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â€˜The doctrine of vicarious punishmentâ€™™: space, religion and the Belfast Troubles of 1920â€“22

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Abstract

Between 1920 and 1922, the city of Belfast, Northern Ireland was the location of intense violence between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists arising out of the broader political conflict engulfing the island. Approximately 500 people died within the city as a result of these tensions. There existed marked spatial concentration in patterns of fatality during these original â€˜Troublesâ€™™ which accompanied the creation of the Northern Ireland state. This paper will present findings from research into this period which makes use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology to analyse the spatial distribution and impact of political and sectarian deaths in the early years of the 1920s. It finds that fatalities were heavily concentrated in districts immediately surrounding the city centre and argues that these patterns were profoundly influenced by the nature of the built environment.

Highlights

â The first spatial analysis of fatalities during the Belfast Troubles of 1920â22. â A sample repopulation of the most violent area using individual-level census data. â Patterns of fatality were highly focussed on neighbourhoods around the city centre. â At ward level, Protestants in Smithfield had the highest violent death rate.



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Keywords

Ireland; Belfast; Troubles; Violence; Sectarianism; Partition; Religion; GIS

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