Northern Ireland: The Measurement of Sharing and Separation in a Post-Conflict Society

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On September 17th 2013 Dr Richard Haass began his first session as Chair of the All-Party Group established by the Northern Ireland Assembly to resolve outstanding issues of the conflict: principally those to do with flags, parades and the legacy of the past. In an interview with the BBC that day he said that his mission was puzzling to most Americans he had spoken to – they thought the Northern Ireland conflict was resolved. Certainly that had been the settled view in Washington, London and Dublin, particularly in the period since the restoration of devolved government in 2007. Those closer to Northern Ireland politics would have been aware that in recent years significant problems had developed. Hillary Clinton, for example, who visited Belfast eight times between 1995 and 2012 was shocked to find that her stay in the city in December 2012 was overshadowed by widespread street disturbances relating to the decision by Belfast City Council to limit the flying of the union flag to 18 designated days per year. She had to make adjustments to her schedule to allow a visit to the Alliance MP, Naomi Long, who had just received a death threat and who at that time was trying to cope with a mob which was mounting round-the-clock picketing of her office. It all seemed quite a contrast with the mood outside Belfast City Hall in December 1995 when Bill and Hillary Clinton flew in to turn on the Christmas lights and to celebrate the new mood that followed on from the IRA ceasefire.

When Barack Obama visited Belfast en route to the G8 summit in June 2013 his speech at the Waterfront Hall put the emphasis on the positive achievements of the Good Friday Agreement, but caution was added to the mix. "You have given the world hope" he said, then added: "But as all of you know well, for all the strides you've made, there's still much work to do. There are still people who haven't reaped the rewards of peace; who aren't convinced that the effort is worth it. There are still wounds that haven't healed, and communities where tension and mistrust hangs in the air. There are walls that still stand; there are still miles to go."

The truth he was recognising is that the peace process is still hard to read. The process that led to the 1998 Agreement was a triumph achieved on the high wire by political elites. Below that level, the two antagonistic communities, the Protestants and the Catholics, have had to struggle to emerge from a thirty year conflict and find ways to build a shared society in the schools, the workplaces and the neighbourhoods where people live out their daily lives. The poetry of the Agreement very quickly turned to prose in the implementation period, and instead of creating a shared society Northern Ireland seems at times to have evolved as a 'shared out' society, with social goods and resources divided up by political leaders on a one-for-me, one-for-you basis. That has led some to characterise the new post-conflict dispensation as a form of 'benign apartheid' where the two communities maintain a wary peace by keeping their distance from each other, with high degrees of self-segregation in the school system, in patterns of housing and in social and cultural pursuits. If this is so and patterns of division are in fact deepening, then there may be at best what Ignatieff (2003) calls a 'cold peace', that is, peace without reconciliation. At worst, the cycles of violence which characterise Irish history may turn once more and the current absence of violence may turn out to have been no more than a generational truce.

The signs however do not just point in one direction. For every indicator that signals division there is another that suggests a new form of rapprochement is slowly taking shape, that under the canopy of the new constitutional arrangements a more tolerant and accommodating society is emerging. Observers find it difficult to decide which trend is likely over time to become the more important. One academic has summarised the current situation as follows:

> There are radically opposing views among experts on whether, ten years on, the settlement has reduced or increased sectarianism, as to whether it has crystallised or softened opposing views, and as to whether it has solidified or moderated opposing blocs, or perhaps even begun to transform them.[1]

Like those Escher drawings where the figures ascending a staircase appear mysteriously to be descending at the same time, the people of Northern Ireland can seem to be moving forward and backward at the same time. This paper will explain how the Peace Monitoring Report has been set up to explore the state of the Northern Ireland peace process, and the difficulties it has faced in trying to establish an interpretative framework that can analyse data drawn from many different sources – political, economic, social and cultural. It will outline the

results of the first study, and indicate some of the issues that arise for studies of this kind.

Is there still a peace process?

Before the process of measurement is described it is necessary to first of all to address the foundational question: is there still a peace process, or has it elided into something else, a process more to do with the routine manoeuvres of politics? In assessing the period since the signing of the 1998 Agreement it is possible to see discontinuity as well as continuity, and to identify a key break point when the peace process as such had completed its trajectory. Clancy, for example, sees a clear cut-off at the point where the IRA decommissioned its weapons:

> *The peace process* involves facilitating paramilitaries – primarily the IRA's transition from violence to peaceful means. *The political process* describes attempts to get unionists and nationalists to share power in Northern Ireland.[2] (emphasis in original).

The language of the conflict resolution field can be parsed and analysed in the same way and tweaked to fit with new political understandings . There is a school of thought, for example, which, following the conflict studies expert, Jean-Paul Lederach, argues that the generic term conflict resolution is a misnomer, and that the proper category is conflict transformation.[3] As we have seen above, Northern Ireland would seem to offer itself as an example of a conflict that has not been resolved, but has been transformed from violent confrontation to one that is fought out in the political and cultural arenas. As such it might also seem to fall into the category suggested by the sociologist John Brewer, that of a 'post-violence conflict'.[4]

With such finely nuanced alternatives available to us why would we want to stick to the older language of the 'peace process'? There are several reasons. Firstly, even those who make the fine conceptual distinctions given above still lapse into the more generic terms they decry. It is easy to see why: however accurate the denotations might be, the connotations are still important when communicating with audiences more familiar with the old terminology, and for whom the currency is still good. Secondly, the peace process is still a governmental and intergovernmental category - the EU, for example, is still pledged to its Peace 3 Programme. The third reason, however, is the most important of all. All the research evidence shows that ethnic conflicts are notoriously hard to cap, and that the 'conflict cycle'[5] does not end with the

signing of an agreement. To use a distinction from Boutros-Ghali, the peace-building that begins after the accord is signed is every bit as important as the peace-making that led up to it.[6]

In her detailed study of peace processes the American political scientist Barbara Walter makes the following observation:

> Contrary to common expectations, combatants do not have the greatest difficulty resolving underlying conflicts of interest and reaching bargains. They have the greatest difficulty implementing the resulting terms. In short, the conditions that encourage groups to initiate negotiations and sign settlements do not appear sufficient to bring peace.[7]

Walter's conclusion is that where the peace accord is based on mutual vetoes, as in consociational settlements, the very structures that initially offer security may in time create sufficient frustrations to threaten the resurgence of violence, unless the inflexible blocking mechanisms are allowed to evolve into more open and accommodating political structures. In these terms, the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the St Andrews Agreement and the Hillsborough accord are all just staging posts on a much longer journey – one that may in time follow a trajectory from negative peace to positive peace. Such an outcome is by no means guaranteed, but whatever the outworking, the journey is still accurately described as a peace process.

The political framework

The Janus-like nature of Northern Ireland today – a society that looks backward and forward at the same time – can be explained by the contradiction between the formal peace accord and the legislation and policies that followed on from it. The political settlement reached through the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and subsequently amended through the St Andrew's Agreement in 2007, is a very particular kind of agreement. It is not, as outsiders sometimes imagine, an accommodation that dissolves previous antagonisms in a warm, healing bath of compromise. It is rather, a settlement that builds upon the two ethnic identities: as Taylor[8] puts it, the underpinning assumption is that it is 'in the nature of things', that 'Northern Ireland is deeply, indeed irrefutably, divided between two competing ethno-nationalist communities'. Taking this as axiomatic, the architecture of the political arrangements uses these identities as the building blocks of the new settlement: thus, the manner in which power is shared between the political parties is through a system of weights and counter-weights. The parliamentary see-saw depends upon the nationalist bloc staying in position at one end and the unionist bloc balancing it at the other end.

Politicians in the Northern Ireland Assembly must register as nationalist, unionist or other[9] and the system of mutual veto is a way of maintaining equilibrium between two political identities.

This system of government, known as consociationalism, does not invest in assisting communities to escape their ethnic identities; on the contrary, the stability of consociational arrangements can only be assured when these identities remain fixed. That does not make Northern Ireland exceptional in the world of conflict resolution; it is rather the new norm in situations where the international community intervenes to create a peace agreement. The constitutional arrangement that framed the Dayton Agreement at the end of the Bosnian war, the Ohrid Agreement in Macedonia in 2001, and the NATO-brokered arrangements in Iraq and Afghanistan are all examples of consociational arrangements introduced to cap ethnic antagonisms. In essence, consociationalism is a form of government in which all ethnic communities work together within a grand coalition. Instead of the usual government-and-opposition parliamentary arrangement all parties are entitled to a share in government, with the size of each share determined by electoral strength. The advantage of such an arrangement is the stability it can bring; the disadvantage is the premium placed upon ethnicity as the basis of the polity. For war-weary countries – and Northern Ireland in 1998 was very much in this category – the peace and stability on offer can outweigh all other disadvantages. For its critics however, consociationalism simply offers conflict societies a reinforcement of the ethnic identities at the root of the problem. As Phillips puts it:

> And since the emphasis throughout is on stability rather than equality or change, there is nothing to worry about in the formation of exclusionary political identities which derive their force from seeing others as a species definition that they can no longer bear to live in the same neighbourhood with others who are different from themselves, but if this works to enhance the authority of those who speak for their community or group it will help rather than hinder the 'democracy'.[10]

Seen from this angle, the 1998 Agreement may have brought an end to the violence but has solidified the communal identities of nationalists and unionists and, as a consequence, weakened the middle ground. For critics of the Agreement this problem was obvious from the outset. It began in fact with the publication of the accord. This, as Shirlow and Murtagh point out, is the 'document with two names'.[11] Before the ink was even dry on the first print run it had become known to Catholics as the Good Friday Agreement and to Protestants as the Belfast Agreement. Those who drafted the text of the peace agreement could hardly complain. The binary is built into the document itself.

While it begins in the first paragraph by talking about the 'whole community' it soon slips down through the gears into the more familiar language of the 'two communities'. The permanence of the division is assumed in the constitutional arrangements set up to manage that same division.

It hardly needs to be said that this is an entirely different approach from that which underpinned peace-building efforts in an earlier period. Then the assumption was that relations between the two communities could only be improved with the creation of superordinate identities that would allow for the transcendence of sectarian division or, at minimum, a diminution of communal hostilities. For many years government policy favoured 'contact theory' community relations as part of an overall political strategy which has as its main objective the idea of magnetising the political centre in order to draw moderate unionist and nationalist parties into a power-sharing arrangement. The corollary was that with the creation of a strong centre the political extremes would become increasingly irrelevant. The 1998 Agreement, and the devolved parliament which has, somewhat belatedly, followed on from it, do not conform to this model, and the peacemaking strategies which have developed in the period since its signing are likewise cast in a new mould. The extreme parties, the DUP and Sinn Fein, have formed the new axis of politics in Northern Ireland and it is the moderate, centrist parties like the SDLP and the Ulster Unionist parties, which find themselves in the ironic position of seeing their importance diminish as a result of the peace process.

That however is not the whole story. The contradiction – or as the political scientist Adrian Little puts it, the 'paradox' – written into the Agreement itself is that it manages to be both integrationist and segregationist at the same time.[12] While the political parties may remain anchored in historic identities, then it is also true to say that the new dispensation is 'bolstered by a new regime of human rights and a culture of equal opportunity' and that it is 'steeped in pluralist, inclusive philosophy'.[13] The legislation that has followed in the wake of the Agreement includes the most swingeing equality provisions in Europe: not only does government have a responsibility to safeguard against discrimination, it also has a duty to go beyond this to a positive pursuit of 'good relations'. And so, while the constitutional arrangements assume the solidity of ethnic identities the Agreement also launched a dynamic to improve relations between the two communities. The guiding principle, that of 'good relations', can be interpreted in different ways. It is possible, in the minimalist interpretation, that it means no more than a guiding principle that good relations are to be fostered between two fixed, immutable and antithetical identities without the gap between the two ever being narrowed. It could also however include the ambition that increased exchanges between people from the two

blocs will lead to a narrowing of difference, and a pooling of identities, concerns and networks. If so, then the hope is that in time each citizen will be freed from the constraints of his or her birth identity and be able to move in and out of shifting, fluid multiple identities. This latter, more ambitious agenda was the one set for Northern Ireland by the British government when it published a policy document in 2005 called *A Shared Future*. At that time the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended because of one of the political stalemates that bedevilled the period, and the direct rule administration from Britain used the occasion to push the two sides towards a more full-blooded commitment to the creation of a genuinely shared society. The wording of the document was robust:

> Separate but equal is not an option. Parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically..the costs of a divided society..are abundantly clear: segregated housing and education, security costs, less than efficient public service provision.. Policy that simply adapts to, but does not alter these challenges, results in inefficient resource allocations. These are not sustainable in the medium to long-term. (Section 1.4, Fundamental Principles, A Shared Future)

While such a vision commended itself to the political centre, the two governing parties, the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein were unimpressed. They effectively sidelined the policy, saying they would bring forward their own document, but then, in a telling demonstration of the problem they were trying to solve, were unable for eight years to agree on a community relations strategy. The document which resulted in 2013, 'Together -Building a United Community' is a much less ambitious document than the Shared Future document it superseded. The impulse towards sharing and accommodation is however carried forward in other ways; by civil society organisations, local government, regulatory bodies dealing with equality and human rights and by a vast panoply of projects and initiatives supported by the Community Relations Council and/orfunded by the generous grants distributed through the EU Peace Programmes and the International Fund for Ireland. What success can they be deemed to have had? Fifteen years on from the Agreement, is Northern Ireland a society moving out of conflict or one where ethnic identities have become more inflexible than before? This question, often posed in rhetorical terms, requires an answer that is non-rhetorical and based on the sifting of the empirical evidence. It was this belief that led the Community Relations Council to set up the annual Peace Monitoring Report. The funding for the project came from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and when it came into being in 2010 it faced an immediate methodological challenge: how is peace to be measured?

The Peace Monitoring Report and the tracking of change

If peace were simply the absence of violence then the trajectory of the Northern Ireland peace process would be easy to trace: using the statistics for deaths and injuries, bombings and shootings, riots, arrests and convictions, we would be able to plot with almost mathematical certainty the journey out of violent conflict. We might even be able to arrive at a forecast for the time when the figures for violence in Northern Ireland come into line with those for other parts of these islands, and we could be seen to function within the norms generally accepted for Western European polities. The decrease in violence since the 1998 Agreement is not sufficient however to offer guarantees for such a future. Northern Ireland was in fact an exceptionally peaceful society in the 1960s, if measured only by the statistics for violence. In this period it was a classic example of what the Norwegian peace studies expert Johann Galtung calls 'negative peace' – that is, peace defined simply by the absence of violence. In such situations structural injustices may be waiting to erupt into conflict – as indeed was the case in the period before the civil rights movement took to the streets at the end of the 1960s. The measuring instruments must therefore not only examine overt cases of violence but also what Galtung calls the 'structural violence' below, the inequalities or imbalances that might precipitate a return to violent conflict.

Beyond that, there lies the problem of pinning down something as elusive as the subjective sense of peace. While there are quantitative data sets and standard measures for all of the negatives – poverty, inequality and violence – it is much more difficult to capture the opposite, the experience of positive experiences of solidarity, well-being and justice, the experiences that are constitutive of a positive peace. There have been some significant developments in the measurement of 'well-being', with the French and UK governments now publishing indices that monitor subjective experiences within their respective populations. Peace has now also come to be seen as a valid construct for empirical research; in fact there has been an exponential growth in the study of peace and conflict – not just between states, but because of the rise in ethnic conflict, within states. Recent developments in peace monitoring reflect the diversity of their origins. Driven by the quite different concerns of peace institutes, military intelligence, international development agencies, global capital and international development bodies, there has been a branching out of approaches and methodologies. Academic peace institutes like the Scandinavian International Peace Research Institute, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, or the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, tend to act as observatories producing 'conflict barometers' to calibrate the danger of war in different theatres across the globe. The Global Peace Index, which is produced annually, provides an annual ranking of the countries of the world in terms of their proximity to peace, and stresses the connections between the absence of violence and the possibility of economic growth. The American military, following its interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan has concerned itself very much with indicator frameworks that will allow for predictions about the 'inflection points' that signal changes in the political temperature. Post-conflict studies have been slower to emerge. A significant addition in recent years is the Yearbook of Peace Processes, issued by the Escola de Cultura de Pau, University of Barcelona. This provides a short account of the status of each ongoing conflict (usually about 70 each year), and any peace agreements that have been signed. The most detailed account of the journey of a post-conflict society is provided by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in South Africa which publishes not one but two annual monitoring reports: the SA Reconciliation Barometer, which tracks attitudes to the 'other', and the Transformation Audit which monitors the country's efforts to achieve inclusive economic growth. The particularity of these two IJR reports serves to reinforce the old Tolstoyan message: that while all happy societies are alike, each conflict society is unhappy in its own way, and that each must therefore devise its own peace process and, as a corollary of that, each must have its own monitoring system. And so, while all of these varied initiatives in the measurement of peace are of interest, the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report had had to create its own indicator framework.

Creating an indicator framework

'An indicator is a sign of the presence or absence of the concept we are studying'.[14] This definition is both precise and clear; however, to make our indicators operational we must find ways to make the abstract concepts amenable to empirical observation. This same task faces all social research surveys where the concept under scrutiny takes the form of a political abstraction. Peace is an example of a concept that is too loose and baggy to be measured without further definition; we must break it down into more meaningful categories or dimensions and then construct indicator sets that will allow these categories (which are still abstractions) to be appraised in real life situations. In a widely quoted definition Gallopin describes indicators as "..variables that summarise or otherwise simplify relevant information, make visible or perceptible phenomena of interest, and quantify, measure and communicate relevant information".[15] Since the choice of possible indicators is limitless, care must be taken to ensure that only those closely aligned with the concept are admitted. Selecting what is to be included and what excluded is no easy task: the Council of Europe, for example, looked at 600 possible indicators to allow it to examine the idea of social cohesion. The crucial first

step is being clear about the concept, or category, under investigation. As Beauvais and Jensen have it, "definitional choices have significant consequences for what is analysed, what is measured, and what policy action is recommended".[16]

If, for example, we wish to consider how a concept like social justice can be monitored then we can look to the example of the Bertelmann Foundation which, working from OECD data, examines how this abstraction translates in practice in developed societies. It makes its definitional choices by dividing the concept of social justice into five dimensions, each of them open to empirical testing: poverty avoidance, education access, labour market inclusion, social cohesion and equality and generational equality. These domains are then further divided into indicator sets, based on the pooling of 18 qualitative and quantitative indexes and the transformation of them into a linear scale. Or, to use another example, when the Equality and Human Rights Commission set out to monitor fairness in British society it did so by breaking the concept of fairness down into five 'gateways': health and well-being; education and inclusion, work and wealth; safety and security; and autonomy and voice. Each of these was then further broken down into indicator sets (or 'clusters') so that all relevant aspects such as age, class and gender could be factored in to create a fully multi-dimensional understanding. It is in this way that the abstract becomes concrete, the general becomes the particular, and something that is an abstract value is given a relationship to facts.

The definitional choice that faced the Peace Monitoring Report concerned the categories or domains that, taken together, allow for a fully rounded analysis of the peace process. Peace as a superordinate category is multidimensional and in order for it to be examined we had to disaggregate it into distinct, if overlapping dimensions. The number had to be sufficiently parsimonious to allow a tidy ordering of the information, while at the same time sufficiently accommodating to allow for all the many and various aspects of accord and discord to be taken into account. This meant the creation of a small number of indicator-rich domains or, as they are sometimes called, composite indicators. According to the OECD definition:

> A composite indicator is formed when individual indicators are compiled in a single index, on the basis of an underlying model of the multi-dimensional issue that is being measured. A composite indicator measures multi-dimensional concepts which cannot be measured by a single indicator.

What concepts then, taken together, allow for a sufficiently kaleidoscopic understanding of the dynamics of a post-conflict society? The framework constructed for the research is made up of four distinct, but interlocking domains, each with own indicator set made up of both quantitative and qualitative data. The four dimensions are: first, the sense of security: second, equality: third, political progress; and fourth, cohesion and sharing. The rationale for each and the results of the first annual summary of the data are as follows:

1. The Sense of Security

The simplest measure of how peaceful any society is comes from the sense of security experienced by the individual citizen. This has to be assessed in a number of different contexts: in the home, in the neighbourhood, in the workplace, and in the public space. To build evidence for this dimension we looked not just at crime statistics but at attitudinal surveys and academic articles which explore the subjective sense of security. Attention was also paid to differentials between geographical areas and between groups of people. Levels of violence are key indicators of the absence of security, and during the Troubles they were the statistics most frequently used to measure the intensity of the conflict. The decline in the levels of violence since the ceasefires provides useful evidence of the journey out of conflict, and we therefore collated data which detailed the numbers of bombings, shootings, beatings, hijacking, arson attacks, and other forms of violence which reflect injury to person or property. Trends which show decline or diminution in the security-related category of the PSNI Crime Statistics cannot of themselves however be taken as evidence that the threat of sectarian violence has been left behind. While the figures for 2012 provide encouragement in that the murder rate has fallen to pre-1969 levels, it was also the case that the Chief Constable warned that the dissident threat is at its highest level since 1998. The sense of latent violence therefore had to be part of the equation, because even when the threat did not become manifest, the people of Northern Ireland still lived under its shadow. Note was also taken of the level of non-political crime. While post-conflict societies like Kosovo, Guatemala or (especially) South Africa have often recorded increases in crime following a peace settlement, this has not been the case in Northern Ireland. And, while conflict societies often record high rates of domestic violence, again this has not been true of Northern Ireland, where the incidence of abuse has until recently run below other parts of the UK.

2. Equality

The Troubles in Northern Ireland erupted because of structural inequality in housing, employment and life chances between Catholics and Protestants. This fault line therefore has to be constantly monitored to see if the inequality gap

is opening up or closing over. In the 1998 Agreement great emphasis is laid upon equality as the essential ingredient of any peace settlement; the wording of the Agreement commits the participants to 'partnership, equality and mutual respect', and one of the first initiatives following its signing was the creation of an Equality Commission. In the past inequality was closely associated with discrimination, but external factors now have a hugely important shaping influence. Northern Ireland has had to absorb the shocks of a global recession that has radically restructured the labour market, creating new differentials. The de-industrialisation of an earlier period has its effect on heavy industries like shipbuilding and engineering, while the recession is now making its impact felt on construction and related occupations. These blind forces re-balance the life chances for Catholics and Protestants in unintended ways but the consequences have to be monitored. So too do the effects of educational policy and the quality of educational provision which prepare – or fail to prepare – a younger generation for the labour market. A consideration of education and equality also necessarily brings gender into focus. Social disadvantage, religious background and gender can combine to create compound effect, so differentials need to be understood not just in their own terms, but in interaction with each other. The data for the 2012 year showed how these various forces have combined to create a force field in which both women and Catholics have been redressing traditional imbalances. The labour market had been re-shaped during the 1998-2008 period to allow more females and more Catholics to enter the labour market and to ascend the managerial levels. The research showed however that the escalator providing this upward movement had been stopped by the recession: this has meant a suspension of relativities at the 2008 level but not, as yet, their reversal.

3. Political progress

The end destination of the peace process has always been shrouded in mist, and this creates an obvious problem in measuring progress towards that point. The 1998 Agreement was suffused with the 'creative ambiguity' that allowed for its acceptance by both political traditions. For unionists the compromises over territorial sovereignty are justified by the belief that this marks a final settlement of the constitutional issue; for republicans the acceptance of the UK framework is justified by the belief that it is only a staging post towards a united Ireland. Republicans see themselves as still being on a journey; unionists feel they are at a terminus. The Peace Monitoring Project is agnostic on the constitutional issue. Progress in this context does not have to be measured against particular constitutional destinations, such as a United Ireland or further integration with Britain. Instead it can be seen in terms of the ability of political opponents to use dialogue in order to arrive at mutually satisfactory outcomes.

The operations of the Northern Ireland Assembly are evaluated, and while its performance in 2013 was considerably less impressive than even its modest achievements in 2012, the mere fact of its existence provides a measure of hope. Indeed it was noted when the Assembly dissolved itself for the May 2011 elections it was the first parliament to have served out its mandate for forty years. And, while there has been spoiler activity by dissident republican paramilitaries their violence has not threatened the political institutions; on the contrary, their campaign has had an effect opposite to the one intended in that it has consolidated the political centre. Not all the indicators were positive. The most destabilising factor has been the inability to deal with the past. Old sores continue to open up and while it is now accepted that there will not be a 'big bang' solution, such as a South Africa-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission no other remedy has been accepted. The Israeli writer Amos Oz has said 'you can have peace or you can have justice, but you can't have them both'. Northern Ireland chose peace but the release of convicted prisoners, an essential part of the deal, created a sense of injustice that is proving slow to heal.

4. Cohesion and sharing

While the values of the project have a clear preference for sharing over segregation, sharing in itself is not elevated to an absolute. This is an area where the measurement of progress becomes problematic because there is not a consensus on where the balance is to be struck between the *unum* and the *pluribus*. When *A Shared Future* was put out to consultation the overall recommendation was to privilege sharing over separation, but a sizeable minority, some 40%, reported themselves happy with the existing level of separation. The more we look into different sectors the more complex the patterns become: while most people agree that residential sharing is desirable, there is an understandable hesitation about giving it more force in housing policy if that comes to seem like coercion. When it comes to education, the pattern is even more confusing. Attitude surveys consistently show support for the idea in principle, but the new emphasis on respect for cultural diversity has allowed a challenge to develop. The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, for example, argues that a genuinely pluralist society would not put such pressure on Catholic schools to integrate with others. Sharing, in other words, as a moral and social value has to be balanced against other imperatives. This is a problem identified elsewhere in the creation of other indicator frameworks. In Canada, for example, a monitoring survey of immigrant communities used support for minority ethnic languages as an indicator of respect for incoming communities (diversity) while also including participation by immigrants in English and French language programmes as an indicator of integration (unity).

Given that Northern Ireland is now very definitely an ethnically diverse society, it has been necessary to also look at how far its many different communities can also experience themselves, in Benedict Anderson's phrase, as an 'imagined community'. At the low end of the cohesion spectrum there is a fragmentation of the culture with social groups operating at increasing distance from each other; at the high end, where cohesion is achieved, there is a commonality of experience and with it, a sense of the mutuality of ties and obligations. Perhaps one of the more hopeful findings to emerge from the 2011 data was the increase of neutral spaces, enjoyed by all. Northern Ireland's towns and cities have seen the growth of a confident new cappuccino culture: busy restaurants, shopping malls and night clubs. There were also times when old enmities were set aside to allow for a sense of a united people – as for example, when Northern Ireland's golfers, Rory McIlroy, Graeme McDowell and Darren Clarke pulled off stunning victories, or when the MTV awards came to Belfast and the city gave itself over to a party which was, in its way, a celebration of how far things have come.

Finally, economic forces have provided the driver for a new form of sharing in education. Falling school rolls have made the twin track approach of having a Catholic and Protestant school in every town unfeasible. Northern Ireland has 879 primary schools, but more than a third of these (326) have less than a hundred pupils, the number needed to be economically viable. Of the 228 post-primary schools 107 are economically unviable. While integrated schools might provide a solution, they at present only account for 6.5% of all enrolments, and the numbers are not projected to reach 10% until 2020. A new initiative led by Queen's University Belfast has piloted what is termed 'shared education', a system whereby schools, while retaining their identity, can pool resources to mutual benefit. Thus, schools which do not have sufficient students to support a French language teacher, or to build a basketball court, can combine their resources to assist each other. The framework encourages the sharing on a cross-community basis and, while the driver may be economic, the benefits are social. The initiative provides additional resources, but the scheme has caught the attention of a cash-strapped Assembly, and the Minister of Education established a Sharing Education working group to see how such an initiative can be mainstreamed. It is a small step but a significant one. And it is by taking such small steps that Northern Ireland will complete its path to peace.

Notes

[1] Todd, 2010, p.88

[2] Clancy, 2010, pp 4-5

[3] Lederach, 2003, pp3-7

[4] Brewer, 2010, p.17

[5] Misra, 2008, pp 135-148

[6] Ghali. 1995

[7] Walter, 2002, p.5

[8] Taylor, 2008, p.183

[9] NIO, The Agreement, 1998, Strand One, para. 6

[10] Phillips, 1993, p.52

[11] Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, p.33

[12] Little, 2004

[13] Wilford, 2001, p.121

[14] Bobbie, 2010, p.131

[15] Gallopin, 1996, p.108

[16] Beauvais and Jensen, 2006, p.6

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