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A preliminary investigation on the genesis of EU cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland

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Abstract

The Good Friday Agreement of April 1998 led to the creation of a new set of political institutions within Northern Ireland and between Great Britain and the island of Ireland. A central tenet of the agreement

was to promote cross-border cooperation on an all Ireland and border region basis and, consequently, the new institutional setting for this cooperation forms the core of this research. The article will first sketch an analytical approach that enables the analysis to address new policy processes, the state authority, and the multitude of actors involved. Secondly, it will proceed to an in-depth description of the genesis of the implementation of EU-sponsored cross-border cooperation in the context of the Irish border region. The examination will encompass a description and analysis of the development of the European specific border region programme 'INTERREG' and the limited results achieved by cross-border cooperation in such framework. Finally, the article will interconnect the creation of new political institutions within Northern Ireland and between North and South with experiences of regionalism and peacebuilding in order to analyse how processes of EU integration and association are related to border conflict amelioration on the island of Ireland.

Introduction

The 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (GFA), and subsequent accords[1], provided the supreme structure for ending the violent conflict in Northern Ireland: the agreement involved a carefully and standardised political accommodation between the main political groups on one side, and the British and Irish governments on the other. The main objective was to provide constitutional mechanisms for the pursuit of nationalist aspirations for Irish reunification, balanced against the recognition that such change could only come about with the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland. In addition, a cross-border dimension was made manifest in the institutions provided by the GFA and, on the face of it, it is possible to assess that the British-Irish improved relationship helped to deliver a North/South institutional architecture that reflected the cross-border cooperation thrust of Europeanization and prefigured an era of cross-border cooperation focused on the island of Ireland (Hayward, 2006; Laffan, 2005; Todd, 2011).

The impetus for the creation of linkages across the Irish border came from the promise to open the territorial cage of the state to enable the development of inter-cultural dialogue and inter-communal relations on the island (McCall, 2014: p. 40-42).

   Nonetheless, in recent years, much of the academic debate focused on the partial success of this strategy for conflict amelioration before 1998, since cross-border cooperation (with its challenge to territory, borders and identity) was viewed as a threat to the national culture and national identity and because of the centralized nature of the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and the UK governments (McLoughlin, Phinnemore, McGowan, McCall, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Acheson, Milofsky, 2008; Tannam, 1999; Laffan, Payne, 2001). Accordingly, this article examines the genesis of the European Union (EU) cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland, in order to preliminarily describe how this provided the first backdrop and context for challenging the 'zero-sum' logic of the Northern Ireland conflict. The 'peacebuilding from below approach' advocated by Lederach (1997) will be influential of this work. Lederach argues that peace requires a peace process to be firmly embedded in the 'Grassroots Leadership' of the local community (Lederach, 1997: p. 26), but critics contend that the conflict exacerbation versus conflict transformation orientation of grassroots leaders, as well as their location, is open to questioning (McCall, 2013: p. 206). Nevertheless, it is now generally accepted that the engagement of the 'grassroots' is an essential component of peacebuilding and, accordingly, conflict amelioration, as used in this article, attempts to capture a peacebuilding effort wherein political violence has reduced, competing ethno-nationalist political elites have entered into policy-making processes and, crucially, local private network have been engaged in an on-going peacebuilding effort. On one hand the article will investigate the causes of the limited impacts of EU-sponsored cross-border cooperation initiatives in Northern Ireland prior to 1998. On the other hand, it will interconnect these experiences to the challenging new era of peace, in which, by including features of economic development, cross-border

cooperation, and social inclusion, the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation[2] became the ultimate EU instrument for building peace in Northern Ireland.

This article argues that the specific issues raised from the past experiences in EU-sponsored cross-border cooperation stand as the basis of the EU capacity for answering more efficiently to the region necessities after 1998. The article will first sketch an analytical approach that enables the analysis to address new policy processes, the state authority, and the multitude of actors involved. Secondly, it will proceed to an in-depth description of the genesis of the implementation of EU-sponsored cross-border cooperation in the context of the Irish border region. The examination will encompass a description and analysis of the development of the European specific border region programme 'INTERREG', and the limited results achieved by cross-border cooperation through INTERREG I and II (1994 - 2001), with INTERREG III (2000-2006) which was far more successful. Finally, the article will make a preliminary interconnection between regionalism and peacebuilding as the motives for the creation of the EU PEACE funding in a changing political and institutional environment.

Government, Governance, Metagovernance: a framework analysis

Cross border cooperation has emerged as a major challenge for the EU and for member state governments in past and in recent decades. Partly for these reasons, and reflecting wider trends in governance, scholars have argued that governments have become increasingly wary of top-down prescriptive or intergovernmental approaches to cross-border cooperation (Murphy, 2014: p. 195) and have instead favoured market-based (Teague, 1996) and network or partnership-based modes of governance (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; Keating, 2004; Rhodes 1996: p. 662; Rhodes, 2007: p. 1246; Rhodes, 2007: p. 1247). Indeed, since the '80s, there has been a perception that traditional forms of hierarchical government are being complemented if not displaced by network modes of governance (Rhodes, 1997; Jessop, 1998: p. 32).

Pervious scholarships have often employed notions of intergovernmentalism and Multi-Level-Governance (MLG) (Marks, 1996: p. 30) to analyse the role of different actors in the development and implementation of cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland (Murphy, 2014; Laffan, Payne, 2001; Tannam, 1999). MLG is defined as 'a system of continuous negotiation among nested governments at several territorial tiers in which supranational, national, regional and local governments are enmeshed in territorially overarching policy networks' (Marks, 1993: p. 402-403). This definition raises some problems of applicability to Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland cross-border relationship developed in the framework of the EU as it neglects Northern Ireland's socio-spatial structuring principles (Jessop, 2016: p. 20), the autonomous role of the other two states involved, and ignores tangled scalar state and network hierarchies (Piattoni, 2009). Hence, overall, the contrasting logics of territorialisation, which are consequent to cross-border cooperation implementation, are deeply problematic for government and governance and its analysis. Scholars (Laffan, Payne, 2001; Tannam, 1999) have related the issue to complex interdependence to justify the need for greater intergovernmental relations and/or MLG, but this justification underplays the complexities of governing the Northern Ireland geographical space as well as to problems grounded in other kinds of spatial dynamics and private networks (Jessop, 2016: p. 21). This argument indicates the need to look beyond the territory of the EU and/or its internal scalar division to study networks that crosscut the territorial boundary of the Irish border and are transversal to specific scalar hierarchies.

Accordingly this article argues that governments and networks governance remain central to all forms of governance within the EU, the Community having always been studiously respectful of the independence of the member-states involved in the promotion and support of cross-border activities on the island of Ireland. In Northern Ireland these have firstly privileged the position of the Irish and UK governments, and only subsequently interactions with non-state actors. From here lies the need to 'bring government back in' (Bell, Park, 2006: p. 64) when analysing governance, especially in relation to the

concept of 'metagovernance', which includes not only government and governance, but policy networks as well (Rhodes, 1996).

'Metagovernance' can be defined as the 'government of governance' (Jessop, 2016: p. 13) as it encompasses all activities in which governments and private networks of the state are heavily implicated. It offers a decentralised view of the state as it can be performed 'not only by state actors but also by various networks of public and private actors and a whole range of supranational, regional and local levels in the formal political system' (Sorensen, 2006: p. 102). The role of the nation state may be changing within the EU, but 'metagovernance' suggests that government policies and the wider state apparatus still have a crucial function in supporting and governing new forms of governance (Bell, Park, 2006: p. 64). In this way 'metagovernance' provides a broad lens through which to analyse cross-border cooperation, power sharing and conflict resolution on both the inter- and intra- institutional levels, within the political and social contexts of the GFA in Northern Ireland. This partnership or network mode of EU governance was officially institutionalised as the Ireland/Northern Ireland cross-border EU networks by the creation of the North/South Ministerial council (NSMC), which crystallized the EU cross-border policies *acquis* at the national, regional and local level (Interview with Andy Pollak, journalist, researcher, editor and former director of the Centre for Cross-Border Studies of Armagh, 28 November 2015).

It is nonetheless necessary to emphasise that INTERREG III had been framed and developed in a very different context to earlier EU cross-border programmes. Additional actors joined the system of public policy-making, their number increasing with the establishment of the executive in Northern Ireland. These processes had in turn an impact on the structure of networks and on the interaction within the network and between the network and the EU. Furthermore, a certain degree of institutional learning implies that those involved in previous programmes will have learnt from that experience and will want to apply the fruits of that learning. Thus, the influence that different actors have within a policy network is

also dependent on their role in different phases of the policy process and on the context in which they act. 'Metagovernance', by involving official and 'behind the scenes' practices, helps this article to grasp how, given that the UK government was usually very reluctant to formally relinquish power, stakeholder participation in cross-border EU networks appears to go further than an advisory role from INTERREG III onwards, with the Irish and Northern Ireland actors effectively 'ruling the game', enhancing thus their place in the EU policy-making system.

Cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland

The surfacing literature related to the Irish border (partly developed as a consequence of Brexit) demonstrates how its establishment is still contested; it was never normalised or fully accepted (Hayward, Campbell, Murphy, 2017; Hayward, 2017; Hayward, Komarova, 2016; Hayward, 2001). The border between the ROI and Northern Ireland defines the reach and limits of formal Irish and British sovereignty on the island. The border, running in some places through farms, villages and towns (O'Dowd, Corrigan, Moore, 1995: p. 237), was drawn in an arbitrary manner depending on pre-established county boundaries (Aughey, Gormely-Heenan, 2011: p. 64). It created not just an international boundary between two states but what political geographers would call 'a frontier zone' or a 'border region' (McCall, 2014: p. 43). The Irish border region was, and remains, culturally and ethnically mixed, although it does in some places coincide with lines of cultural and political division (O'Dowd, McCall, 2008: p. 82).

The outbreak of communal conflict in Northern Ireland from 1968 onwards drew attention again to the contested nature of the Irish border as the state authorities on both sides moved to enhance security in an effort to counteract the spread of paramilitary violence (Patterson, 2013: p. 495). Overall this reduced the permeability of the border since many roads were closed and military fortifications multiplied. The genesis of cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland must be seen against this backdrop of conflict (Tannam 1999).

The EU tried to give an impetus to cross-border cooperation on the island because such measures held out the prospect of positive-sum politics in the North, which were outward looking and capable of revealing existing and new areas of common interest between the two parts of the island (Coakley, O'Dowd, 2007: p. 878). The Union's wide range of powers (particularly those arising from EU regulations and monetary policy) had an impact on the political economy of the border region and the concept of a 'Europe of the regions' provided a rallying cry for those political actors who wished to foster European regionalism. In this framework, financial programs such as INTERREG were introduced to provide financial incentives and a model of cooperation designed with the specific purpose to transform the borders from 'barriers into bridges'. The empowerment of the regional level of governance stemmed from bottom-up mobilisation (Laffan, Payne, 2001: p. 27), through the promotion of subsidiarity, the creation of consultative *fora* such as the Committee of the Regions, and the provision of funds directed not at the state as a whole, but to specific units within it. The Commission concretized this intention with the establishment of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in 1975, which strengthened the development of a stronger EU Regional policy (Tannam, 1999: p. 200).

With the European Parliament (EP) 1984 Haagerup Report (The Haagerup Report, 1984), the Community emphasised its role in supporting an Irish-British understanding on Northern Ireland matters, as part of a normative and functional dynamic of European integration, with Irish government support. In addition, it stated the need for greater cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland. The 1985 Anglo Irish Agreement (AIA) additionally enhanced this context. It was the product of transformed British-Irish relations that accorded a role to the Irish government in Northern Ireland public affairs through the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference (IGC), with meetings to be held regularly to improve cross-border relationships. Thereafter, the agenda for negotiation on the future of Northern Ireland always included the cross-border dimension, which was aided by interpersonal relations between British and Irish premiers at key-stages (McCall, 2014: p. 43), but also by the transnational organization of the EP, in

which Irish, Northern Irish, and British representatives could sit together in a neutral arena that fostered dialogue and positive cooperation.

The first Ireland/Northern Ireland INTERREG (1991-1993) built on the possibilities opened-up by the AIA to promote cross-border cooperation. The initiative identified problems related to the 'peripherality' of the island (Laffan, Payne, 2001: p. 47) and the manner in which violence had exacerbated the economic problems of the border areas (INTERREG I, 1991: p.13). Each sector of cooperation was developed as a sub-programme and a monitoring committee and a related civil service network in both Dublin and Belfast administrations were responsible for the delivery and management of the programme (Laffan, Payne, 2001: p. 47).

Although the programme was designated with a specific bottom-up approach, in practice there was very little involvement by those living in the border areas, nor did the programme reflect any effective strategy to jointly overcome the obstacles to economic development (Interview with Andy Pollak, 28 November 2015). INTERREG I constituted nonetheless a useful exercise in developing cross-border linkages mainly driven by business interests in search of a 'one island economy' (Laffan, Payne, 2001: p. 48) and by groups along the border in search for economic regeneration, thus expanding cross-border networks among the business sectors, public agencies and civil servants (Tannam, 1999: p. 104).

The INTERREG II (1994-1999) programme identified three types of cross-border cooperation activities meriting regional aid: joint planning and implementation of cross-border sub-programmes; the introduction of measures to improve the flow of information across borders and amongst the border regions, between public agencies, private organisations and voluntary bodies and, finally, the setting up of a shared institutional and administrative structure to sustain and promote cooperation (INTERREG, 1994-1999: p. 15-22).

Although tangible improvements were registered, criticisms of INTERREG II concerned the management structure of the sub-programmes, which was highly centralised. The vast majority of the

decisions were taken in the working groups, which were usually more concerned with technical expertise under the direct influence of the Irish administration and the Northern Ireland civil service, with very little or no involvement of civil society interests. Another key criticism was related to the need for more genuine cross-border sub-projects, the potential of which was clearly interconnected with the network capacity to influence choices during the programming phase. At the local level, business interests needed greater information sources about potential opportunities and a straightforward access to a commissioner who could help with the obvious administrative challenges related to doing business in two different jurisdictions (Interview with Andy Pollak, 28 November 2015). In sum: 'INTERREG II showed a real need on a joint management and strategic planning, which could facilitate a common understanding of the other administrative structures and their culture. Nonetheless it had been a good starting-point for the working thorough of INTERREG III' (Interview with Andy Pollak, 28 November 2015).

Contradictory attitudes towards EU cross-border cooperation

As it has been briefly stated above, the reasons for INTERREG I and II failing to fully attain their objectives have been identified by scholars as linked to the deeply rooted problems of the political symbolism of cross-border cooperation and to the centralised nature of the British and Irish states (O'Dowd, Corrigan, Moore, 1995; Tannam, 1999; O'Dowd, 1992).

   Traditionally cross-border cooperation met with different responses from Unionists and Nationalists. For Unionists, cross-border cooperation represented the Republic 'Trojan horse': a device to trap them into a united Ireland by stealth. Nationalists on the other hand, welcomed and perceived very positively cross-border cooperation in economic and political terms. For John Hume the EU generated cooperation that would dilute the negative effects of the Irish border and would facilitate reconciliation between the two communities and between North and South (McLoughlin, 2009: p. 603). *Sinn Féin* echoed the SDLP's support for cross-border cooperation but without the same enthusiasm, the political position of

the party having always been one of 'critically engaging with European matters' (Interview with Martina Anderson, Member of the EP for *Sinn Féin*, 2 December 2016). Finally, all political parties in the Republic supported cross-border cooperation in whatever guise (Laffan, 2005: p. 179).

Reticence towards cross-border cooperation was by no mean the only obstacle. The 1988 reform of the EU Structural Funds, with its emphasis on partnership and 'bottom-up' approach, did not fit easily into the dominant style of public policy-making on either side of the border. Authorities in Dublin and Belfast were quick to assert their role as gatekeepers in relation to Brussels. In addition Northern Ireland, as legally part of the UK, was not directly involved in lobbying or negotiations and was not part of the committee system into the Council of Ministers. Moreover, involving another jurisdiction was seen as upsetting long established procedures implemented by the Westminster policy-style, impacting negatively on power relationships (Interview with Patrick Colgan, former chief executive of the Special EU Programs Body and Senior Adviser Government of Ireland, 10 May 2016). These dynamics limited in practice the space for manoeuvring of Northern Ireland's political and private representatives whose influence on the policy-making and bargaining processes was minimal. On the opposite side, this also meant that Irish representatives, sharing common interests with Northern Ireland in certain economic areas, might be better disposed than the British government to protect Northern Ireland interests. Thus, the absence of adequate Northern Ireland representation ended up being an additional input for Northern Ireland groups, issued from both communities, to lobby Irish ministers for support for particular stances and creating a formal rapprochement of the two administrations.

At the end INTERREG has been welcomed and interpreted as a positive contribution by both communities:

'INTERREG is still one of the most popular programmes of Europe and it lasts the challenge of time. We - the Unionists - were suspicious of its aim of changing theoretically and concretely the meaning of

"border". We tried to resist, while the programme persisted through the years and I now consider it as one of the best programmes ever delivered in the border regions of the island by the EU.'
(Interview with Jim Nicholson, Member of the EP for the Ulster Unionist Party, 27 January 2015)

From a metagovernance perspective the centralised and hierarchical nature of the Irish and UK states, highlighted above, had a major impact on the spatial implementation of public policies and on the role of territory in the system of government in both jurisdictions (Whitehead, 2003: p. 8). The two states still played a key role in the oversight, steering, and coordination of the new cross-border arrangements. They played a part in mobilising the resources used in governance and took prime carriage of legitimacy and accountability issues in relation to governance arrangements. Essentially this means that policy was directed from the centre with little sub-national participation. Private actors became thus a 'self organising network' (Rhodes, 2007: p. 1249) operating 'in the shadow of hierarchy' (Scharpf, 1994: p. 36).

Devolution in Britain and Northern Ireland, together with regionalisation in the Republic and the North-South Strand of the GFA, subsequently generated processes that had a long-term impact on the system of public policy-making. Rather than one hierarchical centre, the system became more layered with different spatial areas involved in the planning and delivery of programmes. North-South cooperation was fostered by the two states, by parallel developments in civil society, and by the self-organized networks (Tannam, 1999: p. 204). Accordingly the next section will explore the intersection of institution building under the GFA, changes in the EU INTERREG III, and networks in the Irish border region.

The EU INTERREG III
The GFA and the whole process of devolution altered the dynamics of the internal political and policy process in Northern Ireland and scholars have argued that one of the most novel features of the agreement

was its external dimension (Murphy, 2014: p. 131). The NSMC was created within this framework to respond to issues at the heart of the Northern Ireland conflict, such as the consideration of the 'Irish dimension' (Meehan, 2014: p.59) and the nationalist calls for recognition of their special link with the ROI (Laffan, 2016: p. 164). The significance of the NSMC is that it provides a formal institutional channel for the office holders to 'develop consultation, cooperation and action on an all-island and cross-border basis' (Interview with Andy Pollak, 28 November 2015). Furthermore, by focusing on both an all-island and a cross-border dimension, it also laid the foundation for the establishment of a series of implementation bodies (Murphy, 2014: p. 131), one of which had an exclusive European remit: the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

The SEUPB has responsibility for the management of cross-border EU Structural Funds programmes in Northern Ireland, the border region of Ireland and part of Western Scotland. Given the history of EU programmes in the border region the establishment of the SEUPB was not unexpected, but not universally welcomed, as it was an organization working beyond the direct control of either the Irish and the Northern Ireland jurisdictions and with direct dealings with the EU Commission (Interview with Patrick Colgan, 10 May 2016). As such, the SEUPB was a unique body, with no existing precedent for its operation and having been specifically designed to overcome the centralized nature of the participating administrations. The creation of a novel transnational body of this nature suggested innovation (McCall, O'Dows, 2008: p. 38) because the body *de facto* formalized links between the Northern Ireland regional administration and the Irish government. 'The placement of EU all-island activities under the auspices of the NSMC and an executive cross-border body was of more than mere symbolic importance' (Tonge, 2005: p. 14) as it had political and economic significance. Scholars have suggested that a central objective of all cross-border bodies, thus including the SEUPB, was to provide the context in which civil society, business, and politicians could make North-South and cross-border cooperation work better for mutual benefit (Murphy, 2014: p. 147; Magennis, Clarke, Shiels, 2006: p. 31), which is a view that fully fits with

the metagovernance perspective. The support shown by the Irish and UK governments does not demonstrate a clear sense of a shared purpose, both governments maintaining a hold over the dynamics of the experiments in cross-border governance, making the 'hand of the state' an omnipresent element (Murphy, 2014: p. 148).

Thus the networks began to re-position themselves during the latter half of INTERREG II as they sought a more significant role in the design and implementation of INTERREG III. They learnt from their past experience and, in order to take a more active part in the policy-process they firstly addressed a number of key issues: they aimed to expand the concept of partnership as part of a specific lobbying process of local councilors and civil servants to support their local stances. Then they sought to strategically approach the plans and sub-programs on an area-based perspective, as each border county was different and thus had different needs. Finally, they were very specific in articulating what role they could or wished to play in relation to INTERREG III (Interview with Andy Pollak, 28 November 2015). They had to address all of these issues in an unstable and changing political and institutional environment, with the coordinators maintaining extremely close contact with each other 'so that they would have their voice enhanced' (Interview with Patrick Colgan, 10 May 2016).

In addition, at the end of 1998, the three main networks (North West Region Cross Border Group; Irish Central Border Area Network, and East Border Region LTD) decided to prepare a report on a 'Border Corridor Strategy' (Stutt, 1999) to address changes in relationships among the border groups, other local organizations, the two governments, and the EU (Stutt, 1999: p. 30-65). The text touched on issues such as the importance of the communication channel opened by SEUPB, which favored a straightforward approach to the Commission, instead of the network voice being represented at the supranational level by the two administrations. It needs to be taken into account that the ability of the actors to persuade the two governments to give them a greater role depended in some measure on their capacity for internal change in the partnerships involving wider civil society interests (Interview with Andy Pollak, 28 November

2015). Subsequent tensions pushed the three networks to engage in extensive consultations and a coordinated lobbying campaign to ensure a central role in INTERREG III, conscious also of the fact that the EU programme PEACE II was regarded undoubtedly as a larger and more important initiative, hence receiving more attention (Laffan, Payne, 2001: p. 109). The considerable amount of lobbying, the fact that INTERREG III was the responsibility of a relative small cadre of officials assisted by external consultants, the support of the Commission, and the new institutions created by the GFA, all contributed to the positive results of the initiative, the main achievement being to foster the dynamic nature of network interactions with the EU through the SEUPB underlining the positive effects of the combination of these elements with institutional change and individual agency.

In sum these self-organized networks were built on metagovernance arrangements in order to shape the cross-border 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches of INTERREG as an opportunity. The networks influenced the direction of change and likely influenced the operation of INTERREG. Their success was highly dependent on the capacity of the SEUPB to establish and organize itself quickly enough to be an effective representative of the local level at Brussels, as well as the networks' capacity to re-organize themselves quickly to ensure the involvement of wider societal interests (Interview with Patrick Colgan, 10 May 2016).

As previously assessed by Jim Nicholson, INTERREG has lasted all these years, being highly regarded by both communities in the North and by both administrations North and South. While the UK Prime Minister has left open the door to continued participation in some EU funding programmes it is currently unclear whether this will include some or all of INTERREG programmes, thus potentially disrupting many of the achievements realized on the island of Ireland.

The cross-border dimension of the EU PEACE programs: lessons from INTERREG

Overall, EU PEACE funding is a reminder of the role of European integration in peacebuilding and the intergovernmental and cross-border dimensions were manifest in all the four PEACE programs. Previous scholarships have observed that the process of EU peacebuilding has only been visibly underway since the *de facto* implementation of PEACE (Muphy, 2014). Nevertheless too little has been said to interconnect the experience of INTERREG and any further EU implemented initiative in the framework of the PEACE programs. INTERREG and the issues interconnected to cross-border cooperation established a niche for bottom-up participation in conflict amelioration and peacebuilding, underlining at the institutional level the necessities the EU had to address to foster more efficiently the peace process.

The single most contentious issue not yet accounted for concerning the implementation of INTERREG was 'additionality'; that is, whether or not there is additional public expenditure in the province as a result of receipts from the Structural Funds. At a deeper level additionality was also inextricably bound up with the question of sovereignty, since it is the essence of a sovereign government to have the authority to raise revenue and control directly its expenditures (NIEC, 1992: p. 61). Thus additionality joins the other reasons already accounted for as to why INTERREG failed to fully attain its objectives.

In the absence of additionality, when the money received from the EU is merely substituted for transfers from the national exchequer (which would have come to Northern Ireland anyway), it could be argued that a great deal of effort was expended in negotiating with the Commission for very little positive effect (interview with Hugh Logue, former EU Commissioner and 1994 Northern Ireland Task Force Official, 29/10/2015; Carlo Trojan, Former Deputy Secretary General of the Delors' Commission I and II and Head of the 1994 Northern Ireland Task Force 29/01/2016; Roberto Speciale, former head of the EU Committee on Regional Policy, 17/3/2017). Whether, and to what extent, there was additional public expenditure in Northern Ireland as a result of receipts from the EU has always been difficult to ascertain but all the Northern Ireland MEPs, since the publication of the 1981 Martin Report (Martin, 1981: p. 10-20), regularly raised the problem of the absence of additionality.

In November 1992 Jacques Delors concluded his Belfast speech by saying:

'Regional development and interregional partnerships are at the base of sound and balanced prosperity in the Community. […] In Northern Ireland, the economic situation has recently been less bad than in the rest of the UK […] Europe, I believe, can add a useful dimension in helping to tackle problems in the future as it has in the past. For this, it will be necessary to at least maintain the level of financial support and expand the funds, improving arrangements for their administration in an effort to match them to their task […]. As you know, the Commission has recently made proposals - the so-called Delors II package - and its purpose is to ensure well-managed budgetary arrangements over the forthcoming 5 years and to give expression to the continuing commitment to economic and social cohesion."
(Jacques Delors, Belfast, 3 November 1992: p. 5)

The insistence on 'improving arrangements' for the administration of financial aids shows the Commission's awareness of contemporary issues concerning European budget distributions to Northern Ireland through INTERREG. The existence of proposals in this regard at such an early stage reflected a formal intention of involvement in a more straightforward and prioritized way in regards to Northern Ireland necessities. Furthermore, in the same public address, President Delors added 'there are also a number of principles on which future actions can be based. Amongst these are partnership, consultation and networks:' peculiarly, these features all figured in the EU PEACE funding, together with additionality, and in sum, this consciousness of existing issues surfaced vehemently when historical conditions were the most promising for success. The PEACE package established its own administrative body to circumvent the centralism of the British and Irish states and included Northern Ireland and the border counties of the ROI. Funds were characterized by an immediate disposability (interview with Roberto Speciale, 17/3/2017).

Conclusion

This paper focused on the micro-institutional and policy processes related to cross-border cooperation, which bridged the pre and post GFA period. It situated INTERREG in the context of the Irish border and it clarified why the administrative models adopted for INTERREG I and II did not achieve satisfactory results. The evidence from the research suggested that the highly centralised nature of the Irish and British administrations, together with the political symbolism of cross-border cooperation in the Irish border regions, hindered the authentic involvement of private actors and interest groups in the initiatives. Subsequently, the re-establishment of an executive in Northern Ireland, the functioning of the NSMC and the creation of SEUPB with its exclusive European remit, all impacted positively on INTERREG III outcomes. Finally, this article provided preliminary evidence on the originality of the EU PEACE funding: the process of devolving responsibility to the grass roots and building capacity of the region through intermediary funding bodies and bottom-up consultations. Contrary to popular opinion, the evidence presented shows how the programme's administrative system was deliberately kept separate from the INTERREG's one in order to resolve issues of additionality and to circumvent the centrality of the Irish and British governments in EU programmes implementation. This makes the whole INTERREG experience a 'lesson-learning' model for further EU peacebuilding in the region. Cross-border cooperation has been integral to the European integration project because it presents a bottom-up projection for integration that offers some counter-balance to charges of undemocratic top- down Brussels polity building. It can also advance conflict amelioration because it can provide a means of opening the territorial cage of ethno-national conflict and promoting cross border inter-cultural dialogue for communities amenable to such dialogue.

The example of the management and implementation of the EU programme for cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland provides useful empirical insights into the nature of networks

governance and associated metagovernance arrangements. The case study examined in this paper revealed that metagovernance involves government in the form of an omnipresent 'hand' of the state, and, as a result, it directly impacts the outcomes of governance. The Commission, while supporting the networks in their attempts at carving out a role for themselves in the policy-making processes, recognised the importance of the ministerial level in Northern Ireland. It has thus always acted through the 'high-level' of politics, arguing that an essential part of INTERREG was devoted to secure stable institutional structures and decision-making processes to facilitate genuine cross-border cooperation. Metagovernance included actions such as identifying key stakeholders, setting agendas, and structuring outcomes.

The main achievement of the EU in overcoming issues has been to provide instruments to the networks to be juxtaposed to the administrations' management. Networks, private actors, and interest groups remain dependant on EU support. Institutions and 'high-politics' also owe in part their long-lasting existence to the economic and political support of the EU, which ensured their functioning on the long-term perspective. What will the future be in the shadow of Brexit?

Notes

[1] Revisions to the operation of the Northern Ireland institutions were agreed between the main Northern Ireland political parties and the British and Irish governments at St Andrews in 2006 and at Stormont House in 2014.
[2] Commonly known as the PEACE founding, the PEACE package or the PEACE programs.

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