Cross-Border Knowledge Sharing: A New Common Chapter for Cooperation

Anthony Soares, Acting Director, Centre for Cross Border Studies

@antsoares67
Towards a New Common Chapter: Concentration versus participation?
The context for cross-border cooperation on the island of Ireland
Curiosity and generosity... and capacity for cross-border cooperation
Origins: The “old” Common Chapter – high-level cooperation

IRELAND
National Development Plan 2000-2006
Dimensions of the “old” Common Chapter

- co-operation along the Border Corridor and between Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland;
- co-operation North-South within the island of Ireland; and
- co-operation East-West between the island of Ireland and Great Britain, Europe and internationally.
Strands of the 1998 Agreement

- Strand One: Democratic power-sharing institutions in Northern Ireland
- Strand Two: North-South Ministerial Council
- Strand Three: British Irish Council, British Irish Intergovernmental Conference
2000-2006: An interruption
“Towards a New Common Chapter” project aims

- To address the need for cross-border cooperation to be independently valued and enacted at the grass-roots level, with communities from both sides of the border jointly setting their own priorities and advocating for their inclusion in regional and local strategies.
“Towards a New Common Chapter”: The fundamental question

- Do people actually agree with the idea of cross-border cooperation?
- **REMEMBER:** We are dealing with a post-conflict society!
Women’s Groups: Equal representation of women to ensure New Common Chapter addresses their concerns and hopes.

Protestant/Unionist Community Groups: Felt to be less confident in getting involved in cross-border cooperation in comparison with Catholic/Nationalist groups.
“Difficult” conversations?

- Different experiences of living at the border
- Rural-urban divide
- Lack of knowledge of each other (North-South and East-West)
The New Common Chapter: A shared vision for cooperation

A New Common Chapter
for cooperation within and between these islands

Introduction
The vision for cooperation within and between these islands by grassroots community organisations we propose below was developed in the light of our critical engagement with what had been known as the “Common Chapter”. Following the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, the devolved administration in Northern Ireland gave its approval to a section on cooperation with the Republic of Ireland in the Northern Ireland Structural Funds Plan 2000-2006. The same text was contained in the Republic of Ireland's National Development Plan 2000-2006 in a section on cooperation with Northern Ireland. This replicated text - the “Common Chapter” - set out the two Governments’ priorities for cooperation and how funds (particularly European Union funds) would be used to support it. It was understood that cross-border cooperation for the island of Ireland had three dimensions:
- cooperation along the border corridor and between Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland;
- North South cooperation within the island of Ireland; and
- East-West cooperation between the island of Ireland and Great Britain, Europe and internationally.

Within the three year period for which these plans were designed development in Northern Ireland was suspended, and following the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2007 the common chapter was not renewed.

What follows below, therefore, is the result of a sustained process of engagement by grassroots community organisations from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with the notion of cross-border, North South and East-West cooperation, which has led to a vision of such cooperation and what it should entail.

A New Common Chapter

Recalling the “Common Chapter” on cross-border, north south and east-west cooperation that existed in Ireland’s National Development Plan and Northern Ireland’s Structural Funds Plan, WE HEREBY PROPOSE A NEW COMMON CHAPTER FOR COOPERATION within and between these islands by grassroots community organisations within and between these islands which vision how it can:
- Acknowledge and respect the differences that make these islands what they are, while also recognizing and cherish the relations between the communities that lie within its distinct regions and regions;
- In the knowledge that we speak and treasure indigenous languages whose roots cross the borders within and between our islands;
- Recognize that faith traditions are organised and followed by communities within and across these islands; Visions the musical, literary, and other artistic traditions that have spread across the world and whose development has been shaped through relations within and between these islands;
- Nothing that whilst we can compete against each other, sporting and sporting organisations also unite us within and between these islands; and
- Recognize that our islands are connected by family bonds that cross the borders that separate them.

WE HEREBY PROPOSE A NEW COMMON CHAPTER FOR COOPERATION by grassroots community organisations within and between these islands which vision how it can:
- Maintain family ties and friendships that cross borders;
- Allow for the cross-border sharing of local and resources and services;
- Increase opportunities for the sharing of information, knowledge of skills and best practice in the other jurisdictions, widen our cross border evidence base, and improve policy making by matching it to the realities on the ground and identifying cross-border opportunities;
- Promote sustainable cross-border friendly relations between communities that give insight into the views of those from the other jurisdictions, and allow for difficult conversations to be had;
- Promote a civil society that values diversity and in which there is the ability to discuss respectfully;
- Facilitate the exploration of a community’s culture and heritage;
- Increase the protection and enjoyment of the environment;
- Encourage and develop community leadership;
- Contribute to our common safety and wellbeing;
- Explore economic opportunities;
- Discover tourism potential;
- Advocate for improved coordination of regulations within and between these islands; and
- Engage with and support the most isolated and marginalized in our communities.

WE BELIEVE THAT FOR IT TO BE SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION WITHIN AND BETWEEN THESE ISLANDS MUST NOT:
- Be the unique province of any one government, agency, group or community;
- Be for party-political purposes;
- Involve policies or projects imposed on communities and that are irrelevant to them;
- Operate on the basis of religious or cultural labelling, or assumptions about a community or group, or involve notions of quantitatively defined targets;
- Be short term, short sighted or unsustainable;
- Be shown by the need to achieve large impacts in a way that privileges the involvement of larger institutions and organisations and diminishes the value of micro-community initiatives and their potential to contribute to significant positive change;
- Be overly theoretical, complicated or divisive of community-led approaches;
- Be funding led; and
- Deny equality of opportunities to people with different religious beliefs, political opinion, different racial groups, ages, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, with or without a disability, with dependents or without.

WE HEREBY PROPOSE A NEW COMMON CHAPTER FOR COOPERATION WITHIN AND BETWEEN THESE ISLANDS CAN USEFULLY ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING ISSUES:
- Capacity building for community leadership in cooperation, especially for young leaders;
- Improving the sustainability of community organisations and initiatives;
- Exploring the potential for cross border tourism, especially rural tourism;
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- Promoting sustainable cross-border friendly relations between communities that give insight into the views of those from the other jurisdictions, and allow for difficult conversations to be had;
- Promote a civil society that values diversity and in which there is the ability to discuss respectfully;
- Facilitate the exploration of a community’s culture and heritage;
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- Advocate for improved coordination of regulations within and between these islands; and
- Engage with and support the most isolated and marginalized in our communities.

WE HEREBY COMMEND THIS NEW COMMON CHAPTER FOR COOPERATION WITHIN AND BETWEEN THESE ISLANDS.
We hereby propose a New Common Chapter for cooperation by grassroots community organisations within and between these islands which values how it can:

- Increase opportunities for the sharing of information, knowledge of policy and best-practice in the other jurisdictions, widen our cross-border evidence-base, and improve policy-making by matching it to the realities on the ground and identifying cross-border opportunities.
Lessons from The New Common Chapter: What cooperation shouldn’t be about

We believe that for it to be successful cooperation within and between these islands must not:

- Involve policies or projects imposed on communities and that are irrelevant to them
- Be driven by the need to achieve large impacts in a way that privileges the involvement of larger institutions and organisations and dismisses the value of micro-community initiatives and their potential to contribute to significant positive change
- Be short-term, short-sighted or unsustainable
Thank you, and happy birthday CESCI!!!