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Northern Ireland
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UNIVERSITY of ULSTER

E·S·R·C
ECONOMIC
& SOCIAL
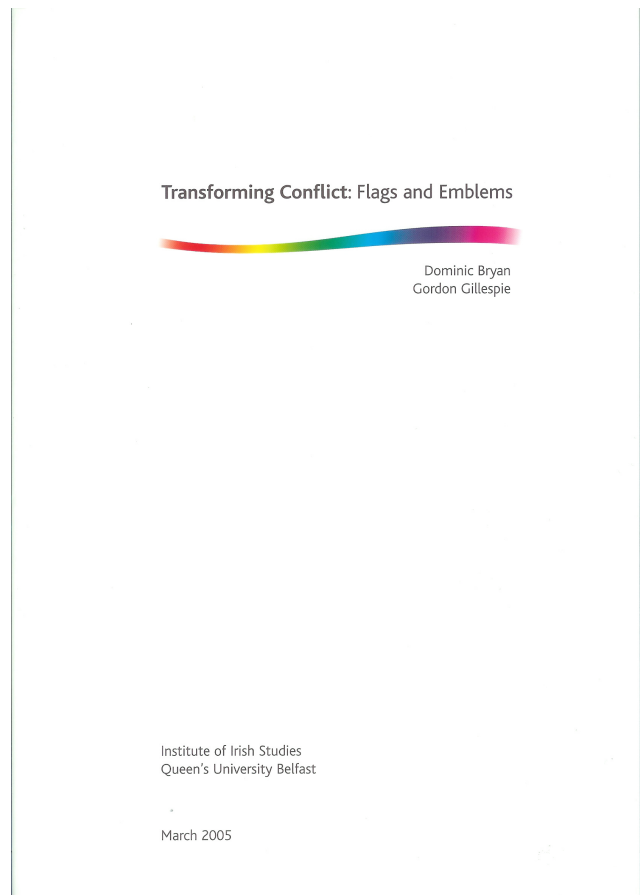RESEARCH
COUNCIL

Queen's University
Belfast

Flags:

who wants them up, who puts them up and how long do they stay up?

Dominic Bryan, Clifford Stevenson, Gordon Gillespie

Institute of Irish Studies, QUB

Transforming Conflict: Flags and Emblems

Dominic Bryan
Gordon Gillespie

Institute of Irish Studies
Queen's University Belfast

March 2005

- **Transforming Conflict report**

- **Need for a baseline study of frequency and location of flags**

- **Arterial routes across Northern Ireland**

- **Two census points: before 12th July, end September**

SYMBOLS

- **the meaning of symbols is not fixed;**

- **meaning depends upon context;**

- **symbols can have a whole range of meanings;**

- **different people will read the same symbol in a different way;**

- **the psychological drives for the display of symbols might vary;**

- **political actors have a number of strategies when using symbols;**

SYMBOLS

- **there maybe a range of strategies being undertaken in a display of symbols;**

- **Symbols help in 'community' formation/control**

- **the power held by individuals and groups plays an important role in the strategies followed; and**

- **new symbols can be used to in new situations.**

U·V·F·

N°4 — Pltn

FOR GOD AND ULSTER

A. Coy — 1st Batt.

IN MEMORY OF
OUR FALLEN COMRADES
No4 PLATOON
A. COY
1st BATTALION
BELFAST

LEST WE FORGET

This Mural Is Dedicated To The
Fallen Volunteers Of 174 Plt, A Coy,
1st Belfast Battn, Ulster Volunteer force
Who Dutifully Served This Community
In The Years Of Conflict.
It Pays Tribute Both To Those Who
Died In Active Engagement And To
The Many Who Passed Peacefully From
Service Having fulfilled Their Duties.
Their Names And Deeds Are
Eternally Venerated By Their Comrades
In Arms Who Humbly Serve In Their
Honour.
They remained staunch to the end against
odds uncounted,
And fell with their faces to the foe.

Their Names Liveth
for Evermore.

Lest
we
forget

all round
70 28 28 20
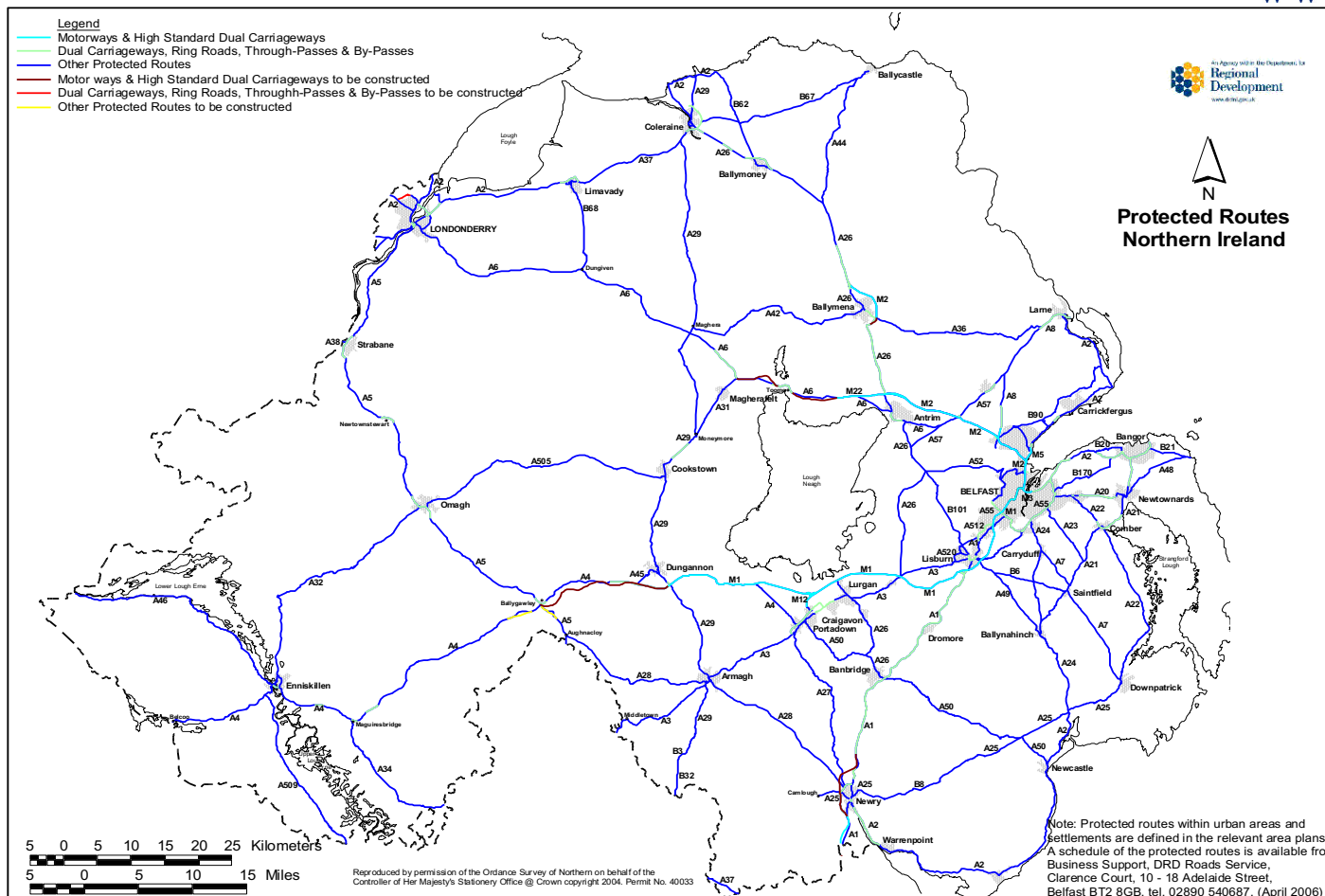
Flags and Emblems Survey Project funded by OFMDFM

- Survey of arterial routes

- Case Studies

- Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey

The Flags Survey

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ACCESS RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE

Legend
Motorways & High Standard Dual Carriageways
Dual Carriageways, Ring Roads, Through-Passes & By-Passes
Other Protected Routes
Motor ways & High Standard Dual Carriageways to be constructed
Dual Carriageways, Ring Roads, Throughh-Passes & By-Passes to be constructed
Other Protected Routes to be constructed

An Agency within the Department for
Regional Development
www.drdni.gov.uk

N

**Protected Routes
Northern Ireland**

Note: Protected routes within urban areas and
settlements are defined in the relevant area plans.
A schedule of the protected routes is available from
Business Support, DRD Roads Service,
Clarence Court, 10 - 18 Adelaide Street,
Belfast BT2 8GB, tel. 02890 540687. (April 2006)

5 0 5 10 15 20 25 Kilometers
5 0 5 10 15 Miles

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METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

- **Inductively designed coding frame**
- **Valid and reliable measure**
- **Exhaustive and exact coverage**

But:

- **Only arterial routes**
- **Limits of the census timing**
- **Aggregation masks local contextual factors**

Round 1 Findings (29th June to 9th July 2006)

- **4,136 political or party symbols along arterial routes or in town centres.**
- **90% of these were loyalist/unionist and 9.5% were nationalist/republican.**
- **3,459 were flags, 90.8% of which were displayed from lampposts or telegraph poles.**
- **178 flags had evidently been in place for several months beforehand.**
- **There were 194 paramilitary symbols including 133 flags and 29 murals.**
- **Almost half of these were located in Belfast local government district, though other areas also had a high ratio of paramilitary to political emblems.**

Round 2 Survey (18th to 27th September 2007)

- **Same coverage in same order**
- **Revisiting all points noted phase 1**
- **Recounting all items**
- **Noting new manifestations**
- **Overall, have flags been removed?**
- **What are the patterns of removal/persistence?**

Round 2 Survey (18th to 27th September 2007)

- **2499 political emblems on display suggesting a 40% overall decrease in symbolism. (More had actually been removed but some had been replaced)**
- **1,754 of these emblems were unionist/loyalist indicating a 53% reduction of these symbols. The 181 loyalist paramilitary emblems decreased by 29% to 136.**
- **Symbols associated with the Loyal Orders showed the biggest decrease.**
- **737 of the emblems in the second round were nationalist/republican indicating an increase of 87.5%. This was attributable to the Hunger Strike commemorations over the summer.**
- **The small proportion of republican paramilitary flags doubled from 9 to 18 flags.**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- **Overall there was a reduction in political symbols, though this is a result of some flux**
- **Loyalist symbols decreased while republican symbols increased**
- **National and regional symbols decreased more than did paramilitary symbols**
- **Loyal Order symbolism was removed most systematically**
- **Flags displayed from private houses were removed more often than those from lampposts**
- **Symbols reduction varied considerably by geographical location**

KEY ISSUES

- **Key: People taking responsibility**
- **A number of loyalist areas took their flags down in October (after the second survey)**
- **What is considered acceptable practice as celebration and commemoration and what is the marking of territory?**
- **The use of quasi-official flag poles to replace flags on lampposts.**
- **The use of significant and permanent memorials.**

Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2006/07

Q10.Has there been any time in the last year when you personally have felt intimidated by republican murals, kerb paintings, or flags?

	Catholic		Protestant		Total	
	2005	2006	2005	2006*	2005	2006
More	12	11	30	15	23	12

Q13. And has there been any time in the last year when you personally have felt intimidated by loyalist murals, kerb paintings, or flags?

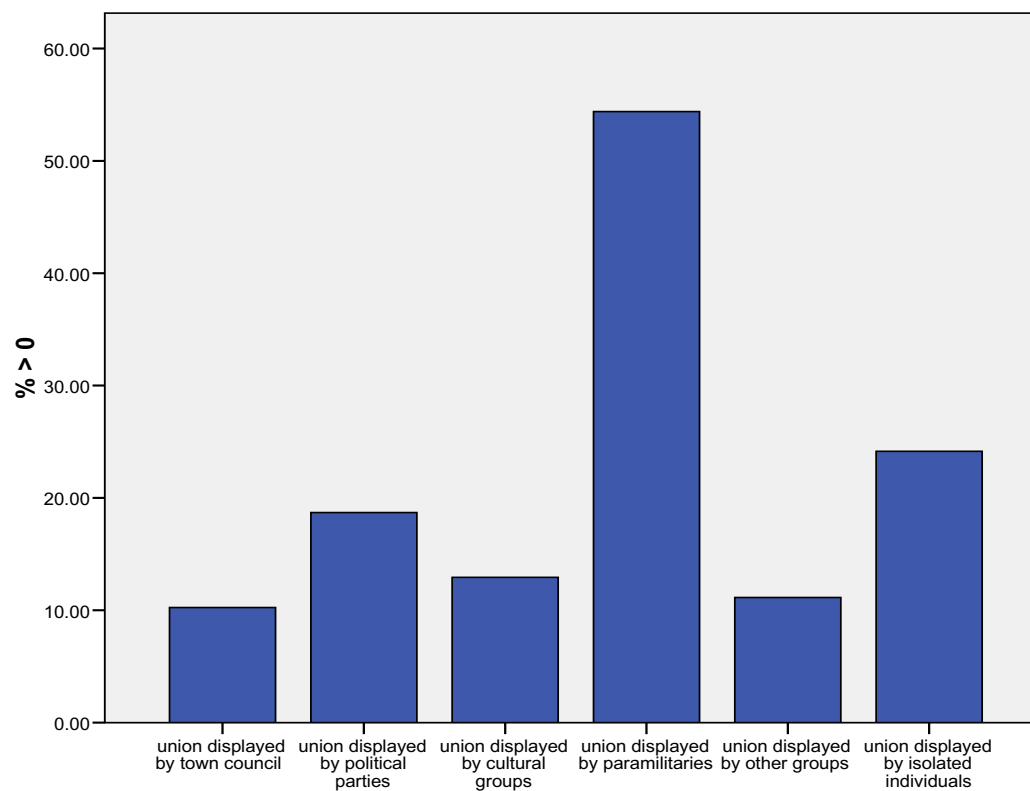|	Catholic		Protestant*		Total	
	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006
More	28	20	21	13	25	16

Q.21 likelihood to shop in neighbourhoods with displays of loyalist flags or murals

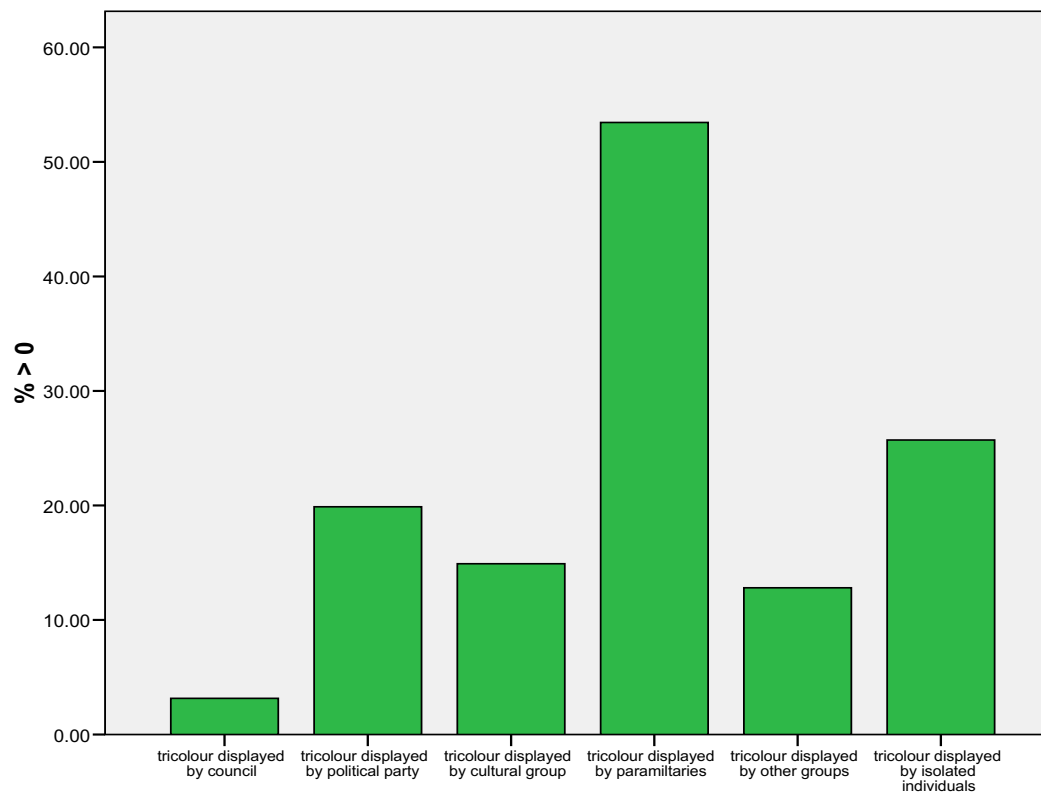|	Catholic*	Protestant*	No religion	Total
Less willing	55.7%	24.6%	33.1%	37.7%
More willing	.9%	4.4%	.6%	2.5%
Would make no difference	35.0%	62.7%	58.4%	51.5%
Can't choose	7.2%	7.2%	6.0%	7.0%
No reply	1.3%	1.2%	1.8%	1.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Q.21 likelihood to shop in neighbourhoods with displays of republican flags or murals

	Catholic*	Protestant*	No religion	Total
Less willing	29.8%	53.1%	39.2%	42.2%
More willing	6.5%	.7%		2.8%
Would make no difference	54.6%	37.7%	53.6%	46.4%
Can't choose	7.8%	7.3%	6.0%	7.3%
No reply	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

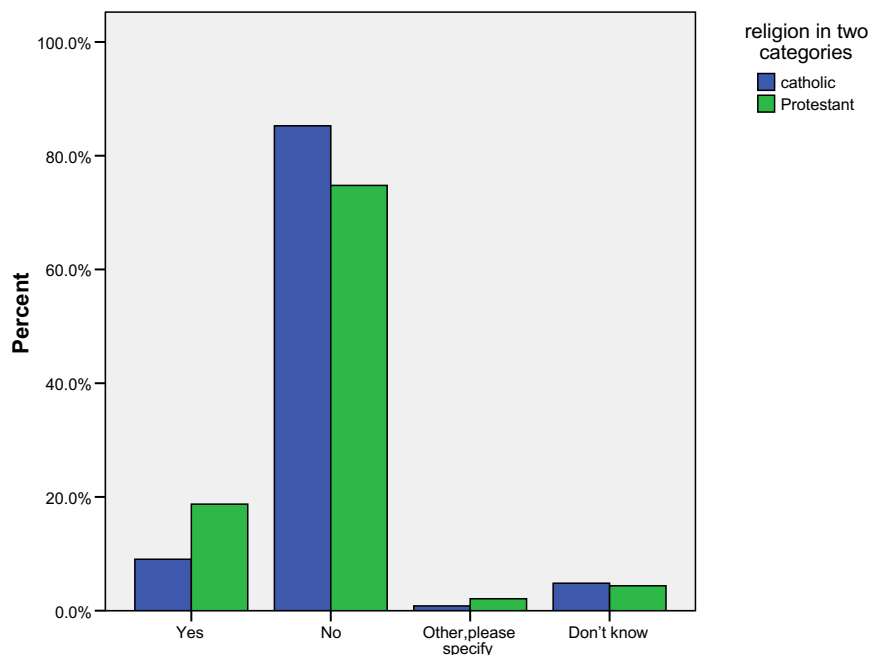# Q.17 opinion as to who usually puts up union flags on lampposts

Q.17 opinion as to who usually puts up tricolour flags on lampposts

In general, would you, or do you support flag flying on lampposts in your own neighbourhood?

Question 31700: Q16.In general, Would you, or do you support flag flying on lampposts in your own neighbourhood?

In general, would you, or do you support flag flying on lampposts in your own neighbourhood?

	SES1*	SES2*	SES3*	total
Yes	5.3%	8.9%	17.8%	13.1%
No	90.7%	84.6%	76.2%	81.2%
Other	1.8%	.8%	1.2%	1.2%
DK	2.2%	5.7%	4.8%	4.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

In general, would you, or do you support flag flying on lampposts in your own neighbourhood?

	UUP	SDLP	DUP	All	SF	PUP
Yes	10.9%	0%	28.8%	2.6%	21.8%	25.0%
No	84.2%	97.4%	63.7%	97.4%	74.4%	75.0%
respondents	84	154	212	77	133	4

When do you think it is legitimate to display union flags on main streets?

	Catholic	**Protestant**	**No religion**	**total**
All year round	1.7%	4.4%	1.2%	2.9%
For a few weeks around special events	30.2%	57.2%	38.6%	44.3%
Never	45.9%	20.4%	34.9%	32.2%
It depends	11.1%	12.4%	16.9%	12.5%
Can't choose	10.0%	4.5%	7.2%	7.0%
Not answered	1.1%	1.0%	1.2%	1.1%

When do you think it is legitimate to display Irish Tricolour flags on main streets?

	Catholic	Protestant	No religion	total
All year round	4.3%	1.6%	.6%	2.5%
Only for a few weeks around special events	28.9%	26.7%	23.5%	27.1%
Never	42.8%	51.5%	47.0%	47.5%
It depends	12.4%	11.9%	20.5%	13.3%
Can't choose	10.2%	7.2%	7.2%	8.3%
Not answered	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%

OBSERVATIONS

- **Flags are put up by groups NOT communities;**
- **NILT survey suggests that the practice of flying flags is not hugely popular;**
- **Reduction in paramilitarism;**
- **The Protocol has had limited influence;**
- **Importance of working with local groups;**
- **Importance of partnerships and agencies working together.**

- **Key issue: taking responsibility;**
- **Key issue: time period the flag is up;**
- **Key issue: nature of shared space.**