Background: Civil Society and Peace Processes

The link between civil society and peace processes began with Kaldor’s (2003) emphasis on the globalization of civil society as an antidote to war. ‘Global civil society’ is that range of voluntary associations, NGOs and third-sector groups and social movements that work on a transnational scale, addressing the global dimensions of the local problems that mark their main activities.

Although not universally supported (for criticisms see Keane, 2003), there are several factors that are beginning to make civil society global. For example, forms of geo-strategic governance have emerged associated with the United Nations, particularly since the then General Secretary, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, developed, in conjunction with the EU, NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the notion of international trusteeship for the comprehensive reconstruction of war-torn societies and for the regulation of the conduct of war. Forms of cosmopolitan and humanitarian law have also emerged to impose international accountability for the conduct of war that transcend national legal systems (see Hirsh, 2003). The emergence of global politics has ensured that civil society political engagements take place now on a broader scene than the nation state, and civil society groups are required to be international in their political focus and activities, hence their depiction as INGOs (Kaldor, 2003: 79 passim). There are now also networks of exchange and collaboration that are transnational. These global networks place the activities of national groups in a broader framework, moving them literally on to a global stage. Civic networks in the past have linked national civil society groups together across different fields of interest (which thus amplified their range of involvement) or within their field of interest (which thus added weight to their campaigning) but these networks are now global, which raises exponentially the scale of their activities. While there is no global state, as it were, to provide a legislative framework for civil society activities, as there is with national NGOs, there are geo-strategic governance structures and rules of law that global civil society groups both work within and help to reinforce. Global civil society is thus both cause and effect of the growth of international organizations and treaties and the emergence of regional blocs of co-operation over security, health, economics and the like (Huddock, 1999).

The emergence of global civil society is important for our purposes because it facilitates peacemaking. Kaldor (2003: 109-41) emphasizes the impact of global civil society on the development of humanitarian law to regulate organized violence, the increase in the international demand for humanitarian interventions in conflicts and the growth of international peacekeeping. Globalization has facilitated peacemaking and brought new kinds of peace work. Global political interconnectedness makes us all vulnerable to conflicts in distant parts of the globe and can facilitate our mutual interest in peaceful intervention. The rising density of economic connections between states and regional security blocs means that nations no longer see threats to national security just in military terms, so that intervention is more readily contemplated. The development of extensive diaspora networks gives nations a cultural connectedness with distant others that may also motivate peacekeeping.

The human rights discourse that affects so much of geo-politics is in essence a language of peace by constituting a powerful deterrent to the violation of human rights. It has furnished a monitoring regime of numerous INGOs that operate transnationally, bypassing governments to establish a global network of peace
 monitors. This network allows INGOs to play a global role as peace campaigners, which gives peace an international voice. The impact of this global network is enhanced by the co-operation between human rights INGOs and a plethora of global networks mobilizing around gender, violence against women, the environment, anti-capitalism, opposition to landmines and other instruments of war, charitable giving, AIDS and other health issues and the like. There are flows of information between these networks and co-campaigning.

Global civil society resonates with peace in two ways. First, a raft of social, economic, environmental and gender issues are often aligned with peace, inasmuch as organized violence is seen to cause or make them worse and global networks easily get mobilized around peace as a vocation through their engagement with these issues. The globality of civil society is thus a virtue for peace processes in that local conflicts are felt to be everyone’s concern and peace efforts to deal with local conflicts are enhanced by their global reach. But civil society groups operate nationally and internationally at the same time, mediating between the local and the global, a process summed up in Robertson’s redolent phrase ‘glocalization’. Global activists are – in the famous phrase – urged to think globally and act locally by addressing the local manifestations of problems and issues that often have a global cause. But they also move in the other direction by taking local concerns on to a global stage by means of marshalling global civic networks in order for such mobilization to impact back on local circumstances. The capacity of civil society groups to negotiate their way between the local and the global allows them to be simultaneously national and international, within and outside a nation state’s borders. This ‘glocal’ quality makes civil society groups an effective go-between on two levels, mediating between the grassroots and the state within a national context and also between national and transnational policy makers. This gives local grassroots people the opportunity for their private troubles to be transformed by civil society into public issues on national and global stages. The protagonists in Northern Ireland’s conflict, for example, internationalized the war for the purposes of arms procurement and strategic allies, and then internationalized the peace process, with the US government becoming the guarantor of the process and the EU the financial backer.

This introduces the second virtue of civil society in peace processes. Civil society is the cog in the centre from which all sorts of engagements, involvements, deliberations and dialogue emanates outwards, like spokes in a wheel, towards the state and international regulatory frameworks, transporting local private troubles into public issues on very powerful arenas. Civil society helps to shape the policy agenda in the public sphere by making public issues of the dilemmas that negotiated peace deals provoke.

However, there is an important caveat that should prevent us from running away with the idea that civil society is always positive for peace processes. Putzel (1997) referred to the ‘dark side’ of social capital, which is the creation of trust, sociability and bonding amongst regressive religious and ethnic groups. This is similar to Chambers and Kopstein’s (2001) notion of ‘bad civil society’, by which they mean organizations and voluntary associations that are malevolent by their resistance to peace. In this regard, the Orange Order is as much a part of civil society as Northern Ireland’s Women for Peace Together. We should not, therefore, romanticize civil society in a peace process, for some intermediary organizations will oppose a settlement or try to keep the divisions real, deliberately or unintentionally making peace processes fragile; zealots with their ‘spoiler violence’ (Darby, 2001) rarely work alone but have the aid and assistance of third-sector, civil society
organizations behind them. In this respect, Smith and Stares (2007) argue that diaspora communities can be as much peace-wreckers as peacemakers.

If civil society is not always progressive, it is also the case, however, that where they emerge, agents of change come out of civil society. The grassroots is amorphous, unorganized if not disorganized, and poor. With weak social capital and suffering from social exclusion, the grassroots lack the skills, resources and motivations found in civil society. Civil society is a space where intellectual challenges to the existing order can be first thought, where material inequalities and oppressions are not so immediately pressing as amongst the down trodden and beaten so that intellectual envisioning of peace can begin. In civil society lie the educational and communication skills for political articulation, deliberation and mobilization that can motivate people to involvement in peacemaking. Groups within civil society can mobilize international links – through aid agencies, NGOs, the church, diaspora networks or whatever – to get money to under write their peace work. Civil society groups can mobilize these resources to such an extent that money can be poured into the peace process simply because they are linked to rich funders overseas. They can draw on these same international links to get trained professional peacemakers, conflict resolution mediators, and other peace activists to engage with their particular conflict, none of which can be done by the powerless and globally disconnected grassroots.

**Objectives of the research**

The research was designed to assess the contribution of the churches in Northern Ireland’s peace process as a case study of the strengths and weaknesses of civil society in situations of conflict. Our choice was strategic in that some churches opposed the peace process while the positive contribution of others was neglected on the popular view that religion is part of the problem. Two key motivations therefore dominated our research: to compensate for the relative neglect of the churches in accounts of Northern Ireland’s peace process by describing their contribution; and to use the data to reflect on the wider role of civil society in peace processes.

Since we began our research, Power’s (2007) analysis of the ecumenical churches and Daniel’s research on evangelicalism (2008) have been published, but it is still the case that the contribution of churches more generally has been relatively neglected. Paradoxically, however, churches and para-church organizations retain considerable legitimacy in Northern Ireland because of high levels of religious belief and practice (Brewer, 2003). This creates what Weber called a naturally occurring experimental situation that brought three research questions to the foreground. Did Northern Ireland’s churches, as a key component of civil society, transform themselves into being part of the solution, and if so, how? What were the strains and tensions evident within the churches arising from their peace vocation and their resulting strengths and weaknesses? What are the difficulties civil society faces in reconciling conflicts in those setting where it normally assists in reproducing it?

We therefore set ourselves the following aims and objectives:

1. To examine the role of the churches and para-church organizations in Northern Ireland’s peace process
2. To identify the various forms of their involvement and facilitation
3. To examine the ways in which the churches and para-church organizations balanced the competing pressures on them for involvement as a part of their religious faith with the hostility this provoked in many church goers
4. To use this case study to explore the strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, faced by civil society institutions in situations of communal conflict

5. To establish ways in which civil society in divided societies can become more effective agents for reconciliation

In meeting the second aim, we developed a typology of forms of engagement that enabled us to go beyond the descriptive listing of activities. In meeting the first, we advanced our conceptualization further by distinguishing four key strategic social spaces that Northern Irish churches occupied within civil society, highlighting the opportunities and constraints associated with each. We explored these opportunities and constraints directly under research aim three above, utilizing interviews with church hierarchies and rank and file members, set along side interviews with other stake holders who reflected on their engagement with the church. Running results together, we have been able to address some of the general features of civil society peacemaking in aims four and five by using our data to engage with two key conceptual distinctions in the literature: between negative and positive peace; and between the political and social peace processes. We suggest that it is best to conceive of church peacemaking as part of wider church-civil society-state relations and that this matrix better unlocks the potential for churches to transform themselves into becoming part of the solution. This enabled us to address issues under aim five by drawing attention to the importance of churches becoming part of a broad coalition in civil society rather than going-it-alone. We looked at some of the reasons why the churches in Northern Ireland were unable to do this.

Methods
Primary data was collected by in-depth interviews. Our data set consists of 61 audio cassettes and 54 data files of transcribed interviews in word format. Some written data was also collected, which was scanned and included in the data set.

We interviewed church hierarchies and rank-and-file members of the churches for details of their activities, self-assessments of their effectiveness and some of the strengths and weaknesses as they saw them. This was contextualized by interviews with civil society groups and representatives of political parties and governments for an assessment from their perspective of the effectiveness of the churches and of their engagement with them. Interviewees are: rank-and-file members of churches and para-church organizations (25); leaders within church hierarchies (7); leaders of former paramilitary organizations (6); local politicians (6); members of other civil society groups (10); political advisors to governments (1); government politicians (2); miscellaneous (7). Interviews included the last by Sinn Fein’s Denis Donaldson before he was exposed as a British agent and assassinated.

These are what is called ‘elite’ interviews, often difficult to organize, needing to be kept short and thus conducted over several sessions, and obviating the requirement for consent forms; since people were already active in the public domain they were happy to give consent for their names to be publicized.

Results
We defined two types of peacemaking: *passive*, which is the avowal of peace and denunciations of violence and conflict and corresponds to what in the literature is called negative peace (the cessation of violence); and *active*, which is the engagement with broader issues, such as engagement with the terms of the conflict to redefine it,
efforts to reintroduce and restore justice and equality and dealing with the problems of transition to a post-violence society, corresponding to what is known as positive peace (the restoration of equality, justice, fairness).

As a way of making sense of the large number of activities we were told about, we established the following typology of kinds of active peacemaking by the churches, which we illustrate with just a few typical examples:

a) Ecumenical activity (breaking down barriers, stereotypes and developing contact in a religious context)
Church to church activities - joint worship, Bible study, prayer, clergy to clergy groups; major ecumenical organizations (Corrymeela, Cornerstone etc); ecumenical public events; joint declarations of doctrine, belief and commitment; Irish Bishops and Irish Inter Church Council establishing the Irish Inter-church meeting; ‘informal’ or ‘non-structured’ ecumenism in the form of open invitations to preach in other pulpits, everyday ongoing interactions between people of different churches; the role of prison chaplains.

b) Mediation (conflict resolution)
Formal mediation organizations with Christian input (such as Mediation Network); informal involvement in mediation by local Christians; Christian dialogue with protagonists to the conflict, such as clergy meetings with UVF, Sinn Fein and the IRA; the development in some clergy of what might be called ‘mediatorial behaviour’, that is, adopting a posture of mediation that motivates specific formal mediations.

c) Cross-community activities (entry into secular spaces to try to break down barriers)
Large scale Christian involvement in integrated education, integrated holiday schemes, home building schemes etc; local Christian involvement in neighbourhood initiatives, issue-based mobilization on drugs, crime, women’s issues etc.

d) Peace initiatives (espousing peace and monitoring the conflict)
Church involvement with formal peace organizations and initiatives; clergy engagement with populist peace activity - peace train, rallies, peace marches etc; public interventions by church leaders and others, including sermons at funerals; peace advocacy by churches, such as Church of Ireland Hard Gospel and the Presbyterian Church’s Peace Vocation.

e) Anti-sectarianism (challenging the conflict and redefining it)
Engagement by churches and para-church organizations with the nature of sectarianism and its negative features, such as Irish School of Ecumenics’ project on transcending sectarianism, the Inter-Church Group’s project on non-sectarianism or ECONI’s de-privatising of religion by creating public spaces to meet to discuss sectarianism; church involvement with the trade union-led peace rallies against sectarianism.

f) Dealing with the problems of post-violence (assisting with post-conflict adjustment)
Work with victims and victim support groups; dealing with memory and narratives of atrocity; dealing with the issue of forgiveness; reintegration of protagonists, such as
church-facilitated ex-prisoner and family support groups, job creation schemes; citizenship education workshops that try to inculcate the skills for living together in tolerance.

g) Back channels of communication (provision of ‘safe’ political spaces)
Facilitation of communication between the political representatives of the warring factions in protected ‘safe’ spaces, such as secret meetings involving the British and Irish governments with paramilitary groups and meetings between local political parties and the paramilitary groups.

With the exception of the last, these kinds of activity address what we call the ‘social peace process’, that is, they deal with issues of social healing, repair and reconciliation, areas in which the church has more expertise. The ‘political peace process’, by contrast, concerns the negotiation process by which a peace accord is developed. Only in respect of the provision of back channels of communication were churches and para-church organizations systematically involved with the political peace process, although individual church leaders, especially Archbishop Eames and Cardinal Daly, were regularly consulted by governments.

We developed our conceptualization further by identifying four arenas or strategic social spaces in civil society which the church occupied in pursuing these activities. These are: Intellectual spaces (as places for discussion of peace, development of visions for peace, ideas for conflict resolution, new ideas for reconciliation work etc); Institutional spaces (as religious organizations that put peace into practice in their own activities and behaviours); Social spaces (their employment of social, symbolic, cultural and material resources to support peace and peace work); Political spaces (their engagement with the political peace process, engagement with political groups and their armed wings, with governments etc).

If we combine the two typologies, we suggest that in intellectual spaces we find the churches doing many forms of ecumenical activity and anti-sectarianism; in institutional spaces we see the churches engaging with its cross-community activities and dealing with some of the problems of post-violence; in social spaces the churches were involved in mediation, engaged with peace groups and dealt with those post-violence adjustment problems that involve expending material and cultural resources; in political spaces we see the churches acting as back channels of communication, facilitating engagement between the various factions, including paramilitaries and governments.

When analysed in these terms, it is important to note the opportunities and constraints that operate on churches and para-church organizations in entering these socially strategic spaces. We observed that the minority/majority status of the churches affected their engagement, since majority religions tend to be established churches linked to the state or the religion of the dominant group culture, such as the Church of Ireland and Presbyterian Churches. This majority status can limit their role in peace processes; a majority church can be constrained in the critical positions it can take, and as broad churches are fearful of offending sectors of their congregations. Minority churches can be more critical, as were the Methodists in Northern Ireland and some non-aligned para-church organizations like ECONI. One way in which the majority churches managed the problems of engagement should it go wrong, was to restrict the involvement to ‘unofficial’ activity. The distinction between ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ peace work thus became an important element to our conceptualization, for it helps churches manage the risk of public exposure. Our conceptualization of
religious peace work thus involves wider church-civil society-state relations, an approach we develop in the first nominated output.

If the above represent some of the strengths of the churches with respect to involvement in the peace process, in terms of the perceived weaknesses of the churches, the following themes emerged from our interviews:

1: A Disunited Church.
It is both impossible and unhelpful to speak of ‘the Church’ in Northern Ireland; there has never been any fully unified approach to addressing conflict in the society on the part of Christian leaders. Some churches (such as the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster) have theologies that reinforce the terms of conflict; while the senior leaders of others (such as the Church of Ireland) often seemed to see themselves more as ‘chairmen’ tasked with maintaining the unity of their membership rather than prophetic voices called to challenge their people to live ‘outside their comfort zones’ for the sake of peace. Even those leaders who might otherwise have incarnated a truly risk-taking spirituality were frequently opposed from within their own denominations. Indeed, when the roll of Northern Irish Christian peacemakers is read, the names are likely to be less known to the public, as these tended to be low-profile, even ‘maverick’ figures, whose very unconventionalism meant that they were unlikely ever to rise to senior leadership positions in their own churches. Peace initiatives, ironically, tended to be carried out on a denominationally-exclusive basis, with one notable but indicative example being the Presbyterian Youth for Peace project established in 2000 which omitted any requirement for contact with Catholic youth, as this would have been considered too controversial to be approved by the General Assembly. The Methodists, disproportionately involved in the peace process, tended on important occasions to want to ‘go-it-alone’ in a denominational initiative. Ultimately, it must be acknowledged that a very great deal of the positive role of the churches in Northern Ireland was played by individuals acting ‘unofficially’, and not institutions, and many of these individuals were actually at odds with and not fully supported by their leaders.

2: Clergy as ‘managers’.
The role of clergy as representatives of their own congregations/denominations is noteworthy. Many clergy felt constrained by their congregations and so did not speak out about sensitive topics; on the other hand, ‘mavericks’ acted as the ‘conscience’ of their denominations and carried the imprimatur of the senior leadership only indirectly. When ethnicity and religion represent two sides of a Janus face, the churches are not ‘above’ the conflict and it therefore proved extremely difficult to find a way for them to intervene that did not exacerbate difficulties within their congregations.

3. Fear – both real and perceived.
Clergy and grass roots Christians were sometimes afraid of involvement in responding to the conflict, anxious about putting their head above the parapet. The role of fear needs to be acknowledged as part of the fuller story of Christian engagement with peacemaking. Some clergy and church workers suffered genuine intimidation – bullets in the post, threatening phone calls, etc. This is why some of the types of peacemaking in our typology represent fairly ritualized and ‘safe’ peace work. At the same time, the use of ‘fear-language’ can be an excuse for not being involved. Sometimes the ‘fears’ were exaggerated.
4. **Mis-diagnosing the problem.**

To ask if the conflict is or is not religious is to misunderstand the nature of its framing. It is both religious and not religious; religious discourses surround the terms of the conflict, and religious interventions have helped ameliorate it. But to see it as a religious conflict misdiagnoses it. For example, conservative evangelicals in the Presbyterian Church sought to monopolize the word ‘reconciliation’, using it to refer to the role Christ plays in reconciling people to God, suggesting that political or social reconciliation would be the consequence only of widespread evangelical conversion experiences. They therefore focused exclusively on what they called ‘preaching the gospel’ – which in practice meant a pietistic personal Protestant morality that actually reinforced the ethno-religious boundaries in Northern Irish society. Thus, by conflating evangelical spirituality with the trappings of Ulster Protestantism, sincere Christian people ended up reinforcing the terms of the conflict through their own evangelism.

5: **The role of mistrust.**

Perhaps the most obvious and long-standing dimension of the conflict is the role of mistrust. In a society where religion is divisive – even if not the cause of the conflict – it is difficult for the churches themselves to be trusted. This inhibits their capacity to garner and facilitate governments, paramilitaries, political parties and ordinary people to trust each other. The Protestant churches on the whole failed to raise questions of social injustice because they feared being perceived as supporting the Republican cause. Conversely, neither they nor the Catholic Church taught their members to offer the grace of trust to others.

6: **Churches being behind the times.**

The fact that leading individual church figures had been engaged in dialogue with paramilitaries since the beginning of ‘the Troubles’ did not prevent the central leadership from being woefully late in their engagement with the social peace process, especially in a publicly visible fashion. It was not until 1994 – the year of the paramilitary ceasefires – that the Presbyterian Church endorsed its ‘Peace Vocation’ statement, calling on its members to distinguish their faith from their nationalism (British or Irish); the Church of Ireland’s ‘Hard Gospel’ project did not begin until well after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement; the Catholic Church at the time of writing still has no central direct peacemaking initiative involving grass roots members. Even the much lauded ecumenical churches restricted themselves in the main to the constituency of the already converted ecumenists prior to the Belfast Agreement.

7: **Self-aggrandizement and the over-stating of ‘statements’.**

Some church leaders had an enlarged sense of self-importance, reflected in self-aggrandizement and their over-emphasis on the ‘measured public statement’. Church leaders were very visible in the public forums for their rhetorical condemnation of violence; it was rare, however, to see high profile church leaders living in communities where violence was prevalent, or to understand that actions count for a thousand words. Those clergy and church people who lived and worked in the more challenging areas often spoke of their disdain for high profile church leaders, and their tendency to appear to think that public statements rather than long-term action on the ground solves problems. On the other hand, while critical of senior church leaders,
some local clergy often wanted to restrict themselves to relatively safe ecumenical work that could be kept low profile. There were people who overstated their involvement in peace building to themselves and others. High profile peace activists in the church, who lived and worked their peace vocation, were the exception.

8. The battle for credit.
Just as the peace process generally was hamstrung in its early days by the fight over who would get the credit for starting it – the British Government or John Hume – the churches have sometimes appeared to be competing with each other to be seen to be ‘taking a lead’ in peace building. The denominational mindset that reproduces ‘the divided church’ referred to above, results in some clergy wanting to take credit. Competition between them or even a benign lack of co-operation among the churches contributed to the gaps in Christian responses to the conflict.

9. The innate conservatism of the church
Church institutions are conservative by their very nature and design, concerned above all to protect themselves as institutions. Even in the cases where church leaders have been personally committed to peace issues, they have found it difficult to bring their members with them. Rank-and-file wanted negative peace, the cessation of violence, but many baulked from supporting positive peace, justice and redistribution. It is also the case, however, that the rank-and-file were ‘armchair activists’, convinced of their own way of doing things or of what would work, forming an obdurate bloc that high profile church peace activists had to negotiate their way round.

10. A lack of critical self-reflection
The dying embers of Christendom represent the twilight of clericalism in Northern Ireland – it is only after the negotiated political settlement that self-criticism on the part of the churches has become mainstreamed. Looking back, the churches will reflect that prior to the political peace process, they did relatively little to advance the social peace process, working within sectarian structures rather than seeking to destroy them. It is no coincidence that both John Dunlop and Ken Newell – two of the most courageous Protestant peace activists – spent a large part of their early ministry in overseas mission work. Many church people who left Northern Ireland for a time before returning have brought a positive perspective to bear on the culture – especially if they have been exposed to other religious traditions. The vast majority of the clergy, however, were too parochial – keen to play a role in the public square but on terms shaped by conventional attitudes towards ‘the Troubles’.

In conclusion, on the basis of our research we argue:

- ‘Good’ civil society, as it were, did not confront ‘bad’. The mainstream churches did not challenge ardent opponents of the peace process in other churches, thereby allowing militant fundamentalism to have an influence vastly disproportionate to its numbers.
- Church leaders did not sufficiently challenge their own congregations to engage with the peace process.
- Inter-church worship, clergy-to-clergy groups meetings and the like were used far too often as a bandage on conflicts that were far deeper than could be resolved through ecumenical work. They were not attentive to proactive non-violence as a means of achieving change, thereby failing to present a theology
of reconciliation and peace building as a normal part of what it means to be a Christian. Churches, on the whole, either left it to their leaders or franchised out their peace work to individuals, small groups or church committees rather than making it central to the call of Christ.

- Churches failed to link up with other sections of civil society in a broad coalition to advance the peace process. The divisiveness and denominationalism within the churches encouraged a go-it-alone mentality that meant that they failed to co-operate amongst themselves and with other civil society groups, with the occasional exception. Whatever credibility the churches had from the survival of religiosity in Northern Ireland was not used to enter the public square and align themselves with the rest of the peace movement in civil society. This limited the willingness of secular civil society to see the churches as agents of change.

- Largely reliant on spaces opened up by the political peace process rather than forging ahead to garner healing, repair and reconciliation in advance of the Belfast Agreement, the churches are not fully exploiting new opportunities after the settlement. They are not addressing issues of post-conflict reconciliation that might be thought their provenance. Being relatively absent from civil society during ‘the Troubles’, save in ritualized ways, the churches are dealing with post-violence adjustment problems as pastoral care issues within their congregations, absenting themselves from the public sphere.

- Key public challenges for the churches ahead include addressing the sense of abandonment some victims feel from churches, whom they perceive as not attending to their needs; increasing the churches’ civic engagement with post-violence issues like hope, forgiveness and healing; and addressing socio-economic issues at a local level.

**Activities**

a) A conference paper has been presented at the annual meeting of the British Sociological Association in Cardiff in April 2009, entitled ‘Religion, Civil Society and Peace Processes’.

b) Brewer has already delivered two public lectures on the research: ‘Post-conflict emotions: notes towards the sociology of hope and forgiveness’, University of Kent, 26 February 2009 and the University of Aberdeen, 4 March 2009.

c) Higgins has already presented a version of the findings at the following events: Institute of Irish Studies Summer School August 2008; Duke University, North Carolina, John Hope Franklin Human Rights Center occasional paper November 2008; Mennonite Peace Gathering, Philadelphia, January 2009; University of British Columbia, Vancouver, February 2009.

**Outputs**

An article has been accepted, with minor revisions, by *Sociology*, entitled ‘Religion and Peace Processes: A Conceptualization’, due for publication in 2010 (see designated output 1).

The research has also been used as part of Chapter 3 (on civil society) in Brewer’s book *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach*, to be published by Polity Press in January 2010.
The research is being written up as a book, provisionally entitled *The Role of the Churches in Northern Ireland’s Peace Process: A Case Study in Civil Society Peacemaking*. We hope to complete the manuscript within 12 months of the end of the grant, summer 2010.

Further articles and outputs are planned as set out in our dissemination strategy (see designated output 2).

**Impacts**

The dissemination strategy sets out our ambitions to engage with potential users of the research in Northern Ireland and the means by which we intend to do this. While much of this strategy requires that the book be completed first, we are keen to publicize the research in advance of the book and for there to be an immediate impact. Some ways in which this is being done are disclosed above in the section ‘Activities’.

We are keen to translate the research into popular forms of writing. The research has already been reported by journalists in two electronic sources devoted to religious topics: Anglican Mainstream (http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/?p=9752) and Religious Intelligence (http://www.religiousintelligence.co.uk/News/?newsID=4274). It has been featured also in a report in the *Times Higher* on Brewer’s appointment as President of the British Sociological Association, and in a forthcoming article by Brewer in the *Times Higher* on the ‘eureka moments’ that have influenced his work.

Further activities are planned with users as outlined in our dissemination strategy. Arrangements are under discussion with BBC Radio Ulster’s Sunday Sequence religious current affairs programme to discuss the research on air, on which Brewer and Higgins are regular contributors.

**Future Research Priorities**

a) Explorations of church-civil society-state relationship in other societies where religion is part of the problem, such as Sri Lanka, The Philippines and Israel-Palestine.

b) Explorations of further civil society contributions to peace in Northern Ireland, such as the universities, trade union movement and local community development groups.

**Bibliography**


