



**SOLIDARITY  
BEYOND BORDERS:  
Cultivating a  
Community  
of Practice  
IRELAND AND BEYOND**

*The project brings together civic society organisations from the Island of Ireland to strengthen cross-border collaboration and foster inclusive dialogue. Its aim is to build a critically engaged community of practice across civic society with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to respond to rising racism, anti-migrant sentiment, Islamophobia, and antisemitism, and to explore how these issues intersect with questions of identity across the island.*

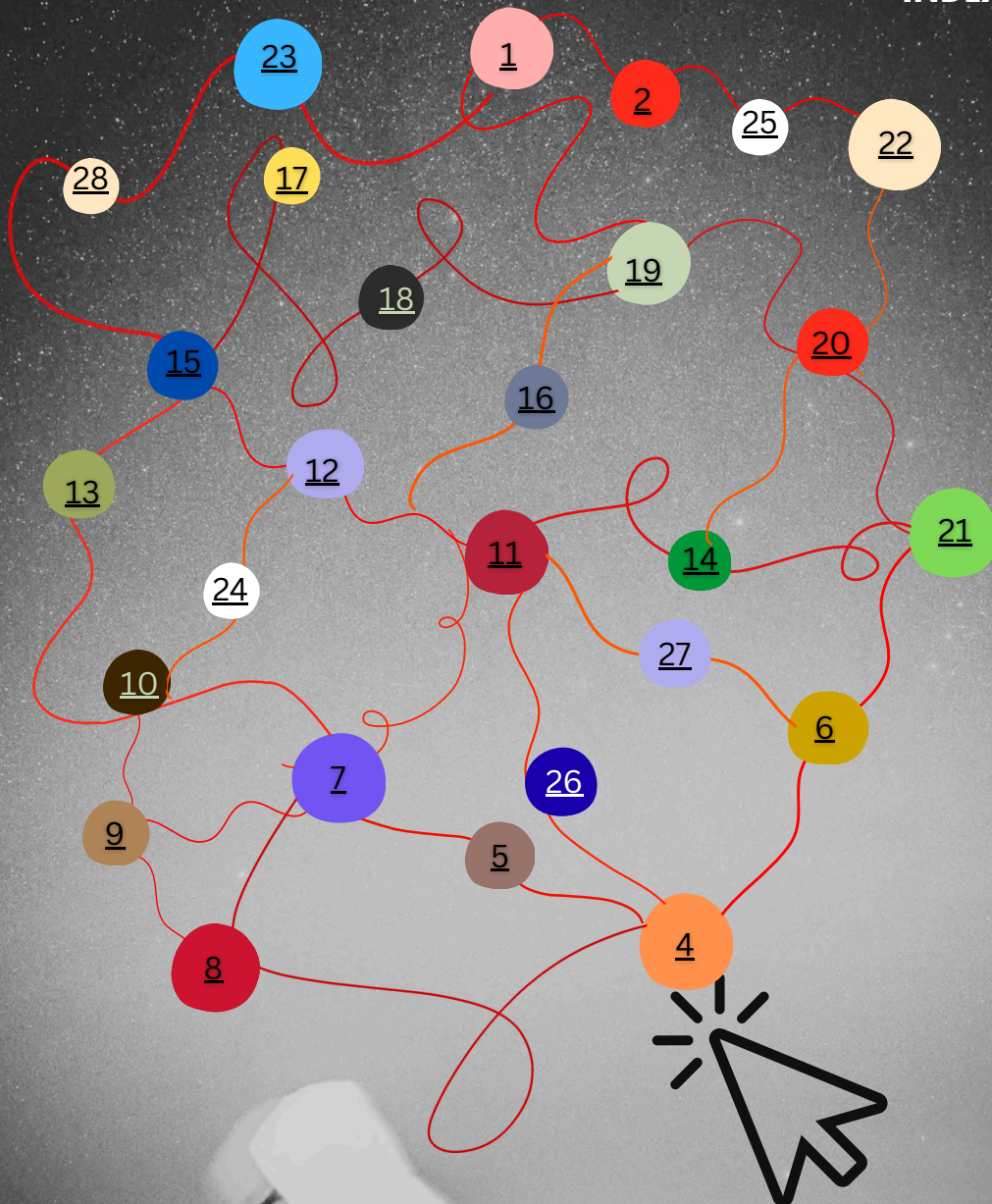
*A central goal is to create spaces where generative discussions can take place on these complex issues, helping to build understanding, trust, and shared approaches to long-term peace and reconciliation. The project supports organisations to reflect on their own practices, develop confidence in facilitating difficult conversations, and engage constructively with diverse communities. Through these efforts, it contributes directly to the Shared Island objectives by promoting cross-border cooperation, inclusive dialogue, and a more connected, resilient civic society across the island of Ireland.*

*A key element of the project is wider public engagement, creating spaces for discussion and reflection to support public awareness.*

*The Global Centre for Education is a non-governmental development organisation based in Belfast which aims to raise awareness of global issues and encourage action toward social change. We organise events, deliver training, produce publications, and provide a wide range of resources to target groups in the formal and non-formal education sectors.*

*Established in 1975, Comhlámh is the Irish association of international development workers and volunteers. As a membership organisation, we build and mobilise community around global justice issues.*

*Comhlámh nurtures and supports work for change, locally and globally, and advocates for a world beyond injustice.*



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# Local to Global: Understanding the Wider Context

*"It is crucial to understand that issues like Islamophobia, antisemitism, sectarianism, and racism have both local and global implications."*

*"It's important to stay aware of the authoritarian political ascension across the West and how this has implications for the whole island. When we discuss issues like racism and sectarianism, we need to view them through a wider global lens."  
"We need to think from an internationalist framework, not just an all-island one, because global developments have a direct impact on Ireland."*




*"Rising Islamophobia and antisemitism must be taken seriously by civic society. Addressing these should be part of every organisation's commitment to equality, justice, and human rights."*

*"Multiracial solidarity is essential, and civic society must deepen relationships with communities most affected by racism and sectarianism, which are increasingly interconnected."*





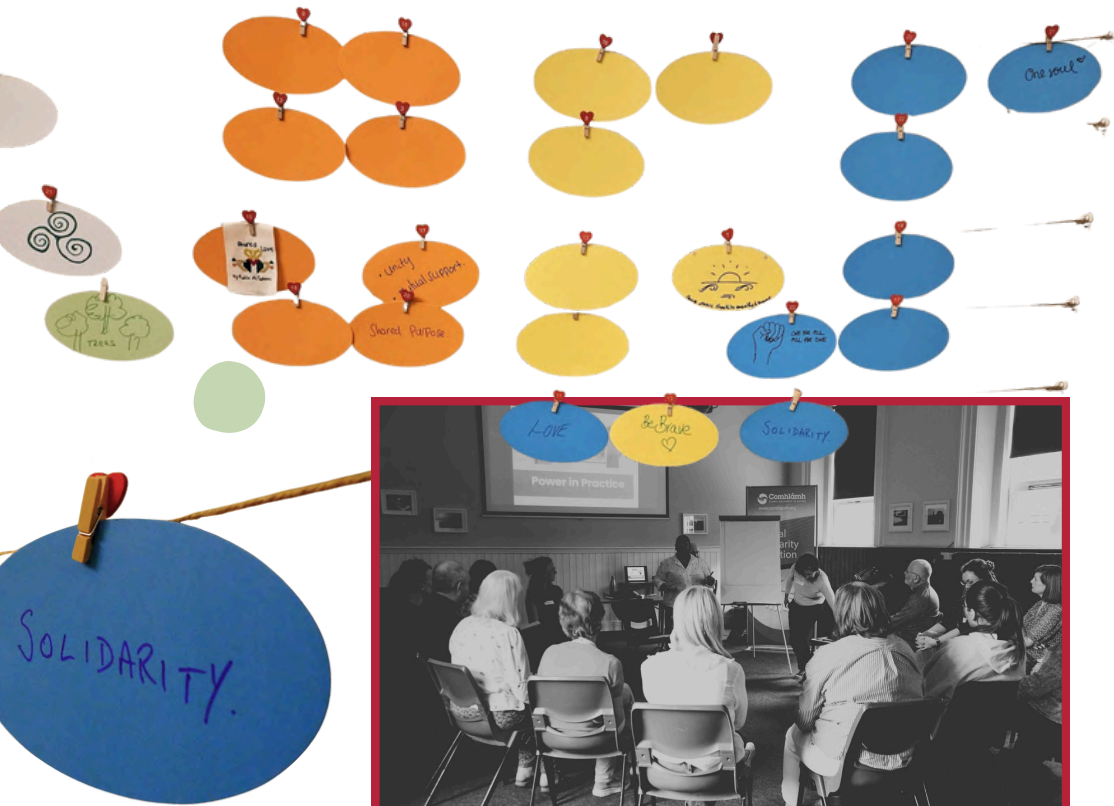
**BY LISTENING DEEPLY,  
SHARING KNOWLEDGE,  
AND ACTING TOGETHER,  
CIVIC SOCIETY SUPPORTS  
THE SHARED ISLAND AIMS.  
CROSS-BORDER  
COOPERATION IS  
STRENGTHENED. INCLUSIVE  
DIALOGUE IS PROMOTED.  
COMMUNITIES BECOME  
MORE CONNECTED AND  
RESILIENT.**



"If civic society across the island is to build genuine collaboration, we also need to reflect on how our own systems can unintentionally reproduce exclusion. Decolonising civic work means opening space for new voices and perspectives, North and South of the globe."

"These conversations are really important. It's courageous to go there, and if people want to go deeper into discomfort, then we need more preparation, but at this time going to the discomfort of it is needed more than ever."

"To strengthen dialogue across Ireland, civic society needs to model openness and reflexivity. Decolonising this work helps us move beyond charity or representation, toward real shared ownership and understanding."



*"The conversations we have started show that understanding and trust grow when people are willing to listen across borders."*

*"Using creative methods helped us listen differently, not just to what was being said, but to what was being felt in the room."*



*"It's opened real pathways for collaboration."*



## Turning Inward: Understanding Civic Society's Role in Structural Change

Civic society exists within long-established institutional frameworks, which both enable and limit our work. This session encouraged reflection on these structures, examining how we can adopt decolonising practices to create more inclusive spaces, strengthen cross-border collaboration, and take practical steps toward meaningful change.

"In such a polarising time, these spaces allow us to connect and strengthen civic society, enabling us to work with complex issues across jurisdictions with differing human rights legislation."

"True collaboration across the island starts with humility and learning. Decolonising is about creating civic spaces where knowledge flows in all directions, not just from institutions to communities."

"Decolonising civic spaces is about balance. It asks us to listen to those whose experiences have often been sidelined, so that the shared island conversation reflects the full diversity of people who live here."

"We need to think from an internationalist framework, not just an all-island one, because global developments have a direct impact on Ireland. Multiracial solidarity is essential, and civic society must deepen relationships with communities most affected by racism and sectarianism, which are increasingly interconnected."





*"These are very difficult times, so it is more important than ever to have the conversations that matter, even when they are tricky or contentious."*

*"What stood out to me was hearing directly from people across the border who are facing the same challenges in different ways. It reminded me that these issues don't stop at county lines."*



*"These sessions are about learning and sharing first, not about creating a perfect manifesto or echo chamber. They are about talking together and acknowledging our blind spots."*

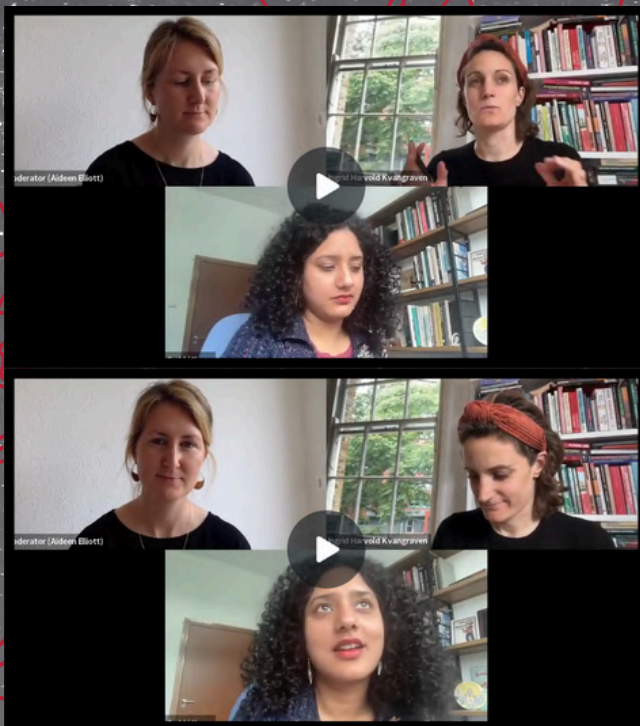


*"We come from different walks of life, with diverse perspectives and experiences. Spaces where we can sit with care, compassion, and respect are vital for deepening connections."*





# TURNING INWARD: UNDERSTANDING CIVIC SOCIETY'S ROLE IN STRUCTURAL CHANGE



[Bond\\_DecolonisationReport2024.pdf](#)

Moderator:

**Aideen Elliott,**  
Comhlámh

Speakers:

**Surbhi Kesar,**  
SOAS University of London

**Ingrid Harvold Kvangraven,**  
King's College, London





The workshop Part of the Future made  
me think of my place as an immigrant  
living in Ireland.

I find it difficult to put on personal  
pictures on the Irish Flag because I find  
it hard to relate to.

I already find it hard to belong  
in my origin country and I don't want  
to burden myself into looking for  
relativism or belonging regarding  
Ireland.



*“Political education is essential. Civic society organisations need to strengthen their teams’ understanding of racism, sectarianism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism to be more effective in their equality and rights work.”*

*“While we share the same island, the legal, political, and cultural contexts differ north and south. Since the North left the European Union, rights under the Windsor Framework remain an evolving space, and civic society needs to work together to understand and respond to these complexities.”*


*“We can talk about all the policies and laws in the world, but our role as civic society is to connect these frameworks to real life across the island.”*

*“It’s essential to have a space where we could really talk about difficult things like racism, sectarianism, and belonging, without fear of being judged. That’s rare.”*

*“This work has shown that learning together, North and South, strengthens our ability to respond to complex social issues.”*







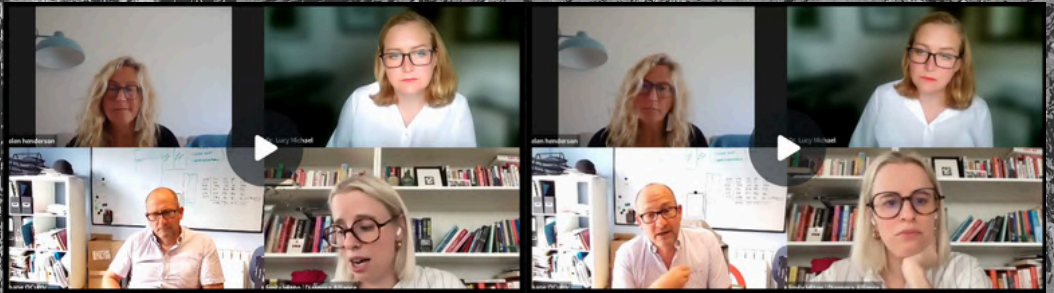
*"Divide and conquer is still very much alive, and a democratic society needs safe spaces for dialogue."*

*"Strengthening dialogue across civic society in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is essential for a whole-island approach."*

*"There is always room for learning and for change. Holding this space together is itself progress."*

*"When we talk about building a shared future, we also have to ask whose histories and perspectives are shaping it. Decolonising civic work invites us to make that future genuinely shared."*

*"Hearing voices most affected by the issues centred in the discussion made me reflect on whose stories usually get told and whose don't. It was powerful to listen, not just speak."*



## **BEYOND BORDERS: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONS OF RACISM, SECTARIANISM, ISLAMOPHOBIA, AND ANTISEMITISM**

*Bringing together civic society actors from North and South, this session examined how racism, sectarianism, Islamophobia, and antisemitism shape experiences of belonging across communities.*

**SHANE O'CURRY** — Irish Network Against Racism  
**DR. LUCY MICHAEL** — Former Commissioner, Irish Human  
Rights & Equality Commission  
**EMILY HILTON** — Diaspora Alliance

**MODERATOR: HELEN HENDERSON**







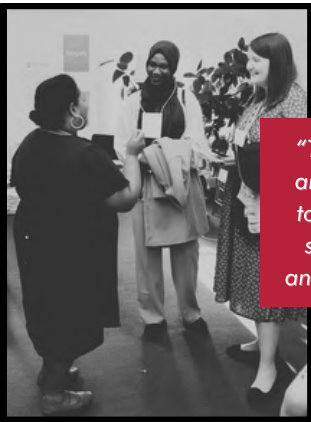
# Shared Stories:

film screenings, live music, and shared food experiences, creating an informal and welcoming space for public engagement, cultural exchange, and dialogue.



*"These are very difficult times, so it is more important than ever to have the conversations that matter, even when they are tricky or contentious."*

*"These conversations show that even small steps in connecting communities across the island can have a meaningful impact."*



*"The language for war is alive and well, and there just seems to be such a push for division, so how do we take this work and move it forward together?"*



*"We come from different walks of life, with diverse perspectives and experiences. Spaces where we can sit with care, compassion, and respect are vital for deepening connections."*



# Culture Night 2025 :

*interactive storytelling, a human library, film, and cultural performances, providing a dynamic space for engagement and dialogue with the public.*



*"Projects like this make the idea of a shared island real. It's not just political language, but people learning together, finding common ground, and building trust."*

*"This work is a practice. It can be uncomfortable and challenging but ultimately requires courage."*



*"What stood out to me was hearing directly from people who are most affected by the issues."*

*"By continuing to meet, reflect, and act together, we make the idea of a shared island a reality in practice, not just in words."*

presentation, talk and music brought people together from across the island to listen, share, and build solidarity.



Bringing people together from Derry, Dublin and Donegal to listen to Mo'min and the Palestinian Sound Archive was not a one-way "talk", but a shared act of listening, reflection, and ethical witnessing.

It's inspiring to see people across Ireland, North and South, coming together to build understanding, trust, and collaboration through collective learning and solidarity.



"It's not just about inclusion as a concept. Having these spaces shows what inclusion feels like in practice: people coming together, learning, listening, and moving forward."

The event with Mo'min and the Palestinian Sound Archive created a moment of deep, collective engagement, where participants from different communities and political contexts listened together, reflected together, and grappled with the implications of cultural memory, displacement, and resistance.



"The arts bring imagination into civic dialogue. They help us move from debate toward discovery, and that's where transformation begins."

"The use of film and music helped turn dialogue into something living, something we could see, hear, and feel together."

photos: Stephen Muller



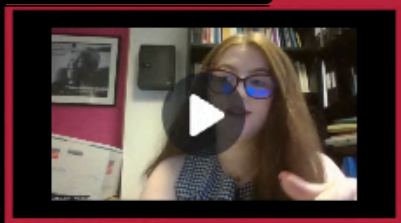


**Disinformation is shaping public debate, fuelling division, and undermining trust in communities across the island of Ireland and beyond. Misleading narratives can amplify racism, anti-migrant sentiment, and sectarian division, hindering efforts to strengthen understanding and cross-border connection.**

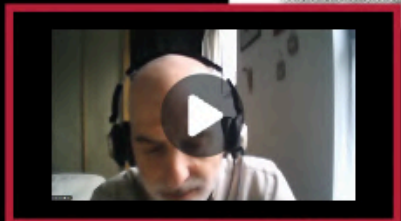
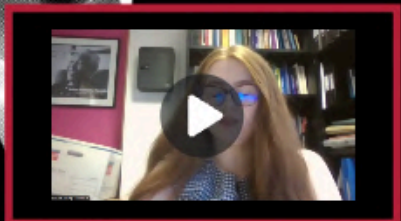


# COUNTERING ONLINE HATE & DISINFORMATION

Shannon Doherty of CAJ



Dessie Donnelly, Author of the CAJ Report



Insights from CAJ's Mapping Far-Right Activity online report

The session brought together NGOs, youth workers, educators, and community practitioners from across the island to explore how local and cross-border action can strengthen democracy, build social cohesion, and advance inclusive civic engagement—pushing back against the misleading narratives that fuel racism, anti-migrant sentiment, and sectarian division.

"It's interesting, and worrying, how the narrative of 'local communities rising up' is completely manufactured online. People buy it because it looks grassroots."

"I knew there was far-right stuff online, but I didn't realise how quickly it spills into real-world intimidation. That shocked me a bit."

"It's important to stay aware of the authoritarian political ascension across the West and how this has implications for the whole island. When we discuss issues like racism and sectarianism, we need to view them through a wider global lens."



NO TO RACISM


"The bit about overseas social media accounts stirring things up here really hit home. It's scary how easily people get manipulated by stuff that's not even local."

"The example about the protests going viral with millions of views...that's the sort of thing that shapes public opinion before facts even come out."

"What struck me was how coordinated some of this activity actually is. It's not just random angry posts, but there's a strategy behind it."

NETWORK





*"The recommendations make sense, but unless there's actual political will to tackle this, nothing changes. It can't just fall on NGOs."*

*"Does the whole 'peacebuilding' or 'post-conflict' framing here create blind spots when we try to address systemic racism? I'm curious how that context shapes people's responses."*

*"There's a few organisations trying to secure funding for anti-racism work, and honestly, getting people into collective action feels like the only way forward."*

*"It's not enough to talk about racism and sectarianism; we need to actively build spaces where people feel safe and included."*

*"For me, it's about turning concern into action and supporting programmes that give young people critical thinking skills, and helping communities challenge misinformation before it spreads."*

*"I think one of the most important things we can do is empower communities to speak out and organize collectively against racism and sectarianism, rather than leaving it to a handful of people."*

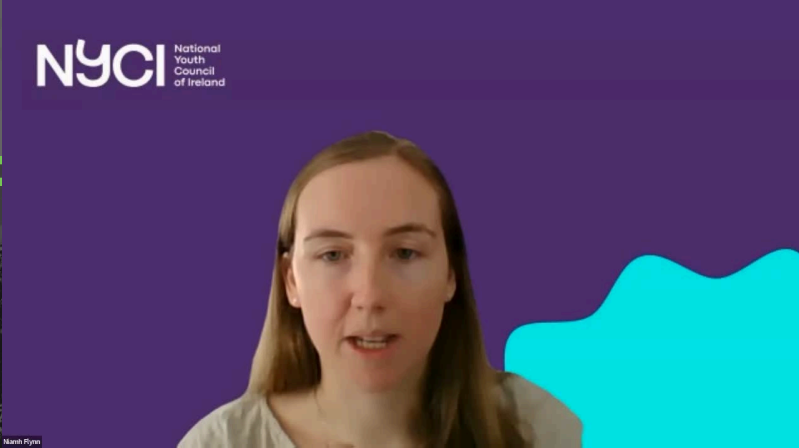
*"We need to focus on education and awareness, but also on practical tools: reporting hate speech, monitoring local social media, and connecting people to support services."*

*"It would be great to do more on this because I think there was so much more to discuss, especially with colleagues from the north of the island who bring such a unique experience in dealing with disinformation through their lived experience of sectarianism in communities."*

**COUNTERING DIVISIVE NARRATIVES AND FOSTERING  
CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE ON RACISM, SECTARIANISM, AND  
MISINFORMATION.**




**Jessica Taggart, Youth Action  
Northern Ireland**



**Niamh Flynn, NYCI**





**"It's opened real pathways for collaboration."**

**"Projects like this make the idea of a shared island real. It's not just political language, but people learning together, finding common ground, and building trust."**

**"The cross-border element made all the difference. It reminded us that the same misinformation and fear can divide any community, North or South, but solidarity works both ways too."**



**C o u n t i e s   r e a c h e d :**

**ANTRIM, DERRY, DUBLIN, DONEGAL  
AND BEYOND..**





# RESOURCES







**"THE WORK DOES NOT END HERE.  
BUILDING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE  
ISLAND IS A  
LONG-TERM COMMITMENT."**



