

UK Historical GIS 2008 Conference

Niall Cunningham (Research Associate) – Lancaster University

Ian Gregory (Principal Investigator)

Abstract

Analysing religious change and political violence in Ireland: A GIS approach

Religion has had an extraordinarily powerful effect on the shaping of identity in Ireland over the past two centuries, nonetheless for the fact that in Ireland it has come symbolise a wide range of historical, political and cultural differences between the two main communities rather than providing the source of substantive theological disputes. This paper will shed light on some aspects of research being conducted on one strand in the 'Troubled Geographies' project, funded under the AHRC's 'Religion and Society' scheme.

This strand examines long-term religious change in the island of Ireland from 1861 up to the present, utilising data on religious affiliation which has always been a feature of Irish censuses. It will address the methodologies employed in the construction of the long-term database and the spatial and temporal challenges presented by changing statutory and political geographies over time by locating these challenges within their turbulent historical context. At an analytical level the paper will question the established view of a confessional duality in Ireland by focussing on the breadth of religious diversity and the spatial, economic and political variety it represented with reference to a range of socio-economic variables whilst contextualising such within a broader understanding of Ireland's colonisation.