



Interaction Institute
for Social Change

IISC'S IRELAND STORY

A CASE STUDY IN EMERGING NETWORKS



About the Interaction Institute for Social Change

The Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC) is a nonprofit organization that partners with individuals, organizations, and communities to achieve greater social impact. Our multicultural team of seasoned consultants provides network building, consulting, facilitation, leadership development, and training services to a diverse array of clients that includes networks, collaboratives, and coalitions; nonprofit organizations of all sizes; schools and school systems; intermediary organizations; public sector agencies; international NGOs; and foundations. Our clients work in all disciplines of the social sector and are located throughout the United States, in Ireland, and beyond. We are particularly committed to building the leadership and collaborative capacity of grassroots leaders to engage, speak out, and participate fully in determining the policies and decisions that affect their lives and their communities.

The work of IISC is informed by our theory of social change, mission, and values. At our core, we practice and teach facilitative leadership – a model rooted in shared power and decision making, consensus building, collaborative skill, and servant leadership. We continually strive to deepen our capacity to address issues of power, privilege, and oppression related to various dimensions of diversity and design culturally appropriate processes and services that consciously address power dynamics.

IISC was founded in 1993 by Interaction Associates (IA) as an expression of its commitment to social change and as a way of bringing its collaborative methodologies into the social sector. Since that time, IISC has grown from a staff of two to an organization with nearly twenty staff members and a cadre of affiliates who have worked with thousands of change agents across the globe and social sector. In support of these efforts, IISC has adapted the collaborative and leadership development methodologies inherited from IA and created new and innovative approaches to working with and meeting the needs of social change leaders.

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Executive Summary

This story begins in 1996, a time when Northern Ireland was emerging from decades of violence and devastation. With community development support flowing in from the European Union (EU) and the historic Good Friday Agreement only two years away, hope was dawning for a more peaceful and prosperous future. Searching for cutting-edge programs to develop capacity for revitalization, a representative of the Belfast-based Workers' Educational Association met in Boston with the chair of the board of IISC to learn more about the Institute's training in leadership and community-building. The encounter launched a robust partnership that has helped create and strengthen a culture of collaboration in the nonprofit and public sectors across the island of Ireland. Today the connections between and among individuals, organizations, and communities that have been exposed to IISC's frameworks and methodologies constitute what could be considered a growing network capable of realizing the transformation envisioned when this work began. This paper describes the emergence of that network and introduces some of IISC's partners in Ireland and the ground-breaking work they are doing throughout the island. Their extraordinary accomplishments have been achieved in part through a shared understanding of how to effect lasting social change: through designing effective and inclusive processes, nurturing meaningful relationships, and thinking strategically about moving forward together.

“When we got engaged, there was renewed hope and energy and money and the beginning of a vision of a different Northern Ireland. We came into fertile ground, where the voluntary and statutory sectors were open to changing the way they had heretofore done business. “

- Marianne Hughes,
Executive Director, IISC



The Invitation

In 1997, the Boston-based Interaction Institute for Social Change (IISC), then just four years old, launched an initiative in Northern Ireland that seems, prophetically, perfectly aligned with IISC's current vision of impact:

to have a profound and far-reaching impact on social change by radically influencing how change efforts are initiated, designed, facilitated, and experienced.

From the standpoint of IISC's new partner in Belfast, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), there was an equally striking fit between the Boston organization's core principles and expertise, on the one hand, and, on the other, the urgent need to build capacity for change in Northern Ireland, where decades of conflict had devastated communities, breeding fear and mistrust among neighbors and destroying civic institutions.

Furthermore, IISC's mission was compatible with that of the WEA, established in 1910 as a nonprofit institution to extend educational opportunities to adults with limited access to the traditional delivery system. The latter's mission includes supporting "those who wish to work collectively for the benefit of their communities and for the good of society as a whole." Thus, when Stevie Johnston, then director of WEA's leadership development programs and now its top executive, arrived in Boston in 1996 looking for cutting-edge approaches to building leadership capacity, he welcomed the suggestion of Charlotte Kahn of the Boston Foundation to meet with Thomas Rice, founder of IISC.

That fortuitous meeting led to a partnership between the two organizations that remains robust and has expanded in unforeseen ways throughout Northern Ireland and six border counties and into the Republic of Ireland. In 2006, IISC opened a regional office in Belfast in order to meet the growing demand from across the Irish island for its workshops on leadership and collaborative process, as well as consultation and facilitation services.

Meanwhile, the network of change agents exposed to IISC's transformative methodology and frameworks has continued to grow. Today over 2000 individuals who have attended IISC trainings model new skills and behaviors to others in their communities and organizations, thus influencing patterns of interacting between and among individuals, groups, and neighborhoods and across sectors and geographical boundaries. Alumni of IISC workshops are likely, as well, to arrange trainings for colleagues and to request assistance from IISC in building and strengthening coalitions, helping organizations plan and grow strategically, and transforming conflict into opportunity.

It is the "emergent nature" of this network that IISC Executive Director Marianne Hughes cites as the distinctive feature of the network building model exemplified by IISC's work in Ireland. She stresses that the organization will launch international projects "only where we are invited and where we can have a very deep partnership with an indigenous group that will work shoulder to shoulder with us to ensure the cultural appropriateness of our work," as well as to participate in shaping all aspects of the partnership. The result is that those who are exposed to IISC's knowledge base and methodology become



what network theorists call “connectors,” building a network, person by person and group by group, that ultimately can change a culture.

Fertile Ground: An Alignment of Need and Resource

In the case of Northern Ireland, compelling reasons drove Stevie Johnston to seek outside help in 1996. The IRA had declared a ceasefire two years earlier, and released prisoners were beginning to return home, ready to redirect their energies toward rebuilding their communities. Funding from the European Union, via the EU’s Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (“PEACE I,” 1995-99), was fueling the exponential growth of the nonprofit sector. And, at last, former U. S. Senator George Mitchell was on the verge of mediating a settlement that resulted in the historic Good Friday Agreement of 1998. There finally was an opening to end the violence that, since the 1970s, had cost some 3200 lives.

With those enabling factors in place, it was all the more urgent to identify new ways of working together to develop common goals and effective means for achieving them. In IISC, Johnston found a partner whose “pretty revolutionary ideas” showed “a participatory way forward through partnership that is entirely alien to the way we had done things for sixty years.” And, he says, that model “quite radically altered the conversation about leadership” among change agents working across the sectarian divide in their communities.

The Knowledge Base: Integrating the Familiar and the New

“People started taking some of these basic concepts back to their work and their communities and, instead of going through old behaviors and getting into an argument or a fight, they took the ideas and said, ‘There’s a better way.’”

- Stevie Johnston, Director, Workers’ Educational Association, Belfast

The model that attracted Johnston to IISC is an adaptation for the social sector of “The Interaction Method,” a cluster of concepts, strategies, and frameworks relating to collaboration developed by Interaction Associates (IA). IA is a Boston-based international training and consulting organization that launched IISC as a separate nonprofit entity and as an expression of its commitment to social change. In IISC’s three trademark workshops – Facilitative Leadership®, Facilitating Change™, and Essential Facilitation™ - participants are invited into productive dialogue that both affirms and challenges them. The workshops teach participants to value what has worked for them in the past, including their own abilities to intervene constructively in group process. Participants are challenged to integrate familiar techniques and practices with a set of behaviors grounded in quite distinct core principles. Central to IISC’s collaborative methodology is that



building understanding and agreement among people requires a balance between results, process, and relationships.

Accepting the importance of all three dimensions of successful collaboration, says Hughes, is the breakthrough for newcomers to IISC's methodology, who then learn to achieve the necessary balance as facilitative leaders and strategic thinkers. This perspective is fundamental to all of IISC's workshops, which are highly interactive and encourage participants to reflect on their actual practice and, with others, to develop strategies for the real-life situations they face. Facilitative Leadership®, IISC's flagship course, introduces formal and informal leaders to strategies for "tapping the power of participation." Facilitating Change™ is designed for individuals and groups interested in designing and facilitating social change initiatives or creating collaborative cultures within organizations and existing networks. Offered less frequently in Ireland is Essential Facilitation™, which focuses on developing specific facilitation skills for effective group process and collaborative problem solving.

The Knowledge Transfer: Modeling the Principles

"It was as clear and perfect a learning experience as I have ever had."

- Jason Donaghy
participant in IISC-WEA workshop
June 1997, Belfast

Louise O'Meara, who attended the first WEA-IISC training in Belfast in 1997 and is now IISC's Regional Director for Ireland, believes that IISC's work across the island has produced "a much deeper consciousness around the need for process and the distinction between effective process and content."

Peter Day would agree. He has seen the methodology take hold among grassroots community workers with little formal experience in collaborative process. Day, whose responsibilities at the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland include working with some of Northern Ireland's neediest communities, recalls, for example, the profound impact of "the Triangle" on one community worker who attended a three-day Facilitating Change™ workshop sponsored by the Foundation in April 2005. Of Kenny McFarland – coordinator of an EU PEACE-funded project serving six tiny, disadvantaged villages in Northwest Ireland (including the one where he has spent his entire life) – Day says, "He saw the light, on the day of training devoted to process, how to create a framework for this kind of work, and how it's necessary to bring stakeholders on board to make real and lasting change."

McFarland himself recalls that, as someone with no formal training who is "learning on the hoof," he found the IISC training "brilliant," and he says he uses the tools he learned constantly to help the villages he serves "rebuild a sense of identity that we lost during 'the Troubles.'" He believes that by modeling the tools – and IISC's respect for each individual's leadership capacity – he has helped the community groups themselves take ownership in revitalization projects for their villages. Where



formerly McFarland himself had to “manage the management committee,” village representatives “are beginning to think for themselves and not just agree with me.” They are learning, he says, that although they may need help with planning, “it has to be the group itself doing that work.”

When McFarland models behaviors learned in the Facilitating Change™ workshop (and in an Essential Facilitation® training also sponsored by the Community Foundation), he is emulating the leadership style and interaction of the IISC associates who delivered the workshops. This exposure is what many alumni of the workshops cite as most valuable about the learning experience. Indeed, it was the excellence of the IISC trainers that persuaded Stevie Johnston’s boss in 1997 – Paul Nolan, then WEA director and now director of lifelong learning at Queens University – to support the proposed partnership. Thomas Rice and his colleagues, says Nolan, “had a degree of professionalism in content and delivery in advance of anything we had developed ourselves at WEA and anything I had experienced in Northern Ireland.”

Joanna McMinn, director of the National Women’s Council of Ireland, agrees. She says the IISC workshops represent “the best quality training in organizational development that there is at this very practical level. It is the most accessible and the most immediately useful. . . . This is a quality that I hadn’t seen before in Ireland.”

McMinn, who works with over 167 affiliated organizations – representing well over 300,000 women across the island of Ireland – was director of the Women’s Resource and Development Agency

in Belfast when she attended the first of four IISC workshops, Facilitating Change™. Subsequently, she attended Facilitative Leadership® and, in Belfast in 2000, a pilot training on coalition-building that was developed by WEA, with IISC’s assistance, as an adaptation of the latter’s Fair Chance Partnerships program.

In 2001 in Dublin, McMinn, with a handful of other women, took a Training for Trainers workshop delivered by O’Meara and Michael Reidy of IISC’s Boston office and became licensed to deliver FL workshops herself. Although work demands have prevented her from doing that, she says IISC offers the only training she has “explicitly encouraged people to go on, other than knowledge-based training in such areas as human rights. . . . I am happy to pay for it out of the Council’s training budget.”

Safe Spaces for Transformation

Marianne Hughes believes that “people respond so heartily” to the IISC associates they meet and observe because “we hold one another accountable to the values we not only espouse but live as an organization. We require personal development and encourage each of our staff to build self-awareness . . . to be clear about our own internal static. Our job is to serve the group . . . not to come in as an expert to judge where the group is . . . but to meet them where they are and, arm-in-arm, move toward this new mindset and these new skills.”



The “new mindset” begins with acknowledging the essential contributions every participant makes to an open and equitable collaborative process. Attending a Facilitative Leadership®, in Boston in spring 1997, Stevie Johnston embraced that basic premise of the training, as articulated in promotional materials: that leaders, whether formal or informal, succeed to the extent that they “respect the value and diversity each person brings and share power and decision making.” In that first workshop and in subsequent trainings he attended in Belfast in June 1997, with other WEA staff and grassroots leaders from Northern Ireland, Johnston, like others in attendance, observed the extent to which IISC associates model this attitude. The way they “communicate with individuals, listen, and make people value one another,” he says, “is part of a “program delivery that is absolutely clear” and reflects a deep commitment to the concepts being taught.

The skill of the facilitators had a “huge impact” on another participant in the first of the series of workshops offered by WEA in partnership with IISC: three in Belfast (including a one-day Conflict Management session) and another in Derry, reaching a total of over 70 individuals. One participant in Belfast was Rab McCallum, a member of the (Catholic) Irish Republican Army (IRA) who was imprisoned for 12 years before returning to Belfast to help rebuild his community. McCallum says the openness and skill of Hughes and Michael Reidy in the four-day Facilitating Change™ workshop he attended profoundly influenced how he viewed his own role in bridging differences among long-time antagonists. At least one of those former adversaries, (Protestant) loyalist Michael Atcheson, attended the workshop with him, as did another former IRA

member, Brendon Bradley, with whom McCallum grew a model community development organization from “just three or four of us working hard” in the conflict zone of Ardoyne in North Belfast. Today that organization is one of three partners in the North Belfast Interface Network, the conflict transformation program McCallum directs.

The Emerging Network

Connecting Change Agents

McCallum, Bradley, and Atcheson were recruited for that first four-day Facilitating Change™ workshop by Roisin McGlone, then director of the Center for Community Development in North Belfast. McGlone recalls being “hungry for something that would be useful,” and she quickly embraced IISC’s approach to fostering collaboration. Now chief executive officer of Inter-Action Belfast in the highly volatile Shankill-Falls Interface area in West Belfast, McGlone says she left that early training resolved to “take those skills deep into my community.” Indeed, she immediately used the IISC model to facilitate a collaborative planning process for her organization that produced – among other innovative strategies – the so-called Mobile Phone Network that has been credited with significantly lessening the often-violent conflict that arises along the borders between Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods during the annual “marching season.”

In the decade since those first WEA-IISC trainings, McGlone has continued to work across the sectarian



divide in Northern Ireland and her success at fostering collaborative problem-solving has led the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to seek her assistance in assuring “human rights are addressed” throughout the province’s six counties. “I couldn’t begin to quantify the times I have used” what she learned in the IISC workshops, says McGlone. And each time she does, she is teaching others to make a space for dialogue amid the clamor of strident partisanship.

Eager to do even more to pass along her learnings, especially after moving to her current job in West Belfast, McGlone, in 2000, arranged for Hughes and Reidy to run a workshop for all staff and board members of Inter-Action Belfast (then Springfield Inter-Community Development Project). Having everyone with whom she worked understand her thinking and the tools she was by then using constantly really made a difference, she says: “They could see why what I did was open and transparent, and they incorporated those values and the IISC tools into their own work.”

McGlone also invited Hughes and Reidy to facilitate two and a half days of program analysis by the Civic Forum, a broadly representative body established after the Good Friday Agreement to provide input to government officials regarding a range of issues in Northern Ireland. The result was to get “people really interested in community relations to caucus more and work together more, so that we planned a lot better,” she says.

Expanding the Team

McGlone has been a key “connector” in what Hughes describes as “an unbelievable network of leaders who share a common language and frameworks and are working in grassroots organizations to create and nurture a new culture of collaboration” across the Irish island. This evolutionary process also has been the result of a partnership design that included a decision to license WEA and train its staff and other community workers to deliver the Facilitative Leadership® workshop and exponentially expand the impact of IISC’s work in Northern Ireland (and later, the South, as well).

The first cadre of affiliates—18 including Stevie Johnston and Louise O’Meara—attended a Training for Trainers workshop in April 1998 in Belfast. Since then, local affiliates, often with IISC associates, have delivered workshops throughout Northern Ireland and the border counties—some six a year. IISC offers training workshops to the public while others are promoted as part of WEA’s regular programming and the rest are trainings requested by groups or agencies as a result of word-of-mouth endorsements. In addition, IISC offers Facilitating Change™ and Essential Facilitation® workshops in Northern Ireland and those workshops, as well as FL, in the Republic of Ireland. The network also expands when IISC associates and local affiliates who have developed relationships over the years with individuals and organizations, are asked to facilitate group processes or provide planning or organizational development services.

A number of those first licensed trainers are still delivering workshops. In addition, because demand



has held steady, two other Training for Trainers workshops have been conducted since the first such session in 1998.

Among the most active local affiliates trained in 1998 are Jason Donaghy and Helen McLaughlin – both WEA staff members (in Belfast and Derry, respectively) when they were licensed by IISC and now independent consultants who often deliver or co-deliver FL workshops under the auspices of WEA or IISC or both. The trajectories of their work are emblematic of how an informal network is spreading across Ireland, wielding a common toolkit and advancing shared principles for building community.

Working on the Ground

Donaghy describes himself as “quite evangelical” about Facilitative Leadership® (FL), which he believes is “a phenomenally successful program” for people “who are crying out for process and tools to help them talk, facilitate, change, and bring others along.” He has transferred the workshop’s concepts and tools to a wide range of groups and individuals, including ex-prisoners and ex-paramilitaries, women’s groups, district councils, public-private partnerships, family counselors, and many others. Following a widely publicized 2001 sectarian conflict involving Holy Cross Girls’ School in the Ardoyne interface area in North Belfast, for example, Donaghy says the people there whom he had trained in FL “were in the forefront of their communities of those trying to broker understanding and agreement in order to return the district to normalcy.” It was an example of “the huge transformations he sees” in people who adopt the IISC mindset and

ways of interacting. “I could see changes in their language, the way they related to the media, how they conducted themselves in meetings, and their relations with their constituencies,” he recalls.

Donaghy also has taken Facilitative Leadership® into organizations with a larger sphere of influence. In one such case, he facilitated a workshop attended by Kevin Downer, support officer for 26 District Policing Partnerships set up following the Good Friday Agreement. “The training was as good as I’ve received in the eleven years I’ve worked in Northern Ireland,” says Downer, who would like to see others with whom he works have the same experience.

Donaghy says he sees a growing impact from the workshops, as more and more people are exposed to IISC values and tools and take those learnings into their communities and organizations, using them to address a wide range of issues requiring collaboration across diversity of all kinds. “If we can get Facilitative Leadership® ideas into a microcosm of culture by changing a small area, we can change the wider culture,” he says.

McLaughlin agrees that there is evidence of a cultural change. When visiting one client who had sought her help with a strategic planning process, she was pleased to see that he had posted on his wall a chart he had received during a three-day partnership training conducted by IISC and WEA in Omagh in 2000. McLaughlin’s client was David Patterson, partnership manager for the Down District Strategy Partnership, one of 26 such broadly based groups established under the EU’s PEACE I program. Partnership members represent local government, the nonprofit sector, and others in



civil society, such as trade unions and businesses. Their job is “to develop and coordinate integrated strategies for local districts,” says Patterson.

The chart on Patterson’s wall, “Levels of Involvement in Decision-Making,” reviews alternatives to authoritarian models, linking stakeholders’ involvement in the process of generating and weighing options to their support of the final decision. This framework is one of the IISC tools that help him meet his chief challenge, to “bring people together for dialogue” and to “encourage them to work collaboratively.” Doing so is a requirement for the EU funding that supports a range of local projects throughout his district, where political and paramilitary factions – even within the predominant loyalist (Protestant) ideology – historically have kept people from working for common goals, says Patterson. As funding declines, he says, he is hopeful that “the culture of working together in Northern Ireland and the border areas will stick.”

McLaughlin believes such a culture is increasingly evident. She says she and her husband, who is also a peace worker, see “a shift in how people do things around process.”

Building Relationships Across the Island

In the constellation of factors shaping the culture of collaboration that Patterson, McLaughlin, Donaghy, and others believe is emerging in Ireland, IISC has played a pivotal role. The values and principles that first resonated in the conflict zones of the

North quickly spread into the South, through the relationships that have developed since the initial workshops conducted with WEA in 1997.

- Typical of the people-to-people aspect of the network’s expansion is the partnership between IISC and the Institute for Public Health in Ireland, whose director Dr. Jane Wilde and associate director Leslie Boydell met Marianne Hughes and Danny Martin, another IISC associate, in the late 1990s, in the early days of the ground-breaking all-Ireland body conceived by the chief medical officers in the North and South. After a “quite inspiring lunch,” Wilde and Boydell accepted an invitation to attend a workshop in Boston they found “absolutely fantastic” and later asked Rice to facilitate a process that brought together public health professionals from North and South to help shape the new institute. In 2000, when strengthening coalitions in the public health field became part of Boydell’s portfolio, she attended one of the Building Successful Partnerships trainings co-delivered by IISC and WEA facilitators. And, after learning about IISC’s leadership development work in Portland, Maine, Boydell included a module of Facilitative Leadership® as part of her newly launched IHPI leadership program.
- One of those participants, Anne-Marie Telford, director of public health for the Southern Health and Social Services Board, found the module so helpful that she subsequently arranged for all of her own staff and the organization’s senior managers to be trained, as well. The IISC training is “not all about technique but about people recognizing themselves as leaders within

the organization,” even if they are not CEOs, says Telford, whose organization provides services and promotes health and well-being to a predominantly rural, aging population of some 320,000 in Northern Ireland.

- Another alumnus of the IHPI leadership program is Ronnie Fay, director of Dublin-based Pavee Point, a network of programs serving some 5000 Travellers (about one percent of the population) scattered around the Irish island. (Travellers are an ethnic group that have historically suffered a high incidence of poverty, low educational levels, high infant mortality, low life expectancy, and related problems.) After completing the Facilitative Leadership® module, Fay asked O’Meara to offer a three-day workshop for coordinators of Traveller projects throughout Ireland. Participants included Cristina Hurson from Tullamore in County Offaly, who now would like to see “everyone I work with” (including Travellers who serve as board members for outreach programs) receive similar training. “If it is just for coordinators,” she says, “we are missing out on so many people who are natural leaders in their own way.”
- Lindsey Butler likewise has helped expand the network. After attending a Facilitating Change™ in Galway in June 2005 that was targeted at Community Enterprise Development Officers (CEDOs) like herself, she organized another training – this time, Essential Facilitation™ - for the county development board Butler staffs and for others in local authorities and agencies in Kilkenny, in the southeastern part of the Republic. Participants included representatives from Ireland’s Training and Employment Authority, the Women’s Equality Measure, the county’s volunteer centers, a panel studying mental health issues in the Republic, and the Kilkenny Council.
- Rural Community Network (RCN) is a voluntary organization with some 500 members, funded partly by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to advocate for rural communities. A key focus is to improve how government agencies elicit public comment on policies and projects affecting rural communities. Senior manager Gareth Harper, who attended a Facilitative Leadership® workshop in late 1998, was instrumental in developing a manual to guide such “consultation” processes, and he says the content was influenced by IISC frameworks and tools. Dissemination of those ideas began with enlisting, as members of the project steering committee, representatives from agencies RCN hoped would adopt the new practices. A major breakthrough in RCN’s campaign to change how public agencies do business came when a local health and social services trust began to adopt the new approach to consultation and added RCN’s course to its internal training program. Such institutionalization of the new practices could lead, over time, to exponential growth of individuals committed to IISC’s principles and strategies.
- McMinn sees a similar “cascading effect” in the National Women’s Council, whose board members observe her using the IISC frameworks and tools and whose staff members model them



elsewhere, such as on boards of other groups to which they belong. Like Harper – and many others – she would like to see that effect “move up the ladder in terms of political parties or civil servants whose traditional way of working” typically is not based on the same principles of participation and collaboration. Likewise, Kilkenny CEDO Butler hopes more community development board members can learn collaboration skills, which, she says, often are not evident in public officials’ approach to problem-solving.

A Platform for Social Change

Hughes is not surprised that exposure to IISC’s methodology and concepts generally leads quite readily to enthusiastic acceptance and a desire to initiate others. She believes there is “a universality to the need” for the kinds of process skills, collaborative models, and facilitative leadership that IISC transfers through its various services to individuals, organizations, and communities. Such tools, she says, “provide the invisible glue that connects individuals and organizations that are in and of themselves doing extraordinary work. The result is that they can coordinate their efforts across issues and sectors, creating shared visions and strategies for concerted action, and have much greater impact as networks for social change.”

Broad social change is indeed IISC’s agenda, as it has been since Rice, as president and CEO of IA,

founded IISC “to be a force for hope and possibilities and to advance peace and social justice wherever we are.” That vision has been at the heart of IISC’s work in Ireland since its partnership with WEA began. The IISC and WEA partnership became “a very important hub in Northern Ireland,” says Hughes, and has led, individual by individual and group by group, to “a very vital, dense network of change agents operating out of a collaborative leadership model that is a platform for social transformation.” Ireland, she adds, is “a fractal of the whole.” Important as it is on its own merits, it demonstrates the potential impact of “amplifying a strategic, focused, and collective voice that might, someday, give global expression to a shared vision of a new world that is just and sustainable.”

