



Truth recovery in Northern Ireland: Critically interpreting the past

Kirk Simpson

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Northern Ireland has entered what is arguably the key phase in its troubled political history - truth recovery and dealing with the legacy of the past - yet the void in knowledge and the lack of academic literature with regard to victims' rights is particularly striking. This book analyses truth recovery as a fundamental aspect of the transition from political violence to peace, democracy and stability in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Kirk Simpson argues that it is essential for any process of truth recovery in Northern Ireland to provide the victims of political violence with the opportunity to express and articulate their narratives of suffering within the context of public dialogic processes. He outlines a unique and original model: that victims of political violence should be enabled to engage in meaningful truth recovery through a Habermasian process of public democratic deliberation and communication involving direct dialogue with the perpetrators of such violence.

This process of 'communicative justice' is framed within Habermas' theory of communicative action and can help to ensure that legitimate truth recovery publicly acknowledges the trauma of victims and subjects perpetrator narratives of political violence to critical scrutiny and rational deconstruction. Crucially, the book aims to contribute to the empowerment of victims in Northern Ireland by stimulating constructive discussion and awareness of hitherto silenced narratives of the conflict. This difficult and unsettling interrogation and interpretation of the conflict from a comparatively 'unknown perspective' is central to the prospects for critically examining and mastering the past in Northern Ireland.

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