INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

This project is funded by the International Fund for Ireland and is managed by the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC) under the Integrating Community Organisations Programme.

The *Age Knows No Borders* Project

A community research project devised and delivered by Joanne Cunningham with the Belleek and District Community Partnership

Analysis of the findings from the *Age Knows No Borders* Project

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October 2011

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Age Knows No Borders Project

The *Age Knows No Borders* project aimed to develop cross-border ties and knowledge by introducing people living in villages in close proximity with little social interaction in a border area and by offering the opportunity for people from different generations in these villages to learn more about "local" and "national" histories through talks and guided visits.

The project was spearheaded and designed by Belleek and District Community Partnership (BDCP) with funding from the International Fund for Ireland (IFI) administered by the Rural Development Council (RDC).

The *Age Knows No Borders* project culminated with a conference held on 22.10.2010 at the Sandhouse Hotel, Rossnowlagh. In all, 56 people of all ages from the communities of Belleek, Kesh and Ballyshannon attended this event and gave their views about, and experiences of, the border.

Data about these views were gathered at this event by BDCP. Sociologists from the University of Ulster were asked to analyse and present theses views at a subsequent community conference held in Belleek on 7.7.11, in a summary report (July 2011) and in this final report. They were tasked with responding to the following questions:
- What were the perspectives on the Border across the generations?
- Why are they like this?

In initial discussions with BDCP, Michael and Rachel noted that it is difficult to answer "why" questions, particularly as this question was not asked of the conference participants. Further, longer-term research would be needed to draw "causes" out.

This final report therefore presents the perspectives and goes some way to addressing the "why" query by:
- commenting on the association between participants' age groups and their responses, and
- referring to previous findings in the general and specific social science literature.

Whilst the researchers were not asked specifically to make recommendations for policy and practice, it is hoped that BDCP and the wider community of organizations working in this area will draw useful information and perspectives from this report.

The Research Process

Data collection

Information about participants' views of the border was collected by BDCP facilitators from 3 separate groups, one for older people, one for middle-aged people and one for younger participants. This data was amassed in various creative ways:

- Participants were asked about **the names they give to the areas North and South of the border**. They were asked to write these on to outline maps of the island of Ireland. They were also asked to **draw the border** on similar maps.
- The facilitators also asked the questions **what's good and bad about the border?** Participants were asked to write the answers to these on "post-it" notes.
- Sheets were provided so that people could fill in what word and associated idea they thought of in connection with the letters **T-H-E B-O-R-D-E-R.**
- Sheets of further questions were also provided asking people to fill them in according to their reflections on the border.

The participants

People who gave their views on the border at the Rossnowlagh conference consisted of those who chose to respond to an invitation to participate, many of whom had participated in the earlier phase of the project. We cannot consider the grouping as "unprimed" (many had reflected on the issues as a result of attending the trips and talks) nor to be a statistically representative sample. Nonetheless, a profile of participants can help us to understand how far the research findings are likely to be a reliable guide to the range of opinion and experience in the area.

Social and political profile data was collected from participants using a proforma which ensured anonymity and is standard practice at such events. This data was not connectable with the information collected about participants' views of the border. The overall profile of participants was as follows[1]:

AGE	18 and under	18	19 to 59	15[2]	60 and over	22				
GENDER	Female	43	Male	13						
HOME VILLAGE	Ballyshannon	22	Belleek	20	Kesh	14				
GIVEN RELIGION	Catholic	40	Protestant	11	Other	1	None	4		
GIVEN POLITICAL PREFERENCE	Loyalist	1	Nationalist	19	Republican	5	Unionist	5	Other	26
GIVEN NATIONALITY	British	8	Irish	34	Northern Irish	11	Other	2		

This indicates that, overall, there was quite an even balance amongst respondents across the age range and villages. However, females predominate over males and Catholics over those of other religions.

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[1] Tables order categories in numerical or alphabetical order (except where "none" or "other" occur).
[2] Of which 3 were 19-29, 5 were 30-45 and 7 were 46-59

It is more problematic to comment on balance according to political party preference or nationality. The data collection method did not collect data on RoI political party preferences (this explains a high "other" response). The "nationality" category is also problematic given that some respondents may have answered according to passport held. There are different and changing rules about which passport can be held according to place of birth. In addition, there are no "Northern Irish" passports. On the other hand, some respondents may have answered the "nationality" question according to self-perception of identity.

Breaking socio-political data down further for each age group, we can see that the profile of participants for the older age group (60 and over) was:

GENDER	Female	12	Male	6				
HOME VILLAGE	Ballyshannon	7	Belleek	7	Kesh	8		
GIVEN RELIGION	Catholic	12	Protestant	9	Other	1	None	1
GIVEN POLITICAL PREFERENCE	Loyalist	1	Nationalist	6	Republican	2	Unionist	5	Other	8
GIVEN NATIONALITY	British	6	Irish	12	Northern Irish	3	Other	1

Note that this is the most "balanced group" in terms of socio-political criteria.

For the middle-aged group the breakdown was:

GENDER	Female	14	Male	1				
HOME VILLAGE	Ballyshannon	7	Belleek	6	Kesh	2		
GIVEN RELIGION	Catholic	12	Protestant	2	Other	0	None	1
GIVEN POLITICAL PREFERENCE	Loyalist	0	Nationalist	7	Republican	1	Unionist	0	Other	7
GIVEN NATIONALITY	British	2	Irish	10	Northern Irish	3	Other	0

Bear in mind that this group is skewed with women and Catholics in the majority.

For the younger group the profile was:

GENDER	Female	15	Male	4				
HOME VILLAGE	Ballyshannon	8	Belleek	7	Kesh	4		
GIVEN RELIGION	Catholic	16	Protestant	0	Other	1	None	2
GIVEN POLITICAL PREFERENCE	Loyalist	0	Nationalist	6	Republican	2	Unionist	0	Other	11
GIVEN NATIONALITY	British	1	Irish	12	Northern Irish	5	Other	1

Note that young women are in the majority in the group and there were no Protestant participants.

From data collection to analysis

The data collection approach enabled the comparison of overall views across the age ranges, the main concern of this project. However, as mentioned above, it was not possible to associate views with other socio-political criteria. This placed a constraint on wider possibilities for analysis. However, it probably had the advantage of avoiding the use of individual lengthy questionnaires which often result in low response rates or partial responses, amongst other problems (Bryman 2010). The variety of approaches used would have stimulated participation and encouraged reflection.

Additional data

Ten short interviews were carried out by researcher Bryonie Reid as part of this project. Data from these is also drawn upon in this report. Participants' feedback on the day was also gathered, making using of an anonymous standard questionnaire. This is also commented on here.

Data analysis

Volunteers from the community groups input much of the data into electronic format whilst the interviews were professionally transcribed at the University. Rachel further entered this data into two software packages, SPSS (for quantitative analysis) and NVivo (for qualitative analysis), as appropriate. Rachel analysed this, making use of thematic analysis and descriptive statistical techniques. At the same time, Michael worked on the academic literature, considering social science material which relates to the issues in the project.

Ethical matters

Ethical questions in relation to data collection were managed by Belleek and District Community Partnership. All responses were anonymous and treated as confidential. As Rachel and Michael were making use of "secondary data" (data they had not collected themselves) the University ethics committee agreed that the data analysis project could go ahead without requiring a full ethical review by the University.

The Border

Introduction

The border on the island of Ireland remains one of the contested legacies of 20th century history in Europe, albeit in a 'benign' form at present (Coakley and O'Dowd, 2007). The border was originally established under the Government of Ireland Act of 1920. This gave devolved powers within the United Kingdom to the North-eastern six counties of Ireland, later becoming Northern Ireland. With the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, the other 26 counties were granted limited independence within the Commonwealth, later becoming the fully independent Republic of Ireland (Todd et al, 2005: 4). The legitimacy of these arrangements has been contested in various ways at various times and is an important source of ethnonational conflict. Donnan (2010: 254) contends that, in the North, "for the Catholic Irish nationalist and republican minority [...created by partition...] the border was not just an unwelcome obstacle to island unity but also a politically unacceptable and morally unjustifiable continuation of British involvement in Ireland". Whereas, for the unionist, pro-British Protestant majority, this demarcated a region which "guaranteed their economy, polity, religion and culture", to be defended from the territorial claims of the Republic to the island as a whole

(Donnan *ibid*). Initially, the establishment of the border, in spite of Catholic/Irish resistance and Protestant support, became an 'acceptable' feature of life on the island with two entities largely developing their own separate institutions (Todd et al, 2005). These attitudes have been changing and reflect wider socio-economic-political changes on the island, especially since the ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement in the early and late 1990s respectively (Coakley and O'Dowd, 2007).

The Irish Border reflects partition and influences politics but also affects daily life of those who dwell there (Rankin, 2005: 1). Nash and Reid (2010) describe some of the impacts. The 1923 customs barrier separated Northern Ireland and the Irish Free State in financial terms and this was when the border became significant both in symbolic and practical terms. The imposition of customs' duties brought necessitated a system of control over the movement of people and goods between the jurisdictions, involving 15 designated crossing places of the hundreds that existed (those crossing on foot could still use these) and accompanying inspection posts, regulations (including approved daytime crossing hours) and paperwork. This impacted daily life. The border also contributed to the demise of some all-island transport links (especially rail). After 1925, the movement of motor vehicles was regulated, presenting encumbrances. This customs' system lasted for 60 years and, perhaps unsurprisingly, cross-border smuggling became endemic (Nash and Reid 2010: 271-2).

Until the early 1970s, most existing cross-border routes were motorable even if not approved for traffic. As The Troubles flared up, however, the British army systematically rendered these impassable and army and police checkpoints were installed within Northern Ireland near the remaining designated crossing places. As Nash and Reid note:

> Road closures meant much longer journeys for many people and army checkpoints often led to long and unpredictable delays. Anxiety, frustration and sometimes anger experienced in encountering heavily armed soldiers at checkpoints, and fear of being caught up in an attack on an army checkpoint or patrols or of being ambushed by an IRA unit were for many people part of the experience of crossing the border during the Troubles (Nash and Reid 2010: 273).

The border and Belleek, Kesh and Ballyshannon

The interviews indicated how these factors played out in the Belleek, Kesh, Pettigoe, Rossnowlagh and Ballyshannon areas (see Map 1).

Initially, the local customs posts were constructed at Belleek and Pettigoe. People interviewed described the regulations and how they attempted to outwit the imposition of customs duties on small amounts of retail goods purchased:

"There used to be a customs post in Pettigoe, one on the Northern side and one on the Southern side [...] I think maybe they both closed about eight o'clock in the evening. But then [...] if you had a car and you crossed the border [...] and

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> you wanted to come back, say at twelve o'clock at night or two o'clock in the morning, you had to [...] make a request and pay, I think maybe a shilling or two shilling."
>
> [Senior citizen who used to cross regularly, speaking of the 1960s]

> "One of me first memoires of the border would be me going over with me granny and me parents and we would have been smuggling [...] We used to pull in on the way back from Enniskillen intil a wee, like, a picnic area, I don't think it's there any more. And whatever me mother had bought, like clothes seemed to be a big thing with them, and always put up under granny's jacket and up round her skirt [...] there was pins 'n' all brought with us. And then because she was an old lady so granny wouldn't be disturbed but we had all us new clothes and they would have been pinned round her. And then there would have been, butter is one thing I remember that would've been brought over. And that would've been my earliest memories of it. And I never felt afraid of it or anything at that [time]."
>
> [Interviewee speaking of growing up in the 1950s]

> "The border as an obstacle [is one way of thinking about it...]. You know, coming over and having to hide, you know, whatever it was that you were bringing over the border [*laughs*],or whatever, was always, you know, "hide that, and don't let that be seen!" you know. And that would have even infiltrated into even when we were packing the car, nearly, you know, "Pack the car round the back! Don't let anybody see!" [*laughs*]"
>
> [Interviewee speaking of a childhood during The Troubles]

One man interviewed described his early experience of the differences between the British and Irish customs posts.

> "If you had something that was, maybe a quarter pound of tea, that was lifted [at the southern post]. Whereas, for whatever reason, the British customs [...] if it wasn't too big, they used a bit of discretion. And of course one of the reasons [for this was...], one of them in particular said there was too many forms to fill in! [*laughs...*] He had to fill them in right or his job was gone. He'd rather not have to fill in any at all, but for the bigger stuff [he did]."

Over time, according to this interviewee, the personnel at the southern posts became integrated into society, so that the values of "helping the ordinary person" sometimes trumped the bureaucratic rules:

> "You felt they [the southern customs] were too authoritarian, they would probably get the, what was it, the "Gold Cap" award for it [*laughs*....] Their attitude didn't seem to be very pleasant. But I'd have to say the last, perhaps twenty years of the customs on the Republic side they got in a whole new lot of younger lads and they were a wee bit more, much more friendly. [...] If you were coming home over the border at after twelve o'clock at night you had to get a request put in. And some of these younger guys, customs guys, when they got to know you and you would say "I'm coming home, back home, at one o'clock, you have to get this form filled in". And he would fill it in, and to a few of us who got to know him, he would say "you wouldn't mind putting down two o'clock on that?", and to someone else "three", and someone else "four" [...Because] he was paid an hour for every request. But if he had four requests for three o'clock in the morning he had to come there at three and was just paid for one hour. [...] That would have been unheard of for the older guys to ask you to do something like that. So there was great respect."

Clearly, the customs procedures were an encumbrance and might require energy to be invested in negotiation and developing links of friendship with officers. However, crossing under these circumstances was not described as fearful. Indeed, one story relates a particularly good experience:

Map 1: Sketch map of the Belleek, Kesh, Ballyshannon, Rossnowlagh, Pettigoe and Enniskillen areas drawing on public domain maps available at www.ulsterheritage.com
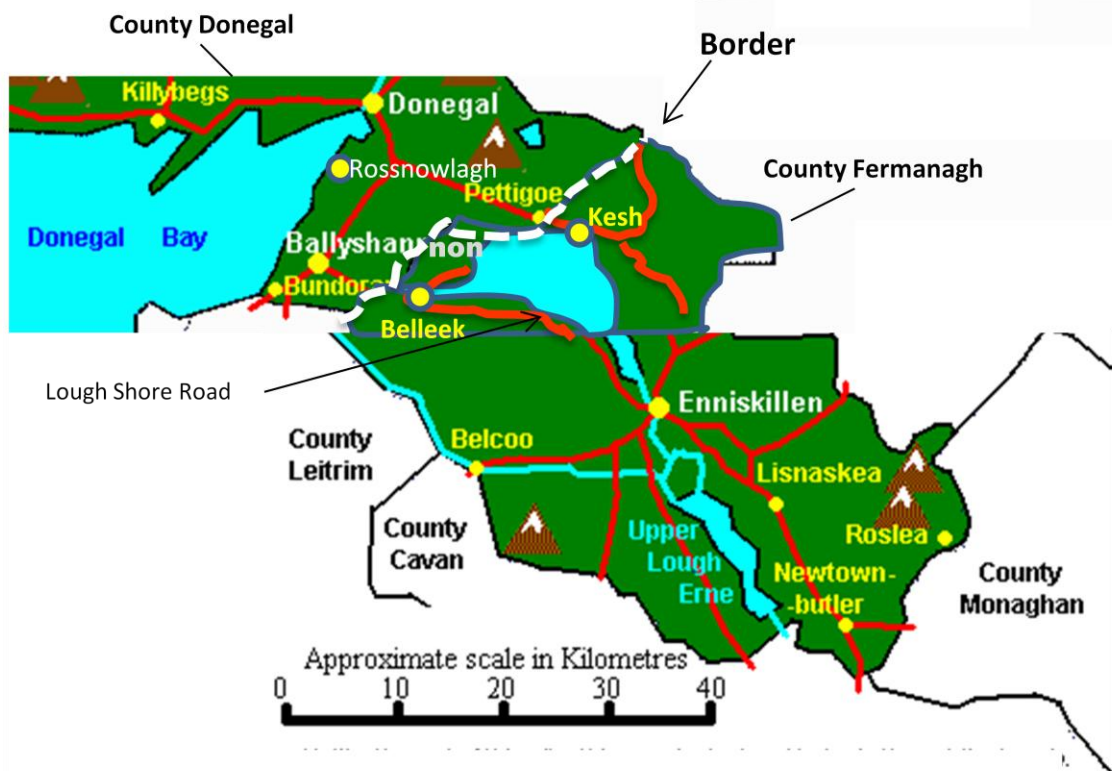
"The one that I would have gone over as a child would have been Pettigoe. And I suppose we never really had a problem with it because it was more a customs sort of a checkpoint rather than an army checkpoint. And the other one, at, um [south side] I remember actually coming back, the Castlefin one, and my brother and I, you know, must have been pretty young, you know, teenagers or early twenties, and we were both coming [...] home for Christmas, and we were both hitching up that way. And we met the boys at the border, and they give us a cup of tea and a piece of cake 'n' all, 'cos we hadn't got a lift, d'you know, and that was a lovely, sort of, Christmas gesture."

Things seemed to have changed at the customs post with the advent of the Troubles. One interviewee said:

" [The Troubles] would have scared me. And I remember when I learned to drive and I would've went over to Belleek [...] and I remember me car being taken in one side and I was with one of me older children and everything just being taken out of it, you know [...] now that really scared me because I didn't have anything.[...] And I remember me son then in later years coming across at Belleek, the customs, and it would have been the police pulled him [...] and everything was taken off his car, the whole boards on the side of the doors 'n' all. And that terrified him now. He never really went back much after that until things settled down."

Later on, there were army checkpoints on the Lough Shore road (between Enniskillen and Belleek) and outside Kesh. There was also a garda checkpoint over the border on the route from Belleek to Ballyshannon which could call on local army support.

Some people who had lived through this time and had crossed the checkpoints recounted that these were more disruptive:

"[...] as regards the army checkpoints, you could be stopped three times between home and Enniskillen on a twenty-five mile stretch of road. Now there's a big.[...] I mean, there was nowhere where you could have went but you were still stopped three times on one small stretch of road. You just got used to it, there was no point in getting aggravated about it [...] It didn't stop us from going anywhere.

[The interviewee also said that here was a garda checkpoint with army back up a mile across the border in the south which caused fewer problems unless there were inexperienced guards up from Cork or elsewhere]."

Some felt fear and had frightening experiences of these army checkpoints:

"That was always a scary place because you had, you know, you couldn't see anybody and they could see you [...] You had a particular place you had to stop and then, you know, they had these spikes as well that come up if you did the wrong thing. They might puncture your car and then you wouldn't be able to get away [...] Even though, I mean, I never heard of anybody that happening to unless they were trying to get away if somebody was after them. But, the trepidation of being held, even only if it was for a few minutes in this place, where somebody was going to question you, you know. [...] Especially at night was the scary bit [...] 'cos you never really knew who was about or, you know, you could be vulnerable as a woman on your own coming through there."

[Interviewee speaking of the army checkpoint on the Lough Shore road between Enniskillen and Belleek]

Throughout the Troubles, violence surrounding the border was higher than anywhere else in Northern Ireland, other than in Belfast (Nash and Reid 2010, Donnan 2010). Such violence was described by some of those interviewed.

"Anything would happen because you lived close to the border, that you were in danger of being caught in the crossfire, people fleeing from the army or the police, you know, there was all sorts of activity going on at night when

> you were in your bed. [...] Where we were situated there was lots of different roads leading to, across, the border, you know, so there you were very vulnerable in the position you were in."

> "There was so many people that were blown up. [...] And we had, [...] just 100 yards down the road from us, we had two people coming from working in the police station. And they were shot, just riddled, you know in their van, two workmen, and that left a horrible feeling in the area for a long, long while after."
>
> [Interviewee who lived 200 yards from the border during the Troubles]

> "Our family twice became the victims of the Troubles. Myself and my sister were kidnapped once. It's probably now, it's about twenty-seven or twenty-eight years ago. And we were held up and because we were going across the border at Pettigoe, and my dad, he was made to drive a bomb to the police barracks in Kesh and my sister and I were put into a shed overnight. It was a terrifying experience [...] I talk about it, but not a lot, not a lot, because it's something that you want, a box you want to close and put away because it's part of the past.
> We also had the experience of a neighbour, a daughter, who, well, to add insult to injury they said it was mistaken, she was shot dead at here house and that was less than 200 yards from where we lived. [...] It did deeply, deeply affect us."

A combination of the difficulties around the border, and no doubt other aspects of The Troubles, led interviewees to reflect on their experiences of relief from stress south of the border:

> "During the whole Troubles, and, I would've, you always felt that, once you got over the actual border [going to The Republic], 200 yards down the road, don't tell me, you can't explain, you just relaxed. [...] Then when you were coming home, you might be away for a day or a few days, the nearer you got to the border, you started to tense up."

> "Growing up [in the North] there was a lot of bombs, we lived on the main street, so we were just very aware constantly of, you know, a lot of change happening between [...] I suppose a lot of the bomb, the bombers, could escape over the border quickly [...] As a kid growing up with something like that you just accept this is the way things are, but getting down to Rossnowlagh was just like a total godsend [...]"

Whilst many said they continued to cross the border and maintain cross-border friendships and family connections, some said it meant stopping visits to the north and an end to some relationships. This seemed to vary according to locality.

> "My other half wouldn't cross the border so I had to go over [to live] with her."
>
> [Interviewee who moved to the north when he married]

> [*Did you maintain you social networks across the border?*] "Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, we did in our area alright. But I know in other areas now close by, that, just four, five miles from us and people grew up and they literally wouldn't know people living literally just 200 yards away from them because the roads were blown up and they couldn't meet, socialise, one thing or another."
>
> [*That was a generational difference? Those born since the start of the Troubles?*] Yeah. Yeah. Big. Yeah.

Following the ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement, things had changed again in the area:

> "I would never have went any further than Enniskillen until recent years [...] The ceasefires [made the difference] and the cross-border women's collective that I would have joined, that would have been a big, really a big, eye-opener for me."

"It was the first time about four years ago that I would've drove up to Belfast to Antrim on me own. But I had visions of being stopped. There was different things coming into me head. [...] I had a picnic on the way back, and I thought, this is brilliant, this is great! [...] and I don't think there's any part now that I haven't been up to [...Antrim...Armagh...Omagh...] And they're so beautiful, that's what I can't get over!"

[Interview with middle-aged Co. Donegal resident]

"It's funny, you know, on the lough shore there's a place there that does surf, you know they have surfboards and stuff, it's very near to the place the border was. And I often think, isn't that a great transformation [*laughs*] you know, that people can now go surfing the waves, from living near the border [...] with an army checkpoint more or less beside yer"

[Interviewee speaking of former checkpoint place on the Enniskillen-Belleek road].

"It's amazing how easy it is to forget, as well [the big deal it used to be] crossing the border, you know, now so many things have happened."

[Respondent who crosses the border regularly]

The border, meaning and identity

Much of the literature on borders in general, and the Irish border in particular, tends to concentrate on the institutional level and not as much on how people create meanings from their daily experiences, in a changing situation, and the implications this has for identity. The wider context within which the issue of the Irish border is located, ethno-national conflict on the island, is significant here (Todd et al, 2005; O'Dowd and McCall, 2008; Nash and Reid, 2010). It is against this background that the presence of the border is given meaning. Also implicit in the matrix of political affairs is the issue of identities and how these may change across generations (Todd et al, 2005; Bottos, 2006). As Bottos and Rougier (2006) and Todd et al (2005) point out, the formation of states and institutions are highly germane to the creation of identity and state borders are 'key sites' in relation to questions of identity and 'how people make sense of their world'. Todd et al assert, "they define where state power begins and ends and constitute the boundaries of acceptable interactions, the relevant power-holders, life and career- paths, allies and enemies, for whole populations. It is at these borders that the contingency of state institutions and the impact of state institutionalization on identity are most clearly visible" (2005: 2).

There are two main arguments in the literature on the question of the current meanings given to the border, its relationship with identity and whether these are changing, or have the potential to change. The first is that of Donnan and Simpson (2005) who say that we should not ignore the tendency of some groups to attempt to maintain the status quo in terms of their identity even in the face of major change, speaking particularly of Protestant Unionists/Loyalists in Northern Ireland. Illustrating this point, Donnan (2010) draws on evidence from ethnographic fieldwork with

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"Border Protestants" in South Armagh, noting that most lamented sorely the "opening up" of the border, perceiving this as permitting the political, economic and cultural "encroachment" of "The Republic" onto unionist territory. The border for them, "stood as a tangible representation of what differentiated 'us', the border Protestants, from 'them', border Catholics and Republicans" (2010: 256). Anything weakening the border generates "uncertainty and anxiety" (*ibid*). "Cross-border relationships are one such ambivalent field and initiatives designed to facilitate north–south cooperation and communal reconciliation have sometimes paradoxically resulted in new identity anxieties and renewed struggles over boundary maintenance" (*ibid*). Whilst the "international" boundary softens, Donnan argues, that this tends to result in the firming of local sectarian boundaries (*ibid*: 266). This may help account for the current situation which he labels "not war-not peace" (citing Sluka 2009).

The second argument is that of Nash and Reid (2010) who describe the border region as a place which holds the possibility of the development of a new, shared identity for its dwellers. This is based on interviews undertaken on both sides of the border amongst Protestants and Catholics across many localities as well as on historical research. They show that, *prior* to the creation of the border, there was a notion of a regional identity (a feeling of "Ulsterness") and a "sense of commonality – 'of our people in small farms' – not based on religious and national affiliation but on the shared lifestyles, landscapes and experiences of farming families on either side of the border" (*ibid*: 276). The border created "senses of difference that had not previously existed as people found themselves often pejoratively labelled as 'Southerner' (or 'Free Stater') or 'Northerner' – labels that were applied regardless of religious background" (*ibid*: 276). Nash and Reid, drawing on interview and other evidence from along the border, suggest that changes to the border since the ceasefires are again enabling a cross-cutting, shared identity, of 'border people', now based on a "shared sense of isolation and wider misunderstanding, shared experience of the negative impacts of the border, and shared resourcefulness among those who have lived with the border" (*ibid*: 278). They hope that this can come to the fore and transcend the other divisive identities, thus creating a platform for a new beginning in the border regions, a set of new narratives. However, they acknowledge that there can be no simple or painless ways forward in attempting to nurture such a transformation (*ibid*: 280).

Whilst suggestive, the differences in these stances are likely to relate partly to the differences in constituencies studied, the localities selected for research, the research methods used and the periods covered by the work. As Anderson noted in 2006, the findings of research should not be taken as having general application along the border, as, "Findings for one side or one section of border may not hold for the other side or for other sections" (2006: 3). Neither can findings be regarding as reflecting permanent truths.

Anderson also makes the important point that, "in borders research there is always the danger that if we go single-mindedly looking for the effects of borders, and/or the effects of ethnonational identities, we will of course find what we are looking for, and conversely may fail to see anything

else. The danger in rushing to territorial or ethnonational judgement is that we become blind to other socio-economic or locational influences which might well be as or more important" (2006: 4).

One socio-economic influence is likely to be generation. The focus on different generations' perspectives on the border in Ireland has been a subject of increasing research. Bottos and Rougier point out in their study, "Using the concept of "generations" for the study of ethno-national identity appears to be an adequate and promising standpoint, because implied in the idea of a nation is that of a community formed by past, present and future generations" (2006: 618).

Gaps in the literature

Whilst this is a growing area of literature, gaps remain:
- Much of the material concentrates on the southern side of the border and perspectives from Catholic communities. There are exceptions (such as Donnan, 2010, Donnan and Simpson 2007, Nash and Reid 2010).
- There are likely to be differences according to border location (Anderson 2006: 4, Nash and Reid 2010: 281) and most studies are area-specific (e.g. Donnan and Simpson consider South Armagh). Many locales are yet to be researched in relation to this question.
- In particular, there is a paucity of research on the identity formation and cultural assumptions of the younger age group (although the national identity of young people is becoming more of a point of interest) (Stevenson and Muldoon, 2010).

This project addresses some of these gaps. It includes participants:
- from *both* Catholic and Protestant communities (although the imbalance in numbers has been acknowledged above)
- from *both* the RoI and NI, and
- from *across* the generations.
- Further geographical areas are also covered (although there is overlap with one recent relevant project (Nash and Reid 2010).

Therefore, this project goes some way to contribute to the literature.

Issues for policy and practice

The issues, discussed above in theoretical terms, are of course highly pertinent to "everyday life" and the work of development organisations. Finding out why perspectives might vary (because of the border, related ethnonational or territorial issues, socio-economic structures, other wider influences) is important to discover in order to attempt to address them. This report aims to indicate what some of these factors might be.

1. NAMES FOR THE AREAS NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE BORDER

Types of names and 'top' names

The types of names relate to: direction and size (e.g. "The Wee North"), culture (e.g. "The Aould Sod"), politics (e.g. "The Free State") and political identity (e.g. "Nationalist").

The overall top names for the "North" were **Northern Ireland**, **The North**, **UK** and **Ulster**. For the "South" they were: the **Free State**, the **South**, **Eire** and the **Republic of Ireland.**

Northern Ireland (NI)

For older people, the **North** was the most popular name, then **Northern Ireland**, and **Ulster**. The **Six Counties** was also quite a popular name, with the **UK** used very little. A large range of names was given (12). For the middle-aged group, **Northern Ireland** was as popular as **The North**. **Ulster** and **Six counties** were used less as names amongst this group than the older group. The **UK** was not a popular name. The middle-aged group also gave a wide range of names (13).

The younger people gave **Northern Ireland**, the **North** and **UK** as their top responses, in that order. **Norn Iron** and **Unionist** were also popular. Some terms disappeared from the range used by the older generations but there were also some innovations (e.g**. Tellytubbyland**[3]). A narrower range of names was given in total (9).

The Republic of Ireland (RoI)

For older people, the **Free State** was the most popular term followed by the **South, Eire** and the **Republic.** A large variety of names was given (14). For middle-aged people, the **Free State** was also the most popular response and then the **South. Republic of Ireland** was next most popular, followed by **Southern Ireland, Eire** and the **Republic. Aould Sod** and **Mexico** appear as names (which was not the case amongst the older group). A wide range of names was given by this group too (14).

For younger people, the **Free State** was again the most popular response, followed once again by the **South**. **Republic of Ireland. Eire, Ireland** and **Nationalist** were also popular. **Da South**, **Actual Ireland** and **Irish** appear. A slightly narrower range of names was given (12).

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[3] A reference to a popular BBC television cartoon for the very young.

Insights from the research literature

Why do the names differ across the generations? The literature on the Irish border did not discuss in detail the issue of names for the two sides of the Irish border. Names such as 'The North'; 'The South'; Republic of Ireland and 'Free State' were expressed by respondents in a range of previous studies.

There is a vast literature on the sociocultural transmission of and innovation in knowledge, for example in relation to the sociology of the media (see, for instance, Jackson et al 2011) and the anthropology of the development of world views (see, for example, Barth 1990). There is also a large anthropological literature on the significance of naming in culture and society (see vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2009).

Interpretation

In this case, influences and experiences which influence place naming might include those related to history and politics (e.g. Irish Independence, ethnonational issues,), economic change (e.g. the recession), the international connections experienced (e.g. links with Irish America), changing cultural influences (e.g. the media), personal and community identity (including ethnic) and the influence of peers and family.

Each generation names according to its own experience and influences as a way of coming to terms with the border, reflecting relationships. By taking part in naming, people are making and remaking the meaning of "North" and "South", here especially the" North".

2. WHAT'S GOOD AND BAD ABOUT THE BORDER?

What's good about the border?

The top responses to what is good about the border were: **Nothing** and **better shopping** (i.e. cheaper shopping with greater variety). Also mentioned quite frequently were: **Separation** and **fun of crossing.**

Half of the older group said there was **nothing** good about the border and a fifth said **better shopping** was a good thing about the border. Half of the mid-aged group also said there was **nothing** good about the border and a greater proportion than for the older group, a third, said **better shopping** was a positive thing about the division. In contrast to these two groups, less than a fifth of young people said there was **nothing** good about the border. More than a third of this group said **better shopping** was a good aspect of the border.

Separation and the **fun of crossing** were mentioned by some respondents in each age group with the exception of the middle-aged group who did not cite **fun of crossing** as an advantage of the borderline.

What's bad about the border?

The top responses to what is bad about the border were: **Divides people** and **price differences** (i.e. differences in prices and costs). However, there were lots of answers and there was little consensus. Other more popular responses were: **The Troubles**, **conflict** and **border in the mind.**

The idea that the border **divided people** was given by only a fifth of older people (a smaller proportion than for the other age groups). **Price differences** were the next major concern (under a fifth stated this as their first response). Four other responses were given by a tenth of this group, indicating slightly more clustering amongst this group than the others.

A larger proportion (over a third) of middle-aged people as compared to older and younger people gave the fact that the border **divides people** as their main concern about the border. The second most common response was that the border means there are **different rules** on either side (under a fifth). This did not feature in the top concerns of the other age groups. A large range of other responses was given by others in this age category.

The largest cluster (less than a third) of younger people was concerned that the border **divides people**, however just over a fifth also thought that **price differentials** were a bad thing about the border. A smaller proportion (about a tenth) thought that **accents** from the other side of the border were a bad thing about it. This aspect is not mentioned by participants of other ages. A large range of other responses was given by others in this age category.

The research literature

Respondents in previous studies had a mix of responses. The border was seen as bad in the senses that**:** the border was a source of danger in relation to paramilitary activity and British Army and Garda/NI police patrols; the border posed the problem of physical barriers and checkpoints; the border broke up social interaction; the border disrupted infrastructural linkages (Todd et al 2005, Nash and Reid 2010).

The border was seen as good in the following ways: as a source of income due to smuggling, especially in the earlier years; as a source of wealth later on in the context of EU finance; as a source of income due to the possibility of claiming welfare "on both sides"; the opportunity to go shopping for cheaper or unavailable goods in the North and fuel in the South; as protection from 'trouble up North' (for some speaking from a 'Southern' perspective). The literature notes that a border implies state control, which can provide a sense of protection and safety (Todd 2005, Coakley and O'Dowd 2007, Bottos and Rougier 2006).

However, the border did not matter for some people. In terms of identity, some even identified themselves as 'border people', irrespective of the two ethno-religious communities on either side (Nash and Reid 2010). For many, since the development of relative peace, the border did not matter anymore as social interaction and travel had improved (Todd et al 2005, Coakley and O'Dowd 2007).

According to the literature therefore, responses have been ambivalent and have changed over time.

Interpretation

Asking respondents about good and bad aspects of the border encouraged them to think about this ambivalence documented in the earlier studies.

In terms of what's good about the border it was interesting that even when primed to think about positive aspects of the division, half of the older and middle-aged groups still saw the border as negative.

This view was less strongly held by the younger group, perhaps because they have grown up with a border always in existence but in a less problematic and contested way than for previous generations. Also, young people, without as many family and financial responsibilities as the older generations, may perceive the border from a perspective of leisured consumers of fashionable goods. They particularly valued the shopping opportunities of the border. Perhaps this was part of the fun of crossing. However, this is not to say that young people did not also have negative feelings about the border (see below).

The older group, when speaking of the fun of crossing, may have been referring to the adventure of crossing for leisure/smuggling opportunities, particularly in the old days. They may also have been talking of the fun of crossing to meet up with people including in the context of cross-border initiatives such as *Age Knows No Borders.* Many may have the leisure time to do so during retirement.

A further contradiction in feelings is revealed by the fact that some respondents from each generation saw the separation produced by the border to be a good thing. This is likely to be related to the reasons given in earlier studies, noted above.

What's bad about the border?

Whilst the fact that the border divides people was the top-most response here, it was intriguing that a greater percentage of middle-aged people as compared to younger people saw the division of people as a negative aspect of the border and that there was an even smaller proportion of older people who felt this. One explanation may be related to the contention that many older people have time and opportunity to meet people on a cross-border basis and there are also more

opportunities for more leisured younger people to do this (this, of course, is the experience of the Rossnowlagh conference respondents).

Price differences was the second most common response overall. This again reflects the contradictory feelings related to living in close proximity to the border. On the one hand, proximity to cheaper and more varied shopping was regarded as an asset but, on the other, the difference in living costs relating to aspects of life which cannot easily be "shopped for" on a cross-border basis is felt as an injustice (for example, housing rates payable only in NI, healthcare costs which only apply to RoI). Again the variation in views over the life-cycle was interesting. Middle-aged people were more concerned about different rules which may reflect the need for a larger number of people from this generation to have to negotiate the problems connected with these (such as differences in tax rules, planning rules, business regulations, driving laws and so on).

Finally, it was noteworthy that some younger people stated that difference in accents was a bad thing about the border. Again, this may be an aspect of identity (along with a fashionable appearance) felt to be more significant by young people than those in other age groups.

3. QUESTIONS ON SPECIFIC TOPICS

More detailed questions probed perspectives on specific aspects of life north and south of the border. These helped reveal further reasons behind the views and experiences expressed in part 2.

Banks

There were many negative comments offered about these institutions. However, there was little mention of the border in connection with them. Generally, there was no agreement on whether banks were worse in NI or the RoI. The older group, and especially the middle-aged group, commented on the role of the banks in causing recession. Younger people commented in brief, mostly on the role of the army in protecting the banks' money in the RoI.

Health

Most people compared NI and RoI in terms of health services. There was no discussion of other aspects of health. There was very little mention of the impact of border on health services, bar one mention of the increase in waiting times at Erne Hospital due to higher usage of the facility by people from the RoI.

Cost was mentioned as an issue. Older people mainly focused on cost and criticised the high costs for most in the South. Long responses from the middle-aged group discussed this too. Most young people also mentioned this.

Quality was also mentioned as an issue. Some older people see this to be better in the South,

others the reverse. On balance, more middle-aged people saw quality in NI as better, though future cuts a threat to this. Younger people said doctors are better in the RoI.

Housing

Cost came up as an issue here too. This was a focus of the older group. However, some emphasised housing is cheaper in NI, others that it is cheaper in the RoI, taking into account the lack of local rates in this jurisdiction. Cost was also a focus of the middle-aged group where higher rents and house prices in the RoI were mentioned. This group also made many other points. Young people's focus was on housing being cheaper in NI.

Style and quality were also issues alluded to. Some in the older group said quality was better in NI, others the opposite. Some in the middle group mentioned the red brick style of NI housing and the good quality of housing (mostly referring here to NI). Young people mentioned the large size, red brick style and smartness of housing in NI.

The middle group seemed to have greater knowledge of housing and said in relation to NI that there are: Too many planning restrictions, shorter waiting lists for social housing and that housing and lands are different or segregated according to identity. They mentioned that, in the RoI, much housing is empty.

Roads

The older group focused on comparing the **quality** of roads in NI and the RoI, with no agreement. The middle-aged group were similar but gave more detail in their comparisons. Some agreed that the quality is the same in both regions. One commented that link roads across the border are poor (except major routes), the only comment which referred to the border *per se*. Young people's comments were also similar to older people's and they also mentioned contrasting road markings across the jurisdictions.

Shopping

Many in the older group said shopping is currently cheaper in NI but this may change according to the exchange rate. The better choice of goods in NI was mentioned. One commented that *Asda* seems cheap but that the border areas are generally very competitive. The middle-aged group also commented on the cheapness of NI but said that the same variety is now found in the RoI. Shopping in the RoI was said to be nice "for a change", higher VAT in the RoI was seen as problematic and the poor exchange rate sometimes given in stores was mentioned. One person noted the influx of "Mexican" shoppers at Christmas in the North. Members of the younger group also noted that shopping was cheaper in NI and there were more "brands" in the North because it is part of the UK. *Asda* was mentioned frequently, in a positive light.

Policing

Older people mostly said police are **less visible in NI** and are **not accepted** by all. Most said **policing**

is **better in the RoI.** The middle-aged group mostly said the police are *more* **visible in the North** and are **not accepted** by all, some also noting that policing is **a harder job in NI** than in the RoI because of terrorism. The Guards were said to be more **approachable in the RoI**. Some saw southern officers as **lazy**, overpaid and too focused on minor crime including traffic offences (where spot fines are used). Others noted the Guards have a tough job.

Younger people said that policing is **"stricter"** in NI where police are better trained. Policing with **guns** in NI was mentioned. The Guards were seen as more **permissive**, better "craic" but **lazy**.

Politicians

Older people had mostly **cynical attitudes**, politicians were seen as useless, "crooks" and overpaid. NI politicians were seen as **sectarian**. One saw NI politicians as **more honest**. The middle-aged group expressed similar **cynical attitudes**. Politicians were regarded as hypocritical and acting according to their allegiances and family loyalty. Life was viewed as a misery because of cuts imposed by politicians. Some in the middle-aged group described northern and southern politicians as regarding themselves as **"above" the people**. However, some said NI politicians are better educated, **more honest** and more open-minded. Young people gave little response to the question and there was no consensus in this group as to whether politicians were better in NI or the RoI.

Older people's lives

There was a general consensus in the older group that older people are better off in RoI in terms of **pensions, services and benefits** except perhaps in terms of **medical care**. They expressed a **fear of cuts** to these in the RoI.

The middle-aged group pointed out the pros and cons for older people living in NI and the RoI in more detail. They talked of pensions, services and benefits as above. They were also concerned about greater **social isolation** in the South and worse **quality of life** of older people in troubled areas of the North. The younger people said and knew less but most agreed older people are better looked after in the RoI. One mentioned the effect on northern older people of the **Troubles**.

Youth activities

Many in the older group said they knew little about this. Some said things were better in NI, others in the RoI. One mentioned that children "come north" for activities.

In the middle-aged group most said there are more, funded youth programmes in NI, such as summer schemes, however they noted that this often divided on a sectarian basis. Sport was more inclusive for youth in the RoI. Some said they knew little about this.

Young people disagreed over whether there is a better choice of activities in the RoI or NI. Some mentioned drink is cheaper in the NI. Others mentioned, though not in any detail, other activities like smoking and bombing.

What does peace mean to you?

The older group gave a range of responses from **quality of life** to **freedom of movement and action**, **better economic future**, **freedom from fear and violence**, **living in harmony** and being able to **sleep at night**. None predominated.

The middle group gave a larger range again of answers, including the above with a greater stress on **freedom from fear and violence** with some more particular examples of this.

The younger group mentioned the above points, with more emphasis on the **end of violence** and **less worry about bombs**. They also mentioned **no debating over land** and **no racism and sectarianism**.

The research literature

The respondents in previous studies were not asked the range of questions on many of the specific topics covered in this research. But questions relating to peace do resonate with previous literature. Generally, previous respondents felt the border, from the perspective of 'The South' should not have existed and 'we are all one'. They were glad links can be restored (Nash and Reid 2010).

In terms of shopping, this still plays a major, perhaps increased feature in the lives of many on the border. The globalising cultural trend towards consumerism, particularly the postmodern identity-creation possibilities of shopping taken up by young people, is highlighted in the anthropological literature (see, for example, Miller 1998). However, previous research on the Irish border found that the 'novelty' factor of going North for scarce goods is no longer the case as the Republic has become more affluent and all the brands can be had in the Southern border areas too (Todd et al 2005). However, as Anderson (2006) states, experience of the border is inevitably localised. In the *Age Knows No Borders* date, the current greater choice in NI is commented on. The range of "brands", important in the construction of identity, is mentioned by young people. Presumably, this is associated with the proximity of Enniskillen to all the villages, offering a range of shops with "northern" prices.

Interpretation

In general, the responses to the above topics reflect the experience and the knowledge of the age groups. Older people can be said to have experienced life before the Troubles as well as the Troubles themselves and the formal border. They have lived through the reality of a more peaceful time (in the locality, if not globally) and therefore know through experience that peace is possible. Middle-aged people experienced growing up in the era of the Troubles and a militarised border. Indeed, in responses to the prompt **"When I think of the border I don't understand.../I wonder"** (see below, section 5) some from the middle-aged group in this research said that they wondered what things were like before the Troubles around the border. This suggests that they did not know this as a lived reality and perhaps had been told little about it by their parents. Younger people

have grown up during a period of relative peace and opening borders. In the part of section 5 referred to above, younger people also responded that they wondered what it was like to live peacefully in the area.

Out of all the age groups, the middle-aged are likely to be particularly knowledgeable about many matters in NI and RoI, being called upon to negotiate the differences between NI and RoI because of their **family and other responsibilities in** areas such as business, work, housing, shopping, providing transport, leisure, health and caring. **Older people**, of course, are probably best placed to talk about their lives and younger people about **younger people's activities**. Younger people are likely to have different relationships with the **police** than older people, partly due to the popular representation of younger people as more likely to commit crime and antisocial behaviour and of older people as more likely to be victim of crime. Traffic policing is likely to be a concern for the middle-aged possibly driving in both jurisdictions frequently.

It is notable that younger people said very little about **politicians**. This appears to be a generation with less of an interest in party politics. It is often said that interest in issue-based politics, such as environmentalism or international development, is now higher than party politics, especially amongst the young. However, opinions on this were not sought in *Age Knows No Borders* (except in relation to border and peace issues).

Whilst the question **what does peace mean to you?** elicited a large range of responses, it is salient that young people here emphasised freedom from fear and violence above other issues and that this was also quite a strong concern of the middle-aged group. This focus suggests that, whilst respondents had positive aspirations for the future, there are fears about these problems recurring today, especially amongst younger people. This interpretation is reinforced by the difference in generational response given in section 4 below where younger people express negative views and great worries about the border.

It is also interesting that freedom from sectarianism and racism is articulated by younger people rather than those of the more senior generations. Again, these aspirations are positive and may reflect work done within the education system on both sectarianism and racism in recent times. But the views may also express fear in relation to the future.

4. WHAT DOES T-H-E B-O-R-D-E-R MEAN TO YOU?

In relation to this question, posed in terms of what participants associated with the letters in the words "The Border", the variations across the age groups are quite striking.

Older people made various points, **positive and negative**. For example, the difficulties the formal border created in the "old days" were mentioned but also described was the fun of smuggling items across and crossing for dances. Thankfulness was expressed that the border crossing exists no

longer and enthusiasm was shown about what this brings, including opportunities to make new friends.

The middle-aged group also made a wide variety of points but had a **greater focus on the negatives of the border** as they experienced it – hate, helicopters, bombs, ordeals, repression, racism, resentment, danger, death, division, Troubles, terrorists.

The younger group **stressed dangers and violence** associated with the border much more strongly. For example, most responses for "B" were "bombs" and variants, for "D", "Death" and variants were given by over two-thirds and "Omagh bombing" was given several times for "O". All gave "Troubles" for "T". Responses were also less detailed. Big topics were named in a single-word response, such as "religion", "reality" or "history". The older groups were happier to give more detail plus detail about how they are or were affected personally by the border.

The research literature

There is a vast literature on the sociocultural transmission of knowledge and attitudes for example, in relation to the sociology of the media (see, for example, Jackson et al 2011) and the anthropology of the development of world views (see, for example, Barth 1990). Barth describes how the keeping of certain knowledge as secret and the limitation of its transmission to subsequent generations influences inter-generational power relations but also the content and interpretation of information transmitted. Hastings and Donnan (2007) note that for "border Protestants" in South Armagh, the maintenance of silence concerning Troubles-related experiences of violence and murder has been a culturally valued feature until recent times. Although they do not consider how this may have influenced younger generations, either within the family or without, they note in general that, "Like secrecy, silence can intensify feelings of fear by generating uncertainty and paranoia" (Hastings and Donnan 2007: 13, citing Green 1994: 238–40 and Ross 2001: 269 –73).

Interpretation

The difference in responses across the age range is likely to reflect differences in experience and knowledge. In turn this will be affected by decisions of those with experience and knowledge about whether or not to share this with younger people. Difference in perspectives will be influenced by the *way* in which knowledge and experience are transmitted to new generations and how this knowledge and experience is *represented* to young people within different contexts (families, communities, churches, schools, peer groups and so forth) and by the various media.

The increasing negativity as we move down the generations is conspicuous. Images of violence conjured up by the border for the young people are striking. Fear seems to be expressed in these responses. The general, one-word answer given by the younger people in many cases perhaps reflects the fact that these are areas of lack of detailed knowledge and uncertainty for young people. Perhaps this is partly fear generated by cultural silence in relation to more difficult past experiences of border life in this area.

5. REFLECTIONS ON THE BORDER

"When I think of the border I am..."

The older group had mostly mixed feelings of happiness (about the peace process) and sadness (about the border still existing). The middle-aged group also had mixed feelings with more feelings of sadness than happiness. Most of the younger group said they were not bothered about living near the border, it did not make much difference to them, but a few said they were confused about history and sectarianism.

"When I think of the border I don't understand.../I wonder"

There was little variation across the generations in response to this question. Older people gave a mixed set of "why" responses, including why there was disagreement and violence, why some want to continue the conflict and wondering what the future will hold and whether peace will last. The middle-aged group responses were similar to those of the older people. They also wondered what things were like before the Troubles around the border. The younger group again expressed similar thoughts with a slightly greater emphasis on why the border existed in the first place.

"When I think of the border I fear.../I worry"

Older people feared the restarting of conflict and detected that sectarianism is on the rise and "splinter groups" reactivating. Particular worries were expressed about young people's future including that of "marginalised youth" during a time of unemployment.

Middle-aged people had similar fears concerning the reactivation of conflict. Unlike the older people, some worries about violence were expressed in graphical terms by this group ("bombs", "killing"). Younger people shared the fears of the middle-aged with a greater emphasis on worries about violence expressed in graphical terms ("deaths", "thugs", "riots").

"When I think of the border I enjoy...."

Older people mainly enjoyed crossing the border for meeting people, including within cross-community groups. Shopping opportunities also featured. The mid-age group mainly enjoyed crossing the border for cheaper shopping but also just for the fun of travel. Younger people mainly enjoyed the opportunity provided to hear stories about the border in the past, to meet people from the "other side" and the fun of travel.

"When I think of the border I dream…/I hope.../I want..."

Older people's aspirations focused on lasting peace and harmony.

The middle-aged group expressed a greater range of aspirations, including peace, ending of hatred and fear, and a "better future". Some mentioned removal of the border and political unification.

The younger group gave few responses. Of these, perspectives were more varied. They wrote of peace, a better economy and equality but also that they do not dream about the border. Several mentioned they wanted the removal of the border.

Interpretation

The rather nonplussed response of the majority of young people to the prompt **"When I think of the border I am..."** was perhaps a surprise given the negative reaction to the border described in section 4 and the fact that the reaction of middle-aged people followed the earlier pattern (i.e. more negative than that of older people). The young people's response may have been related to the question's phrasing and it should be noted that some young people indicated they were confused about history and sectarianism, which fits in with the analysis in section 4. In response to the statement **"When I think of the border I wonder…."** People from all age groups asked questions about reasons for conflict and how things might be in future but young people also wondered why the border was created in the first place, perhaps again expressing a desire for further historical knowledge. Also, in relation to the prompt **"When I think of the border I enjoy…."**, in addition to the now familiar responses related to shopping and fun, the young people mentioned as their primary response the enjoyment they had from hearing stories about the border from older people. Perhaps this is also related to a desire for more historical awareness.

Worries about the border, given in response to **"When I think of the border I fear.../I worry"**, are consistent with the earlier findings that border-related fears were generally worse the younger the respondent. Responses to**: "When I think of the border I dream…/I hope.../I want**...", whilst focusing on the desire for peace also included responses such as the hope for the border's removal amongst the middle-aged and younger people. This is likely to reflect the political profile (outlined in the introduction) within these groups as well as the greater fears related to resurgent conflict in border areas.

Summary of findings

There are clear differences in experiences across the generations which feed into inter-generational differences in perspectives expressed at the conference. This is not to deny both the range of intra-generational differences and the similarities expressed on an inter-generational basis.

Of the cross-generational differences, the level of worry expressed by the younger generation about the possible resurgence of conflict is the most striking.

Why these findings?

The socio-economic factor of generation seems an important part of the explanation as to why there are variations in perspectives on identities and meanings. We argue that there are likely to be broad factors affecting cross-generational perspectives on the border (building on Anderson 2006). We summarise possible factors in Fig. 1 below.

Fig. 1: Some influences on perspectives on the border
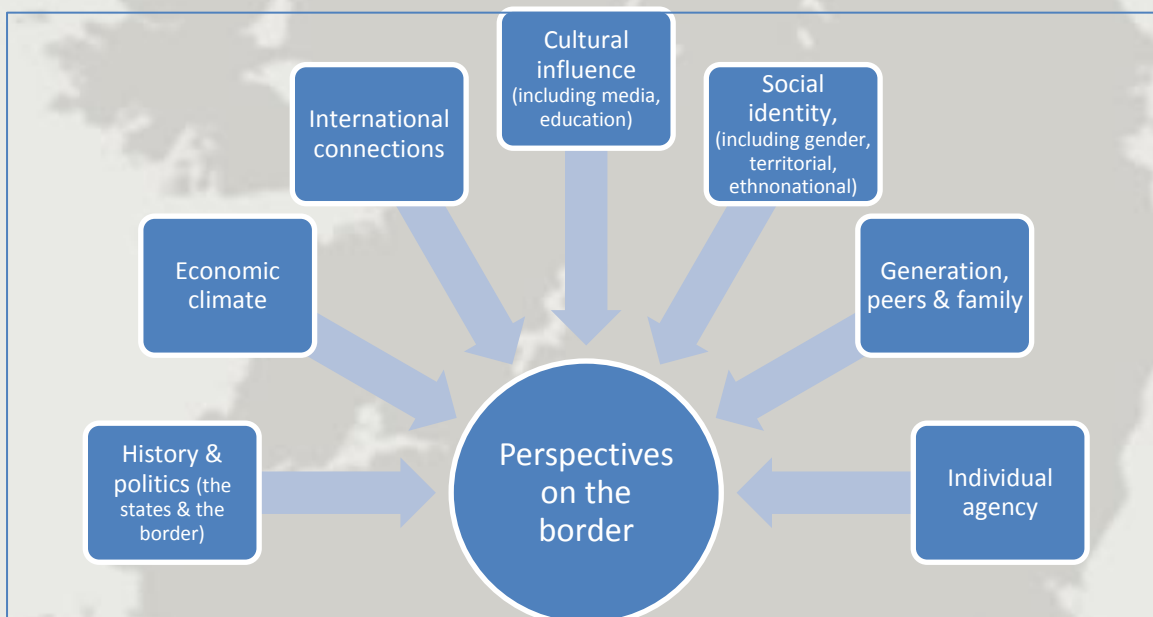
The importance and the interplay of such factors may vary according to particular setting and time.

Whilst there may be many factors influencing generational differences, ethnonational and territorial factors are likely to be important given that worries about the resurgence of conflict are paramount. We detected a sense that a previous status quo, with a regulated border that provided some "protection" and perhaps "certainties", was still valued by some. This supports Donnan and

Simpson's (2010) argument to an extent. On the other hand, the view that the porous border in a more peaceful context holds new possibilities for the development of social relationships was embraced by most. The latter supports Nash and Reid's argument (2010) for the possibility of a new "border identity". To us, is not surprising that both views can be held at the same time, to varying degrees, across the generational and ethnonational "divides". It is part of the human condition that we live in an eternal present, reacting to circumstances by drawing on the past and yet ever trying to embrace the future.

In terms of the most striking cross-generational difference, the level of worry expressed by the younger generation about the possible resurgence of conflict, it appears to be no coincidence that this goes hand-in-hand with a concern expressed by some of the young people that they lack knowledge and understanding of the fairly recent past (i.e. The Troubles' period). Perhaps it is the lack of transmission of detailed, convincing history to the younger generations which is one of the roots of this problem within the wider ethnopolitical context.

Implications for policy and practice

Whilst we have not been asked to make specific policy recommendations in our work, it seems evident that further work needs to be done to address the concerns being expressed here to avert a self-fulfilling prophecy of the resurgence of conflict. Perhaps initiatives like *Age Knows No Borders* and further work in this field can help to produce a new beginning, drawing on, and helping to build, a shared identity (such as that described by Nash and Reid) in areas like Belleek, Kesh and Ballyshannon. Perhaps also, it can lead to detailed work focusing on work with the younger generation in particular, to help supply "detailed, convincing" history both in educational and community settings within civil society.

Further research

These findings and explanations are suggestive. Its methodological limitations were described in the introduction. The work could be extended in various ways. It would be particularly important to pursue further, in-depth research with younger people, including with representation of Protestant younger people, in order to better understand and explain this generation's perspectives.

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