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European Union Cross-Border Cooperation and Conflict Amelioration

CATHAL McCALL

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Abstract. The relevance of European Union (EU) cross-border cooperation for European border conflict amelioration may be questioned in the contemporary global climate of threat and insecurity posed by forces of 'dark globalisation'. In any case, empirical evidence exposes the limitations of cross-border cooperation in advancing conflict amelioration in some border regions. Nevertheless, in an enlarged EU which encompasses Central and East European member states and reaches out to neighbouring states through cross-border cooperation initiatives, the number of real and potential border conflicts with which it is concerned has risen exponentially. Fortunately, there are cases of EU 'borderscapes' that have adopted a cross-border 'peace-building from below' approach leading to border conflict amelioration. Unfortunately, countervailing pressures on EU cross-border cooperation from border security regimes (principally Schengen), the Eurozone crisis, EU budgetary constraints, the conceptualisation of 'Europe as Empire', and the possible reconfiguration of the EU itself compromises this approach. Therefore, the path of European integration may well shift from one of inter-state peace-building and regional cross-border cooperation after the Second World War, to border conflict and coercion in constituting and reconstituting state borders after the reconfiguration of the EU.

Their memory of old freedoms lingers and won't let them rest. In these cases, your only options are to reduce the place to rubble or go and live there yourself (Machiavelli, 2011, p. 20).

1. Introduction

The post-2001 borders security regimes adopted by the US and the EU are responses to features of 'dark' globalisation—'global terrorism' and illegal migration—and resulting discourses of threat and insecurity, which have turned the page in political, media and academic understandings of state borders. In this contemporary global context, the idea of cross-border cooperation and the reconfiguration of borders from hard security barriers to spaces for contact and

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communication appears to belong to a naïve pre-2001 era where talk of a 'borderless world' was heard even within the Academy. With political, academic and media attention now fixed firmly on notions of global threat, border conflicts in Europe are largely regarded either as inconsequential or passé (Newman, 2012, p. 249). Ireland and Cyprus are closely associated with EU border conflicts, but they are small islands with limited global political impact. Border conflict in the Balkans was ameliorated by fair means and foul in the 1990s. A squabble over the relocation of a war statue and interred Russian soldiers in Tallinn caused minor skirmishes in 2007, but hardly sent Russian tanks rolling across the Estonian border, let alone set the world alight. And even the Israel/Palestine conflict appeared to be overshadowed by the 'Arab Spring' and the fall of dictatorships throughout the Middle East in 2012.

This paper argues that border conflicts and their amelioration matter now more than ever for the EU. This is recognised by many European 'borderlanders' who are acutely attuned to the historical consequences of border conflict and the possibility of its reoccurrence. Accordingly, border conflict amelioration, as used here, describes a long-term project wherein ethno-national, ideological, political and cultural incompatibilities between conflictual parties are addressed in a cross-border context. Those parties enter into a 'peace process' at political elite and, crucially, local 'grassroots' community levels in a concerted effort to resolve those incompatibilities.

Cross-border cooperation has become a 'trademark' of the European integration process and, as such, is supported by EU structural funding and community initiatives (Scott, 2012, p. 85). It may be argued that cross-border cooperation also remains central to the process of ameliorating ethno-national territorial conflict derived from the distinct lack of fit between modern state borders and ethno-national communities. In essence, cross-border cooperation is integral to conflict amelioration because it promises to open the territorial cage of the state to enable the development of inter-communal relations and intercultural dialogue with those on the other side of the border. In Europe, this post-World War II endeavour, developed by the European Community after 1989, faces its biggest challenge in the form of dominant post-2001 border securitisation policies, practices and discourses. The debate on the future of the EU in the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis may also impact on the EU's cross-border funding regime and future EU border reconfiguration. Yet, cross-border cooperation as conflict amelioration is of even greater importance to an enlarged EU of 28 member states (after the accession of Croatia in 2013), which is also actively building a 'neighbourhood'¹ beyond its borders with all of the conflictual border situations that it encompasses.

Sources of border conflict come in multifarious forms within and beyond the EU. Ethno-linguistic sources complicate cross-border relations between Estonia and Russia, and between Hungary and Ukraine. They also echo at the geopolitical heart of the EU through incompatibilities between Flemish and Walloon communities in Belgium. Divergent and competing ethno-national historical memories and commemorations remain 'live' sources of conflict in Ireland and Cyprus, and between Turkey and Armenia. Culture wars through, for example, museum representations, continue in Cyprus and in Bosnia where the National Art Gallery and National Museum were forced to close in 2012 due to lack of government funding. Funding was not forthcoming because Serbs and Croats deemed these cultural institutions to be 'too Bosniak' and want their own national cultural institutions (Hooper, 2012).

The paper examines the relationship between governance, bordering processes, cross-border cooperation, culture, emotions, and the amelioration of ethno-national conflict within the EU and in the context of its 'neighbourhood'. It considers the development of cross-border cooperation from the perspective of power relations, governance including the Third (voluntary and community) Sector and transnational organisations (principally the EU), cultural representations, and recent geopolitical shifts in Europe and beyond. It seeks to discern ways in which cross-border cooperation has contributed or might contribute to conflict amelioration particularly where it is integral to reconceptualising issues of culture in terms of openness/exposure to other cultures. In what circumstances does such exposure advance a conflict amelioration endeavour? In what other circumstances does it exacerbate confrontational difference and fears of insecurity, as well as threats to received notions of identity? Can 'borderscapes' where conflict amelioration is relatively well advanced offer 'sites of learning' for other 'borderscapes' where conflict persists; and indeed others throughout Europe where border conflict lies dormant but memories of 'old freedoms', victories, defeats, injuries and hurt lingers? Finally, can cross-border cooperation aimed at conflict amelioration resist countervailing pressures from border security regimes that seek to deliver hard, impenetrable borders between states and between the EU and neighbouring states?

The concept of 'borderscapes' is mobilised in order to help address these questions. Borderscapes are border landscapes displaying cultural and political complexity, contested discourses and meanings, struggles over inclusion and exclusion, and involve multiple actors (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr, 2008, pp. ix–xi). However, borderscapes are also important landscapes for inter-cultural dialogue that advances conflict amelioration. Borderscapes signify the fact that these multifarious dynamics stray well beyond the borderline.

2. Reduce the Place to Rubble ...

Territory and Emotions

Contrary to the contemporary fix on the possibilities and limitations of globalisation, with its emphasis on the power of instantaneous communication in virtual space, borders and conflict bring us right back down to earth since they rest on disputes over territory, a place that is physical, tangible and durable. Moreover, territory and the adjective 'territorial' imply acquisition, ownership, exclusion, and protection, which in turn spark emotions of love, hate and violence (Berezin, 2003, p. 4). As Brendan O'Leary (2001) reminds us, territory comes from the verb 'terreor', to frighten, and the noun 'territorium', a place from which people are 'frightened off'. He also points out that 'territory' and 'terrorist' share the same etymology highlighting the intimate association between territory and violence (O'Leary, 2001, pp. 5–6). The quest for acquisition, ownership, exclusion, and protection, and ultimately the human urge to exercise social and political power within a territory, has led to its delimitation by borders (Sack, 1986, p. 20).
For Mabel Berezin

territory is social because ... persons inhabit it collectively; political because groups fight to preserve as well as to enlarge their space; and cultural because it contains the collective memories of its inhabitants. Emotion is the constitutive dimension of territory. The feeling of 'mine,

not yours; ours, not theirs' colours social and political space (Berezin, 2003, p. 7).

Cultural practices, such as the naming of streets and the erection of monuments to commemorate national heroes, national victories, national defeats and 'old freedoms', serve to steep a territory in national communal memory, thus re-enforcing the relationship between national territory and communal emotion and identity (Berezin, 2003, pp. 9–10). Territories become sacred places engrained in the communal memory by the communication of cultural practices. "Emotion entrepreneurs" nourish this relationship by, for example, communicating a legacy of past grievance (Bechev and Nicolaidis, 2010, p. 6). Thus, defence of territorial borders or the desire to rent them asunder has, more often than not, resulted in violence, injury and death because of the potent brew of social, political, cultural and emotional forces at work. According to Liam O'Dowd

typically, change in the territorial location of borders has not been a democratic process but rather a product of wars, invasions, dynastic settlements and the balance of power and coercion (O'Dowd, 2002, p. 16).

Historically, border construction does not rest on a democratic imperative. Rather, borders are consolidated when they become identified with the popular national emotion of the victor.

Identities and interests that cannot be made compatible, that have the ability to mobilise and that are supported by a justifying ideology with legitimating myths, provides the wellspring for conflict over territory (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk and Zartman, 2009, p. 3; Malešević, 2010, p. 332). For Siniša Malešević, it is this interaction that "open[s] the door for the transformation of habitual banality into organised virulence" (Malešević, 2010, pp. 200–201). It is the trinity of a threatening 'other', an ability to mobilise the necessary resources to challenge that other, and, importantly, a motivating ideology, that enables individuals to contemplate and carry out the killing of others (Jackson, 2009, p. 177). Shrill cries to reduce the other's place to rubble emerge from this trinity, as when, during an upsurge in the Israel/Gaza conflict in 2012, Gilad Sharon declared, "We need to flatten entire neighborhoods in Gaza. Flatten all of Gaza" (Sharon, 2012).

"Conflict entrepreneurs" are central to this process of violent conflict construction. In particular, political elites as conflict entrepreneurs have the power and influence to combine social mobilisation with a supporting ideology in pursuit of conflict (Jackson, 2009, p. 180). Nationalism is the ideology that is most often charged with the construction of violent conflict². Modern nationalism as a territorially driven ideology has prioritised the acquisition and/or defence of territory, state-building and the creation of state borders as separation defence barriers (Kolossov, 2005, p. 614; Paasi, 2011, p. 14). Where there is a dispute over the creation of a modern state border then violence has, more often than not, been used as a means of resolving that dispute. In border conflict situations, modern grievance-driven nationalism, with its supporting narrative of victimhood expressed in words and in music, can provide an ideological driver for conflict over territory. Far from being forgotten, martyrs from past conflicts are eulogised and rendered powerful emotional agents for social mobilisation against the threatening other. However, the emotional temptation to reduce the other's place to rubble in honour of the sacrifice of martyrs, often gives way to the other's

defeat rather than annihilation as the preferred outcome. The enduring nation requires the other because it is an integral part of the self.

European integration presents a significant challenge to a rigid understanding of the relationship between territory, borders and identity conceived through the prism of the modern nation-state. On the one hand, this challenge can be viewed positively, especially when cognisant of the devastating carnage wrought by two world wars in the cockpit of Europe during the twentieth century. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union in 2012 was a reminder of the role of European integration in peace-building after the Second World War. Indeed, in a Western Europe largely at peace for generations it is often forgotten that peace-building and economic regeneration were the twin objectives of the 'Founding Fathers' of the European integration project—Konrad Adenauer, Alcide De Gasperi, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Paul-Henri Spaak, and Altiero Spinelli (Mayne, 1996). However, this conflict amelioration objective of European integration remains very much to the fore in border regions that have experienced recent conflict, such as those in the Balkans, Ireland, and Cyprus, and those on the EU's external border where the border itself remains contested. On the other hand, the EU challenge to territory, borders and identity can also be viewed as a threat to national culture and the nation-state itself. In Greece, where the effects of the Eurozone crisis have caused widespread economic destitution, violent street protests and the rise of the violent far right group Golden Dawn, the timing of the award was greeted with incredulity (Smith, 2012). Informed by traditional British nationalist ideology and strengthening British Euroscepticism, UK Prime Minister David Cameron was as incredulous when he refused to endorse the award or join other EU leaders for the ceremony in Norway (Mason and Waterfield, 2012).

The accelerated pace of integration during the 1990s and 2000s, including the enlargement of the EU into Central and Eastern Europe, coincided with strengthening Euroscepticism in 'Western' political, media and academic spheres of influence generally (see Harmsen and Spiering, 2005). The crisis in the Eurozone can hardly have stemmed the sceptical onslaught. However, in the context of borders and conflict amelioration, any historical reading of European integration must pay close observance to its impact on border change and peace-building.

3. Nascent EU Cross-Border Cooperation

European integration emerged from the experience of World War II, its *raison d'être* being the prevention of further inter-state wars and economic regeneration in a devastated post-1945 Europe. The borders that war had drawn were accepted by the founders of European integration. In doing so they recognised the efficacy of ultra-violence and victory in war. However, war as the means of future border change was rejected in favour of the alternative: interdependence between states and regional cross-border cooperation³. Initially, cross-border cooperation between local and regional authorities, such as that which developed in the Rhine Basin between its French, German, Belgian, Swiss and Dutch regions from the 1950s, was promoted by the European Council rather than the European Community (O'Dowd, 2002, pp. 17–18). Although economic development was to the forefront of this cooperation, cross-border contact gave some expression to the shared borderscape culture of these regions and, arguably, helped advance conflict amelioration after World War II.

The 1986 Single European Act (SEA) provided the impetus for the European Community to realise a support strategy for developing regional cross-border cooperation. The SEA's Single Market ideology dictated that a reconfiguration of the member state borders—from high tariff barriers to economic bridges—was required to facilitate the seamless flow of goods and services, though administrative, political, cultural and psychological obstacles continued to frustrate this reconfiguration (O'Dowd, 2002, p. 20). Regional level cross-border cooperation may be viewed as a European Commission strategy for addressing and eroding these obstacles to border reconfiguration. However, Bob Jessop (2002) strikes a sober note of caution on assessing the outcomes of this strategy when he says that

There are many more cross-border regions and cross-border region projects than there are successful well-functioning examples. We must not mistake a proposed strategy for its successful realisation (Jessop, 2002, p. 45).

The INTERREG programme has been the main funding instrument for promoting cross-border cooperation within the EU and along its external borders. Approximately €10 billion has been channelled to cross-border 'Euroregions', cross-border city development projects and other co-operative ventures via this programme since 1989. According to James Scott: "... the practice of establishing Euroregions has been understood in terms of the active re-constitution of borders" (Scott, 2011, p. 135). Other EU programmes, such as PHARE and TACIS for Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, have also provided development funding for border regions (Scott, 2012, pp. 90–91). Taken together these programmes may be viewed as vehicles for promoting cross-border cooperation and a de-bordering discourse, not least in Central and Eastern Europe and the European 'neighbourhood' (Scott, 2011, p. 136). The attendant cultural interaction that such cross-border contact brings is an important consideration, especially where there is a legacy of border conflict and lingering suspicion, fear and resentment. However, the Schengen border regime⁴ compromises such interaction across the EU's external frontier. Schengen presents a countervailing dynamic to cross-border cooperation initiatives between the EU and neighbouring states through its manifestation of the EU's external frontier as a border barrier. For example, despite the creation of four Euroregions across the borders of Romania, Ukraine and Moldova in 2002, the prospect of restrictions on cross-border movement, including the introduction of Schengen visas for Moldovans and Ukrainians travelling to Romania, promises to have a re-bordering impact on those citizens once Romania is judged to have complied with Schengen rules (Popescu, 2006, p. 50). This is also a major issue for Bosniaks because their lack of EU visas places them at a disadvantage *vis-à-vis* Croats and Serbs who can traverse the Schengen border without visas. As such, the Schengen border regime threatens the integrative symbolism of cross-border interaction where modern state borders have divided ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups. Moreover, Schengen undermines the potential challenge of EU cross-border cooperation to the binary distinction between 'self' and 'other', 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there', 'inside' and 'outside' and 'include' and 'exclude', that is informed by the legacy of empire and enforced by the power of the modern state (O'Dowd, 2010, p. 1047).

4. Limits of EU Cross-Border Cooperation

This is not to say that cross-border interaction automatically results in shared values and reconciled identities. As Bechev and Nicolaidis remind us

the noble goal of resolving conflicts through appeals to economic rationality and common development goals, as preached by the EU, has more than once run into the rough seas of past grievance, stirred up by the emotion entrepreneurs of the day⁵ (Bechev and Nicolaidis, 2010, p. 6).

For example, the blossoming of multiple Euroregions along the German-Polish border over the last 20 years has resulted in economic, transport and environmental dividends. Between 1994 and 2006, €400 million was channelled into the Polish-German cross-border cooperation programme for improving cross-border roads and environmental protection (Gorzalak, 2006, p. 200). However, the cross-border cultural impact is questionable. German and Polish borderlanders have tended to shy away from cross-border cultural interaction (Scott, 2012, p. 93). This may be partly explained by asymmetry in national representations of war commemoration and remembrance: Centrally-driven Polish representations of national victimhood contrast with a German focus on either Holocaust victims or forgetting. In any case, the persistence of a psychological German/Polish border and 'exclusionary mentalities' is an important reason for the lack of cross-border interaction: Two thirds of German/Polish borderlanders classify themselves as either 'neutral' or 'unfriendly' towards their neighbours on the other side of the border (Gorzalak, 2006, p. 204).

Similarly, many borderlanders in the 'Three-Borders' Area of Austria, Italy and Slovenia tend to dismiss suggestions of any cultural communion with, or even geographical proximity to, those on the other side of the border. Instead, they remain socio-spatially oriented inwards towards their respective national centres for their economic activities and interests, identity affirmation, and sense of security. As a result, binary distinctions between 'self' and 'other', 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there', and 'inside' and 'outside' remain sharply defined by the state borders (Janschitz and Kofler, 2004, p. 208). Here, state borders continue to be key arbiters for the maintenance of national identity. Indeed, this example demonstrates the fact that borders are as much economic, social and cultural institutions as they are political institutions (Scott and van Houtum, 2009). The post-2001 political and discursive emphasis on re-bordering rather than de-bordering reinforces the role of borders as arbiters between national communities (McCall, 2012). Indeed, Scott maintains that the 2004 enlargement of the EU represents the "high water mark in the political attempt to extend the 1980s and 1990s momentum of de-bordering" (Scott, 2011, p. 135). Thus, EU top-down cross-border cooperation initiatives may be counter-productive to a contemporary conflict amelioration effort at regional and local levels. As David Newman warns

... meeting, particularly after periods of lengthy conflict and cross-border tensions ..., may serve to strengthen national or group uniqueness as each side seeks to cultivate its own feelings of difference and cultural superiority (Newman, 2011, p. 38).

This is especially the case where cultural differences are small. Anton Blok (1998), drawing on Freud (1929), has argued that a narcissism of minor cultural differences can exacerbate conflictual tensions in meetings between

ethno-national groups as they seek to maintain the differentiation and oppositional elements of their subject positions.

On the Polish-Ukrainian border, Hann (1998) has argued that cross-border cooperation in the Carpathian Euroregion actually increased anti-Ukrainian sentiment and led to a corresponding deterioration in Polish-Ukrainian borderland relations. In this borderland, the bazaar economy has been the focal point for convivial cross-border contact, highlighting the function of borders as economic resources, rather than 'imposed' cross-border cooperation which may have benefitted only "a few officials" (Hann, 1998, p. 254). Indeed, EU cross-border cooperation has been criticised in the past for its excessive bureaucracy and public sector dominance (Scott, 1999). The Third (voluntary and community) Sector has gained a more secure foothold with each successive cross-border programme (McCall and Williamson, 2000; McCall and O'Dowd, 2008). However, the inclusion of the Third Sector in the governance of programmes may only serve to further complicate their implementation. For Liam O'Dowd (2002), the operation of cross-border cooperation in the EU has been marked by

Insufficient resources, mismatched competencies, duplication of effort, 'back to back' rather than genuinely integrated projects, inter-agency conflicts over resource allocation, erratic funding patterns and excessive emphasis on physical infrastructure and 'hard' economic outcomes, rather than on 'soft factors' like social capital and trust (O'Dowd, 2002, p. 23).

Olivier Kramsch (2002) also raises concerns about the lack of democratic accountability involved in cross-border dynamics.

Such experiences and assessments leave the EU open to the charge that its production of cross-border zones of contact, communication and cooperation has deleterious consequences for some border regions where borderlanders on either side of a border shun contact, communication and cooperation across it. Indeed, Newman has criticised this production as "something artificial and super-imposed" (Newman, 2006, pp. 180–1). However, experiences differ widely throughout the EU's border regions. The infrastructural power and provenance of EU states vary enormously and have produced a great variety of borderscapes. Cross-border cooperation can open up political, social and cultural spaces in which national histories can be re-examined and the configuration of national identities re-evaluated (Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson, 2003). Fundamentally, where there is an interest and a willingness to engage in cross-border cooperation, especially to a conflict amelioration end, then cross-border zones may be classified as something real and voluntary though the degree of popular involvement in cross-border projects is the acid test. Informal cross-border interaction is a fundamental precursor to this involvement and may vary according to the incentives and disincentives that exist for people to interact across a border.

Overcoming the psychological hold of borders as dividing lines between 'self' and 'other', 'us' and 'them', 'here' and 'there', and 'inside' and 'outside', which have been fortified by conflict memories and separate political, economic and cultural development under the roofs of different states, is no easy task. As Mabel Berezin remarks, "novelty . . . is a mental irritant whereas custom is a mental sedative" (Berezin, 2003, p. 10). EU sponsored cross-border cooperation is a relatively new and unchartered phenomenon. Somewhat paradoxically, borderlanders in search of stability and security may be especially averse to the challenges of

cross-border cooperation and reaching out across the border to the other side in the quest to achieve their goals.

5. ... Or Go and Live There Yourself

Conflict Resolution/Transformation/Amelioration

The mammoth task of resolving, transforming or ameliorating conflict is one informed by an extensive theoretical debate in the academic literature (see, for example, Bercovitch, Kremenyuk and Zartman, 2009; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill, 2011; Wallersteen, 2012). An end to organised political violence is often seen as the starting point for a conflict resolution process. It presents a window of opportunity for negotiating a political settlement to the conflict and remedying structural injustice. Ultimately, conflict resolution strives for reconciliation between conflictual parties and the creation of a genuinely integrated society (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill, 2011, p. 246). In *Understanding Conflict Resolution* (2012, Third Edition), Peter Wallersteen states that

conflict resolution is a social situation where armed conflicting parties in a (voluntary) agreement resolve to live peacefully with - and/or dissolve - their basic incompatibilities and henceforth cease to use arms against one another (Wallersteen, 2012, p. 50).

For Wallersteen, dissolving incompatibilities between conflict parties can happen in a number of ways, including: one party changing its goals; dividing resources, for example, sharing the position of Prime Minister; 'horse-trading', that is, where one party has its goals met on one issue and acquiesces in the other party's goals being met on another issue; sharing control and ruling together; ceding control to a third party; engaging conflict transformation mechanisms such as new elections and arbitration; and 'parking' issues that they find difficult to resolve by appointing a commission to examine and report (Wallersteen, 2012, pp. 54–7). While these recommendations are useful when considering the amelioration of border conflicts they are pitched clearly at the political elite level. Conflict resolution also tends to focus on the conflictual parties directly involved and be end product oriented in approach with the emphasis on the political negotiation of peace agreements and their implementation, security, disarmament, government, and justice.

Conflict transformation, on the other hand, tends to articulate a more multilevel, multi-sectoral and long-term approach with structural change and international, national and local political and cultural processes considered. Thus, for Cordula Reimann

conflict transformation refers to outcome, process and structure oriented long-term peacebuilding efforts, which aim to truly overcome revealed forms of direct cultural and structural violence (Reimann, 2004, p. 10).

Here, the 'peacebuilding from below approach' advocated by John Paul Lederach (1997) in his *Approaches to Building Peace* pyramid model is influential. Lederach's argument is that a sustainable peace requires a peace process to be firmly embedded in the 'Grassroots Leadership' of the local community (Lederach, 1997, p. 26). Critics contend that the precise location of 'the grassroots', as well as the conflict exacerbation versus conflict transformation orientation of those

grassroots leaders once they are located, is open to questioning. Thus, Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill argue that

what constitutes the authentic grassroots or the local community may be difficult to discern, and peacebuilding from below is subject to many of the same constraints, dilemmas and instabilities as elite-level peacebuilding. Local groups may not be benignly autonomous actors, and they are susceptible to the effects of structural global forces, structural pressures, and national and regional power plays that characterise most violent conflicts. Indeed local groups operating at the grassroots may well be highly disempowered and fragmented and lacking any capacity for peace activity; they may be local agents of stronger external groups, including militias or criminal gangs or clan-based politics; or they may be genuine peacebuilding organisations with authentic roots in the community, but compelled to speak the language of peacebuilding as defined by powerful donors and patrons (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill, 2011, p. 244).

Nevertheless, it is now generally accepted by peace-building theorists that the engagement of the 'grassroots' is an essential component of a peace-building endeavour. This is particularly the case in border conflicts where borderlanders are, more often than not, on the periphery of the state and geopolitically remote from the central government. Accordingly, conflict amelioration, as used here, attempts to capture a peace-building effort wherein political violence has largely abated, competing ethno-nationalist political elites have entered into an agreement on governance and, crucially, local borderland 'grassroots' communities have been engaged in an on-going peace-building effort.

6. Practical Conflict Amelioration at the Grassroots

There is some disjuncture between the theoretical advocacy of 'peace-building from below' and difficulties in developing practical ways of engaging people at the grassroots in conflict amelioration activities. Sport and the creative arts are the two potentially most fruitful areas of activity through which people can become engaged in cross-border, intercultural dialogue (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill, 2011, p. 355). The emotional appeal of football is an especially useful resource to garner for conflict amelioration purposes. Football peace projects have been established in, for example, Israel (*Football4Peace*) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Open Fun Football Schools*) (Lea-Howarth, 2006). Creative networks—involving museums, visual arts, music and theatre—have also been established to pursue conflict amelioration. The worldwide network of *Museums for Peace* provides spaces to promote peace through art on display. For Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill (2011) such spaces are important because

...dimensions of feeling, emotion, imagery and imagination, which are stimulated when peace and conflict are the subject of the visual and other arts, are clearly important but under-utilized reservoirs and motivators for conflict resolution (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill, 2011, p. 349).

In a similar vein, music has been cited as a valuable medium for promoting peace, though like sport, it can also excite passions that fuel conflict and violence (Urbain,

2008). Musical ventures, such as the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, which was founded by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim to bring together Arab and Israeli musicians⁶, are powerful emotional symbols for peace-building across borders.

In Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch (2006) Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett wrote: "It is said that the Devil has all the best tunes. This is broadly true. But Heaven has the best choreographers". Theatre and film present opportunities for exploring conflict transformation and have been mobilised to this end by theatre companies and filmmakers working in conflict zones (see, for example, the *Theatre of Witness project*⁷ and the *Belfast/Sarajevo Initiative*⁸). Lisa Fitzpatrick (2009) argues that theatre performance is especially effective at creating moments of intersubjective togetherness and "... engages in a process of aestheticizing loss and transcending the brutality of the past" (Fitzpatrick, 2009, p. 187). While such creative forms have made substantive contributions to conflict amelioration endeavours, their effectiveness may be questioned in terms of their limited appeal to specialist or non-aligned audiences. For example, while the 2008 film *Lemon Tree*⁹ received international critical acclaim and grossed \$6 628 437 at the box office, it was largely ignored in Israel (Viera, 2009). The film's Israeli director, Eran Riklis, explained its poor reception in Israel in terms of the average Israeli saying: "Oh, this is about a Palestinian. It must be pro-Palestinian and I don't want to see it" (Hart, 2009).

Mass media, particularly newspapers and television, are potentially more powerful and potent forms because of their reach into homes and their proven social mobilisation capabilities. However, this capability has arguably served war efforts and ignited conflict tensions more than help ameliorate them. As well as inform and educate, mass media forms can all too easily be drawn to the pornography of violence and suffer from a tendency to offer spontaneous, unreflective and partisan commentary on a conflict (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Maill, 2011, pp. 360–361).

7. The Irish Borderscape as a 'Site for Learning'

The EU Peace programmes for Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland (1995–2013), which has entailed funding of €1524m over almost two decades, represents a sustained and sophisticated example of 'peace-building from below' with cross-border cooperation as a key priority. The EU Peace Programmes provide a wealth of practical conflict amelioration projects with a cross-border dimension. Many cross-border, cross-community¹⁰ projects involved schools in practical, educational, and creative activities. For example, one project, in receipt of £139 941 in EU Peace II (2000–2006) funding, involved 12 primary schools (500 pupils aged 9 to 12 years) from border regions in counties Louth, Cavan, Down, Armagh and Tyrone for local history, local environment, drama, sport and music activities. The project ended with an exhibition of all work undertaken in the Market Place Theatre, Armagh City, including numerous presentations, drama, songs and stories (Burke, 2007).

Many cross-border, cross-community projects involved discussion on Irish histories with the aim of increasing mutual understanding. For example, one project initiated fruitful discussions on the meaning of 1916 for British Protestant unionists/loyalists (the 'Battle of the Somme' during World War I) and for Irish Catholic nationalists/republicans (the 'Easter Rising'). According to Bechev and Nicolaidis

(2010): “human communities define their boundaries with reference to the past” (2010, p. 8). Such examinations of historical events that reveal erstwhile hidden complexities serve to challenge those boundaries and binary identity configurations that become embedded through conflict.

EU Peace programme cross-border projects for young people have included the ‘Cultural Pathways’ project which brought together young people from Protestant East Belfast and ‘Southern’ Catholic Ballybofey to play music and sport, as well as talk about issues that interest them, and visit and stay with each other. Other projects with a cross-border, cross-community sports focus have included the ‘Dunfield project’ which is a joint initiative of Linfield Football Club from Northern Ireland and Dundalk Football Club from the Republic of Ireland involving 1000 young people, mostly school pupils. The project has organised cross-border, cross-community soccer matches, ‘blitz networking’ days, ‘conflict resolution classes’ and a ‘cultural diversity awareness group’ (McCall, 2011).

In music, following the example set by the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, the Cross-Border Orchestra of Ireland has 160 members (aged between 12 and 24) who are drawn from both sides of the Irish border. The orchestra has performed across Europe and in the USA and benefited from EU Peace programme II funding. The Orchestra is often accompanied by large youth choirs, adding to its reach on a cross-border, cross-community basis (Hayward, McCall, and Damkat, 2011, p. 197).

Some cross-border projects with school pupils on the island of Ireland have involved storytelling in English, Irish and Ulster-Scots in an effort to promote an appreciation of cultural diversity through languages. Regarded as an integral element in a conflict transformation endeavour (Salmon, 2007), storytelling has been employed in projects beyond the confines of schools, including carnivals, art in public spaces, and filmmaking projects based on the life stories of former prisoners, in an effort to challenge strict binary distinctions between ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘inside’ and ‘outside’, and ‘include’ and ‘exclude’ that underpin violent conflict (McCall and O’Dowd, 2008).

Henk van Houtum (2005) argues cogently that borders are sites “at and through which socio-spatial differences are communicated” (van Houtum, 2005, p. 672). Yet they may also be understood as borderscapes in which commonality can be communicated and diversity appreciated in a conflict amelioration effort. Challenging stereotypes, discussing history, and recognising diversity and commonality among Irish nationalist and British unionist ethno-national groups have been important conflict amelioration outputs of the Irish borderscape. The emphasis of projects has been on the search for commonality while accepting difference, that is, the promotion of diversity rather than attempting to narrow political and cultural differences. Respect for difference is a pre-requisite. Crossing the border and ‘living there yourself’, through engagement in cross-border projects, presents opportunities for exploring commonalities and accepting differences.

8. Beyond the EU Pale¹¹

Visiting, staying and ‘living’ across the border, with the contact and communication such an adventure entails, is integral to the conflict amelioration impetus of cross-border cooperation. Yet, the mobility required for this adventure is hindered by a number of factors, not least the border security regime that it confronts. The key Europe-wide study that examines the influence of the EU on multiple

border conflicts inside and outside the EU is *The European Union and Border Conflicts: The Power of Integration and Association* (2008), edited by Thomas Diez, Mathias Albert and Stephan Stetter. In their introduction, Diez, Stetter and Albert rehearse the ‘incompatibility of subject positions’ understanding of conflict, to argue that conflict amelioration in border zones requires the reconstruction of borders and hitherto incompatible identities, in order to end violence and, ultimately, reconfigure identities from antagonism to compatibility or to at least, what Chantal Mouffe calls, ‘agonism’¹². For them, transforming the communication that constructs conflict is a necessary first step towards its amelioration. In the study they seek to determine the extent to which European integration and association (with its integrative elements reaching into the European Neighbourhood and beyond) can impact on border conflicts to a conflict amelioration end (Diez, Stetter and Albert, 2008, pp. 5–11). In particular, they are interested in the extent to which the EU has successfully used its normative ‘soft’ power—through its institutions and its economic and social policy instruments, rather than through military might—by presenting opportunities for EU integration and association to states ‘beyond the EU Pale’ (McCall, 2007, pp. 61–63; Whitman, 2011, pp. 5–6). Elsewhere, Diez and Pace make the cogent point that the successful use of EU ‘soft’ power depends on the reputation that the EU has already garnered in wielding it (Diez and Pace, 2011). Diez, Albert and Stetter’s beyond the EU Pale case studies focus on Greek-Turkish, Finnish-Russian, Israeli-Palestinian, and Cypriot border conflicts.

In the Greek-Turkish case, Bahar Rumelili argues that the granting of EU candidacy status to Turkey in 1999 was the key event that helped to ameliorate the Greek-Turkish conflict with “issues that would have easily escalated into serious crises in the past ... now carefully contained by elites” (Rumelili, 2008, p. 100). In particular, candidacy status signalled an acceptance among the Turkish political elite that the resolution of the Greek-Turkish conflict was an important element in its EU membership process. Accordingly, bilateral cooperation agreements on, for example, economic development, tourism promotion, border landmine removal, and illegal immigration, have been implemented. However, Rumelili confirms that the development of cross-border cooperation in the Greek-Turkish case is impeded by the Schengen border security regime while Turkey remains beyond the EU Pale (Rumelili, 2008, p. 119).

Also remaining beyond the EU Pale is the Turkish Cypriot north of Cyprus demarcated from the Greek Cypriot south by the ‘Green Line’ border. EU efforts at conflict amelioration on the island were complicated by the Greek Cypriot rejection of the UN-proposed ‘Annan Plan’ for unification of the island in April 2004. Although the referendum was carried by 65 per cent in the North it was rejected by 76 per cent in the South. Thus, the southern Republic of Cyprus acceded to the EU one week later leaving the ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ behind and division intact (Demetriou, 2008, p. 71). Clearly, conflict amelioration hopes were pinned on a united Cyprus entering the EU (Diez and Pace, 2011, p. 216). Indeed, the accession process itself did lead to a partial opening of the border in 2003 which increased mobility and cross-border contact between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Peristianis and Marvis, 2011, p. 143). However, not only did the referendum and subsequent EU accession for the South strike a blow to those hopes, they have, in the meantime, arguably exacerbated conflictual tensions on the island (Stetter, Albert and Diez, 2008, p. 221). This is because Greek Cypriots have used EU membership to strengthen

their position in the conflict dynamic by recourse to EU norms, values and *aquis communautaire* which, in practice, do not extend beyond the EU Pale on the island (Diez and Pace, 2011, p. 217).

Elsewhere, Debbie Lisle considers the importance of Cypriot cultural institutions for reinforcing an incompatibility of subject positions. Representations of heroes, enemies and victims by these institutions serve to promote oppositional subject positions between North and South. The narrative of the 'Museum of Barbarism' in the North is one of bloodthirsty and murderous Greek Cypriot enemies. This factory of historical memory helps buttress Turkish Cypriot group identity in oppositional terms to the Greek Cypriot one. No better, from a conflict amelioration perspective, is the 'Museum of Struggle' in the South, which ignores the Turkish Cypriot/Greek Cypriot conflict altogether, preferring instead to dwell on the Greek Cypriot anti-colonial struggle against the British in the 1950s (Lisle, 2007, pp. 99–106). The failure of these cultural institutions to engage in the discursive practices of conflict amelioration is a major stumbling block for shared understandings of a common historical heritage. Consequently, Lisle recommends that "... parts of the Dead Zone (Buffer Zone) should be preserved so that bi-communal activists, local officials, community groups, international organisations and even political tourists can begin to think about how to represent the toll of 30 years of ethnic conflict" (Lisle, 2007, p. 113). Reconfiguring the cultural institution of the Buffer Zone border into one that symbolises cross-border cooperation and a shared common history would represent a significant conflict amelioration step that chimes with the bottom up approach to peace-building recommended by Lederach (1997) and practised in the Irish cultural borderscape after 1995.

Beyond the EU Pale applying to the geopolitical position of one party to conflict is also a complicating factor for conflict amelioration in the Finnish-Russian case, as discussed by Pertti Joenniemi in Diez, Albert and Stetter (2008). Unlike Turkey, possible EU membership for Russia is not an option through which the EU can exercise leverage (Joenniemi, 2008, p. 159). That said, the EU has had some enabling impact on Finnish-Russian conflict amelioration through support for cross-border cooperation initiatives like those in the Euro-region Karelia which are undertaken at the local and regional level (Joenniemi, 2008, p. 162). Cross-border visits by people on voyages of discovery to battlegrounds, lost territory and war memorials has involved a sharing of historical memories and a bridging of cultural differences (Scott, 2012, p. 93). However, the Schengen border regime's tightening of the EU's external borders with neighbouring states inhibits the development of a borderscape for cooperation and socio-cultural interaction (Scott, 2006, p. 33). Moreover, explicitly connecting the process of Europeanisation to cross-border cooperation in the Finnish-Russian context is likely to be counter-productive for conflict amelioration here since it may be understood by the Russian state government as a subordination process to the neo-medieval construction of 'Europe as Empire' (Joenniemi, 2008, p. 164; Zielonka, 2006).

When both parties to a conflict are beyond the EU Pale then the EU's influence on its amelioration diminishes further. Indeed, it may be argued that EU involvement in such a conflict exacerbates it rather than ameliorates it. In the Israel-Palestine conflict, with its strong binary identity dimension forged in decades of conflict and underpinned by state asymmetry and the conflictual ideologies of Zionism and Palestinian nationalism, EU funding directed towards the Palestinian Authority is largely interpreted in Israel as reflecting an EU pro-Palestinian

bias (Yacobi and Newman, 2008, pp. 172–9). Moreover, the 2005 decision by the G8 to allocate \$3 billion for Palestinian reconstruction, a decision promoted by EU members, was automatically read by many Israelis as a reward for terrorism coming as it did one day after Islamic jihadist bomb attacks in London (Yacobi and Newman, 2008, p. 199). Diez and Pace (2011) have also criticised the route of EU funding for Palestine into 'Fatah agents' whom they accuse of malpractice and a refusal to channel funding to independent Third sector groups. Thus, the EU's reputation for exercising normative power in the conflict is further diminished and its role in exacerbating both Palestinian divisions and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict enhanced (Diez and Pace, 2011, p. 223).

In contrast to an EU cross-border cooperation approach to border conflict amelioration, Israel's border security regime became manifested in the construction of the Separation Wall in the West Bank beginning in 2000. The objective was clearly to protect Israelis from Palestinian terrorist attacks. The effect, however, has been to damage the Palestinian economy thus forcing some Palestinians to seek passage to Israel (via clandestine people smuggling networks), in search of work. Moreover, prolonged damage to the borderland economy of the Hebron Hills and the Negev may compound disputes over territory exacerbated by construction of the Wall (Parizot, 2010, pp. 192–194). Ultimately, the creation of the 'Separation Wall' was an Israeli state security response to a threat from the other side. Paradoxically, through rendering the other side invisible the sense of threat perceived by Israelis can only escalate (Newman, 2011, p. 43). The lack of Israeli interaction with Palestinians fuels the stereotyping and the dehumanisation of the enemy 'other'. Moreover, thoughts of 'what are they doing over there?' can lead to imaginations running wild.

Drawing on evidence from their case studies, Stetter, Albert and Diez argue that while Europeanisation has had an ameliorating effect on some border conflicts, it may also have the opposite effect, particularly where one or more party to the conflict is beyond the EU Pale and has no interest in, or prospect of, becoming a member (Stetter, Albert and Diez, 2008, pp. 220–230). However, their conclusion that "a change of identity constructions" towards a "shared European reference point" is the most powerful "pathway" to a conflict transformation is surprising, especially given case study research on conflicts with one or more conflictual parties beyond the EU Pale (Stetter, Albert and Diez, 2008, p. 232). In Russia, and arguably in Northern Cyprus and Turkey among others, a 'shared European reference point' may easily translate as an EU reference point and the pursuit of EU neo-imperialism. In that case, claims to sacred territories of the communal imagination can be easily converted by conflict entrepreneurs into violent resistance (Bechev and Nicolaidis, 2010, p. 6). As Anton Blok has observed "... it is hard for people to survive physically and socially when they are not in some way 'respected'. Violence underwrites reputation" (Blok, 2001: ix). Without respect, violence becomes the default position in the quest to assert cultural reputation.

9. Conclusion

For Niccolò Machiavelli (2011), conflict was the outcome of the human need for self-preservation and a desire for power. However, conflict amelioration also addresses these human needs, albeit through the less rapacious and more benign route of ending violence in border conflict zones and the empowerment

of individuals and communities therein. 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. Cross-border cooperation 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. However, if conflict amelioration, as an original objective of the European integration project, remains on the radar of EU policy innovators and decision-makers, then one would expect that inter-cultural dialogue projects would be 'mainstreamed' in existing economic development cross-border programmes. Instead, such dialogue is merely suggested as an agreeable 'by-product' of cross-border contact in pursuit of economic development. As such, the thrust of EU cross-border co-operation is clearly weighted in favour of subnational, neoliberal, 'geoeconomics' (Sparke, 2002).

Border conflict, whether repressed or expressed, is a live issue in many EU border regions. Therefore, a re-prioritisation of this objective in the EU through mainstreaming it in cross-border cooperation initiatives is a minimal response. The introduction of explicit conflict amelioration cross-border programmes, in border regions exposed to live conflict or where tensions related to past conflict continue to simmer, is the optimal response. The post-2004 enlargement of the EU and the EU's active engagement with neighbouring states beyond the EU Pale, increased the number of real and potential border conflicts with which it has to contend. However, the case for dedicated EU Peace programmes for conflictual border regions, such as the EU Peace Programmes for Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland (1995–2013), is compromised by turbulence in the Eurozone, economic recession experienced by many member states, with the spectre of economic catastrophe looming over some, and calls for a reduction in the EU budget threatening long established key EU programmes like Erasmus (Osborn, 2012). Moreover, in the context of the EU and its neighbouring states, cross-border programmes run up against the Schengen security wall which frustrates mobility and, therefore, inter-cultural contact and communication.

Rhetorical dues will continue to be paid by the European Commission to the EU's role in ameliorating conflict in Europe, if only to help answer the question: 'What is the European Union for?' However, EU power asymmetries, the lack of internal consensus, economic turbulence and response to 'global threats' mean that the amelioration of border conflicts will remain a suboptimal concern.

The EU's fight for its own survival in economically turbulent times will likely centre on a German-led quest for the deeper integration of viable Eurozone states and the possible jettisoning of Eurosceptic states and failed Eurozone states. If this scenario comes to pass then the path of European integration may well shift from one of inter-state peace-building and regional cross-border cooperation after war, to border conflict and coercion in constituting and reconstituting state borders after the reconfiguration of the European Union.

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Notes

1. European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) represents an EU effort to counteract the re-bordering effect of post-2004 enlargement through cross-border initiatives with some 'neighbouring' states including, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. However, 'neighbourhood', as used here, includes neighbouring states that are not included in ENP, for example, Russia.
2. It is important to distinguish between state nationalism and state-seeking nationalism, imperial nationalism and anti-imperial nationalism. Too often the violence associated with nationalism is ascribed solely to the state-seekers and the anti-imperialists.
3. See the EU FP7 project EUBORDERREGIONS—European Regions, EU External Borders and the Immediate Neighbours. Analysing Regional Development Options through Policies and Practices of Cross-Border Cooperation at <http://www.euborderregions.eu>.
4. The Schengen border regime prioritises control of the Schengen Area's external border. Schengen rules involve strengthening external border controls with non-member states and eliminating internal border controls within the Schengen Area. Of all the EU member states only the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are not required to implement Schengen rules. Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania have yet to comply with Schengen rules while four non-EU member states—Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland—belong to the Schengen Area.
5. 'Emotion entrepreneurs' are commonly understood to be 'hot nationalists'. However, they can also spring from the 'banal nationalism' camp. As John Hutchinson explains, "banal nationalists will become 'hot' in defending national cultural distinctiveness, homeland integrity, economic power and political autonomy" (Hutchinson, 2005, p. 147).
6. <http://www.west-eastern-divan.org>; accessed 2 November 2012).
7. <http://www.theatreofwitness.org>; accessed 2 November 2012).
8. http://www.qub.ac.uk/cecpa/belfast_sarajevo_part1.html; accessed 2 November 2012).
9. *The Lemon Tree* portrays efforts made by a Palestinian woman to prevent her neighbour, the Israeli Defence Minister, from destroying her lemon grove for security reasons. She is observed tending to her grove by the minister's wife and a human bond develops between the two women.
10. 'Cross-border, cross-community' denotes projects that involve participants from both sides of the Irish border and from British unionist and Irish nationalist ethno-national communities on the island.
11. 'The EU Pale' is used here to denote an EU geopolitical entity in which security is increasingly emphasised, especially in terms of threats lying beyond it. 'Beyond the Pale' has historical significance. For example, the *Pale of Dublin* was created in the 14th century to protect an English settlement around the city from an increasingly assertive Irish population 'beyond the Pale'. The *Pale of Settlement* was an area to the west of Imperial Russia that was created for Jews by Catherine the Great in 1791. However, some Jews were permitted to live 'beyond the Pale'.
12. According to Mouffe: "If we want to acknowledge on the one side the permanence of the antagonistic dimension of the conflict, while on the other side allowing for the possibility of its 'taming', we need to envisage a third type of relation. This is the type of relation which I have proposed to call 'agonism'. While antagonism is a we/they relation in which the two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognise the legitimacy of their opponents. They are 'adversaries' not enemies. This means that, while in conflict, they see themselves as belonging to the same political association, as sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place. We could say that the task of democracy is to transform antagonism to agonism" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 20). Unlike conflict resolution, which aims for the taming of conflict, conflict amelioration, that is, making a conflict better, can accommodate the shift from antagonism to 'agonism'.

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