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'Reel' outcomes?

Assessing participatory filmmaking as a peacebuilding tool in Northern Ireland

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Abstract
Violent conflict poses a significant threat to human rights. With the highest number of active conflicts taking place globally since World War II, the urgency to develop effective peacebuilding and reconciliation strategies is paramount. Research thus far has been limited on exploring the role of art-based approaches to peacebuilding, leaving research gap on whether these approaches are perceived as beneficial or not by those directly involved in them. This research aims to address this by investigating innovative arts-based approaches to peacebuilding, an at times overlooked area for fostering long-term reconciliation, especially in de-antagonising everyday relations between conflict parties or previously warring groups. This study delves into the potential of participatory film and video projects to bridge divided communities and create new narratives. Through analysing the perceptions of those involved in these projects, in particular based in Northern Ireland, this paper seeks to uncover effective practices for participatory filmmaking in post-conflict peacebuilding settings, and areas for improvement. This will provide important and much needed insights to inform policy, funding and peace building strategies, providing a vital contribution to minimising the potential for violent conflict, and therefore risk to human rights.

Keywords
Peacebuilding, post-conflict, reconciliation, arts, participatory video, participatory filmmaking, Northern Ireland

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

AR Augmented Reality

CAIN Conflict Archive on the Internet: Ulster University's database on Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland

CSO / CSOs Civil Society Organisations

C4D Communication for Development

DDR Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration

EU European Union

ICTR International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

ICTY International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

ICT4D Information and Communications Technologies for Development

IRA Irish Republican Army

NGO/ NGOs Non Governmental Organisations

PRONI Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, the official archive for Northern Ireland

PV Participatory Video

TV Television

UDHR Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UK United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

US United States of America

UVF Ulster Volunteer Force

VR Virtual Reality

“Art should cause violence to be set aside and it is only art that can accomplish this.”
Leo Tolstoy

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Violent conflict puts all human rights at risk[1]. We are currently witnessing the highest number of violent conflicts globally since the Second World War (Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, 2023; International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2023; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2023).

Besides the evident need for violence to cease, beyond that, in so-called 'post-conflict' settings, peacebuilding and reconciliation are crucial to prevent a relapse into violence. Especially as the best predictor of future violence is whether a society has experienced prior violent conflict recently (Junne & Verkoren, 2004). Commonly employed post-conflict efforts tend to encompass institution building, lustration; disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR); security; mediation; and diplomacy (Herrero, 2004; Salomons, 2004; Clark, 2008). Yet, these elements alone are not sufficient. They tend to be actions on the macro level with the international community and states, rather than on the micro level: efforts focused on the societies and the individuals who must live with the reality of conflict. Understanding everyday interactions between communities at a grassroots level is essential to fostering genuine reconciliation and peace (MacGinty, 2021). Often underestimated, the arts possess a unique power to connect to emotion, unite, communicate, and allow space for expression in ways that transcend borders, institutions, and legal mechanisms (Mitchell et al., 2020). We only have to stop to consider our own experiences to understand how much the arts shape the way we see the world: the profound impact of a moving film, an inspiring book, or the unifying experience of a communal music event. Arts projects have increasingly been utilised in so-called 'post-conflict' areas, approaching the work of peacebuilding in more innovative ways (Mitchell et al., 2020; Gantheret et al., 2023). Participatory techniques in arts projects, particularly participatory film or video, place participants at the centre of the process, and when used in peacebuilding, can bring together groups that might not otherwise interact. Participatory film and video projects also have the potential to challenge internally held beliefs (about 'the other'), of both participants and audiences, through the collaborative process. Today, many conflicts are extensively documented, understood, as well as exacerbated through video, underscoring the role of media in shaping perceptions and narratives (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013; Eder and Klonk, 2017; Patrikarakos, 2017; Zeitzoff, 2017; Simor, 2021). These participatory filmmaking or video-making approaches could leverage our image and video-mediated world, countering divisiveness

[1] In particular articles 3, 5, 13, 18, 19, 25, 26, 28; but also, to a slightly lesser extent, articles 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 27 (UDHR, 1945). This is a sentiment shared by Lupu & Wallace (2019).

through shared creation. Therefore participatory film projects may be the ideal way in which to work through the everyday de-antagonisation between groups, and facilitate space for new narratives.

There are some that argue there can rarely be a truly 'post-conflict' society, where conflict ceases entirely, rather there are merely periods where there is less violence (Junne & Verkoren, 2004). For the purposes of this research, 'post-conflict' societies will be used to mean contexts where open warfare has ended, or at least subsided for some time. Antagonisms often continue to play out in these societies where there has been recent violence, for example, through continued animosity in relation to transitional justice, differing histories, and continued physical or societal division. Therefore, peacebuilding processes are necessary. When various art forms are utilised creatively and collaboratively, they can contribute to fostering a more peaceful society (Mitchell et al., 2020). The importance of the arts for peacebuilding has indeed been widely acknowledged (Gantheret et al., 2023), even at the highest level of international organisations: such as the creation of the UNESCO Artists for Peace programme[2] and their Arts and Culture for Peace Initiative[3]. Nevertheless, the arts have sometimes been considered as an area of lesser importance than other peacebuilding instruments (Mitchell et al., 2020). Engaging with the arts, and the possibility to express oneself freely, are often not perceived to be a necessity, and usually not prioritised during crisis periods such as in active violent conflict (Gantheret et al., 2023). Nevertheless, art has been called the "missing link in the field of conflict resolution and peacemaking" (LeBaron, 2011), and research is yet to fully explore its' potential long-term, and how it plays out when utilised in different ways.

One way in which practitioners in the peacebuilding, community work, art and filmmaking fields (as well as many other areas and disciplines), are conducting their work, is through a 'participatory approach', centring those affected by the issues at stake. Participatory filmmaking generally is concerned with creating a film where those who are the subject of the film, have a key role in shaping the film itself (Miller et al., 2017), and is usually a process where groups use video to document their thoughts on issues that impact their space or community (Roberts & Lunch, 2015). Community participatory film or video projects have been created in many contexts, such as in facilitating social and political dialogue (Mistry & Shaw, 2021), or as an advocacy tool related to communications campaigns (Flower & McConville, 2009). These projects have often, even mostly, been used with underrepresented groups such as refugees (Frisina & Muresu, 2018; Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020; Trencsényi & Naumescu, 2021; Decherney, 2023; Sarria-Sanz et al, 2023); those who are homeless (Kennelly, 2018; Roy et al., 2020); indigenous groups (Amir, 2019; Rao, Narain & Sabir,

[2] UN Artists for Peace are famous individuals who work as advocates for the United Nations agency UNESCO. UNESCO also have a podcast called Art Lab which "gives a voice to artists committed to the promotion of human rights" (UNESCO, 2024).

[3] An initiative with a focus on young people and schools contexts to work on arts and culture for peace activities and topics (UNESCO UK, 2022).

2022); and has been employed especially frequently when working with young people (Blum-Ross, 2013; Blazek et al., 2015; MacDonald et al., 2015; Haynes & Tanner, 2015; Canosa et al, 2016; Wilson & Graham, 2016; Redwood, Fairey & Hasić, 2022; Eastwood et al., 2021). In peacebuilding contexts, these participatory film projects have been used as a tool to bring previously at-war communities together, to open spaces for dialogue, to process what happened, or to reframe narratives around conflicts, communities and 'the other' (Baú, 2014a; Townsend & Niraula, 2016; Fairey, 2018; Johnston, 2020; Charles & Fowler-Watt, 2022; Redwood et al., 2022).

There seems to have been little investigation into the perceptions of participatory film projects beyond narrowly focused evaluation forms, predominantly from funding bodies (Jennings & Baldwin, 2010). There is also limited literature on how these projects are perceived over time, or what happens after the project has finished, when the films have been 'completed'. It might be useful therefore to look at an area where a significant amount of time has passed since a peace agreement, where violent (ethnic) conflict has notably reduced, and where there has been investment in arts, including film, projects in a peacebuilding context.

25 years have now passed since the peace agreement in Northern Ireland: the Belfast Agreement, commonly known as the Good Friday Agreement (1998). Violent conflict, often described as an ethnic conflict[4] (McBride, 2023), in the region has significantly reduced since 1998 (Ulster University, n.d.). It is also an area where there have been many arts related projects implemented (Pruitt, 2011; Anderson & Conlon, 2013; Foy, 2018). There have been creative peacebuilding projects in Northern Ireland from music (Pruitt, 2011), to theatre (Foy, 2018), for example. Often referred to as 'cross-community', projects which attempt to straddle or transcend community divides through the arts, they span from rather more well-known pieces such as the murals (Aguiar, 2014; Kehoe & Dunne, 2021), to more recent digital projects such as the '*AR Peace Wall'* app (2022), an augmented reality (AR)[5] project created with twin city Hiroshima in Japan; and '*Border Sounds'* (2021) a cross-border virtual reality (VR) video project (Aguiar, 2023).

In research by Zupančič, Kočan & Vuga (2021), art *per se* was not perceived as an effective tool for bridging inter-ethnic divides (Zupančič et al., 2021). Therefore, the question is, if non-participatory arts do not have the potential, or at least have limited potential to overcome ethnic boundaries, where does

[4] There is discussion about whether Northern Ireland can be usefully described as an ethnic conflict. McGrattan (2010) explores the limitations of the ethnic conflict model applied to Northern Ireland, although McGinty and many others refer to the conflict as an ethnic one. As ethnic conflict is generally the terminology used in much of the literature, it will be referred to as such in this research, with the caveat and acknowledgement that there was much more at play, with poverty being a large factor in the conflict.

[5] Augmented reality (AR) uses the real world as a setting which is then overlaid with digital elements; virtual reality (VR) is completely virtual and immersive, isolating users from the real world, usually with a headset or headphones (Johnson, 2023).

that leave participatory arts? Is the involvement in the process of making art, for example - making a film, perceived to be more effective? While the topic of peacebuilding and the arts has been studied broadly, as has participatory film and video, we are yet to understand how these projects play out long term in relation to the overall idea of peacebuilding: going beyond ethnopolitics, and facilitating space for everyday de-antagonisation of post-conflict contexts. This research looks at collaborative participatory community arts projects, specifically those focused on participatory filmmaking or participatory video, which are created with the aim of being part of a peacebuilding process. In other words, the focus here is not peacebuilding through watching cinema (although this may play a part), but about the *making of* film or video together with others from across the spectrum of conflict parties, opposing groups or community divides. Through these projects, the hope is that the process of creation in itself is a meaningful part of peacebuilding, and de-antagonising (everyday) relations.

1.2. Research Questions and Methodology

The main research question is whether participatory filmmaking or participatory video, which aspires to go beyond ethnopolitics, is really perceived as doing so, or being truly effective for peacebuilding, by those directly involved in these projects in Northern Ireland. Auxiliary questions to this core line of enquiry would incorporate whether people feel that who coordinates, funds, facilitates, or directs these projects, affects the process; how might they see these projects implemented differently. It is important to understand whether these projects do what they set out to do or claim to be able to do in peacebuilding. In sum, the focus here will be on how participatory filmmaking or participatory video (often abbreviated to PV) projects are perceived by those involved in them, and to what extent they are perceived as effective in terms of peacebuilding, through specific examples in Northern Ireland.

This thesis seeks to shift the focus towards a bottom-up analysis that gives priority to the views and opinions of the ordinary citizens and communities, or those working directly in peacebuilding arts. The objective is to shed light on the concerns of those 'on the ground', working on these types of projects, and understand the issues that may be encountered by those at every level of the process, ultimately contributing to a more holistic understanding of participatory arts (film) for peacebuilding. By looking at examples in which the film creation process has been 'completed', we can gain both a longer term perspective on arts peacebuilding projects, as well as to understand their practical implementation in the present day.

To answer the research questions, this thesis combines literature on participatory film projects in with in-depth interviews conducted with people who worked on projects in Northern Ireland. Interviewees were identified through theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Bryman, 1988), ie. participants were selected based on criteria derived from the theoretical research interest. They were predominantly found through contacting the above projects, but a wider network of other participatory film and video projects conducted in the region were contacted too, so as to broaden the scope beyond the four specific

projects mentioned above. The reasons why this decision was made are twofold. Firstly, a very practical consideration - there were simply not enough filmmakers or facilitators across these four project examples to make up a large enough pool to draw analysis from. Secondly, in relation to privacy and anonymity. As the arts and peacebuilding and participatory filmmaking communities in Northern Ireland - although wide ranging - are still relatively small, and by naming specific projects, it may become clear rather quickly who has made what statement, risking their anonymity, and potentially risking honesty in their answers. For these reasons, filmmaker facilitators from other similar projects were also added to the interview pool.

During the process of interviewing, interviewees tended to recommend others who were related to the project, working on the project or who are or were working in the same field on other projects. Therefore, the interviewee pool expanded in a somewhat organic way, also known as 'snowballing', although it was important to assess at each point whether the recommended interviewees still met the brief for the research, and that the pool of interviewees were as balanced and diverse a sample of individuals as possible. The interviewees included film makers, facilitators, producers, directors, researchers[6] - all of whom worked on projects related to participatory filmmaking in peacebuilding or cross-community contexts in Northern Ireland. Interviewees were generally selected due to their spanning a cross-section of project styles: on-screen appearance of participants; multi-strand projects; projects which make use of archive footage; and VR. The time passed since the projects that they worked on ranges from 10 years ago to present (ongoing projects). Some were organisers and facilitators focused more on peacebuilding and community work; some were individual freelance artists or filmmakers. These interviewees had worked on projects which took place in a mix of both city and rural environments across Northern Ireland and the border, and cover filmmaking projects in every county of Northern Ireland apart from one[7]. Some of the interviewees were from the specific areas in which the filming took place, or where the participants were from; some were originally from Northern Ireland more generally although perhaps not from that specific area; and some were from entirely different countries and contexts. Funding sources also varied.

There were 11 interviews conducted in total, between May and June 2024, with those involved in participatory film projects in this context. All had worked on or were part of projects related to participatory filmmaking in peacebuilding or cross-community contexts in Northern Ireland. These interviews have been anonymised.

[6] Securing interviews with project participants proved significantly more challenging due to ethics and rules surrounding privacy of information, and some participants were unwilling to discuss the project. This will be referenced in the sections which deal specifically with the interviews.

[7] Counties: County Derry~Londonderry (*'In Peace, Apart'; 'REEL BORDERS'*); County Armagh ('*Border Sounds'; and* near Armagh, in County Monaghan: *'Across and In-Between'*); County Down ('*Border Sounds')*; County Fermanagh ('*Border Sounds';'Across and In-Between'; and partially 'REEL BORDERS'*); and County Tyrone ('*Border Sounds'*; and near Tyrone, in County Donegal: *'Across and In-Between'*). County Antrim is the only county in Northern Ireland not covered by the participatory film case studies examined in this research.

At the beginning of the research, the roles identified in the filmmaking process included:

1. Facilitator / Producer / Director / Professional Filmmaker / Researcher 'on the ground': **working closely working with participants**
2. Facilitator / Producer / Director / Professional Filmmaker / Researcher / Organiser **overseeing the big picture**, possibly slightly distanced from filmmaking process but not necessarily
3. Project participant
4. Funder; film distributor; screening organisation; or other connected stakeholder

However in practice, due both to time constraints, and even more so due to logistical and ethical difficulties especially in terms of getting in touch with project participants, for this shorter masters level study, it was only possible to conduct interviews with categories 1 and 2: ie. those facilitating or running these projects (see Table 1.1.). Therefore, three groups of research participants were interviewed: five interviews were carried out with Category 1, three interviews were carried out with Category 2, and three interviews were carried out with those whose role spanned elements of both Categories 1 and 2.

Table 1.1. - Interview coding

Interview code	Project code	Role category	From Northern Ireland originally	Living in Northern Ireland	Interview date	Other notes
P1-02-1	02	1	yes	yes	09/05/24	
P2-04-2	04	2	no	no	14/05/24	
P3-100-1	100	1	n/a	yes	22/05/24 (received)	written responses
P4-01-2	01	2	no	no	22/05/24	
P5-03-3	03	1 & 2	no	yes	23/05/24	
P6-100-1	100	1	yes	yes	23/05/24	
P7-01-1	01	1	no	yes	28/05/24	
P8-02-2	02	2	no	yes*	30/05/24	
P9-100-3	100	1 & 2	no	no	31/05/24	
P10-02-1	02	1	yes	yes*	10/06/24	
P11-02-3	02	1 & 2	no	no	28/05/24	

Data about the participants' age and gender for example, has been omitted as it was considered that it may risk the anonymity of interviewees, and is data that was not considered relevant enough for this particular study.

It was felt to be important to reference the project codes in order to see where quotes may be from individuals who worked on the same project. However, during the course of the interviews, all of the interviewees (apart from the written responses interview), mentioned other similar projects they had worked on too, and made reference to them in addition to the original project they had been contacted about.

Role titles may range from titles such as facilitator, producer, director, creative producer, organiser, professional or freelance filmmaker, facilitating researcher. The below categories were created in order to understand the nuance between how these roles may play out in practice. This is relevant as it may influence their understanding of the practicality of the process, depending on how closely they worked with participants; and conversely, depending on the extent to which they work with or have contact with funders or other stakeholders, they may see the wider context differently too.

- **1 - filmmaker / facilitator 'on the ground'**, working closely with participants.
- **2 - overseeing facilitator, organiser or manager,** possibly more focused on 'the big picture', often slightly distanced from the filmmaking process but not necessarily.
- **1 & 2 -** elements of **both of the above categories.**

The inclusion of data on whether the interviewee was from Northern Ireland originally or is currently based there, was felt to be important and relevant data, due to the way that whether an individual has experienced the divisions, or even the conflict, first-hand will inevitably alter the way in which they perceive these projects. Those living their day to day lives in Northern Ireland while facilitating these projects may also have insights into social dynamics of politics, that a facilitator coming from outside the context may not have a deep understanding of. Equally, those more closely connected to the region, and perhaps even the conflict, will also have their own specific biases; which will perhaps be different to the biases of those coming to these projects as an 'outsider'. There were examples given by interviewees where it was an advantage if one of the facilitating filmmakers was not from the region, as they were 'blind' to some of the dynamics, which was described at times as being a benefit for the project. *indicates interviewees who tended to live partially in Northern Ireland, or where it was unclear how much of their time is currently spent in the region.

The interviews were conducted, in English, almost entirely online using video conferencing software (Zoom), due to practical considerations[8]; and also so that interviewees could be in familiar surroundings (e.g., at home, in a quiet place at work). A one interview was ascertained through written responses in exceptional circumstances due to the interviewees' schedule. The interviews were conducted between May and June 2024, and each lasted about an hour. Participants were first informed about the interview procedure, including recording, transcription, anonymisation, and confidentiality. They were also sent a document with information about the study and completed a consent form (see appendix 2.). The study background was also explained by the interviewer verbally at the beginning of the interview, and the participant's informed consent was obtained. Each interview was fully recorded and transcribed, and the interviews have been anonymised.

The interviewing method used was in-depth interviews using a semi structured approach, which consisted of a series of open-ended questions as a guideline, which was used to help participants elaborate on issues relevant to the research questions and to ensure that all key topics were covered. The interview guideline was implemented without strict adherence to the order of questions, in order to facilitate a natural flow of recall and elaboration. The approach was a hybrid inductive / deductive one, with main categories already predefined (built in order to map connections in the data), while also using the information from the interviews to look for emerging themes. The questions (see appendix 1.) focused on how they would describe the project and process from their perspective, how they saw their role in the process, if there were factors that affected the process (Section A); how the project may have changed perceptions of self and community (Section B); how they perceived the project, and how 'successful' or not it was, if it had lasting impact, if they perceive participatory film or video projects as being useful for peacebuilding [in Northern Ireland], and if they saw other outcomes or difficulties which may not have been foreseen (Section C); as well as opening up space for other thoughts or perceptions related to the project which may not fall neatly into the predefined question areas (Section D). This was useful as interviewees raised some elements which were not expected, and patterns of similar points were made across several interviews in Section D. As the interviews were conducted as semi-structured, the format was more conversational in nature, to allow a more natural flow of ideas and thought processes. Some follow up questions were asked in certain moments to clarify or understand more fully a point raised by an interviewee. Interviews were analysed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this is an appropriate approach for qualitative research using interviews, especially as this method was originally used in psychology. This research is focused on perceptions (of the facilitators), therefore this method was deemed to be the best way to proceed.

[8] Logistical, temporal and financial constraints during the research period did not allow for travel to the region to conduct interviews in person. Although some interviewees were either never based, or are no longer based in Northern Ireland.

1.3. Structure of the research

The structure of this thesis is designed to comprehensively analyse participatory filmmaking and video in peacebuilding. The thesis is organised into four main chapters, each serving a distinct purpose in unravelling the complexities of peacebuilding and the arts and then latterly its' operationalisation in Northern Ireland, with regards to participatory film. By employing this structured approach, the thesis will provide a holistic understanding of participatory filmmaking and video in de-antagonising relations between previously at-war groups. This thesis is consisted of five chapters, after the introduction, the second chapter will begin with a literature review, conceptual and theoretical framework, looking in depth into peacebuilding and post-conflict societies as a phenomenon. It will then be followed by a section on arts in peacebuilding, its' application, and then on to participatory filmmaking projects in peacebuilding. This will then lead on to a section on the operationalisation of participatory filmmaking projects. The aim of this chapter is to help to clarify different definitions of these concepts and areas of study before dealing with the specific regional focus of this thesis. The third chapter will be focused on Northern Ireland. This chapter will include a brief historical contextualisation of the most recent conflict in Northern Ireland, the peacebuilding efforts which have taken place there, and where the arts have been used in the region as a peacebuilding tool. At the end of this chapter, participatory filmmaking projects which have taken place in Northern Ireland will be covered. The aim of this chapter is to elaborate on the background of the context of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland and what projects have been implemented to date. The fourth chapter will consist of the results of the qualitative interviews on participatory film and video projects in Northern Ireland. Finally, the concluding chapter will be a synthesis of the findings from the interviews, and a comprehensive discussion of the results, answering the research question, and explore further avenues for research.

This research endeavours to understand how collaborative participatory arts projects, specifically those focused on participatory filmmaking, are perceived by those involved, and to understand what is seen to be effective in terms of peacebuilding, and what can be improved upon. This will be done through examining specific examples of projects in Northern Ireland, the perceptions of those involved in those specific projects, through interview, as well as interview with those working or who have worked in other participatory arts, filmmaking, peacebuilding contexts in Northern Ireland. This study will allow us to gain both a longer term perspective on arts peacebuilding projects, as well as to understand their practical implementation in the present day. This will be useful for us to understand when devising and designing new future projects of this nature, so that these findings may potentially be used in other post-conflict contexts. Especially when, inevitably, the day comes in other conflict-affected parts of the world, where the gunshots echo their last, the bombs stop dropping, and peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts will slowly begin to take place in earnest.

2. Theoretical Background

This section deals with existing research through four subchapters, with the overall aim of outlining the literature in peacebuilding, the debates with regards to limits of some peacebuilding techniques, the claims of the benefits of using the arts in peacebuilding as a way of filling in some of the gaps in the commonly used peacebuilding methods. This is to underline the ways in which participatory art making (in this case, film) can be used, and have been used, to date. The following theoretical background will begin with the topic of peacebuilding and 'post conflict' societies. Thereafter, the role of arts in peacebuilding will be discussed, with an overview of literature on participatory filmmaking, also in the context of peacebuilding. Lastly, the theoretical framework will examine the operationalisation of participatory filmmaking projects, which is relevant for the understanding of how participatory filmmaking functions in practice.

2.1 Peacebuilding and 'post-conflict' societies

With alarming estimates of the number of current violent conflicts globally ranging from 55 to 114 (Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, 2023; International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2023), it is clear that peacebuilding strategies are still incredibly important and necessary today. As mentioned previously, 'post-conflict' is a term which has been contested (Junne & Verkoren, 2004), that there may be no such thing as 'post-conflict', merely periods of less violence (Junne & Verkoren, 2004), but is generally meant as a period of significantly reduced level of violence after violent conflict has taken place. Perhaps the clearest indicator of the likelihood of renewed violence, is conflict which has taken place recently, which many have claimed is the "best predictor of future large scale violence" (Junne & Verkoren, 2004). In 44% of all post-conflict situations, war resumes within the first 5 years; and after 10 years, violence resumes in 50% of post-conflict contexts (Junne & Verkoren, 2004). Therefore peacebuilding processes are necessary.

Another, much more overarching challenge, which has been debated in the literature, is how do we define peace. There have been various conceptions within the field of peace and conflict studies, of what we mean by peace. Commonly, strategies have been categorised into 'positive' and 'negative' peace. Johan Galtung, in his conception, defined 'negative' peace as the absence of (physical) violence, whereas 'positive peace' means something far deeper (Galtung, 1969). Galtung also discussed the idea of structural violence. How we define peace is relevant to this study, and where peace is referred to henceforth in this paper, it will be the idea of positive peace.

Once violence has begun to subside, there comes the phase of institution building, and approaches to various forms of justice. As mentioned previously, post-conflict efforts such as institution

building[9], lustration; disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR); security; mediation; and diplomacy for example, tend to be focused on the macro level. One way to manage the aftermath of a conflict is through the concept of justice, through trials. Trials, specifically international tribunals, often take place far away from the citizens of the countries where the atrocities took place, sometimes with those citizens being unaware of the tribunal at all (eg. ICTY and ICTR[10]): they can be too far removed physically and culturally (Clark, 2008). Due to the very nature of the way that trials work, the 'truth' which is revealed can be narrow: many stories do not get told, or that the 'truths' told are selective (Clark, 2008). There are others who say that we must consider culturally appropriate ways of remembering (Barsalou, 2008). Antagonisms often continue to play out on a grassroots level in these societies where there has been recent violence, for example, through continued animosity in relation to transitional justice, differing histories, and continued physical or societal division (Zupančič et al., 2023). There is therefore debate in the academic literature which centres on what some argue are the limitations of some peacebuilding models, and this study will continue in this vein to argue that some of these limitations may be addressed through artistic practice. The argument here is that there is therefore a gap in 'traditional' peacebuilding strategies, and the arts can potentially fill in aspects of it and provide a space in which to explore other approaches and narratives.

2.2 Arts and peacebuilding

Although not always first to come to mind as a peacebuilding tool, art has considerable potential to provide positive outcomes in post-conflict situations. There has been a steadily increasing collection of academic research published in the area: *'The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace'* (Lederach, 2010) is cited regularly throughout the oeuvre of arts and peacebuilding research, and has been referred to as one of the first instances where the research is focused entirely on the topic, rather than a single chapter on the arts in a wider collection on peacebuilding. Another seminal text is '*Mediating Peace: Reconciliation through Visual Art, Music and Film'* (Kim et al., 2015). A newer collection of essays '*Peacebuilding and the Arts*' (2020) was published, and in the same year, the Center for Art and Peacebuilding (CAP) was set up at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). Most recently '*Art and Human Rights'* (2023) also considers the arts in peacebuilding contexts, through a human rights lens. The main debates in arts and peacebuilding, have for a start often been in relation to

[9] Behind the idea of institution building in the aftermath of conflict, is the concept that a society based on rule of law, with strong political institutions, in itself will allow individuals to have more of a sense of control over their lives (Barsalou, 2008). However, it has been argued that it is perhaps over-simplifying the matter at hand to say that democracy will solve all conflict (Herrero, 2004).

[10] This is in reference to the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), located in The Hague, The Netherlands - which is not close to the former Yugoslavia region where the crimes took place; and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) located in Arusha, Tanzania, not in Rwanda (Clark, 2008) - in fact, Arusha is on the opposite side of Tanzania to the part that borders Rwanda.

justifying the value of arts in peacebuilding in itself. Claims which deal with the benefit of the arts used in peacebuilding processes, have often originated from the peace and conflict studies discipline, peace education, and related social science fields, including those writing from a human rights perspective (Mitchell et al., 2020; Gantheret et al., 2023); but, as we will see as this chapter progresses, there have also been linked contributions from disciplines such as psychology, clinical psychology and therapeutic practice (specifically arts therapy) - an area which has long understood the power of the arts for healing. This study relates to this to an extent, as looking at the way in which participatory filmmaking projects are perceived, in itself is about assessment of the value of the arts (in this case participatory filmmaking) in peacebuilding.

Arts projects have increasingly been utilised in so-called 'post-conflict' areas, approaching the work of peacebuilding in more innovative ways, for example through music (Heley, 2010) or dance (Deiana, 2022). Art may provide benefits such as helping people make sense of their experiences, feel more in control when faced with challenging situations, and as a way to amplify their need for their human rights to be respected, and also in terms of pursuing justice (McClain Opiyo, 2020). The arts "are a social phenomenon, whose meaning and practice are shaped and reshaped by social forces the momentum of which we can scarcely understand, let alone foresee." (Mitchell et al., 2020). Art allows creative space to ask questions and explore potential answers (Gantheret et al., 2023). In '*A Different Kind of War Story*', Nordstrom (1997) uses the example of Mozambique to argue that the peace agreement there was not, as is often reported, due to the work of the United Nations on the ground or the news media across the world at the time, or least not only through this work, but through "locally produced plays, prose, poetry and pictures that Mozambicans themselves created the conditions for peace. They made war an impossibility". She states that the peace accords stemmed from, and were built from, these grassroots arts efforts (Nordstrom, 1997).

There are however, ways in which the creative arts have been used for contrary purposes, cases where it was used to *incite* violent conflict. For example, propaganda in cartoons, hate speech on the radio, murals which double down on national and religious narratives, arts and media which others 'the other' (Mitchell et al., 2020). As Kickasola (2020) quite succinctly says: "Hitler sold the coming war with the language of peace, and cinematic power helped him do it. We see, here, a cautionary tale for cinematic peacebuilding" (Kickasola, 2020). Art has also been used to legitimise "unjust power", glorify violence, and play a part in creating narratives around identities which encourage conflict (Mitchell et al., 2020). This instrumentalisation of the arts can also be much more nuanced, not quite inciting violence, but still part of a state-sponsored visual effort focused towards the creation of a particular (national) identity (Poposki & Todorova, 2016). The arts have a huge capacity to shape identity, yet this can be done in a way which is intentionally destructive, or *"volatile"* (Mitchell et al., 2020), through, for example

propaganda (Kiper, 2022). We must be mindful of this too, when dealing with peacebuilding and the arts.

The specific attributes understood to be part of art that contribute to peacebuilding include storytelling (for example, for sense-making), healing in a therapeutic way (art therapy), healing in terms of transitional justice and memorialisation, and community building (reconciliation) to name a few. Firstly, there is an element of storytelling in the arts: stories create a framework for understanding our world (Gustafson, 2020), while stories which have differing takes on the direction of violence or differing narratives, can become a point of contention or contradiction. This is important as it relates to the possibility of the arts to add "nuance and complexify understandings of reality, [...] look at the world differently and move beyond binary ways of perception" (Gustafson, 2020). Art has been used to make sense of experiences, to "develop a sense of agency, to call for their rights, to pursue justice" (McClain Opiyo, 2020). Historical narratives are a significant aspect to the idea of cultural heritage, due to the way in which this intersects with identity (reference). The arts "are a social phenomenon, whose meaning and practice are shaped and reshaped by social forces the momentum of which we can scarcely understand, let alone foresee." (Mitchell et al., 2020).

The research on the arts in peacebuilding contexts, has been spoken about in terms of 'healing' in relation to transitional justice and memorialisation; the idea that there is a need to process and understand what happened, and that art can be a way in which this can be done (Gantheret, et al., 2023). Arts approaches linked to transitional justice (Rush & Simić, 2014; Fairey & Kerr, 2020); as a 'healing power' in transitional justice contexts (Golebiewski, 2014); or transitional justice via participatory art (Shefik, 2018). Lea David makes the claim that there has not been sufficient research made to say that 'dealing with the past' through transitional justice projects (including artistic ones) actually has a positive effect (David, 2020). Therefore this study could be an important way to examine dealing with the past, even if through indirect ways, and whether this can be done through (participatory) arts projects.

Arts in peacebuilding has also been connected to art therapy (Woodward, 2012; Haywood, 2023), which tends to focus on 'healing' in a more individual sense, rather than a collective or societal one - whether that be through music (Osborne, 2012); or visual arts (Haywood, 2023). The latter is particularly important in the context of 'post conflict' peacebuilding, as when a traumatic event is experienced, psychology researchers believe that the part of the brain which processes language (the Brocas area) "shuts down" (Rausch et al, 1996). An long-standing idea which has been in circulation in psychological research for some time now, is that due to the way in which danger is then recognised by the brain (in the amygdala), traumatic memory is stored through feeling or "bodily sensation" as well as, crucially,

visuals (Rausch, 1996). The field of art therapy has used art to help individuals express their emotions about traumatic events, to get in touch with both the memories which were 'recorded' visually, or through the body[11]. Some researchers of arts therapy have reasoned that touch and sight in fact connect directly to our brain's fear centre (Lusebrink, 2004). Therefore, not only have the arts already been used in individual therapeutic contexts for a significant period of time, but the arts is precisely well-placed to be an effective, even central, part of peacebuilding, where violent conflict will have inevitably inflicted traumatic experiences across individuals and populations, and where healing and processing is crucial. In order to move into a peaceful society without risk of slipping back into conflict, we need to ensure that individuals and society are equipped with the tools needed to fully process and come to terms with what has happened. For a sustainable transition into a peaceful society, and in order to minimise the likelihood of renewed violence, or if we are to use language from psychology: 'relapse', we must deal with and process what has happened on an individual and societal level.

One way in which practitioners in the peacebuilding, community work, art and filmmaking fields (as well as many other areas), are conducting their work, is through a 'participatory approach' (Bishop, 2012; Miller et al., 2017), centring those affected by the issues at stake, in a collaborative and "bottom-up" way (Shefik, 2018). Participatory art has been described as something which can *"contribute to individualised and collective healing, make the invisible visible, extend social responsibility, restore collective memory, repair the social fabric, reclaim truths and foster collective change"* (Shefik, 2018). These attributes of art processes are (aimed to be) enhanced and at the centre of participatory art, which includes film.

2.3 (Participatory) Filmmaking as peacebuilding tool

There is a poetic parallel with filmmaking and societies in transition from conflict. Film itself is constantly in transition, in movement, each frame making way for a new one. Film also feels appropriate as a tool due to the increasingly visually-led way in which we interact with and understand our world, especially through video viewed on phones[12], which is particularly notable with respect to this field of research, in terms of the way in which violent conflict is being videoed and shared more than ever. Film, much like music, has a relationship to time in that it can only be experienced at a specific pace, rather than as a static image or artwork. Therefore, if viewing communally, we experience the emotions and moments of the story collectively, at the same time. Conflicting narratives are at the core of post-conflict societies (Cobb, 2013). Therefore, film seems the perfect medium to explore new or lesser heard

[11] It has also been argued that arts which have a more physical aspect to them, for example using clay or pint help connect to this physical sensation, especially if they have become psychologically disassociated from their own sensations (Rausch, 1996)

[12] In a study on smartphone use, participants used their phone every five minutes regardless of notifications (Heitmayer and Lahlou, 2021)

narratives, or understanding narratives which are at odds. It has been said that film can "re-humanise" conflict contexts, even though it often has a tendency to do the opposite[13] (Morel, 2020). Film can therefore be a space for truths to be told, bear witness, allow room to imagine alternative futures, and potentially even change local and international minds or perspectives.

The concept of participatory filmmaking methodology has gained traction and popularity in recent years as part of a wider focus on participatory arts projects. This is especially in the realm of documentary, and has been used predominantly by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), UN or other international agencies, social work or community groups, as well as for academic research. Interestingly and perhaps quite significantly, much of the literature on this topic, and the claims of the benefits of participatory video, have been made from academics within the fields of geography, social work, community work, education, development, environmental and climate studies, as well as in peace and security realms, even international law (Gantheret et al., 2023). In some ways, it has been linked to ethnography (Gruber, 2016; Gutiérrez Torres, 2024), and there has been research linked more closely to film studies, although the discourse tends to focus on documentary filmmaking techniques (Macleod, 2016) and the 'subjects' relationship to the camera or filmmaker (Zaki, 2018). The main debates in participatory filmmaking and PV fields tend to revolve around methodology and roles, whether the process can be truly participatory, or to what extent it can be participatory (Takeda, 2021). Others discuss how "*academic approaches to participatory filmmaking tend to oscillate between scepticism and a-criticism"* (Gutierrez, 2022).

Participatory filmmaking, as is the case with most participatory art (Miller et al., 2017), is generally concerned with creating a piece (in this case, a film) where those who are the subject, have a key role in shaping the artwork (film) itself (Miller et al., 2017). Participatory filmmaking or participatory video is usually a process where groups use video to document their thoughts on issues that impact their space or community (Roberts & Lunch, 2015). Much of the research that concerns itself with the origins of participatory video, makes reference to Paulo Freire (1970) and his work the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and his theory of the action/reflection praxis (Freire, 1970). That is to say, the idea is that dialogue in itself is not enough, that one must take action to "critically reflect" on what their reality is, in order to change it (Freire, 1970). This is linked to empowering individuals, and to his idea of conscientization, that we all learn "social myths" and that learning is a process which needs to reveal the real problems and issues (Freire, 1970). Some state that participatory filmmaking or PV came from

[13] Film cameras themselves, strangely, have a history which is inextricably linked with warfare. The history of the part of the film camera which contained the reel, is technology which was derived from the machine gun. This was seen in examples such as the chronophotographic gun, and photo revolver or Janssen revolver - ancestors of the film camera: "the technologies of the gun and camera…evolved in lockstep" (Landau, 2002).

the idea of citizen engagement through cinema, such as the the Fogo Process[14] in the 1960s: a methodology of which concerned itself with a group or community being involved in creating their own films (Roberts & Lunch, 2015). Participatory filmmaking has also been linked to feminist practice (Roberts & Muñiz, 2020). Participatory film, or PV more specifically, incorporates a very broad scope of practices which generally consist of the creation of films by non-professionals, as a way to "engage communities, develop critical awareness, and amplify citizens' voices" (Roberts & Muñiz, 2020). "Participatory video is an iterative process, whereby communities use video to document innovations and ideas or focus on issues affecting their environment and community" (Lunch, 2007). Many or most of the approaches to participatory techniques in arts projects, particularly participatory film or video, place participants at the centre of the process, and when used in peacebuilding, can bring together groups that might not otherwise interact (Baú, 2014b). It is a process where groups use video to document their thoughts and issues that impact their space or community. The process of participatory film is a constant process of (re) negotiation (Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020), much like societies transitioning from conflict themselves. Participatory film and video projects also have the potential to challenge internally held beliefs (about 'the other'), of both participants and audiences, through the collaborative process (Baú, 2014b). Local viewing of the film as the project goes on, is often core to the PV process. This is with the view to "opening communication channels locally; promoting dialogue and discussion; and setting in motion a dynamic exchange of ideas and solutions" (Lunch, 2007).

Participatory film or video projects have been created in many contexts, and have often, even mostly, been used with marginalised, underrepresented, or historically oppressed groups, such as indigenous communities (Misty & Berardi, 2012; Amir, 2019; Rao, Narain & Sabir, 2022); refugees (Frisina & Muresu, 2018; Frimberger & Bishopp, 2020; Trencsényi & Naumescu, 2021; Decherney, 2023; Sarria-Sanz, Alencar & Verhoeven, 2023); those who are homeless (Kennelly, 2018; Roy et al., 2020); female carers (Blazek, et al., 2015); or has been used to deal with topics such as domestic violence (Garrett & Brickell, 2015); and it is a practice which has been employed particularly when working with young people (Blum-Ross, 2013; Blazek et al., 2015; Haynes & Tanner, 2015; MacDonald et al., 2015; Canosa et al., 2016; Eastwood et al., 2021). Participatory film projects conducted in peacebuilding, conflict or 'post-conflict' contexts (Baú, 2014a; Townsend & Niraula, 2016; Fairey, 2018; Johnston, 2020; Redwood et al., 2022; Charles & Fowler-Watt, 2022), have sometimes been used, not only as a way to process, tell stories and have them heard, heal or memorialise, but also as a tool where previously at-war communities are brought together through the process of making, to open spaces for dialogue, to process what happened together (possibly creating a third narrative), or to reframe group narratives around conflicts, communities and 'the other' (Baú, 2014b). This has been especially in the context of

[14] The Fogo Process refers to a project in Fogo Island Newfoundland, Canada, where isolated groups made films about their communities, which were then screened to other isolated communities (Williamson, 1989; Wiesner, 1992; Emke, 1998).

ethnic or identity conflicts, where projects are used with the aim of de-antagonising relations between groups (Baú, 2014b). In some cases, the projects have been specifically set up in order to create a piece of work to be shown to decision-makers (Fisher et al., 2021); for specifically as a means to facilitate social and political dialogue (Mistry & Shaw, 2021; Mistry et al., 2023); to be used as an advocacy tool related to communications campaigns (Flower & McConville, 2009), or, very commonly, as a research tool (eg. Chávez et al., 2004; Gall, 2016), also in feminist research (Moodley, 2008). It has sometimes been linked to ICT4D (Information Communication Technology for Development) projects (Roberts, 2015; Roberts, 2016; Poveda & Roberts, 2017; Roberts, 2017; Haines et al., 2022), and Communication for Development (C4D) (Roberts & Muñiz, 2020), a concept closely linked to Development Studies.

Aspects of participatory filmmaking have also been used on a bigger scale by well-known film-makers. For example the *'Act of Killing'* (2012) and *'The Look of Silence'* (2014) by Joshua Oppenheimer. The films deal with gang-run mass killings (1965-66) in Indonesia, and on realising their pride in their actions and their interest in cinema, the filmmaker asks those involved in the killings to re-enact them as a play in the style of their favourite Hollywood films. Through the process of re-creating, of a film within a film, treading the line between documentary and fiction, the participants slowly begin to reflect on their actions. Another example is '*Promises'* (2001), a documentary focused on Israel and Palestine, which works with children from both sides of the border, and brings them together. They talk about politics, but more so they do everyday things that concern children: play, practicalities, curiosities. The children would never have met if it were not for the film, and through the 'excuse' of the film, children from one side of the border are brought across to the other side, to meet children of the same age, living not far from their reality, who, through the filmmaking, they had had contact with only via telephone calls. The film makers then bring the children again together years later, and ask them to reflect on their experience. *'Reunion: Ten Years After the War*' (2011) which concerns itself with the war in Kosovo also uses the creation of the film itself to facilitate dialogue between the participants who may not have otherwise met. When these types of films gain large traction and audiences, it also has an effect on the participants, and how the community is viewed more widely. The focus here will be on participatory film or video projects of a much smaller scale, and which feature a range of approaches to what they mean by 'participatory'.

Research conducted by Zupančič, Kočan and Vuga (2021), found that art *per se* is not perceived as an effective tool for bridging inter-ethnic divides (Zupančič et al., 2021). Therefore, if non-participatory arts do not have the potential, or at least have limited potential to overcome ethnic boundaries or group identities, where does that leave participatory arts? Is the involvement in the process of making art, for example, making a film, perceived to be more effective? While the topic of peacebuilding and the arts has been studied broadly, as has participatory film and video, we are yet to fully understand how these projects play out in relation to the overall idea of peacebuilding - going beyond ethnopolitics, and

facilitating space for everyday de-antagonisation of post-conflict contexts. There is limited literature which seems to agree on the design and methodology of participatory film projects in this context, and even less on how these projects are perceived over time. There has been very little investigation into the perceptions of these projects by those directly involved in them, beyond narrowly focused evaluation forms, predominantly from funding bodies (Jennings & Baldwin, 2010).

Another issue is in relation to balancing the 'quality' of the aesthetic output, which has often been put into contrast with the idea of ensuring that the process is truly participatory (Goris et al., 2015), although these do not necessarily need to be mutually exclusive. It matters who or what the facilitating organisation or individual is, and how the project is envisioned. That is to say, whether they are conceived primarily as an arts project to be aesthetically pleasing also, to be exhibited; or a peacebuilding project, where the exhibition and distribution of the film is perhaps less important than the process, where there may be a small screening or viewing for those involved but not wider than that. It also matters whether the project is part of a research project or began as part of research, conceived of by predominantly academics, and delivered by either academics or those working closely to academia or straddling the areas of academic writing on the topic and film making practice.

There are also difficulties with participatory filmmaking or video, and criticism of the process too (Milne, 2016), for example in terms of whether participants can retain anonymity when at risk of being stigmatised (Fraser et al., 2022), or the possibility for participatory filmmaking projects to exhibit an over- "attendance to researchers output requirements during the production process" (Sarria-Sanz et al., 2023). Inevitably as a medium, it is not always accessible to all, for example those with visual impairments[15]. Another pressing issue, is with regards to reproducing a "paternalistic" standpoint (Milne, 2016), and that the reasoning behind the giving of cameras to, for example children, has often been argued as being to "give them a voice", which Milne says is a cliché which has been used at times in a way which is careless and not well thought through (Milne, 2016). It is important to understand that participatory filmmaking and PV methodology has its' pitfalls, especially when exploring facilitators perceptions of the projects.

Elements which have been studied in relation to participatory filmmaking include participant motivations for taking part[16] (Mistry, 2014), and there has also been acknowledgement of inherent tensions as groups evolve; as well as the role that ethics play in the process (Shaw, 2014), and that it matters who is behind the lens (Whiting et al., 2016). The issue of facilitation, who facilitates PV processes, and how these dynamics and relationships play out has been the subject of some research.

[15] However, during the process of interviewing, some facilitators spoke about video projects they had managed to conduct in creative ways with groups who were visually impaired.
[16] In relation to communities in North Rupununi, Guyana and in Tumucumaque, Brazil (Mistry, 2014)

For example the way in which PV creates *"emotional bonds between team members"* (Bignante, et al., 2016). Literature from the field of documentary filmmaking also touches on this issue of the importance of the relationship between communities, the filmmaker, or who is holding the camera: *"when there is a conflict or dissonance between the community and the filmmaker [...] the immersion of the filmmaker into the community and her immediate interaction with […] subjects may become difficult to establish or sustain."* (Zaki, 2018). Therefore, a participatory filmmaking approach, meaning those from the community make the films about their community, would circumvent some or at least elements of the issues described above.

Community screenings are also usually part of the PV process. This has often been done with the view to "opening communication channels locally; promoting dialogue and discussion; and setting in motion a dynamic exchange of ideas and solutions" (Lunch, 2007). The idea of these communal viewings has been described as "*a different experience than reading a book alone, watching the television alone or with a couple of people, because even if what you see or read is incredibly moving, enraging, you're still alone. Your rage can be isolating. If you're in a room with people, you can immediately turn and say 'what do we do about it'".* (Naomi Klein quoted in Waugh et al., 2010). It has also been used as a way to confront difficult issues - for example a film featuring testimony from survivors of "highly militarised law enforcement", then those complicit in the violence were invited to the screening[17] (Wills, 2018). Whether the film is viewed collectively, distributed locally, distributed more widely (eg. film festivals) (Deiana, 2017), inevitably affects the nature of the project. This then relates to this idea of 'film as 'product' (Zelizer, 2003), and where this can become complicated in the context of peacebuilding. As Kickasola states: *"Can film do anything positive for the cause of peace without lapsing into meaningless commodification? If it can, we must first get beyond pat phrases and oversimplified stories that fail to reflect the hard, long-suffering work peacebuilding requires…how might false conceptions of peace be "sold" in the screening of them?"* (Kickasola, 2020). Faced with this issue of whether to screen, without 'commodifying' the art into 'product', Horváth (2023), stated that we have two approaches we can take: we can cease to exhibit participatory art completely, as "*it has an intrinsic value, obvious for the target group, and no meaning for others",* or we must find an alternative form of showing participatory art to the public, for example in "*non-artistic"* formats, or showing the artwork as a project which is still in progress (Horváth, 2023). This shows how complicated the presentation or screening of participatory art or film is. There is not one approach which will work well in every context, but the acknowledgement of the complexities at play is key to understanding the process and the nuances with regards to screening and distribution.

[17] This case was in relation to the film *It Stays With You: use of force by UN Peacekeepers in Haiti* (Cahal McLaughlin and Siobhán Wills - co-directors and co-producers, 2017, Belfast) (Wills, 2018).

After or during the screening stage, the impact of arts-based interventions is often difficult to measure. As Hawksley (2020) points out, it is difficult to argue for the effectiveness of the arts. When we wish to show that the arts should be used in peacebuilding, it is tempting to refer to case studies which have very clear outputs or results. However, an over focus on 'successes' in terms of visible results *"short-circuits the messy and unpredictable process by which genuinely effective results are often attained*" (Hawksley, 2020). This issue of how we evaluate the value of arts projects is something which has been explored in other research too (Hunter & Page, 2014).

Today, many conflicts are extensively documented, understood, as well as exacerbated through video, underscoring the role of media in shaping perceptions and narratives. This approach leverages our image and video-mediated world, countering divisiveness through shared creation. Therefore, participatory film projects may be the ideal way in which to work through the everyday de-antagonisation between groups, and facilitate space for new narratives.

2.4 Participatory filmmaking in peacebuilding: towards an operationalisation

The definition of what we mean practically by *doing* participatory filmmaking or PV, is rather contested, as there is a range of approaches to what is meant by 'participatory', and the definition of participatory filmmaking or PV, and a variety of ways this has been conducted. Across the literature, it seems clear that there is not a one-size-fits-all method for every context. They range from having participants hold the cameras themselves (eg. Gryniuk, 2019) and direct almost entirely, to participants being seen on screen, to participants co-creating the process with a professional film crew, to participants being instrumental to every aspect of the film down to the editing (and trained in techniques to do so), to methods which fall somewhere in-between these approaches. The level of direction, support and input that participants receive from those facilitating these projects varies wildly also. Mistry (2013) breaks the process of participatory filmmaking down into four phases: storyboarding, filming, editing and screening, although this may not necessarily always take place in this exact order (Mistry, 2013). Yet before that there is the conception of the project itself, who funds, initiates, facilitates the project and where it takes place. It is very relevant how the film is intended to be seen, or whether it is intended to be seen at all. One way that the types of activities (within arts and peacebuilding projects) have been categorised is in the following framework by Zelizer (2003):

Type of Activity	Purpose	Level of Focus
1. Youth Programs	Throughout Bosnia, many youth programs and youth houses use the creative performing arts as part of their activities. Often these are not so much peacebuilding activities, more entertainment for youth, however some programs are designed more as peacebuilding processes to bring groups together.	Individual/Community
2. Art and creative therapy programs	Several programs were setup at the end of war to use arts-based and creative therapies as tools to work with more traumatized populations, primarily with refugees and Internally Displaced Peoples.	Mostly Individual
3. Arts for Peacebuilding	Several projects were established in post-war period. Balance between product and process of bringing people together.	Individual/Community
4. Training Tool within conflict resolution	Many training programs and workshops use arts based component as a tool or component of process.	Individual/Community.
5. Short-term program	Bring together people from around the country to attend arts activity.	Community/Society.
6. Elite Arts	In more traditional arts some plays, music, movies dealt with the war from various perspectives. Also many continued to feature actors from diverse backgrounds, particularly in Sarajevo.	Individual/Community/ Society

Fig. 1. Types of Arts-Based Peacebuilding Activities (Zelizer, 2003).

It is important for us to understand the nuances between programmes, the ways in which projects can be grouped into various 'types', although it is also true that the lines between these groupings can be blurred or include aspects of more than one 'type'. This framework is more about how the project was conceived.

Zelizer (2003) also created a specific framework for differing visions and objectives of arts projects used in peacebuilding. They are: Arts as training tool, arts as product, process based arts, and arts as social protest (Zelizer, 2003). This categorisation was based on projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but may be applicable to other conflict or post-conflict contexts such as Northern Ireland.

Category	Description	Example
Training Tool	As a training tool in conflict resolution. Arts can help participants develop skills, experientially explore conflicts, increase creativity and increase trust between participants (*Pipkin & Dimenna, 1989; Yaffe, 1990)*	Education and Youth Peacebuilding Project in Bosnia; local trainings that incorporate theater based techniques.
Product Based	When the product itself is the primary goal. The art may have an impact on the community or a conflict, but the process of creating the product is not emphasized (*Epskamp, 1999)*	Plays produced in Sarajevo during the war. Much of contemporary, traditional art in Bosnia-Herzegovina.
Process Based	As a process-orientated approach where identity groups in conflict come together and work on reconciliation issues through creating shared work, which may also have an impact on larger the community. The process of creating the product is one of the main foci of the work (*Epskamp, 1999)*	An example in Bosnia is, an interreligious, inter-ethnic choir in Sarajevo.
Social Protest	As a form of speaking out against conflict, protesting against injustice and raising awareness. This can take place at various stages of a conflict, but often occurs at highly escalated stages or when there is a significant power imbalance (*Bartelt, 1997, Freire, 1997, Lederach, 1995*).	Examples include the famous violin concert by Vedran Smaljovic in Sarajevo during the war and the production of musical Hair during the war.

Fig. 2. Types of Arts-Based Approaches to Peacebuilding (Zelizer, 2003)

As this is more concerned with approach than 'type', this framework will be very relevant when examining perceptions of projects. The idea that approaches to arts projects can be either (1) Training Tool (Pipkin & Dimenna, 1989; Yaffe, 1990); (2) Product Based (Epskamp, 1999); (3) Process Based (Epskamp, 1999); or as (4) Social Protest (Bartelt, 1997; Friere, 1970; Lederach, 1995), and be categorised as such (Zelizer, 2003), will form the basis of the framework through which the interviews on the perceptions of arts projects (participatory filmmaking projects), will be analysed. For participatory filmmaking as (1) Training Tool, any mention of the film project in terms of skills building, education, learning in the sense of something as a means to an end for the participants, will mean it is categorised as such. For the (2) Product Based category, discussion of the participatory film or PV project as a 'product', ie. a final film to be taken to film festivals, screened, shown in art galleries, distributed (also for possible profit), will mean that the statements will fit this bracket. For the (3) Process Based section: comments which talk about the participatory film project as something where the process of making takes precedence over other elements. For (4) Social Protest, a broad definition of protest will be taken here, to mean any projects which attempt to make a (political) statement, advocate for change, or lobby in some way. In this case it will be defined as non-violent protest, which is public and organised (as opposed to violent, covert or spontaneous protest) (Andrain and Apter,

1995). This structure will help to understand how those involved in these participatory filmmaking endeavours directly, perceive the projects or approach them.

3. Northern Ireland

3.1 Conflict in Northern Ireland (1960s to 1998) and 'post-conflict' situation

With regards to Northern Ireland, the question of how far back one must go in order to truly pinpoint the beginning of a conflict is a difficult one to answer. This thesis will concern itself predominantly with the period from the late 1960s to 1998, where 3,500 people died[18] and over 40,000 were injured (Ulster University, n.d.). This period is commonly referred to as 'the Troubles', although it is important to acknowledge that this phrase is a contested concept for some (Phoenix, 2019). The most important elements to mention for the purposes of this research are that this conflict period, 'the Troubles', are generally understood to have begun with the civil rights movements in the 1960s, with Catholics protesting against discrimination – for example in elections (where there were issues with gerrymandering and property requirements), with employment, housing and the Special Powers act[19]. (Landlow & McBride, 2023). The conflict has generally been described in terms of being between two main conflict parties: those who saw Ireland including Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom ('unionist'), usually from the Protestant community[20]. Then there were those who saw Northern Ireland as being part of the island of Ireland (the Republic of Ireland) ie. pro-secession, often known as 'republicans', or nationalist, usually from the Catholic community (Landlow & McBride, 2023). As we know from almost all conflicts, there is a far more complex picture in reality: with subsections within conflict parties, and the involvement of the British army, and various paramilitary groups such as the IRA[21], the UDA[22] and the UVF[23].[24] Ceasefires took place in 1994, not long before The Belfast Agreement, commonly known as the Good Friday Agreement[25] in 1998: the peace agreement commonly understood to have brought an end to the conflict.

[18] Perhaps one of the most notable episodes was what is known as Bloody Sunday (1972), where 13 were killed and 14 injured (one of the injured later died) (Ulster University, n.d.).
[19] Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act (Northern Ireland) 1922, often referred to simply as the Special Powers Act or the "Flogging Act"
[20] Sometimes parts of this group are known as loyalists, which is in reference to being loyal to the United Kingdom.
[21] The Irish Republican Army, a republican paramilitary group
[22] Ulster Defence Association, a loyalist paramilitary group
[23] Ulster Volunteer force, a loyalist paramilitary group
[24] Any attempt to succinctly summarise the conflict and contextualise the situation historically, will inevitably misrepresent the way it played out in practice, and lack nuance. For the purposes of this research, the focus will be on the peacebuilding efforts since the conflict period.
[25] Agreement was reached on Good Friday, 10 April 1998, with the vote on the agreement on 22 May of the same year. This was done via two referendums, both North and South of the border. 71% (North) and 94% (South) voted 'Yes' to the agreement. (Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, n.d.)

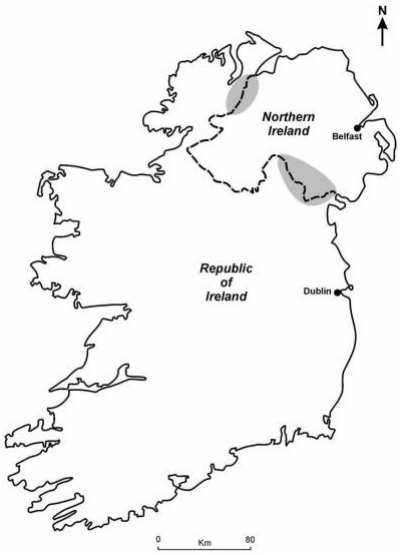


Fig.3. - Map of Ireland - Image source: (Todd et al., 2006)

However creating 'positive peace' means more than simply ending violent conflict. The post-conflict reality of Northern Ireland deals with ongoing difficulties in the region, and we would be remiss to paint the Good Friday Agreement as a resounding success story without any problematic aspects. Ulster University's CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) indicates that well over 100 people have been killed in sectarian related instances since the 1998 deal was signed. Elements such as where people live are still generally being along sectarian cleavages, with in some cases elements of physical segregation (walls between communities for example) still present. Social housing in Northern Ireland remains 90% segregated along the same fault lines that communities were divided upon historically (Northern Ireland Housing Executive, 2016; 2023). The 'Peace Walls' in Northern Ireland, where walls which were not conceived of as a permanent solution, but as a temporary way to reduce violence, have now become more permanent. A study released in 2012 found that 69% of residents believe that the peace walls are still necessary, therefore it would not be 'socially acceptable' to work on the removal of the walls, even though social segregation is one of the main hurdles to overcome for effective peacebuilding (Queens University Belfast, 2020). Education is still mostly separated: just 7% of Northern Ireland's schools are integrated[26], and 70% of school students attend a school where there "is less than a one-in-20 chance of meeting a pupil from another religious background" (Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, 2021). Therefore, there is still continued social segregation taking place and a continued need to bring groups together. It is important too, that we do not overlook the role of poverty and economic factors. Where the focus on the divide as being a political, historical and religious one, the issue and role of poverty being a factor in the violence at times has not been emphasised. There is still

[26] Schools which are not specifically for the Catholic nor Protestant community, but integrate pupils across the divide(s).

not a consensus on many topics such as the release of political prisoners, parades, commemorations, and controversial rituals (Zupančič et al., 2023). There are also ongoing controversies in Northern Ireland about compensation payments and amnesties.

There are also renewed potential sources of violence and ongoing division. Since around 2012, there have been news reports of a so-called 'new IRA' actively recruiting in Northern Ireland (McDonald, 2012), and the "political party Saoradh, perceived to be their political wing" (Zupančič et al., 2023). In 2020, news outlets reported an information leak from MI5 and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, which stated that loyalist paramilitaries were actively recruiting, and that there were an estimated 12,500 members (Dempster, 2020; De Souza, 2023). In March and April 2021, large riots broke out in Northern Ireland, which were linked to a multitude of factors including COVID-19; the funeral of IRA head of intelligence Bobby Storey; and racism towards new communities in Northern Ireland: "hate crimes and anti-EU immigration attitudes are strongly aligned with the youth of former conflict communities" (Doebler et al, 2016; McKee, 2016). There are also ways in which the legacy of violent conflict has had an impact on the mental health, both of those who experienced the violence directly and indirectly, but also there is increasing research into the concept of intergenerational trauma seen in the younger generations. Dr Ciaran Mulholland, consultant psychiatrist with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust stated in 2023 that "Northern Ireland has one of the highest rates of antidepressants [usage] in the world" (Thompson, 2023). As well as the first hand trauma experienced by those during the Troubles, there has been more recent attention paid to a group which has been termed the 'Ceasefire Babies', those too young to have experienced the bulk of 'the Troubles' first hand, who were babies or very young children at the time of the provisional IRA ceasefire in 1997 (Austin, 2019) and the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Now in their thirties, suicide rates have almost doubled since the peace agreement (Tomlinson, 2012).

Another factor which was attributed to the 2021 riots was Brexit, which brought Northern Ireland out of the European Union (EU) in 2020, with the Republic of Ireland remaining in the EU. There were concerns about this new layer of the issues for the border, now the only land border that the UK has with the EU. Importantly, in the referendum, Northern Ireland voters voted to remain in the EU by a 55.8% majority (BBC News, 2016), however there were reports that this vote fell quite closely along community divisions (see Appendix 3.1). In July 2022, the European Commission issued a press release announcing the PEACE PLUS programme for Northern Ireland for the 2021-2027 period. The Commission stated that it will invest €235 million, citing the UK-EU withdrawal agreement and concerns about unequal access to healthcare and business for example (European Commission, 2022).

Contentious issues globally such as the violence in Israel and Palestine, which in 2023 and 2024 with groups identifying with and supporting each group quite markedly along sectarian lines: Israeli flags appearing in unionist Protestant areas, and a large number of Palestinian flags being displayed in

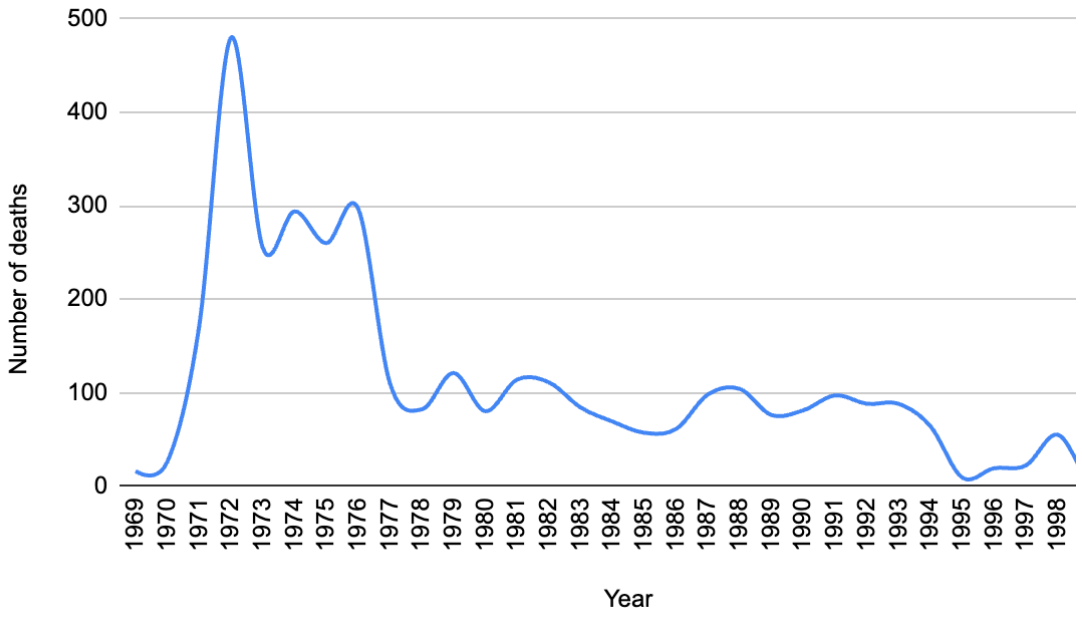
traditionally republican Catholic areas. It is another issue over which division and group identity is being formed or reaffirmed around, although thus far this phenomenon has mostly featured in news reporting only (eg. Freyer & Al-Kassab, 2024), rather than in new academic literature yet.
Given all of these issues, peacebuilding is still needed.

3.2 Peacebuilding efforts in Northern Ireland

Since the Northern Ireland peace agreement was signed in 1998, violent conflict in the region, often described as an ethnic conflict[27] (McBride, 2023), has significantly reduced (Ulster University, n.d.) (see figs. 1 and 2). The Good Friday Agreement (1998) was largely credited with being successful in terms of reducing levels of violence[28] (Rickard, 2023). It is a timely moment to examine the area, as the Good Friday Agreement turned 25 years old in 2023, and Northern Ireland has been technically 'post conflict' since then. On the whole, Northern Ireland exists in relative peace in comparison with the period leading up to the Good Friday Agreement. The region does not currently figure on conflict indicator studies such as the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Armed Conflict Survey - Conflict Trends Map (2016-2023) for example, which measures current active armed conflict areas across the world[29]. The Good Friday Agreement created a new power-sharing government[30], focused on disarmament, and ensured there were no longer border checks between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Landow and McBride, 2024). From 1987 to 2017, there has been over two billion Euro in peacebuilding funding to Northern Ireland (Byrne et al., 2022), notably the EU PEACE funds[31]. There were also architectural creations such as the Derry Peace Bridge[32] which links the areas which were in conflict.

Fig. 4. Deaths during the conflict in Northern Ireland, until the 1998 Good Friday Agreement

[27] There are disagreements with regards to whether it can be called an ethnic conflict (this is mentioned in an earlier footnote)
[28] Although it is true that the Omagh bomb in August 1998, just months after the agreement was signed, killed 29 people and injured around 220 - the event with the highest death toll during the period (Ulster University, n.d.).
[29] A conflict being defined as over 25 deaths in a calendar year (IISS, 2024)
[30] With the Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont
[31] Between 1995 and 2020, there were four EU PEACE programmes. The PEACE PLUS programme is for 2021-2027, with "the UK's financial contribution and additional national co-financing from Ireland and Northern Ireland". (European Parliament, 2024)
[32] The bridge was opened in 2011. It bridges the largely unionist Waterside with the mostly nationalist Cityside.



Data from Ulster University's Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN)

There is a general understanding that there has been an overall reduction in violence since the 1990s, and Northern Ireland has at times been held up as a success story. The numbers of deaths since 1998, should this graph continue, barely figure on the bottom of the scale (Ulster University, n.d.). The fact that there is a tourist industry in the region (O'Connor and Bolan, 2008) is in itself testament to the level of peace that Northern Ireland currently experiences.

Northern Ireland is therefore an appropriate example to look at due to the unique mix of the time passed since the conflict, the general reduction in violence and 'success' of the peace process, but also in relation to the extensive funding for peacebuilding projects, including arts projects. It is also a region which finds itself encountering potential new sources of violence, or rather, in many cases, new violence triggers of old divides. It is an example of just how long-term peace processes must be, and how the idea of a 'finished' peace process is perhaps impossible or at the very least, naive. There is a continued and clear need for peacebuilding projects in the region, and there are many concrete examples of arts and film projects throughout the years to look at in this regard.

3.3 Arts as a peacebuilding tool in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is an area where there have been many arts related projects implemented as part of peacebuilding (Anderson & Conlon, 2013; Foy, 2018; Pruitt, 2011). There have been creative peacebuilding projects in Northern Ireland focused on music (Odena, 2010; Pruitt, 2011; Odena & Scharf, 2022), theatre (Jennings & Baldwin, 2010; Foy, 2018), and even a 'social circus' (Lybeck, 2023), to name a few. As previously mentioned, such activities offer great potential for storytelling,

new narratives, and potential healing. Often referred to in the region as 'cross-community' (Starr, 2020), these are projects which attempt to cross or transcend community divides and bring previously warring communities together. Examples of 'cross-community' projects through the arts span from rather more well-known projects such as the murals[33] (Aguiar, 2014; Kehoe & Dunne, 2021), to more recent digital projects such as the '*AR Peace Wall'* app (2022) an augmented reality (AR)[34] piece created with twin city Hiroshima in Japan; and '*Border Sounds'* (2021) a cross-border virtual reality (VR) video (Aguiar, 2023). With a challenging past of conflict, coupled with several peacebuilding projects involving art, Northern Ireland offers an excellent setting to investigate the benefits and drawbacks of participatory arts.

3.4 Participatory filmmaking in Northern Ireland

Peacebuilding through the arts will be interrogated here through examining participatory film or video projects which have been undertaken in Northern Ireland. Before proceeding to look at the arts projects in Northern Ireland focused on participatory film and video, it is important to look at how Northern Ireland is depicted on screen nationally and internationally, especially in the context of 'the Troubles', to examine the wider context in terms of visual culture, and what narratives, messages and images they (re) produce. It has been said that "Northern Ireland is one of the most over-narrativised areas of the world" (Kennedy, 2005). It is important to understand the wider visual culture and reference points which may be in the minds of creators and audiences. One of the most famous recent media examples is the TV series '*Derry Girls'* (2018-2022), a fictional sit-com set in 90s Derry-Londonderry. This series has had a significant impact on the collective consciousness around the conflict especially for those outside of Northern Ireland and for younger generations[35]. It is worth noting other well-known big budget films about 'the Troubles' over the last 20 years or so, such as *'Bloody Sunday'* (2002); *'Hunger'* (2008) about the 1981 Irish hunger strike; '*'71'* (2014), about a British soldier separated from his unit during a riot in Belfast; and *Belfast* (2021) about growing up during the Troubles. Perhaps gaining the most media attention of late is the film '*Kneecap'* (2024), which premiered at Sundance Festival 2024, and deals explicitly with the conflict, transitional justice, intergenerational trauma, young people in Northern Ireland, and the politics of language. It is the first Irish language film (a language associated with the republican, predominantly Catholic, community), and it has garnered a great deal of

[33] Some of the murals were made in peacebuilding contexts, but some of the most famous ones were made before this, in order to mark territory of specific groups, express national/group identity or anger towards the 'other' (Aguiar, 2014).

[34] Augmented reality (AR) uses the real world as a setting which is then overlaid with digital elements; virtual reality (VR) is completely virtual and immersive, isolating users from the real world, usually with a headset or headphones (Johnson, 2023).

[35] There was a subsequent non-fiction piece made for TV, called *'The Real Derry: Jamie-Lee O'Donnell'* (2022) with one of the actresses from '*Derry Girls'*, who grew up in Derry.

controversy[36] (eg. BBC, 2024; Roy, 2024; Wilson, 2024). Whether documentary or fiction, or something in between, storytelling about Northern Ireland and sectarian divisions has taken place extensively in the film and TV context of the late 2010s and early-to-mid 2020s. It is important, too, to mention other recent depictions of Northern Ireland on screen that have challenged the 'same old' narratives focused on 'the Troubles': '*Game of Thrones'* (2011-2019) notably contributed to the tourist industry in Northern Ireland[37] and it has been argued that the series changed some perceptions of the region (Çelik Rappas and Baschiera, 2020; Mannheimer et al., 2022). How Northern Ireland and the conflict are depicted on screen, remembered, reproduced, is clearly still very relevant to how both those within the region see themselves and those outside understand what has happened. When film is made in relation to the conflict in Northern Ireland, for the most part, it is made to be watched. Both through the creation, and in the interpretation through viewing, cultural reference points such as film inevitably affect the way in which meaning is created or understood. This is highly relevant therefore, especially when looking at international audiences for participatory projects, and international funding.

There are a plethora of participatory filmmaking examples which were made in the context of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland, or deal with the topic of the Irish border, or conflict related or current social issues. Examples of relatively small-scale participatory film projects (as opposed to big-budget films for screening in cinemas) conducted in Northern Ireland, set up to examine topics in relation to violent conflict and the border, which illustrate the practices discussed above, include: *'In Peace, Apart'* (2014); *'Across and In-Between'* (2018); *'Border Sounds'* (2021); and *'REEL BORDERS'* (2021-2026). These projects illustrate the variety of styles and approaches that can be taken in participatory filmmaking: from on-screen appearance of participants[38]; multi-strand projects including an immersive art exhibit and theatre performance[39]; projects which make use of archive footage[40]; and VR[41]. Some were projects as part of a strategy to engage the public with public records offices or archives[42]; and others were academic research projects[43]. The time passed since the projects took place ranges from 10 years old[44], to six years old[45], to a project created remotely and digitally during the COVID-19

[36] *Kneecap* are a band that rap in Irish, and the film was made about the band, in a semi participatory way. The band featured at Glastonbury music festival in the UK in June 2024. This goes to show just how current issues around identity still are, and how present it is in arts and culture of Ireland, Northern Ireland and the UK.
[37] To understand the scale of the impact it has had on tourism and perceptions of Northern Ireland: on the VisitBelfast website, the top header banner includes: 'What's on'; 'See&Do'; 'Eat&Drink', and subsequently: '*Game of Thrones*' as a separate header and category on its own (VisitBelfast, 2024)
[38] *'In Peace, Apart'; 'Across and In-Between'; 'REEL BORDERS'*
[39] *'Across and In-Between'*
[40] '*Border Sounds'; 'REEL BORDERS'*
[41] Virtual Reality - *'Border Sounds'*
[42] '*Border Sounds'*
[43] '*REEL BORDERS'*
[44] *'In Peace, Apart'*
[45] *'Across and In-Between'*

pandemic[46], up to the most recent projects in progress today (with funding to continue until 2026)[47]. Funding sources also varied, from European Union research funds[48]; a war museum[49]; archives[50]; and universities[51], among other sources.

'*In Peace, Apart'* (2014)

'In Peace, Apart' (2014) is a short film which involves students from two schools in Derry~Londonderry, from across the divide: a Protestant school and a Catholic school. Four students appear on screen, and the main focus is on two of the girls, who meet and exchange uniforms - a very visible marker of whether a school student is Protestant or Catholic. This was facilitated by the Guestbook project (based in Boston, US), and the Nerve Centre (Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland). '*In Peace, Apart'* is available publicly online, and gained some press attention at the time in the *Belfast Telegraph* (Ferguson, 2014) and the *Guardian / the Observer* (Vulliamy, 2014). The process was fully participatory in that the participants (school students), came up with the concept, were trained on the cameras, and were both on and behind the camera during the project. The students had noted that they felt uncomfortable going to certain areas of town in their school uniforms[52], and formed the basis of the film. The film was made as part of a broader community peacebuilding project between the schools, and elevated the voice and experiences of young people living in this divided society, which may have been overlooked. It also most certainly brought groups together who may not otherwise be in contact, potentially challenging views of 'the other'. This example is an almost 'textbook' case of using the production of a film *itself* to bring groups together.

***'Across and In-Between'* (2018)** (with *'The Yellow Line'* and *'The Border People's Parliament'*)

'Across and In-Between' (2018)[53] is a short documentary film which focuses on the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (usually referred to as the Irish border). It focuses on those who live by the border[54], their relationship to the land, history, the realities of day-to-day life, and speculation on the future. This project was made as part of a set of arts-based creative endeavours, instead of taking place in a community style setting, this project was run by artists and conceived - first

46 '*Border Sounds'*
47 *'REEL BORDERS'*
48 *'REEL BORDERS'*
49 *'Across and In-Between'*
50 '*Border Sounds'*
51 *'In Peace, Apart'* '*REEL BORDERS'*
52 Due to the fact it was such a visible marker of what community they belonged to.
53 The project was made in 2018, and at the time a large part of public discussion and debate centred on the issue of Brexit and would would happen in terms of the Irish border. The UK referendum to leave the European Union was conducted in 2016, with the UK officially leaving the European Union in 2020. This, although it was actively not the focus of the project, inevitably coloured the project, and its' reception at the time.
54 '*Across and In-Between'* collaborated with communities in Pettigo, Tullyhommon, Cuilcagh Mountain, Castle Saunderson, Magheraveely and Newtownbutler

and foremost - as an art piece. The quality of the aesthetic output was held in high importance. The full piece included an immersive installation called '*The Yellow Line'* (2018), which references the colour of the plants along the border lands. Another branch to this project was a people's parliament - the '*Border People's Parliament'*[55] - a participatory performance piece (with those involved in the film '*Across and In-between*') which culminated in a manifesto which was then presented to the (real) parliament, Stormont (see appendix 3.) (Carr, 2018). This raised "important issues with decision-makers [...] on behalf of their communities" (Haynes & Tanner, 2015).[56] The method here was that those that appeared on film shaped the narrative, but were not in charge of holding the camera, directing or editing. Rather the participatory element during the '*Border People's Parliament'* immersive interactive arts piece dialogue, which culminated in a manifesto which was then presented to the (real, legislative) Northern Ireland Assembly, in Parliament Buildings, Stormont. The *'Border People's Parliament'* was possible to experience mostly only by being there; and *'The Yellow Line'* installation only available to see when it is being exhibited[57]. The main director/producer/overseer of the project is US-based, but it was also co-produced by local filmmakers and artists: local both to Northern Ireland, and the specific border towns where it was made. This was co-commissioned for the closing season of 14-18 NOW[58] and Belfast International Arts Festival.[59] What this project showed was the way in which participatory filmmaking can firstly be created in a way which is initiated by and originates with artists and filmmakers. It is also an example of a multi-strand large-scale project, which had a large number of people involved.

'*Border Sounds'* (2021)

Another project is '*Border Sounds'* (2021), an 11-minute VR film, created remotely across both sides of the border (Aguiar, 2023). The remote nature of the project was due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the requirement to be socially distanced at the time. There are no people on screen in this film, rather it is a series of landscapes. The film transports the viewer through a VR (virtual reality) experience to locations along the Irish border which mean something to the participants. This is combined with a soundscape of sounds that the participant associated with the area and chose to be included, and a Haiku poem written by participants about this location, which appears on the screen. This was created with funding from the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), the official archive for Northern

[55] For the *'Border People's Parliament'* - On 20th October 2018, 150 people arrived at Northern Ireland's Parliament Buildings, Stormont, which was a "carefully staged event, their opinions recorded in Parliamentary committee rooms and their photographic portraits captured." (Belfast International Arts Festival, 2018) They then drafted *The Yellow Manifesto - A True Account of a Border and its People* (see appendix 3.).

[56] These three elements, this entire artistic piece, was created by and overseen by the artist in residence for the Belfast International Arts Festival: Suzanne Lacey - The leading artist had also worked on other projects which she says were more *truly* participatory, although these were not in Northern Ireland and fall beyond the scope of this study. The project *'Across and In-between'* is a model or format which has been used in various contexts.

[57] There was not an ongoing exhibition of *'The Yellow Line'* during the time frame of this research.

[58] A project from the Imperial War Museum (reference)

[59] It was presented from 16 - 23 October, 2018

Ireland. '*Border Sounds'* was made as part of the Making the Future programme[60] led by PRONI and the Nerve Centre with the Rural Community Network. This is an example of a project which had fewer facilitators, and had someone who had filmmaking experience but that was coming to the project also from a very community work focus, while also having had experience of working in research. It is also an example of utilising new technologies to facilitate in a more distanced way should it be required.

***'REEL BORDERS'* (2021-2026):**

***'Derry the Oak Grove'; 'Triang Times'; 'Connecting Borders'; and 'Crossing Lines'* (2022)**

'REEL BORDERS' (2021- running until 2026), is a 5 year European Research Centre-funded research project which looks at border areas. It is a series of projects that use participatory filmmaking in border towns and areas, as a core methodology. This is a project which facilitates participatory filmmaking in a variety of locations and contexts, from Northern Ireland, to Syria and Turkey, to Morocco and Spain (Ceuta). During the project so far, there have been a collection of four short films made in Northern Ireland including '*Derry the Oak Grove', 'Triang Times', 'Connecting Borders'*, and *'Crossing Lines'* (April-June, 2022). Some used amateur archival collections filmed in these areas provided by the Irish Film Institute Archive and the Northern Ireland Screen's Digital Film Archive.

These projects exemplify the range of approaches to similar topic areas and at times have similar aims. They also illustrate that there are many examples to draw on, over time too, to gain a more holistic view of the perceptions of these projects from those directly involved. Northern Ireland is therefore an appropriate area to examine participatory filmmaking projects due to the sheer volume of projects taking place in this field in Northern Ireland, and the amount of funding, which makes for a large selection and mix of approaches to participatory filmmaking in 'post-conflict' peacebuilding societies. This allows for a wider scope for interviewees, and to understand more profoundly the areas where it is perceived to have been 'successful', and for those directly involved in the projects: what difficulties they face, and what they perceive to be the issues with these kinds of projects. This is important as those that fund these projects, or even those who research or theorise the concept of participatory frameworks or arts in peacebuilding, may be slightly removed from the projects (and issues they may encounter) in practice.

[60] Making the Future is a project supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

4. Results

11 interviews (see Table 1.1) were analysed to answer the research question on whether participatory filmmaking or participatory video is perceived as something which can de-antagonise relations between groups, including whether people feel that who coordinates, funds, facilitates, or directs these projects, affects the process; and how might they see these projects implemented differently. The aim of this study was to understand how participatory filmmaking projects are perceived by those directly involved with them, both as a practice in and of itself, and how they perceive its' value in the context of peacebuilding. This section is a synthesis of the findings of the thematic analysis performed on the interviews with those involved in these participatory film projects, and a comprehensive discussion of the results.

(1) Training Tool

Some interviewees described the transformative effect of participatory filmmaking in terms of participant media skills building, or 'digital literacy': *"Working with good filmmakers [...] providing those opportunities [...] people can develop their skills, but also broaden their horizons"* (P8-02-2). This was sometimes referenced in relation to employment prospects, with the potential for participants to go on to work in media, communications or photography, and also in relation to encouraging prospective participants to take part: *"Skills acquisition, and actually developing employability through creative skills - it gives people something tangible when they finished the course* [noted specific jobs which it would be useful for] *So leaving people with a legacy, it's not just around this identity, and the self journey around self knowledge and knowledge of others. [...] I'm just gonna incentivise people to be leaving with tangible skills, which can be put to social or economic use by the participants [...] It's really hard to recruit people for projects that have social benefit alone [...] it's really a focus on the practical benefits [...] and then the social benefits are sort of implicit in that."* (P7-01-1). In some cases, the participants were already students of media and communications: "*What brings us a little bit of hope, is that these [...] Communication and Media students, they often tend to go and work in the media industry afterwards. And they describe themselves [...] as [...] the next generation of film or media makers."* (P2-04-2). Some spoke about how publicising the skills-building aspects of a project was a better way to engage and encourage participants to take part, rather than marketing the project with its' peacebuilding or social benefits first and foremost; but how this may contradict funders wishes: *"If we frontload the social benefits - as a lot of funders would want you to do - it's a much less attractive proposition for the kind of people, young people, that we're trying to engage."* (P7-01-1). Most of the statements on participatory filmmaking and training, focused on the idea of individual transformation.

(2) Product Based

Some interviewees stated that the arts need to exist as 'arts for arts sake' rather than for "*some kind of socially prescribed output*". (P1-02-1). In general, one of the elements which was often raised was a kind of dichotomy between seeing the filmmaking as primarily a process-oriented endeavour, extremely focused on the community; or seeing the work as a piece of 'quality' art or an aesthetically pleasing film piece with a high level of production. The divergent ways of approaching the projects could be seen right from the beginning from the process, in relation to starting the project and finding participants. In one more 'art' and artist-led project, participants were found in what they referred to as being a more randomised manner, rather than through existing community groups, which were described as having *"organised ways of thinking"* (P1-02-1) (see appendix 4.1). Other interviewees described it as somewhat of an insult to not encourage the participants to aspire to 'high art[61]':

"[a lot of the arts peacebuilding projects are] quite often done on a very amateurish basis. [...] this is what I don't tolerate, and don't like. [...] like, 'oh, let's do some happy clappy face painting'. Those things [...] I find very annoying, and not as useful [...][it's] dumbing it down [...] the community arts can [...] go that direction." (P8-02-2), this was spoken about as opposed to bringing *"serious artists, [...] serious work into the communities"* (P8-02-2).

Following on from this, motivations of the participants, and setting (high) expectations for them from the outset, were noted as something that affected the process and 'final product', or even whether there would be a final product at all. A facilitator working from a more community and social projects perspective said:

"Everything we did had a final product, [...] you have higher levels of engagement if people know what's happening in the end. [...] Actually saying: 'Look, this film you're making, we're going to submit it to film festivals [...] look at all the amazing things that are gonna come out of all of this hard work you're putting in'. Because you're asking people to dedicate time to projects, so there has to be a reward for them. It's not just about you taking the stories from them." (P5-03-3).

Another said something along similar lines, and linked this to aspiration specifically: *"we try and give examples to people at the start of the programme to set aspiration levels [...] Who wants to give 10 weeks of their life to doing something that's not that great?"* (P7-01-1). Overall, there were practical considerations cited too, and difficulties in relation to making the participatory filmmaking practice participatory at all stages (if that was what was desired from the project) in practice, related to

[61] This may link well to Zelizer's categorisation of 'Elite Arts' (Fig. 1.) (Zelizer, 2003)

creating a final 'product': *"There's the sound mixing, everything related to post production. Subtitling, getting the credits right [...] and for those particular elements of finalising the film, this was really hard to involve the participants."* (P2-04-2).

The idea of legacy and long-term impact of these projects was spoken about also in terms of the practical preservation of the final film projects themselves, and how this relates to the process. One interviewee said: *"we're thinking about long-term preservation as well, which is something that a lot of participatory projects don't think about. [For other projects] it's all about making the film, screening the film, and then good luck finding the film. So for us, it was always like, no, there is going to be a home for all of the things we're doing [in an official archive] [...] So for us legacy was something that was super important. [...] we want long term preservation as well, and long term access."* (P5-03-3). This statement was also contextualised by considering video or film which has been posted online more generally (ie. the film was not just for screening at an event, but continues to 'live' on online, on platforms such as YouTube, for example): "*if YouTube closes tomorrow, [...] people can still find [everything] properly archived."* (P5-03-3). With regards to the ephemeral nature of our digital and online worlds: *"a lot of participatory projects that create websites. For me, [...] it's the most frustrating one, because websites don't live forever. You only get funding to have, let's say, a domain name for like, five years [...] And then we had some projects [...] that we went down the website route, but because the funding [...] was over, those websites longer exist. There are a lot of really, really, really cool participatory projects, they create these amazing websites, and then five years, 10 years, when you try to access them, they're gone."* (P5-03-3).

Arts funding in Northern Ireland generally was mentioned as affecting the process, in relation to a binary peacebuilding approach: *"becoming enshrined in the way that even arts festivals, film festivals, music festivals [work]: it's one for you, one for me"* (P1-02-1). Another interviewee stated that an issue which affects the process of creation (and whether it is 'film as product') in the way in which funding is organised: *"I think that one of the big problems [...] in Northern Ireland [...]there is no minister of culture or there is no separate funding, the funding either sits with 'communities' or with 'economy'. So [...] it either needs to be [...] films which produce income and which are measured by economic input, or [...] community arts, which is dumbed down: it's some face painting or 'have a picnic and engage with each other'. [...] it is really, really underfunded. And it's not only about funding, it's also about level of ambition [...] there needs to be a serious investment in arts and arts education.[...]in Northern Ireland it's really like a desert.* [...]*So maybe it's a role for bigger international community philanthropy, or those bigger UK Island-wide projects, where there is an external resource, and it's not putting pressure on local communities"* (P8-02-2). Some voices also explained the limits to what can be facilitated in an artistic space:

"*I witnessed some tensions, and some very difficult conversations. For some, it was a platform to voice deep grievances, which, perhaps we were not in position to address, because they were so deep, […] we didn't have the space or time to bring healing, without dismissing those concerns[…] there was no opportunity to fully engage. [...] I think to some extent, it needed to be like that, because, you know, even if there were more resources or more time, we're talking about a very deep, deeply embedded grievances, there was [one participant], he was definitely angry. You know, he was repeating themes which have a history [...] probably going back to plantation. So [...] even with more resources, it's so intense that no artist or community group is in a position to resolve it.[...] it's a fairly long process of healing [...] Maybe for this family. It was the first step [...] I think sometimes it's best to leave it, it's like Pandora's box. [...] how much artists can do [...] it's a massive responsibility, as long as we don't do harm, it's fine. […] We cannot always bring the full healing."* (P8-02-2).

A 'product' which can be distributed not necessarily for profit, but for educational purposes globally: *"They study Northern Ireland in the Danish curriculum, and they wanted to use the film as part of teaching in Denmark [...] it certainly was in use in the Danish schools curriculum, which we always thought was hilarious [because] how [do] they navigate a Derry accent?"* (P7-01-1).

Under the frame of product-based arts, or film as 'product', the divide became clear on the conception and perception of the projects as primarily product based (linked to a final art piece), or process focused. Themes which emerged included the legacy of that product, and how what product is created is affected by funding.

(3) Process Based

Many interviewees tended to describe a sort of dichotomy between a focus on process: often attributed to more social work or community work projects; versus a focus on the final product: which tended to be linked to artists or filmmakers more concerned with aesthetics. From one interviewee's point of view, it is a problem if there was too much focus on the 'final product':

"*We actually brought an external filmmaker to facilitate workshops, but we found that it didn't work, because that filmmaker was more concerned about the end product, not the process. [...] In participatory projects, process is as important as the final product or even more important [...] So we thought that that didn't work. So after that horrible experience we had, we decided that we would do the facilitation 100% ourselves"* (P5-03-3).

Another spoke about this issue too but saw the elements as needing to be more balanced:

"*it was about the process as much as the product [...] it was around learning those skills, and developing some voice for yourself."* (P7-01-1).

This was also alluded to in less explicit ways:

"I'm a big advocate for participatory projects, because I think they're very ethical. They are about building relationships [...] I have no idea how people work otherwise! [...] It's going to produce a film that's respectful, that's ethical, and reflects people's life stories. I see more benefits, but I see limitations as well. You know, it is very time consuming. Everything takes twice longer. [...] You always have the risk of losing people along the way, because they're too busy, they're finding the technology too difficult, and they don't want to read or learn technology, or personal life gets in the way. So you lose a voice in that project [...] because that person pulled out. Or that person asks you to remove all of their contributions, and then you have to respect their wish. But I see more benefits to limitations to participatory projects." (P5-03-3).

Some said that the final film aesthetic and production values did not necessarily seem to matter for participants. One interviewee said:

"I think they're [the participants] just so happy to share their story and just see it up on a screen, it doesn't matter if it doesn't look the most technically polished film ever made. They're just so happy and so proud. [...] And then because I have the filmmaking skills I'm looking at from an aesthetic perspective, and I go like, 'Oh, that could be better framed, or that audio could have been better captured'. But then [...] you have 100 people in the room, watching those films, talking about those films and reacting to those films. And then people who made those films are super proud like 'Oh, my God, I made a film.' So I don't think the aesthetic should be a barrier to you creating a film [...] When you give people full creative control [...] the technical side of it is the first one to suffer. But I don't think that it's a bad thing, per se." (P5-03-3).

In one particular case, the lack of interest in aesthetics (on the part of participants) was put more explicitly, where story was seen as something that needed to take precedence, over imagery: "*the participants had very little interest in [...] making a beautiful film, [it] was not a priority for them, the priority was: the stories need to be out there."* (P2-04-2).

There was the idea of *'participatory distribution'* mentioned by one interviewee, while another stated: *"with a lot of our participatory projects is this whole idea of co-ownership as well, that they own the copyrights to the film, it's their film as well. And they can do whatever they want with the films, too."* (P5-03-3). Practical considerations to what happens after the project were also noted: *"there's no*

organised way really, for us to continue a conversation with them[62]*. I mean, we have the data we have, it's just with GDPR, and things like that we're not necessarily still allowed to engage."* (P1-02-1). Difficulties in terms of families asking videos to be taken down, or participants themselves asking for old videos to be taken down. Some examples from interviewees included: "*their parents wrote to us and said, no, we were not giving you permission to post this. [and then in another context] [the videos] were up for a while, and then they pulled it down, because their friends were saying, no, we're not talking to you because you're talking to the enemy."* (P4-01-2) Another example was: "*[one of the students] wrote to us and asked us to take it [the video] down. Because she couldn't get a job when she went back [home], because every time she went for an interview, her future potential employer would Google her [...] [and] the first thing that came up was [this] video. And then they see her engaging in this peace process with somebody from ['the other side']."* (P4-01-2). In relation to one of the projects, for the participants who appeared on screen, there was some local attention initially, and they then subsequently wished to distance themselves from the project: *"there was a lot of publicity [...] and they sort of became peace ambassadors when they went around to different schools in Northern Ireland, showing the film. I think at the time, they probably did enjoy the celebrity, but [eventually] they wanted to move on [...] and probably just wanted to get the hell out of Northern Ireland, you know, [...] and didn't want to be associated with all that with 'the Troubles'."* (P4-01-2) Another, speaking of the same project said: *"the young people that are in it themselves are just distinctly unimpressed by the whole thing and just think people need to get over it, it was just a thing they did, and that was it. [...] It's quite funny that we're so interested in it, but they're kind of a bit nonplussed."* (P7-01-1).

One way in which participatory filmmaking was cited as beneficial for peacebuilding, was as a way to allow certain stories to be heard: *"It is effective for peace building here. It enables people to find a voice and tell their stories"* (P3-100-1). Other comments in the same vein included statements in relation to healing *"There is a supportive community that is built around these projects that is healing."* (P3-100-1). The bringing people together through the process was mentioned by many of those interviewed: *"I think it's super important. [...] there is no better medium to bring people together than through arts or sports or participation"* (P8-02-2). On bringing participants together, through the *making* of the film: *"I witnessed it with my own eyes, the sort of the conversations, [...] among people who otherwise would not come together* [...] *it was exciting [for some] [...], it was a moment of healing. For others [...] [it was] voicing their concerns."* (P8-02-2). For one project, the idea came about in the following way:

"It became apparent [...] when you've got communities that aren't communicating, other than through hostile interactions - shouting at each other, you've got high levels of segregation, where you can quite comfortably live in Derry and not meet a Protestant, not come across a Protestant. And vice versa,

[62] The participants

depending on where in the city you are - that actually film might be a way, [or] video [...], of getting people to share elements of their lives with each other and sort of demystify things across that divide, and across that division" (P7-01-1).

For another interviewee, who referenced one of their projects which is not based in Northern Ireland, but had some similarities:

"we learned after many conversations that most of these students had almost never encountered ['the other'] *living in their city. Some were very curious to meet them. So we tried to develop the filmmaking process as an instrument to go and meet them. This sort of ethnographic approach, which we were very, very careful to not intrude in neighbourhoods, and, you know, not make it a bit like 'poverty porn' style. But in conversations with the participants afterwards, it seems that in this particular case, it did lead to an increased awareness. That it did help, being more aware about stereotypes, encountering otherness, but also finding similarity. [...] So I do think there is a potential there for participants at a very micro individual level."* (P2-04-2)

In a similar vein:

"people are brought together for kind of forced interactions around the fact that we're from different sides: that Noah's Ark approach. […] 'you're one of them, and I'm one of us' [...] but actually, what we've found is that creative process and learning of the skills together as a shared experience, which is politically neutral, really helps to build strong relationships. Filmmaking is a collaborative pursuit, it's a team activity. And you'd have to learn together and work together as a team to do that. [...] So it means that you certainly demystify 'the other', you break down any stereotypes, any sort of community myths and misconceptions about the other community: [...] 'they all do this, or they all think that' [...] you build those normalised relationships, which has a powerful effect, [...] And it is very clear in this film, this group had a shared identity as young people that was more powerful than their separate identity as Catholics and Protestants. [...] So I do think, on that personal level, they can have a transformational effect." (P7-01-1)

There were those who expressed that it was not just about the relations between groups, but also attitudes within groups themselves that have changed as a result of arts peacebuilding projects. In relation to an interviewee speaking about another arts project they worked on, which was focused on music:

"One of the bands […] they heard a member of their band community saying, 'I will not perform if there is somebody from this or that community' and the rest the band then said 'then don't, you are not welcome' [...] somebody stood up for somebody else, because they had experience of the project [...] they were more open or welcoming. So it's not even what I noticed across different communities, but within those communities. How they started self-regulating themselves. Saying 'No, it's not on', having enough courage, [...] saying, [...] 'it's not acceptable. This is not what we stand for.'" (P8-02-2).

The idea of the (individual) transformative potential that participatory filmmaking has for participants, was mentioned by several interviewees: *"At the individual level, they can have an absolutely transformative effect on the individuals that are involved in them: just that experience of having a voice, finding a voice and having a platform for it for it to be heard, to be telling your story, putting who you are out there. And for young people, particularly who struggle to be heard and struggle to be taken seriously around serious matters. I think they can have a really, really significant impact on the individuals involved"* (P7-01-1). For example one facilitator stated: *"It enables people to see another side. If a person has a label or negative label like 'violent felon', now they have another label: he's a great actor."* (P3-100-1). This interviewee then went as far as to state: *"This work is life changing. It changes lives. It's changed my life. And I see it on a regular basis, changing other people's lives. They see themselves in different ways. They see what they are capable of. They glimpse their own potential in the mirror."* (P3-100-1).

Someone who was part of the facilitation of a participatory filmmaking project in the context of research, also spoke about the impact on them personally:

"I had never worked with this method before, and I find it wildly inspiring, it was so fun to do. It was very moving, to listen to stories, I think this aspect touched me the most [...] the way that this artificial setting creates an occasion for people to open up, to share life stories, traumas, dreams, and hopes, all these things, with someone who is basically a stranger. That was really moving to see [...] That was so beautiful, I knew it from the literature, that it [participatory filmmaking] creates a chance to share stories, but then when you actually experience it, this was a good surprise. I decided now to include the participatory aspects in future projects as well. I think it has a clear added value for social sciences. We cannot have enough." (P2-04-2).

The issue of funding came up consistently, even when it was not explicitly mentioned by the interviewer. For many of the interviews, who funded the project came up in the first sentences about the project. They tended not to criticise the funding gained for their specific project, with most stating that the funding brief was not restrictive, apart from some exceptions, or sometimes targets. However,

even if not critical of the funding source, the fact that it was funded and the underpinning reasons why, was something facilitators across the board were acutely aware of: *"Brexit gave it [the project] a currency that allowed me to attract the money to make it and so had to become part of the narrative because it was hard to ignore."* (P1-02-1). The European Union peace funding was mentioned by several, and this was also mentioned in relation to Brexit[63].

In other ways, funding or project organisations were described as having *'target groups'* and *'target numbers'*, with specific amounts of participants and 'outcomes' desired by the funders: *"I think we had to work with 600 people in our community engagement programs. [...] We had to deliver an exhibition as well"* (P5-03-3). Some facilitators talked about funding outcomes as being limiting, and even talked about 'rebelling' against specific elements of the brief, by widening the scope:

"In terms of the participants profile, because it's peace funded, it's a very outdated model, because it doesn't really reflect Northern Ireland society today. They're still obsessed with the green and orange[64]: Catholics versus Protestants. So in theory, a lot of the projects had to be almost kind of 50/50. So if there was a group from a nationalist community approaching us, 'oh we would love to run a project for our group', if they didn't have the token Protestant in that group, we couldn't run the project [...] because it's not cross-community enough. [...] But we tried to move away from [...] that model, because we thought that it doesn't reflect society nowadays. [...] we have lots of ethnic minority groups who are left out of everything, because they're not green and they're not orange. And we thought that let's reach out to them as well." (P5-03-3).

Several shared this sentiment: *"I was arguing with the executive office, I said, 'I cannot have a few 'talking Catholics' in, only because your form says so. I need to engage with this specific community' [...] a lot of those funding restrictions actually limit what we can do."* (P8-02-2). It was spoken about in terms of reporting also:

"With the peace funding, they're very, very thorough in looking back at how you spend the money. [...]With peace, and the way that they manage the fund, [...] the reporting is very thorough, you have to go back, you have to justify. [...] I think if we had played by the rules of like, 'it has to be 100%, cross-community', I don't think would have worked with some of the groups that we've worked with, like ethnic minorities, the disabled group, because we would be so focused on 'it has to be a Catholic group and a Protestant group, and we have to bring them together into the room'." (P5-03-3).

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[63] *"With Brexit, there was only one last round of peace funding, which has just been launched, called Peace Plus, that's the last one, and then they're stopping it. But there's gonna be other funding avenues through this thing called Shared Island Fund between North and South, which I think will replace a lot of [that peace plus funding]"* (P5-03-3)

[64] The colours green and orange have traditionally been associated with the republican or nationalist Catholic groups (green); and unionist Protestant groups (orange).

Another stated:

"[peace funding] certainly creates a dependence: all the time that there's funding available for projects around sectarian identity or sectarian division, there's an incentive for sectarian division to continue to exist and to continue to be amplified as a factor. [...] the divisions are far more economic, than the sectarian division that has been artificially sustained for quite a long time. […] I speak as someone at an organisation that's benefited enormously from European peace programme money, is that it does push you into this Noah's Ark approach. [...] it's a double edged sword in terms of a world of increasing competition for money and resources at UK level and beyond. Northern Ireland's USP[65] *is conflict, it's social division. And even though social cohesion may be worse in other parts of Europe, may be worse in other parts of the UK, now, we [Northern Ireland] have an actual conflict that we can always 'trump' other places with, if they've got issues around, you know, migrants, around the rise of the right, or whatever the social cohesion issue is there. We've got the IRA and the UVF. And, you know, lots of people died. [...] It is part of what helps us sustain a thriving community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland, it is really important work that needs to be done. I think the focus has shifted slightly. But [...] needs to continue to shift away from green, orange, and more around social issues, and anti poverty initiatives. And that's where the divisions in society really are. When people have very little, it's comparatively easy to set them against each other and to blame each other for their problems."* (P7-01-1).

It is important to note that funding for their specific projects was also spoken about in very positive terms too. Several spoke of a continued need for work in this area (see Appendix 4.3), although with a caveat that the peacebuilding work may need to work slightly differently than it has done in the past:

"There are still divisions, schools are still segregated, housing estates are still segregated, so no peace funding will ever fix that. But there's so many other benefits [to community / participatory projects], that it almost kind-of like surpasses the peace benefit. […] There are so many different benefits, it's a shame that peace funding is bloody focused on peace building, which is a very important one, and I think it had it's place, but I think society has moved on so much, that there are so many other pressing issues that these projects are doing so well. And it's a shame to see the funding being, you know, taken from them [...] Because society will suffer in other ways." (P5-03-3) (see Appendix 4.2)

The discussion on funding was also linked to evaluation forms, often required by funders, which were cited as being rather narrow by several interviewees: *"Funders care about measuring impact and*

[65] USP - Unique Selling Point

administering monitoring and evaluation" (P3-100-1). Several interviewees discussed the non-quantifiable aspects of participatory filmmaking projects, and the way in which this can be difficult in relation to funding and reporting, *"unintended consequences are, in a way, very much part of the of the process, as art, you know, it's not a science as such, [...] it's not a scientific project with data that can be quantifiable and sort of legitimated, justified, tallied in terms of success or failure."* (P4-01-2) and:

"We have the metrics that the funders use, but they're more like, 'oh, how likely are you to speak with a Catholic?' Oh, my God, every time we had to give those evaluation sheets [to the participants], we're apologising [to the participants, saying] "We don't like the questions, it's the funders"[66] *[...] it's a shame that the metrics they [the funders] use are useless. We have anecdotal impact information [...] [for example, participants] say that their confidence levels have improved big time [...] doing things that they thought they would never do. How do you quantify that? You can't. How do you quantify that the project benefit is someone's confidence level? [...] When we worked with ethnic minorities, who were saying that, for the first time, they felt that their story really mattered for this country. And they felt a huge sense of pride for having their story [recorded]. So those benefits are there, but how do you quantify them in an evaluation sheet? You don't really."* (P5-03-3)

This was described by one interviewee as a "*Noah's ark approach*" (P7-01-1), in reference to the Biblical story of Noah's Ark where, in order to save the worlds' creatures from the flood, there had to be precisely two of each animal in the world saved and allowed onto the ark. This can be understood or interpreted as a prescriptive approach, with a need to have a certain number or quota of people from 'each' conflict party - in order to fulfil monitoring and reporting requirements, often in relation to funding. One interviewee said: *"with younger generations [...] it's not even part of the discussion, when we had asked kids to fill out forms for us, and then there were stupid questions about like 'oh Catholics and Protestants' - some kids were asking us 'What is a Catholic? What is a Protestant?' This is just my personal observation, I think there is a real impact [of these cross-community projects] because cross-community relations here have improved, and we see that just by looking at foreigners actually chosen to live here, if this place was still a warzone, I wouldn't move here."* (P5-03-3). The same interviewee also spoke about the funding in terms of legacy: *"the funding goes towards the making, it doesn't go much towards the reflection, the evaluation and the dissemination. You spend all of your resources there, and then you're left with like, 1% to do everything else. they [funders] only want to see the results of the making of things, rather than the legacy side of things."* (P5-03-3)

[66] The comment here was in reference to the idea that participants found it insulting to be asked whether they would speak to someone across the sectarian divide, that to the participants it was obvious that they would, and that the questionnaire questions came across rather 'on the nose'.

Funding more generally - beyond the interviewees' specific filmmaking projects - was almost always discussed, as well as criticised, in terms of funding for the arts and peacebuilding, the arts and social projects, or merely just the arts funding in itself within Northern Ireland. *"It could be funded better. It could be invested in."* (P3-100-1).

Others emphasised that through the process of making, they could see how complicated the situation is, and how far there might be still to go: *"how much work there needs to be done. And how much pain and resentment there still is. [...] there are people who are super at ease, [...] people who moved on; and there were people who are still very much stuck."* (P8-02-2).

This product (final film or art 'product' piece) vs process dichotomy was seen yet again in this section. Themes also related to the idea of legacy, and especially to funding.

(4) Social Protest

Far fewer comments were made with regards to participatory film or PV projects as a form of social protest. The main way in which it was touched on my interviewees was through the idea of utiliting the screening of the films as a way to make a statement: *"Probably the biggest potential to have actual impact is once these films are finished, and then they could travel to audiences, like the broader public or policymakers"* (P2-04-2), and from the same interviewee, when discussing one specific example: "*for them [the participants], the priority was: the stories need to be out there. People need to know about our situation in order to bring a concrete change."* (P2-04-2). However, there were comments which were not very hopeful about the possibilities of this in practice:

"I've got to a point where I'm sort of fairly cynical about…. In terms of sort of changing the narrative or anything like that, I don't know […] I think that media is so diverse and so diffused now that, although we've got so many more outlets to see content and pick content up. Serious content doesn't reach audiences that easily unless it's deliberately antagonistic, and will track well on an algorithm. So I don't know that they find a great audience beyond the converted already [...] So I don't know that they reach the audiences that often, that widely, [although] occasionally something punches through. [...] those things [the projects] on an individual level, they can have a significant effect. On the wider level? Not so much. I just think they struggle to be seen by the people who are most likely to need to see it." (P7-01-1)

Nevertheless, this was followed by more hopeful comments on the potential of a ripple effect: *"If enough people are involved, and then enough of their acquaintances get to hear about the experience [...] That's where you can achieve changes that have a wider scale. But it's micro compared with the*

audience potential for audience reach and transformation. But, you know, if you keep plugging away at both ends, then just keep these messages trickling out as far as possible, then, yeah, it has to have some effect. (P7-01-1)

Throughout the interviews, almost without exception, interviewees were emphatic about the inherent value and impact of participatory film and video projects, usually using quite emotive language to describe how they perceive participatory filmmaking in peacebuilding and their projects: *"I definitely believe with all my heart, I feel like those projects are important. There should be more of it."* (P8-02-2). This seemed to be a feeling shared across the board: *"I was super excited, [...] I find the project very interesting.[...] it was addressing a very difficult subject.[...] the fact that it was film and poetry and, you know, beautiful visual photography and activism and community engagement. [...] it all worked very, very well. And I was super proud of being part of such an incredible project, I still wear it as a badge of pride."* (P8-02-2). There were statements which summarised very well this mixture of process and 'product' as having impact and being beneficial for peacebuilding: *"the idea is really that people come with their separate stories, and they share their story with the other and then ideally create something new together, something new comes from the encounter, which may indeed be the making of the film itself. Something is sparked by the exchange of stories. And then the wager is, the hope is, that that may then subsequently have some impact or influence, however tiny initially, on the world out there"* (P4-01-2).

6. Conclusion

The main research question was whether participatory filmmaking or participatory video, which aspires to go beyond ethnopolitics, is really perceived as doing so, or being truly effective for peacebuilding, by those directly involved in these projects in Northern Ireland. This included whether people feel that who coordinates, funds, facilitates, or directs these projects, affects the process; and what they think could be done differently. The assumptions that led to the thesis were that if art in itself is not perceived as effective for peacebuilding (reference), then participatory arts (film) may be perceived as being more effective. This study aimed to provide a long-term perspective on arts-based peacebuilding projects, evaluating their practical implementation and uncovering new challenges in societies further along the peace process.

To understand how participatory filmmaking or PV projects in the context of peacebuilding are perceived by those working on them, on the whole, weighing up the different perspectives from interviewees, it appears that assessing whether participatory filmmaking and video 'works' for peacebuilding, is a rather complicated question to answer. It would be unfair to draw one large, generalised conclusion from what was a varied mix of approaches and attitudes toward these projects, but what we can say is that the broad range of interviews conducted resulted in a wide range of responses in relation to the questions on participatory films.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, those facilitating these projects, although they did have criticisms of elements related to the bigger picture of peacebuilding and ways participatory filmmaking is done, tended to be very positive. Emotive language was often used to describe stories of catharsis, shared dialogue and hope. They perceived participatory filmmaking or PV as a useful and important tool. The perception of the 'effective' elements of participatory filmmaking with those involved in facilitating them, tend to be grouped along the following elements: storytelling and voices being heard (that may not often be given a platform or represented); healing; working together to better understand 'the other'; and media skills building.

This study, although rather small in scale, and conducted in a relatively short time frame, found several trends did emerge throughout the interview process, and the following themes were identified in the interviews: a dichotomy between art/film 'final product' vs process; funding (and its' limits); legacy, long-term impact; (usually individual) transformation and effectiveness – which included skills building and (less measurable) personal transformation or impact for the facilitators, as well as for participants.

The main power of these projects was often spoken about in terms of individual transformation, rather than on a societal level. While it is true that many stated that the true benefit lies with individual transformation (for the facilitators as well as participants), skills building, on a "micro level" (as one interviewee put it), and it is also true that some were sceptical about drawing larger claims about participatory filmmaking being something which can bring peace - through the conversations, it became clear that many believe that a sort of ripple effect can take place.

There were criticisms or problematic issues also cited in relation to participatory filmmaking, and generally speaking this was in relation to funding, and a disconnect between funding bodies and the reality on the ground. It was also mentioned that the ways that we evaluate these projects (in the context of funding) may need to be revised to be less narrow. At times, some peacebuilding funding for these projects was talked about in terms of 'reaffirming the divide' and that perhaps the new divides or social issues are elsewhere. It came across that t peacebuilding needs to be agile to a changing society, that new conflicts can emerge over slightly different issues or along different lines, and that binary funding models (this "Noah's Ark approach" as described by one interviewee), may play into both sustaining old divisions, and also underestimating or not considering seriously enough new or changed issues or sticking points. Funding was also often linked to the idea of legacy and the long-term impact of projects.

Aspects which came up during the interviews which were unexpected, striking even, included the emphasis on individual transformation or development. Another element which was not necessarily predicted during the research preparation stage, but came up throughout the interviews, was the potential for the process to be transformative not only for those who are the participants in these projects (ie. those which the peacebuilding and processing outcomes are aimed towards); but also potentially has a transformative effect for those who conduct these projects too. That the process of facilitation is also part of the collective transformation. The tension between seeing these projects as an art 'product' versus a community process-oriented project, was another element which was unexpected.

Most of the benefits were described in relation to personal transformation, emotional impact, as well as skills building - change on what one interviewee called - on a 'micro individual level'. Although there was scepticism around claims for the overall peacebuilding potential of these projects, through starting with impact on the micro level, there may be potential for impact on a larger scale, from the bottom up.

Further research is required which delves deeper into this issue, particularly focussing on interviewing a broader range of people. A study which takes into account - as was intended at the outset of this project - the perspectives of project participants especially, but also funders and other stakeholders, would allow us to gain a more holistic view of these projects As well as that, other types of research could be done in order to further the research agenda, avenues which may be worth exploring include a further

exploration of the longer term impact of these types of projects, even if difficult to measure. It we put more focus on the intersection of film or video with other elements, this could be further explored through new technologies. The nature of participatory filmmaking has also changed especially with respect to new emerging technologies and increased accessibility to them (Mitchell et al., 2014; Schwab-Cartas & Mitchell, 2015; Mitchell, 2016; Mitchell, 2019). These new technologies have changed our relationship to media, how we 'consume' it, as well as our relationships to each other. It has also opened up new avenues to meet and collaborate virtually, opening up possibilities for remote or partially remote participatory video projects (Marzi, 2021; Aguiar, 2023), and for films to be distributed online. Significantly for participatory film or video making, digital technology has made such video making "radically accessible for the non-professional user" (Shrum et al., 2005). There have also been increasingly common efforts related to peacebuilding which experiment with new modes such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and video game creation (references), in projects such as 'Visual Peacetech'[67] (Glybchenko, 2023). This may be an area to explore further with regards to participatory practice. Another element which may be worth examining is participatory filmmaking projects which use fiction, a format which has been researched to some extent in ethnographic film (Sjöberg, 2014), which is a different discipline to participatory filmmaking, but perhaps shows that there is scope for further exploration.

This study showed that individual transformation - for those facilitating these projects as well as participants - is (one of the areas) where the strength of participatory filmmaking projects lies. The research also linked individual transformation with the potential for wider societal transformation, in this case, peacebuilding. It is clear that categorising projects as solely product based or process based is very difficult, and perhaps not a useful categorisation, as these elements are linked, the perceived effectiveness of the projects is in the interaction between all four (as defined by Zelizer, 2003) elements or approaches. Something else to consider is that it seems that the power may be (participatory)film in conjunction with another element: whether that be a circus, an interactive 'parliament', new technologies, discussion afterwards – even the creation of a manifesto.

A large part of the motivation behind this study, was in relation to the highly 'televised' (rather, social media video-ised) current large scale ongoing conflicts today in 2024. We can see from Northern Ireland, just how big a task peacebuilding is, and how long it takes. Of course, every conflict is different, and as has been explored through this research, there is rarely one (perfect) size fits all approach which works in every situation. However, this study allowed us to gain a perspective on arts peacebuilding projects from those working directly with them, and who have worked on these projects over a longer

[67] Visual Peacetech is a research project which examines VR and AR as tools for "digital diplomacy and peacebuilding" (Glybchenko, 2023)

period of time. Looking at ‘post-conflict’ societies which are ‘further along the road’ on the peace process, so to speak, we can better understand how we might practically implement peacebuilding arts projects going forward. As seen in this research, participatory arts projects such as participatory filmmaking, address aspects that other peacebuilding methods fail to attend to. Although they may not seem to be so grand in scale or high level, these types of projects appeal to our emotions, create space for meaningful interpersonal interactions and transformations on a smaller scale, and ultimately function in a peacebuilding context towards something arguably far more powerful: hope.

6. References

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Interview Questions

SECTION A - overview, role and process

- Can you describe the project you were involved in, from your perspective?
- [If relevant] At what point in the process did you/the organisation get involved? Why did you get involved?
- What did you do, what was the process? What was your role?
- What were the others' roles? What were the participants' roles? What input did you get from [funder/other organisations/other supporters or coordinators]?
- What input did you provide to participants? How were they directed?
- How was the process designed? Was there a brief?
- Where and when did the filming take place and why? Did this affect the process?
- How did you find the participants? Were there requirements or goals in terms of what kind of participants to engage? Can you tell me anything else about the participant group creation process?
- How was the project funded or supported? Do you think this changed the process, and if so, how?
- If there was a screening, where was it/ how was it screened? Was it distributed?
- If you encountered difficulties in the process, what types of difficulties were they?
- Have you been in contact with the others involved in the project since?

SECTION B - feelings and perceptions of self and community (/communities) through process [if relevant]

- *How did you feel during the process?*
- *How did you feel after the process?*
- *What did you think or feel about the project and final film at the time? / what do you think or feel about it now?*
- *Do you think it changed your perceptions of yourself, [if relevant] your community, other communities, Northern Ireland? / or your perceptions of communities in Northern Ireland? If so - in what way?*

SECTION C - perceptions of project

- If there was a screening or if it was distributed, how did you feel or what did you think about the screening or distribution?
- Are there ways that you feel that the project had a lasting impact on you or on the community? If yes - why do you think? If not - why not?
- Do you see these types of project as effective for peacebuilding in Northern Ireland? If yes - why? If not, why not? What could be done better in your opinion?
- Do these types of project do what they say they do or what they set out to achieve? If yes why? If not, why not, and what would be more useful?
- Are there other outcomes of these types of projects which may not have been predicted or intended by organisers?

SECTION D - other

- Is there anything else that I have not covered, that you feel is important to mention?

Appendix 2 - Research Information and Consent Form

INFORMATION LETTER / CONSENT FORM

Masters Thesis

Perceptions of participatory film / video projects in a peacebuilding context

European Masters of Human Rights and Democratisation

Global Campus of Human Rights / University of Ljubljana

You have been asked to participate as an interviewee as part of a research study. In order to make a decision to participate in the interview, it is important to understand the meaning of the research and your involvement in it. Please read the following information/instructions. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do ask the Researcher.

Information & purpose of the research

The Global Campus of Human Rights is a global network of universities for education in human rights and democracy, and is supported by the EU. It has presence in seven regions of the world: Africa, Arab World, Asia-Pacific, Caucasus, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean, South East Europe. The regional headquarters are in Pretoria, Beirut, Bangkok, Yerevan, Buenos Aires, Sarajevo/Bologna, and are coordinated by the main office in Venice, Italy. The researcher attends the Global Campus of Human Rights Europe (Venice) - European Master in Human Rights and Democratisation (2023-2024), attending the exchange part of studies at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia.

For the researchers' masters thesis, the aim is to investigate how arts projects, specifically participatory film or video projects, used in peacebuilding and 'post-conflict' contexts, are perceived. This includes the perception of the participants, those running the projects, and other stakeholders. There will be a specific focus on projects in Northern Ireland. Therefore your participation in this research project is extremely valuable.

Procedure

You will be asked several "semi-open" questions. Please have in mind that there are no "correct" or "wrong" answers to questions, and it will be closer to an open conversation with no strict rules needed to follow. You are encouraged to share your opinions and views as freely and honestly, and without limitations. You should be aware that these responses will be presented anonymously in the research, although personal data regarding racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs may be linked to your responses. The researcher guarantees that this data will be handled with great care and in accordance with your preferences. If you do not want to express your opinion to some of the questions you do not have to.

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a Consent form (below). You can withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason, even after signing the Consent form, with no consequences. In cases of withdrawal, any data you have provided will be destroyed unless you indicate otherwise.

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed for practical reasons: there should be some proof that this interview really took place; the researcher should have a way to go back to your interview

and confirm what was said in an accurate way, so as not to jeopardise possible alteration of your exact words.

Your answers/opinions to questions can be used for further relevant academic research and publications, on the basis of *your consent*.

There will be no costs for your participation, nor will you directly benefit from participating in the research.

Personal Data Protection and Confidentiality

This research adheres to the rules of scientific professional research and guarantees that every effort will be made to protect your confidentiality and privacy. Your name and contact details will be kept during the data collection for contact purposes. Your personal data or any other source or clue that can reveal your identity in public, will be either anonymised or altered, except in those cases and/or for the purposes that you will specifically agree with in the Consent form. There will be special care taken not to damage the participants in the research, not to be exposed, stigmatised and or be object of revenge or retaliation in any way.

Your personal data will be stored only as long as it is necessary to achieve the purposes for which they were collected. The data received will not be used for any kind of commercial or marketing purposes. The collected personal data will be stored in an appropriate manner, to prevent unauthorised access, further dissemination or potential abuses.

At any stage of the project, you will have the right of access to the data, as well as the right to rectify or ask for erasure of personal data (by contacting the researcher).

CONSENT FORM

☐ I have read carefully the information presented in the Information Letter about the research study.

☐ Research subject and research goals were clearly explained and I fully understood the purpose of my participation.

☐ I understand all issues regarding my personal data, their treatment and processing activities.

 I understand that during the interview I will have the opportunity to ask questions about my involvement in this study and to receive additional details.

☐ I understand that if I agree to participate in this research, I may withdraw at any time with no consequences and further obligations.

☐ I understand that at any stage of the project, I have the right of access to the data, as well as right to rectify or ask for erasure of my personal data.

☐ I understand that my interview will be audio recorded and transcribed.

☐ I agree to participate in the study.

Specified Consent Issues:

**** Choose one of the options***

1 - I am aware that in my discussion I may reveal special categories of personal data (data concerning racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, health data or data concerning sexual orientation) and ***I agree*** to be used for the purposes of the project, in accordance with my preferences for using my personal data as stated below

☐ ***Yes***

☐ ***No***

2 - I agree the transcripts of this interview to be used in further relevant academic research activities and publications:

☐ ***under my personal data***

☐ ***fully anonymised***

3 - I agree the transcripts of this interview to be used in/for preparation and publication of project working papers, articles, reports and other project documents:

☐ ***under my personal data***

☐ ***fully anonymised***

Participant	***Researcher***
(Full Name)	(Full Name)
Contact Details	Contact Details
(Signature)	(Signature)
(Date & Place)	(Date & Place)

Appendix 3

Appendix 3.1

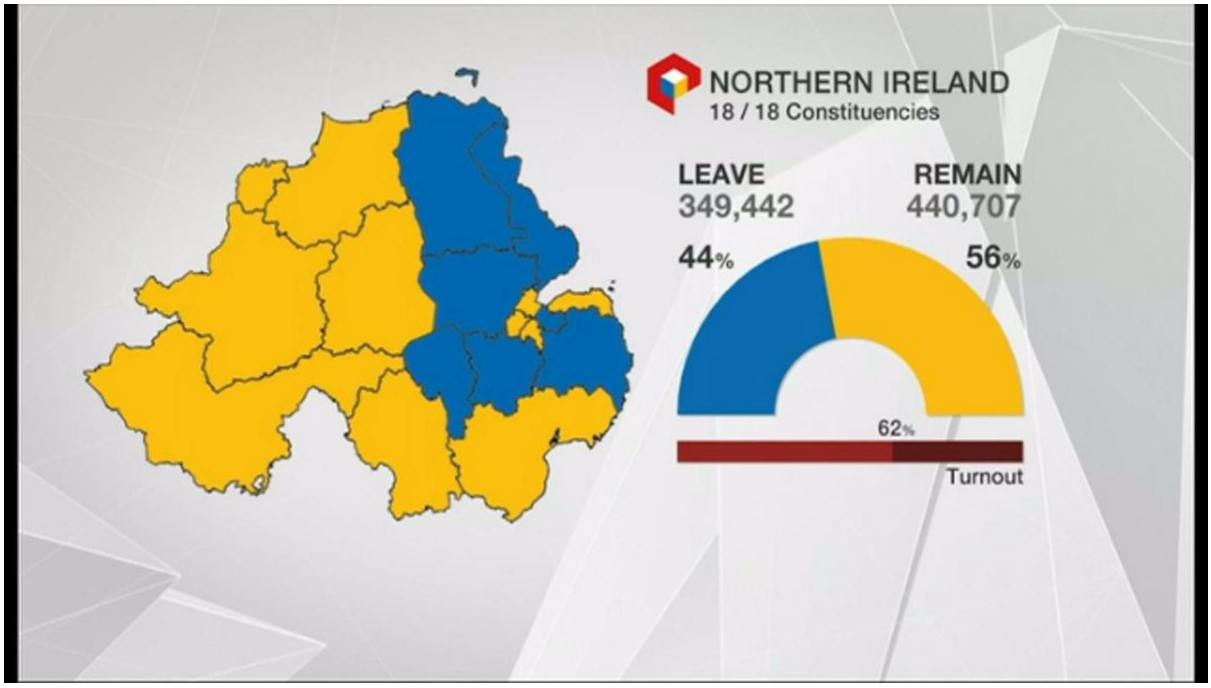

Image source: BBC News

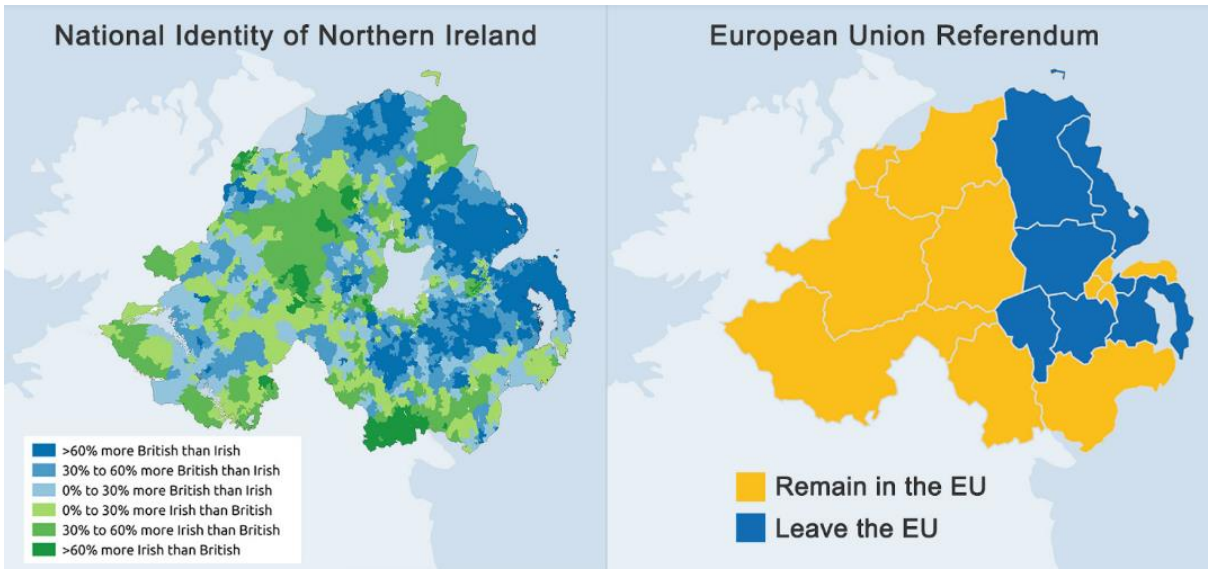

Image source Karl Wheelan, University College Dublin (2017)

Appendix 3.2

THE YELLOW MANIFESTO

A true account of a border and its people.

1. People who live on the border need a say on the nature of that border. Everyone needs to understand the emotional meaning of the border as well as its practical impacts. Don't think just of the borderline, think of the lives on the border.

2. This is one of the most beautiful places on earth. We need to preserve this for everyone; the night sky, lakes, mountains and bogs. We value the freedom we have to wander in our environment.

3. We value our ability to live and work in either jurisdiction. Many of us cross the border daily. Homesteads, farms and businesses span both sides. We value the border as a place of mingling, comings and goings, cultural clash and negotiation. We value the borderland's uniqueness. We value family and friends; we have relatives across religious and social borders and love our differences. We value peace and quiet.

4. We know how to resist. We know how to adapt. How to open closed roads. How to quickly evaluate strangers and work out currency exchange rates. How to get along with neighbours, even when our views are opposed. We don't fit the stereotypes.

5. We could teach you about tolerance. We could teach about the futility of division. Border people have codes; we know how to treat each other in order to keep harmony. The border is where realities can co-exist. Co-existence is essential to the contract we have with each other; it is a higher thing than economics or security.

6. No one was unaffected by our history; the sights we saw, the hurt and fear. Some people lost far too much. For many the border gave safety and protection and preserved identity. We all need to learn history - our own and others. Preserve this knowledge so that the troubles of the past remain in the past.

7. Keep the border invisible and confined to maps. We want no checkpoints. Heightened security doesn't make us feel more safe or more secure. It makes us feel the opposite - angry, anxious, tense, defensive and fearful. The border is now one of cooperation and collaboration.

8. The difference between Yes and No can be made into Maybe. The Good Friday Agreement brought peace and stability. We fear the reversal of this good work. We can teach the world about history respect and forgiveness but we need more time to come to terms with our past. You don't rush border people.

9. Some of us want to grow together without a border. Some of us want the border intact although invisible. Our neighbours are our friends. We all choose peace.

ACROSS AND IN-BETWEEN

Written by people who live along the border in Ireland during the Border People's Parliament.

Parliament Buildings, Stormont.
20th October 2018

The manifesto which was created by those who live around the Irish border, as part of the *Across and In-between / The Yellow Line / The Border People's Parliament* project (2018). Source: Belfast International Arts Festival website (2018).

Appendix 4. Longer excerpts from interviews

4.1 *"a good 50% or more [...] we just had met along the journey, which I think is really important because the thing with organised groups, there's nothing wrong with them, of course [...] but I didn't want sort of organised beliefs either, or organised political positions. So the leaders of those groups, in a way, are already somewhat leaders in the community, and then they're part of the forming of the narrative of what that community thinks about an issue. [...]I don't want the artwork to be a vessel for those organised ways of thinking. [...] I think the main point is that we try to approach it as randomly as possible in terms of the selection of people we engaged with."* (P1-02-1)

4.2 *"We live at peace. It's not a perfect society. There are still divisions, schools are still segregated, housing estates are still segregated, so no peace funding will ever fix that. But there's so many other benefits [to community / participatory projects], that it almost kind-of like surpasses the peace benefit. So people's mental health, just getting them in a room working with other people, engaging with history, you know, they're learning about their history, they're improving their mental health. They're meeting older people, like-minded people as well, they're making new friends. They're building their confidence, they're learning a new skill, they might be learning a new skill that will help them change careers. There are so many different benefits, it's a shame that peace funding is bloody focused on peace building, which is a very important one, and I think it had it's place, but I think society has moved on so much, that there are so many other pressing issues that these projects are doing so well. And it's a shame to see the funding being, you know, taken from them [...], it's not just about peace building, it goes way beyond that. [...] Because society will suffer in other ways, not necessarily in cross community relations. But I think if you are at peace with yourself, with your well being, with your mindset, with your knowledge, with everything, you're going to relate much better to others. There is no point in trying to get to relate to others if you're not in a good place."* (P5-03-3).

4.2 *"An awful lot of the issues on the ground are still there, [...] that haven't been resolved. Even still, to an extent people saying too loudly that they haven't been resolved, you just get a sigh and groan and a 'move on', or 'is this a ploy for funding?' or 'these are the same issues the people are facing in Manchester [England, UK] or wherever else, you just need to cop on, it's not conflict related.'* [but] *Our schools are still 92% segregated, there's only 8% of schools in Northern Ireland that are integrated schools. And we still live overwhelmingly in segregated communities, through choice as much as through housing stock provision. And that's where we are as a society. [...] Many people can still count the friends and acquaintances from the other religion on the fingers on one hand, even 25 years post Good Friday Agreement, 29 years post ceasefires, and it's going to take a long time [...]when you meet someone, we do sort of go through this very polite and quite sophisticated coded conversation where*

you're just assessing whether they're a nationalist, a unionist, what they're likely to be, so that you can avoid any areas of conversation that might not be acceptable, or might cause some kind of offence, or start a disagreement or whatever else. We do all of that. And we don't even think about it, we just do it as a default thing." (P7-01-1).