

Keeping the Peace: Conversations with Grassroots Activists

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Executive Summary

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Keeping the Peace: Conversations with Grassroots Activists examines the roles of socio-economic and environmental movements in Northern Ireland in achieving and preserving a genuine, sustainable and just peace.

The conclusions from this piece based on interviews with activists in Northern Ireland working on campaigns to realise social, economic and environmental rights are:

- The importance of centering economic, social, cultural and environmental rights as vital to building a sustainable peace, and that paradoxically the tension created in newly established post conflict institutions through the pursuit of those rights is a necessary part of this peace.
- There is untapped potential in developing connections between traditionally divided communities through social, economic, and environmental campaigns. Despite this, institutions and media in Northern Ireland often describe human rights and campaign work through the lens of the conflict protagonists (as belonging to one or other of the two main communities) which obscures its true relevance and power.
- Engrained knowledge around struggle and challenging power gained during the conflict is being applied by communities in social and economic struggles post-conflict.
- Grassroots campaigns can be obstructed by some who are invested in by peace funds - who appear to be motivated by territoriality and by preserving that investment.

- The role of grassroots campaigning groups and movements in peacebuilding has gone largely unexamined and requires closer attention in order to learn how to deepen knowledge of how these movements navigate the realisation of rights in post conflict contexts.
- Part 2 reflects on the methods of work used by the grassroots campaigners, and show how these extend beyond the traditional approaches of legal work, monitoring and advocacy, and incorporate methods like dialogue, personal development and relationship building work more usually associated with peacebuilding.