summary of results

The intention of this document is to provide a graphic record of the growth of small towns over time, using figure ground illustration clearly to reveal patterns of development over 50 year intervals. This tool successfully extracts spatial order and structure allowing easy identification of morphological changes over time and provides a springboard from which further investigation could be explored.

Background research into the history of the case studies substantiates the physical evidence uncovered in the graphic exploration. Six types of settlement are identified and traced through time. These are: market towns, industrial, planned, coastal, tourist and commuter.

Market towns formed in medieval times and gained important status as trade centres. There was little in the way of other types of settlement until the beginning of the industrial period when mills and water power sparked an era of change. From this point on, industrial towns began to form. While these existed to serve industry, market towns simultaneously grew in prestige with financial services and associated wealth. The 18th and 19th centuries saw this pattern accelerate and many more industrial settlements were established. There was little in the way of development control and whilst market towns had some form of physical structure, the new industrial settlements formed in an almost ad hoc manner. A small amount of planned towns did emerge, but these tended to be the products of private investment.

In the mid 1850's railways and improved transport infrastructure had a significant impact. Towns developed new roles such as tourism and early commuter settlements. In the modern day, car use and the motorway network has had a similar effect. As development becomes increasing focused on larger settlements, small populations have become more and more reliant on larger settlements for employment and leisure. In many cases the original function of the town has been diluted and it has had to adapt to a new way of life.

This study shows that remarkable similarities exist within the categories. These are reflected not only in their physical structure and history but in modern day performance. Statistical analysis supports a correlation between the traditional role and current level of success or failure.

The tables within the case study section record data collected for each town in relation to a number of factors. These include, economic, social, the built environment, transport connections and growth.

Undoubtedly, the data collected does not paint a complete picture of the conditions of these towns. One of the crucial missing assessment criteria is character. This is expored in the next study, 'Under the Microscope: Twenty Small Towns in Scotland'.

However, many of the essential socio economic statistics have been included and provide a good general synopsis. Cross comparisons between town types can then be drawn from the final table on page 171.

This table allows for the town types performance to be interpreted revealing the following order -



The top two performers are **commuter** and **tourist** towns. Both of these have a clear modern day purpose that sustains their economy and communities. Their dominant economic function is relevant to twenty first century lifestyles.

Commuter towns have an impressive set of statistics and have benefited from their location. All of these towns are located within 30 miles of larger settlements with good road connections. Only 3 of the 9 towns have a railway station suggesting that access to public transport is not an essential component.

Tourist towns return the best results in education and employment sectors too. Investments made in facilities and attractions over time have sustained the local economy. This allowed these towns to retain the same main function they had 150 years ago.

Market towns have remained important throughout time. They have preserved their heritage with the original street patterns clearer here than in any other town type. However they do not hold the regional significance they once did. This is reflected in the average economic results across the board of data analysed.

Coastal towns have a geographical advantage over the others. As attractive places to live, they all demand higher than average house prices. However, results for other socio-economic indicators are less impressive. Contrary to the other categories, the defining factor of these towns is their location rather than function. Indeed, they have had varied roles over time and subsequently achieve mixed results.

The poorest performing categories are planned and industrial towns.

Planned towns, like coastal towns have had a varied existence. Planned towns expanded quickly to accommodate a waiting population or industry. Their figure grounds appear more coherent in the first 100 years than the other groups. However, this disintegrated in the last 50yrs with expansion largely ignoring the original street pattern. The planning of these towns, whilst interesting, did not secure their success over time.

Industrial towns are the least successful towns in this study. Employment or lack of employment opportunity has been detrimental factor. Overtime, the combination of undesirable physical qualities and a lack of purpose or reason for growth has left these towns stagnating or declining. Industrial towns have failed to find an appropriate role to play and struggle to meet the Scottish average in many of the socio- economic indicators tested.

Overall, thetop performing categories appear to have a few notable common factors. Purpose and location are the most obvious. Conversely, the worst over all performers are those with a role that has failed to adapt to modern day life, as demonstrated with industrial towns.

Planned and coastal towns are difficult to compare with the other groups. The component settlements had a variety of different functions and are categorised by their physical characteristics rather than role. Subsequently, the overall performance may not accurately represent the success of failure of each category.

More than half of the towns studied have grown at a higher rate than the country as a whole. From 1951 – 2006 population of Scotland has risen by 0.26% where as 68% of the case studies have exceeded this rate. Many of those that have grown are situated in regions with a rising population and less isolated locations. For example, Banchory, the town that has grown the most in this study is situated in Aberdeenshire, the region with the greatest rate of growth. It is also a commuter town reliant on its vicinity to a city. However, Neilston, an industrial town with a dwindling population is also situated in a region experiencing major growth. This emphasises that function and purpose play a large part in the success of small towns.

The most prolific period of physical growth in this study was post 1950. 20th century development has tended to take the form of low density suburban housing. From 1950 onward the proportion of people living in towns and cities increased. This was coupled by the emergence of government subsidised housing schemes and volume house building. The impact on small towns has not always been positive with figure grounds revealing a total lack of connection to the central core of the town.

With the changing demographics of Scotland, a further increase in households is predicted with single person households to account for 42% of all housing by 2024. Combined with an ageing population and declining workforce, the 21st century will pose new questions for small towns. This morphological study of offers an insight into the physical form of small towns and the processes that have shaped them. Acknowledging the past will help addressing the challenge of the future.

conclusion

This study has de-constructed fifty Scottish small towns, illustrating through figure ground a graphical record of their physical development and patterns of growth. Parallel historical background research and socio-economic statistics have revealed how the past has impacted on the current formand performance of each settlement today.

The purpose of this study was not to identify what their future is but to distinguish the key elements that have led to past failure or success. Small towns are an important part of the fabric of Scotland, it is vital that the Government invests in these settlements and that future development has a positive rather than a negative impact on them. Key to achieving this is to establish a thorough grasp of the morphological factors that have shaped these towns.

The realm of this study is endless. The next step, 20 Towns Under the Microscope, investigates more common patterns shared by small towns including character assessment to add a further layer of depth to the study and reveal more about the effect the quality of the built environment has on small towns. The combination of An Comann and 20 Small Towns provides and invaluable resource for urban designers, showing that important trends of the past provide the foundation to steer future development whilst respecting the integrity of our towns.

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