Conflict at the Interface

National Divisions, Resource Inequalities and Hegemonic Struggles in Northern Ireland and Kosovo

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Research Objectives

➢ to explore the interrelatedness of national identity and class and socio-economic divisions and their impact on intergroup conflict in the divided societies of Northern Ireland and Kosovo.

- to explore how intergroup tensions manifest themselves on the ground in areas where the conflict has been, and still is, most intense – i.e. in the interface and enclave communities;

- to investigate how these tensions are influenced by the hegemonic power struggles of the divided national elites.

Research Questions

1) What is the impact of national identity and socio-economic inequality and class divisions – and how are these issues interrelated – in those localities of Northern Ireland and Kosovo with the highest levels of intergroup conflict?

2a) How does the hegemonic power struggle of the divided political elites affect the interface and enclave communities with regard to the persistence of intergroup conflict?

2b) What are the modes of governance and policies applied by the elites that impact on these communities and who are the dominant actors?

Field Research:
Approach & Methodology

➤ The <u>background information</u> for the field research has been gathered through a comprehensive and systematic literature review of historical accounts and (materialist and identity-based) analyses of conflict in divided societies in general and of the two cases under study – with the focus on interface and enclave communities.

Field Research:
Approach & Methodology

➤ Objectives:

1. to identify the key issues that matter to people living in interface and enclave areas;

2. to gain insights in how these issues materialise on the ground – especially with regard to their impact on community relations;

3. to explore the impact of socio-economic and national divisions on their living situation;

4. to get a clearer picture about their perceptions on how these issues are addressed at the policy and governance level and thus in which way the hegemonic power struggles of the divided elites impact on interface and enclave communities.

Field Research:
Approach & Methodology

➢ in-depth qualitative, semi-structured, narrative <u>interviews</u>, <u>informal talks</u>, non-participant and participant <u>observation</u> and <u>focus groups</u> in interface and enclave communities and other locations in Northern Ireland and Kosovo.

➢ <u>interview guideline</u> focus on:
national identity, class interests, socio-economic situation and issues, community relations, perceptions of power, power relations and policy outcome, personal experiences of the conflict, and future outlook.

Field Research:
Approach & Methodology

➢ <u>Several locations</u> with high levels of violence and socio-economic deprivation selected to get a clearer picture of the nature and scope of community divisions and identify common patterns and differences.

➢ <u>Interview partners</u> selected based on information from desk research and informal talks with local informants and experts.

➢ <u>Field research journal</u> including anecdotes and reflections of personal experiences -> 'ethnographic vignettes': in-text illustration pointing to particular structural relations between the key issues under study and their manifestations on the ground.

Field Research:
Approach & Methodology

➢ Field research <u>analysis</u> mainly through <u>meaning condensation</u>, i.e. through transcribing and interpreting relevant excerpts from the interviews, <u>deductive coding</u> and <u>qualitative content analysis</u>.
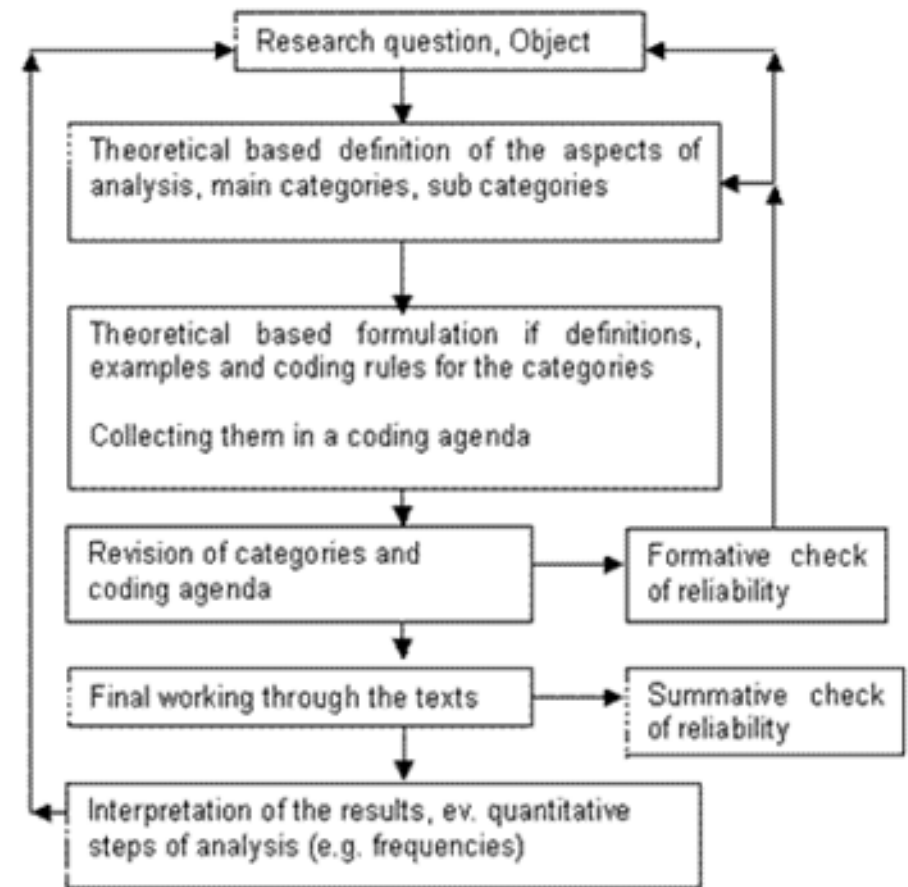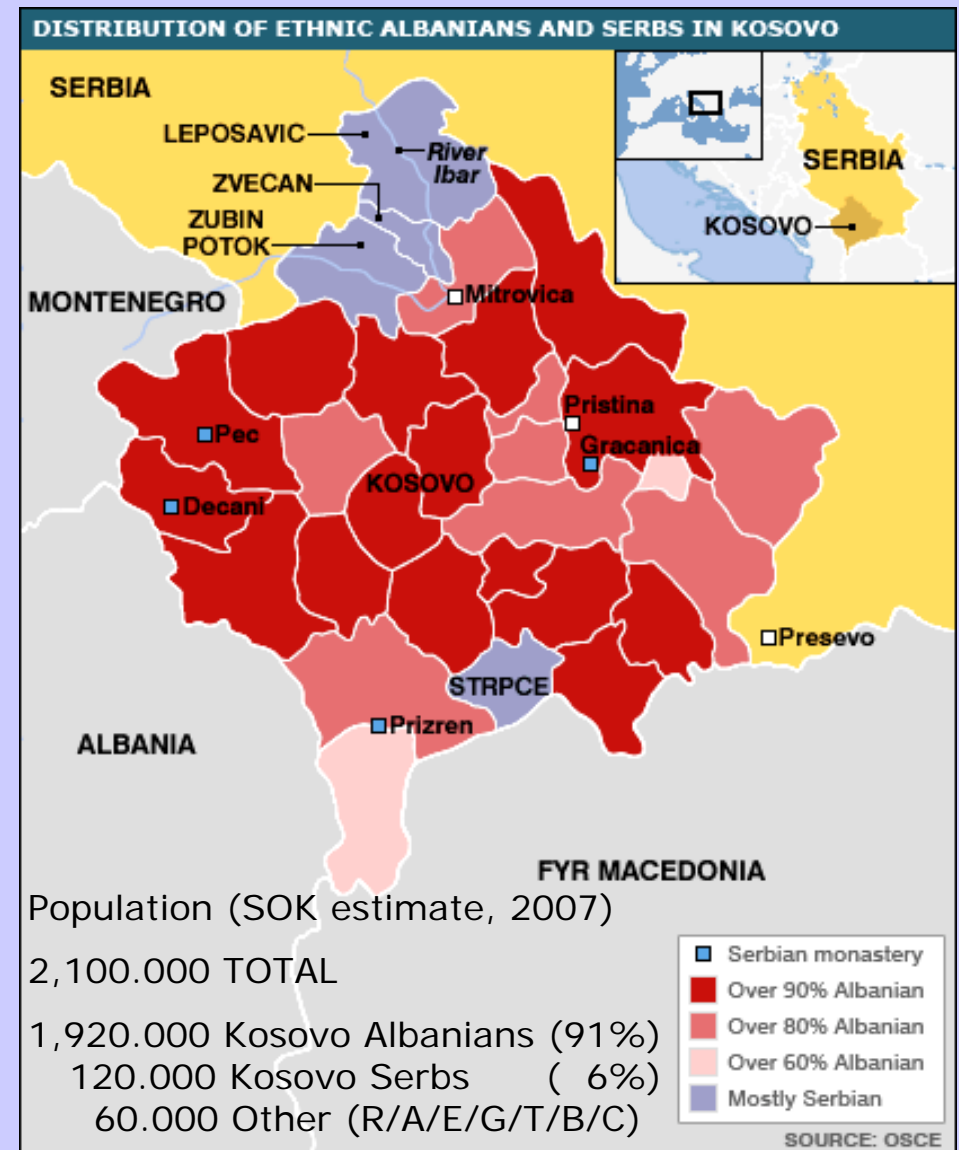

Fig.2: Step model of deductive category application (MAYRING 2000) [14]

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Field Research:
Approach & Methodology

➢ The <u>theoretical-analytical framework</u> guiding the field research analysis draws on Gramsci's theory of hegemony, supplemented by approaches to transitional/post-conflict (participatory) governance, national identity/ nationalism, socio-economic deprivation, fear, borderland studies and territorial segregation.

Field Research Kosovo

➢ February – April 2009

➢ 28 semi-structured, narrative interviews, 11 informal talks in 8 locations:
Mitrovica North (KS) and South (KA), Gračanica, Štrpce and LapljeSelo (KS), Prishtina, Prizren and Gjilan (KA)

➢ guided tours and observations

➢ 5 interviews, 1 informal talk in Vienna

➢ IP: Kosovo Albanian and Serb locals, community activists, local NGO representatives, police officers, local politicians, state officials and politicians, intellectuals, academics and representatives from the International Community (UNMIK, EULEX, OSCE) and International NGOs

DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC ALBANIANS AND SERBS IN KOSOVO

SERBIA

LEPOSAVIC
ZVECAN
ZUBIN POTOK
River Ibar

MONTENEGRO

SERBIA

KOSOVO

Mitrovica

Pec

Pristina
Gracanica

KOSOVO

Decani

STRPCE

Prizren

ALBANIA

Presevo

FYR MACEDONIA

Population (SOK estimate, 2007)

2,100.000 TOTAL

1,920.000 Kosovo Albanians (91%)
   120.000 Kosovo Serbs   (6%)
    60.000 Other (R/A/E/G/T/B/C)

Serbian monastery
Over 90% Albanian
Over 80% Albanian
Over 60% Albanian
Mostly Serbian

SOURCE: OSCE

Field Research Kosovo: Parallel Governance

➤ K.Serbian parallel structures of local governance and administration in education, social security and health care in 23 Kosovo municipalities: 4 in the North and 19 in the South

➤ Elected by K.Serbs in Serbian local elections on 11 May 2008 – mostly won by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) and the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS).

➤ Considered to be illegal by K.Albanians and the International Community (UNMIK, EULEX).

➤ Kosovo institutions and status of independence not recognised by most K.Serbs and the Republic of Serbia.

➤ Almost all K.Serbs refrained from participating in the 2007 Kosovo (general and municipal) elections. 4 K.Serb parties in Kosovo parliament, K.Serb Minister for Community and Return – considered as self-elected by Kosovo Serbs.
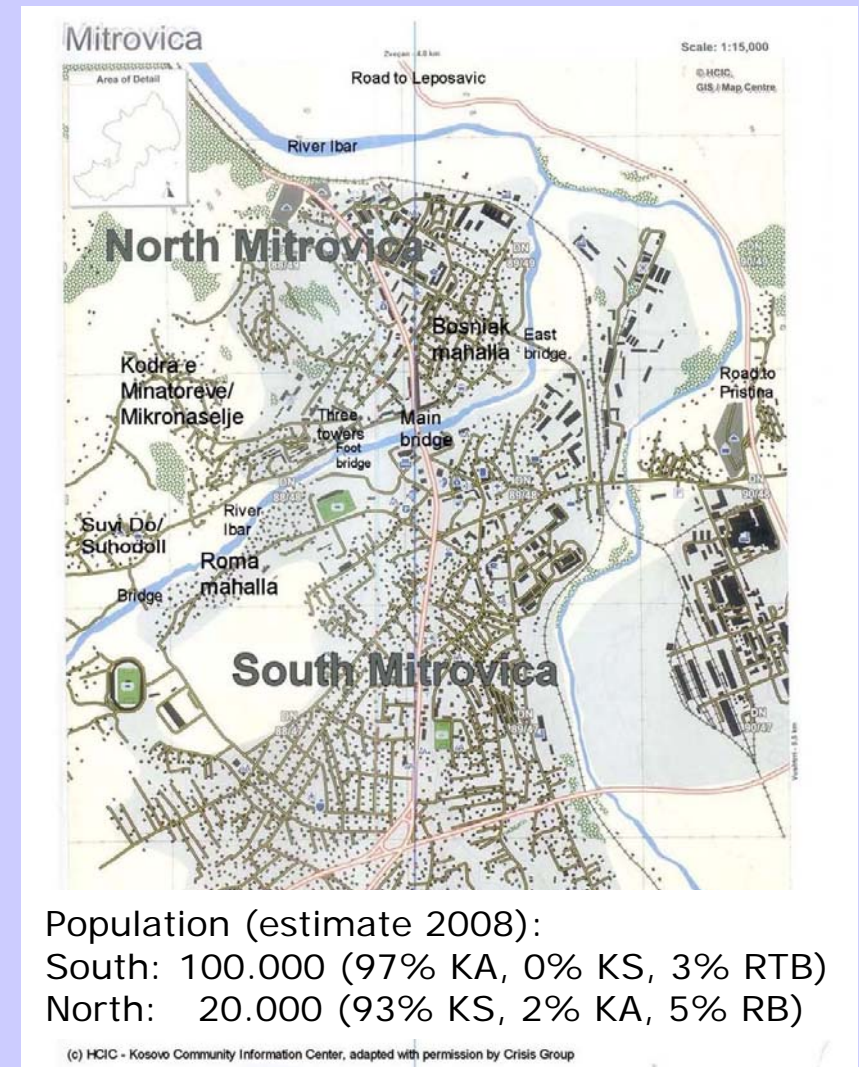
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Field Research Kosovo: Parallel Governance

➤ K.Serbs employed in the parallel institutions receive increased salaries from Serbia twice as high than salaries of K.Albanian public service employees.

➤ Republic of Serbia pays substitute for salary loss to unemployed K.Serbs and covers the pensions.

➤ K.Serbs entitled to double (Serbian/Kosovo) citizenship and participation in Serbian general and local elections.

➤ K.Serb political and socio-economic affairs are heavily controlled by Serbia (Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija).

➤ Parallel governance structures fail to provide security (policing), justice and the rule of law.

Field Research Kosovo: Parallel Governance

North/South divide:

➤ <u>North Mitrovica</u>: parallel governance structures in education (primary, secondary and university), health care, social security; function quite effectively.

➤ No rule of law, security tasks performed by local vigilant groups ('bridge-watchers') controlled by radical political leaders (O. Jovanović, M. Jaksić), frequent inter-ethnic violence – worst riots in March 2004 and March 2008.

Population (estimate 2008):
South: 100.000 (97% KA, 0% KS, 3% RTB)
North: 20.000 (93% KS, 2% KA, 5% RB)

(c) HCIC - Kosovo Community Information Center, adapted with permission by Crisis Group

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Field Research Kosovo: Parallel Governance

North/South divide:

➤ <u>North Mitrovica</u>:
Police (Kosovo Police Service, KPS) only limited authority in the North. After 16 months boycott K.Serb police officers returned to service end of June 2009.

➤ Permanent security threat

➤ Smuggling and trafficking

➤ Northern Serbs protest against the EULEX court.

➤ Signs of intimidation of K.Serb locals to comply with informal social order and control (e.g. to join protests)

➤ No official contact between South Mitrovica K.Albanian official and North Mitrovica K.Serb parallel municipality administration

Field Research Kosovo: Parallel Governance

North/South divide:

➢ <u>Southern enclaves</u>:
Serbian parallel municipality administration of Pristina based in <u>Gračanica</u>.

➢ Municipality of <u>Štrpce</u> has currently 3 mayors: a Kosovo Albanian elected in Kosovo local elections 2007, a Kosovo Serb elected in Serbian local elections 2008 and a Kosovo Serb appointed by the SRSG.

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Field Research Kosovo: Parallel Governance

North/South divide:

➢ No link and contact between K.Serb parallel institutions – and K.Albanian administration.

➢ Southern parallel local governance structures have very limited service capacity.

➢ Serbia cannot fully meet the local needs either.

➢ Need for cooperation with Kosovo institutions in Southern Serbian enclaves, especially in water and energy supply and official channels, which more Southern K.Serbs grudgingly accept.

➢ Language problem when dealing with Kosovo institutions, since most Southern K.Serbs do not speak Albanian.

➢ Kosovo Police Service in performing security tasks is gaining more authority in Southern enclaves.

➢ Perceived insecurity and lack of freedom of movement of Southern K.Serbs

Field Research Kosovo: Other Key Findings

➢ Highly <u>divergent interpretations of history</u> between K.Albanians and K.Serbs (e.g. Battle of Kosovo, Ottoman rule, Prizren League, Balkan wars, Albanian expulsions, Tito-Yugoslavia, Miloševic, Serbian army, KLA, Kosovo war)

➢ <u>Strong and conflicting</u> Albanian and Serbian <u>national identities</u> built on historical myths (e.g. Kosovo the cradle of Serbian civilisation, first settlers in Kosovo were Albanians – descendants of Illyrians and Dardanians) and national heroes (e.g. Skenderbeg, A. Jashari, Miloš Obilic) prejudices and enemy concepts (e.g. Albanians perceived as uncivilised savages, Serbs as oppressors and 'blood-thirsty' warlords). Serb-Orthodox <u>religion</u> is important element for Serbian national identity.

➢ <u>Nationalistic politics</u> and <u>media</u> discourse

➢ Disputed <u>status</u> of Kosovo

➢ <u>Paternalistic leadership</u> style of K.Albanian and Serbian political elites and International Community, perceived <u>corruption</u>, <u>failure</u> to address issues on the ground, <u>EULEX and UNMIK unwelcome</u> in both communities.

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Field Research Kosovo: Other Key Findings
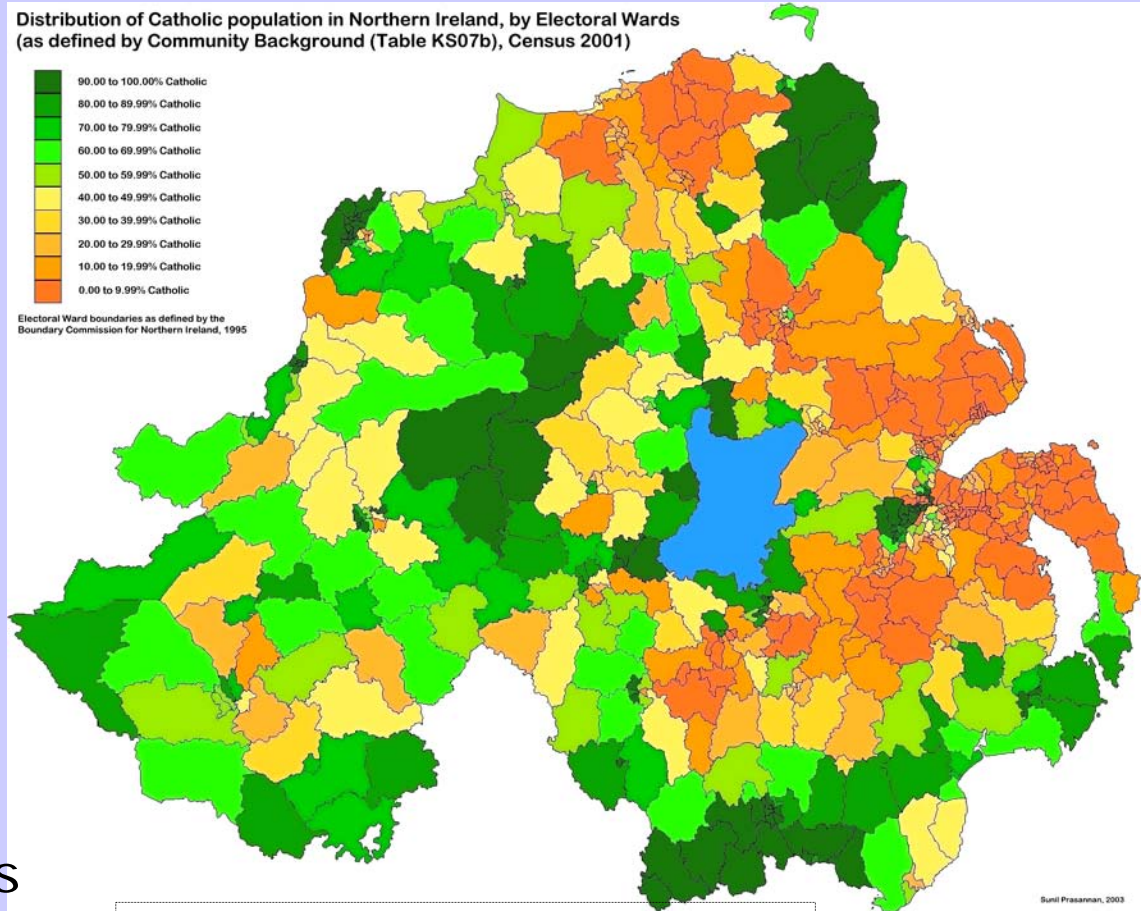
➤ Nationalist symbolism

Field Research Kosovo:
Other Key Findings

➢ <u>Community relations</u>: up to 1980s good neighbourly relations between K.Albanians and K.Serbs, deteriorated with the rise of Miloševic, after the war almost complete segregation and no cooperation, except: *"Criminals can cooperate very well regardless of their ethnicity background. Serbs and Albanians can perfectly cooperate on crime issues, this is no problem."*

➢ Shared sense of <u>socio-economic deprivation</u>: poor education, high unemployment (>60%) low personal income (average/month ~100-150€), water and electricity shortages, poor housing and disputed property rights, poor infrastructure

➢ High levels of <u>corruption</u> and <u>crime</u>

➢ Underdeveloped <u>civil society</u> (NGO sector) on both sides, more on K.Serb side

➢ Return of Internally Displaced Persons (<u>IDPs</u>): Between 2000 and 2009 8.000 – max. 10.000 K.Serbs of 200.000 returned.

Field Research Northern Ireland

➢ June – July 2009

➢ 45 semi-structured, narrative interviews, 3 focus groups in 5 locations:
Belfast North (CNR/PUL), West (CNR/PUL) and East (PUL), Portadown/Garvaghy Road (CNR) and L'Derry (CNR/PUL)

➢ guided tours and observations

➢ 4 telephone interviews in Vienna

➢ IP: Republican/Nationalist and Loyalist/Unionist locals, community activists, ex-combatants, police officers, local politicians, representatives from religious and cultural organisations, state officials and politicians, intellectuals, academics

Distribution of Catholic population in Northern Ireland, by Electoral Wards (as defined by Community Background (Table KS07b), Census 2001)
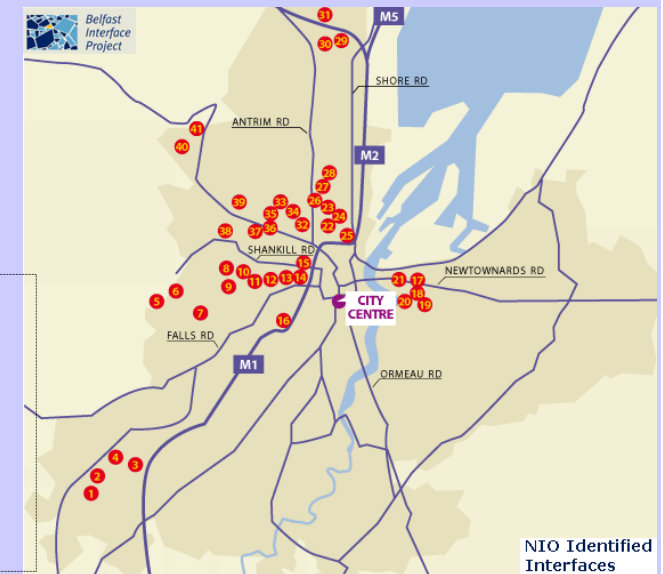
90.00 to 100.00% Catholic
80.00 to 89.99% Catholic
70.00 to 79.99% Catholic
60.00 to 69.99% Catholic
50.00 to 59.99% Catholic
40.00 to 49.99% Catholic
30.00 to 39.99% Catholic
20.00 to 29.99% Catholic
10.00 to 19.99% Catholic
0.00 to 9.99% Catholic

Electoral Ward boundaries as defined by the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland, 1995

Sunil Prasannan, 2003

Population (Census, 2001 estimate):

1,685.000 TOTAL
860.000 Protestants (51%)
775.000 Catholics (46%)
50.000 Other (3%)

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Field Research Northern Ireland: Parallel Governance

➤ <u>Parallel governance structures in education</u> in Irish Nationalist Republican (CNR) areas – run by Catholic Church – since inception of Northern Ireland in 1921; state-funded, autonomy in decision-making

➤ <u>Informal security and social control systems</u> in CNR and Protestant Unionist Loyalist (PUL) interface areas – run by paramilitaries – since the beginning of the conflict (the 'Troubles') late 1960s/early 1970s; security, policing and justice tasks, punishment beatings ("kneecapping")

➤ <u>Parallel local governance structures</u> in Republican areas – run by Republican party Sinn Féin (SF) – during the height of the conflict 1970s/1980s; local public services (employment, housing welfare)

➤ Paramilitary and Sinn Féin systems considered as <u>illegal</u> by Unionist parties and the British State.

➤ After the peace agreement 1998 <u>participatory modes of local governance</u> have been gradually introduced.

Field Research Northern Ireland: Parallel Governance

➢ In <u>Belfast</u> the parallel local governance structures in Republican areas have ceased to exist after the peace agreement.

➢ Most of the informal security and social control systems have been replaced – after SF's endorsement of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2007 – with <u>participatory local governance structures</u> (District Policing Partnership – DPP). However, in some loyalist and republican interface areas the remnants of these systems still exist.

➢ The informal justice systems have been replaced by <u>intermediate</u> structures (<u>restorative justice schemes</u>: NI Alternatives and Community Restorative Justice Ireland) acting between police and courts.
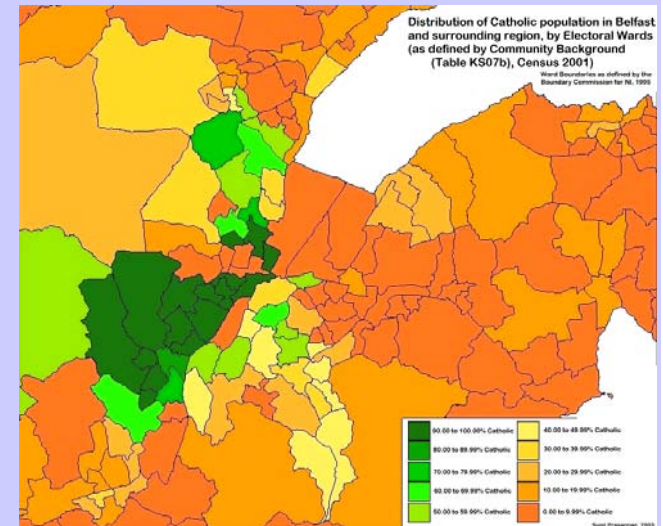
Distribution of Catholic population in Belfast and surrounding region, by Electoral Wards (as defined by Community Background (Table KS07b), Census 2001)

Belfast Interface Project

NIO Identified Interfaces

Population (Census, 2001 est.):

277.000 TOTAL
140.000 P (51%)
125.000 C (45%)
 12.000 O (4%)

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Field Research Northern Ireland: Other Key Findings

➢ Highly <u>divergent interpretations of history</u> between CNR and PUL interface communities (e.g. Plantation, Irish civil war, Partition, Stormont regime, Civil Rights Movement, PIRA, UDA/UVF, British army, Hunger strikes, Agreement)

➢ <u>Strong and conflicting</u> CNR and PUL <u>national identities</u> built on historical myths and national heroes.

➢ <u>Nationalistic politics</u> at state and local level – political polarisation

➢ <u>Contested status</u> of Northern Ireland – open to majority decision: United Kingdom vs. United Ireland

➢ Perceived <u>failure</u> among CNR and PUL interface communities of <u>public policies</u>, particularly in the areas of housing, education and community relations.

➢ <u>Community relations</u>: Almost complete segregation between CNR and PUL interface communities. Strategic policy paper on community relations is long overdue due to political disagreement

Field Research Kosovo: Other Key Findings

➢ (Nationalist) symbolism

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Field Research Northern Ireland: Other key findings

➢ Many <u>cross-community/interface partnerships</u>, ex-combatants involved

➢ Significant decrease <u>inter-group violence</u> after the Agreement, but still frequent riots and sectarian attacks in CNR and PUL interface areas of North and West Belfast, particularly during the 'marching season' and around the contentious issue of social housing.

➢ Shared sense of <u>socio-economic deprivation</u> in CNR and PUL interface areas ("*There is probably more that unites us than divides us*"), poor education, high (long-term) unemployment, poor infrastructure

➢ Most contentious issue is <u>housing</u>: Due to demographic differences in age CNR interface communities are in high demand for social housing. However, PUL interface communities are unwilling to 'sacrifice' territory.

➢ High levels of <u>youth crime</u> and <u>anti-social behaviour</u> (ASB)

➢ Still <u>lack of trust</u> in <u>police</u> and <u>justice</u> systems in interface communities.

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Field Research:
Some Preliminary Conclusions

➢ Massive inter-group divisions between K.Albanian majority and the K.Serb minority are massive intruding all spheres of life: territorial (North/South), political (Kosovo vs. Serbia), national (K.Albanians vs. Serbs), ethnic (Albanians vs. Slavs), religious (Albanian Muslims vs. Serb Orthodox).

➢ Kosovo's disputed status reflected in parallel governance structures and informal social control systems – particularly pronounced in Northern Serbian controlled part, grudging readiness to cooperate with Kosovo institutions in Southern Serbian enclaves.

➢ Intra-group divisions: cultural (traditional/rural vs. modern/urban), socio-economic/class (rich elites vs. poor/unemployed peasants)

➢ Inter-group divisions between Protestant Unionist Loyalist majority and Catholic Nationalist Republican minority most pronounced in the least advantaged interface areas.

➢ Transformation of local governance structures in Northern Ireland after the peace agreement: participatory modes

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Thank you for your attention!

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