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**CONTENTION, COMPETITION AND CRIME:  
NEWSPAPERS' PORTRAYAL OF BORDERS IN THE  
NORTH-WEST OF IRELAND**

**Katy Hayward**

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## ABSTRACT

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### **CONTENTION, COMPETITION AND CRIME: NEWSPAPERS' PORTRAYAL OF BORDERS IN THE NORTH-WEST OF IRELAND**

This paper analyses three local newspapers in the Derry-Donnegal region for their presentation of cross-border issues in a two year period (2004-5). The border is portrayed in all three papers as a locus of political contention, competition for trade, and even of criminal activity. This paper highlights four important points for understanding the perception of partition in a border region. The first is the vast differences between the papers in the way they present the border and the "other side" of it. The second is that cross-border issues are rarely featured, and the work of north-south bodies is barely mentioned at all. The third point is that the EU is linked to virtually all stories of cross-border cooperation. Finally, local territorial divides appear to be far more important for identification of community and difference than the actual state border. Overall, the results of this brief study implies that increased cross-border mobility in and of itself does not necessarily give rise to a shared discourse around the border—and can indeed have contrary effects.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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**Katy Hayward** is IRCHSS Government of Ireland Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for British-Irish Studies, UCD. She has previously held fellowships at the Dublin European Institute, UCD, and at the Wales in a Regional Europe Centre, University of Wales in Aberystwyth. The research on which this paper was based was conducted whilst she was Research Fellow at the School of Politics and International Relations, Queen's University Belfast. This fellowship was part of the European Fifth Framework Programme's "EUBorderConf" project investigating the role of the EU in conflict transformation.

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## CONTENTION, COMPETITION AND CRIME: NEWSPAPERS' PORTRAYAL OF BORDERS IN THE NORTH-WEST OF IRELAND

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Katy Hayward

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### REPRESENTATIONS OF THE BORDER

The purpose of this paper is to examine representations of the border in certain examples of written media, concentrating in particular on representations of borders between and within Derry and Donegal as points of difference, the border as a locus of cooperation, and the EU's role in relation to the border. It is intended to provide an overview of the type of representations and themes that occur in the written media on this subject, rather than to compare systematically between regions, newspapers and time periods. The three papers analysed in this study are the *Londonderry Sentinel* (average net circulation per issue of over 5,000) based in the Waterside; the *Derry Journal* (bi-weekly, with an average net circulation per issue of around 23,000), based on the Cityside; and the *Donegal Democrat* (bi-weekly, with an average circulation per issue of around 15,000), which is part of the Derry Journal Group and the only newspaper to cover the whole county of Donegal.<sup>1</sup>

The "border" does not feature highly in any of the three newspapers analysed in this study. The different ways in which they address issues relating to it, however, reveals much about their assumptions regarding the interests of their target audience. The *Londonderry Sentinel*, for example, only mentions the "border" when referring to the state beyond it. This usually occurs less on grand political matters than on issues that are seen to have a local relevance, as in a call by the Institute of Public Health to "bring smoking ban north of the border" (7 April 2004). This call was supported a month later by two local Ulster Unionist councillors, whose comments reveal a matter-of-factness about crossing the border for leisure purposes.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, references to Donegal in the *Sentinel* are made almost exclusively in the context of leisure activity or tourism. For example, a feature of suggestions on how to spend the Easter break recommended "unspoilt Donegal" as "one of the most popular destinations for people from all over Ireland, including Londonderry" ("Unspoilt Donegal is a jewel", *Londonderry Sentinel*, 20 March 2002). Donegal is presented in the main to readers of the *Sentinel* as an attractive tourist destination that is conveniently close; the *Sentinel* makes no assumptions that its readers have ever crossed the border or have even thought about doing so.

The *Donegal Democrat* also confines its news coverage to its county boundaries and refers to the border only in stories which show it (or more specifically, the city

beyond it) as directly affecting the interests of Donegal residents. It is notable that references to cross-border activity frequently imply some kind of threat or competition from the other side. Regular examples of this occur in the field of trade, where Donegal businesses are "competing against slick multinationals...across the border [where they] can sell goods 25 per cent cheaper" ("Brisk trade despite stiff cross border competition", *Donegal Democrat*, 23 December 2004), and crime (for example, east Donegal is reported to be "in the grip of a crime wave which has struck fear into the community...believed to be the work of Derry 'hoods'", although the "Derry crime gang" is said to be operating out of a village on the Donegal side of the border) ("Moves to combat recurring cross border crime menace", *Donegal Democrat*, 25 August 2005).

These same two themes—trade and crime—also feature highly in references to the border in the news coverage of the *Derry Journal*, although the two papers would present the same story quite differently. For example, whilst the *Donegal Democrat* would portray Donegal traders holding their own against Derry's shopping centres ("Brisk trade despite stiff cross border competition", *Donegal Democrat*, 23 December 2004), the *Derry Journal* leaves readers in no doubt that the advantage in cross border trade lies in the city ("Double blow for Letterkenny traders", "Donegal traders suffer from Christmas exodus", *Derry Journal*, 9 December 2003 and 2 January 2004). The competition between Donegal and Derry extends to such a degree that even the smoking ban in workplaces in the Republic is reported in the *Journal* in terms of the rewards for pubs just across the border, to which smokers from Donegal were expected to retreat ("Trade 'blooms' for Derry's Three Flowers", *Derry Journal*, 6 January 2004). The ease of crossing the border has therefore put particular pressure on traders in Donegal, with the exception of the petrol stations, which benefit from "the thousands who cross the Border on a daily basis" for the cheaper petrol ("Donegal most expensive for petrol—again", *Derry Journal*, 6 January 2004).<sup>3</sup> The relaxing of security and the "opening of border back roads" are blamed in part too for problems in Donegal that both the *Democrat* and the *Journal* agree to have originated in Derry, such as joyriding and criminal gang sprees ("Joyriders racing Inishowen's roads", *Derry Journal*, 9 December 2003).

The *Derry Journal* also reports on the "terror" faced by residents of the Inishowen peninsula in east Donegal from the "Derry crime gang", including the shooting of a man on the border during an armed robbery on the border ("'Terror' crime gang behind border shooting", *Derry Journal*, 6 September 2005). It gives a slightly different twist to the story from that given by the *Democrat* in its coverage, however—revealing the ways in which complex blends of political tension that exist in Dublin and Belfast are translated into practical issues on the ground in the border region. A public meeting convened in Inishowen to discuss the crime wave was reported in advance by the *Donegal Democrat* (25 August 2005) but only the *Derry Journal* reported on the political row it provoked. A Sinn Féin Donegal County councillor

<sup>1</sup> www.abc.org.uk [2005-10-06] and www.medialive.ie/Press/Provincial/d\_democrat.html [2005-10-06].

<sup>2</sup> "We attended two functions in Donegal in the last week, it was a pleasure to sit across a table from friends and be able to see them without a haze of smoke" (*Londonderry Sentinel*, 5 May 2004).

<sup>3</sup> The fact that petrol has been cheaper in the Republic since the mid-1990s means that crossing the border from Northern Ireland to buy it has become customary. Anderson's (2005) study revealed that buying petrol is the main reason for people in the northern border region to cross the border into the south.

chaired the meeting and afterwards “called for the setting up of a local committee to gather information and inform Gardaí [Irish police force] on criminal activity in the area with the help from colleagues in the North” (“Republicans accused of ‘hijacking’ crime issue”, *Derry Journal*, 25 September 2005). The response from other local politicians (who boycotted the meeting) reported in the *Derry Journal* article indicates a concern that Sinn Féin “hijacked” the issue by setting itself up as an intermediary between locals and the Gardaí, bringing in a nebulous cross-border dimension, and having “heavy security” present at the meeting.<sup>4</sup> The concoction of local activism, proxy law enforcement, cross-border links, and do-it-yourself defence present in this one small event is seen as a hallmark of Sinn Féin activity across the island. Regardless of whether they regard it as somewhat clandestine, other political parties believe it to be a strategy that has brought Sinn Féin great success in the voting booths.<sup>5</sup>

## POLITICS AND PARTITION

### *A matter of anti-partitionist credentials*

The growth of Sinn Féin as a political party north and south is reflected in reportage relating to the border in both the *Donegal Democrat* and the *Derry Journal*. It is clear from the *Donegal Democrat* that partition—and support for cross-border activity—is a politically live issue in the southern border counties. It is perhaps no coincidence that such articles tend to emanate from comments made by Sinn Féin representatives that question the anti-partitionist credentials of their political opponents. Such remarks usually either follow or precede statements made from other politicians that question Sinn Féin’s commitment to democratic politics. For example, in response to a statement made by the Fine Gael leader that he was “fundamentally opposed” to giving Sinn Féin politicians from Northern Ireland speaking rights in Dáil Éireann (“Kenny to ask if there were deals with SF”, *Irish Times*, 8 August 2005), an article in the *Donegal Democrat* was devoted to a local Sinn Féin councillor’s accusations that Fine Gael is “partitionist in the extreme” (“Fine Gael guilty of ‘partitionist’ comments say Sinn Féin”, *Donegal Democrat*, 11 August 2005). The following week, a local Fine Gael councillor based his reply on the premise that Sinn Féin has not been able to distinguish “the proper meaning of Irish unity and the partition of Ireland” (“Sinn Féin and partition—Cllr. Harte responds”, *Donegal Democrat*, 18 August 2005). After presenting a contrary interpretation of the history of north-south relations, he concludes with the argument that the EU has made partition unimpor-

<sup>4</sup> Responding to criticism about the heavy security and the lack of Garda presence, the Sinn Féin councillor who chaired the meeting replied, “I would appeal to people to understand that we are dealing with dangerous criminals here, some of them armed with guns...we [Sinn Féin] felt that, as we organised the meeting, it was our responsibility to provide our own security”. (*Derry Journal*, 25 September 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Politicians also recognise that Sinn Féin’s electoral strength increases as the IRA makes what are seen as positive steps towards peace (“Sinn Féin will be a force in next election—James McDauid, TD”, *Donegal Democrat*, 2 August 2005).

tant in practice and that the responsibility of seeing it end altogether lies not with Britain but with Ireland’s politicians:

The division of Ireland has now little meaning within the European Union and will totally disappear when together the Irish build an Ireland which all those who live on the island wish to be part of.

Efforts towards building such an Ireland through cross-border cooperation are also fraught with political sensitivity among Irish political parties. Thus, the absence of some Donegal county councillors from a meeting of the North West Region Cross Border Group (otherwise virtually unmentioned in the newspapers) was publicised by a Sinn Féin councillor in the *Donegal Democrat*: “we have now seen how serious [six Donegal NWRCBG] members are in participating in cross-border development” (“Councillors ‘cross’ after border meeting”, *Donegal Democrat*, 17 March 2005). Although this Sinn Féin councillor is not a member of the NWRCBG himself, he says it was drawn to his attention “by fellow Sinn Féin councillors attending from north of the border”. One of the accused Donegal councillors retorted that Sinn Féin were “simply trying to divert attention from other things happening at the moment”.<sup>6</sup> This is a good indicator of how cross-border cooperation, even in a carefully structured and balanced political forum such as the NWRCBG, can become a political instrument in reaction to (depending on whom one listens to) Sinn Féin’s growing electoral might or Sinn Féin’s paramilitary shadow.

### *A matter of regional development*

The *Derry Journal* embodies a different take on the link between politics and partition, originating in part from the emphasis laid by the two largest political parties in Derry on cross-border cooperation. Indeed, the SDLP is more likely to be found echoing than deflecting Sinn Féin’s criticisms of southern political parties’ lackadaisical approach to partition. For example, the SDLP will use the *Derry Journal* as one means by which to publicise its frustration at the lack of progress in “Strand Two” (north-south cooperation) of the 1998 agreement (“SDLP in plea over cross-border cooperation”, *Derry Journal*, 17 February 2004). Undoubtedly another dimension of the accord between the SDLP and Sinn Féin in Derry regarding cross-border cooperation is the fact that, they see a particular need for cross-border cooperation if the north-west region is to be developed (“Direct rule a ‘total failure’ for NW economy — Hume”, *Derry Journal*, 30 November 2004). Both parties are equally concerned for the various strands of the 1998 agreement to be working effectively and to be bearing fruit in the form of sustainable progress. More particularly, both the SDLP and Sinn Féin also believe that the British and Irish governments have failed to adequately build on the potential for regional development offered through the European Union (“NW ignored for far too long”, *Derry Journal*, 7 December 2004; “SDLP in plea over cross border cooperation”, *Derry Journal*, 17 February 2004). The rea-

<sup>6</sup> Sinn Féin was at the time under huge political pressure from all quarters following the robbery of the Northern Bank and the murder of Robert McCartney by members of the IRA. Indeed, this St Patrick’s Day was the first in over a decade that Sinn Féin’s leading politicians had not been invited to the White House.

son cross-border cooperation is a point of political unity between the SDLP and Sinn Féin in Derry city is substantially because of the relevance that the border—and cooperation across it—is seen as having to everyday practice and political progress in the city. This is illustrated in the amount of references made to the border (directly and indirectly) in the *Derry Journal* in comparison to either the *Londonderry Sentinel* or the *Donegal Democrat*. The *Journal* frequently covers cross-border issues with a wide scope of relevance, including infrastructural development (for example, “Derry-Dublin rail link on the agenda”, *Derry Journal*, 30 April 2004), local councils (for example, “Waste becoming a border issue”, *Derry Journal*, 13 January 2004), those working and living on different sides of the border (for example, “Taxman hits Inishowen bank accounts”, *Derry Journal*, 28 May 2004), and cross-border travellers (for example, “Speed warning to Derry-Downpatrick drivers”, *Derry Journal*, 8 March 2005). This results in a situation in which politics in Donegal and politics in the Republic when directly related to northern concerns are regularly reported in the *Derry Journal*.<sup>7</sup>

### A matter of inter-state protocol

Whereas the *Derry Journal's* contents are notably affected by the border, one may speculate that (with the exception of a regular advertisement for a furniture shop across the border!) the *Londonderry Sentinel* would be little different if it was based ten times further from Donegal. The only time when the *Sentinel* engages with politics in the south is when they are brought to the doorstep of unionism in Londonderry. This has been done more than once by the Irish President, Mary McAleese, in the form of her visits to community groups in Protestant estates in the city. These community groups were encouraged in their symbolically significant gesture by the *Sentinel*; its front page headline at the time of her first visit read: “McAleese welcome! Mayor and Development Group back visit of Republic's President to Waterside” (10 April 2002). Political reaction to this first visit was mixed but generally one of cautious welcome of this move to greater mutual awareness. A local DUP politician involved in the development of the community centre hosting the event mused that:

A few years ago this visit would have caused a problem but I think that the people of this area are mature enough to realise that there is nothing political about this visit. The head of another country is coming to view this positive and worthwhile project and will hopefully take away what she has seen (William Hay, MLA, in “Mary McAleese to visit Tullyally”, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 3 April 2002)

One issue of contention was raised by a DUP MP, Gregory Campbell, who said he would not oppose McAleese's visit on the proviso that she came under the title of “President of the Republic of Ireland”, as opposed to her official title as “President of

<sup>7</sup> For example, issues raised in local elections in Donegal (for example, “TDs [Irish MPs] must speak up on NWHB [North Western Health Board] scrapping”, 23 April 2004) and a visit by the Taoiseach to east Donegal are reported (“Bertie's flying visit to Buncrana”, 5 March 2004), and an editorial criticises comments made by the Irish Minister for Justice on Sinn Féin (“Free speech”, 18 January 2005).

Ireland” with its implicit 32-county reference. (“Campbell's cautious welcome for McAleese”, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 3 April 2002) This was apparently not adhered to to Campbell's satisfaction, and he afterwards called for more “openness and transparency before any future visits by a Head of State from another country takes place”:

It is a matter for the people of the Irish Republic to choose what the title should be but as they would not be impressed if the Queen were to be officially called the Queen of Britain and Ireland, so they must understand that we do not accept their President's title inferring that she is the Head of State here when she is not. *Those in the Republic of Ireland genuinely interested in having a more open approach to Northern Ireland will I hope have these matters raised and resolved in the immediate future.* (“Campbell calls for answers after McAleese visit. MLA says there must be greater adherence to protocol”, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 17 April 2002)

Opposition to the April 2002 visit—which led to community workers involved being warned they could be a “target of terrorists” (“Development worker talks about threats over Mary McAleese visit”, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 17 April 2002)—centred on suspicion of the state McAleese represented and also drew comparison with the only head of state recognised by unionists:

She is not welcome here. She is the head of a state which has traditionally supported republicanism and which still has questions to answer about the level of that support, including supplying arms to the IRA... Her Majesty has not been able to go to the city, so the head of state from the Republic is not wanted here. Send her home.

Whilst McAleese did visit Protestant enclaves in the city—and has often welcomed community workers from such areas to Áras an Uachtaráin—these visits were not the source of news coverage and political debate to the same degree as the first. Nonetheless, the interest and issues raised among unionists by the event serve to illustrate just quite how “foreign” the Irish state is even to unionists just across the border, and just quite how sensitive Irish politicians need to be if they are to build lasting good relationships (or even impressions) on the foundation of such courageous initiatives as the cross-border, cross-community presidential visit to Derry.

### 3. BORDERS WITHIN DERRY

The tight relationship between community and territory in Derry city is clearly reflected in the conceptual “map” of the target audiences of the *Londonderry Sentinel* and the *Derry Journal*. The *Sentinel* is for the most part concerned with events on the Waterside, where the majority of unionists live in the city. This is embodied in the fact that the picture used to illustrate an advertisement for the *Sentinel* in a supplement on local newspapers in Northern Ireland is the silhouetted outline of the Waterside from the banks of the River Foyle.<sup>8</sup> The exception to this focus on the

<sup>8</sup> This image includes the outline of the British army watchtower at the Clooney barracks on the Waterside dismantled in March 2004.

Waterside is the inclusion of the Fountain (the most prominent surviving Protestant district on the Cityside); in fact, the amount of attention given to the Fountain is disproportionate in terms of its size but indicates the significance of this enclave on the Cityside to the unionist population in the city. It is notable that a vast amount of news articles on the Fountain in the *Sentinel* are concerned with issues of security, and more specifically with the sense of ever-present threat to what is described as "the beleaguered estate" ("Fountain attack after Old Firm final", *Londonderry Sentinel*, 8 May 2002). Thus, although the Protestant population constitutes the majority on the Waterside, the sense of threat and "siege-like mentality" that they themselves refer to is continually stoked by coverage given to the fate of the few hundred residents of the Fountain. For example, "Fountain support from North Belfast" (*Londonderry Sentinel*, 9 June 2004). This is exemplified in the *Sentinel's* (5 May 2004) banner front page headline—"Cease this fear"—over an article in which the local DUP Assembly member calls for an end to "tit-for-tat attacks" between the Fountain and the parallel Bishop Street.

The *Derry Journal* also gives disproportionate coverage to the Fountain/Bishop Street area, although with an emphasis on the experience of residents on the Catholic-dominated side of this division. It is interesting to compare the coverage of incidents of interface violence by the two newspapers in the city. There are three points of significant commonality. First, the victims of these attacks are vulnerable. On the Fountain side, reports in the *Sentinel* tend to focus on young victims ("Attack leaves child terrified", *Londonderry Sentinel*, 5 May 2004). Reports in the *Journal* highlight such victims as residents of a nursing home in Bishop Street ("Elderly 'terrified' because of stone-throwing attack", *Derry Journal*, 31 May 2005) or a Catholic male nurse fleeing what is described as "Fountain 'Terrorfest'" ("Catholic nurse flees Fountain 'Terrorfest'", *Derry Journal*, 16 July 2004).

Second, these attacks are not seen to be random acts by bored teenagers, but there is often the suggestion that they are in some way coordinated by hidden political forces with sinister motives. For example, a spokesperson for Fountain residents refers to "the republicans who are orchestrating these attacks on them" ("Fountain support from North Belfast", *Londonderry Sentinel*, 9 June 2004) and a Sinn Féin councillor expresses his suspicion that an incidents was "the start of a campaign to raise tensions in the area leading up to the marching season" ("Elderly 'terrified' because of stone-throwing attack", *Derry Journal*, 31 May 2005).

Finally, and no doubt connected to the previous point, many of the reports consist substantially of comments from local politicians speaking about these events (for example, two headlines from the *Sentinel* on the subject: "PUP concern at interface violence", 11 April 2002, and "Campbell calls for an end to bus attacks", 8 May 2002). In the *Sentinel*, the comments of local DUP Assembly member Willie Hay and DUP MP Gregory Campbell (who is from the area but not an MP for the city) are often given such priority as to form the basis of whole articles and even front page headlines. Although it cites Sinn Féin politicians most frequently, the *Journal* certainly contains a wider spread of political interviewees. For instance, it often contains statements from Willie Hay of the DUP and even from the Ulster Political Research Group, and covers attacks on the Fountain and other Protestant estates as

well as from them—a concern of local residents on the Cityside being that the young people involved in interface violence are also responsible for intimidating vulnerable residents in their own area ("It's a living nightmare"—says tormented resident", *Derry Journal*, 30 August 2005).

## THE REPRESENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

In the *Donegal Democrat*, reference to the European Union is by and large confined to comment on EU funding, most particularly the PEACE programme, which draws together the border counties with Northern Ireland to address the need for reconciliation. Indeed, it is significant that virtually all the reference to cross-border activity that has a positive theme in the *Donegal Democrat* is in relation to EU programmes. This ranges from such diverse activities as a visit to the Irish President by community workers from the border counties on a course funded by PEACE II ("Border peace builders welcomed to Áras an Uachtaráin", *Donegal Democrat*, 19 April 2005), a cross-border farmer's market funded by LEADER ("New cross border farmers' market for Letterkenny", *Donegal Democrat*, 21 April 2005), or plans for a natural gas pipeline between Derry and Letterkenny supported by INTERREG IIIA funds ("Gas pipe for North West set to be shelved", *Donegal Democrat*, 2 June 2005). Yet, even whilst welcoming this funding, the assertion that the source of the problem lies across the border is articulated by the local MEP, Senator Jim Higgins: "the hope is that the Programme will reverse the negative effects that 25 years of *Northern troubles* have had on the border areas" ("Donegal to benefit from new Peace funding", *Donegal Democrat*, 18 January 2005 (emphasis added)).

### The euro

It is notable that on the rare occasions that the European Union is mentioned in the *Londonderry Sentinel*, it is essentially either in relation to cross-border subjects or to European Parliament elections. The main instances of the former include announcements on PEACE funding and a brief mention of the impact of the euro changeover across the border.<sup>9</sup> The *Sentinel* reported that the business community in the city saw the introduction of the euro as an opportunity with the "potential to increase trade and business to the region". Indeed, to ensure the city could "adapt and trade in euro in order to gain more business from Donegal", euro information seminars were run in the city in the months leading up to the changeover ("City gets ready for euro", *Londonderry Sentinel*, 2 January 2002). This changeover was particularly complex for businesses in the city who chose to accept the euro, just as many had accepted the punt, as they had to deal for some time in pound sterling, euro and punt. It appears that "euro friendly" business is supported by politicians of all persuasions in Derry, as seen in the quotations from SDLP MP and MEP John

<sup>9</sup> For example, an announcement on the revised closing date of applications to the PEACE fund due to the "unprecedented interest in Measure 5.3 Developing Cross-Border Reconciliation and Understanding" (27 March 2002).

Hume in the *Sentinel* and from DUP MLA Willie Hay in the *Journal*.<sup>10</sup> Where the euro does become a divisive issue, however, is on the argument for a single currency across the island—an issue raised by Sinn Féin during the campaign for the European Parliament elections, claiming that to continue with two separate currencies would “exacerbate economic differences” between north and south (“All-Island currency would benefit border region”, *Derry Journal*, 25 May 2004).

### **The European Parliament**

This leads to the second issue on which the European Union is discussed in local newspapers: elections to the European Parliament. As noted above, the *Londonderry Sentinel* does not shy away from publishing articles based solely on the comments of DUP politicians. Yet, although the DUP's Jim Allister certainly gained the most publicity, the *Sentinel's* coverage of the European elections was notable for its inclusion of all other candidates, most particularly those with a local connection. Thus, the SDLP candidate Martin Morgan (who gained special attention as John Hume's nominated heir), independent John Gilliland (a farmer from County Londonderry), and even socialist Eamonn McCann were fairly frequently reported on in the *Sentinel* in the weeks leading up to the June elections. A key theme in the *Sentinel's* coverage of the election campaigns was the DUP's ambition to stop Sinn Féin getting the most votes in the election. Indeed, of the three key issues of the DUP's campaign, only one was “important European issues”, the other two being “facing the new Sinn Féin challenge to top the European poll” and “giving extra leverage to Unionists to gain an advantage in the political talks” (“SF must not top European poll”—DUP candidate”, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 5 May 2004).

Second to this theme was the question of what the north-west had to gain from the election. The responses to a “vox pop” conducted by the *Sentinel* with each of the candidates were revealing (“Why should the people of the north west vote for you?”, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 2 June 2004). Jim Allister's response was fairly predictable given the mantra of his campaign: “The unionist community in the North West will do their bit to make sure Sinn Fein does not top this poll and the only party that can see Sinn Fein (sic) off is the DUP”. In seeking to avoid this polarised political debate, the aims of other candidates were non-parochial to the extreme. Stated objectives from the election included, “ending the illegal war in Iraq” (McCann, Socialist Environmental Alliance), “to combat child pornography on the Internet and protect children and families” (Gilliland), and, from the SDLP, “to put money in your pockets, food on your table, and provide for a better shape of life all round... in voting for Martin Morgan, you are voting for peace, both here in Northern Ireland and across the world”. The only thing seemingly absent from their list of what the EU could offer the north west was “apple pie”. Those candidates who sought to be more specific about needs they thought the EU could meet in the area tended to emphasise the

<sup>10</sup> Hume said he was confident that, “the euro will become a familiar and welcome currency in the city” (“City gets ready for euro”, *Londonderry Sentinel*, 2 January 2002). Hay is quoted as saying, “Over 25% of passengers using the airport are from Donegal or another euro-currency zone, therefore it is important that their requirements are taken on board” (“Airport car park goes euro”, *Derry Journal*, 3 February 2004).

EU's economic capacity. Whilst the UUP's Nicholson argued that “the North West needs more EU funding...that will encourage SMEs to mushroom and stimulate the local community”, the Green party and Sinn Féin emphasised the potential of the EU to facilitate better cross-border links. Thus, the former sought “the restoration of links between Sligo, Leitrim, Enniskillen, Derry and Letterkenny” and Bairbre de Brún promised to lobby for “the enhancement of all Ireland development, with specific emphasis on the North West Region including Derry and Donegal”.

The *Derry Journal's* coverage of the European Parliament elections concentrated mostly on the candidates from the SDLP and Sinn Féin. This resulted in a number of articles during the campaign featuring arguments for the EU's ability to improve cross-border relations in Ireland (“An Ireland of Equals in a Europe of Equals”, *Derry Journal*, 4 June 2004; “All-island currency would benefit border region”, *Derry Journal*, 25 May 2004). The *Journal's* editorial prior to the election considered the question, “what does Europe mean to us?”. The answer put forward was expressly influenced by the message consistently advocated by John Hume as MEP for the region for 25 years: “European Union membership is not... simply about grants. It can and should be about seizing the opportunities offered by membership of a ‘great family of nations and peoples’” (“What does Europe mean to us?”, *Derry Journal*, 8 June 2004).

The potential of the EU to affect the context of daily experience in a border region was highlighted six months later in the *Journal's* reporting of comments by two politicians on either side of the border on the subject of mobile phone “roaming” in the area. Fine Gael MEP for Ireland's north-west, Senator Jim Higgins, welcomed the investigation by the European Commission into fees for “roaming” with mobile phones, which can be prohibitive for individuals regularly travelling out of their home jurisdiction (“EU probe in ‘Rip-off’ roaming phone charges”, *Derry Journal*, 17 December 2004). SDLP MLA Pat Ramsey also hailed this move by the EU, noting that people in border areas such as those on the outskirts of Derry “can find that they are subjected to huge roaming charges just by moving from one room to another in their own house” (quotations from “Stop ‘Welcome to Ireland’ messages—Pat Ramsey”, *Derry Journal*, 17 December 2004). He called for the imposition of a single all-Ireland tariff and for the simultaneous ending of the “Welcome to Ireland” messages sent by the phone company as individuals cross the border:

Like many others living in the north of Ireland whose identity is Irish, I resent being treated as a foreign visitor by multinational phone companies. For those of us who may cross the border several times in a day, this is a great irritant which is completely unnecessary. This gimmick shows little sensitivity towards many customers who live in the north of Ireland. We never left Ireland.

### **THE PORTRAYAL OF BORDERS: CONCLUSIONS**

This brief study of these three local newspapers highlights four important points for understanding the perception of partition in a border region. The first is the vast differences between the papers in the way they present the border and the “other side” of it. It is startling how Northern Ireland is only seen as relevant to Donegal resi-

dents when issues cross the border (albeit in such various forms as political debate or crime waves), how Ireland is presented very much as a foreign country to unionists in Derry city, and how nationalists in the same city only register the border as a significant divide in terms of practical differences (such as speed limits and smoking bans). The second is that north-south bodies simply do not feature in any of the papers, and the local cross-border corridor group (the North West Region Cross Border Group) is only mentioned as part of an attempt by Sinn Féin to score political points. The third point is that the EU is given credit for increased cross-border funding, however this merely seems to increase the propensity for politicians to play fast and loose with promises of EU money and with people's ignorance of the actual capacity of the European Parliament. Finally, local territorial divides appear to be far more important for identification of community and difference than the state border.

### **REFERENCES**

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