"Not So Much for Their Sake as for Its Own": The State and the Geography of National Education in Pre-Famine Ireland

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ABSTRACT: The centralization of state power in pre-Famine Ireland enabled the British government to target the Irish social body under the pretext of reform. Institutional reform was part of a wider governmental rationale and resulted in the transformation of institutions such that their focus shifted to acting on the Irish social body more generally, with the intention of civilizing Irish subjects. In Ireland the transformation took on the added imputes of attempting to legitimize the British state as key actor in Irish society. The shift in focus of institutions in Ireland represents what Michel Foucault referred to as governmentality, with the British state aiming to "conduct the conduct" of the Irish population in order to provide security. One key institution was the establishment of a national education system pre-Famine Ireland. The establishment of the Commissioners of National Education in 1831 attempted to introduce a non-denominational education system in Ireland that would unite the children of different creeds in the same classroom. This paper examines this introduction of a national education system in Ireland as a governmental technology and the geography of the early years of the system. The system involved a central-local management system, with the Commissioners controlling regulations and local actors responsible for the operation of schools. The establishment and operation of national schools was therefore dependent on local networks of social relations developing common interests in accessing state capacities for education and therefore interacted with the rationale of the state. The placing of local actors under the regulations of the system, while also being placed under the surveillance of the British administration, resulted in the establishment and engineering of social norms that extended well beyond the walls of the schools. The introduction of national education therefore sought to reshape local social relations in line with the rationale of the state. The emerging geography of the system, with core regions of high and low national school densities, were therefore the result of the spatial variation of social relations and interactions with the state across the country. A case study of east Ulster is examined to provide an example of how the introduction of national education attempted to reshape local social relations and how those relations were also influenced by other social actors in pre-Famine Ireland.

An important element within the emerging research on the colonial contexts in Irish historical geography has been the legacy of colonial technologies, such as plantation, partition, and state institutions. Discussions around the nature of colonial technologies used by the British administration in nineteenth-century Ireland have focused on the "social engineering" of the Irish populations and have been examined in various cases; such as the policy of the British government in dealing with the Great Famine.[1] Many recent studies have depicted the British colonial administration of Ireland as an exemplar of what Michel Foucault called governmentality.[2] Governmentality refers to a range of practices and institutions intending the "conduct of conduct" of the population, shaping behavior according to a particular set of norms for a variety of ends.[3] Foucault states that power, and more specifically social power, is

generated through social relations on a local level, and that in the eighteenth and nineteenth century these social relations were "progressively elaborated, rationalised and centralised in the form of or under the auspices of state institutions."[4] The centralization of state power enabled the British government to target the Irish social body under the pretext of reform. Institutional reform was part of a wider governmental rationale and resulted in the transformation of institutions that previously acted on disciplining and enhancing the lives of individuals, such as jails, police, workhouses, and hospitals, so that their focus shifted to acting on the Irish social body more generally, with the stated intention of civilizing and not just restraining Irish subjects. The Act of Union, introduced at the beginning of the nineteenth century, signified the beginning of the shift of focus towards civilizing the Irish population. The Union occurred between two rebellions indicating the unsettled nature of Irish society. The transformation of institutions within a civilizing mission in Ireland therefore took on the added impetus of attempting to legitimize the British state as key actor in Irish society. The most intense period of institutional reform occurred from 1830–45 and took place against the backdrop of the tithe war, highlighting the importance of a civilizing mission and the need for state intervention in Irish society.

One example of this transformation was the introduction of national education. The establishment of the Commissioners of National Education in 1831 attempted to introduce a non-denominational education system in Ireland, which would unite the children of different creeds in the same classroom. In doing so, children of all backgrounds would come under the disciplinary techniques of schools run by the British administration, which could define the capacities of the child and elaborate the way children should behave in regards to social norms, both inside and outside the classroom.[5] National education was an important state institution as it extended beyond the youth, as the structure of the system required cooperation between various local actors and the central authority in the establishment and operation of schools.

Inquiries in 1812 and 1825 found that Irish education was in a poor state, and concluded that the central issue was distrust between the clergy of different faiths and attitudes against the proselytizing nature of educational provisions.[6] The inquiries recommended the intervention of the government and the creation of a centrally controlled national system of education. The educational inquiries were part of a wider trend of information gathering, with over 175 commissions that reported on Ireland between the Act of Union (1801) and the Famine (1847-52). These inquiries acted as a colonial mechanism that defined the condition of the Irish "social body" and thus determined the basis of colonial intervention in Ireland.[7] The reports presented a comprehensive plan for a system of general education for Ireland, the aim of which was to provide "a system of united education from which suspicion should, if possible, be banished, and the cause of distrust and jealousy be effectively removed."[8] To achieve this it was recommended to establish a central authority that would control the expenditure of public money, define the curriculum, appoint inspectors, and have the power to appoint and dismiss schoolmasters. Despite similar systems proposed in both inquiries, it took another parliamentary committee and a failed bill before the system was finally introduced through the infamous letter from Edward Stanley.[9] Edward Stanley was the Chief Secretary of Ireland from 1831 to 1833 and outlined the system of national education in a letter to the Duke of Leinster in October 1831. It is from this letter, and not from any official legislation, that the national education system was established and it remains the legal basis for national education in Ireland to this day.

The educational developments influenced by the British administration in the eighteenth century were often aimed at proselytizing Catholic children. The reports and debates around the creation of a centralized education system for Ireland therefore chart the transformation of education from a mechanism to convert the Irish population from "the errors of Popery" to one

intended to train the Irish population so that they would act within the norms of society and become "useful citizens."[10] Educational reform therefore represents the shift from disciplinary power, targeting the body (and mind) of the pupil, to a mode of governmentality targeting the behavior of the Irish social body more generally.[11] National education would mean the Irish population would "receive its benefits as one undivided body, under one and the same system, and in the same establishments," and in doing so would instill habits and discipline "which are yet more valuable than mere learning."[12] The shift in focus of the British government was summed up by Thomas Spring-Rice, who stated that it was the "duty of the state to provide the means of instruction for all classes of its subjects, not so much for their sakes as for its own."[13]

The education policy implemented in Ireland was important in a wider colonial context. The introduction of a centralized system of education as a governmental technology in Ireland was of much interest in the British Empire, especially in the Anglophone colonies. As a result, the national system in Ireland became a model, with colonies in Canada and Australia directly importing the structure of the Irish system in the 1840s.[14] Education reform was also implemented in 1830s India, with policy shifting to the pursuit of Western science and literature through the medium of the English language.[15] The colonial impact of Irish national education was not confined to the structure of the system, as the textbooks published by the Commissioners of National Education became one of the most widely used series of textbooks throughout the Empire. The books did not contain material overtly specific to Ireland and Irish culture as they viewed the world through an overtly British imperial lens. The Irish system therefore represents a wider attempt throughout the Empire to normalize the ideology of imperialism and attempt to legitimize a dominant culture and secure imperialist control.[16] The educational reforms of the British state were therefore not unique to Ireland, and demonstrate an imperial governmentality aimed at the 'conduct of conduct' of the colonial populations. National education in Ireland therefore represents the view that Ireland was treated as a ground for social experimentation for the Empire, as it was "a social laboratory, the scene of daring and ambitious experiments... the most conventional of Englishmen were willing to experiment in Ireland on the lines which they were not prepared to contemplate or tolerate at home."[17]

This paper examines this introduction of a national education system in Ireland, the effects that it had on social relations, and how that policy influenced the geography of education in the country. The rationale of the state in introducing a centrally regulated system of education interacted with location-specific relations to form unique social networks. The spatial variation of social relations and interactions with the state therefore provided the basis for the unique geography of national education in pre-Famine Ireland. The examination of national education is part of the emerging discussions of Irish education, which draw upon Michel Foucault's writings on governmentality, which includes John Morrissey's research on the emergence of a neoliberal governmentality, which seeks to regulate the subjectivity of academic life in Ireland.[18]

The structure of national education

In a departure from the earlier proposals, the later plans for reform embodied a more liberal view of schooling. A central element of this was the belief that education should be demanded and offered rather than forced. Frankland Lewis, the Chief Commissioner of the 1825 inquiry, exemplified this belief in parliament when he stated that "if education was to be generally given to all, it must be given in a manner in which those to whom it is offered were willing to receive it."[19] Once again the continuing discussions on education represent the shift to more liberal attitudes towards the use of education, developing of the concept of self-regulation with only those who desired education approaching the state for aid, and therefore interacting with the regulations of the state system for their own interests. The relation between security and liberty is

highlighted through this, where security involves the regulation of groups in order to lead them to exercise their liberty in a disciplined manner and, as such, governmentality only works when individuals act upon themselves as free members of society.[20] In this way, national education attempted to shape individuals so that they would not need to be explicitly governed by others but instead could govern themselves; "if we take educational institutions, we realize that one is managing others and teaching them to manage themselves."[21] Self-regulation in the colonial education policy in Ireland had the added impetus of attempting to shape the Irish population so they would exercise their liberty in a disciplined manner that accepted the legitimacy of the Union, while also reducing religious animosity.

To establish a national school, local individuals had to apply to the Commissioners of National Education and fill out a query sheet with the details of the proposed school. The Commissioners had a three-grade classification system for applications, introduced in Stanley's letter, based on the main principle of uniting those of different creeds. The first class of applications were those that were signed by both Protestant (including Presbyterian) and Roman Catholic clergymen, which in effect needed cooperation of clergy members of different creeds.[22] In most cases, one of these clergymen became the patron of the schools, with the others granted visitation privileges. The patron was heavily involved in the local management of national schools, usually in charge of hiring schoolmasters and providing local funds. While there were many school managers and committees in existence, the Commissioners directly communicated with the patron. It was in this way that the dual-management system emerged, with central regulation of the system and local management of schools headed by the patron. The importance placed on local management opened the system to influence from a variety of actors on many scales. The main example of this was that, in most cases, the patrons and school managers were local clergy who were often heavily influenced by the views of the bishops in the area. The second class of applications were those signed by clergymen of one denomination and laity of the opposite creed, again seen as cooperation between different faiths. In these cases the clergyman who signed the application usually became the patron, but cases existed where agents of landlords or influential lay members of the community were the applicant and patron. Third-class applications were those signed by laity from both denominations with no clergy member. The regulations stated that if applications were exclusively signed by only one denomination the Commissioners would make an inquiry as to the circumstance of the application. The majority of schools were established through second-class applications, with 1,106 national schools established by 1834, out of which 176 were from first-class applications, 601 were from second class and 114 were from third-class applications.

The character of the grading system is a clear indication of the state's attempt to place different local actors in a unified system that promoted unity and thus secure governance. The encouragement of local management was an element of using liberal government to achieve security while respecting the freedom of those to be governed, with the local actors self-regulating and self-governing, thus leaving the state to govern from a distance.[23] The attempt to encourage the clergy to establish or transfer existing schools to the national system was part of the strategy to colonize existing education provisions, with liberal modes of government utilizing the existing capacities of free actors to connect to the system.[24] Once connected to the state system, local actors who did not respond to self-regulation were subjected to corrective action by the Commissioners, such as withholding salaries or discontinuing funds.[25] The inspectorate played a vital role in linking central regulation to local management, focusing on the layout and character of the school building and the competencies of the schoolmaster or -mistress. The attention to school maintenance and teaching standards meant added responsibility was assigned to the patrons, committees, managers, and schoolmasters to uphold standards. The power of national education

as a governmental technology was rooted in the inspectorate as it extended the state's gaze into the schools and thus regulated the behavior of schoolmasters and local management. The local management was thus accountable to the Commissioners and, therefore, those who exercised power within the schools were subjected by its functions as much as the children taught within them.[26] The state was thus using the national education system as a technology that extended beyond shaping the behavior of the youth, and it cultivated lateral techniques that allowed for the supervision of parents, local actors in schools and, ultimately, society as a whole. In this way, national schools in pre-Famine Ireland represented minute "social observatories."[27]

As the system was based on the liberal rationale of government, local actors interacted with the state through pursuing their own interests in gaining access to state capacities. Relationships were therefore established between the nature and character of educational problems facing various social groups at a local level in pre-Famine Ireland, which became linked into a common interest in accessing resources for the establishment of schools. The development of a common interest at a local level and the complex interactions of strategies at various scales may have transformed what was essentially a local issue of the establishment of schools and tied them into much larger political ones. If so, associations would be established between a variety of local actors, all of whom were seeking to enhance their powers by gaining access to state capacities and resources so that they could function to their own advantage.[28] The liberal rationale of government meant that national education, as an emerging technology of government, did not have overall control and domination by a central authority but sought to manage the domain outside politics without destroying the autonomy of the actors in that domain. As such, the structure of national education in Ireland meant the system was dependent on the strength of the various local relations and their ability to cooperate. To achieve this without destroying the autonomy of local actors, the state granted them roles in the governance of the system at all levels.[29]

The national education system in Ireland was therefore based on a complex network of social relations. Figure 1 is used as an illustrative tool to view the network of relations that resulted from the interactions with actors at different scales. The central-local management structure meant that the system was open to influence from a variety of scales. At the highest level were the institutions that acted on a national scale. The Commissioners of National Education regulated the whole system and controlled the nature of applications, and therefore influenced those at all levels. Religious institutions were also influential as the central administrative bodies of the various Churches had influence on a national scale, either through interacting with the Commissioners or by influencing their clergy at various lower scales. These national authorities had regional agents that implemented the strategies of the central authority, such as superintendents who managed regional model schools and Archbishops who regulated the local clergy. In the network of national education, regional agents interacted closely with the patrons of national schools, who in some cases were patrons to several national schools over an area, and thus the various agents acted as the intermediaries between the central and local management of national education. At a local level, there was a series of different actors who influenced the establishment and operation of national schools, such as managers who regulated individual schools, inspectors who ensured schools were properly regulated and landlords, local clergy, and laity who established and operated national school. At the bottom-most scale were the schoolmasters who influenced the children attending national schools. The network of social relations illustrates that power was distributed as a net of systems of relations spread throughout society, and that control was conducted by governmental programs in the sense that it held the network of actors together.[30]
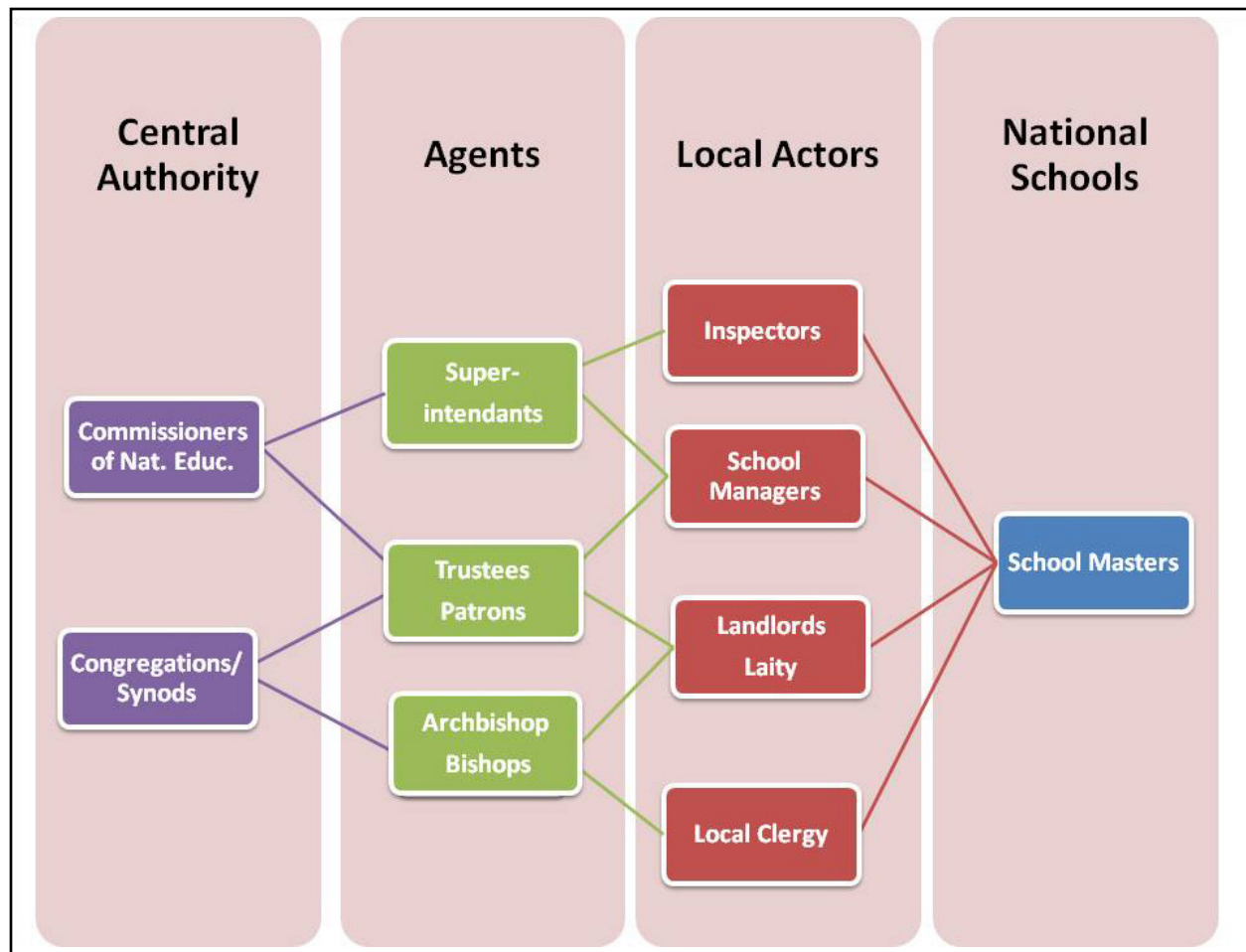
Figure 1. Network of Influence of National Education.

The geography of national education

National schools became an important element in the Irish landscape and appeared in a wide variety of locations, often sited near the outskirts of villages, mirroring the location of other state-run institutions and Catholic institutions as part of the "governmental and ecclesiastical fringe-belt" that emerged in nineteenth-century Ireland.[31] National schools were a unique state institution, however, as it was also common to find them in peripheral locations, including Roman Catholic chapel grounds or in isolated rural areas. As an element of the institutional emergence of the state in the Irish landscape, national education "symbolises the transformation of the state from an abstract set of power relationships into a physical entity" which would eventually be witnessed in every parish in Ireland.[32] The Commissioners of National Education began receiving applications for the establishment of national schools in 1832 and by the onset of the Famine there were 3,426 national schools in operation, affording education to 432,844 children.[33] Figure 2 shows the location of national schools established in this time period and illustrates that national education did not emerge uniformly. A brief observation of the location of national schools indicates that there were larger numbers of national schools established in the northeast and east of the country, with western areas having fewer national schools. While it is possible to make overall comments about trends of national-school establishment from this distribution map, when this information is aggregated into barony units, patterns of national-school establishment become easier to identify. The examination of national-school distribution at a barony level
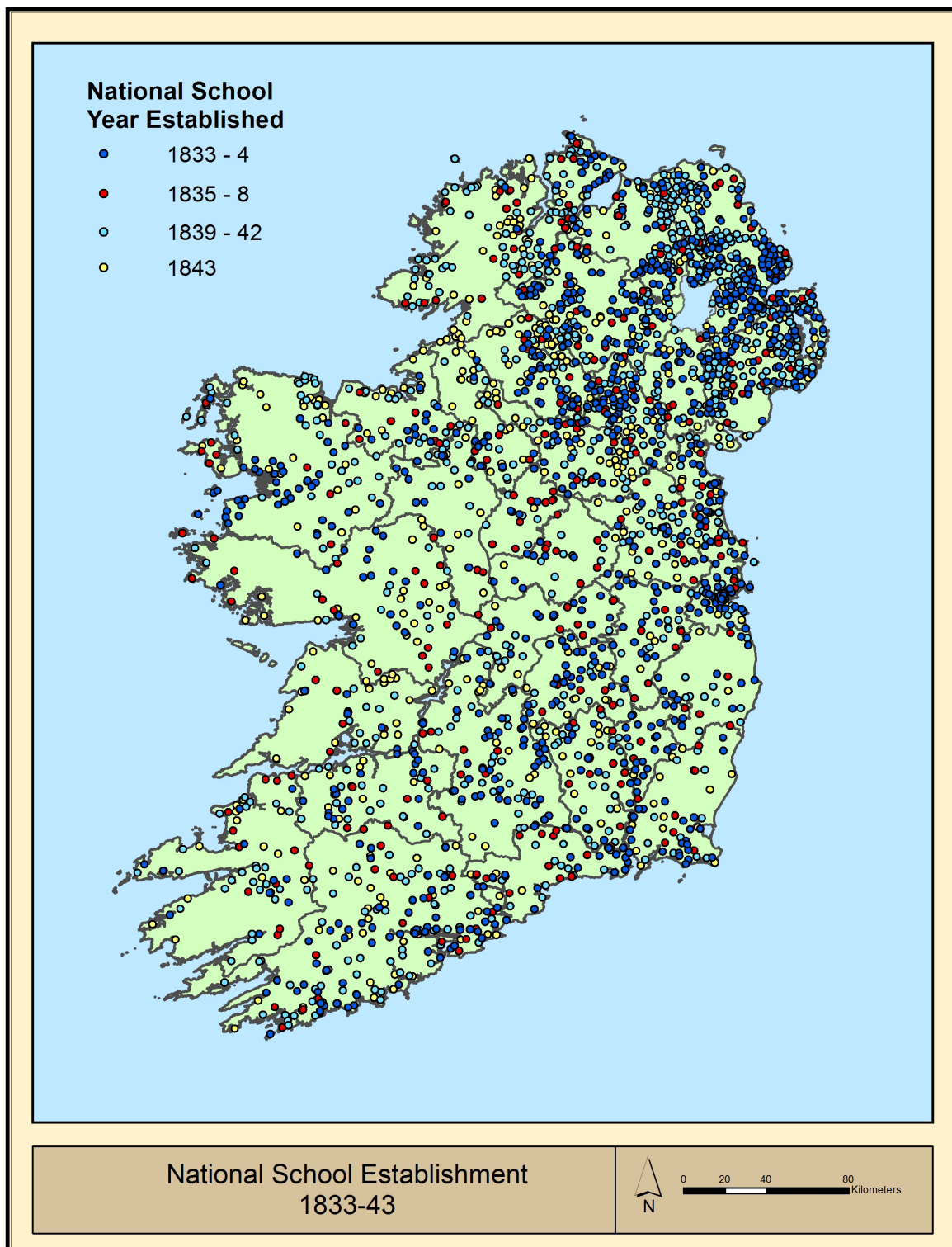
**Figure 2**. National school locations, 1833−43.

provides an indication of the regions that were quick to adopt national education in pre-Famine Ireland, and also regions that experienced relative non-adoption. While baronies are a more suitable unit to study the distribution, there is a problem of relative size. National-school density per ten thousand people is used to provide a more instructive unit of measure for true national-school distributions.

The years after the creation of the national school system saw rapid expansion, with 1,106 schools established by the end of 1834. The map of national-school densities in 1834 demonstrates that areas of high and low density emerged with the creation of the system; see Figure 3a. A region in the east of Ulster emerged with high densities. High school establishment was localized to a relatively small area. Baronies with high densities stretched from the east coast area of Down and Antrim, north to Glenarm in the Glens of Antrim. The baronies in this region all contained more than 2 national schools per ten thousand people, with the baronies around Belfast and Carrickfergus containing between 6.5 and 9.5 national schools per ten thousand people. The urban area of Belfast City had a relatively small number of schools, amounting to only 0.5 national schools per ten thousand people, suggesting that different processes occurred in urban centers with regard to national-school establishment. The area of central Ulster, specifically around north Monaghan and south Tyrone, emerged with relatively high national-school densities. The region had above the national average densities of 1.6 national schools per ten thousand people, as most of the baronies had more than 2 national schools per ten thousand people. The rest of the northern areas of the country had close to the average densities, except for the low densities contained in Armagh and the west coast area of Donegal. Inishowen was an outlier in the region of low densities with a density of 3.6 national schools per ten thousand people in 1834.

Another region of high national-school densities emerged in the north Dublin and southern Meath area. The majority of baronies from the north of Dublin City stretching to the southern area of Meath had high densities of above 4.5 national schools per ten thousand people. Similar to Belfast City, there was a low density of national schools within Dublin City, equating to less than one national school per ten thousand people. A region of central Leinster stretching from west Kildare through east Laois and into Carlow emerged as an area of relatively high densities, as the majority of baronies contained densities above the national average. There was a zone of relative low densities on the east coast of Leinster, with the baronies in the south of Wicklow and north Wexford having densities lower than one national school per ten thousand people, and with three baronies having no national school.

A zone of mixed densities emerged in the south of the country, with an area that arched from south Wexford, across south Tipperary, and into south Cork that had close to average densities. Some baronies adjacent to urban centers had slightly higher densities, such as those close to Waterford City and Wexford Town. The region coincided with the old established Catholic big farm heartland as identified by Whelan, who stated that there was a survival of significant Catholic landlords in a district from Waterford Harbour through to Limerick.[34] This Catholic core had a number of common features such as a monolithic Catholic population, a commercialized Catholic farmer class, capacity to generate wealth, an outward-looking orientation with connections to Catholic Europe and a leadership class based on surviving Catholic landed families. Educationally, this manifested itself with the diffusion of exclusively Catholic-sponsored schools and the educational institutions of Catholic Orders across the region, such as the Christian Brothers schools that originated in Waterford in 1802 and the Presentation Sisters who originated in Cork in 1775. The Christian Brothers responded to a request from Archbishop Murray, a member of the Commissioners of National Education, to give the national system a fair trial in some of their schools; however they began withdrawing their schools from the system from 1836, only a few years after the national system began.[35]
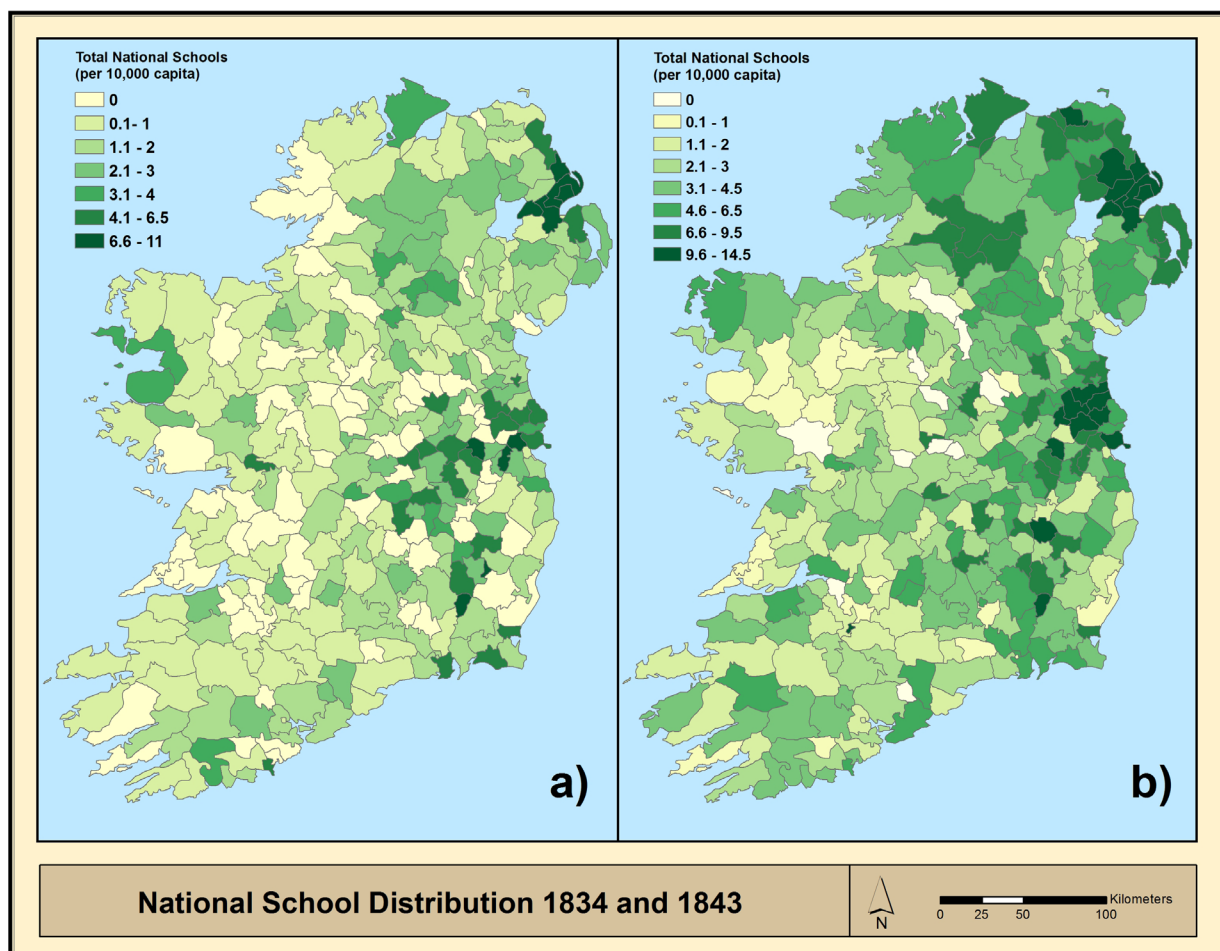
Figure 3. National-school distribution, 1834 and 1843.

A large region of low national-school densities stretched throughout the western area of the country and included much of the midlands. The region arched from the south of Donegal through Longford and Westmeath to Clare. Nearly all the baronies in this region had fewer than two national schools per ten thousand people, with a large proportion below one school per ten thousand people. There were a large number of baronies, over twenty, which had no national schools. Once again the urban areas, such as Limerick City and Galway had low densities of 0.5 national schools per ten thousand people or fewer. There was an outlier in the western region of low density as the area surrounding Clew Bay had high densities of around 3.5 national schools per ten thousand people in 1834. Overall, in the initial years after the creation of national education in Ireland it can be said that the pattern of national-school establishment was highly regional with core regions of high and low density, regions of mixed density, and several significant outliers.

Over the period from the creation of the system to the period just before the Famine, there were some significant changes to the regional nature of the system; see Figure 3b. The region of east Ulster had expanded to encompass much of Antrim and Derry. The increases around the area of west Antrim, up to the Bann Valley, meant that the region now stretched from the area from southeast Down to Coleraine, with all baronies having densities over five national schools per ten

thousand people. The vast increase was mainly due to the official adoption of the national system by the Synod of Ulster. The Synod was the largest congregation of Presbyterians in the country who met annually to discuss and debate various issues that affected members of the Church in the region. A special meeting of the Synod was called to discuss the merits of the national system soon after the regulations were published in 1831. The Synod opposed the national system for several reasons. While officially it was stated that it opposed increased interference of the state and the exclusion of the Bible as a common school book, it soon became apparent that the true reasons for opposition was due to the increased influence of Catholic priests in their schools.[36] The Synod entered into negotiations with the Commissioners of National Education, and in 1838 the regulations were altered in line with the Synod's opposition. The result of this was that in 1839-42 there was a large increase in the numbers of Presbyterians establishing schools in the region, accounting for a quarter of application in 1839 alone. The central-Ulster region was still apparent in 1842 but, due to a lack of major increase, possessed by then significantly lower densities then the east-Ulster region. Other increases in the peripheries of these two regions meant that a transitional zone emerged which connected the two relatively high-density regions in Ulster with a zone close to the average density. Inishowen was again an outlier which, in 1842, had the highest number of national schools in the country with forty-five. Armagh was the only area that contained a significant number of baronies below the average.

The changes in the pattern and regions of national-school establishment in the east of the country were similar to what occurred in the north. The core region around north Dublin was again evident in 1842, and had extended northwards to include the area north of Drogheda. The region of central Leinster, while still present, had lessened in densities when compared to the north Dublin region. This region, which stretched from west Kildare into the Barrow Valley, had densities slightly above the average. Slight increases in the periphery of this region, especially in east Kildare, led to the connection of the two Leinster regions, meaning that a zone of relatively high densities existed from the area surrounding Drogheda to the south of Carlow. The southern zone of the country had a consistent pattern of national-school establishment over the period. The area stretching from south Wexford to the west of Munster had densities from around one to three national schools per 10,000 residents, with the areas around Waterford having higher densities, meaning there was not a significant change to the initial region.

The western region of the country still has the lowest densities in the country, with an area stretching from south Donegal to western Tipperary and Limerick that possessed lower-than-average densities. The outlier of high density surrounding Clew Bay had transformed to an area of low national-school density by this time. The vast reduction in the number of schools in the area was the result of the opposition of Archbishop John McHale. While initially a reluctant supporter of the system, McHale changed his attitude publically in 1838 and began protesting against the system for what he saw as an unfair distribution of funds. In reality, McHale was reacting to the increasing influence that the Commissioners exercised over local clergy involved in the system.[37] McHale influenced local clergy who had become patrons to national schools to withdraw from the national system.[38] As a result of the public campaign against the system, the Catholic clergy in the Galway and Mayo areas started to withdraw their schools from the national system. In the three years after Archbishop McHale denounced the system, a total of fifty-six schools were withdrawn from the national system in Ireland, with fifty-three (95 percent) of these located in the diocese of Tuam. The twenty-four schools that had been connected to the national system in the Clew Bay area were all withdrawn by 1840.

The change in the distribution of national schools in the period prior to the Famine resulted in the modification of the various regions that emerged after the creation of the system. The initial high adoption rates in the north and east of the country and low densities in the west were further

consolidated with an extension to the initial core areas of high and low density. The distribution therefore displayed an east/west pattern that can be highly generalized by a line running from an area around Sheephaven Bay in Donegal to Waterford Harbour. The regions to the east of this line can be characterized as areas with a high rate of adoption of the system, while those to the west of the line were areas of relative non-adoption. A similar generalized line was identified by Smyth in a study of the variations in vulnerability to the Famine.[39] Within this generalized pattern, the geography of national education in pre-Famine Ireland was highly regional. Overall it can be said that there were two core regions of the country that were particularly quick to adopt the national system, with two zones of relative high adoption close to each. The whole western area of the country showed relative non-adoption of the system, except for a small number of isolated cases. It was seen that between and connecting the regions of high and low densities were transitional zones that showed a degree of mixed densities. Figure 4 presents the regional character of national education. Influenced by Whelan's methods in producing his map of regional archetypes in Ireland, it delineates various regions that were not necessarily continuous. The borders of the various regions are used for illustrative purposes, as they did not possess definitive boundaries, and as a result, should be considered as "reified abstractions."[40]

Regional example of East Ulster

The examination of national education policy in Ireland illustrated that the system relied on a complex network of social relations, while observations of the geography of the system highlighted the regional dimension in the emergence of the system. The examination of a regional case illustrates how the structure of the system and the network of social relations influenced the establishment of national education and resulted in regional patterns. The examination of regions in this way follows on from the work of Anne Gilbert, among others, who discuss the nature of regions as a physical setting for social interactions, with social actors attempting to change relationships within society. The focus, therefore, is on the spatial networks where interactions take place, thus leading to a general understanding of the functioning of society and space as a "geography of power." In this sense, networks of social relations are region-specific, with groups having differential access to power through interactions within these networks, leading to regional differences.[41] The examination of how different actors interacted, in particular spaces, to form distinct social networks suggests how localities came to be different, and forms the basis of the asymmetrical distribution of national education.[42] In order to describe the social relations involved in national education it is necessary to research local case studies and for this purpose the case of east Ulster has been chosen.

East Ulster was an area of dramatic social change from the eighteenth century which resulted in the interaction of a large number of social groups. The complex nature of labor and industry, landholding, and religion in Pre-Famine Ulster resulted in a unique social configuration, which was divided into distinct self-aware groups and strata that had their own tactical outlook.[43] The complexity of the social structure in the region increased public interest in education. The different classes of applications are taken as a central source in providing an indication of interactions of social actors in the region. The fact that clergymen of different faiths participated together in the establishment of national schools for first-class applications is taken as a sign of cooperation between the different social actors in the local network. Across the country there was evidence to suggest that when applications were being made to the Commissioners, there was communication between the clergy of different faith, and also with influential lay members of the community. An example from the east-Ulster region comes from an interview with a Catholic priest in Antrim where he stated that he had "the attestation of a respectable neighboring Roman Catholic clergyman, that in three schools which he has succeeded in connecting with the Board
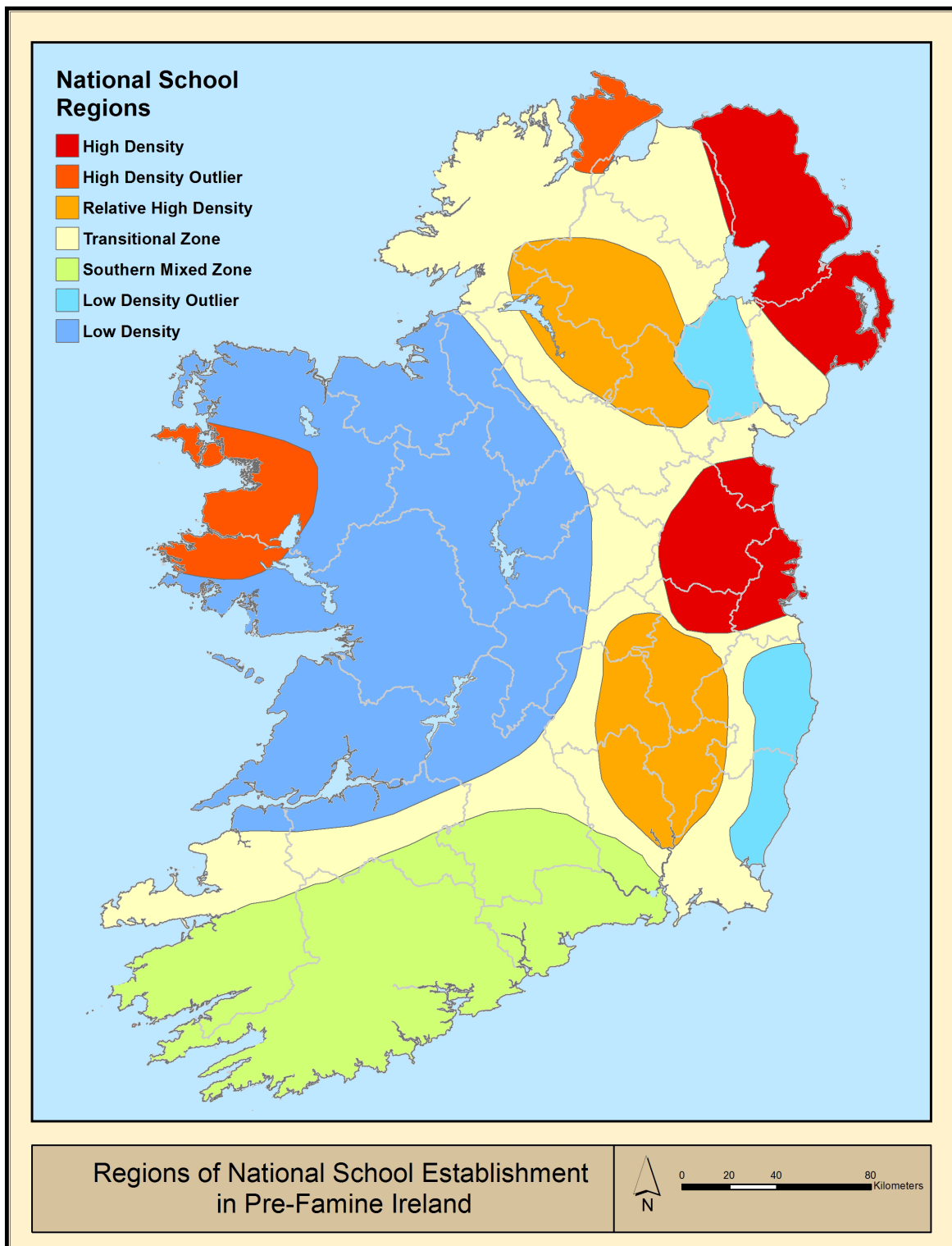
Figure 4*. Regions of national-school establishment in pre-Famine Ireland.*

[of National Education] the Presbyterians have no objection in his neighborhood to send their children to them; and I may affirm of this clergyman that he lives, I believe, in harmony with the Protestant clergymen of the neighborhood."[44] The evidence of communication between the various social actors involved in the establishment of national schools suggests that signatures present on applications represent real cooperative interactions within the local social network.

The distribution of the various classes of applications in east Ulster is presented in Figure 5. There was a concentration of first-class applications that correlated with the high national-school densities in the Lagan Valley, Belfast, Carrickfergus and Larne axis. The combined baronies of Belfast Upper, Belfast Lower, Carrickfergus, Massereene Lower, and Glenarm Upper had a total of forty-three first-class applications out of a total of sixty-eight schools established. The clergy of different faiths were therefore jointly involved in 63 percent of the schools established in the region. Out of the remaining applications, 27 percent were second-class, meaning that clergymen of only one faith were involved in their establishment, and 10 percent were signed by laity alone. A drop in the levels of first-class applications occurred outside of this core region. In the areas of northwest Antrim and east Derry first-class applications dropped to 36 percent and 44 percent were second-class applications. The distribution indicates that the cooperation between the clergy in the east-Ulster region was confined to a specific locality and highlights that the behavior of the clergy varied over space. The distribution can thus be seen as a result of the changing nature of social interactions over space, with the actions of the various clergy as key drivers. The area of high clergy interaction indicates a different local social network that resulted in a higher establishment of national schools. The nature of local social networks and how they interacted with the state was therefore central to the distribution of national schools.

The proportion and distribution of clergy signatures provides a clearer indication of interactions and social relations of the various actors across the region; see Figure 6. The clergy of the Church of Ireland were not very active in the establishment of national schools in the east-Ulster region, with only 7 percent of all national schools established in Antrim and Down having the involvement of the Church of Ireland. The negative reaction of the Church of Ireland hierarchy to the introduction of the system likely influenced the actions of the local clergy and resulted in the lack of involvement in establishing national schools.[45] The Presbyterian clergy were active in the initial establishment of national schools in the region, as 41 percent of the schools were established with the involvement of Presbyterian clergymen. While this high rate might be expected given that the area was home to a high proportion of Presbyterians, it is surprising given the seemingly negative reaction of the Presbyterian Church, namely the Synod of Ulster, to the creation of the national system. The signatures of Presbyterian clergymen in the initial three years of the system were concentrated in the Lagan Valley-Larne crescent of high density. The activity was highest in the baronies of Belfast Lower and Carrickfergus, where 77 percent of all applications were signed by Presbyterian clergymen, with 22 percent of those signed by more than one Presbyterian minister. Outside of this core region, the level of Presbyterian clergy involvement dropped to 23 percent of applications signed. The correlation between Presbyterian clergy involvement and high national-school density indicates that they were important drivers in the adoption of the national school system in the east of Ulster, but the behavior was variable over the region. The importance of the Presbyterian clergy as actors in the wider region was highlighted by the fact that they had a much higher proportion of places of worship in the area. Out of all the places of worship in the Dioceses of Connor; 41 percent were Presbyterian, with 25 percent being Church of Ireland, 20 percent were Catholic, and 14 percent were other Protestant dissenter places of worship.[46]
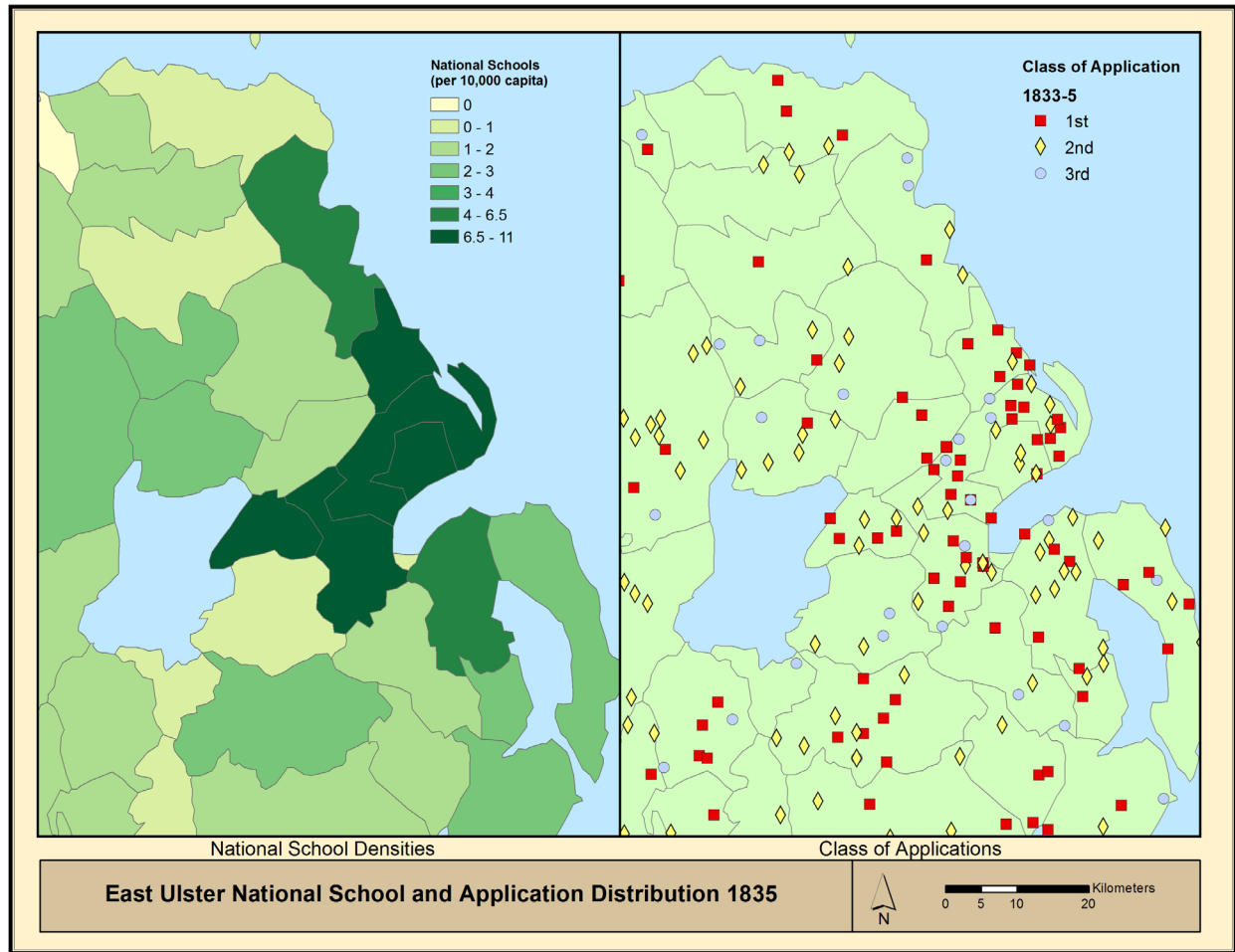
Figure 5. East Ulster national schools and application distribution, 1835.

The Catholic clergy had the largest proportion of the signatures, with 52 percent of all the signatures on applications in the wider region. The strategy of the state, which unofficially assigned preference to the Catholic Church in applications for schools, was a factor in the high proportions. The involvement of the Catholic clergy in national-school establishment was not necessarily concentrated around any one locality within the region, indicating the widespread activity of Catholic priests. The majority of applications signed by the Catholic clergy, however, were signed by a single priest, unlike the distribution of Presbyterian signatures that often had two or more clergy ministers. The core region of the Lagan Valley to Larne belt was the only area where multiple Catholic priests signed applications. The high level of Presbyterian and Catholic clergy signatures, combined with the high percentage of first-class applications in the area, suggests the existence of a high degree of cooperation between the clergy of these two Churches. The cooperation is highlighted as 75 percent of schools in the core region had both Catholic and Presbyterian clergymen involved in the application process. It can thus be inferred that a tactical alliance formed between Presbyterian and Catholic clergymen in the core region after the creation of the national education system that led to a high rate of school establishment.
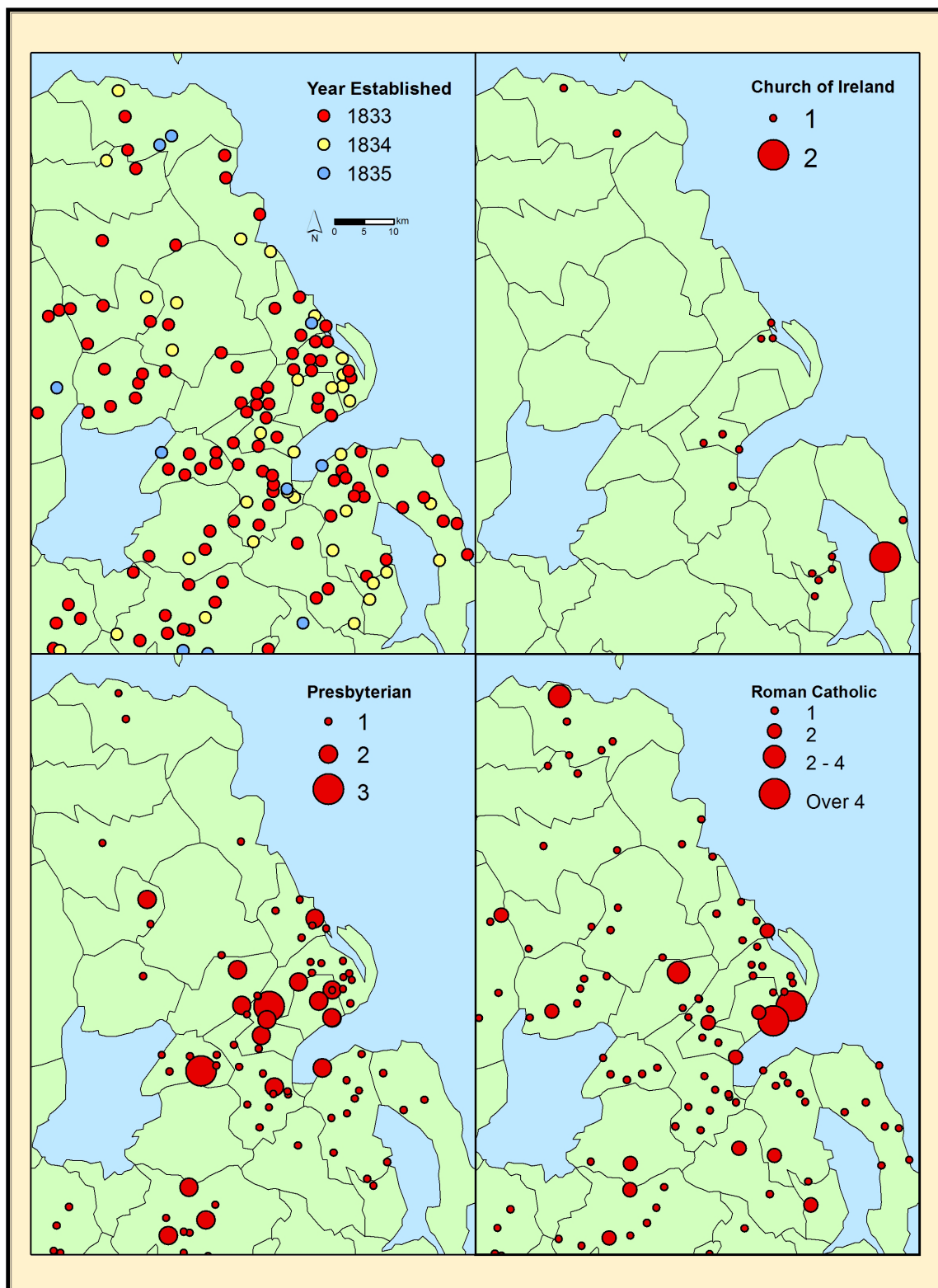
Figure 6. East Ulster clergy signatures of the various Churches, 1835.

Local case study

A closer examination of the core area in the baronies of Lower Belfast and Carrickfergus reveals more detail of the interactions and strategies involved in the process of establishing national schools. In the area there were a number of individual clergymen who signed several applications for national schools. Out of the seventeen schools with Catholic clergy signatures in the first year of the system, eight were signed by the Catholic priest Arthur O'Neill, while three were signed by the Bishop of Connor-and-Down William Crolly. In the case-study area, only six different Catholic priests signed applications for the seventeen schools. This pattern was mirrored by the Presbyterian ministers, where the same four ministers were involved in 70 percent of the national schools established with the involvement of Presbyterian clergy. William Glendy signed the application for five national schools, while William Heron signed four applications in the two baronies. The area surrounding Carrickfergus provides a good example of the local interaction of the clergy, as all eight national schools established in the initial years were jointly signed by the Presbyterian ministers William Flinter and James Seaton Reid. It is significant to note that the Presbyterian clergy involved in establishing schools in the region were not part of the Synod of Ulster, with many being members of the Presbytery of Antrim, thus highlighting the importance of regional actors on local actions. The repeated signature of a few clergymen of the various faiths indicated a tactical push to establish national schools in the area by both Churches which therefore dominated the network of social relations involved in education in the area.

The tactical alliance between the clergy was illustrated by the various ministers of different faiths jointly involved in several schools. Out of the five applications signed by William Glendy, three were also signed by Arthur O'Neill, a Catholic priest. In the Larne area, Arthur O'Neill also signed the application for four schools with another Presbyterian minister, J. C. Ledlie. Ledlie was reported to have stated that the system brought significant benefit to the area and confirmed that there was true cooperation between the clergy, stating "some of the clergy [...] have cooperated in the management of schools; clergymen of all persuasions attend [...] examinations; and no clergyman of any denomination has made any formal opposition to a national school."[47] In this locality a small number of Presbyterian ministers became patrons to the vast majority of national schools. Given that none of the schools were given grants for building a schoolhouse, it is very possible that they were already in existence, under the patronage of the Presbyterian ministers, and were subsequently transferred to the national system. The fact that the clergy were working together in the establishment and operation of the schools that were most likely previously Presbyterian schools suggests that the clergy of both Churches took a tactical position to cooperate in transferring schools to the national system.

These local relationships differed in the northern parts of the east-Ulster region, where the density of national schools was significantly lower. In the baronies of Cary, Dunluce Lower, and Glenarm in the north of Antrim the local clergy were not significantly active in the cooperation or establishment of national schools. The lack of activity of the clergy was not matched by the laity, as there were a large number of signatures from lay people of all faiths. The Catholic clergy were the most active of the clergy in signing applications, but again it was only single priests involved in school establishment. The Catholic community, both clergy and laity, attempted to establish national education in this area, but the lack of cooperation with other actors led to low densities. The isolated activity of the Catholic community is backed up by the fact that it was the only place in the east-Ulster region where the majority of the patrons were either Catholic priests or laity. The lack of cooperation between the clergy outside the initial core region was highlighted when the Catholic priest in Drummale in west Antrim, Daniel Curoe, discussed the establishment of national schools in his parish. In reference to the communication with the Protestant clergyman

of the parish he stated that "on my first attempting to connect the school with the New Board [of National Education] in March 1832 I applied to [the Protestant clergyman] for his co-operation; he replied, that he felt a delicacy and a reluctance to co-operate with me."[48]

In the initial period after the creation of the national system, the state's capacity to supply funds for education led to the tactical tie between a body of Presbyterians, Catholics, and the Commissioners in the core region of east-Ulster. Variations in the behavior of these actors, and the influence over the local management of the actors at different scales, such as the Synod of Ulster and the Catholic bishops, resulted in the strategic ties being localized to a specific area in a crescent from the Lagan Valley to Larne. The rationale of the state required the Presbyterian clergy to cooperate with the Catholic clergy to implement their strategy in this area. The Catholic clergy were active in national-school establishment across the region, and it is possible that the clergy saw the link with the institutionally strong Presbyterian Church, and the government rationale of integrating Catholics, as a way to strengthen their influence in the educational landscape of the area. In other areas with lower densities this tactical alliance was not as present, which illustrates that the behavior of actors varied over space and therefore strategies of the various actors were driven by localized social relations. As such, outside the core area the responsibility fell to other actors, such as landlords and other influential lay members of a community, to establish national schools. These actors did not possess the same institutional strength to implement a significant spatial strategy and therefore often acted in isolation. The less complex social network in the other areas of this region, and the reduced involvement of the clergy, resulted in the lack of a common interest and therefore less activity with regard to national-school establishment.

Technologies of government can be effective only if they tie various actors together and give them a common goal.[49] The intervention of the state with the introduction of a national system of education that had specific regulations, application criteria, and inspections, resulted in the formation of new sorts of local social relations. Local actors developed a common interest to acquire state funds for education, which resulted in the development of local alliances that interacted with the state to achieve this goal. In this way, the introduction of national education as a governmental technology shifted the nature of social relations in Ireland such that local actors came under the surveillance of the British state through their own self-interest. Relationships were thus established between the Commissioners of National Education and actors in other socio-spatial domains and were consolidated to form unique networks of relations, with a diverse range of actors linked through expertise and disciplinary techniques, with the power of the system distributed through the network.

Conclusion

The study of national-school establishment in pre-Famine Ireland showed the emergence of certain regions. The various regions were not the result of independent events, but were formed through social processes situated in their historical context, which stemmed from the social relations and interactions that were specific to a localized area. Relationships established between the Commissioners of National Education and actors in other socio-spatial domains were consolidated to form a network of relations.[50] The structure and regulations of the national system were important as they created a central-local management system that linked the state officials, in the form of the Commissioners of National Education and their inspectors, to the wider social environment. The interplay between the governmental rationale, the strategies of state agents, and wider social networks was central in the emergence of a regional dimension to the national education system.

The national education system resulted in the creation of a differential spatial web of relations and interactions across the country. The examination of a localized case study illustrated

how this differential web of relations led to the adoption or relative non-adoption of national education across space. The nature of school establishment resulted in local actors having different abilities in pursuing strategies, which were shaped and constrained by the regulations of the system and the rationale of various actors on a local level. The influence of regional actors further complicated the strategic networks, as the strategies of institutions that functioned on many scales shaped local strategies. An example of this was seen with the opposition of Archbishop John McHale to the national system, which represented his wider nationalist viewpoint and opposition to the colonial civilizing mission of the British state in Ireland. The wider rationale and strategy of McHale influenced the local clergy in the West with regards to national education and greatly affected the establishment of national schools throughout the region. Government in pre-Famine Ireland was therefore the domain of strategies and techniques where different forces sought to render programs such as national education operable and, as a result, connections were formed between the rationales and aspirations of central authorities and the activities of social groups and individuals.[51] It is important to note that the introduction of the system itself influenced the nature of these social relations. The degree of integration, the incorporation of the influential actors at various scales, and spatial variation in the emergence and development of the national system all affected the nature of social ties and their impact upon educational interaction.[52] In this way sub-national regions formed as sites of social relations and were reliant upon social and historical processes while simultaneously formative of society and history.[53]

The interconnectedness of interest and rationales at various scales show how the essentially local issue of schools became tied to larger political matters, such as the opposition to the intrusion of the British state in Irish matters and the increase of influences of other actors. The local issue of the establishment of schools represented a clash in mentalities and rationalities, with the transforming governmental rationality of the state conflicting with the pastoral power of the Churches and ultimately influencing the larger political matters such as the legitimization of the Union. In this way, associations were established between a variety of local and regional actors who sought to enhance their own powers by accessing state capacities so that they could function to their own advantage.[54] When combined with the liberal rationale of governmentality, and the attempt to establish a self-regulating population that acted within their liberties, it was seen that the national education system depended on the formation of strategic ties at a locality. The strategic ties between the Catholic and Presbyterian clergy in the establishment of national schools in east Ulster, and the activities of the Synod of Ulster in this region, illustrate the interaction of local issues of school establishment and how it became tied into larger political matters.

The introduction of national education represents the attempts of the British state to civilize the country and legitimize the Union and left a lasting colonial legacy. The education of children of different creeds in the same classroom without regard to religion was an attempt to reduce sectarian conflict in the times of the tithe war while challenging the position that the Established Church held in Ireland. The control of school regulations meant the British state were able to influence the conduct of the Irish youth and, combined with the creation of textbooks specifically for the system, attempted to normalize the ideology of imperialism, legitimize British culture, and secure the Union in Ireland. The most significant colonial impact, and legacy, of national education was the restructuring of local social relations. The central-local management system resulted in local actors, especially Catholic clergymen, becoming tied into the actions of government. The incorporation of the local community into the state structure also resulted in the assimilation of a whole range of independent educational networks into the state system, and resulted in the modification of these networks in-line with the rationale of government. The placing of local actors under the regulations of the system, while also being placed under

the surveillance of the British administration, resulted in the establishment and engineering of social norms that extended well beyond the walls of the schools. The national education system ultimately increased the influence of the state over local actors as it extended central surveillance over the system. The activities of the inspectorate, combined with the regulations of the system such as the need for annual returns from each school, threw a web of visibility over the local and regional actors within the system. In this way the conduct of actors was shaped through constant observation, judgment, and the capacity for corrective action.[55] The colonial context and legacy therefore meant that the British state-regulated system of national education in Ireland extended the power and influence of the state beyond the pupil to the conduct of the Irish population, as national schools represented minute "social observatories" that exercised regular supervision over actors at various scales of the system, and ultimately society.[56]

NOTES

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