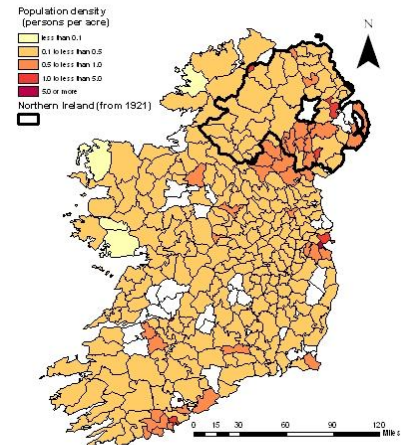


Connecting space and time tells us more about Irish history, religion and violence

Ireland's religious geographies have remained surprisingly stable over time – today's patterns have clearly recognisable origins in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though there has been, since the early nineteenth century, migration from the more rural west to the urban east. It appears that while the impact of the Famine of the late 1840s was worst in areas that had overwhelmingly Catholic populations, its impacts in more mixed areas were often at least as severe on the Protestant population as on Catholics. Outside Ulster the Presbyterian population actually increased at this time. However, Partition in 1922 did lead to major population changes. For example, the Church of Ireland declined across much of the Free State. How have these links between religion, demography and location in Ireland been found?



One of the maps from the project website

Religion has played a key role in Irish history. Now Ian Gregory and his team at Lancaster University, funded by [the Religion and Society Programme](#), has found an innovative way to learn more about this role and religion's relationship to key events and socio-economic factors in Ireland. They were able to use Irish census data plus data from the 1834 Commissioners for Public Instruction to create a Geographic Information System (GIS) to look at religion, identity, community, welfare and prosperity in Ireland long-term and also focus in depth on killings during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. By using GIS they can locate temporal events spatially, and present them in a visual, searchable form.

In respect to the Troubles specifically, the project has found complex micro-geographies of conflict. The analysis reveals that killings took place primarily in areas that had high Catholic populations and were deprived. Province-wide, killings of security forces personnel by Republican paramilitaries were particularly concentrated in South Armagh but all areas adjoining the border were relatively dangerous to security personnel. Killings of Republican paramilitaries by security forces show a very different pattern, being concentrated in the areas of Fermanagh and Tyrone further away from the border. There are a variety of reasons for this, including the use of the border in Republican attacks and the security service's relative success in areas like east Tyrone that had a relatively large Protestant population, but failure in Catholic dominated areas such as South Armagh. Protestant civilians tended to be killed by Republicans in Protestant areas of West Belfast and Catholics by security forces in Catholic areas, but Catholic civilians in North Belfast were deliberately targeted by loyalists to drive them out of the area. Since 1971 Catholics and Protestants have moved away from central Belfast, Catholics to the West, and Protestants away from Belfast altogether.

The team have been invited to present their methods and findings internationally and are introducing nuanced quantitative methods into the study of religion. A book of the research is to be published by Indiana University Press with an accompanying website, as well as an atlas to be published by Four Court Press. A small grant to study spatio-temporal patterns of religious practice in Ireland has also since been awarded by the British Academy.

Find out more...

- Visit the project's website including interactive maps: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/troubledgeogs/>
- See Ian Gregory's profile: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/staff/gregoryi/>
- Keep an eye out for the book *Troubled Geographies: A Spatial History of Religion and Society in Ireland* to be published by Indiana University Press.

You might also be interested in...

- Alison Mawhinney's Religion and Society funded project about opting out of Religious Education in Northern Ireland:
http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings/featured_findings/opting_out_of_re_could_and_should_be_easier
- The report from a one day conference on child abuse in the Catholic Church which the Programme co-organised and paid attention to experiences in the Republic of Ireland:
http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/research_findings/featured_findings/child_abuse_in_the_catholic_church_what_can_be_learned
- The Database of Irish Historical Statistics used for this project:
<http://www.esds.ac.uk/search/indexSearch.asp?ct=xmlSn&q1=33276>
- Malcom Sutton's index of deaths from the Conflict in Ireland also employed:
<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/index.html>
- Irish Studies e-resources: the [Act of Union Virtual Library](#), [Historical Hansards](#) and the [JSTOR Irish Collection](#).

Project Details

Award Title

Troubled Geographies: Two centuries of religious division in Ireland

Team

Principal Investigator: Dr Ian Gregory (Lancaster)



Arts & Humanities
Research Council



Co-Investigators: Dr Chris Lloyd (Queen's University Belfast), Dr Ian Shuttleworth (Queen's University Belfast), Dr Paul Ell (Queen's University Belfast)

Research Assistant: Mr Niall Cunningham (Lancaster)

University

Lancaster University

Research Partners

Prof Andrew Beveridge (City University of New York)

Dr Martin Melaugh (University of Ulster)

Centre for Data Digitisation and Analysis, Queens University Belfast

Award Type

Phase 1 Large Grant

Key terms

Geography, spatial humanities, quantitative methods, the Troubles, Partition, the Famine