

Landscape and place probably best epitomise the kind of things geographers are interested in. And at the local level, landscape and place assume greater significance for us because local landscapes and places represent the most familiar dimensions to our lives. We are born and bred in local landscapes; we come to know them intimately. The shape, size and texture of our first place probably remains with us always. When we move out of it, we continue to remember it. But we also become familiar with other subsequent places. Local landscapes therefore are the common, every-day places we move around in on a regular basis. They are vastly more significant for us than the broader region or state, parts of which we are only familiar with in an infrequent or incomplete manner. On this basis, therefore, the geographical dimension and the geographer's preoccupation with landscape and place is an important added dimension in local studies and local history. For this reason, geographical studies together with history must form an essential part of the educational foundation for young people in Ireland and the proposal to abandon history and geography as core subjects in the second level Junior Cycle in the Republic is a serious mistake.

Localism, local culture, traditions, songs, customs and stories, all are inherently redolent of the geography of place. Much of this localism is central to the distinctiveness of local landscapes and their sense of place. Local studies often spring from a consciousness of the distinctiveness of a local place, a distinctiveness born of interrelationship of landscape and people over time and a need to understand the meaning and significance of the local place or area through time. One of the founding fathers of geography, Friedrich Ratzel, suggested that while it was possible that he could understand New England without knowing the land, he could never understand it without knowing the Puritan immigrants. Sense of place is both social and territorial: it derives its meaning from society and place, a community in a landscape. The landscape bears the marks or inscriptions of the generations who made, modified and transformed it in the past in its buildings, farms and fields, roads and bridges, churches, trees and hedges. For purposes of understanding, the landscape can be divided into its main ingredients of the physical landscape of environmental quality, the human landscape of settlements, and the community which occupies the place and gives it its identity. Combined in a variety of ways, all these elements help to give each place its varying distinctiveness, called by some geographers the personality of place.

II

A fruitful geographical method of undertaking a local study is to examine the evolution, or making, of its landscape: what were the forces or processes

LOCALITY AND CHANGING LANDSCAPE: GEOGRAPHY AND LOCAL HISTORY

P.J. Duffy

Geography is a 'territorial' science. It is concerned with the environment, landscapes and place, the meaning and significance of the location and distribution of aspects of the environment. Whatever about the discipline of history in general, local history suggests a clear territorial emphasis in its study. It places a priority on scale and on locality. The local place and its 'localness', where it is and its connection with other places assume considerable importance. In this sense therefore, local history has considerable affinity with geographical studies.

Geography's role in local historical studies may be characterised by its distinctive objectives, methods and sources. Its object of study is the landscape and its morphology; its method is to examine the making of the landscape in the past and the sources it uses help this process by concentrating especially on those with spatial applications. The following discussion will concentrate broadly on these three themes.

I

One could say that the main preoccupation of the geographer is the landscape context of society or community, that is the landscape which *environs* the community. In fact there are also important social and economic aspects in a community's occupation of the landscape which are of interest to the geographer as well; for example, rich and poor have different territorial and landscape expressions. So it could be said that we are also talking of the societal context of the landscape. An additional important aspect of this societal context is the way different groups – whether classes, interest groups, lobbies – read and represent their landscape. There are different layers of meaning in landscape which will be adverted to later.

which went into its making? We can classify these into a broad range of social and economic processes in the past which might be considered to have had impacts on the landscape. Thus, to take an agricultural example because agriculture has made such a pervasive contribution to landscape development, market demand for beef and butter for the expanding Atlantic trade in the eighteenth century provoked a regional response in Irish farming. In Munster, especially at local level in the rich pastures of east Cork and the Golden Vale, farmers went into dairying. In landscape terms the repercussions might be seen in investment in rearrangement of fields, in buildings in the countryside, in roads and bridges. At local level, the geographer is concerned to show how the landscape impact of broader market forces was mediated through a range of influences and agencies such as local landowners, middlemen tenants, lesser tenants, merchants and traders, churches and government, all of which in various ways influenced the day-to-day running and shaping of the farm and its landscape.

The shaping of the landscape by past generations clearly is of central concern. The local landscape in which the present generation moves is a legacy of past contributions. Its shape, scale, size and distances are legacies of different economic orders when, for example, mobility was lower and the world was local.

Events of the past have assembled people in quite different technical and economic conditions and have thus created economies of scale that still determine the optimal marginal movements of factors of production.¹

The landscape as legacy, therefore, is an important starting concept in local studies. Legacies imply continuities, inertia, as well as slow modifications of earlier contributions. Legacies in the present can be seen as keys to the past. But concentrating exclusively on these inherited qualities of the landscape can be ahistorical in the sense that it can miss out on many processes in the past which have come and gone and left no traces. In some cases relic features in the landscape do reflect aspects of these lost worlds of the past, as for example in the case of the abandoned potato ridges on bleak mountainsides in the west of Ireland, but the flimsy habitations of the poorest classes for hundreds of years have left few clues to their existence.

Figure one attempts to illustrate with examples the major processes which went into the making of the landscape and with suggestions as to how these might be interlinked in their operation. They have been broadly categorised as locational, environmental, economic, cultural, social and ideological processes of change. Each of these processes may be seen to have contributed to landscape development either materially, in the form of, for example, set-

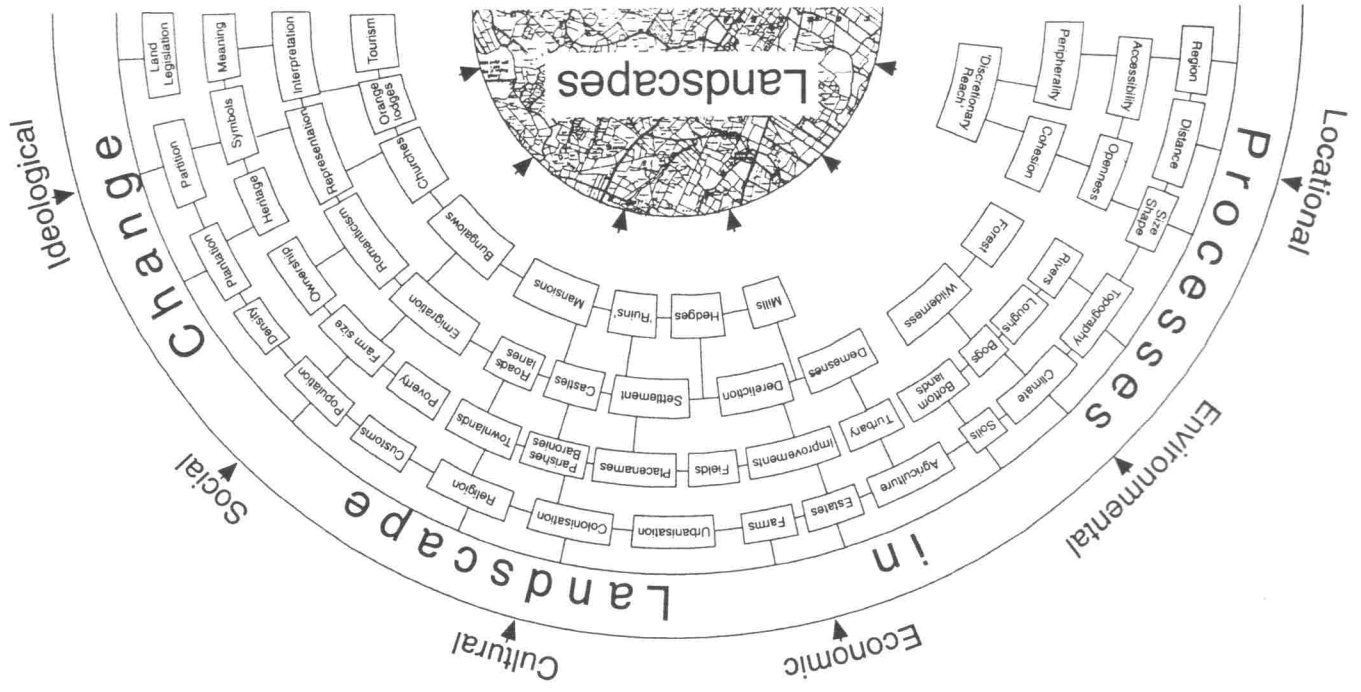


Figure 1: Processes in the making of the landscape. P. J. Duffy

tlement patterns, fields and hedges, townlands, castles, or more indirectly as a consequence of processes such as colonisation, 'improvements', religion, emigration. In this sense, much of the story of local places in the past has a spatial or landscape manifestation. The following pages discuss in turn these various processes of landscape change.

III

'Local-ness' or 'locality' are fundamentally locational qualities. Social and economic processes in the past have been importantly influenced or modified by locational factors. It is impossible to adequately undertake a local study without regard to its locational relationship with other localities and regions, its openness, its resistibility, or its peripherality to change. Locational considerations therefore take account of a broad range of categories to do with an area's strategic position in space and time with regard to impulses for change. Robert Scally, in his study of emigration from a west of Ireland townland, conducted an extended analysis of the significance of Ballykilcline's location in Roscommon and Ireland in the mid nineteenth century: knowledge and isolation were closely connected, leading to the Famine emigrants' understanding and visualisation of the outside world.² In geographical studies, the importance of the process of diffusion in understanding the nature of change has long been understood – the diffusion of innovations for example, emanating from a point of origin outwards through a territory. Thus spatial characteristics like distance and location can have an important bearing on the transfer and reception of new ideas. The concept of distance decay reflects the reduced impact of change processes with distance from a centre of diffusion. In an historical sense, empirical evidence would suggest that most impulses for change, either socially or economically, originated in urban centres and filtered outwards into rural hinterlands. So, for example, the Irish language shows a pattern of retreat westwards from more urbanised regions through the nineteenth century. Information on emigration likewise percolated westwards down the urban hierarchy of fairs and markets, through a network of travelling traders, beggars, and balladeers, much like the battered hats worn as status symbols by the poor peasantry in the west before the Famine:

a generation out of fashion elsewhere, most had adorned more genteel heads before and had finally been picked up for pennies near the end of their half-life from the itinerant peddlers of second-hand goods . . . part of the flotsam and jetsam of the rag trade flowing from east to west circuitously seeking its lowest market where the final drops of profit could be wrung out.³

Thus questions of openness, accessibility and distance from centres of power or centres of change are important. Some of the descriptions of the poor communications in the west of Ireland in the nineteenth century dramatically illustrate the significance of location. John O'Donovan, working for the Ordnance Survey in west Donegal in the 1830s, had to journey through landscapes with neither roads nor bridges.⁴ One of the most dramatic tests of the importance of location in the past was the differential local impact of famine relief measures and the tragic consequences of remoteness.

'Locality' in the past was a more bounded concept, more territorially restricted, than today. Local areas were more inward-looking, independent and self-sufficient, relying on their own indigenous resources whether physical, economic or social. Economic and settlement variations at local level in early modern Ireland often reflected the varying impact of locational factors, and areas of colonial plantation, areas of informal colonial infiltration, and areas of continuing Gaelic control illustrated the workings of distance, continuity, or openness. Unlike today when integration of localities is an everyday reality as well as an objective of EU policy, in past worlds peripherality of location could be of paramount significance for a place. Remote parishes in west Fermanagh or west Mayo up to the late nineteenth century were greatly reliant on their own limited and scarce resources. Only the small number of resident elite could rise above the limitations of location – contrast, for instance, the Big House and its imported stone facade with the peasant's vernacular house of local thatch and clay or stone. The nineteenth century, however, saw the beginnings of a great breakdown in distance as a factor influencing change and the sudden closeness, for example, of Carrickmacross (in Monaghan) to Liverpool, following the development of the steam packet and the railway, can be contrasted with the continuing remoteness of towns in west Mayo or Donegal.

IV

It is a truism that environmental factors in the past rated more highly in a local community's everyday life than in today's world of industrial agriculture and motorised landscapes. Human communities existed in a close symbiotic relationship with the physical environment of rocks, soils and plant cover. The rich Gaelic heritage of toponyms is a reflection of priorities in landscape perceptions in the distant past – *cor, drum, cluain*, for example, all were names with significance for landuse potential. Human settlement, therefore, was intimately bound up with quality of environment. By the time the various waves of colonists had arrived in Ireland, whether in the twelfth

or sixteenth centuries, earlier occupants had to a great extent identified land-use potential, and Norman or Tudor or Stuart planters could fairly readily cherry-pick Gaelic or monastic pastures and granges.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, surveys were undertaken to establish the extent and nature of the environmental resources available for settlement and development in Ireland. Inventories of landscape potential reflected colonial intent and, as Raymond Gillespie points out for east Ulster in the late sixteenth century, data on agricultural land, fisheries and woods were assiduously collected as a preliminary to a programme of settlement and plantation. William Smith's survey of the barony of Farney in south Monaghan for the earl of Essex in 1611 listed 1,458 acres of woods, 336 acres of bog, and good turbary, fourteen large lakes full of pike and eels, limestone for building and a stream suitable for an eighteen-foot mill wheel at Carrickmacross.⁵ Many surveys of the seventeenth century, especially the Civil Survey of 1654, endeavoured with some success to outline land quality, separating arable from wasteland. For example, in the barony of Salt, according to the Civil Survey for Kildare:

the soyle is generally moist and specially the meadowe grounds pastures and underwoods. The arrable land in ye said Barony being well manured will yield good corne. The south part is somewhat hilly and mountainous but is held to be good pasture for cattle. . . .⁶

Later the eighteenth-century preoccupation with 'improvements' is echoed in the Rev. William Henry's assessment of west Fermanagh in 1739:

not much of it is profitable for tillage, the cold clay lying so near the surface in most places that scarce any manure will meliorate it. Sand and lime are found the most effectual marle had been often tried but in vain. Besides the exceeding dampness of the air prevents corn from ripening till late in the season by which means it is often destroyed. The last of the harvest is often out till the middle of October.⁷

Griffith's Valuation in the middle of the nineteenth century was the ultimate effort by central government to catalogue the land and property of Ireland for taxation purposes, and was one of a number of examples of Victorian obsession with data accumulation. It records and values the environmental resources of Ireland at the end of more than two centuries of reclamation and husbandry of varying intensities in all the localities of Ireland.

In this age of the deregulation of economies, it is possible to apply the principle of comparative advantage retrospectively to consider the links between local social and economic conditions and environments in the past.

In a situation of little or no centralised intervention in local economies, as was the case for most localities up to the nineteenth century, each district strove to reach its maximum potential according to its physical endowment.

Areas poor in natural resources, such as good soils or favourable climatic conditions, were under-developed and impoverished in comparison with more richly endowed regions. Thus parishes in the west of Ireland since the seventeenth century developed largely as nurturing areas for young cattle which were moved eastwards to the fatlands and ports. Alternatively, they participated in the early spinning stages in domestic textile processing, feeding their output eastwards into the yarn markets. As the agricultural and cottage industry came under pressure in the early nineteenth century, western parishes also became nurturing areas for growing numbers of young people who the local economy could not absorb and who had to migrate eastwards in search of work in Ireland or beyond. In this colonial-type setting, therefore, a perverse kind of environmental logic attached to the marginal lands of Ireland where an escalating imbalance between labour and economic resources – population and land – had developed by the early 1800s. Poverty, squatting and squalor were associated with boglands and badlands throughout the island by the 1840s.

V

Environmental conditions merge imperceptibly into economic processes of change in the landscape, macro economic forces operating through micro-processes at local level. For example, the repercussions of colonialism, mercantilism or industrial capitalism – articulated through state legislation like the Act of Settlement, Cattle Acts, Navigation Acts and Factory Acts – were filtered into the rural recesses of the landscape, the bogs and meadowlands, the river valleys and mountainsides.

As an aid to understanding the making of the Irish landscape and the myriad localities which comprised it, the landed estates system represents a useful framework. Although the landowning class was by no means homogeneous, as a fairly universal system which evolved throughout the island, it is a sort of territorial template with which to interpret the transforming impact of macro-economic processes in local landscapes. Undoubtedly, at local level important sectors of the community fell outside the structure of the estates and in some areas the estates were so ephemeral as to be almost non-existent, yet their structure, clear or opaque, can be used to interpret negative or positive influences on change. In the idealised model, the estate management responded to wider economic processes by mustering its resources and matching its rents to prices. The rent-paying tenants

beliefs.¹¹ The Irish Folklore Commission, later the Department of Irish Folklore in University College, Dublin, has been for seventy years quietly assembling an enormous data collection on all aspects of Irish local community culture and some ways of using this are suggested by Linda May Ballard's essay below.

The process of subdivision and naming local places and territories must be among some of the most pervasive aspects in the building of landscapes in the past. Past landscape order and organisation, for example, are reflected in house, farmyard, 'street', fields, farmholding, townland and parish. These represent sequences in the creation of places by the people who occupied these locales in the past and collectively they contribute to the differences in texture of landscape from one place to another. The sense of place is a cultural and emotional amalgam of the familiar 'feel' and experience of the shapes, curves and angles of farmyard, byre, headland, townland and hill. A spatial step upwards from the farm are the townlands, units of supreme importance in the Irish cultural landscape.¹² They have been cartographically recorded for posterity in shape and name from the seventeenth century and form important building blocks in attempts to understand the morphology of the local landscape. Whatever about the landed estate as a unit of landscape interpretation, the townland has been the container within which landholding and landscape changes have waxed and waned for centuries as W. H. Crawford's essay below suggests. The parish has also represented the community's territorial expression – a place of neighbours, kin, marriage alliances and community solidarity. There is evidence of discontinuity in parish settlement patterns following the Reformation, and the eighteenth-century re-emergence of Catholic parish centres is reflected in hundreds of lonely stranded graveyards and ivy-clad church ruins in the middle of fields in many countrysides. In Protestant-planted Ulster regions, the older units established in the Gaelic period seem to have largely survived for the Protestant and Catholic populations through to the present.¹³

The minute naming of places and farmsteads radiating out from the farmhouse is a reflection of the more crowded and local landscapes of the past, as well as a memorial to those past generations who manhandled the rocks and clay of their home places. Unfortunately, most of the intimate local names are now forgotten in emptier and tractored landscapes: many of the fields which were given homely names with local significance have themselves been removed, and the owners of the land have no need or use for such local labelling. Many of the names recorded in this century are emblematic of a recent past when Irish was a familiar and living language in places where it is now long forgotten. In one north Monaghan parish, for example, there were

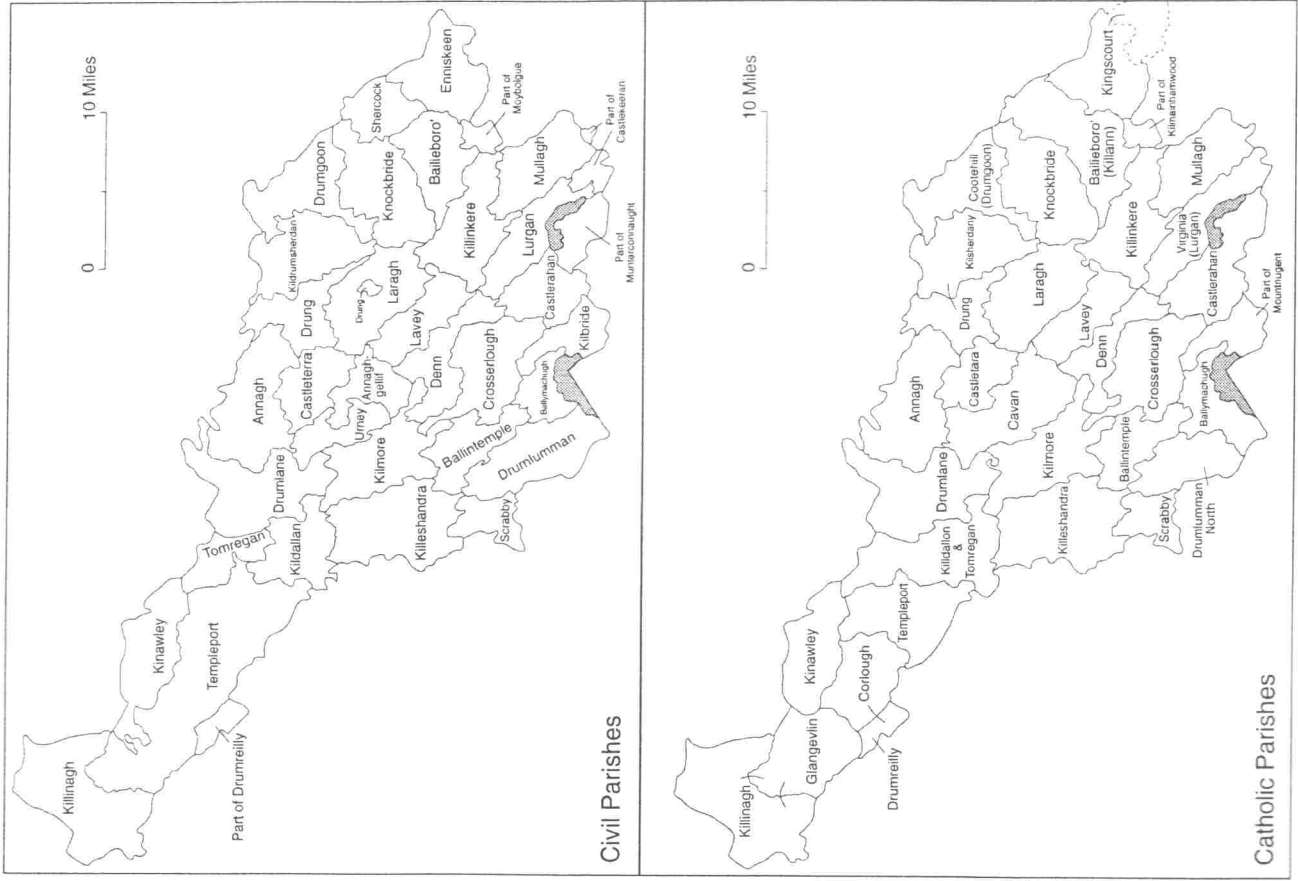


Figure 3: Civil and Catholic parishes in the diocese of Clogher.

fields in the early twentieth century with names like *Páirc tóin na mbó*, *Garrdha na gcrann*, *Garrdha na heorna*, *Páirc éadain*, *Páirc an fheir*, *Poll na Fola*, *An Spinné*, *Poll na steall*, *Garrdha na bplandaí*. In another parish in the middle of Monaghan, most of the names were in English, or variants of forgotten Irish – the smoothing iron, the footstick field, the black garden, the carrycar, the parawhack, the baychin, glenmore, the cowan, the rassan.¹⁴

The townland names outside the area of Anglo-Norman manorial settlement reflect a Gaelic past which placed a high priority on pastoral agricultural land potential. John O'Donovan speculated in the 1830s that it is possible that many of the names of units of great territorial antiquity might be relatively recent, suggesting, for example, that names like Lisnagore, Lisnalee or Rakeeragh in the Monaghan parish of Aghnamullen, are probably modern associations (with goats, calves and sheep) applied to local ring forts. Some of the most interesting cultural transitions in landscapes occur across the old frontiers around the Pale, where there are sometimes quite abrupt changes from the English prefixes *castle*, *court*, *grange*, *grove* and the ubiquitous suffix *-town* to the overwhelming Gaelic names of south Ulster and the west midlands.¹⁵

In sharp contrast to the workaday folk landscapes were the exotically named landscapes of leisure of the eighteenth-century ascendancy and land-owning class. The Romantic Movement especially resulted in fanciful, often 'frenchified' names such as Belle Field, Beaulieu, Belvedere, Dolly Mount (later Delamont, in county Down), Mount Tally-Ho (later Montalto also in Down) and places called after wives or daughters such as Bessmount, Annesborough or Bettyford.¹⁶ Many of these demesne landscapes came equipped with 'pleasure grounds', follies, ornamental ruins like the Gothick arch in Belvedere county Westmeath, artificial lakes, evocations in the landscape of very different lifestyles and cultural priorities to those of the local population.

VII

Among the most important social influences in the making of the landscape was the population. The most significant modifications of the landscape were made during the most crowded period in the history of the Irish countryside. Half a million kilometres of hedges were laid down during the century before the Famine. Rural population density was connected with the farm structure, in which the day-to-day mechanics of rural landscape change were undertaken. Small farms had small fields, most dramatically reflected in the gardens of Connemara. The highest population density was associated

inevitably with the smallest farms: one square mile of five- to ten-acre farms in 1841 would have contained up to one hundred farmhouses, each with perhaps up to six occupants. This would have characterised much of south Ulster or parts of west Mayo. Contrast this with the comparatively empty landscapes of most of Kildare and Meath where a square mile might have been divided into farms between fifty and one hundred acres comprising ten or a dozen farmhouses. Together with perhaps a handful of labourer cabins this would amount to little more than fifty people.

Population experience is therefore a useful surrogate indicator of landscape experience, and the accretion and augmentation of the pre-Famine period of population expansion was matched by a process of dereliction and landscape contraction which followed decades of continuous population decline. Kevin Whelan graphically describes this process in west Mayo:

The tenacious combination of potato and lazy bed had allowed cultivation to spread into even the most unpropitious locations. The tide of population which flowed into these valleys and up the hillsides ebbed rapidly during and after the Famine and today these withered scars on the landscape, quilted under heather and bracken, compose their own oblique requiem to the crowded generations of pre-famine Ireland... eight million people who had by 1841 surged into every conceivable nook and cranny.¹⁷

The most marginal landscapes were abandoned first as the line of settlement retreated progressively downhill. Due to the peculiarity of demographic decline, where migration especially was a slow generationally-selective process, there was a time-lag between abandonment of land and population decline. Only during crises like the Famine were houses and farms abandoned suddenly, though John Healy documented hurried departures from east Mayo in the bleak years of the 1950s. The norm was a gradual imperceptible running-down of landscape. First one house, then another closed, with lanes, drains and hedgerows gradually becoming derelict and overgrown.

Another important aspect of social change in local landscapes relates to landholding. To what extent did peasant proprietorship, as it has been called, affect landscape change? Following the late nineteenth-century Land Acts, the farmers had achieved the ultimate stake in the landscape – ownership of the land, masters inside their own fences. Did removal of the pressure of gale days change their relationship with the landscape? Raymond Crotty thought it did, and for the worse.¹⁸ Farm consolidation went hand-in-hand with rural population decline, but as with settlement contraction, there was no immediate correspondence between them. A consequence of owner occupiership

was land immobility: a great many small holdings in poorer emigration-prone regions of the west continued in the possession of families long after they had emigrated. In the 1950s and 1960s it was possible to pick out these unworked and unoccupied farms with their rush-infested fieldscapes. It was also sometimes possible to identify in the landscapes of the north-west another by-product of rural social change from the post-Famine decades. This was the bachelor farm, a demographic consequence of postponed marriage and permanent celibacy in circumstances of rural poverty, where there was neither the incentive of rent nor the motivation of family to maintain the landscape legacy of the farm.

VIII

Enlarged or diminished, embellished or purified, lengthened or abbreviated, the past becomes more and more a foreign country, yet also increasingly tinged with present colours.¹⁹

The lesson today is that there is a constant revision of the past, re-interpretations arising from or fitting into the ideologies of the present day. The very designation of 'interpretative centre' implies the processing and packaging of versions of the past, a past which is more and more separated from the people today. Indeed the peculiar needs of tourism result in a process of commodification which is characterised by distinctive social constructions of landscapes and societies in the past, which may be represented, for example, as places of happiness, wholesomeness and authenticity, symbolised by sparkling thatched cottages or gentrified Georgian mansions. Local history, perhaps, offers greater scope to keep in touch with the past, *our* past which belongs to us rather than being a foreign place. It is part of the story and the memory of the people who lived in a very familiar place. The geographical reality of the local past, therefore, is an important key to maintaining contact with the past of the local place and, in one way, knowing its past in this way deepens the knowledge and understanding of the local landscape.

It might appear, however, that the story of the landscape (the geography) is less amenable to ideological distortion than the story of events (the history): the landscape cannot be blamed for some of the happenings in it in the past! But, as the preceding discussion has shown, the landscape story is also a layered and complex one. The cultural geographer Meinig has said that 'any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but also what lies in our heads'.²⁰ The processes which went into the making of the landscape are open to interpretation in different ways by different people. At local level, for example, the farmer's and the labourer's perspectives on their land-

scapes may be quite different. Similarly it is interesting to consider how the landowning ascendancy perceived their landscapes from their vantage of houses and demesnes: in the pre-Famine period in the works of Maria Edgeworth, for example; in the late nineteenth century in the works of Somerville and Ross; in the 1930s in the writings of Elizabeth Bowen perhaps; and more recently, in the writings of Molly Keane or the views of Desmond Leslie of Glaslough or Lord Altamont in Westport. At local level of course, their views and their landscapes and what they symbolise are still regarded with suspicion by sections of the community. The local landscape, therefore, is a text that is open to a variety of interpretations.

IX

Much of the foregoing discussion of approaches to studying the historical geography of local areas relies on a variety of sources which are particularly used by the geographer, such as maps and surveys, sources with a strong territorial dimension, particularly ones which allow cross sections in time, as well as field surveys and other material which help illuminate landscape and place. Art and literature, for example, can also provide valuable insights to the sense of place and the distinctive character of local landscapes.

It is important to understand the meaning of maps because on this will hang understanding of their limitations and uses. Maps are essentially representations of part of the earth's surface, in which symbols are used to indicate the presence, extent and shape of different items (such as buildings) or characteristics (such as altitude or environmental quality) in the landscape. There are two other significant characteristics of maps: as symbolic representations maps can only show selections or parts of the landscape reality, and related to this, the area depicted is a scaled down version of reality. Maps, like writing and language, are an important symbolic part of living and so it is appropriate that they should form part of local studies. We use maps almost unconsciously, because we live territorially. Our place and our behaviour is spatial and so one of our basic tools of communication should be some form of representation of this spatial dimension to our lives – today and in the past.

Maps can be useful firstly as documents or sources of data in themselves and, secondly, as a means of presenting data in a local area study. As data sources, maps in Ireland reflect the distinctive nature of the Irish past: the struggle for the land of Ireland whether as a colonial prize by settlers, as a family possession by an elite or as a rented peasant holding has meant that the land, its boundaries and other cadastral features are fairly well recorded and care-

fully preserved locally. Other aspects of the landscape, such as its suite of settlement and communications net are only incidentally recorded before the Ordnance Survey of the nineteenth century.

As sources of data of use to the local historian, topographic and administrative maps have different potential uses. In Ireland there is a range of map documents which have considerable topographical use and which have been comprehensively studied and catalogued by John Andrews.²¹ Paul Ferguson's *Irish Map History* is a good guide to where to begin looking although new maps are being discovered fairly regularly.²² Irish maps begin with the great state-sponsored land mapping surveys which accompanied the various plantation schemes of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for instance, the maps of the Ulster Plantation and the Down Survey.²³

With the consolidation and economic development of estates in the eighteenth century came a range of privately commissioned estate surveys. These date mainly from the middle of the eighteenth century. The greatest exponents of this craft were John Rocque, who came over to Ireland in 1754 to make a map of Dublin and set up a surveying business there with his son-in-law Bernard Scalé. There are many more inferior estate maps which are often useful for the local detail they provide. Estate maps with other estate papers provide only a patchy coverage, with a concentration obviously on the larger and better-managed properties.

Just as the surveying profession was coming into its own in producing comprehensive maps of estates by the early nineteenth century, the state intervened. In response to the growing land and population problem and the need to produce an equitable Poor Law land tax, the government established the Ordnance Survey which began in the 1830s to produce the most comprehensive cartographic survey of the landscape for the first time. The six-inch survey, which fortunately predated the great Famine and the resulting widescale transformation of many local landscapes, remains as an important monument to pre-Famine landscape studies. The one-inch scale and the town plans are other useful sources for the later nineteenth-century landscapes.²⁴

Apart from topographic information, maps also provide important information on the territorial organisation of the landscape, especially as it is organised into administrative and territorial structures. The Townland Index map is one of the most useful maps produced. It originated as an index to the six-inch survey and at this stage has become a poorly reproduced and largely obsolete map in the Republic, although it is an important and intimate document of the shape of the countryside, particularly the network of townlands. For the local historian these administrative units are important

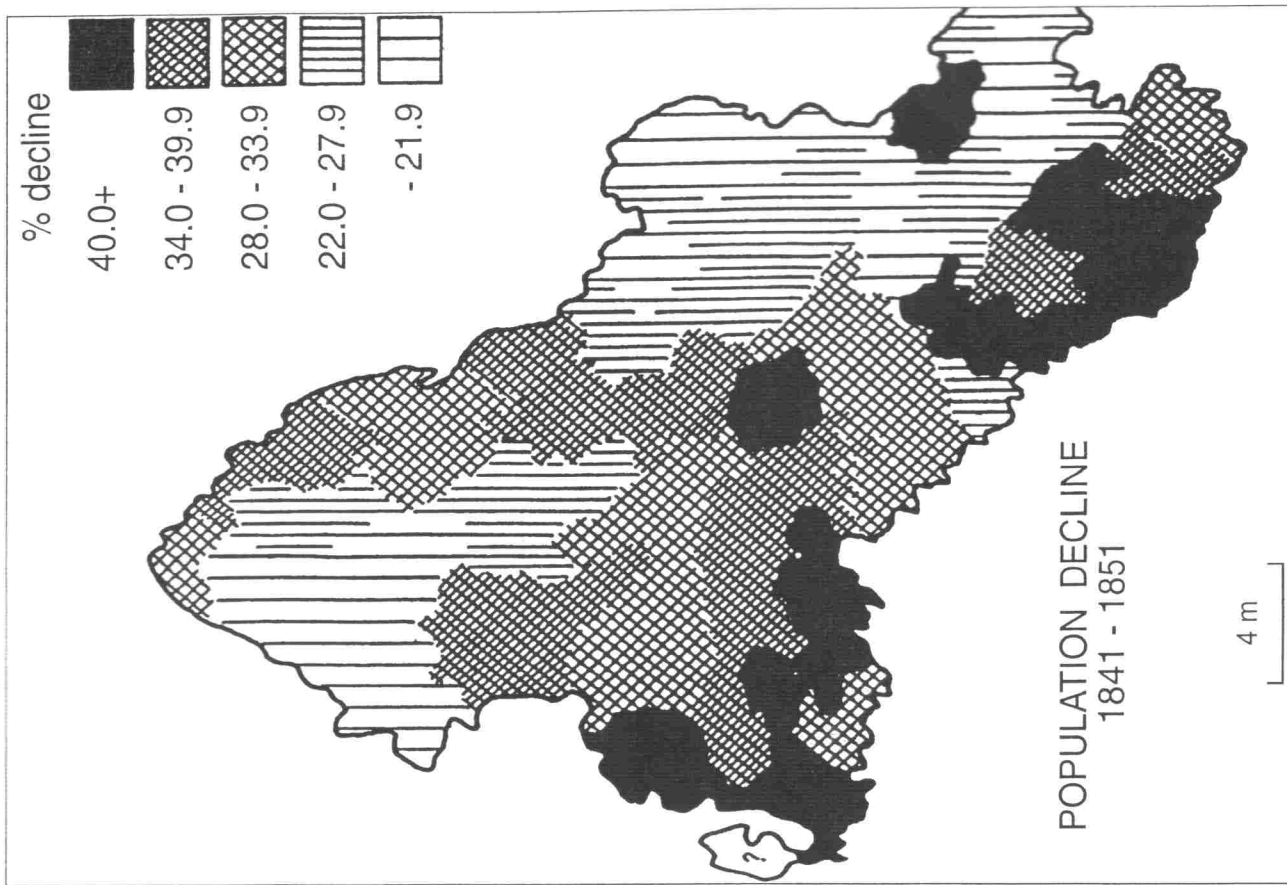


Figure 4: Population decline by electoral division, county Monaghan.

information sources and important containers of data. This is especially true of the nineteenth and to a lesser extent the eighteenth century: data on a range of subjects were collected on a townland, parish, barony or Rural District basis and can be retrieved in this form.

The other principal use of maps is as a means of presenting data. Though cartographic representation is especially associated with geographers, it is a useful means of illustrating spatial aspects of a study. These kinds of maps are distinguished by their concentration on a restricted and focused theme, unlike the topographical maps which include a broad range of information. Thematic maps in this sense can be qualitatively or quantitatively descriptive. They may be locational or non-numeric (showing the location of points or patterns) or numeric (showing ranges or intensities of values over an area). In most cases, the type of map presentation will be dictated by the requirements of the study. Locational maps may be generalised versions of data obtained from topographical maps such as, for example, the road network extracted from a nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey map, or data collected in the field such as the distribution of ring forts. Quantitative-type maps take data from another documentary source such as the census, and present them often in administrative divisions, for example, population density by Electoral Divisions. Shadings (or choropleths) are used to distinguish one value in one area from another as in the case of population change (figure four).

Apart from maps, the most popular sources which have been widely used by historical geographers have been those which have assembled recorded data comprehensively by territorial unit. When available, these are especially useful in constructing cross-sectional profiles of landscapes. Examples which have been used to throw light on the evolution of landholding and landownership have been the mid-seventeenth-century Civil Survey and the Books of Survey and Distribution, as well as the Tithe Applotment Books and Griffith's Valuation of the nineteenth century. Geographers have been especially interested in the Valuation and the manuscript cancellation books in the Valuation Office and in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland for the light they cast on post-Famine landholding and population experience at local level. T. W. Freeman studied nineteenth-century population patterns in Ireland by using the detailed census reports from 1841, and he produced one of the most comprehensive maps of rural population density in Ireland for 1841.²⁵ The household enumeration forms from the 1901 and 1911 censuses have also proven extremely popular as sources for local population dynamics. These are among the assets of the local historian in Ireland which help to counter some of the negative consequences of the destruction of so many documents in 1922. In Northern Ireland, Estyn Evans established

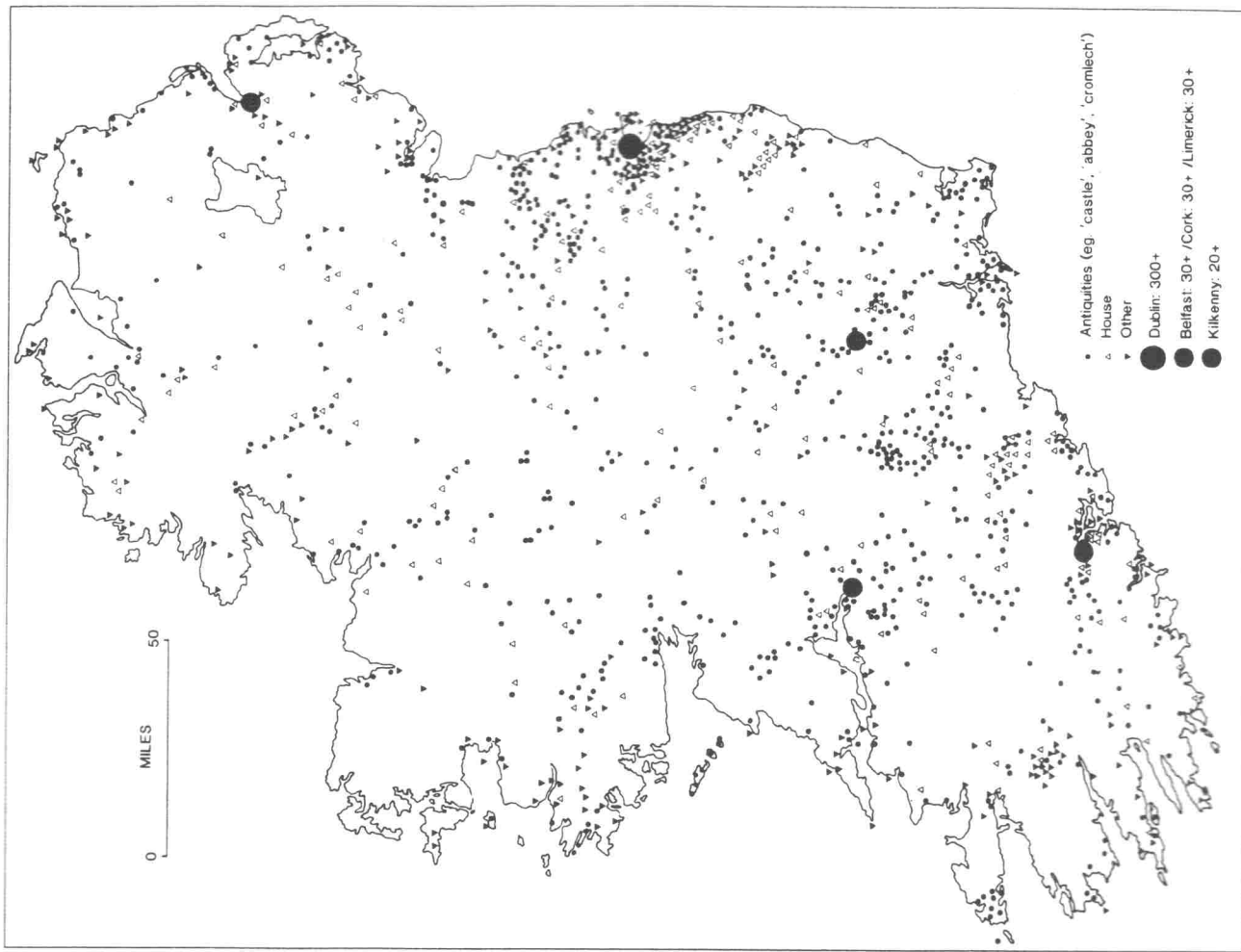


Figure 5: The locations of 'views' in Irish prints published up to 1850.

an abiding interest in the rural cultural landscape, especially rural settlement and buildings, based on a sound field survey tradition. Evans and his successors have mapped ring fort and rural settlement patterns throughout Ireland, which have recently been updated and supplemented by the extensive field surveys of the Office of Public Works in the Republic and the Archaeological Survey of Northern Ireland.

Artistic sources such as paintings, photographs and literature often contain important representations of landscapes in the past. However, while landscape paintings, for example, might seem at first sight to be of obvious value in depicting what a landscape looked like in the past, one needs to be alert to the special nature of these sources and the subjectivity and biases of the painter or recorder. 'Rose-tinted imagery' frequently characterised these depictions of landscape and many places were painted in a manner which would please a client or sell at an exhibition.²⁶ In addition, like estate maps, landscape art is a fragmentary and patchy source, with some types of area or landscape proving more popular than others. Urban fringe areas, demesnes and parklands and popular tourist areas in the eighteenth century are often especially rich in these views (figure five). Similarly, photograph collections are also often selective, with towns and villages, for example, being more popular than many open countryside.

Literature such as novels and poetry also often offer uniquely interesting perspectives on landscapes and countrysides in the past as Myrtle Hill shows below. These include formal works of creative literature such as Kickham's *Knocknagom* and Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* or Sam Hanna Bell's *December Bride*, all of which in various ways capture the ambience and sense of place of the regions in which they are located. Indeed novels about the past written in the present are often useful sources, so powerful is the insight of the artist in many cases. An examples of this genre would be J. G. Farrell's *Troubles*. The poetry of Yeats, Kavanagh, Heaney, MacNeice and many others offer important reflections on their local landscapes to the extent that these regions are frequently identified with the names of their distinguished authors: Yeats Country, Kavanagh Country, Goldsmith Country for example.

Knowing one's place, its landscape and social identity, is an increasingly respectable preoccupation today, in great contrast with thirty or more years ago when such interests were seen as parochial, backward and irrelevant. Nowadays, cherishing local cultural distinctiveness is a valid political objective, and thanks to tourism, it has a viable economic potential.

Local studies represent the academic response to these dawning realities. Ironically, one of the principal reasons for the growth in interest in local studies is probably the extent and speed of change in the last generation, a process

of homogenisation and modernisation of society and economy which has obliterated or vastly simplified the complex geographies and histories of local places. Technology has resulted in a sort of spatial closure in life and landscape. The territorial structure of rural society in Ireland has been transformed from a highly complex localised framework. The hierarchy of localities, or pyramid of places where local was dominant – from house to yard, to field, farm, village, townland, to parish and beyond – has been inverted. Territorialisation, at local level reflected in an intimately detailed information field, has been simplified or abandoned. In many ways, life is now lived more intensely at a regional, national and international level than ever before. The ultimate expression of this process is reflected in e-mail and the World Wide Web: 'networking' at international rather than local levels.

Paralleling this abandonment of local worlds is a selective appropriation of these places and their pasts, especially by the city, where more and more of the policy-makers, as well as the consumers of landscape, now live. This is represented especially in the all-embracing needs of the tourism industry, which through heritage tourism, for example, commodifies and packages local cultural diversity and its stories and pasts to suit the transient fancies and fads of tourism. Local studies, therefore, have a responsibility and opportunity to recover and defend the integrity of the local community and landscape.

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