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**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN A  
PARTITIONED CIVIL SOCIETY:  
WHYTE REVISITED**

**Kevin Howard**

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## ABSTRACT

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### CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN A PARTITIONED CIVIL SOCIETY: WHYTE REVISITED

This paper revisits John Whyte's seminal 1983 article "The permeability of the United Kingdom-Irish border: a preliminary reconnaissance" (Whyte, 1983). The objective is to explore hypotheses Whyte put forward as to why some private organisations are all-Ireland while others follow the international boundary. He suggested that two variables are crucial in explaining this: the nature of the organisation's activities and the date of its foundation. He also identified a lack of readily available information on foundation dates. To overcome this lacuna we carried out a survey of private organisations to ascertain their foundation date, area of activity and what if any territorial reconfiguring they have undergone. Using the same functional categories as Whyte our research is generally supportive of his initial findings. Civil society can act as a counter-force to the boundary reinforcing dynamics of separate state developments.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

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## CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN A PARTITIONED CIVIL SOCIETY: WHYTE REVISITED

Kevin Howard

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper is the third in a mini-series of four in which the author has attempted to take different perspectives on the impact of partition on the political and social life of the island of Ireland. The first paper in the series theorised about the nature of the relationship between the northern nationalist community and the Irish kin-state. It highlighted the rapidity with which the Irish political elite accepted partition and moved to consolidate the southern state—and the consequences of this for the northern nationalist minority. The argument was that this community does not hold any special position vis-à-vis the Irish state. Northern nationalists share the same constitutional status as Irish immigrants and their descendants in other parts of the UK and elsewhere, and the same constitutional status as northern unionists. It was suggested that as a consequence of partition and separate patterns of state development the northern nationalist community could be conceptualised in terms of “diaspora”; permanently resident outside the nation’s political homeland. This divergence is tentatively described as ethnic drift. The notion of drift is borrowed from biology where it refers to differentiation within what was once a single species as a consequence of separation and separate development. Ethnic drift refers to the development of a sense of differentiation within what was at one time a cohesive ethnic or national grouping. Emigration is the most common cause of this intra-group divergence. However, it can also be engendered as a consequence of the redrawing of political boundaries and the subsequent divergence in experience due to socialisation in different states. The preceding paper explored therefore the boundary reinforcing dynamic of partition, particularly for the island’s Catholic or nationalist majority. Crucially, however, the paper did not argue that partition was either inevitable or reversible. It simply put forward a way of thinking about the nature of the relationship between northern nationalists and the really-existing Republic.

The second paper presented a critique of MV Heslinga’s naturalistic justification for the Ireland-UK land border. It sought to show how Heslinga’s argument lends itself well to typical nationalist post-hoc rationalisations that repackage contingent events and unforeseen developments as the outworking of national destiny. This third paper on the other hand explores an alternative interpretation of the impact of partition, namely John Whyte’s 1983 paper, “The permeability of the United Kingdom-Irish border: a preliminary reconnaissance” (Whyte, 1983). John Whyte’s preliminary reconnaissance emphasised the negligible impact partition has had on the associational life of the island. Whyte’s paper therefore implies the *boundary transcending dynamic* of civil society, which we argues is in tension with the *boundary reinforcing dynamic* of separate state development.



### ***Civil society and partition***

It is worth pointing out that Whyte does not use the term civil society at all, referring instead to private and voluntary organisations. This is particularly interesting from an intellectual historian's point of view. Whyte was writing before the resurgence of interest amongst academics and politicians in the notion of civil society. Civil society has been offered as the key variable in explaining a variety of sociopolitical outcomes. For instance, the notion of a strong civil society has been used to explain the apparent weakness of Arab states; on the other hand, a weak civil society has been used to explain the strength and rapaciousness of these very same states (Yadowski, 1995). In the first instance, the strength of religiously orientated institutions and the cultural and social conservatism they represent and reinforce is the rock upon which the state-led project of modernity founders. In the second instance, the weakness of these institutions provides an insufficient bulwark against the coercive and surveillance powers that modern states can wield over individuals. Either way, it is the inherent fuzziness of the concept that allows these divergent interpretations.

Farrington (2004) usefully highlights the range of ways in which civil society is conceived and the divergent associated discourses that underpin these conceptions in Northern Ireland. He identifies four "ideal type" civil society discourses operating in the north:

- The neo-liberal discourse
- The activist discourse
- The public sphere discourse
- The conflict transformation discourse

While there are different emphases on what civil society is and what role it ought to play, all of these discourses share an understanding of civil society associations and organisations as both the repository and generator of "social capital". This term is also of recent vintage. There is no entry, for example, in the various editions of the Penguin *Dictionary of sociology* published between 1984 and 1994 (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1984-1994). The notion of "social capital" shares with that of "civil society" both a similar fuzziness and a widespread increase in usage in recent years, their popularity correlating with the policy shift on the part of governments towards invigorating the "community"—another equally fuzzy concept (Powell and Geoghegan, 2004). The British Office of National Statistics defines social capital as "the pattern and intensity of networks among people" and its effects as "the shared values which arise from those networks", thereby generating "a greater sense of community spirit" (ONS, 2005). The elective affinity between this set of concepts and the imperative that publicly funded peace and reconciliation programmes offer value for money is obvious, hence its application to a range of analyses. Yet, even before the publication and widespread impact of Robert Putnam's *Bowling alone* (Putnam, 2000) Portes had argued that:

Social capital has evolved into something of a cure-all for the maladies affecting society at home and abroad ... the point is approaching at which social capital comes to be applied to so many events and in so many different contexts as to lose any distinct meaning (Portes, 1998: 2).

As Harriss puts it, the “idea of ‘social capital’ has mystified rather than clarified. It systematically evades issues of context and power” (cited in Powell and Geoghegan, 2004: 13). Acheson et al (2004: 8-9) argue that Keane offers one of the most widely cited definitions of civil society:

Civil society, as I use the term and still do, is an ideal type category that both describes and envisages a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected non-governmental institutions that tend to be non-violent, self-organising, self-reflexive, and permanently in tension with each other and with the state institutions that “frame”, construct and enable their activities (cited in Powell and Geoghegan, 2004: 7).

The state, in this definition, provides the parameters within which civil society operates. The debate, put in simple terms, can be reduced to evaluating whether the autonomy of civil society institutions and organisations is ascribed or achieved, that is, is this autonomy permitted by the state or maintained in spite of the state? Keane’s definition of civil society captures the sense that civil society’s institutions operate on sufferance. Farrington argues that civil society in Northern Ireland, that is, civil society within the one state—despite all its supposed bridge-building potential—remains divided along ethno-sectarian lines. Social capital in the north appears to be of the strictly intra-communal “bonding” variety rather than the inter-communal bridging “variety”. Moreover, this is a situation that reflects profoundly the division and ethnically exclusivist nature of the state and its peak social institutions. In relation to the island as a whole, Acheson et al argue that:

[T]he Irish case shows that the dispositions, types of networks and institutional arrangements of communities (the forms of bonding and bridging capital available to them) do matter, but they matter much less than the processes of state and institution-building in which they are situated (Acheson et al, 2004: 319).

In the above definition the state is the matrix within which civil society operates; it is the state that shapes civil society rather than as in classical liberalism civil society being “outside” the state.

O’Leary has given a succinct definition of partition thus:

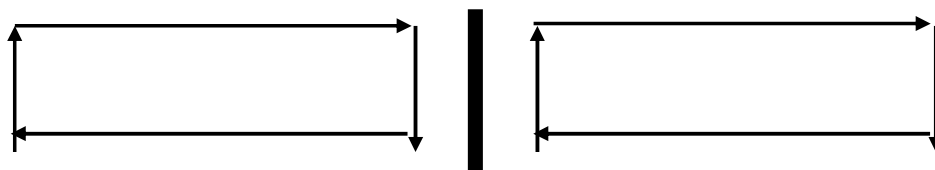
A partition should be understood as an externally proposed and imposed fresh border cut through at least one community’s national homeland, creating at least two separate units under different sovereigns or authorities... Partitions create new states or territories. Sovereign or Great Powers execute partitions—though local parties may affect them. Partitions are always regarded by at least one “loser” as an imposition, or violation (O’Leary, 2001: 54).

The Irish border has episodically evolved from a coercively imposed partition of imperial territory into the boundary separating two sovereign states. The saliency of this boundary has increased over time as the “reach” of the two states on either side

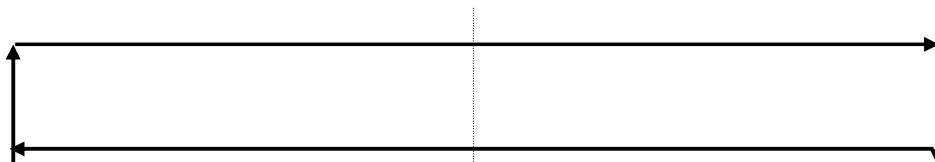
of the boundary has extended into more and more areas of people's lives. In addition, political violence in this island reinforced the relevance of partition. While this is well recognised, the worst years of the troubles coincided with the entry of both the Republic and the UK into the EEC, with its explicit founding principle of ever closer union. The impact of the EEC, and later the EC and EU, on the permeability of the Irish border is the subject of an expanding literature. There are countervailing tendencies between EU and "home-grown" functional cross-border cooperation on the one hand and, on the other, the centrifugal pull in opposite directions of two highly centralised administrations. In the first, the border is perceived as and functions as a bridge between the two jurisdictions; in the second, it is perceived as and functions as a barrier. Thinking in ideal-types, figure 1 schematically represents two ends of a spectrum along which the saliency of the state boundary for an organisation's activities and membership can be arranged. At one end of the spectrum would be organisations located solely in the Republic, solely in Northern Ireland, or across the UK as a whole and were established after partition. In other words, the international boundary delimits these organisations temporally and spatially. At the other end of the spectrum would be organisations established pre-partition and continue to be organised on all-Ireland or all-archipelago basis. The first are paradigmatic national organisations, are constrained by and reinforce the boundary; the second are paradigmatic boundary transcending organisations in that the drawing of the boundary is an irrelevance.

The deep division implied in O'Leary's definition is contrasted with Whyte's conclusion; he was writing in the early 1980s at the height of the troubles and long before the implementation of the EU's cross-border initiatives. Even so, he regarded the impact of partition as rather limited. He characterised the Republic of Ireland-United Kingdom land border as uniquely permeable in terms of the degree of boundary transcending civil society organisations.

**a) Reinforcing the boundary**



**b) Transcending the boundary**



**Figure 1: Differential permeability:  
boundary reinforcing and boundary transcending organisations**

**Table 1. Response rates to survey questionnaire: December 2004 - May, 2005**

<b>Category of organisation</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>%</b>
Charitable and voluntary	(58/96)	60
Trade unions and trade associations	(142/195)	73
Churches and church-related	(23/37)	62
Cultural and scientific	(65/79)	82
Professional associations	(59/95)	62
Youth and sporting	(75/124)	60
Overall response rate	(425/625)	68

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## **REVIEWING CIVIL SOCIETY**

### ***The rationale for a territorial survey***

Whyte hypothesised that organisations established before partition were likely to remain island-based. However, one of the problems he identified in assessing the impact of partition was the lack of information on precisely when the organisations that he had researched were established. We thus decided to conduct a survey of organisations to elicit basic information as to when they were established; the date, if any, of when the organisation was restructured and/or renamed; its primary area of operation; and the area of its membership base. The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter drawing attention to the project and explaining precisely what we were looking for. The response rate within each category is described in table 1 (the overall response rate was an extremely high 68%).

The next section analyses each of the categories in turn in relation to both Whyte's initial findings and to what the author's recent research survey work reveals.

### ***Charitable and voluntary organisations***

The difficulty in achieving conceptual precision is not confined to defining "civil society" or "social capital"; there is a similar difficulty in defining voluntary activities. These difficulties stem from the same problem: how to draw a clear line between the public and the private that differentiates publicly funded from voluntary activity in the sphere of social welfare provision. Indeed, as Duffy has pointed out, "the relationship between the voluntary and state sectors has never been fully clarified" (cited in Fanning and McNamara, 2003: 178). The line is further blurred by the usage of the categorical description "non-profit". Nonetheless, despite conceptual fuzziness, the role of the voluntary sector in Ireland has been immense. By the time partition was imposed "there had been at least two hundred years of voluntary action in Ireland", carried out by organisations from either of the two major religious

denominations, leaving “little space between them for a pillar of secular action” (Acheson et al, 2004: 24). The territorial state and its institutions provide the context within which civil society operates. When voluntary social welfare activity took off in the nineteenth century, the boundary between publicly funded state activity and privately funded voluntary activity was easier to draw. Moreover the withering away of voluntary activity in the social welfare domain has not paralleled the expansion of the state. On the contrary, the growth in state provision has led to even greater expansion of the non-profit sector as these civil society actors are incorporated into mechanisms of social administration. The divergence between north and south began before partition and increased further. After partition, and especially after world war two, the basic normative framework informing the relationship between the state and the individual was very different north and south. The development of comprehensive, universally accessible, cradle to grave, welfare structures provided by the secular state applied more fully to Northern Ireland, as part of the UK, than it did to the south. Different projects of state or nation building shaped the possibilities for voluntary action.

In both Irish jurisdictions the development of the voluntary sector has been closely aligned with the approaches taken to citizen welfare by government in each jurisdiction ... [post-partition] These processes dragged the two apart and emphasised differences that were already evident before partition ... the factors that underpinned the divergence between the two Irelands are still very much in play (Acheson et al, 2004: 321-2).

The in-depth research that Acheson et al carried out into the divergence and the recent, partial convergence of civil society associations in the domain of social welfare provision helps contextualise the responses to our survey. High profile organizations such as the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the National League of the Blind of Ireland and St John’s Ambulance Brigade were founded before partition, in 1880, 1898 and 1903 respectively. All three describe themselves as solely based solely in the Republic, though in each case they report warm relationships with their parallel organizations in the north. In other areas, representing Northern Ireland, as a shared British and Irish space is a bilateral arrangement, according to which Northern Ireland is administered, between the UK’s National Union of Students (NUS), and the Republic’s Union of Students of Ireland (USI). A joint NUS/USI office was opened in Belfast in 1972. More indicative of southern suspicion of “them up there” are The Disabled Drivers’ Association of Ireland and Rural Resettlement Ireland formed in 1970 and 1990 respectively. The first organisation has engaged in cross-border activity but it reported that it was

... difficult to work with Northern Ireland groups, [they were] distant in their attitude, [there was a] lack of trust among older persons, [though we] worked well with people under 30, religion while not discussed seemed to be a barrier among older groups and participation [was] poor [they] seemed to be there for the funding (correspondence with author).

Rural Resettlement Ireland reports that “the border has always presented difficulties—families would not move to border areas, we have never considered working

in Northern Ireland, our concern would be cultural differences” (correspondence with author).

### ***Trade unions***

According to Whyte, trade unions are the organisations most likely to be organised on an all-archipelago basis. While this remains the case in that 14% (6/43) of those unions that responded to our survey are organised on an all-archipelago basis there has, nonetheless, been a significant degree of retrenchment to either side of the line. Nearly half (48%) of union respondents dated their foundation to the period before partition. Three of these, the Transport Salaried Staffs Association, the National Union of Journalists, and the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union remain all-archipelago based; one, the Irish National Teachers Organisation (established in 1868) remains organised on all-Ireland basis. All the rest (80%) are confined to one side of the border or another, either as based solely in the Republic (50%); the United Kingdom as whole (20%); or solely in Northern Ireland (10%), although the Ulster Teachers Union claims 20 members living in the Republic.

For those unions established after partition, only one the Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU, founded in 1990), is organised on an all-Ireland basis. Three are organised on an all-archipelago basis: the British Equity Actors Union (founded in 1929); AMICUS (founded 1968); and UCATT (founded in 1971). However, the roots of SIPTU, AMICUS and UCATT are in the trade union movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (indeed, UCATT dates back to the 1820s, and AMICUS to the 1850s). SIPTU is an amalgam of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (founded in 1909) and the Federated Workers Union of Ireland (founded in 1924). The amalgamations that took place to create AMICUS (predominantly engineering) and UCATT (solely construction) had nothing to do with partition. In other words, these amalgams are composites of pre-partition unions and not post-partition boundary transcending organisations. The rationale seems to be economy of scale.

The majority of union respondents that dated their foundation to the post-partition period are organised on one or other side of the border (83%). Foundation dates range across 30 years; from 1930 (Teachers Union of Ireland), up to 1999 (National Association of Principals and Deputies). Once again, as with those respondents in the voluntary category, what comes out of the research is a sustained pattern of organisational consolidation on either side of the boundary. Even the impact of the EU was identified as one of the reasons for boundary consolidation. For instance, in explaining its current territorial structure, Unity claimed that “the organisation had served radiographers in both the Republic and the north, until EU legislation obliged us to withdraw from the Republic, as a separate country, in 1976” (correspondence with author).

### ***Trade associations***

Whyte argues that “Trade associations ... are the most partitionist of all categories” (Whyte, 1983). Of the trade associations he researched, 91% observed “the interna-

tional frontier". Once again, Whyte identifies date of foundation as one of the possible reasons for territorial structure; associations founded after partition are more likely to be confined to one side or other of the boundary. In addition, "more important, probably, a large proportion of the business of a trade association is with its government ... it is only common sense to have one trade association facing one government" (Whyte, 1983).

The greater weight given to the latter factor once again helps explain some of the anomalous responses to our survey. The date of origin of the Licensed Vintners' Association, for instance, is given as 1872, yet its area of activity and membership base are both described as the Republic of Ireland. In other words, whatever about its origins, the relevant territory is the Republic. Of the 14% of associations established prior to partition, the majority (64%) described themselves as based solely in the Republic of Ireland. The representation of all-Ireland (21%) organisations include the Farm Tractor and Machinery Trade Association (established 1912); the Irish Timber Council (1918); and the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders' Association (established 1920). The only all-archipelago entity still in existence that was established before partition is the National Federation of Retail Newsagents (founded in 1919).

The imposition of the border, therefore, and the evolution of different legal regulatory and social administrative environments on either has had a curling effect. Associations have re-orientated towards the centre of political and administrative power in their jurisdiction. For the post-partition period, Whyte's conclusion is largely born out: the overwhelming majority of organisations are confined to one or other side of the boundary. The IBEC/CBI joint business council (established in 1991) is emblematic of the increase in interest of cross-border business activity that has emerged since Whyte's research.

### ***Churches and church-related organisations***

Whyte argued that of all the categories "this is the one in which the border is least observed" (Whyte, 1983: 303). It is also the category in which we find the largest organisations. The major churches predate partition by many centuries; indeed the Church of Ireland regards itself as the "descendant of the Church founded by St Patrick in the fifth century AD, which embraced the whole island" (Whyte, 1983: 303). The Catholic Church remains the largest of any all-Ireland organisation in terms of members, that is, people born into and brought up in the Catholic faith while not necessarily being practitioners or even believers. Catholics, defined in this maximal fashion, make up at least three quarters of Ireland's population.<sup>1</sup> In the Republic, according to the 2002 census there were 3,462,606 Catholics (88% of the population). In Northern Ireland, according to the 2001 census, Catholics or at least people brought up in the Catholic tradition, number 737,412 (44% of the popula-

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<sup>1</sup> In the Republic a question on religious communal background, similar to that used in Northern Ireland, was not included on the census. Nonetheless, 5.5% of the population (217,358 persons) did not state a religion or declared themselves to be of no religion. It is reasonable to suppose that some, perhaps many, of these people come from a Catholic communal background.

tion). At the opposite end of the scale, using the same data sources, Baha'is make up 0.01% of Ireland's population (744 in total, 490 in the Republic, 254 in Northern Ireland). In terms of sociological and political importance, the Catholic Church and the organisation representing the Baha'is are radically different; nonetheless, the latter organisation, established in 1948, stresses its all-Ireland orientation. Similarly, the Church of Scientology established in Ireland in 1954 and the Islamic Centre of Ireland established in 1959 both stress the boundary transcending character of their faith and its territorial institutionalisation.

Whyte highlights institutional inertia as a probable reason for the boundary transcending nature of religious organisations. On the other hand, the organisation representing Buddhists, established in Dublin in 1977, when pressed as to its territorial parameters, opted to be defined as operating within the Republic. The person being questioned did not seem to regard the issue of political boundaries as something that he or his organisation had given much attention to (correspondence with author). The Jewish Representative Council of Ireland, on the other hand, is acutely aware of the border and declared that the organisations representing the Jewish faith were organised separately north and south. Similarly, the Islamic Council of Ireland described itself as organised separately in the north and south. The Knights of St Columbanus were also acutely aware of the border; for them the south offered sanctuary. Described as an all-Ireland organisation, the Knights had been "founded in Belfast in 1915 [but] headquarters moved to Dublin in 1923, [the] original premises [having been] burnt out in the Belfast pogrom by the police" (correspondence with author). Nonetheless, despite these exceptions, 83% of the organisations that responded to the survey described themselves as organised on all-Ireland basis (61%) or alternatively a worldwide basis (22%).

Whyte also identifies historical inertia as one of the possible reasons why religious bodies established prior to partition continue to operate on an all-Ireland basis. As would be expected, all the church and church organisational survey respondents with foundation dates prior to partition continue to be organised in this way. However, religious organisations tend to be border-transcending irrespective of date of foundation. Of the organisations identified as being founded post-partition, 86% were boundary transcending. In sum, therefore our survey supports Whyte's observations regarding the territorial reach of church and church related organisations.

### ***Cultural and scientific bodies***

In this category, more than any other, organisations established prior to partition continue to be territorially structured on an all-island basis. This includes the well known peak institutions such as the Royal Irish Academy (established in 1785), the Royal Hibernian Academy (1823), the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland (1848) and the Royal Irish Academy of Music (1856), but also lesser known organisations such as the Water Colour Society of Ireland (1870). The Esperanto Association of Ireland (founded in 1907 as the Irish Esperanto Association) is the only pre-partition organisation identified as based solely in the Republic.



For those organisations established after partition, all-island, all-archipelago, and/or international structures predominate. Indeed, only a minority (16%) are described as based solely in the Republic. The most common reported structure is all-Ireland (60%). What the responses to our survey indicate and what Whyte signalled is that the impact of partition on the cultural unity of the island has been limited.

### ***Professional associations***

The territorial structures of the professional associations that responded to our survey correspond very much with Whyte's findings. Although there are a "bewildering variety of units of territorial organisation", there is a significant presence of all-archipelago bodies (13% in both Whyte's findings and in our survey responses). For Whyte, one possible explanation of this is the mobility of professionals: "for professional people above all, the archipelago is one market. Irish doctors, engineers, architects surveyors and so on have gone in large numbers to Britain, and are anxious to avoid taking any step which would make that freedom of movement more difficult" (Whyte, 1983: 308).

### ***Sport in Ireland***

The organisation of sport on the island of Ireland falls between the two ideal types suggested above. Whyte identifies 19 sports which are organised on all-Ireland basis, and 21 organised on a Republic or Northern Ireland basis. He does not identify any six-county or even nine-county sporting organisations. This is an area in which there has been an explosion of interest and corresponding organisational development. The website of the Irish Sports Council lists 62 governing bodies for the various sports in Ireland.<sup>2</sup> The equivalent website of the Sports Council of Northern Ireland (SCNI) lists 90 organisations described as "Northern Ireland/Ulster governing bodies of sport".<sup>3</sup> However, some of these are the same organisations as posted on the ISC's website; others are the northern branches of all-Ireland organisations, while still others are the Northern Ireland branches of UK organisations.

Despite its profound impact, partition is ignored in the historical narrative of the Irish Football Association (IFA). The IFA came into existence first as an all-island body but is now "confined" to Northern Ireland; its description of the organisation's trajectory is particularly interesting.

On the 18th November 1880 ... the Irish Football Association [came into being]. Its aims were to promote, foster and develop the game throughout Ireland...The IFA's first International venture was against England at the Knock Ground, Bloomfield in East Belfast, in 1882. Ireland lost 13-0...Not necessarily the start that the IFA would have wished: however success was to come eventually, on a world wide stage through qualification for the World Cup Finals in 1958 (Sweden), 1982 (Spain) and 1986 (Mexico). Over the years, Irish footballers have achieved international distinction, and players such as Peter Doherty, Danny Blanchflower, Pat Jennings and

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<sup>2</sup> [www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/developing-ngb-contacts.aspx](http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/developing-ngb-contacts.aspx) [2006-07-18].

<sup>3</sup> [www.sportni.net/links/ni\\_gov\\_body.htm](http://www.sportni.net/links/ni_gov_body.htm) [2006-07-18].

George Best would have graced any World Cup eleven selected from the Worlds finest ([www.irishfa.com](http://www.irishfa.com) [2004-10-10]).

For a reader unaware of the partition of Ireland what is elided is the obvious transmutation of 32-county Ireland's soccer team into six-county Northern Ireland's soccer team. This studied indifference to the existence of the "southern" characterises the history of the IFA, helped by the fact that these two Ireland teams did not contest a competitive match for 50 years after partition. Taking the northern organisation's website at face value, it could look as if partition and the emergence of the Republic's far more successful team, and its governing body the Football Association of Ireland (FAI), had never happened.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, constructing a category "great Irish players" that does not include Roy Keane is perverse. The IFA website also, and quite understandably, elides the deeply divided nature of soccer within Northern Ireland. Right from its grass-roots emergence in Belfast in the 1880s, the religious-political divide orientated soccer's organisation in the six counties, sectarianism leading to the demise of Belfast Celtic in 1949, and Derry City's secession from the six-county League of Ireland to join the Republic's league in 1972.<sup>5</sup>

The great Irish players listed in the earlier quotation are all men who played solely for Northern Ireland. For many years both the northern and southern teams continued to describe themselves as the "Ireland" national team, drawing players from both sides of the border. Therefore, although the territorial reach of the organisations governing association football in Ireland broadly followed the lines of partition, the ongoing overlap in terms of membership base meant that the "boundary" separating these two more was more fluid than it appears at first sight. For the best part of 50 years after partition, both governing bodies, while studiously ignoring each other, claimed the title of "Ireland" for their respective teams. These nomenclature struggles were not fully resolved until the 1970s; indeed neither team now describes itself solely as "Ireland". According to soccer's international governing body, FIFA, the 26-county team is the "Republic of Ireland"; the six-county team is Northern Ireland. Since the outbreak of "the troubles" there has been a polarisation along ethno-sectarian lines. Notwithstanding the emergence of northern nationalist support for the Republic of Ireland team, particularly since the watershed of 1988, association football has increased the saliency of both the state boundary between north and south and the ethnic division within Northern Ireland.

In addition to apparent political allegiances driving organisational divisions, Whyte highlights a class dimension that might have impacted on the organisation of sport. He suggests that

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<sup>4</sup> Two years later, the IFA's potted history had been amended to refer to partition, thus: "Up until partition in 1921 the IFA governed football across the entire island but a decision by the Dublin clubs to form their own association led to the formation of the FAI (Football Association of Ireland). Nowadays the IFA looks after the interests of the game in the six northern counties: Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone", available at [www.irishfa.com/the-ifa/about-the-ifa/](http://www.irishfa.com/the-ifa/about-the-ifa/) [2006-04-10].

<sup>5</sup> There is an intriguing parallel between the Free State's enthusiasm for the League of Nations and the FAI's support for and membership of FIFA, the world governing body of soccer boycotted by the IFA, between 1928 and 1946 (Fulton, 2005: 145).

By and large, the more middle-class games (golf, polo, lawn tennis, rugby) seem more likely to be organised on an all-Ireland basis than the more proletarian sports (cycling, soccer, wrestling). This may be because political feelings in the past tended to run higher in working-class circles (Whyte, 1983).

While acknowledging that Whyte's analysis was preliminary, this requires a large amount of qualification. It implies that nationalists are proletarians and that proletarian sportspeople are less likely to organise on an all-Ireland basis than the middle-classes. Now, while the class dimension of Rugby Union is obvious at one level across the archipelago, the "proletarian" enthusiasm for rugby in Munster, particularly working class Limerick, does not fit easily into this conceptualisation. Thomond Park, the "spiritual home" of Munster Rugby, is situated adjacent to one of the Republic's most deprived urban environments. The Landsdowne Road ground of the Irish national team, on the other hand, is located in one of the Republic's most affluent urban areas. While the location of these grounds tells us nothing necessarily about the class background of the fans or players, where they are sited is symbolic of the class disjuncture in Irish rugby, particularly in the Republic; outside Limerick, mainly a middle-class sport, within Limerick strongly working class. More problematic are coarse fishing, by definition a proletarian sport and organised on an all-Ireland basis, and boxing—the quintessential proletarian sport.

In relation to rugby, Whyte suggested that, "on neither side [of the politico-religious divide] was there a desire to make an issue about symbols such as flags and anthems". While support of the Irish Rugby Football Union's "national" team is compatible, or at least contemporaneous, with political unionism, tensions over the symbolic dimension, flags and anthems are endemic. Moreover, recent claims of intra-provincial sectarianism in the organisation of rugby in Ulster have shone a light beneath the veneer of apparent all-Ireland unity exposing to some extent the artificiality of an all-Ireland national team with two "national" anthems. Moreover, class as a determinant in whether or not particular sports are organised nationally or trans-nationally cannot really explain the GAA.

Sport, as Bairner puts it, quoting O'Brien,

Provides ... a sidelight on politics. It's a vivid touchstone of memory and a blueprint of a home from home. It's a bright thread in the fabric of recent social history, and a clue to a generation's evolving cultural awareness (cited in Bairner, 2005: 1).

The reference to a generation's evolving cultural awareness is very appropriate in relation to the way in which sport in Ireland has been, is, and is likely to be, organised. There are indications of north-south divisions emerging within even the most resolutely all-Ireland organisations such as the GAA, divisions that have been exacerbated by the differing perceptions of how the Good Friday Agreement should be implemented.<sup>6</sup> Hassan has argued that these divisions were brought into sharp relief during the GAA's internal debate during 2001 over whether or not to abandon

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<sup>6</sup> This might simply be a matter of temporal distance; the Olympian exploits of Michelle Smith are more recent than those of Mary Peters.

Rule 21, the prohibition on members of the “crown forces” in Northern Ireland from being GAA members. When the issue was decided on 17 November 2001, every one of the Republic’s 301 delegates voted to repeal Rule 21. Delegates from the northern six-counties overwhelmingly voted to retain the prohibition; only County Down voted for repeal. Of course, no GAA ground in the Republic has been taken over and used as a British Army base. The BBC offered an overview of the Rule 21 controversy that is thoroughly disingenuous:

Imagine if Olympic medallist Kelly Holmes had been told she could not run for Great Britain because of the fact she was in the army. What if the Rugby Football Union had decided Wade Dooley and Paul Ackford could not play in England’s Grand Slam side of the early-90s because they were policemen. Such a scenario might sound bizarre but it is a fact of life for people in Ireland where the line between sport and politics is much more blurred ([news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/northern\\_ireland/1630081.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/northern_ireland/1630081.stm) [2006-07-18]).

Firstly, the significance of partition is ignored, in that members of the security forces in the Republic are not banned from playing GAA; the links between An Garda Síochána and the GAA are deep and mutually reinforcing. GAA membership in the south carries immense social capital. Rule 21 barred Northern Ireland policy and British army personnel. Moreover, extending the BBC’s analogy, the British army of which Holmes was a serving member does not base its operations in athletics tracks in Great Britain; nor have British security forces singled out athletes as subversives, colluding with ultra-British nationalist paramilitaries to kill members of athletics clubs. The practical dangers of GAA membership for people in the north of Ireland, even if overstated by Republican propaganda, have no parallel in Great Britain nor, indeed, in the south of Ireland. In the north, expressions of GAA membership can invite hostility and violence. In short, GAA members in the Republic, Great Britain, the USA, Australia and elsewhere have not been killed for their support; in Northern Ireland they have. Both the British and Irish governments presented the decision to scrap Rule 21 as an endorsement of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

When we consider the Rule 21 controversy in light of the quote from Bairner, sport as a “bright thread in the fabric of recent social history, and a clue to a generation’s evolving cultural awareness”, it indicates that according to southern understandings of the Good Friday Agreement the north is settled business. A question posed in the course of a recent GAA youth fundraising quiz asked “who was the first Irish female Olympic gold medal winner?” The correct answer as far as the quizmasters were concerned was Michelle Smith, who won three swimming gold medals at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. This was the first time a woman representing the 26-county state’s Olympic team won a gold medal. However, at the 1972 Munich Olympics Mary Peters from Northern Ireland won a gold medal in the pentathlon event. Given the GAA’s all-island organisation and supposedly 32-county nationalist ethos, it is perhaps telling that the correct answer in a youth quiz reflects and reinforces partition. Intra-GAA political divisions were revisited in 2005 during the run-up to the 16 April vote on whether or not to open Croke Park, the GAA’s showcase stadium, to “foreign games”, namely Rugby Union and Association Football. What in effect

was a private matter for the GAA on how it should use its assets was recast as a debate over the nature of contemporary Irish identity. In the end, although the vote was overwhelmingly in favour of allowing a temporary derogation of the rule prohibiting soccer and rugby, the territorial divisions almost mirrored those over the Rule 21 controversy. In this instance, the dissenting southern voice was Cork; on the other hand northern opposition was even more emphatic than four years earlier. No northern county at all was in favour of the derogation.

## CONCLUSION

In broad terms we have found Whyte's tentative conclusions to be supported by own research. There is a reasonably strong correlation between date of foundation and territorial organisation. However, as Whyte also pointed out, the degree to which partition impacts on territorial structure varies with the types of organisation. Social welfare and trade organisations follow the boundary more frequently than other categories. Cultural and religious organisations follow the border least. Sporting and professional organisations fall somewhere between. None of these categories are static. Expansions and retrenchments are ongoing, though, as we show in the next paper, territorial organisation of the seemingly most apolitical activities can easily come to symbolise ethnonational tensions and divisions.

### *Ireland as state, Ireland as island*

Billig defines banal nationalism as the

ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced. It is argued that these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation is indicated, or "flagged", in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition (Billig, 1995: 6).

The central thesis of Billig's 1995 work is that:

In the established nations, there is a continual "flagging", or reminding, of nationhood...nationhood provides a continual background for their political discourses, for cultural products, and even for the structuring of newspapers. In so many little ways, the citizenry are daily reminded of their national place in a world of nations. However, this reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag which is being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building (Billig, 1995: 7)

Central to this process of inculcating and maintaining "nation-ness" is the homeland's map-image. The outline of the state is widely disseminated; as an image it is instantly recognizable, it functions as an iconic logo—no words are necessary. In an earlier paper it was argued that from the perspective of "southern Ireland" a fundamental cleavage separates Northern Ireland from the rest of the island. This was indicated early on by the widespread lack of enthusiasm amongst southern electors for any boundary revision.

**A**



**B**



**Figure 1: Ireland as state, Ireland as island**

Yet at the same time, at all levels of southern Irish society, notions of territorial reunification have been consciously and more importantly unconsciously recycled. It is this unconscious recycling that is interesting. The hegemonic map-image used in the 26-county state serves to elide the political partition of the island. Map-image “A” in figure 2 is the map-image of the Ireland the state; it is hardly ever used and it jars the sensibilities of even the most ardent 26-county nationalists. This contrasts with the practice of Scottish, Welsh even Northern Irish nationalists of symbolising their “homeland” as disembodied from the territory of adjacent political entities.

The styling of the map-image in the 26-county state is one example of how, despite the partition of Ireland the island, ambiguity over what constitutes Ireland remains endemic. A recently printed newspaper report highlighted a dispute between the Ponderosa public house in County Derry and Johnnie Fox’s tavern in County Wicklow, centred on which of the two could claim the title of the highest pub in Ireland. In terms of elevation above sea-level, the Ponderosa is higher, however, the management of Johnnie Fox’s maintained that their understanding of Ireland is the 26-county Republic, hence their entitlement to the claim of highest pub in Ireland.

### ***What’s in a name?***

This relatively harmless dispute brings into sharp relief the ambiguity in the usage of the term “Ireland”. This ambiguity is evident at all levels of institutional complexity, including the state itself. The English language name of the 26-county state according to that state’s constitution is Ireland, the same name as the 32-county geographical entity, the second largest island in the British Irish archipelago. Therefore the usage of the term “Ireland” when what is being referred to is the 26-county state is constitutionally validated and thoroughly entrenched in the greater part of the island. Similarly, there is a widespread usage of the term “Ulster”, when it is Northern Ireland that is being referred to. Both usages carry heavy political baggage even if those using them are unaware of this. On the other hand, some people are in-

tensely conscious of how the partition of Ireland into “Ireland” and “Northern Ireland” has resulted in nomenclature problems. Declan Curneen, described in the press as a musician from Co Leitrim, served two weeks in Mountjoy Prison as a consequence of his refusal to fill in the Irish state’s census form. Curneen, a one time member of Republican Sinn Fein (RSF), declared that “the census form states that is a census of the population of Ireland and there is no ambiguity there. Therefore it should be a census of the 32 counties, and not just 26” (*Irish Independent*, 8 Dec. 2004).

While the capacity to live in complete denial of political realities is the hallmark of RSF, Curneen’s quixotic protest does point to an endemic ambiguity. It is this ambiguity in naming conventions that is one of the most obvious results from our survey of the territorial structure of civil society organisations. Of the 625 organisations that we surveyed, the majority (66%) began their titles with “Irish”, “National” or ended with “of Ireland”. Consider, for example, the “Irish Rugby Football Union”, the “Irish Bankers’ Federation”, the “National Dairy Council”, the “National Women’s Council of Ireland”, the “Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland”, or the “Teachers Union of Ireland”. The territorial structure of any of these organisations cannot be known from their titles. Indeed, we found no correlation between name of organisation and territorial structure with the exceptions of when title and territory were unambiguously flagged, for example, the “Northern Ireland Athletic Federation”, or the “Republic of Ireland Snooker and Billiards Association”.

At one level this could be regarded as trivial, but naming conventions are heavily laden with political and historical symbolism even if those constructing them are not fully aware of their significance. The dispute over the decision to discard the territorially ambiguous organisational title “Royal Ulster Constabulary” for the more accurate “Police Service of Northern Ireland” is just one recent and high profile example (McGarry and O’Leary, 1999). The Agreement signed at the multi-party talks in Belfast on Good Friday, 10 April 1998, is another. The point has been frequently made that the subsequent agreement between the British and Irish governments is the British-Irish agreement rather than another Anglo-Irish agreement. The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, reiterated this point in the aftermath of the agreement: “the way in which countries and states and peoples are named can often throw an interesting light on the unfolding of history and the evolution of relationships and identities” (Ahern, 1999). This applies equally to civil society institutions and associations. Organisational nomenclature is heavily laden with political symbolism; naming conventions “flag” far more than mere function. In revisiting John Whyte’s seminal article we discovered and have highlighted the endemic ambiguity in naming conventions. Territorial structure cannot be “read off” from organisational names, except where the formal title “Northern Ireland” and the informal title “Republic of Ireland” are used. This importance of this is not obvious at first sight. However, when we look more closely, we discover that profound tensions exist over how organisations are named. A further paper (Howard, 2006) presents a specific case study of how the political partition of the island has framed the organisation of one seemingly apolitical activity, namely competitive cycling.

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