gap between what happens and is decided at Stormont (national parliament) and what's

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[50] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the DUP (28-03-2013).
[51] Timothy Cairns in Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the DUP (28-03-2013).

needed to be done on the ground in the voluntary sector, especially in the sector of peace building.[52] The way the government deals with the current situation not only annoys organisations, but also seriously hampers the process of reconciliation. CSI has been promised for years now, but the political parties can't agree on how to deal with sensitive or sectarian issues. Because of this disunity, parts of the government have different policies on how to deal with these issues than other parts of the government, whereas they should be supporting the same. This shows in the example that Chris O'Halloran (BIP) presented: on the edge of Suffolk, a very small Protestant community that has become surrounded with Catholic nationalist housing, was a primary school. It was threatened with closure as the number of children attending declined, so the parents and the school ran a campaign to turn the school into an integrated one- a sensitive solution, but better an integrated school than none at all.

> They […] got support from all of their community leaders and then the decision went to the department of education, to make a decision on. And they decided to close it. And the reason they closed it, so I understand is, their procedures and policies only allowed them to make a decision about the viability of the school. The school was not viable. So they closed it.[53]

So, even though creating shared education is one of the top priorities presented to us by the national politicians to bring about reconciliation, by not having a shared strategy to do this they actually undermine themselves and the peace process as a whole.

Apart from issues surrounding flags, peace walls, Orange parades, housing and education, CSI is also supposed to present a consensus on how to deal with the past. The Troubles caused a lot of casualties and even more injured and traumatised, especially in Belfast where the conflict intensity was high[54]. However, as is already set forth in the theoretical and context chapters above, who is exactly a victim and who is not? In Northern Ireland a hierarchy of victims has emerged, which Junior Minister Jonathan Bell explains through his own situation in The Troubles:

> My home was attacked, my house was attacked, my father was shot and I'm a dad at seventeen years of age who shot somebody back: 'I'm a victim, I was a victim of the society I grew up in.' For as a person that was shot, tends to say: 'I was an innocent victim, I didn't kill anybody, I didn't attack anybody, I'm an innocent victim, I'm the real victim, they're not a victim,' you know?[55]

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[52] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).
[53] Idem.
[54] Interview Rab McCallum, North Belfast Interface Network (20-02-2013).
[55] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the DUP (28-03-2013).

The idea of what a victim is, is closely related to questions surrounding social justice and how (and whom for) to carry it out. However, the government doesn't know how to set up a legal process or a judicial process to provide acknowledgement, to provide redress. Timothy Cairns states:

> I don't think, some sort of truth and reconciliation commission is going to do that, because I think all that would do is create a false equality of victimhood which will equate the perpetrator of a crime alongside the victim of the crime […] How do we define a 'victim' in a way that is going to be satisfactory to everybody and I think that's- we can't, until we can get beyond that question, I don't think we can start to get to solutions, because there is no agreement as to what a victim is, you know.

However, perhaps a national truth and social justice process won't be sufficient. As shown above, reconciliation through truth commissions often is dependent on the individual transformation of the victim, even if this has been defined (Daly & Sarkin 2007:72-79). Reconciliation through social justice systems deals with truths, but what kind of truths? A forensic truth can give insight in what really happened, but does this bring about reconciliation? This can easily solidify the identity boundaries between the two communities. (Daly & Sarkin 2007:6; Ramsbotham et al. 2011:253-255; Sarkin 2008:14; Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:451). They try to a certain extent solve these problems by simply putting a lot of money in the victim sector, where people can apply for funds for themselves or to set up activities to deal with issues surrounding victimhood with people who've lived through the same hardships[56]. However, this isn't dealing with the past necessarily, as it simply treats the symptoms of the legacies of the conflict. By not dealing with the past, not all aspects of the conflict as represented in the triangle above are being addressed (Galtung 1969 in Ramsbotham et al. 2011:10). Sure the politicians look at solving sectarian behaviour and attitudes, but by not addressing the past, the underlying contradiction and grievances of the both communities keep on existing. Because of that, the short-term political achievements could prove irrelevant in the long-term. It is difficult for the two communities to overcome their enmity and learn to live together united (Baumann 2010:171-172).

However, there might also be a lack of motivation to completely deal with the past. On one hand, the need for dealing with the past is expressed and viewed as absolutely necessary to be able to put it all behind them in a way that it has been solved. On the other hand, the need to move forward with politically strengthening the progress (Baumann 2010:171-172) is being put before that, as both Junior Ministers state:

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[56] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the DUP (28-03-2013).

> **Bell:** We can't change the past, but we can change the future.[57]
> **McCann:** We need to get our focus now on the future. […] It's difficult […], but we need to look at the future now. We need to look to our future. Dealing with the past, yes, as much as we can, but we now need to be putting our energies into the future and in our future generations, you know, because that's where the focus needs to go. [58]

However, the question should also be: 'What do the people want?' Not only because there is a noticeable gap between what politicians perceive as being necessary to deal with and what people on the ground rather would see being done, like Darren Ferguson (Beyond Skin) states:

> It's just disconnected with what is really happening at grassroots levels, you know, in economic times, even if we speak about across communities, like the flags is not the major concern, the major concerns that is jobs, education for their children, it's health care, it's benefits, it's just life-stuff which is exactly the same as somebody who is from a Catholic community or, you know, it's a shared issues we all have so that's the real issues of, you know [...]. I think a lot of people are annoyed, you know, things happened at Stormont, are discussing flags and other things which are just, you know, not helpful at all.[59]

Reconciliation organisations at the ground level also need to be looked at because reconciliation can't be forced top down by politicians from top-down. It needs to take root in the grassroots, at the community level, where identity boundaries can be softened and perceptions of the Other can be changed and incorporated in the own identity in a more positive way (Daly & Sarkin 2007:17, 82, 88-90; Jenkins 2008:19). So from looking at the politics, we will present in the following chapters how the various peace and reconciliation organisations try to bring about reconciliation.

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[57] Jonathan Bell at the 'From Fire Fighting to Communities in Transit' conference of the North Belfast Respect Programme (08-03-2013).
[58] Interview Jennifer McCann, Junior Minister from Sinn Féin (28-03-2013).
[59] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

Wasteland beside Cupar Way peace wall, kept clear as the Protestants are afraid otherwise the Catholics will develop it into housing and live there.[60]

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[60] Interview Joe Law, Trademark (12-02-2013).

5. Empirical chapter two: Reconciliation organisations using a direct approach "Overcoming sectarianism by means of knowledge, dialogue and practical help"

Looking for the office of Healing through Remembering, I almost pass its entrance, as the door is wedged in between two clubs. The doorman laughs at me wanting to use the elevator to reach the office, since the lights aren't working. It is pretty creepy and darker than I imagined. This all changes when I arrived at the office. A big open space, hard wood floors, white walls, enormous windows and original wooden beams at the ceiling. On the walls hang pictures of all 200 members of the organisation, several announcement posters of the 'Everyday Objects Transformed by The Conflict' exhibition, as well as a lot of framed photographs of an anthropological research done in Ecuador. Four large desks are placed at a distance from each other and two people are working at the moment. I can look into the empty adjourned conference room and into several filing archives, which are filled with a news clippings archive and their own publications. As Jayme Reaves, the project co-ordinator of Healing through Remembering, comes to welcome me, I notice that this office is –though beautiful- in nature the same as the ones I saw at other reconciliation organisations. A singular space with desks, in which the often few employees work together, a guest area within the same room and a separate conference room. The walls covered in motivations, posters of their own works, pictures of their activities, etc. I had seen this all before with the North Belfast Interface Project, Beyond Skin, the Belfast Interface Network. It reflects the very specific nature of the work that these organisations carry out. "Hi, I'm looking for Jayme?" "Hi, you must be Nathalie. Do you want coffee or tea?" This is not a surprise, as everyone always offers us tea (with milk!) and coffee. "No, thank you, just water please. Cheers. Lovely office you have here! Those filing cabinets are so full, you must be pretty busy" "It's what we do! Take a seat, I'll be right with you for the interview".

In this chapter the direct method of promoting reconciliation and the organisations whom mainly use this method are being discussed. The direct approach, as we understand and define this, is an approach where sectarian attitudes, behaviour and other conflict related problems are being addressed and tried to be solved with explicit acknowledgement of the problems. The vehicles used to do this are often dialogue, discussions and conversations about the issues, but the direct approach can also be used in a broader sense, for example by writing and improving governmental policies surrounding the topic or spreading more information on sectarianism and other conflict related issues like traumas. It's hard to make any

generalisations between the different reconciliation organisations in Belfast or anywhere probably. However, there are several similarities and meaningful differences to be found. First and foremost will be looked at how organisations are structured: who works for them, what goals they want to reach, with what kind of activities they want to reach it and what the target populace is. We will then relate the issues earlier discussed concerning identity, unity and diversity to the above mentioned goals, activities and populace. Finally the different kinds of obstacles that organisations experience in the process of trying to promote reconciliation will be discussed. This is all to get a clear view of who these organisations are that try to pursue reconciliation and a peaceful society in the current socio-economic and political context and how they aim to do this.

Organisational structures and staff

Structure-wise I have recognised a lot of similarities between organisations whom promote reconciliation in direct ways. Often these organisations have a very small staff of both full-time and part-time personnel. It is relatively small when compared to the amount of hours that go into the work needing to be done, especially if you count the amount of time that goes into the administrative work for funding[61]. However, that might have been my timing, as I came around the time that funding was being cut off and some people had to put a lot of work into reapplying.[62] Many a time, these organisations don't have much more personnel than five permanent employees, but they are often helped by a relatively large number of volunteers or members in carrying the workload. The permanent members are often part of the management or fulfil those tasks. Because the current economic situation in Northern Ireland related to the legacies of the conflict and the global economic crisis, causes consequences for the financing of the organisations, as will be further explained below, it also means that organisations often only can guarantee work on a short-term contract basis. Also for the fulltime staff, as is shown in the following excerpt from the interview with Chris O'Halloran (BIP):

> We [Belfast Interface Project] have to fundraise constantly and we're constantly at risk of closing. So that my contract, for example, is due to expire on end of March, and there's no funding to continue my job. My- our board, […] they decide what we do and they've extended my funding to the end of June and that's in the hope that between now and the end of June we can raise enough money to pay my salary, otherwise I'll be unemployed by the end of June.

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[61] Interview with Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013) and Interview with Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).
[62] Interview with Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).

To avoid having to fire people in such a way, parts of the workload are sometimes from the start outsourced to freelance workers and other organisations. Joe Law, the manager of Trademark[63] had employed an international student as an intern, who originally worked with another organisation, but helped out with Trademark as well, since she was experienced in this field. As soon as the project was over, she would stop working there. Jayme Reaves from Healing Through Remembering [HTR] also said that outsourcing certain parts of the workload, like the evaluation of certain projects, would also result in having more time for the permanent staff to do their actual work of promoting reconciliation, which she was passionate about.

A second similarity between the people working in the field of reconciliation, both in organisations that promote it with direct and indirect methods, is that they are often those that have been directly or indirectly affected by The Troubles in the past. Clear examples of this are Ashley Holmes, now employed as a youth worker with Crosslinks where she used to be a participant, and Alan McBride, whose wife got murdered during the Shankill Bombing in 1993 and who was traumatised by this. After being a youth worker, he is now the manager of Wave Trauma Centre in Belfast who helps people traumatised during or after The Troubles in practical ways, by using storytelling and dialogue as a means to deal with the past as well. Half of the original staff that works there have themselves been victims of The Troubles as well[64].

Goals, Programmes and Activities

All of the organisations are trying to promote reconciliation as to bring about a peaceful and reconciled society in a way that sectarian segregation won't be the norm but the exception. They try to do this mainly in accordance to the theory we presented in the earlier chapters, as the organisations focus on activities concerned with state- and nation-building. All organisations feel that in order to work toward a peaceful society, with peace understood as the positive peace (Galtung 1990 in Ramsbotham et al. 2011:11-12) described above as sustainable and structural, people need to move away from the divided past and present, by healing the damaged relationships between the identity groups. This peaceful and reconciled society will come about by changing people's attitudes toward the Other and diversity in society so that a more united future can be created where people will be accepted as

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[63] Organisation that promotes reconciliation in a direct way; giving workshops in which they converse about sectarian issues, for example about discrimination in the workplace or in the neighbourhood, but also tries to bring down the peace walls that divide society physically.
[64] Interview with Alan McBride, Wave Trauma Centre (04-04-2013).

individuals and where there isn't a violent or strongly adverse reaction to difference. This is pursued mostly by doing single identity work and cross community contact work, which will be further discussed below.

However, none of the organisations try to do this by promoting a new unifying identity, national for example, and have the two groups assimilate into one identical group, since most of the informants feel that this disregards the own (perceived) cultural and historical identities people have and value. Chris O'Halloran (BIP) explains why they feel this way as well:

> We're not interested in making people the same. People aren't the same, so no we're not interested in that. I think we're interested in supporting people to recognise the things that they might have in common, as well as recognise the things that they just don't agree on, you know, different religious beliefs, different political beliefs, different constitutional aspirations. We're not asking for people to alter into the same thing.[65]

Healing though Remembering would focus more on the 'diversity is not a bad thing' as well: "I think most of us, yeah, we work on the assumption all those voices are needed, and to boil to everyone down to the lowest common denominator doesn't do justice to anybody."[66] So letting everyone be an unique individual within a society that accepts and is safe for diversity is something they'd rather strife for.

The more specific goals of the reconciliation organisations differ very much from each other, but also within the organisation different goals exist between the different projects and programmes. These goals of the programmes and projects in turn influence the sort of activities being carried out. All these differences seem to be determined by the distinction in dimensions of time. Most of the time this means that the goals and activities focus on adults or on young people, as the adults have lived through the past and the young people are perceived as the future, but it's also about the nature of these goals and activities. Organisations often focus on issues of the past, the present or the future. For example, the NBIN focusses on the square mile of North Belfast where something around 25 per cent of people in The Troubles died. This is an interface area where sectarian crimes, violence and attitudes are still noticeably present. The NBIN have 'conflict intervention process', as they have the view that the conflict still isn't over, but is simply being fought in a different way. They have a meeting every two weeks where different management groups and local area groups look at the problems that happened in the previous two weeks, were there any attacks,

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[65] Interview with Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).
[66] Interview with Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).

vandalism, et cetera and what could they do about it in the next weeks[67]. This is very much looking at problems in the present and stopping sectarian behaviour, such as sectarian motivated violence. Now, Healing Though Remembering [HTR], as the name implies, often looks at the past and "the goal of the organisation is to equip the society as much as possible in order to deal with the past in a healthy way"[68] Because of the membership nature of the organisation they have a very diverse range of views on how this should happen, but they aren't about prescribing one way to do it correctly.

> We would all agree that something needs to happen, there needs to be some sort of movement on a collective societal sort of basis to acknowledge the past in some form or fashion. In both formal and informal ways. […] It would be more of 'let's have the conversation and actually deal with this on societal level'.[69]

The Belfast Interface Project [BIP] runs a programme in which the goal is to teach young people and adults (in separate groups) from both communities more about their own identity and then brings them into contact with each other to learn about the identity and experiences of the opposing groups. This kind of work will be explained further later. The aim is here to slowly, person by person, bring people together and safely discuss similarities and differences to change their views of each other and themselves. This is more focussed on making the future safe and peaceful than stopping the immediate present challenges, such as violence[70].

However, what one must understand about this distinction in time, is that the aims and the dimension of time are intrinsically connected with each other and no organisation merely focusses on one or the other. Yes, HTR wants to deal with the past, but they also discuss current problems with their participants and try to work toward a better future[71]. Yes, NBIN is solving current sectarian issues in North Belfast, but always takes into account the very specific historical context of that area and also does a lot of work in the field of bringing people together.[72] Yes, BIP is bringing people together in order to break down barriers between the two groups in the future, but also looks at what people know of the past, what they experienced, what was passed onto them by their family, as well as the current problems they have.[73] I view the past, the present and the future as intrinsically linked, or as Lederach states: "We have to deal with the past in order to clear the ground in the present for the

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[67] Interview with Rab McCallum, North Belfast Interface Network (20-02-2013).
[68] Interview with Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).
[69] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).
[70] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).
[71] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).
[72] Interview Rab McCallum, North Belfast Interface Network (20-02-2013).
[73] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).

building of a shared future" (1997:27 in Ramsbotham et al. 2011:249). You can't actively work toward a future peaceful society without addressing issues of the past and present, just as you can't address issues of the past without looking at it influences the present and how it could influence the future. You can't influence one without influencing the other. Not only that, you need to include all of them in order to have a stable and productive process. "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (George Santayana 1863-1952). As Jayme Reaves from HTR and most people from the reconciliation organisations acknowledge: you can't ignore the past and simply try to move forward. Problematic issues, like the hierarchy of victimhood that is mentioned above, won't be addressed and the underlying tensions and resentments will keep on existing. Even when the generation that was involved in the conflict directly will have passed away, these tensions will keep on existing as these are being passed down to the younger generations. Problems related to prejudice and sectarianism will keep on returning if not properly addressed[74]

Target groups

The targeted group can differ for the organisations whom use a direct approach to promote reconciliation, but they often aim at the interpersonal and community level. It is difficult to reach everyone in society, but the organisations try, helping one person at a time move forward to a reconciled future. We've seen that the majority of the activities are aimed at adults. This is mostly because adults are more individually motivated to participate as most of them have to make a conscious choice to do so. It is also related to the fact that the older generation consciously and directly experienced the conflict, as well as the problems related to The Troubles. The problems of the adults vary strongly, from psychological traumas and the resulting syndromes[75], handicaps as a result from the war and the economic and social problems again resulting from that; to the problems that are related to the fact that people very much still live in the past, imagining themselves as being part of a former society, with the corresponding sectarian mind-sets, such as Othering, discrimination, prejudices, which can in turn also lead to social and even maybe economic problems (as people won't or are afraid to apply to jobs that 'belong' to the other community).

However, there are a lot of goals and activities set out for young people as well. Not only are they the future of the society, because of the earlier mentioned 'trans-generational trauma'. Combined with what their families, neighbours and friends tell them (which often

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[74] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).
[75] Like PTSD: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder.

isn't challenged by real life cross-community contact, as explained in the previous chapter) causes them to have sectarian attitudes as well. The reconciliation organisations need to try and solve by this offering the view that diversity isn't a bad thing.[76]

Two other main factors that play a role in the targeting groups are geographical location, like the interface areas, or social class. The lower working classes are often more represented in the target groups than the middle- and upper classes. This is because the former live more areas where sectarian attitudes and violence are more noticeably present, thus where the most immediate work needs to be done, as well as the fact that the middle and upper classes can avoid the conflict more easily as they are more mobile, as explained in the previous chapter. They are more difficult to reach and get to participate, as they view the conflict more as a lower working class problem as well.

Methods

Several programmes and activities from different organisations are described above already, but there is one important distinction that needs to be made within these activities as well that is related to the targeted groups as well. This is the distinction of single identity work and cross-community contact work, which are two of the main methods used in the process of nation-building, aimed at people's attitudes.

Within single identity work, organisations take a group of people from one identity group, so a Catholic group or a Protestant group. They then try to determine what their own identity is and what experiences they have related to this identity. Chris O'Halloran (BIP) explains: "An exercise that some of them might do be 'What do you think makes your community different from that community?' or 'What are your views of that community?' Those kinds of things."[77] When looking at collective identities, it is often the differences that exist between our own and the other group that defines the collectivity of the own group. The boundaries are defining, not the 'cultural stuff' that it encloses (Barth 1969 mentioned in: Sanders 2002:328). With single identity work, participants look at what it means to belong to their group, what the 'cultural stuff within' makes them a member, instead of simply contra-identifying with the Other. By looking at both, the strong identity boundaries can soften and can change, lowering the levels of mistrust and make the participants more ready for cross-community contact with a more open mind toward the Other. Single identity work is a useful tool when one wants to implement the process of social learning, where one changes "the

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[76] Interview Alan McBride, Wave Trauma Centre (04-04-2013).
[77] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).

motivations, goals, beliefs, attitudes, and emotions of the great majority of society members regarding the conflict, the nature of the relationship between the parties, and the parties themselves" (Kelman 2006:22; Aiken 2010:169). What is important in this process is accepting the incorporation of the Other in one's own identity. This requires knowledge of one's own identity and the identity of the Other. The latter can be achieved through the cross community work.

The single identity work is done to create the basis and to prepare the participants for cross-communal contact. So, most of the time, multiple groups from different communities do single identity work at the same time, so that they have similar experiences that they can exchange. This exchange takes place in the second phase, the cross-community contact, where the opposing groups meet each other. This phase starts after the participants are ready and want to be put together. "Comfort level and safety are our number one sort of priority. We always want to make people feel safe and that they can trust the process. [...] We would have to be careful about how all of that works." This doesn't mean that there won't be tensions with the exchange[78]. "[This exchange of views] is sometimes quite funny and sometimes quite serious"[79] But good work can come out of tension.[80] Participants often have questions, opinions and the cross-community work is to share it. This cross-community contact phase often kind of generates itself and the resulting discussion, dialogue and general exchange needs simply to be guided. It often results in higher understanding of each other and the self. This process of providing and aiding single identity work and cross-community contact contributes to helping participants to experience the process of identity negotiation, where they can redefine antagonist identities and (re)create a more positive interaction between the former conflicting identities (Aiken 2010:169). It mirrors quite perfectly what the concept of reconciliation encompasses, as it softens and transforms identities to a point that they incorporate both an understanding of the self as well as a new perception of the others, with the possibility to address the broken relationships between the groups more directly to move from a divided past and present to a shared and peaceful future.

It is important to note that not all organisations execute both of the phases. Sometimes it's just one or the other, depending on the aims of the project, e.g. making people think about identities, or bringing people together, et cetera. Sometimes the trouble with simply bringing people together, whether this is within an reconciliation activity or within integrated schools,

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[78] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).
[79] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).
[80] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).

can lead to identifying those people from the opposite group as the exception to their group. They might like the people they know and are in contact with, but this doesn't necessarily mean that their views of the other group as a whole will change. As Chris O'Halloran (BIP) puts it: "They'd become kind of selectively less prejudiced. […] [The participants would go like] 'I like that lot, those ones are good, but I don't know them, I don't like the look of him, don't like the look of him. But they're OK.' That kind of thing"[81]

Next to the above mentioned nation-building activities, some organisations are also involved in state-building activities. As is already explained above, state-building refers to (re)establishing and strengthening self-sustaining institutions of governance within a public structure capable of delivering those essential public goods that are required to underpin perceived legitimacy and bring forth an enduring peace (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:199; von Bogdandy et al. 2005:583-584). However, when because of circumstances some organisations find that the public goods aren't distributed all that well, for example with health care, providing training and education, helping people toward jobs, et cetera, the organisations try to solve this themselves. This is the case with Wave Trauma Centre as well, which is mainly an organisation focussed on victims of the conflict. They have projects where they help the group that has been injured during the conflict financially, as they find that the government doesn't do this as well as they should. They also help people find justice for what happened to them in the past by referring them to organisations that deal with issues of social justice and victimhood[82]

Obstacles

The organisations that use the direct approach have most of the same problems as the ones that use an indirect approach, which are all to varying degrees connected to the current socio-economic and political context described in the previous chapter.

The most mentioned obstacle organisations run into is the issue of funding. This is shown above with the example of Chris O'Halloran (BIP), where he is not sure that his job will still exist in a few months. Most organisations are dependent on external funding. These are very scarce at the moment, which brings the projects that organisations run and the progress that they have made in danger of disappearing. It is hard to get the funding one applies for, because there is a fierce competition for the scarce amount of money.[83] Then there

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[81] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).
[82] Interview Alan McBride, Wave Trauma Centre (04-04-2013).
[83] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).

is the fact that often these funds, especially the EU Peace Funds, are structurally late and less than what was agreed upon. This keeps organisations on the verge of bankruptcy. One organisation, of which the name it unknown to me, said to have had its staff work for free through the summer of 2012 in order to keep existing, waiting for the funds to come through.[84] Staff of the reconciliation organisations have lists of funds to which they can apply, have applied for and are rejected from. If being funded, organisations are saddled with huge amounts of extra administrational work on top of their own, because every pence spent must be accounted for in the books, which takes up a huge amount of time. Jayme Reaves' job as a project co-ordinator (HTR) does include this as well:

> It's a lot of admin, a lot of it is related to what's required by the funder. […] So if the funding situation wasn't the way it was I would feel like we'd probably have a lot more time to do a lot of other stuff. […] So if we want to get something printed, and we're gonna spend, you know, three hundred pounds on that, we have to go and get a quote from three different people on how much that would cost, and so just the process of being able to spend the money – it takes a lot of time. [85]

Paul Braithwaite (174 Trust) recognises this. If they have a gathering with participants, they have to account for every participant, how much tea and coffee would be necessary for the group, how much sugar cubes, how much milk, how much, cookies, how much cups and stirrers. This is wasted time.[86]

And it is time that is so valuable, especially since recently political tensions have risen because of the flag issues and discussions about bringing down the peace walls, as is mentioned in the earlier chapter. These rising tensions mean a lot of more work and thus time. Sometimes the organisations mentioned that because of these sectarian tensions, activities and projects have to be paused or cancelled all together, often resulting in a huge step backwards in the process of reconciliation. This was usually because the participants didn't want to or didn't feel safe to be in close contact within the opposing community groups or their territories, or because the part of the population that was targeted wanted to participate in the resulting rioting[87].

The last obstacle most organisations run into is the media, which mainly reports the negative news surrounding the legacies of the conflict and to a lesser extent the positive

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[84] Conference "From Fire Fighting to Communities in Transition" of the North Belfast Respect Programme 2013, brought up by a man within the public during the Q&A session (08-03-2013).
[85] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).
[86] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013) and Informal conversation with Paul Braithwaite, 174 Trust (19-03-2013).
[87] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).

results and activities that are related to the peace and reconciliation process. This leads to a distorted view in the general public of the reconciliation process, but often also of the Other as well, that organisations need to battle as well on top of the actual issues coming from society itself.[88]

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[88] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

Participating in a drum circle with Darren Ferguson (Beyond Skin)

6. Empirical chapter: Reconciliation organisations using an indirect approach
"Breaking down barriers and moving beyond various divisions using the arts"

The sound of loud upbeat music, clapping and screaming children can be heard while the manager of Beyond Skin and I approach the room where one of their interactive music workshops is taking place. When entering this rather large theatre room, we face a five-piece band on stage while another employee of the organisation is walking through the audience with a microphone in his hand. The audience is filled with some sixty kids around the ages of six to eight and a handful of teachers and supervisors. Noticeable is the fact that they obviously do not attend the same school as about half of the kids on the left side of the gallery are dressed in uniforms with a green vest, while directly on their right side another group of children is wearing burgundy red vests that carry a different school emblem. When the music stops, the man with the microphone asks the kids where they think the band's drummer originally comes from. Although not always immediately visible, all members of the band come from completely different backgrounds. Whereas the lead singer is from Belfast, others originate from Chili, Zimbabwe and Slovakia. Many of the children excitedly toss their fingers up in the air, often barely sitting at the edge of their seats, hoping they may guess where he is from. After a couple of tries, the right answer is given by one of the children. The drummer is from India and has brought an Indian drum. The man with the microphone encourages the children to guess out of which two different animals skins the drum is made and in this way stimulates everybody again to engage in the activity. Once again, a lot of fingers shoot up, but a small group of kids who appear to have an Indian background themselves stand out as they can hardly restrain themselves to stay seated. The first animal skin is guessed pretty easily, a cow. In order to help the kids a little, the speaker gives away that the second animal starts with a "g". The speaker holds his microphone in front of a small boy somewhere in the middle of the gallery who answers with "jaguar". After a few laughs, he turns to the small group in the front where a boy gives the right answer -a goat- with a big smile on his face.

After all the band members have explained where they are from and gave short solos with some instruments of their homeland, the speaker asks the children whether they work hard in school. A loud and unanimous "YES!" can be heard. When the man asks them if their teachers work hard, a more overwhelming "NOOOO!!" comes in respond. In order to set this "inequality" right, all the teachers and adults in the room, including myself, are somewhat forcefully invited onto the stage to join the band on drums in a song whilst the kids are still

jumping together out of enthusiasm. After we all get back to our seats, the band plays a couple of final up-beat songs, among others Michael Jackson's appropriate "Black or White". All the school kids are invited on stage to play an instrument side by side with the band as one big orchestra, while the rest continues to dance and/or clap along. On my left, even two older security guards engage in the workshop as they start to dance while the children are gradually escorted out the theatre room, marking the end of the workshop.[89]

As became apparent in the chapter above, it is difficult to make generalisations when it comes to peace and reconciliation organisations due to the large variety in approaches, activities, goals, etc. This is also the case when it comes to organisations that use more indirect approaches, like using sports, community gardens, media or the arts as a tool to promote reconciliation and address among others issues of sectarianism as a legacy of the conflict. Although there are a lot of peace and reconciliation organisations in Belfast that take on such an indirect approach, a focus will lie here specifically on two organisations, namely Beyond Skin and Crosslinks[90], that use the arts (e.g. music and theatre) to address issues of sectarianism, racism and inequality. This is because many organisations felt compelled to grant access in order to protect their participants as issues that are addressed are often sensitive in nature as is explained above. This chapter will first deal with some initial noteworthy similarities between the two organisations. After that, the two organisations are covered separately, examining their organisational structure, goals and activities, but also the way they deal with identity issues and the themes of unity and diversity herein. This chapter ends with a short conclusion on addressing strong identity boundaries within reconciliation.

Initial similarities

As became clear from the chapters above, the recent flag riots in Northern Ireland are an example of the constant underlying tensions between collective identities that can trigger very easily. This caused for a lot of setbacks in the reconciliation process in terms of the ability to continue reconciliatory workshops and projects due to increased feelings of fear amongst participants and the fact that it physically took longer to get to places because of the riots. One strong similarity between the organisations, besides their corresponding creative approach, is therefore the fact that they both stress the necessity of their work in the current local and

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[89] Vignette derived from data collected at an interactive music workshop by Beyond Skin in Lisburn by Ilse Korving on 25-03-2013.

[90] This due to the fact that much more data has been derived on Beyond Skin by the author than was possible with Crosslinks. Due to stressful times at Crosslinks during the fieldwork period, I was only able to conduct one interview with Ashley Holmes, drama youth worker of Crosslinks.

national context as fears and tensions between people are still very much present. In addition, both organisations are also more future-orientated instead of focusing on the past. Both acknowledge the importance of dealing with the past as they perceive there is still a lot of hurt that cannot be ignored within this post-conflict society and people need to understand where they are coming from in order to move forward.[91] Nonetheless, they do stress that more emphasis needs to be put on ensuring a peaceful shared environment for the future. According to Darren Ferguson (Beyond Skin) there has got to be a balance between the two, but that there is too much focus on the past at the moment. Beyond Skin's focus therefore is, just as Crosslinks', on moving beyond issues of the past.[92]

Another shared characteristic is their participant groups. Whereas Crosslinks is a youth project in nature with participants around the age of 14-18, around eighty to ninety per cent of the participants of Beyond Skin are also young people up to the age of thirty. The reason they choose this age group, however, goes beyond the mere argument that young people supposedly represent the future[93]. Crosslinks believes that at that age people have a level of understanding that some negative attitudes towards Others (attitudes that are often influenced by family or peers which they for instance express in racist remarks) can be challenged and they can learn more about community relations[94]. Beyond Skin also tries to invest in young people, especially in deprived areas where they see that many of them do not have a lot of opportunities and have low confidence. Even though there is a general thought that young people do not have (a big) influence on their community, Darren believes they actually do, and therefore states that: "Young people aren't our future, they are our present and they can make an impact now"[95].

Strikingly, neither of these organisations expressed any serious problems with funding while many other organisations, such as a couple described above, raise this as one of their main problems doing community work. Both view themselves lucky regarding this issue. Darren explains that Beyond Skin never had a lot of core funding (e.g. management wages) and that they always developed projects to sell to councils in order to get any funding and also invest back into the organisation. He states that by being quite entrepreneurial and creative in that respect, they are still able to do creative things with small investments. Even though they

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[91] Interviews Darren Ferguson, manager of Beyond Skin (10-04-2013) and Ashley Holmes, drama youth worker of Crosslinks (11-04-2013).
[92] Idem.
[93] This was amongst others the view of Jennifer McCann (Sinn Feín), Junior minister of the Office of the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM), interview on 28-03-2013.
[94] Interview Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (11-04-2013).
[95] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

did had to overcome big financial issues last year, now they do receive core funding from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland[96] and the only problem Darren raises is the lack of time he has to do all the things and projects he wants to do. Ashley Holmes, drama youth art worker for Crosslinks, stated that financial issues were also not a real problem as Crosslinks was funded pretty well by the European Union under the PEACE-III Programme. Her biggest concern regarding the organisation, is the fact that there remains a lack of awareness of the existence of the organisation within society, even though it has been running for over thirteen years.[97]

Beyond Skin

The interactive global music workshop which has been sketched above, is an example of one of the activities of Beyond Skin, a peacebuilding organisation that was set up in 2004 which developed gradually when opportunities for new projects arose. Nowadays, it is a network-based organisation that employs many musicians from all over the world and uses world music, global arts and media as a tool for cultural education and exchange in order to address divisions created by both sectarianism and racism, whilst also dealing with delicate issues like anti-social behaviour as these also influence the peacebuilding process according to Darren. By doing this, they hope to create a positive difference in Northern Ireland in the sense that it becomes a shared environment where people from different backgrounds and other axes of identity, e.g. gender or culture, can peacefully coexist.[98] In other words, they want to make Northern Irish society safe for diversity by use of reconciliation which we earlier defined as the long-term process of restoring broken relationships where hostilities and mistrust are overcome so that a society learns to live with differences without the use of violence in order to turn a divided past into a shared future (Smeulers & Grünfeld, 2011: 456; Ramsbotham et al., 2011: 246).

The fact that Beyond Skin also includes other identity groups within their goals, indicates that they apply reconciliatory activities thus likewise in relation to diversity in general, among others due to the increase in cultural diversity. Strikingly, however, Darren expressed that one of their aims for the near future is to include more rural areas in their work as these are often left out at the moment because focus and funding goes to the big towns and

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[96] Official website of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland: http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/default.asp, viewed on: 22-06-2013, last updated on: 22-06-2013.
[97] Interviews Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013) and Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (11-04-2013).
[98] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

cities like Belfast and Derry/Londonderry.[99] This makes it seem that rural areas are excluded from the reconciliation process on a national level. In terms of reconciliation, the organisation itself, on the other hand, is a good example of bringing people who have different beliefs and come from different cultural, religious and national backgrounds coherently together. Not only their multi-national musicians but also across its board, over forty nationalities[100] are represented and we have spoken, in relation to the past identity conflict, with both Catholic and Protestant employees.[101]

Three-strand approach

As Darren Ferguson explains it, the organisation uses a three-strand approach within their work. First of all, they want to create a safe environment where people are learning a creative skill or get up to the speed of a creative skill. This may include playing a drum for the first time, a dance class or creating a radio programme for their own internet radio station called Homely Planet. The second aim is to build up confidence. This can be personal confidence, for instance by learning a particular (creative) skill, by being encouraged to sing in front of a group[102] or giving the right answer to a question as in the workshop sketched above. Through their projects and workshops, Beyond Skin also tries to build up the confidence of participants in dealing with other cultures and/or religions. By incorporating a more educational element, they try to foster more understanding towards other cultures and religions so that participants hopefully do not feel uncomfortable or awkward when they encounter people from other religions or another skin colour.[103] This is a small-scale example of what Aiken conceptualised as 'social learning' within the process of reconciliation as the aim is to change the attitudes, beliefs and emotions of members within society as well as the nature of the relationship between parties (2010:169). It surpasses Aiken's use of the concept, though, as Beyond Skin not only incorporates antagonistic relationships between former enemies, but also possible conflicting identities between cultural, national or religious Others caused by globalisation. The final strand of Beyond Skin's approach is the learning of addressing

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[99] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

[100] Approximate number of nationalities: http://www.beyondskin.net/, viewed on: 19-06-2013, last updated on: 19-06-2013.

[101] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013) and informal conversation (05-02-2013).

[102] As was the case in an interactive music workshop from Beyond Skin within the East Belfast Project in Ledley Hall on 18-02-2013.

[103] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

stereotypes and prejudices and other issues where sectarianism, racism or other forms of discrimination are presented[104].

Using the arts to break down barriers

Within Beyond Skin, the arts are considered a 'universal language' people all can understand and relate to as "we have creative elements in all of us"[105]. They believe that by making use of a creative process, other issues (like racism and sectarianism) can be dealt with by (re)moving existing barriers of the Other. According to Darren, it often happens that people just watch the Other perform, which he believes is not very effective as a peacebuilding exercise when dealing with diversity because it can potentially reinforce stereotypes of the cultural, ethnic or religious Other as there is no learning involved. It is therefore that in workshops of Beyond Skin, there are not only educational elements present, but also dialogue and a high level of interaction. By engaging everyone in the activity (whether it is answering questions or playing music together as described above), they aim to remove that barrier of the Other. Not only between different cultural or religious groups and individuals, but also between spectators and performers to a point where the concept of an audience disappears, it all becomes "the one thing" and people stop realising there is any separation at all while learning about the other. This also applies to the musicians who are learning about each other as well, even outside of workshops. Beyond Skin takes on this approach, as they see that the arts are a good way to create a creative shared space where people feel comfortable to ask questions and get involved with Others[106] and therefore indirectly reconcile different identity groups. Claire Whelan from Beyond Skin stresses that it is therefore not just about the results of a workshops, but the process of doing or creating something together also stimulates reconciliation.[107]

A realisation within the organisation does exist, however, that one such experience with the Other does not change the attitudes of participants completely, since, as is explained above, sectarian or racist attitudes are still very much engraved in people's lives, even young people who are often influenced by family and/or peers. Darren therefore prefers a succession of workshops or more long-term projects which they have running at the moment where they

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[104] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

[105] Quote by Darren Ferguson, source: Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

[106] Interview Darren Ferguson (10-04-2013) and participant observation at different interactive global music workshops by Beyond Skin on 05-02-2013 and 25-03-2013.

[107] Interview Claire Whelan, internet radio station Homely Planet from Beyond Skin (11-04-2013).

try to build up community relations using the arts[108]. However, funding often dictates that only one workshop can take place. It is therefore that they developed the interactive music experience (as described in the vignette) where they go in with a really high impact hoping that the participants will not forget that fun, high energetic experience, as well as the educational elements.[109] When visiting some of these workshops, I definitely felt the high level of energy and everybody, including myself as well as the security guards and a principal from a school[110], felt encouraged to join in in the experience. So I do think these workshops leave an imprint on the participants. Whether they have long-lasting reconciling effects is hard to say, however, since there is in no way to measure the exact impact activities such as these have on a person's life.

Global education and understanding of own identity

Beyond Skin also tries to foster understanding on a more global level by teaching people about global citizenship and create awareness about how people all over the world impact each other (e.g. on issues like gender equality and health education that effects everybody, but also the process of making a mobile phone). Darren states that: "It's getting people a place where they can actually learn about these cultures, realise that the world is diverse and we actually all share a lot of common issues, living life as we all do". So by creating an environment where people are doing "the one thing" together, common grounds between people can be found after which differences can be explored and people can make a personal connection with Others according to Darren.[111] In a way, by making that personal, individual connection with people as a global citizen in a diverse world, some form of peaceful unity in which diversity is celebrated is thus also pursued by Beyond Skin. They thus not only apply their methods for pursuing reconciliation only on divisions created by The Troubles, but also on divisions resulting from globalisation[112].

Besides encouraging people to learn and understand more about cultural and religious Others, Beyond Skin also tries to get people to think about their own identity (in so-called 'single-identity work' as is described in the chapter above) as they see that there is a great lack of understanding of people's own identity and the history of it within society, especially

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[108] For example The East Belfast Project.
[109] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).
[110] Participant observation interactive global music workshop (05-02-2013).
[111] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).
[112] Darren Ferguson explained that Belfast was being called "the racist capital of Europe" in the media, source: interview Darren Ferguson (10-04-2013). See also BBC "What the Papers Say": http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/3556583.stm, viewed on: 20-06-2013, last updated on: 20-06-2013.

amongst young people, which creates a lot of identity issues according to Darren. This is mostly in regards to the old conflicting identities of British Protestant and Irish Catholic, which is also something Ashley Holmes from Crosslinks expressed. Single-identity work is for instance done within Beyond Skin's East Belfast Project, where two groups of young people around the ages of 13-14 (one from a Catholic and the other from a Protestant neighbourhood) first did a couple of workshops separately with an artist in order to build up a trust relationship with that artist. After that, the two groups came together in joined music workshops, thus also incorporating cross-community work within the same project. [113]

In order to address and challenge issues surrounding people's own identity, Beyond Skin often uses the so-called 'international eye' where people from outside Northern Irish society, often the international artists, ask somewhat naïve questions regarding people's own identity instead of local people. In this way, local identities can be explored and challenged so that more understanding can be created, whereas participants can perceive it as hostile when locals ask these questions because they perhaps belong to the other side of the Protestant-Catholic dichotomy which could stir up conflicting tensions and attitudes.[114] More understanding of people's own identity is according to Darren also possible through their global focus as he states that "making children more aware of the world outside, they'll realise new stuff about themselves[115]. A learning process which is well-known within anthropology as Ricoeur once explained it as: "The comprehension of the self by the detour of the other" (Ricoeur in Paul Rabinow 2007:xxix).

Crosslinks

Although Crosslinks also makes use of a creative process to contribute to reconciliation within Northern Ireland, they undertake different activities and have somewhat different goals than Beyond Skin does which will be analysed below. Important to take in account, is the fact that during my fieldwork period, Crosslinks was preparing a big show called 'Breaking News'[116]. Since these were stressful times for the organisation, I was not able to participate or interview people during their preparation time. Most of the information below is therefore based on one interview with Ashley Holmes, a former Crosslinks participant herself who is

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[113] Interviews Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013) and Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (11-04-2013).
[114] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).
[115] Conversation with Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (05-02-2013).
[116] Unfortunately, I was not able to come and see the show "Breaking News" in Belfast city hall, because I was already back in the Netherlands on the evenings of the 21st and 22nd of April. Afterwards via e-mail (08-05-2013), I learned from Ashley Holmes that the evenings went really well and that the young people involved "were encouraged and supported by the audience and thrived on their laughter and applause".

now the creative youth arts worker for the organisation and provides community relations drama workshops, who also directed 'Breaking News'.

Breaking down barriers using the arts

Crosslinks was established thirteen years ago as a youth project under the organisation Youth Initiatives (YI), a relatively big faith-based organisation based in West Belfast that also does youth work in East Belfast, the town of Banbridge and perhaps in the future they will expand to Derry/Londonderry. According to their mission statement, Crosslinks is a "cross-community, cross-cultural arts-based youth project that seeks to break down barriers and address misconceptions pertaining to race, faith, culture and tradition"[117]. In addition, Ashley explained that Crosslinks aims to reach out to young people in order to enable them to become accepting and without prejudice towards people from different ethnicities, creeds, cultures and/or sexuality, allowing them to become agents of change within their communities by exploring community relations issues in a safe, positive, relational environment and an atmosphere of mutual respect.[118] Just like Beyond Skin, Crosslinks goes beyond reconciling old conflicting community identities and incorporates other axes of identity that underscore diversity and can cause antagonistic feelings and attitudes within society. Ashley underpins this by mentioning that promoting diversity is one of Crosslinks' core values.

In this respect, both organisations aim to break down barriers by fostering more knowledge about different Others as misunderstandings are challenged by way of creative activities in a safe environment. Through creative means, like drama or dance workshops, dialogue also takes place. During workshops, Ashley explains, group discussions around issues of sectarianism and discrimination are carried out (e.g. flag protests) and that possible derogatory comments from young people are also challenged, so that they learn how to articulate their thoughts in a non-offensive way. This is thus also an example where an organisation uses the process of 'social learning' (Aiken 2010) to reduce intergroup identity boundaries and understanding of the Other is obtained by bringing people together so that communication is possible and a peaceful togetherness can be created (Yanay & Lifshitz-Oron 2008:275).

Although YI states that it has a Christian ethos[119], according to Ashley, Crosslinks on the other hand has not, because they work with people from many different cultural and

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[117] Interview Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (11-04-2013).
[118] Idem.
[119] The official Youth Initiatives' website states that one of their core values is a Christian perspective as they base their ethos on Christian principles of faith, hope and love.

religious backgrounds and it is not one of their objectives to connect people to the Church, unlike YI. The young people participating in activities of Crosslinks are recruited by one of their partners: the East Belfast Mission Youth Group, Youth Initiatives, the Chinese Welfare Association or the Polish community group. Nevertheless, Ashley stresses that their door is open to everybody, because "I make sure it's held open for everybody as there is none of this: you can come, but you can't."[120] This depicts the image that they do not intend to leave anybody out in their community relations youth work, and thus also from their reconciliatory work. Ashley does state, however, that the work of Crosslink is in its nature the principles and practices of youth work, but that it actually is very much the complimentary of God through it all. This can be found for instance in the summer camp they organise in August. Although it is a cross-community camp where everybody is welcome, it is indeed very faith-based as a guest speaker from America is coming over to preach and encourage young people to better their lives. Another activity organised by Crosslinks are occasional service trips, e.g. to Israel and Palestine, where young people learn about other communities.[121] Again, an educational element is implemented in the activities to foster understanding of Other through the process of 'social learning'.

Community relations drama workshop

More specifically, Crosslinks is a programme that runs on a Monday night from 7 until 9 o'clock that takes place at the East Belfast Mission Skainos[122] building. This building is a so-called shared living space that intends to be conclusive for the whole community and is about promoting a shared future.[123] In my opinion, this invigorates Crosslinks' aim to pursue creating a safe environment of mutual respect where diversity is accepted, even if it is just for those two hours. Within those hours, young people can sign up and specify whether they are interested in doing dance, drama, art, singing or music. During one of Ashley's community relations drama workshops, the first aim is to get the young people to know one another in ice-breaking activities like "Picture perfect" and to get from them what they are thinking and feeling about living in Northern Ireland. Here, Ashley shouts out a word that has something to

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[120] Interview Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (11-04-2013).
[121] Idem.
[122] "Derived from a biblical Greek word and rooted firmly in Christian tradition and history, the name Skainos speaks of the importance of practical engagement with a community by figuratively pitching a tent in its midst, and it hints at the notion of hospitality and the extended family. An alternative meaning for the word is as a description of the frailty of human beings. It stands therefore as a useful counterbalance to the temptation to focus solely on new buildings to the detriment of serving people." – on East Belfast Mission website: http://www.ebm.org.uk/skainos/index.php, viewed on: 22-06-2013, last updated on: 22-06-2013.
[123] Source: East Belfast Mission website - "The Skainos Project", http://www.ebm.org.uk/skainos/index.php, viewed on: 22-06-2013, last updated on: 22-06-2013.

do with Belfast or Northern Ireland (e.g. the Titanic or riots) and then the young people have to embody that. After that, group discussions on those issues take place and Ashley uses those discussions to write the script for the play. This was for instance also the case with the decision to take the Union flag down that was turned into a scene called "Flag therapy" where someone embodies the Union flag and enters a therapy room to deal with his feelings on that issue. So, even though Ashley felt frustrated about the rioting after this decision, she was able to use it in "Breaking News" as it portrays current tensions.[124]

'Taking steps, not sides'[125]

"Breaking News" is a funny and light-hearted show played by forty inexperienced actors from Crosslinks where sectarian and racist issues are addressed under the theme of 'taking steps, not sides'. The reason for this title is because with this show, Crosslinks wants to "break" the news as

the media tends to only show negative news on Northern Irish society and this is positive news they can report[126]. Ashley explains that the fact that the actors had such a great input in writing the script with the group discussions, they really embody the play as well as its theme since 'taking steps, not sides' is something that they do on a daily basis, including taking part in this show. She therefore states that this show can be seen as a platform for young people to express their ideas and hopes that they feel empowered to make people listen to them. One of their aims with this show is therefore to inspire the audience to also take steps and not sides in every decision they make on a daily basis. Ashley explained this as follows:

> So they are not going: 'this is my side and that is your side', they are saying: 'Let's compromise each other, let me find out more about your culture, let me find out more about what I believe in, let me believe what I believe in, but be respected'.[127]

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[124] Interview Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (11-04-2013).
[125] Image Source: Crosslinks at www.youthinitiatives.com, viewed on: 28-06-2013, last updated on: 28-06-2013.
[126] In order to try to do this, Crosslinks has invited a couple of media networks like UTV (Northern Ireland's home for News, Sport and Entertainment - http://www.u.tv/) and the BBC.
[127] Interview Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (11-04-2013).

Just as the Skainos-building, the venue chosen for this show also strengthens the aim to reconcile people from different groups in a safe environment. The show took place at Belfast city hall in the city centre in order for people from all over Northern Ireland to be able to come and see the show and not feel uncomfortable because it is in an area predominantly Catholic or Protestant as was the case in previous years[128].

Learning how not to clash

A final type of activities Crosslinks also provides, is workshops in schools on life and learning that deal with identity issues in another way as children are taught about citizenship, stereotypes around diversity and identity itself. In these workshops, it is attempted to empower young people to be confident in who they are and to be ok with and respectful to people who are different from them. As Ashley stated, these workshops try to teach the kids "how you don't clash". In this way, Crosslinks tries to reduce any prejudices and to break down barriers children can have with diverse Others, but also to teach them how their own culture influences them. Here, a focus is present on regarding people as unique individuals and not just in relation to a collective identity, like religion or culture.[129] So, in a way, some form of unity is also pursued by Crosslinks as we are all individuals in a diverse world. By connecting people to other cultures, promoting accepting diversity and providing other ways of thinking so that people can foster a higher level of understanding of themselves as well as Others[130], Crosslinks thus pursues to break down intergroup barriers and to create a more peaceful togetherness through 'social learning' (Aiken 2010; Yanay & Lifshitz-Oron 2008:275). As Ashley puts it: "if it prevents one more person from rioting, […], or one more person from being disrespectful to somebody on the streets […], then we're making a difference.[131]

Addressing strong identity boundaries

As is stated above, strong identity boundaries and cultural differences need to be addressed in a reconciliation process in order for existing feelings of misunderstanding, mistrust and uncertainty to turn into less antagonistic feelings towards each other for a sustainable peace to succeed, even after a formal political settlement has been reached like the Good Friday Agreement (Maney et al. 2006:184, 196). The above shows that both Crosslinks as well as

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[128] The city centre is perceived to be a neutral area regarding the existing two communities. In previous years for instance, the show took place in Lisburn and East Belfast (Interview Ashley Holmes – 11-04-2013).
[129] Interview Ashley Holmes, Crosslinks (11-04-2013).
[130] Idem.
[131] Idem.

Beyond Skin address identity issues within their goals and activities. Whether it is to promote diversity in identities as something positive, to make people aware of the similarities they have with those Others as global citizens or by promoting being confident in your own skin and focusing on people as unique individuals. Their focus on accepting Others as fellow human beings and fostering more understanding about them as well as of people's own identity, points towards identity negotiation within the reconciliation process as their aim is to reduce strong intergroup barriers so that a peaceful togetherness can be created (Yanay & Lifshitz-Oron 2008: 275).

The incorporation of identity issues within the creative activities of both organisations where people from different identity groups cohesively come together also shows that relationships between people from different identity groups can indeed change to more harmonious ones, even when these used to be antagonistic and conflicting in nature. This corresponds with the idea that identity is not just something that someone *is*, but also an understanding of knowing who we are as well as knowing who other people are which is constructed through social interaction (Buckley & Kenney 1995:23; Jenkins 2008:17-18) and can thus be (positively) altered by social learning (Aiken 2010).

Flag hanging on lamppost next to Cupar Way peace wall

7. Conclusion & Discussion

Within Northern Irish society, diversity is not uncommon. The strong existing sectarian feelings and attitudes as a legacy of The Troubles that officially ended fifteen years ago, however, makes this society unique as the old conflicting identities still cause for strong divisions between the two communities (the Irish/Catholic/Nationalist/Republican-community and the British/Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist-community) in many aspects of everyday life. In this final chapter, we'll first underline the theoretical relevance of this research, after which the most note-worthy results will be presented. These findings will show that there are many different peacebuilding and reconciliation organisations that promote a shared future in the current socio-economic and political context of Belfast that take on different approaches, pursue different goals and incorporate many different activities. These results will be shortly discussed below, as well as whether they pursue some kind of unity and/or promote acceptance of diversity. Hereafter we'll reflect on the conducted research and we'll make recommendations both on further research, as well as on the reconciliation process as being carried out in Northern Ireland at the moment.

Theoretical Relevance

The conducted research is theoretically relevant in the debate of reconciling all kinds of diverse societies, as this research was aimed to do. The results show that using methods aimed at reconciling groups that are diverse due to conflict-related issues, will probably be too extreme for societies that are only diverse in nature and not by a former conflict, such as multicultural societies. The nature of the intercultural clashes differ too much, as the differences between opposing groups in societies after an intractable conflict often have a long history of distrust, violence and grievances often resulting in legacies of the conflict, for instance remaining sectarian attitudes. Within the current context of Belfast, some organisations, however, do include reconciliation methods aimed at other types of diversity besides conflict-related. Reconciliation is thus definitely applicable to situations that are characterised by diversity in general. Whether this will actually be effective on societies that don't know a history of conflict, further research should determine.

Legacies of the conflict

This sectarian division is first of all very much present in the hearts and minds of people as they still think and live in this old conflicting dichotomy of "us"-"them". The recent flag

protests is one example where old conflicting tensions were stirred up because a lot of people from the British Protestant community felt they were losing part of their identity in a way. A lot of problems on identity issues do exist, however, because of a lack of knowledge people have on the history of Northern Ireland and the way these two communities, including their own identity group, came into being.[132] Often, this has to do with the many labels these two communities have which pinpoints multiple axes of identity under one collectivity. This often leads to misunderstandings about these identity groups as people for instance perceive that being Protestant also means that someone is British or Loyalist, which is not always the case.

Issues like the flag protests tend to strengthen the boundaries between these two identity groups as people in Northern Ireland are likely to take sides in such matters.[133] This is also done through 'trans-generational traumas' and influences from family and/or peers so that sectarian attitudes are being passes on to younger generations which instils it as a part of every-day life.[134] Some would even go as far to state that people have been institutionalised to hate the Other in the current climate of Northern Ireland without understanding why.[135] These remaining sectarian attitudes are also enforced due to the fact that, just as many other facilities like pubs or supermarkets, the educational sector is strongly divided along sectarian lines. The fact that many people from one community only encounter people from the Other community if they go to university[136] and rarely get into contact at public places, fosters strong identity boundaries. This because the lack of understanding of the Other group as well as its role within people's own identity, pointing towards the way people identify as this incorporates also an understanding of who other people are (Buckley & Kenney 1995:23; Jenkins 2008:18), is hardly addressed.

This is further reinforced by existing physical boundaries and territorial markers in Belfast, like peace walls, murals and flags, that are often merely the visual representation of existing social divisions between the two conflicting collective identity groups. Often, (sometimes barely visible or symbolic) physical barriers are placed at the intersections of primarily Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods, so-called 'interface areas'. These boundaries at the borders of the two community groups thus geographically define the space where collective identities clash and social boundaries between groups are created (Barth 1969 mentioned in: Sanders 2002:328). Social identities that are fluid and changeable in

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[132] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).
[133] Interview Alan McBride, manager of Wave Trauma Centre (23-05-2013).
[134] Idem.
[135] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).
[136] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from DUP (28-03-2013).

nature (Jenkins 2008:18) are thus as a result rather geographically fixed. Visual expressions of group identities, like flags or painted curb stones, within some predominantly Catholic and Protestant neighbourhoods, also mark the content of such geographical areas. Existing symbolic identity markers, that sometimes tell a reframed version of history (e.g. on murals), make it immediately clear for outsiders with which collective identity a neighbourhood identifies itself. In Belfast, the strong existing "us"-"them" dichotomy is thus also physically and geographically played out as both the boundaries as well as the content of collective identities are made visible within the city's streetscape.

Another visible element within Belfast is the widespread poverty: wastelands and dilapidated buildings can be seen, even in the city centre. This isn't surprising as the economy of Northern Ireland is affected by the thirty years of war, the disappearance of old industries to other parts of the world and the global economic crisis. A third of the young people live below the poverty line,[137] most of whom are inhabit the interface areas. These residents are the so-called 'vagabonds' within Bauman's (2010) dichotomy, that can't escape their roots and neighbourhood as they don't have the means, in contrast to the higher social classes. Discontent about the economic situation and opportunities can cause boundaries between identity groups to solidify and tensions to heighten, as there's competition for scarce goods, like jobs. To better the standing of Northern Ireland and Belfast in the world economy, reconciliation is necessary as well, as the national and local economy can't afford it to keep on being divided. For businesses to invest in the country, it needs to have a stable image, which it doesn't at the moment[138].

To solve the economic situation and the rising sectarian tensions, people look at the government for leadership.[139] This is found in the fact the government was obligated in the Good Friday Agreement to promote good relations between all communities within society. Nationally, one could see this as being a priority when looking at the amount of funding. Whereas the total budget for Northern Ireland was cut, the funding for reconciliation processes are currently more than the previous period[140]. Timothy Cairns, Special Advisor to the First Minister, said that promoting good relations and unity should start with housing and education, the latter being necessary first. People want an integrated and shared education system, but are reluctant to make sacrifices themselves. This is necessary however, because if

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[137] Interview Jennifer McCann, Junior Minister from Sinn Féin (28-03-2013).
[138] Idem.
[139] Idem.
[140] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the DUP (28-03-2013).

children are taught together how to deal with diversity now, the problems related to this could stop with the current generation.[141]

The last main national strategy to promote unity and good relations is the CSI, Cohesion Sharing and Integration policy, which is an agreement on how all public bodies should deal with certain sectarian issues, such as flags, peace walls, segregated education, housing, et cetera.[142] At the moment there is no shared view on how this should be done and it happens often that parts of the government decide differently to do things than other parts, sometimes even undermining the decisions of the other.[143] One of the most contested issues is dealing with the past and almost all informants we spoke with had other views on how this should be done. Although most decided that this should be done (and why is explained further below), the informants that worked on a local or national political level said that it was time to move forward and focus on the younger generation, as they are the future of the united society.

The above shows that sectarian divisions and strong identity boundaries between old conflicting identities are still very much alive in Belfast and Northern Irish society as a whole and underlying tensions are still able to resurface. It also proves that reconciliation remains a necessary element in Northern Ireland as relationships between the two identity groups are often still antagonistic in nature. Also because of the fact that the flag protests caused setbacks in the reconciliation process, most importantly because projects needed to be physically stopped as people were afraid to go to areas of the Other concerning the two communities.

Peace and reconciliation organisations

A division has been made by the authors between organisation that take on a direct approach and an indirect approach in pursuing reconciliation. As has been set out above, the direct approach is an approach where sectarian attitudes, behaviour and other conflict related problems are being addressed and tried to be solved with explicit acknowledgement of the problems while the indirect approach addresses issues of sectarianism, as well as other types of discrimination like racism, indirectly by means of non-conflict related activities and platforms.

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[141] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the DUP (28-03-2013).
[142] Idem.
[143] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).

Direct approach

The results of researching organisations that try to bring about reconciliation whilst using the direct approach were very interesting, but the main conclusion is that all reconciliation organisations try to strife for a united society where it is safe for diversity; where sectarianism is the exception instead of the rule. Most organisations are small in staff, but numerous in projects and activities. The staff had often been affected by The Troubles and gone through an individual process of reconciliation themselves, which made them perfect for working within the grassroots organisations as they are attuned to what kind of issues are important in the community on the ground.[144]

The researched organisations try to address these issues in a number of ways, of which most can be viewed as either nation-building or state-building activities. These are often being executed separately in relation to the three dimensions of time, i.e. the past, present and future, in mind. They would for example try to solve current and direct problems in the present, or look at grievances and victimisation in the past, but mainly all activities and goals related to reconciliation are focussed on the future. Of course, all dimensions of time are intrinsically linked and always influence each other. When you want a united and peaceful future, you have to move away from a divided past and present by solving those issues: softening the boundaries around the identity groups as to make them more including and accepting of the ethnic Other and to learn to be able to eventually live together. Dealing with the past is very important within this process, because if underlying tensions will not be addressed, they will not go away.[145]

State-building activities mostly deal with solving present practical problems, such as welfare, education, employment and achieving social justice (which in turn has got more to do with the past); delivering such public goods. Nation-building activities are more often being executed in the dichotomy of single identity work and cross-community work. Single identity work is focussed on making the participants learn about their own identity, their community and their past[146]. It doesn't look at boundaries alone, but also at the 'cultural stuff' it encloses and what this means to the participants (Barth 1969 mentioned in: Sanders 2002:328). It softens the identity boundaries as to make the participant more open and ready for cross-community contact. In the cross-community contact sessions, the participants exchange their views with a group of people similar to themselves, but from the opposing group, whom often

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[144] Interview Alan McBride, Wave Trauma Centre (04-04-2013).
[145] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).
[146] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013); Interview Chris O'Halloran (25-03-2013).

also have gone through sessions of single identity work. The exchange of experiences, views and meanings adhered to those often lead to dialogue and discussion, which in turn often bring about a further understanding of the self as well as a new perception of others, not as enemies, but as fellow human beings (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:261). The use of both methods mirrors quite perfectly what the concept of reconciliation encompasses, as it softens and transforms identities to a point that they incorporate both an understanding of the self as well as a new perception of the Others, with the possibility to address the broken relationships between the groups more directly to move from a divided past and present to a shared and peaceful future (Aiken 2010:169). However, not always are both strands used, sometimes the goal of the organisation is simply to let participants learn about themselves, or deem the participants ready for direct cross-community work.[147]

Because of the more direct and confrontational nature of this method, it is more often aimed at adults, whom probably have made a more conscious decision to participate in such programmes. They have also lived through the conflict and have more direct problems related to this. However, young people are often an important target group too, as they are the generation that will lead in the future, but also because sectarian attitudes are often transmitted throughout generations.[148] Organisations need to interfere now, in order to get the future leaders and decision-makers in a more peaceful and united mind-set.

However, the current situation in Belfast society does hinder the organisations sometimes in the work that they do in promoting reconciliation. As mentioned above in the form of the flag protests, it is clear that external sensitive political decisions can cause the underlying tensions between the two communities to resurface and make people pick sides[149], bringing along negative consequences for the reconciliation process as the identity boundaries solidify, but it also opens up room for people to talk about these issues in the open.[150] Other issues that influence the reconciliation process are often related to funding, as the current economic situation is debilitated because of the conflict and the global economic crisis, organisations often have to struggle to get enough funds for their work. A lot of the organisations don't know on a short-term basis if they can keep carrying out their work. If

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[147] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013); Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).
[148] Interview Alan McBride, Wave Trauma Centre (04-04-2013).
[149] Interview Paul Braithwaite, 174Trust (19-03-2013).
[150] Interview David Robinson, Good Relations Officer in the Good Relations Unit in Belfast City Council (27-02-2013).

they get funding, they have to do a lot of administrative work to keep it, which costs a lot of time. Time that could be better spend on uniting people.[151]

Indirect approach

The two researched organisations taking on an indirect approach towards promoting reconciliation, Beyond Skin and Crosslinks, also showed some interesting results. Strikingly, although many other organisations did have problems with funding, both Beyond Skin as well as Crosslinks had little problems in this respect as they were either getting funded well under the PEACE-III Programme or were entrepreneurially adapted to do creative projects using small investments. Another similarity is the fact that both work mainly with young people and that they have an explicit focus on promoting diversity and ensuring a peaceful shared future.

Although they both take on a creative approach, using the arts to address issues of sectarianism, racism and other forms of discrimination, they are differently structured and use different art forms to do this. Beyond Skin is a network-based organisation, taking on projects when they have the possibility, that predominantly uses music to achieve their goals and has a unique focus on global education. Crosslinks, on the other hand, is a project that falls under a relatively big faith-based organisations and mainly uses theatre to address those issues. Nonetheless, they do noticeably both use the arts to break down barriers between different Others whilst incorporating an educational element and a focus on building up confidence within their participants, even if this is done in different ways. This indicates that both organisations make use of the process of 'social learning' as part of negotiating identity within their activities.

Both Crosslinks as well as Beyond Skin go beyond the mere bringing of people together, but engage in the process of reconciliation as broken relationships are aimed to be restored in order for their participants to live with differences and without the use of violence in order for a society to embrace a shared future (Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:456; Ramsbotham et. al. 2011:246). By promoting the acceptance of diversity in a creative environment where people feel respected and safe enough to engage in learning about their own identity as well as those of Others, they indirectly try to break down strong identity boundaries in order for a peaceful togetherness to be created. In other words, they try to reconcile people from diverse backgrounds, whether these are derived from old conflicting identities or new (possible) antagonistic ones due to the increased flow of migrants resulting from globalising processes, in order to create a peaceful togetherness.

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[151] Interview Jayme Reaves, Healing Through Remembering (21-03-2013).

Unity in diversity

In respect to the key themes of unity and diversity that formed a common thread throughout this research, we have found some striking similarities between the studied reconciliation organisation, both using the direct approach and/or an indirect approach. All of the organisation that are dealt with within the direct approach are trying to promote reconciliation as to bring about a peaceful and shared unified society where differences are accepted in a way that sectarian segregation becomes the exception instead of the norm. They mainly try to achieve this by using redefined practices of state- and nation-building, in itself somewhat unifying peacebuilding processes. Both organisations analysed, that take on an indirect approach towards peacebuilding and reconciliation also promote the acceptance of diversity, but also try to create some form of unity wherein diversity is perceived as something positive. Beyond Skin does this by implementing a focus on global citizenship within workshops, while Crosslinks stimulates participants to view other people as individuals and not for a collective identity they might identify with. In other words, all researched peace and reconciliation organisations want to bring about some form of unity wherein diversity is peacefully accepted so that the world is made a safer place for diversity.

Reflection on conducted research

As we reflect on the research, the above mentioned findings must be put into critical perspective. The fact remains that the period in which the research was carried out was a mere three months. This is a relatively short period of time for a research aimed at broad subjects like reconciliation and identity. It needs to be taken in account, thus, that perhaps this period is too short to make reaching generalisations. Another critical note to the findings is that, though not for lack of trying, we were not able to acquire access to the participants of the activities that the reconciliation organisations carried out[152]. As has been explained above, the main reason for this was that the reconciliation process is perceived by many organisations as fragile, especially in regards to the recent flag protests. The organisations were therefore reluctant to expose the fragile reconciliation process and their participants to our outsider influences and sensitive questions, us possibly endangering the progress as well as the participant's feelings of safety and openness. The result of the lack of participant's views is that the findings might be one-sided when looking at the reconciliation process and the socio-economic and political context. For a deeper understanding of the subject, further research

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[152] With the exception of the participants of Beyond Skin.

would thus be recommended on the participant's side of the activities of these organisations, especially when one is looking at the (long-term) effects and impact of the process of reconciliation.

It also needs to be noted that there is something of a weariness of researchers that has severely limited the amount of organisations we could look at. We would find programmes that seemed representative of the subjects we were trying to study, but we couldn't get into contact with them. An informant said that she had received three requests from researchers that morning alone, which she had to decline because I was already taking up her time. A final note, when looking at the data, it needs to be acknowledged that, although their information was invaluable, the answers several politicians provided might have been socially desirable or in a way politically motivated so that it suited their own agenda's or their party's perceptions of society.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the research, we will make a few recommendations on the reconciliation process that might be useful for those involved. Firstly, the multiple actors concerned with the peace and reconciliation process (peace building and reconciliation organisations, politicians, governmental bodies) could work together better and more closely. The organisations we have looked at were a mere sample from the sheer number of peace building and reconciliation organisations in the Belfast area. More often than not they didn't know of the other's existence or what the other did. This also means that several organisations might be trying to do the same thing, but all in different ways and with different goals. This also results in a process of what Chris O'Halloran calls "re-inventing the wheel", because people keep on developing the process of reconciliation on their own but other organisations might have solved the problems that you have and vice versa. Instead of sharing this knowledge, there's also a bit of territorialisation in the field of reconciliation.[153] This all leads to the second recommendation, which is that the CSI, Cohesion Sharing and Integration strategy should be developed and implemented quickly, so that all public bodies and actors in the reconciliation process can move forward in a collective way, where it is clear what the goals are and how issues should be dealt with, without contradicting each other in trying to bring about a peaceful and shared future.[154]

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[153] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013).
[154] Interview Chris O'Halloran, Belfast Interface Project (25-03-2013); Interview Jennifer McCann, Junior Minister from Sinn Féin (28-03-2013); Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from the DUP (28-03-2013).

Starting to make the world safe for diversity

All the above shows that a lot of work still needs to be done in order for Northern Ireland to call itself reconciled, not only in regards to old conflicting identity groups but also concerning other forms of discrimination concerning diversity. As has been stated in the introduction, diversity is a common characteristic of the world around us that tends to increase due to globalising processes, which for instance also triggered migration flows in Northern Ireland after signing The Good Friday Agreement. It can result in mistrust and misunderstanding between people when different identity groups do not get into contact with each other, but since diversity will always exist in societies to a certain extent, people need to perceive differences in axes of identity (e.g. religion, culture and gender) as non-threatening and in an equal way in order to make the world safe for diversity.

> *If we were starting tomorrow with a blank piece of paper, possibly what we would do, well there was an old Irish joke where somebody pulls over and asks for directions and the reply is: 'if I wanted to go there I wouldn't start from here'. But we have to start from here and that is where the shared opportunities are becoming more I think.* [Junior Minister Jonathan Bell, 28-03-2013]

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Appendix I: Research questions

Main question:
How do different reconciliation organisations try to pursue unity and/or acceptance of diversity through their activities and goals in the current socio-economic and political context in Belfast?

Main goal:
By doing this, we want to contribute to the debate on whether these types of organisations really do contribute to reconciling opposing groups by means of identity negotiation within Belfast and perhaps make recommendations on where this can be improved. Furthermore, this study may contribute to the debate whether these type of reconciling processes, namely from a conflict studies approach, are also applicable to divided societies in general, like societies divided by multicultural diversity.

Sub questions:
1. What is the socio-economic and political context in which organisations try to pursue reconciliation?
    a. How do the legacies of the conflict affect the current socio-economic and political milieu in Belfast?
    b. In what ways do politicians and the government try to promote reconciliation on a local and national level?
    c. In what way does the socio-economic and political context affect the reconciliation process as pursued by reconciliation organisations?

2. Who are these reconciliation organisations and how do they pursue reconciliation?
    a. How are these organisations structured?
    b. What are their goals and activities?
    c. What is their target audience?
        ➢ How do organisations try to reach their target audience?
        ➢ Who do they not reach and why?
    d. What issues relating to identity do these organisation try to tackle and how do they deal with these issues?
    e. What problems do these organisations encounter?

3. How are unity and diversity in relation to identification processes pursued by reconciliation organisations and how is this expressed on a political level?
    a. How do reconciliation organisations pursue unity by means of identity processes, like 'identity negotiation'?
    b. What role does diversity have within the goals and activities of reconciliation organisations and how is the "other" incorporated in this?
    c. What role do unity and diversity have within the policies of local and national politics?

Appendix II: Codes for data

Only for Organisations Questions	For all Questions
- History of Organisation	**- Issues of identity**
- Organisational structures	- Unity
- Board	- Diversity
- Members	- Legacies of the conflict
- Target population	- *Sectarianism*
- Young people	- Attitudes
- Adults	- Violence
- Personal motivation / Life history	- Segregation
- Goals	- Social
- Activities/ Projects	- Geographical
- Single identity work	Neighbourhoods/*Interface areas/*Peace Walls
- Cross-community work	- Facilitary
- Results	- Politics
- Problems	- Politicians and Parties/Leaders
- Funding	- Policy
- Sectarian issues	- Dealing with the past
- Intended solutions	- Shared future/space
	- Victimhood
	- Social deprivation
	- Unemployment
	- Poverty line
	- Social mobility
	- Social problems with youth
	- Crime
	- Education
	- Education
	- Quality
	- Segregation
	- Integrated
	- Politice
	- Flag Protests
	- *Orange / Marching Season*
	- *Border Poll*

Appendix III: Research methods and techniques

Two frequently used methods during our fieldwork, were 'observation' and 'participant observation', where as much field notes, photographs and voice recordings were made when possible. In some research situations, like interactive music workshops, it was possible to actively participate in activities which made it possible to obtain a different view on the activities of a reconciliation organisation. Other situations, on the other hand, required a more passive approach. It was impossible, for instance, to participate in the observed flag protests in front of Belfast city hall[155] since we were complete outsiders of that group of protesters. It did give us a good outsider perspective on the resurfaced tensions in the city. A somewhat higher level of participation than pure observations (e.g. of currently flying flags or murals; examples of visual boundary markers), were also made, for example during a couple of events attended within the North Belfast Respect Programme (NBRP). During seminars and lectures within this programme - where among others scientists, organisations and politicians came to speak about reconciliation in this part of Belfast -, it was necessary to actively listen and observe, but there were often also possibilities to ask questions or give an opinion. During these activities it was therefore also possible to use a moderate level of participation. This constantly differing level of participation and observation, points to the tension that is present within the qualitative research method of participant observation, namely that between distance and involvement or outsider-insider perspective (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011: 21).

Another important used method of research was conducting interviews. Before the start of our fieldwork, a list of questions for semi-structured interviews was set up and adjusted where needed in the field. These planned interviews were most of the time recorded with a voice recorder while notes were also made. Since informal conversations and open interviews often gave the opportunity to ask a lot of these pre-drafted questions, as much notes as possible were also made during these conversations. Some interviews were conducted individually, but most of them were done in pairs. While conducting interviews individually went perfectly fine, there were a couple of advantages to doing this together, because tasks could be divided between the two of us. While one asked the questions and kept her full attention to the informant, the other was able to make notes and could ask additional questions when they arose during the conversation. All while the interviews were being recorded. We noticed that individually, it was more difficult to keep your full attention to the

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[155] Observations were made on 02-02-2013.

informant and their responses while trying to make notes. It was therefore for us the most beneficial way to conduct interviews. You can wonder, however, whether this has had a (significant) influence on the correspondence with the informant. While we believed this collaboration was beneficial since more attention could be devoted to the informant, this could perhaps also come across more intimidating than being interviewed by one person. We never had the feeling, however, that this was the case.

A final method of research that was often used during the period of fieldwork, was the type of informal observation so-called "hanging out". During these informal research activities we would socially interact with our research population and within the general public of Belfast in a relaxed atmosphere. We could examine the assumptions being made about what was considered general knowledge; what the underlying context or framework was in which was being communicated. The relaxed and often safe environment sometimes made it possible for us to ask more direct questions. Hanging out taught us how people in the field, or in other words our research population, communicated, but also provided insights on the way in which subjects were currently being discussed (issues like the recent flag riots) and gave us the possibility to find out about which subjects we needed to know more. In this way, we could adjust the topics and interview questions we drafted beforehand when needed, so that we could ask more relevant questions in the future. Apart from this, hanging out also increased the trust and friendship between us and our research population, increasing the rapport, which made it possible to ask about the more sensitive subjects in later interviews as well. The problem of the informal setting of hanging out was that we couldn't make notes at that specific time, so that remembering everything correctly afterwards could prove difficult.

Appendix IV: Overview reconciliation organisations and programmes

- **174 Trust:**

The 174 Trust is a non-denominational Christian organisation that facilitates a variety of essential community projects in North Belfast. Located in the New Lodge community, the Trust offers opportunities and assistance to people of all ages.

Source: http://www.174trust.org/v3/index.php, last updated on: 18-06-2013, viewed on: 18-06-2013.
Email: paul@174trust.org
Informants: Paul Braithwaite – Programme co-ordinator
            Jennifer Bleiwise – Intern

- **Belfast Interface Project (BIP):**

Belfast Interface Project is a membership organisation developing creative approaches to the regeneration of Belfast's interface or 'peaceline' areas.

Source: http://www.belfastinterfaceproject.org/, last updated on: 17-06-2013, viewed on: 17-06-2013.
Email: info@belfastinterfaceproject.org
Informant: Chris O'Halloran – Project Co-ordinator

- **Beyond Skin:**

Established in 2004, Beyond Skin is an organisation which uses Music, Arts & Media to assist in the building & development of cultural relations in Northern Ireland, with the overall aim of addressing issues of racism & sectarianism.

Source: http://www.beyondskin.net/index.php, last updated on: 17-06-2013, viewed on: 17-06-2013.
Email: info@beyondskin.net
Informants: Darren Ferguson – Manager and founder
            Aiden Logan – Project Manager, Musician
            Claire Whelan – Radio Editor & Journalist (Homely Planet)
            Sean McCann – Musician

- **Crosslinks:**

Crosslinks is a cross-community, cross-cultural arts-based youth project that seeks to break down barriers and address misconceptions pertaining to race, faith, culture and community.

Source: http://www.youthinitiatives.com/index.php?page=CULTURE-CROSSLINKS, last updated on: 17-06-2013, viewed on: 17-06-2013.
Email: office@youthinitiatives.com
Informant: Ashley Holmes – Creative youth arts worker

- **Healing Through Remembering (HTR):**

Healing Through Remembering is an extensive cross-community organisation made up of a range of members holding different political perspectives working on a common goal of how to deal with the legacy of the past as it relates to the conflict in and about Northern Ireland.

Source: http://www.healingthroughremembering.org/, last updated on: 17-06-2013, viewed on: 17-06-2013.
Email: info@healingthroughremembering.org
Informant: Jayme Reaves – Project Co-ordinator

- **North Belfast Interface Network (NBIN):**

North Belfast Interface Network was established in 2002 by community organisations to develop a strategic response to interface violence and develop community relations work in North Belfast. The area within which the project is based is one wherein the past conflict and its legacies have dramatically affected the population. Those communities represented by the three constituent projects, Ardoyne, Cliftonville, New Lodge, have all experienced disproportionate levels of sectarian violence.

Source: http://www.nbin.info/, last updated on: 17-06-2013, viewed on: 17-06-2013.
Email: info@nbin.info
Informant: Rab McCallum – Co-Director

- **North Belfast Respect Programme 2013 (NBRP):**

A special programme of events in the month of March 2013. This programme was organised by the Ashton Community Trust and was funded by the Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) through the North Belfast Strategic Good Relations Programme and Belfast City Council Good Relations Unit though the European Union Peace 3 Programme.

The Respect Programme included a series of events and activities aimed at raising awareness and understanding around a range of important themes. This year's programme particularly focused on issues pertaining to transitional justice and conflict transformation, rights and discrimination, socio-economic deficits, as well as health and well-being inequalities. The intention is to encourage rational, positive debate and reflection on these key issues and hopefully make a meaningful contribution towards finding positive solutions to the many complex problems that exist.

http://www.community-relations.org.uk/about-us/news/item/1309/north-belfast-respect--programme-2013/, last updated on 17-06-2013, viewed on 17-06-2013.

- **Trademark:**

Trademark is an ethically based, not for profit, organisation which works towards social change in which the principles of social justice, equality and pluralism are actively pursued.

Source: http://www.trademarkbelfast.com/, last updated on: 11-05-2012, viewed on: 17-06-2013.
Email: admin@trademarkbelfast.com
Informant: Joe Law – Co-Director

- **WAVE Trauma Centre:**

WAVE Trauma Centre - a grass roots, cross community charity offering care and support to people bereaved, injured or traumatised as a result of 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland; irrespective of religious, cultural or political beliefs.

Source: http://www.wavetraumacentre.org.uk/, last updated on: 17-06-2013, viewed on: 17-06-2013.
Email: admin@wavebelfast.co.uk
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Appendix V: Summary

Reconciliation in a World of Diversity:

Looking for a Shared Future in the Local Context of Post-Conflict Belfast

This research examines the pursuit of reconciliation by different peace and reconciliation organisations within the local socio-economic and political milieu of post-conflict Belfast, Northern Ireland. Northern Irish society has been greatly impacted by the so-called "Troubles", an intractable armed conflict from approximately 1969 until 1998 where the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the British Government could not agree on the status of Northern Ireland; whether it should remain part of the United Kingdom or become part of Ireland (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (Date of retrieval: 2012/12/17). This conflict is characterised by the complex interconnectedness of religion and nationalism within a political context since Irish nationalists, mostly Catholic, wished "to absorb all the six counties of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland" while British Protestants who had lived in Northern Ireland for generations wanted to "maintain the loyalty of the region in the British Union" (Juergensmeyer 2003:37). This led to the deepening of already existing entrenched divisions within two conflicting identities within Northern Irish society.

Today, it is exactly fifteen years after the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement and a strong sense of sectarianism is still very much present, which can be seen as a legacy of the conflict. The official end of this violent conflict also triggered migration flows to Northern Ireland, thus marking an increase in diversity caused by globalisation processes, although the two old conflicting local communities continue to prevail in modern-day Belfast. These two local communities are often referred to as either Catholic and Protestant, but in fact, these collective identities both incorporate multiple axes of identity, namely: the Irish/Catholic/Nationalist/Republican and British/Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist. This pinpointing often leads to misunderstanding due to a lack of knowledge people have on the history of Northern Ireland and how these communities came into being.[156]

The recent flag protests concerning the political decision to reduce the number of days the British Union flag flies above Belfast city hall[157] shows that underlying tensions are still able to resurface and old conflicting identities can easily stir up. Issues like these tend to strengthen the boundaries between the two identity groups as people in Northern Ireland are

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[156] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).

[157] See for example the BBC News: 'National identity still a source of deep division in Northern Ireland'. Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-20951202, viewed on: 20-01-2013, last updated on 08-01-2013.

likely to take sides in such matters, which enforces the "us"-"them" dichotomy.[158] This is also done through 'trans-generational traumas' and influences from family and/or peers so that sectarian attitudes are being passes on to younger generations which instils it as a part of every-day life.[159] Some would even go as far to state that people have been institutionalised to hate the Other in the current climate of Northern Ireland without understanding why.[160] These remaining sectarian attitudes are also enforced due to the fact that, just as many other facilities like pubs or supermarkets, the educational sector is strongly divided along sectarian lines. The fact that many people from one community only encounter people from the Other community if they go to university[161] and rarely get into contact at public places, fosters strong identity boundaries. This because the lack of understanding of the Other group as well as its role within people's own identity, pointing towards the way people identify as this incorporates also an understanding of who other people are (Buckley & Kenney 1995:23; Jenkins 2008:18), is hardly addressed.

This is further reinforced by existing physical boundaries and territorial markers in Belfast, like peace walls, murals and flags, that are often the visual representation of existing social divisions between the two conflicting collective identity groups. These boundaries, often placed at the borders of the two community groups, so-called "interface areas", thus geographically define the space where collective identities clash and social boundaries between groups are created (Barth 1969 mentioned in: Sanders 2002:328). Social identities that are fluid and changeable in nature (Jenkins, 2008:18), are thus as a result rather geographically fixed. Existing symbolic identity markers, (i.e. visual expressions of group identities, like flags or painted curb stones), clearly tell with which collective identity a neighbourhood identifies itself. In Belfast, the strong existing "us"-"them" dichotomy is thus also physically and geographically played out as both the boundaries as well as the content of collective identities are made visible within the city's streetscape.

The strong existing identity boundaries between old conflicting identities indicate that reconciliation remains a necessary element in Northern Ireland as relationships between the two identity groups are often still antagonistic in nature. Reconciliation refers to the long-term process of restoring broken relationships where hostilities and mistrust are overcome so that a society learns to live with differences without the use of violence in order to turn a divided past into a shared future (Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:456; Ramsbotham et. al. 2011:246). On

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[158] Interview Alan McBride, manager of Wave Trauma Centre (23-05-2013).
[159] Idem.
[160] Interview Darren Ferguson, Beyond Skin (10-04-2013).
[161] Interview Jonathan Bell, Junior Minister from DUP (28-03-2013).

a political level, the Cohesion Sharing and Integration (CSI) strategy, aims to provide all public bodies with an agreed upon approach on how to address sectarian issues, such as housing, education, flags, parades, et cetera. This has been in development for a number of years now, as the segregated government can't agree on how this should be done. As a result of this, parts of the government decide on how something should be dealt with, but other parts of the government do this in different ways, sometimes even undermining each other's decisions and the reconciliation process.

This research has shown that many different peacebuilding and reconciliation organisations exist in the current context of Belfast that take on different approaches, pursue different goals and incorporate many different activities. In this research, a division has been made between organisations that take on a direct approach and an indirect approach in pursuing reconciliation. The direct approach is an approach where sectarian attitudes, behaviour and other conflict related problems are being addressed and tried to be solved with explicit acknowledgement of the problems while the indirect approach addresses issues of sectarianism, as well as other types of discrimination like racism, indirectly by means of non-conflict related activities and platforms.

This direct approach of promoting reconciliation includes multiple ways of addressing community issues that are important on the ground. The researched organisations try to address these issues in a number of ways, of which most can be viewed as either nation-building or state-building activities. State-building activities mostly deal with solving direct practical problems, such as welfare and education, whereas nation-building activities are more often being executed in the dichotomy of 'single identity' and 'cross-community' work. Single identity work is focussed on making the participants learn about their own identity, community and past. This is aimed to soften identity boundaries in order to make the participant more open for cross-community contact. Within cross-community work, the participants exchange their views with a group of people that share similarities but are from the opposing local identity group, whom often also have gone through sessions of single identity work. The exchange of experiences, views and often lead to dialogue and discussion, which in turn may bring about a further understanding of the self as well as a new perception of others, not as enemies, but as fellow human beings (Ramsbotham et al. 2011:261). The use of both methods mirrors quite perfectly what the concept of reconciliation encompasses as it softens and transforms identities to a point that they incorporate both an understanding of the self as well as a new perception of Others, thus creating the possibility to address broken

relationships between former conflicting groups and to move from a divided past and present to a shared and peaceful future (Aiken 2010:169).

Two specific organisations researched here that take on an indirect approach towards promoting reconciliation, are Beyond Skin and Crosslinks. Both organisations mainly work with young people and take on a creative approach to promote diversity and promote a peaceful shared future. They use different art forms, mainly music and theatre, to address issues of sectarianism, racism and other forms of discrimination. In this way, both organisations, even if done in different ways, aim to break down barriers between different Others whilst incorporating an educational element and a focus on building up confidence within their participants. This indicates that both organisations make use of the process of 'social learning' as part of negotiating identity within their activities.

Both Crosslinks as well as Beyond Skin go beyond the mere bringing of people together, but engage in the process of reconciliation as broken relationships are aimed to be restored in order for their participants to live with differences and without the use of violence in order for a society to embrace a shared future (Smeulers & Grünfeld 2011:456; Ramsbotham et. al. 2011:246). By promoting the acceptance of diversity in a creative environment where people feel respected and safe enough to engage in learning about their own identity as well as those of "others", they indirectly try to break down strong identity boundaries in order for a peaceful togetherness to be created. In a way, both organisations also try to create some form of unity where diversity is perceived as something positive as Beyond Skin teaches participants about global citizenship and Crosslinks stimulates participants to view other people as individuals and not for a collective identity they possibly identify with. In other words, they try to reconcile people from diverse backgrounds, whether these are derived from old conflicting identities or new (possible) antagonistic ones due to the increased flow of people resulting from globalising processes.

The above shows that a lot of work still needs to be done in order for Northern Ireland to call itself reconciled, not only in regards to old conflicting identity groups but also concerning other forms of discrimination concerning diversity. Diversity is a common characteristic of the world around us that tends to increase due to globalising processes. It can result in mistrust and misunderstanding between people when different identity groups do not get into contact with each other. However, since diversity will always exist in societies to a certain extent, people need to perceive differences in axes of identity (e.g. religion, culture and gender) as non-threatening and in an equal way in order to make the world safe for diversity.