

THE IMPACT OF BUREAUCRACY ON LOCAL OWNERSHIP OF PEACEBUILDING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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This article explores how the bureaucratic nature of external actors' funding relationship with local organizations can impede local ownership of peacebuilding. The findings are drawn from 120 semi-structured interviews, carried out by the second author, which explore how civil society organization (CSO) leaders in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland perceive the process of applying for and receiving economic assistance for peacebuilding from external actors. Study findings suggest that a focus on meeting funding requirements can overshadow the emphasis on peacebuilding and local inclusion, that smaller CSOs in particular are impacted by strenuous administrative requirements, and that such requirements can create significant financial constraints for CSOs. Ultimately, funding processes can be supportive and yet ensure CSOs are accountable for the assistance received.

INTRODUCTION

Externally supported peacebuilding interventions have the tendency to be bureaucratic in the way that they often seek to follow a set pattern to achieve a predetermined outcome. This is evident in the emphasis of neoliberal peacebuilding on a procedural, formulaic approach that is considered more effective than the seemingly outdated and messy locally

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