

Title:

‘Spaces’ for restorative development: international case studies on restorative services

Abstract:

This paper examines the concept of the ‘spaces’ into which restorative services develop (Vaandering 2014; Braithwaite, 2016; Maglione, 2019; Hobson et al, 2021). We conceptualise such ‘spaces’ as: social, the people and communities; as political, the will for developments; as physical, the geography and facilities; and as economic, dependent on the resources available. The first case study examines the hub-and-spoke model from Gloucestershire, England, where a top-down approach with buy-in at the statutory level provides ‘space’ for institutional engagement and integration of restorative practice. The second examines community-led restorative services in Belfast, Northern Ireland, originally tackling paramilitary violence they now fill a ‘space’ in local communities caused by a distrust of the state. The final case study is from Kenema City, Sierra Leone, where a post-conflict and post-Ebola ‘space’ is filled by an urban agriculture scheme aiming to divert young people from harmful activity and to reintegrate into society. Across the three cases in this paper, we hope to show that the types of ‘space’ we identify can be an important conceptual tool in helping to understand how and why restorative services develop, the provision they offer, and the capacities they have to expand.

Key Words:

Restorative justice; criminal justice; top-down and bottom-up justice; transformation; transition; community building; post-conflict

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1. Introduction

With a rich and varied history of community-level dispute resolution, restorative justice has increasingly become part of established discourses within criminal justice systems and other state services. Much of this focuses on the contribution of restorative justice in addressing criminal behaviour in areas such as youth justice, policing, and probation (Rossner and Bruce, 2016; Kirkwood and Hamad 2019; Marder, 2020a; Pali and Maglione 2021).

Increasingly, this also includes a broader depiction of restorative ‘practice’ ‘that are focused on relational behaviour management and cultural and organisational shifts, for example in in prison culture, pedagogic and engagement practices in schools, interpersonal relationships in mental health wards, and in social work and social care (Rees and Hobson, 2021; Dhimi et al, 2009; Wearmouth et al. 2007; Teasley 2014; Parkinson et al. 2018 Cook et al, 2015). This inclusion of restorative justice and restorative practice at the policy level is taking place in diverse countries around the world, including in Canada, (Roach, 2012), Iraq (Al Hasani, 2021), China, (Zhang and Xia, 2021), and across Europe. In the case of the latter, restorative justice in particular has featured in a range of recent policy announcements that grew from the initial discussion of restorative justice as beneficial in the EU’s 2012 Victims’ Rights Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU), to include: the Council of Europe’s 2018 recommendation to ‘develop and use restorative justice with respect to their criminal justice systems’(Council of Europe, 2019); the European Commission’s 2020-25 EU-wide Strategy on victims’ rights (2020 - 2025) that recognised a role for Restorative justice in helping to empower victims of crime; and the 2021 Venice Declaration on the Role of Restorative Justice in Criminal Matters (Marder, 2020b).

In this paper we examine the importance of context for the development and structure of restorative services and projects. We do this through an application of the idea of ‘spaces’ for development (Vaandering 2014; Braithwaite, 2016; Maglione, 2019; Hobson et al, 2021). We

conceptualise these ‘spaces’ as: *social*, reflecting the people and communities in which they work; as *political*, reflecting the will for such developments; as *physical*, relating to geography and facilities; and as *economic*, dependent on the resources available. In analysing and expanding upon these ‘spaces’, we use a series of case studies to expand upon these ideas of ‘spaces’ for development, and in doing so hope to illustrate their usefulness as positional and contextual tools for understanding the development and nature of restorative services. The case studies come from three countries in which different types of restorative services and projects have developed. In each case, we consider how the ‘spaces’ available shape that restorative work. The first case study is in Gloucestershire, England. In this instance, a top-down approach to developing restorative services as part of a hub-and-spoke model funded by the local Police and Crime Commissioner, has achieved institutional buy-in from statutory bodies but has struggled to achieve its goal of empowering key stakeholders (see, for example, Marder 2020). The second case study is based in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where community-based restorative justice schemes developed as a response to a legitimacy deficit between communities and the police in the aftermath of the Northern Ireland conflict. These schemes continued to develop, and now offer community-based resolution practices, community support projects, and diversionary activities for young people at risk of criminal behaviour (Hogg and Butler 2018). The final case study is based in Kenema, Sierra Leone, where recent conflict and the Ebola Virus pandemic have resulted in a poorly resourced state and many communities living in significant poverty (Lynch et al. 2020). This example considers the development of an urban agriculture scheme that aims to divert young people from criminal and harmful activity, and whilst not explicitly badged locally as a restorative justice project, it draws heavily upon similar approaches to create dialogue with those impacted war and poverty, and to create opportunities for forgiveness and constructive ways forward.

2. Literature Review: the importance of ‘spaces’ for development

Restorative justice approaches seek to respond to the harm caused by crime with a philosophy that embraces dialogue in its many forms, engaging those that have created the harm with those that have been harmed (Braithwaite, 1989; Hand et al, 2012; Rossner, 2017). As opposed to the more punitive and retributive systems that have become associated with many criminal justice systems, restorative justice places ownership of conflicts with those who have the greatest stake in those events, with an emphasis on engaging victims and offenders, as well as the communities in which they live or where the harm took place (Braithwaite 1989). Dzur and Olson (2004) describe how restorative justice can strengthen and rebuild social relationships while at the same time minimizing the governmental role in criminal justice by making the victim the central interest in responding to crime and conflict. Over recent years, such approaches have become more established components of criminal justice systems in many countries and have become established and mainstream responses to crime (Rossner and Bruce, 2016), for example, as restorative out of court disposals for a range of offences and offender types (Marder, 2020a), and in probation settings (Kirkwood and Hamad 2019). There is also increasing pressure internationally levels for greater use of these approaches within criminal justice systems more broadly (Pali and Maglione 2021).

Restorative approaches, whilst using the underlying principles of restorative justice, normally take place where there is either no clear criminal incident and focus on supporting individuals, communities, and organisations in finding better ways to negotiate conflict before it becomes a problem. For example, restorative work in prisons is well established as a method for providing post-trial dialogue between victims and offenders but are also increasingly used to create positive cultures amongst those imprisoned and prison staff (Dhami et al, 2009; Calkin, 2021). In schools, restorative approaches provide alternatives to

detentions, expulsions, and suspensions (Wearmouth et al. 2007; Teasley 2014). There are also broad applications in social work and social care (Parkinson et al. 2018), including growing uses of restorative approaches in forensic mental health settings (Cook et al, 2015).

Although there are differences between restorative justice that deal with those in and around criminal justice systems, and restorative practices that aim to develop cultural and relational resources, both share a common conceptual grounding that seeks to respond to harm caused by addressing the needs of those most involved. As such, restorative justice and associated practice exists within the context of particular social, political, and economic environments. They may develop very differently depending on their contexts, not least because they are seeking to address different needs with different resources. For instance, some develop in close association with, or are integrated into, state agencies. In the context of this paper, we refer to these as ‘restorative services’, insofar as they are more likely to be part of provision that spans across a range of established state or statutory services, for example embedded into policing (Marder, 2020a), probation (Kirkwood and Hamad, 2019), or education (Wearmouth and Mckinney, 2007). Others may develop as community-led schemes, that are a response to a specific circumstance, such as war, community conflict, or as a response to local problems such as crime and anti-social behaviour. Here, we refer to these as restorative projects, more likely to focus on those immediate issues (Eriksson, 2009).

We examine these contextual drivers for restorative services and projects using the concept of restorative ‘spaces’ for development. The concept of ‘spaces’ for restorative justice and practice is established in the literature. Braithwaite (2016, p. 81), for example, talks about the development of restorative justice as ‘opening institutional spaces to possibilities for richer forms of forgiveness’. In higher education settings, Vaandering (2014, p. 25) identified the power of relational restorative justice pedagogy to create ‘recognized peace and citizenship as processes creating tentative, open spaces pregnant with possibility’. Maglione (2019, p. 666),

as with many others, talks of restorative spaces as affording ‘possibilities to reflect upon the process of criminalization instead of passively endorsing the subjugating labels imposed by conventional criminal justice’. In this sense, the ‘spaces’ that are available are positional in that they help us to contextualise restorative services and programmes, providing an understanding of the conditions through which they came and the nature of what it is that emerges. In this paper, we develop this concept of space in in four categories: *social*, *political*, *physical*, and *economic*. Each of these relies on the others and in understanding the ‘spaces’ a restorative service or programme occupies, we can know more about what it is that is being achieved, with whom, and to what end.

The first type of space we identify is social, which is the capacities and willingness that exists within affected groups and communities to embrace the relational principles embedded with restorative practice. Social space is often a reflection of need, and Erickson (2009) identified how this type of social space is more likely to be found in transitional societies, moving from conflict or other forms of significant disruption. Such change, she argues, creates strong community ties often in the absence of strong state structures, which in turn ‘leaves space for informal justice alternatives.’ (Erickson, 2009, p 307). The availability of Social space may also be a function of tradition, and there are many examples of community-led and culturally significant restorative practices that occupy a social space within traditional methods of conflict resolution and community building (Tauri, 2009; Hand et al, 2012).

The second type of space we identify is political, which reflects the capacity and willingness of an organisation to engage in conversations around approaches to justice and relational practices embedded with restorative principles. This may include changes to state policy or practice as manifest in the different instruments of social life, such as criminal justice or education systems. As we discussed earlier, there is a significant movement to making this kind of political space for Restorative justice policy and this is reflected in the growing

number of ‘new international legal instruments and guidelines relating to restorative justice’ (Marder, 2020b, p395). Outside of central policy decision, we can also see this kind of political and organisational space emerge when organisations that take deliberate decisions to incorporate restorative practices or approaches in their work, for example localised application of restorative justice policy in prison culture (Calkin, 2021). In both cases, Hobson et al (2021, p12) argue that for restorative schemes to work ‘there needs to be a shift in organisational practice to allow the conceptual and structural space for the development of reintegrative, non-stigmatising approaches to managing conflict’.

The third type of space is physical, which involves the spaces bound (or unbound) in the actual location of the work. This might include issues of geography, and the ways in which projects operate across diverse communities, for example in Northern Ireland separate community restorative justice services emerged at a similar time in both traditionally loyalist and republican communities (McEvoy & Mika, 2001). It might also include the ways in which availability of spaces for work shape the work that takes place, for example the ways in which traditional community practices might become co-opted for restorative work as happened with the Gacaca courts in Rwanda.

The fourth type of space is economic, which reflects the access to resources and how this shapes the nature of work. This might include the stability of funding for services, particularly in the contrast between relatively secure funding as part of established state-based services (such as within policing or probation), and the precarious funding that is more common in community-led projects that often rely on short term contract, charitable support, and donations. There is a growing third branch to this, as well, which are those restorative services that are competitively commissioned as part of outsourced restorative delivery (for example, see Restorative solutions, 2021). One of the ways in which the economic space

afforded can impact on services, is the differing extent of the use of paid practitioners versus volunteers in delivery (Souza and Dhami 2008).

In the rest of this paper, we use the three case studies to expand upon the concept of ‘spaces’ for restorative development, and to illustrate its use as a positional and contextual tool for understanding the development and nature of restorative services.

2. Method

This paper used a case-study approach to examine the nature of ‘spaces’ for restorative development. Such an approach is widely used in restorative justice literature, for example Rosenblatt (2014), Bolitho (2015), Gavrielides (2015), Silva et al (2019), and Mohammed (2020). The choice of the three case study locations comes from discussions held by the authors at a Restorative Practices Knowledge Exchange at Ulster University from 2nd to 4th April 2019. The Knowledge Exchange brought together practitioners and organisations from four different countries and across 20 different organisations in the public, private, community, and academic sectors. Table 1, following, details the organisations present at the Knowledge Exchange:

Table 1: participants in the knowledge exchange	
SECTOR	PARTICIPANTS
State agencies and services	Department of Justice NI; Gloucestershire Police; NI Prison Service; Police Service of Northern Ireland; Probation Board NI; Probation Service Ireland; The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Gloucestershire.
Other support services	Family Group Conference NI; Home Group (Supported Housing); Quaker Service NI; Victim Support NI,

Community-led restorative projects	Community Restorative Justice Ireland; Northern Ireland Alternatives; Restorative Gloucestershire; Restorative Practices Forum NI.
Researchers and academics	Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone (Sierra Leone); University of Gloucestershire (England); Ulster University (Northern Ireland); Maynooth University (Ireland).

The purpose of the Knowledge Exchange was to share knowledge and experiences of building restorative services and projects, and to reflect on the challenges and opportunities faced in developing these practices. Across the three days, participants spoke about their restorative work, describing interventions that draw upon victim-offender dialogue, community conferencing, and peace-making circles. Table 2, following, summarises discussions against the key themes of the Knowledge Exchange.

Table 2: Key themes and discussion during the Knowledge Exchange	
Themes	Discussion topics
Development of restorative projects	The context in which projects emerge and the key influences that shape how projects develop and function.
Challenges and opportunities for Restorative Justice	The key issues faced in developing projects and what are the successes brought by different types of projects.
Models of restorative projects	Top-down, Police-led and organizational led services, versus bottom-up and Community-led Restorative projects.
Challenges & Opportunities for developing policy	The shape, nature, and opportunities in central policy for restorative justice, particularly the Council of Europe recommendations and an Adult Restorative Justice Strategy.
Challenges & Opportunities for diverse restorative services and projects	Discussion on the nature of restorative services across a range of areas including: Education, Youth Justice and Young People; Prisons & Housing; Communities & Multi-Agency Working; Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse.

The three case studies in this paper each figured in the discussions during the Knowledge Exchange, with representatives from each area presenting material on their projects. In addition, the authors of this paper live in work in the various location and are engaged in these projects in evaluation academic capacities. The case studies are presented in this paper as examples of how restorative services have emerged as well as indicative examples of how the 'spaces' available shape the nature of services. In the context of how such services manifest, and for the purposes of this paper, we draw a broad distinction between restorative services, which we classify as provision based with established state-provided or state-funded systems. For example, as integrated within police work or as part of a youth offending provision. We use the term restorative projects to reflect a specific and more-or-less self-contained example of restorative work. For example, as part of a community project or as a stand-alone initiative. Whilst we appreciate these are imprecise terms, they provide some level of specificity in helping to describe the examples we provide here.

3. Findings: Models of restorative services

This section sets out the findings of the paper under the headings of the three case studies used, in each examining examine the different contexts in which restorative work develops, and the shape of the resulting services and projects.

The Gloucestershire institutional Hub-and-Spoke Model

The first case study is an example of a state-driven restorative practices service brought about through the introduction of Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) across England and Wales in 2012. The PCC initiative arrived with the enactment of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 and formed a central part of the 2010-15 Coalition Government's 'Big Society' plan to elect mayors or police commissioners who would exert

greater budgetary control over local police forces and have the powers to hire and fire the Chief Constable (Brain, 2013). As a result, each police force in England and Wales has a democratically elected PCC, except for London and Greater Manchester where police governance is the responsibility of the Mayor's Office (The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, 2020). The main responsibilities of the PCC are to appoint a Chief Constable and hold them to account, setting the budget for the force, setting and approving the police and crime objectives and bringing together criminal justice and community safety partnerships (The Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, 2020). The PCC elections were first held in 2012, and then again in 2016 and 2021. Turnout has been remarkably low at less than 10% and critics have regularly highlighted a lack of information on the process at the local and national level (Caless & Owens, 2016). The PCC initiative has also suffered widespread scepticism from the police as well as the electorate over concerns that police forces would no longer be apolitical, given most candidates are aligned to a particular political party (Brain, 2013).

The role and scope of the PCC is extensive and open to interpretation in different ways by Commissioners, many of whom have looked to push the boundaries of the role and implement a range of initiatives based around their interest or personalities (Caless & Owens, 2016). A particular emphasis on local policing from several PCCs has seen the funding of more victim-centred approaches to policing and crime reduction more broadly, including the implementation of initiatives that were perhaps not possible under the previous system of policing (Rossner, 2017). One manifestation of this is the implementation of restorative justice schemes across a range of PCC areas, which in keeping with the PCC funding sit within the remit and management of the local police service. The development of 'Restorative Gloucestershire' is an example of an organisation that operates in this top-down, institutional managed space. Established and funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner

for Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire Constabulary, Restorative Gloucestershire retain their own service and practitioner staff, have a physical base in the Police Headquarters building, and provide facilitation, training and a forum for members to meet and discuss issues. Members come from a wide range of statutory, third sector and voluntary agencies, including criminal justice agencies (such as probation, youth justice and the courts) and statutory and community services (such as local authority, education and housing bodies) (Restorative Gloucestershire, 2021a). The participants at the Knowledge Exchange described how this structure and the association with the PCC brings both legitimacy and access to agencies, and the long-term funding for the hub model enabled Restorative Gloucestershire to provide training, support and some level of infrastructure to statutory and voluntary and third sector organisations that have integrated approaches based on restorative justice (in the context of criminal justice agencies like the police, youth offending teams, and probation teams) and restorative practices (in the case of groups such as schools and housing agencies). There are several driving factors in this. Firstly, pressure on the police to be doing something in response to well-publicised issues with policing and justice approaches with certain groups and communities including young people (Payne et al, 2020). Secondly, the desire for the police to show that they are involved in a range of community issues but will not necessarily have to lead. Thirdly, and most importantly, the scope to explore the prospects for using restorative justice or restorative practice as a means for bringing about a transformation of justice processes, including the expressed aim of closing the gap between police, justice, and the public (Restorative Gloucestershire, 2021a).

In turn, there are a range of benefits for the local police force. In Restorative Gloucestershire, they have the facilities and expertise to provide a restorative option at the pre- and post-conviction stage of criminal proceedings, including for serious and sensitive issues such as domestic violence and are heavily involved in preventative work after a conviction (Marder

2018). More broadly, there has also been a successful integration of restorative approaches in partnership with schools, which resulted in a reduction in the number of school exclusions and an improvement in pastoral care within the school setting (Keeling, 2019). In other areas, such as supported housing, Restorative Gloucestershire has helped to design projects that build restorative communities and encourage ‘positive’ behaviours (Hobson et al, 2021). Similarly, in youth work, as well as working with state youth justice agencies, the organisation has developed a programme of ‘youth forums’ to help improve the everyday relationships between young people and police officers (Payne et al, 2020).

One of the key benefits for members of the Restorative Gloucestershire ‘hub’ include access to skilled and trained restorative practitioners, who provide restorative interventions for partners (see Table 3), the majority of these come from the local police force and youth justice agencies, although referrals from community and family agencies are growing.

Table 3: Restorative Gloucestershire referrals			
Referrals	2018	2019	2020
Total referrals	112	132	82
<i>Out of court Disposals (Adult)</i>	8	20	12
<i>Out of Court Disposals (Young Person)</i>	42	53	21
<i>Post sentence</i>	19	14	8
<i>Family agencies</i>	24	11	8
<i>Community agencies</i>	19	34	33
(Source: Restorative Gloucestershire, 2021b)			

The successful model run by Restorative Gloucestershire sees many interventions a year across the police, prisons, probation, housing, schools, and other areas (see Table 4).

Table 4: Restorative Gloucestershire caseload details			
Caseload details	2018	2019	2020
Complex & Sensitive cases <i>(Includes all under 18 and all over 65 as these are tagged as 'vulnerable')</i>	101	127	66
'Children First' Pathway <i>(figures included as Complex and Sensitive in above row)</i>	38	44	21
Successful Interventions in the calendar year <i>(Includes referrals received in previous years but completed in the listed calendar year)</i>	71	70	87
(Source: Restorative Gloucestershire, 2021b)			

The Restorative Gloucestershire hub model has demonstrated success beyond the direct referral and intervention process. One of the objectives of the organisation is to provide sufficient training to enable partners to undertake restorative processes themselves, without referring into the organisation. In the first instance this might be 'lower level' incidents, with Restorative Gloucestershire staff facilitating more complex cases, but as the organisations develop capacity the aim is for them to take ownership of the process. In particular the association with the PCC and Gloucestershire constabulary has seen Restorative Gloucestershire train a number of police officers as restorative practitioners, and in the three years 2018, 2019, and 2020, Gloucestershire constabulary carried out 747, 586, and 360 police interventions, respectively (with 2020 data particularly impacted by the COVID19 outbreak). Alongside this, the Hub runs forum sessions for members, through which they can engage with a diverse range of agencies similarly working on developing and embedding restorative services. For example, the hub has close ties with the well-developed 'Trauma informed and restorative practices' team in the County Council, who manage and support the rollout of a number of 'restorative schools' across the county and beyond.

In this context, then, the ‘space’ available for development of the service was largely political; as Braithwaite (2016, p18) describes it, the opening of institutional spaces to new and ‘richer forms of forgiveness’. In practice, such approaches as typified here are characterised by a top-down approach to service development, in which physical and financial space are made available as facilities, established budgets, and logistical support to allow restorative services the space opportunity to plan, develop, and embed practice. The outcome, in the case of Gloucestershire, is a physical and political space, a ‘hub’, to ‘reflect upon the process of criminalization’ (Maglione, 2019, p. 666) that offers training, knowledge, experienced practitioners, and logistical support. The partners are then ‘spokes’, attached to the hub for support and eventually becoming semi-autonomous in their service delivery as they accrue their own political, physical and economic space that includes policy and practitioners. This is the ‘shift in organisational practice’ that Hobson et al (2021, p12) describe, in which both conceptual and structural space contribute to furthering restorative work. Although enjoying political, physical and economic space for development, such services may struggle with accessing the social space within which they can engage community members. They are more likely to be top-down, institutional services, dealing with those that come into contact with state agencies as opposed to addressing the bottom-up needs of local communities.

Community-based restorative justice in Northern Ireland

Community-based restorative justice projects in Northern Ireland, established initially at the end of the conflict, were first met with some resistance from the state. Established in 1998 in both Republican and Loyalist communities, the projects were established and led in part by former political prisoners and former combatants of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) (Mika & McEvoy, 2001). This proved highly

effective in combatting paramilitary punishment violence which involved ‘policing’ activities such as beatings, shootings, threats, and exclusions undertaken by Republican and Loyalist groups in the working-class communities in which they live and operate (McEvoy and Mika, 2001).

Community ‘policing’ by paramilitary groups was a relatively common activity in some communities during the Troubles, with groups attending to crime and conflict at a community level through vigilante violence and exclusions at the same time as carrying out their ‘military activities’ (Bell, 1996; Feenan, 2002). Communities on both sides of the conflict in Northern Ireland suffered poor relationships with the state, particularly the police and other extensions of the criminal justice system, and consequently, there was community pressure on paramilitary groups ‘to do something’ about crime and antisocial behaviour (McEvoy and Mika, 2001; Jarman, 2004).

Changes in Northern Ireland’s political landscape resulted in the beginnings of a move away from the use of paramilitary sanctions in local communities. The onset of multiparty talks, chaired by US Senator George Mitchell, committed the political parties (including those with links to paramilitary groups) to apply their best efforts to bring about the end of paramilitary punishment violence (McEvoy and Mika, 2001). The Good Friday Agreement and the peace process also increased international and local scrutiny and criticism of informal practices of punishment violence and were reinforced by reforms of the police and criminal justice system (Auld et al, 1997; McEvoy and Mika, 2001). This created space for grass roots, community restorative justice projects to emerge as alternatives to the violent paramilitary justice.

There are two principal community-based restorative justice projects in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland Alternatives (NIA), operates in traditionally Unionist/Loyalist areas, and emerged following a commission by the Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders to former Loyalist political prisoner Tom Winston, seeking an

effective alternative to punishment violence in the Loyalist West Belfast area of upper Shankill, (McEvoy & Mika, 2001; Mika & McEvoy, 2001). In 1997, Alternatives began work in Greater Shankill, quickly expanding to North and East Belfast and the town of Bangor (McGloin, 2006).

Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJI) emerged at a similar time, although independently from NIA. CRJI, began work in 1997 in West Belfast, and now operates in ten predominantly Nationalist/Republican areas of West, North, and South Belfast, Derry, and Newry/South Armagh. In Republican communities, discussions between Queens University and community activists led to the development of a working model of community restorative justice (McEvoy & Mika, 2001), and to the publication of the 'Blue Book' (Auld et al, 1997, p. 2), which set out the framework for an alternative to punishment violence based on: "operation within the law, non-violence, respect for the human rights of the offender, accountable community involvement, restoration of both victim and offender, and proper training of those involved".

The community-led growth of restorative projects in CRJI and NIA, as well as the participation of former members of armed groups in both, has meant that they have a unique position in Northern Ireland's transitional environment. Representatives from both projects participated in the Knowledge Exchange, describing how much of their work was providing community responses to community problems, with a large proportion of the referrals coming from community members engaging with the practitioners in the various offices and hubs, located in different community areas. The projects have both made a contribution to the peace process, helping to reconfigure the relationship between state and community (McEvoy & Mika, 2001). This has not been without challenges, and particularly early on both organisations were met with concerns over the extent to which they were providing solutions to criminal issues outside of the formal criminal justice system (Eriksson, 2009).

Although there has been a strong case for CRJI and NIA constructing partnerships with state agencies, Northern Ireland’s transitional landscape has made accessing state support a complicated undertaking. In particular, limited access to funding continues to create barriers to expanding work, and for a while both were largely reliant on funding from external sources including from the North American Organisation Atlantic Philanthropies (Gormally, 2006). Increasingly, however, both projects are accessing public funds and as a consequence are moving more towards the formal sphere. A range of stipulations for formal ‘accreditation,’ which includes training as restorative practitioners, have included meeting conditions around inspection and adherence to an extensive set of regulatory protocols. This has created some tensions within the communities in which these organisations work, where referrals from community members to the community restorative justice projects in cases potentially involving a crime have reduced significantly due to the need to refer all such cases to the police as one of the stipulations for receiving state funding. Meeting these requirements, however, has meant both NIA and CRJI were able to bid for public funding and expand their restorative work across a variety of new areas including community safety, probation, housing, and youth services.

Table 5 provides an indication of their work, the most recent data for completed cases with Community Restorative Justice Ireland, which illustrates both the volume of work and the success they have in engaging with participants in a broad range of different areas across the community.

Table 5: Community Restorative Justice Ireland Closed Cases, 2020	
Case Category	Number of Closed Cases
Total	2382
Abuse/Mental/Sexual/Verbal	18
Advice/Support/Suicide Prevention	366

Alcohol/Drug	44
Anti-Community Behaviour	80
Assault	20
Community Concerns	248
Disputes	49
Ethnic Groups	67
Family/Domestic	461
Harassment/Threats/Intimidation	153
Hate Crime/Riotous Behaviour	12
Landlord/Tenant	75
Licensed Premises	0
Neighbourhood Dispute	166
Probation	178
Reintegration	0
Slander/Allegations	5
Theft/Burglary/Robbery	40
Under Threat (A2Form)	196
Vandalism/Criminal Damage	20
Vulnerable Adults/Children	131
Youth Related	53
CRJI (2020: 20)	

Of these cases, 346 were restorative interventions with DOJ and PSNI, and 534 were cases with partners to deliver engagement and interventions (CRJI, 2020, p. 20).

In terms of ‘spaces’ for restorative development, in the Northern Ireland context, the social ‘space’ into which services emerged is well developed, in part due at least initially, due to the lack of institutional political space from within the state. As community-based, bottom-up

initiatives driven initially by individuals and small groups seeking to improve the issues faced by local communities that often had a deep distrust of the state, these community restorative justice initiatives offered that ‘space for informal justice alternatives.’ Described by Erickson (2009, p. 307). Such community-driven initiatives, also have the benefit of having a physical space that is within the communities they serve, offering a physical and conceptual closeness between those projects and the people that participate. As such, they provide a space in which people can reengage with ideas of becoming citizens in the absence (by design or omission) of the state, and in doing so find Vaandering’s (2014, p. 25) recognition of ‘peace and citizenship as processes creating tentative, open spaces pregnant with possibility’. There are, however, challenges within this, notably in the space for economic stability and planning. These challenges change, from reliance on unstable funding models in the initial stages of development to challenges to the social space services occupy as they move more towards the established, state-based sources of funding.

Economic space, challenging and change

State and community partnerships and post-conflict restoration in Sierra Leone

Our third example is the approach taken to restoring community relationships and providing opportunities for youth in Sierra Leone. Whilst not explicitly badged locally as a restorative justice project, this example is relevant to the context of this paper as it draws heavily upon approaches to create dialogue with those impacted by war and poverty, and drawing on principles of engagement and mutual respect to create opportunities for forgiveness and constructive ways forward.

In the late 18th Century, Sierra Leone became a colony for former slaves and remained a colonial protectorate of Britain until independence in 1961. A destructive civil war from

1991-2002 was driven, according to the UN, by “a repressive predatory state, dependence on mineral rents, the impact of structural adjustment, a large, excluded youth population, the availability of small arms after the end of the Cold War, and interference from regional neighbours” (UNDP, 2006, p. 9). The war saw around 70,000 dead, the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, widespread mutilation of civilians through amputation of limbs, an estimated 2 million internally displaced (Lynch et al 2013, p. 33), as well as extensive looting of mineral wealth, and significant destruction of property and infrastructure (Graybill, 2017, p. 10).

Reconstruction following the war was slow, spanning the legal, political, and social spheres aiming not just at ‘justice’ but at restoration and reconciliation. This included: the Special Court for Sierra Leone, established by the United Nations to try war leaders responsible for serious crimes; national courts, who also brought war criminals to trial; other African states, who helped establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the South African model; the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone, who played an important role in ending the war through support and encouraging cross-community dialogue; and civil society bodies such as ‘Fambul tok’ (Family talk), an NGO focusing on overcoming the harm of conflict and supporting dialogue for resolution (Graybill, 2017). Despite making important strides in this process, the country faced a setback when in 2014-15 it was struck by the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). Sierra Leone suffered the highest case rate (14,124) and second-highest casualty rate (3,956) of those countries affected (CDC, 2019). As well as causing widespread disruption of healthcare, the EVD significantly increased unemployment with the associated negative impacts on income, food security, and further disruption to education.

With a population of 7.5 million, Sierra Leone continues to struggle with development shortfall, including a lack of critical infrastructure and looming poverty. It is one of the poorest counties in the world, ranked 181 out of 189 in the Human Development Index; the

average life expectancy is 54.3 years; the skilled labour force is only 15.2% of the population; roughly 70% live below the US\$2 per day poverty line; 26% live in extreme poverty; and 45% are 'food insecure' (Lynch et al, 2020, p. 2; Binns and Bateman, 2017, p. 159).

The narrative of youth experiences in post-war Sierra Leone is one of neglect, social marginalization, and exclusion. At the Knowledge Exchange, the participant from Sierra Leone described the need for projects that divert youth from problematic behaviours and activities. The legacy of the war on young people is significant. Some were party to war crimes and other victims of such crimes, including the common practice of amputating hands and feet. Most had their education severely disrupted, and conscription was common with many young people trapped in combat for the different factions, particularly the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and Civil Defence Forces. A large number of young people migrated for safety and better living conditions, moving from rural areas to the capital, Freetown, and the provincial secondary cities of Makeni, Bo, Koidu and Kenema. Low youth employment and lack of opportunities continue into the next generation of young people, at times described as the next phase of a 'crisis of the youth'. The 'youth' in Sierra Leone, those between 15-35, account for roughly 70% of the population and within this, about 70% are either unemployed or underemployed. Furthermore, the role of many young people in the conflict has led to widespread stigmatisation and a perception that they are a threat to peace. As a result, there is significant disillusionment and marginalisation, and it is within this context that the project outlined to us in the RPKE functions.

Under the post-crisis youth strategy, policy addressing youth affairs in Sierra Leone became a focal point of the national and international agenda. In 2003, the Ministry of Youth and Sports commissioned the National Youth Policy, anchored on the twin notions of youth empowerment and the creation of a responsible citizenry capable of contributing to the

development of Sierra Leone. In 2009, the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) Act was passed to create a nation-wide environment for ‘re-imagining youth by supporting development and empowerment interventions, helping to restore the relationships between young people and wider society, and creating opportunities to lift young people from poverty (GoSL, 2012). One such example of this, as relayed to us in the RPKE, is in Kenema, in the Eastern Province, the country’s third-largest city and district capital. It was also a strategic centre during the civil war, and in the front line for tackling the EVD being one of the closest to the centre of the original outbreak (Bangura et al, 2018, p. 35). In Kenema district, NAYCOM programme leaders work to divert young people from problematic or antisocial behaviours including drug addiction, crime, violence and gang membership. The project is currently working with over 400 young people in the area. In collaboration with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government, NGOs, and local community partners, NAYCOM solicit opportunities for young people to develop skills and support them to (re)engage with their local communities. This often includes those who were involved in the civil war, as reflected in testimony from one participant:

During the peak of the civil war in 1998, my parents were killed, while my brother and two elder sisters were forced to join the rebels who attacked us in Bo District. My elder sisters became sex partners of the rebel commanders that attacked our town. In 1999 I lost my brother and two sisters, and a few weeks later I became a dangerous fighter to revenge the loss of my family members. [...] As a young fighter I was exposed to drugs, cannabis and hard liquor. After the war in 2002, I decided to stay in Kenema city but was living the hard way [...] I started to find quick ways to make money in the city and got involved in selling cannabis in a ghetto, stealing, washing cars and commercial bikes. [...] I did just earn a living or survive. Through the local stakeholders (the National Youth

Commission, District Agriculture Division and Kenema City Council) I was enlisted for support directed to young people [and] I embarked on vegetable and rice production as a source of earning income and food to sustain myself. [...] The income I earn from my garden is not only secure, but it has given me respect in my community. Now I am contributing to the development of my community in the areas of food production and availability, food security and good health. Thanks to my new work as a young urban farmer, my dignity is restored, and I now have a future.” (Bangura et al, 2018: 36)

Whilst not explicitly badged as projects incorporating restorative justice, one of the key principles of the NAYCOM’s work is to support skills development, trauma-healing, and the restoration of self-respect and communities’ ties. The successes of the scheme were discussed at the RPKE, with youths seeking out opportunities with the commission, asking the commission to visit their communities to see the work they are doing, and helping to change the negative social stigma around these groups. As a consequence, there is a reported reduction in drug addiction and criminal behaviour, there has also been a reduction in numbers of young women in prostitution and the spread of sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS.

Despite the successes of the scheme, the context of Sierra Leone is clearly a difficult one in which to run such projects. Resources and opportunities are severely limited, many of those involved are living in or very close to poverty, and the country continues to struggle with underdevelopment and the impacts of War, and the two pandemics of Ebola and now COVID19.

The example from Sierra Leone shares characteristics with both of the other case studies. They are social spaces insofar as communities have sought to mobilise in support of initiatives to support young people in overcoming the trauma, exclusion, and poverty of

conflict, pandemic(s) and their aftermath. They are political insofar as the state has been instrumental in providing the support for these schemes to exist. Erickson (2009, p. 320) argues that transitional societies transitioning from conflict and other significant disruptions may be more likely to ‘provide greater space – both politically and socially – for transformative restorative justice to take root and flourish. Indeed, by aiming for such transformations, a platform is provided, and a voice given to previously alienated individuals and communities, allowing former enemies to have at least the opportunity to become ‘friends’ within a framework of restorative justice’. However, the case study is also in stark contrast to the others in the overriding lack of economic space available, manifest in serious and widespread poverty, lack of infrastructure, and the difficulties this brings to everyday life. In such circumstances, the social and political ‘spaces’ for development may shift much more quickly than in the other examples, as the capacity for coping with change is much lower. For example, communities living at or near the poverty line or state services or foreign aid reliant have little capacity to absorb shock or change; the type of shock or change characterised in the recent COVID19 pandemic and the reduction in aid spending from the UK, one of Sierra Leone’s largest aid donors. Even though the ‘spaces’ for restorative services are therefore constrained, it is clear that they offer significant value, and we can see how Vaandering’s (2014, p. 25) concepts of relational practices supporting peace and citizenship are reflected in projects that offer young people the opportunity to reengage with communities in meaningful ways.

4. Discussion: ‘spaces’ for restorative development

The case studies demonstrate the importance of context in the development and structure of restorative services and projects. In particular, they illustrate how the concept of ‘spaces’ for development (Vaandering 2014; Braithwaite, 2016; Maglione, 2019; Hobson et al, 2021)

can be applied to support positional and contextual understandings of how services and projects function. These spaces, we argue here, are *social*, reflecting the people and communities in which they work; as *political*, reflecting the will for such developments; as *physical*, relating to geography and facilities; and as *economic*, in the resources available.

Across all three case studies, we can see how the availability of ‘spaces’ for development can lead to certain types of service or project emerging, and the challenges faced by those services and projects as they work or seek to expand. Where social space is readily available, we are more likely to see the development of bottom-up, community-led schemes which are often driven by responses to particular challenges, such as the aftermath of a conflict or a pandemic as in the case studies from Northern Ireland and Sierra Leone. Events of this nature can often empower communities to explore new ways of thinking or seek to reconstruct in positive ways by engaging the activities of individuals and civil society organisations in the shared experiences of adversity (Van Camp, 2017; Robinson and Shapland, 2008). In such circumstances, bottom-up projects expand to fill a social ‘space’ that has emerged because there is a lack of political will or an inability to provide those ‘spaces’ for development.

Projects that enjoy a good level of social space in which to develop, however, often struggle with the difficulties of achieving sustainable resourcing and as the case study in Northern Ireland illustrated, should they move closer to the state for funding, the required regulatory stipulations may ensure they then struggle to maintain their social space in which they emerged. This convergence of social and political space is interesting, as we can see how the conditions that were created through conflict and reconstruction have produced local communities where the emergence of civil society groups and organisations represent a valuable resource and one with which the state can engage (Topping, 2008).

In contrast, those services that enjoy political space are often top-down and led by the increasing drive to integrate restorative justice and practice into state policies (Marder,

2020b), as in the case study of the hub-and-spoke modules used in Gloucestershire. Such services are also more likely to have physical and economic space available to them, including access to resources, engagement from statutory agencies, and opportunities to embed in policy and practice. In the case of Gloucestershire, this comes from an established budget from the PCC, facilities from which to operate, logistical integration with the local police force, and access through the hub-and-spoke model to a range of other statutory services across the county. Such services may, however, struggle to mobilise into social spaces; this may be a function of physical distance from those spaces in comparison to community-led projects, and it may also reflect difficulties linked to indifference and the loosening of social bonds, which have become an increasing issue in many cases (Sluzki, 2010).

Table 6, following, synthesises a series of characteristics or considerations for services in relation to each type of ‘space’. It is not intended as a definitive guide, but to support the expansion of the established concept of ‘spaces’ for development (Vaandering 2014; Braithwaite, 2016; Maglione, 2019; Hobson et al, 2021) we introduce in this paper.

Table 6: ‘Spaces’ for restorative services		
Type of space	Description	Characteristics and considerations
Social	the capacities and willingness that exists in the contrast groups and communities to embrace the relational practices embedded with restorative principles	More likely to exist where there is reduced political space. Often characterised by bottom-up, community led restorative developments
Political	the capacity and willingness of an organisation to engage in conversations around the approaches to justice and relational	More common in peaceful settings. Often characterised by top-down restorative initiatives that embed

	practices embedded with restorative principles	restorative principles and practices into policy
Physical	Bound in the geography, the community, or the locations available for work.	The ‘distance’ and access to the communities in which the restorative work is taking place. Issues of safety, including availability of places to practice.
Economic	the access to resources and how this shapes the nature of work	Community led projects more likely to struggle financially

5. Conclusion

Through the case studies presented in this paper, we hope to have provided more context to the idea of ‘spaces’ for restorative work, and in doing so hope to illustrate their usefulness as positional and contextual tools for understanding the development and nature of restorative services. In each case study, we have shown how the four categories of ‘spaces’ we use, *social, political, physical, and economic*, can reflect the condition in which a service or project has emerged and the shape and nature of its restorative work.

As a general pattern, we can see through the application of the principle of restorative ‘spaces’ how Community-led, bottom-up projects are more frequently found where there is a ‘space’ that a community needs to fill, often where the state is unwilling, unable, or untrusted to do so. These services occupy a physical space that is more likely to be closer to those in receipt of the restorative work. However, these types of projects are also more likely to lack economic and political spaces and the resources that are associated with both. In contrast, top-down, instinctually-led services are more common where there is a political ‘space’ to fill, often reflected in a desire to do something differently and to improve service outcomes. They are more likely to have greater access to economic space to develop and may be able to share physical spaces with the services in which they work, for example in police facilities. However, they may struggle with accessing social spaces, partly because of distance in

mission from community needs but also because of the physical distance they may have from the communities in which they are working.

Restorative services and projects are, as with all facets of our human world reflections of their circumstances. Understand the 'spaces' into which such services and proceeds developed is therefore important, and we argue that it is these concepts of 'space' - social, political, physical, and economic - that can help us to understand how and why a service developed, the provisions it offers, and the capacities it might to expand in the future.

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