



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Mhúad

**RECENT CHANGE IN IRELAND'S RURAL PERIPHERARY:
A CASE STUDY OF GWEEDORE**

Eimear Breheny

Supervisor: Mr. Proinnsias Breathnach

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ABSTRACT

Recent Change in Ireland's Rural Periphery: A Case Study of Gweedore.

Rapid economic growth in Ireland, commonly referred to as The Celtic Tiger, has led to major changes within the State. Social and economic inequalities have increased significantly, with strong discrepancies emerging between the urban and rural environments. This thesis investigates the type, and level of these disparities in relation to the Northwest, rural, region of Gweedore, Co.Donegal. To begin with, the demographic and socio-economic features of a rural area were documented in order to discover the necessary variables by which to gauge Gweedore. A number of methods are then incorporated to measure the disparities and characteristics of this study area, and how they have changed over the years. Quantitative research, by way of questionnaires and census data, gave concise demographic and socio-economic patterns on a number of levels which enabled comparisons to be made on various levels. Past, present and proposed developments were revealed through interviews with agencies working in Gweedore. This qualitative analysis also unveiled the problems of the area, as perceived by the different organisations. From the various research methods employed, it became clear that Gweedore diverges somewhat from a typical rural area. The final section of this thesis presents the area's potential, in light of the obstacles it faces.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Interest for this thesis arose from rural courses taken in both Geography and Sociology at an undergraduate level. The discipline illustrated the problems facing rural communities in Ireland and how these issues have gathered momentum over the years, re-enforcing and creating regional disparities.

It became clear that the rural communities, especially those on the periphery, are facing a crisis. Publications and studies reveal features of decline, common to rural areas. Gweedore, one of the strongest Gaeltacht regions, was noted in some literatures (e.g. Walsh 1996, Mc Hugh 2001) as exhibiting certain divergences from the typical characteristics demonstrated by rural regions i.e. demographically and economically. With these observations in mind and having an affiliation with the area, the researcher decided to conduct a study on Gweedore.

The main aim of the thesis is to investigate

- the changes experienced in Gweedore in the last few years and how they compare to those occurring at different levels throughout the nation
- the future prospect of the area and its peoples.

Chapter Two contains the first objective of the thesis. Here the traits associated with rural Ireland are highlighted which equip the researcher with the necessary variables to investigate Gweedore.

In Chapter Three, census information from 1961-1996 is used to produce a profile of the study area. Gweedore's performance is outlined by comparing its characteristics to those exhibited at a county, regional and national level.

The research methods incorporated in this thesis are the focus of Chapter Four.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the questionnaire survey, completed by 159 residents in the area. This divulges information regarding, among other things, the destination of past and present migrants, which is unattainable from the Censuses.

Chapter 6 represents a deeper exploration into the socio-economic and demographic profile of Gweedore with the help of qualitative data, by way of interviews. Perceived problems, past and present are documented. The chapter also focuses on the type of policies being implemented to alleviate difficulties within the study area.

As the concluding Chapter of the thesis, Chapter 7 provides an overview of the research findings. The main strengths and weaknesses of Gweedore, as divulged from the investigation, are presented. The final part of the Chapter focuses on the perceived future of this Northwest, peripheral region.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 – Introduction:

The intention of this chapter is to present some of the thinking on rurality on a general scale and to discuss some of the characteristics of rural Ireland as documented in the various literature

Defining Rurality:

Writers such Ilbery (1998), Mc Hugh (2001) and Robinson (1994) note that rurality lacks precise definition. The meaning of rural varies within both academia and public policy making across the globe. Pacione (1984:3) agreed that the search for a clear-cut definition of rural has proven to be an “elusive goal”. He noted that census information regarding population size is generally used to define a rural area. But, as Robinson (1994:10) noted, the official definition of rural and urban employed by different countries varies immensely.

“For example, at one extreme, Switzerland regards communes of 10000 inhabitants or less as being rural, whereas the critical limit in Norway is under 200 inhabitants”

The National Spatial Strategy report defines rural, in Ireland, as:

“ District Electoral Divisions (DEDs) with no population centre above 1,500 people, with a population density below 150 per sq.km, and which are not part of an urban district or borough, i.e. it broadly refers to open countryside and rural villages”.

(National Spatial Strategy Report 2000)

Traditionally, the type of settlement pattern (i.e. dispersed) and the presence of a strong agricultural base identified a rural area and provided a strong contrast to the high density, clustered environment of the urban area. However this distinction has proved problematic. In recent years as rural regions have experienced a major transformation, which accompany and reflect the trends in the world economy.

Mc Hugh (2001:7) documented this change as:

“the diminished role for agriculture in rural areas, the changing nature of non-agricultural activities (growth of service economy), the changing uses

(economical, recreational, residential, conservational) of rural space, and the associated processes of social recomposition, demographic adjustment and changing settlement patterns”.

Accompanying this change is the move away from the traditional, descriptive, spatially deterministic and locally orientated approach towards social constructionist approaches. The various discussions on rurality are relevant in the anticipation and understanding of rural issues and proved a necessary starting block to this research.

2.2 – Characteristics of Rural Areas.

Studies conducted on rurality (Cawley and Keane (1989), Robinson (1994), Pacione (1984)) and published reports (NESC 97) focus on the process of change and the problems facing rural regions. From these it was possible to identify common themes in relation to rural areas.

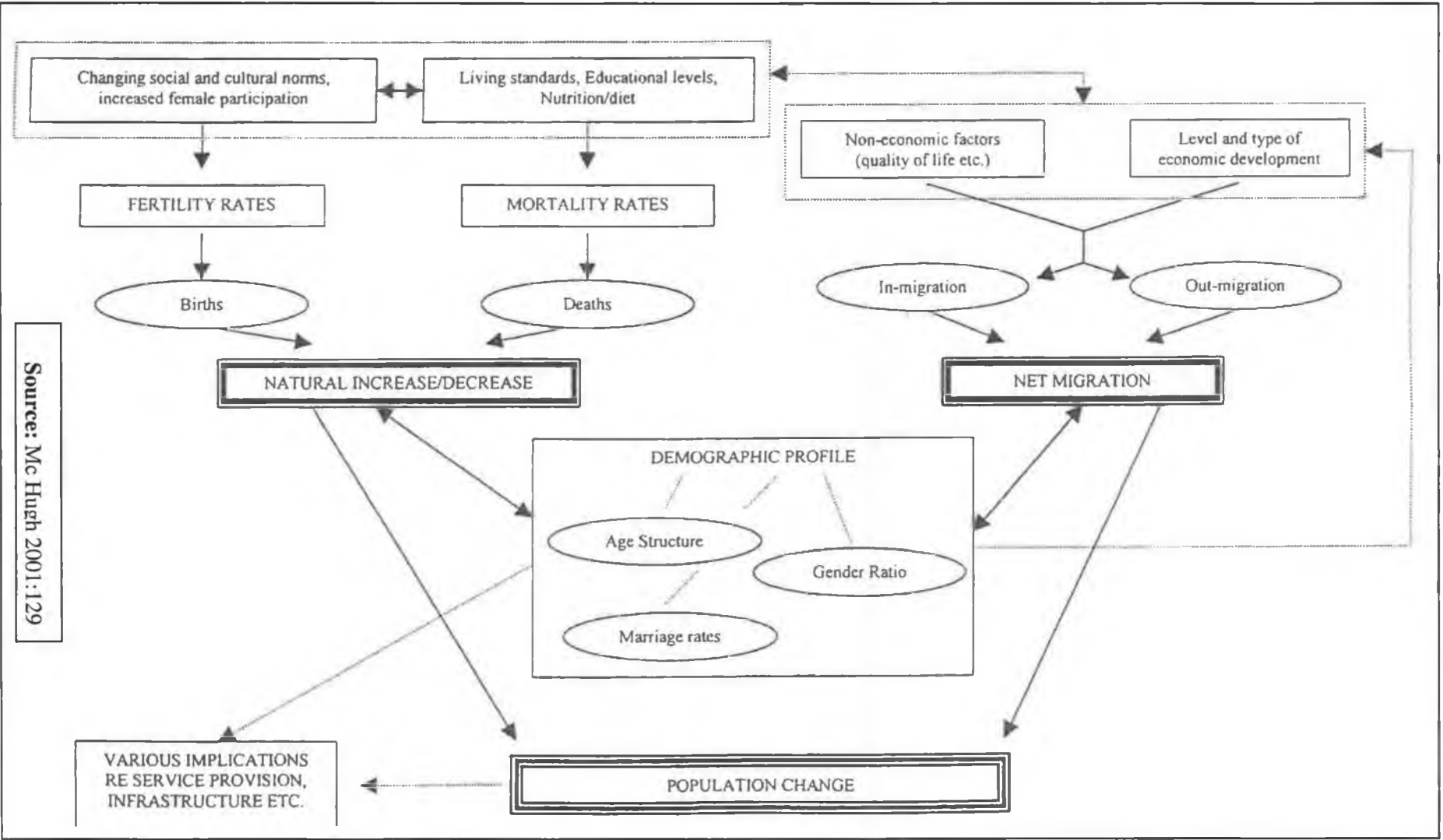
Cawley (1989) discusses the general concern for rural areas as advocated by national governments and the EU. She notes that many areas of the countryside contain sizeable populations which lag behind their urban counterparts along a range of social and economic indicators. Cawley refers to studies which use various indicators to identify regional disparities (such as Boyce and Mc Cashin 1982). The indicators used included employment opportunities and income, educational attainment, housing standards, transport availability and general demographic structures. These variables strongly influence the quality of life the inhabitants' experience and have been used in the study of rural areas.

Shuttleworth et al (2000) studied unemployment and social exclusion in Donegal noting that the sustainability of the Irish rural economy is intrinsically linked to a mix of occupations, services and infrastructure. Taking from the NESC report 97, “New Approaches to Rural Development”, a number of inter-related problems were identified in relation to rural regions. These are a lack of employment opportunities, unemployment, low incomes/poverty, inadequate levels of amenity and service provision, environmental decay, under-utilisation of productive resources and an absolute population decrease. This provided a good framework for my study of Gweedore.

The study (Shuttleworth *et al.*2000) omitted the Gaeltacht communities as they were associated with their own set of unique problems i.e. integrating and promoting development while maintaining the indigenous culture and language. However it did give a good synopsis of the employment problems in Donegal which the researcher could use in her study of the Gaeltacht region of Gweedore i.e. its peripheral location, lack of industrial investment, hidden unemployment and unemployment.

From this study one can see that the process and changes underpinning rural life are multidimensional as economic, socio-cultural and demographic adjustments take place simultaneously and in a highly inter-linked fashion. Mc Hugh devised a diagram illustrating this point (Fig.2.2.1)

Fig 2.2.1 – Components of population change and background influential factors generating spatial differentiation.



Source: Mc Hurch 2001:129

Even though the processes involved are complex, this chapter attempts to present the pattern of demographic change associated with rural Ireland as documented by researchers such as Mc Hugh (2001) and Walsh (1995). Many variables and processes are used in their discussion of rural Ireland from the easily measurable (e.g. demographic trends) to behavioural patterns (e.g. reasons for migration). The multitude of factors proved impossible to gauge in this thesis due to time constraints and so the author of this thesis decided upon eight characteristics by which to discuss rural Ireland and Gweedore. These are:

1. Gender
2. Age structure
3. Fertility rates
4. Migration
5. Employment and Infrastructure
6. Education
7. Dependency ratio
8. Social class

Rural regions in Ireland demonstrate similarities in each category, which have been well documented (Breathnach 1983, Cawley 1988, Creton 1991, Walsh 1995, Mc Hugh 2001). The next section briefly presents these similarities and trends.

2.3 – Characteristics of change and problems associated with Rural Ireland

Population is the starting point for many rural studies as it dictates the type of services and hence lifestyle of its residents. As NES 97 (1994:59) pointed out the viability of a service depends on its accessibility to a clientele large enough to make it attractive to the investor. This is also the case for public service provision, which is most cheaply and effectively provided in areas of concentrated population. Rural areas lack these attributes favourable to a high quality provision of service. Depopulation of these areas has been contributing to a growing weakness in the infrastructure network over the last few decades in rural Ireland. Therefore population is a major issue of concern. Hence factors which contribute to the depleting population of rural Ireland

such as migration and a lack of employment opportunities require much discussion and developmental planning. The following provides a brief synopsis of the characteristics and problems associated with the rural regions in Ireland.

2.3.1. - Gender

Males generally outnumber females in rural areas with a high concentration of females found in and around urban areas such as Dublin and Cork. Horner (1987) noted that there were typically 900 females to every 1000 males in rural areas.

2.3.2 - Age structure

Table 2.3.1 – Percentage distribution of persons in each Regional Authority Area, classified by age group 1986,1991, 1996.

| Region | 0-14 | | | 15-24 | | | 25-44 | | | 45-64 | | | 65+ | | |
|-------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 86 | 91 | 96 | 86 | 91 | 96 | 86 | 91 | 96 | 86 | 91 | 96 | 86 | 91 | 96 |
| Dublin | 26.9 | 26.8 | 27 | 32.9 | 32.5 | 31.5 | 30.3 | 30.9 | 31.6 | 28.9 | 29.2 | 28.7 | 23.7 | 24.5 | 25.4 |
| Mid-East | 9.9 | 10.2 | 10.5 | 8.3 | 9 | 9.5 | 9.7 | 9.8 | 10 | 7.6 | 8.4 | 9.3 | 6.8 | 7.1 | 7.4 |
| Midland | 6.2 | 6.1 | 6 | 5.6 | 5.4 | 5.4 | 5.6 | 5.5 | 5.4 | 6 | 5.7 | 5.5 | 6 | 6.1 | 6 |
| South-east | 11.2 | 11.3 | 11 | 10.4 | 10.3 | 10.3 | 10.6 | 10.6 | 10.5 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11.1 | 11.2 |
| Mid-West | 9.1 | 8.9 | 8.8 | 8.5 | 8.6 | 8.8 | 8.8 | 8.6 | 8.4 | 8.9 | 9 | 8.9 | 9.2 | 9.1 | 9 |
| West | 9.7 | 9.8 | 9.8 | 8.9 | 9 | 9.4 | 9.1 | 8.9 | 8.9 | 10.1 | 9.8 | 9.8 | 12.8 | 12.3 | 11.9 |
| South-west | 14.9 | 14.8 | 14.9 | 14.7 | 14.7 | 14.8 | 14.8 | 15 | 14.8 | 15.6 | 15.5 | 15.4 | 16.6 | 16.2 | 16 |
| Border | 11.8 | 11.9 | 11.7 | 10.6 | 10.5 | 10.6 | 11 | 10.7 | 10.4 | 11.8 | 11.4 | 11.3 | 13.8 | 13.5 | 12.9 |

Source: Mc Hugh 2001: 146

This table shows the percentage of the national total for each age group accounted for by each region. These proportions have remained relatively consistent over the three census periods. It is clear that the population is skewed towards the eastern half of the country, where a younger population is also a characteristic (Dublin and the Mid-East). The Mid-West, West and Midlands fared particularly badly in the 0-14 and 15-24 age brackets. Although the Border region exhibited similar proportions in the younger cohorts to that of the Southeast, it held a larger proportion of the nation's elderly population. The table (2.3.1) clearly illustrates a more top-heavy age structure in the Border, Midlands, West and Mid-West.

2.3.3. - Fertility rates

A high fertility rate in the past cancelled the out migration from the rural regions and a natural increase occurred (Fahy and Fitzgerald (1997)).

A decline in fertility levels became evident around the 1960s. Creton (1991:156) maintained that socio-economic and socio-cultural changes accounted for the changes. Return migrants and the expansion of media influences brought new beliefs, cultures and norms into the arena of public debate. Economically the island of Ireland was shifting its emphasis from a predominantly agricultural base towards industrialisation. This saw the Dublin region increase in importance as individuals were given greater mobility. Walsh (1996) maintained that a decrease in fertility rates is a reflection of the postponement by women of bearing children until they have established a career in the workforce.

A clear urban-rural differential exists, with the least urbanised counties displaying higher levels of fertility e.g. in 1996 Donegal's fertility rate was 2.06 while Meath is 1.98 and Dublin county borough is 1.47 (Fahy and Fitzgerald 1997)

The implications of a low fertility rate are more severe for rural regions. A depleted young age cohort leads to a proportionately larger ageing population and hence, an increase in the age dependency ratio.

2.3.4. - Migration

Since the 1840s migration has been a strong feature of population trends in Ireland. The population in Pre-famine Ireland was distributed among the provinces roughly, in proportion to their areas, the most populous of which being Munster. Through the course of the twentieth century this has changed dramatically, with an overall decrease in the population of Ireland and a concentration of the people to the Eastern half of the country.

Emigration and migration within the country have been contributing factors to this decrease. Patterns of migration have been found in Ireland and these mirror the economy at a particular period. For instance the high net emigration during the 1950s and 1980s resulted from a major slump in the economy. Migration is both age and

gender specific but the balance of each has varied over the decades (Sexton *et al.*, 1991).

Writers such as Pahl (1966) have tried to map the behavioural patterns of migration, believing that certain types of people were prone to migration. Breathnach and Jackson (1991) noted that the educational characteristic of the Irish migrant has changed from the lower educated in the 1950s, to the professionals and non-manual groups in the 1980s. This is seen as a reflection of Ireland's peripheral position in the NIDL, where skilled personnel were drawn to the core regions.

Rural regions have been most effected by this net emigration. The 'brain drain' phenomenon was, and is, the buzzword of much of the rural literature. Mc Hugh (2001:194) maintained that improved economic conditions of the 1990s have halted this 'brain drain' to some extent, as graduates are able to obtain jobs in Ireland. However, this is not the case in the rural areas of the Northwest, west, and Southwest which experienced a loss in population due to migration to urban areas. As Mc Hugh (2001:199) points out this inter-county movement reflects the uneven patterns of economic development and service provision within the state. Cawley (1991), looking at the one-year data from the census 1971-1986 noted two principal flows: 1) towards counties which contain county boroughs (i.e. Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway) and 2) from Dublin counties to the adjoining counties of Meath, Kildare and Wicklow. Mc Hugh investigated the pattern of migration during 1990/1991 and 1995/1996 and found that the concentration of the population to the East of the island had persisted (McHugh 2001:201). The uneven distribution of economic activity in Ireland, as discussed by Walsh (1997) and Breathnach (1998), reflects the reorganisation of the settlement pattern. A lack of job opportunities, easier access to urban areas and a lack of third-level universities have been cited as reasons for the trend in migration towards urban areas, particularly to the East of the country (Walsh 1987-8, NESc 1997, Mc Hugh 2001).

As was mentioned above, there is an age factor to migration. Irish emigrants have always been predominantly young (NESc 90 1989:70), with a particular by high concentration in the 15 to 24 year age group. This has continued throughout the decades and it reflects the influence of economic activity and, more recently, the location of third level institutes on the movement of people. More recent studies (Walsh 1995 and Mc Hugh 2001) found the dominant age of migrants to be from 20-

34 years but the proportions of migrants in each age group varies from county to county (Mc Hugh 2001: 201). The biggest loss in the 20-34 age group is evident in the Midlands, Southeast, West and Border regions which is attributed to the high level of emigration from this stratum. However the pattern of out-migration amongst this age cohort is not specifically a rural or urban phenomenon. According to Mc Hugh (2001:211), migration in this age category involves travelling over long distances, or leaving the country.

The NESR report no.90 discussed the ramifications of the migration of young cohorts from Ireland and this may be applied to rural Ireland. For instance, the alteration of the age structure leads to an increase in the dependency ratio as the productive sector of the population is depleted. The migration of highly skilled personnel aggravates the inequality of the distribution of income as the income of those professionals who remain is raised (1989:247).

2.3.5. - Employment and Infrastructure

The demographic aspects discussed above relate to the economic performance at the local to national level and vice versa. Hence the employment opportunities of an area is an economic variable which requires discussion in relation to rural Ireland.

Walsh (1997:115) discussed the Central Statistics Office publication on the economic activity of regions in Ireland and the type of employment attributed to it. The paper estimated the Gross Value Added (GVA) for each region, where GVA is defined as “a measure of the value of goods and services produced in the region priced at the value which the producer received minus any taxes payable plus any subsidies receivable as a consequence of their production or sale”. It revealed that per capita GVA was highest in the East (Dublin and Mid-East regions) where it was 14.2% of the state average and lowest in the Border, Midlands and West regions (78-83%). Walsh pointed to the regional structure of the economy, the differences in productivity between sectors, as accounting for the disparity between the regions. The Border, Midlands and West have above average levels of employment in agriculture which has a below average productivity level. In stark contrast the East of Ireland fared better, experiencing a higher rate of growth in employment.

Mc Hugh investigated the spatial variation in employment, which echo the above findings. Taking from the Census of Population in 1996 she looked at the sectoral composition of the workforce. This investigation revealed the type of jobs being undertaken at local level. 10 industrial groups were listed giving a good indication of the occupations of residents in rural Ireland. Table 2.3.2 presents the findings.

Table 2.3.2: Persons at Work in Urban centres of different sizes and rural areas, classified by Broad industrial sector 1996

Source: Mc Hugh 2001: 290, Vol. 1 Table 6.4

| Industrial Sector | Greater Dublin Area | Other County Boroughs | Towns 10,000+ pop. | Towns 5,000-9,999 pop. | Towns 3,000-4,999 pop. | Towns 1,500-2,999 pop. | Aggregate Town Area | Aggregate Rural Area |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Agriculture, Forestry & fishing | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 0.8 | 0.9 | 5.7 | 94.3 |
| Mining, quarrying and turf | 5.5 | 3.1 | 9.6 | 3.4 | 3.0 | 2.4 | 27.0 | 73.0 |
| Electricity, gas and water supply | 29.9 | 10.0 | 10.5 | 5.5 | 2.7 | 3.0 | 61.7 | 38.3 |
| Building and construction | 21.9 | 8.2 | 9.4 | 5.1 | 3.2 | 2.9 | 50.8 | 49.2 |
| Commerce, insurance, finance and business services | 35.9 | 10.1 | 11.7 | 5.7 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 69.5 | 30.5 |
| Transport, communication and storage | 37.7 | 10.1 | 11.6 | 6.0 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 70.5 | 29.5 |
| Public administration and defence | 34.4 | 9.5 | 14.1 | 6.7 | 2.9 | 3.2 | 70.7 | 29.3 |
| Professional services | 32.9 | 11.5 | 11.6 | 5.8 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 67.1 | 32.9 |
| Manufacturing Industries | 22.9 | 11.7 | 12.2 | 6.5 | 3.6 | 2.9 | 59.9 | 40.1 |
| Other industries, and industries not stated (include personal and recreational services) | 35.3 | 11.5 | 12.0 | 5.5 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 70.2 | 29.8 |
| Total at work | 28.1 | 9.7 | 10.7 | 5.4 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 59.4 | 40.6 |

As is evident from table 2.3.2 above Agriculture, mining, manufacturing and building and construction are the dominant sectors of employment in rural areas. A pattern of each is briefly described below.

The higher ordered, more specialised services are concentrated in the cities and larger urban centres whereas lower order educational and health services are provided widely throughout the state. The presence of major third level institutes would have a major impact on the proportion and type of professional services which exist in a region.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure of any region has a vital impact on its potential to develop self-sustaining growth. Good quality infrastructure, in particular a good transport system, impacts on costs and travel times, which in turn affects the attractiveness of an area for investment in industry, agriculture and tourism. Rural areas were documented as infrastructurally and economically disadvantaged in a recent report for the National Spatial Strategy. The report compared the percentage increase in the number at work, who reside in each rural DED, to access to infrastructure, measured by DED proximity to the national primary road system. It found that rural areas furthest away from a national road network had an average annual growth rate of 1.4%. At the other end of the scale the large concentration of well performing DEDs (extending in a semi-circular pattern out from Dublin) reflected the radial nature of the national road network (NSS 2001:vii).

2.3.6. - Education

Closely related to the spatial variation in the employment sectors is the type of educational qualifications of the population. The greatest concentration of unemployed males with low levels of education is in the Border, Midlands and West and it is least in Dublin (Walsh 1995:5). Ireland has experienced an increase in education levels in the last two decades which is reflected in the change in the economy from reliance on unskilled, manufacturing work towards a service economy.

There is a significant trend in the distribution of the highly qualified labour force. Approximately “half of the workforce who have obtained degree level qualification reside in Dublin” (Walsh 1997:116).

Census information revealed that 23.6% of the adult population comprised of students from 1991-1996. Dublin houses one third of the State's students. Mc Hugh pointed out that there is a low concentration of students in the border region especially extensive parts of rural Donegal, Leitrim, Cavan and Sligo.

Students have a higher tendency to migrate, especially when job opportunities in their home county don't meet their educational qualifications.

Walsh (1995) discussed the link between unemployment and education levels. The likelihood of being unemployed is six times greater for males with, at most, lower second level education and than for those with third level qualification. Unemployed females have at least upper second level education mainly due to the fact that female participation rates among older age groups are relatively low. Needless to say, a higher concentration of unemployed males with low levels of education is found in the Border, Midlands and West and it is least in Dublin.

2.3.7. - Dependency Ratios

Age and economic dependency are the two variables by which dependency is measured. Age dependency is calculated as the ratio of 0-14 year old and the 65 plus age category to the rest of the population. The economic dependency ratio calculates the number of people not earning a wage (dependent sector) to those in employment (productive sector).

From the spatial variation in age, migration, employment and education, discussed above, it is not surprising that age and economic dependency are higher in rural than urban areas. Mc Hugh documents the regional disparities in relation to economic dependency. Through her analysis it was revealed that the Border, Midlands and Southeast region have the highest ratio (Mc Hugh 2001:353). In the Border region, Donegal and Leitrim displayed quite extensive regions where rates were high, most of which were rural DEDs.

Although both ratios have been declining in recent years, due to declining fertility rates and levels of unemployment, they are set to increase due to the ageing workforce.

2.3.8 - Social Class Structure

Using the concepts of 'work situation' and 'market situation' occupations have been classified and located at various points on a hierarchical scale by the CSO. 7 Classes have been devised:

Social Class 1-Higher Professional and higher managerial; proprietors and farmers owning 200 or more acres

Social Class 2-Lower Professional and lower managerial; proprietors and farmers owning 100-199 acres

Social Class 3-Other non-manual and farmers owning 50-99 acres

Social Class 4-Skilled manual and farmers owning 30-49 acres

Social Class 5-Semi-skilled manual and farmers owning less than 50 acres

Social Class 6-Unskilled manual

Social Class 7-Others gainfully occupied/ unknown.

Source: Mc Hugh 2001:356

As is to be expected, the education and employment levels of the region reflect the proportion of people in each social class. Mc Hugh looked at the census information of 1996 and determined percentage of their population which fell under each category for each of the regions (Mc Hugh 2001: 357-366).

Only 5.4% of the population of Ireland occupy the top level of the social class stratum. Dublin, the Mid-East and the south-east exhibit proportions in social class 1 that equal or exceed the national average (5.4%) while the north-west and the (north) Midland's proportion were particularly marked as low. The analysis of the second social class revealed a relatively strong rural-urban distinction with DEDs close to urban areas displaying relatively high percentages of the population occupying this class. As one descends the social class ladder a clear pattern emerges, which illustrates the association of poorly paid, less skilled jobs with rural regions. The size of farms/ the strong association of agriculture with the rurality, Mc Hugh notes, (2001:360) accounts for this trend.

2.4 – Aspect of rural Ireland - An Gaeltacht

“The Gaeltacht is a legally defined area under Irish legislation, made by order under section 2 of the Ministers of the Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 1956”.

MFG Business Plan, NDP 2000:5

The Gaeltacht constitutes less than 7% (5,600km sq) of the land area of the Republic, covering areas in seven counties – Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, with smaller areas in Cork, Waterford and Meath. Some 80,000 people are located in the Gaeltacht and Irish is the main spoken language. A recent Gaeltacht Commission Report (May 2002) revealed that the numbers speaking Irish has declined so much so that only 18 of the 154 Gaeltacht DEDs have over 75% of their population speaking Irish daily.

Linguistically and culturally, the Gaeltacht is unique and homogenous. “The Irish language is intrinsically linked to the heritage and culture of the Gaeltacht” (MFG 2001:5). However the Gaeltacht communities, as separate and distinct units, are marginalised. They are located away from the centres of economic and social development and decision-making. These areas are among the most peripheral rural and coastal regions in Europe.

Concern for the future viability of these areas has been illustrated in recent years. In 1966 a study into the Gaeltacht revealed that the population of these areas had declined by 50% since 1911 in comparison to 10% in the country in general (Gaeltacht studies 1971:6). This report identified emigration, a lack of employment opportunities and a decline in the productivity of agriculture as instigating the Gaeltacht decline. Other rural characteristics were also identifiable in the study such as the poorly developed pattern of service centres and the dispersed settlement patterns.

Although the Gaeltacht regions are characteristically rural, their link with the Irish language advocates governmental policies separate to those of the rural Ireland.

2.5 – Conclusion

A wide variety of literatures are available on rural geography. Those illustrated in this chapter discussed the characteristics of rural Ireland which can be roughly summarised as the following:

- Low density and/or sparsely populated regions
- A higher proportion of males to females, especially in the 20-34 age band

- Decreasing fertility rates
- Higher out-migration, particularly among graduates and young females
- A poor employment base and a strong association with agricultural activities
- A lack of skilled job opportunities
- Weak and poorly developed infrastructure e.g. telecommunications, roads etc.
- Lower levels of education than the more urbanised areas
- Lower income per capita
- Higher Dependency Ratios

The severity of these characteristics dictates the level of deprivation of an area (as is evident in Chapter 3, Map 3). The more pronounced these demographic and economic characteristics are in an area, the more likely rural systems (-schools, transport, employment, social services etc.) are rendered inviable.

CHAPTER 3

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF GWEEDORE

3.1 – Introduction

Gweedore, the chosen area of investigation is a Gaeltacht region in Northwest Co. Donegal. Map 1 shows the DEDs which comprise the Gaeltacht of Tír Chonaill (Donegal) with Gweedore highlighted in red.

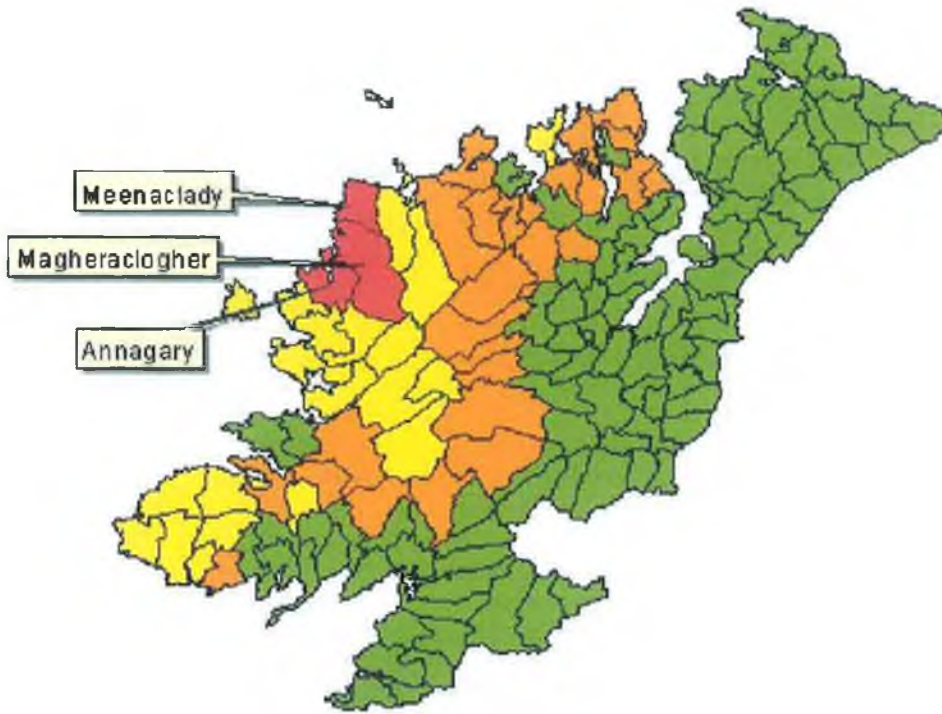
In common with many other rural areas, Gweedore is a peripheral area, characterised by its distance from the larger, more developed, urban environments. This is especially the case in light of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2000-2006, in which the only development gateway in the BMW region has been allocated to Galway.

At a county level the people of Gweedore are also on the periphery, as they are living at a distance from the key county administrative centres of Letterkenny and Donegal town.





The population of the Donegal Gaeltacht is 24,720 (in 1996), a small percentage of which live in the towns of Bunbeg and Dungloe. Neither of these towns has a population of over 1,500 (Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta (MFG) 1999:4). As is the case with other peripheral areas, the Gaeltacht faces problems of an economic and demographic nature.

This chapter investigates if the general trends, documented in chapter two, relate to Gweedore. Census information is used in the comparison of data for County Donegal, the Northwest region (Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim) and the Nation.

Map 1: Gaeltacht Regions in County Donegal and the Study Area



Source: Arc View Mapping System Information adapted from MFG report 2000:6

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
|  | Gweedore - 3 DEDs Totally in the Gaeltacht |
|  | Totally in the Gaeltacht – (22) |
|  | Partially in the Gaeltacht – (27) |
|  | DEDs in County with no Gaeltacht Status – (100) |
| | Total number of DEDs in the Gaeltacht - 49 |
| | Total number of DEDs in County - 149 |

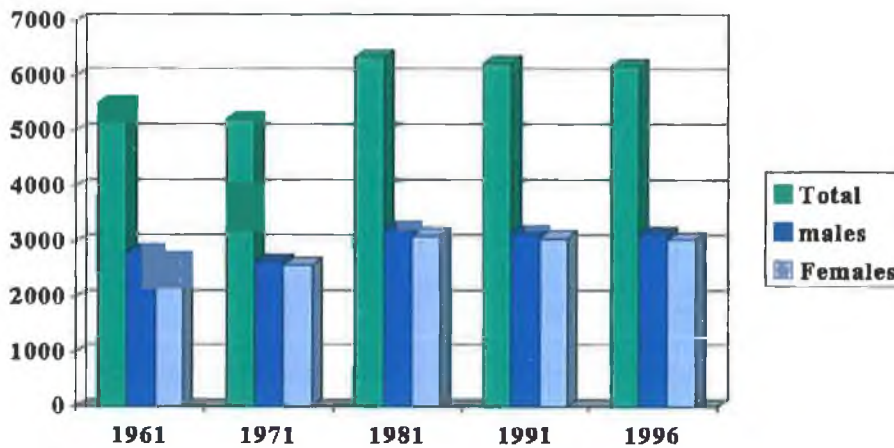
3.2 – Population Size

The area of Gweedore, shown in Map 1, incorporates three DEDs, namely Annagary, Meenaclady and Magheraclogher. With a population of 6184, Gweedore is a densely populated area.

Fig 3.2.1 shows the total population from 1961 to 1996. The population declined significantly (by 5.8%) in the ten-year period from 1961 to 1971. This mirrored the rest of the country, where out migration prevailed.

However, an increase was recorded in the census years of 1981 and 1986 due to a net inflow of people in the 1970s. Again this was the general trend throughout the country, although the Dublin and Mid East regions accounted for 75% of the national growth. A decline of 4.3% was recorded for the ten-year period from 1986 as emigration resumed.

Fig 3.2.1 - Population of Gweedore
1961-1996



3.3 – Gender

According to Horner (1987) there is a greater proportion of males to females in rural areas. Although this was found to be the case in Gweedore, Co. Donegal and the Northwest region, the difference is not what he believed it to be. (900 females per 1000 males in rural Ireland generally). The cell table 3.3.1, illustrates the percentage distribution of the sexes. Although there are more females to males in Ireland as a whole, the three sub-areas depicted in the table experience a higher amount of males, with Gweedore's male surplus greater than that for the county and the region

There is no apparent trend in the distribution of the sexes over the three periods in Gweedore. On a County and Regional level the proportion of males is decreasing, but this is a relatively insignificant trend. The greater tendency of females to migrate, especially to urban areas, is cited as the reason for the difference in male and female numbers in rural areas. Evidence of this may be noted from the higher proportion of females at a national level.

Table 3.3.2 shows the percentage of males and females in each of the age groups. The calculations revealed a different picture to what one might expect. Given that there are age and gender attributes to migration and that there are more males in rural areas, one might expect a higher proportion of males in the 20-29 age group, in Gweedore especially. However as table 3.3.2 illustrates, this is not the case. Males dominated only in the older age cohorts (45-64). These statistics might suggest that trends are changing from what was previously documented. Although the proportion of females in the 20-24 age band is lower than their male counterparts this is also the case at the national level. However this could also be a reflection of female migration patterns out of the country and not within it

Table 3.3.1 - Percentage Distribution of males and females 1986, 1991, 1996.

| | Males 1986 | Females 1986 | Males 1991 | Females 1991 | Males 1996 | Females 1996 |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Gweedore | 50.87 | 49.13 | 50.75 | 49.25 | 50.95 | 49.05 |
| County | 50.83 | 49.17 | 50.59 | 49.41 | 50.40 | 49.60 |
| Region | 50.88 | 49.12 | 50.53 | 49.47 | 50.43 | 49.57 |
| National | 49.98 | 50.2 | 49.73 | 50.27 | 49.65 | 50.35 |

Source: Census 1996

Table 3.3.2 – Variation in the Age Groups between the Sexes 1996

| | 0-14 yrs | | 15-29 yrs | | 30-44 yrs | | 45-64 yrs | |
|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females | Males | Females |
| Gweedore | 11.51 | 10.44 | 11.04 | 10.35 | 9.07 | 9.82 | 11.53 | 9.38 |
| County | 13.05 | 12.39 | 11.82 | 11.28 | 9.32 | 9.46 | 10.05 | 9.31 |
| Region | 12.74 | 12.07 | 11.8 | 11.04 | 9.87 | 9.79 | 10.13 | 9.41 |
| Nation | 12.18 | 11.52 | 12.48 | 12.13 | 10.31 | 10.56 | 9.79 | 9.62 |
| 65+ | | | | | | | | |
| Males | | Female s | | | | | | |
| | 7.79 | 8.6 | | | | | | |
| | 6.06 | 7.17 | | | | | | |
| | 5.9 | 7.26 | | | | | | |
| | 4.89 | 6.53 | | | | | | |

Source: Census 1996

3.4 – Age

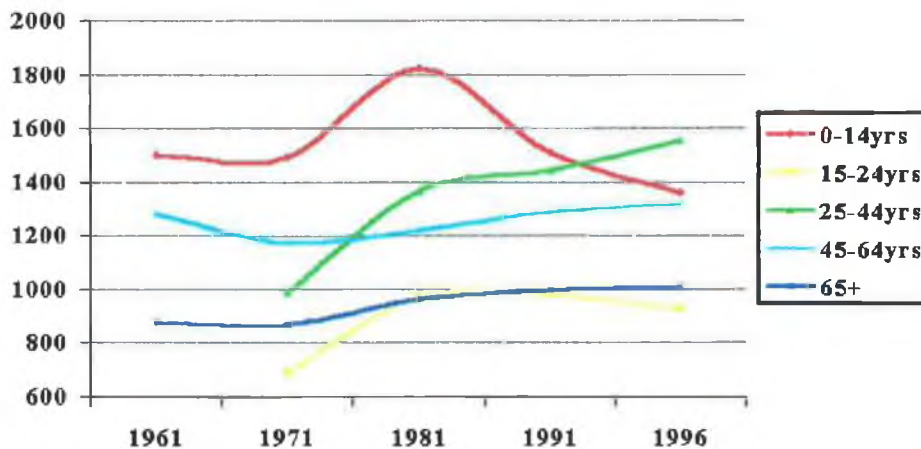
Fig. 3.4.1 maps the age structure of Gweedore's population over a thirty five year period. Significant changes are obvious. The younger age cohorts, under 45 year olds, all increased from 1961, reaching its peak in 1981. In-migration (particularly return migrants) of the 1970s may account for this growth.

The 0 to 14 and 15 to 24 age group experienced declines over the inter-censal periods since 1981, perhaps illustrating a decreasing level of fertility. Slight increases were recorded in the 25 to 44 year olds from 1981 to 1996.

The older age brackets seem to be increasing steadily, probably due to natural maturation through the decades. Gweedore exerts the typical, top heavy, age structure of a rural region.

The 25 to 44 age category should exhibit an increase from the data supplied in the next census (2002) due to the maturation of the 0-14 age cohorts of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The data from 2002 will prove important, revealing if there is a continuous increase in the economically and demographically productive age sector (25-44). A decline in these age sectors may prove detrimental to the viability of the area, especially if the over 65 cohort continues to grow.

**Fig 3.4.1 - Age Structure of Gweedore
1961-1996**



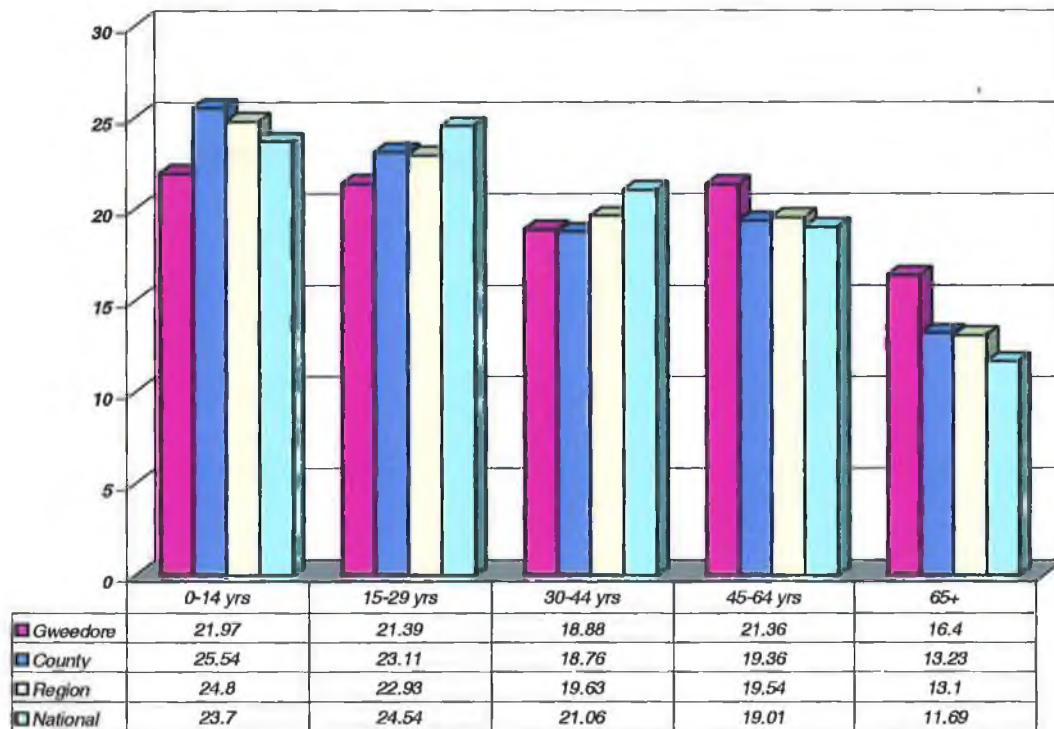
[The age categories used in the 1961 census were different to those used from 1970 onwards and so the data for the 15-24 and 25-44 year olds has been omitted].

3.4.1 - Comparing the age structure of Gweedore at different levels in 1996.

It is important to relate the change in the age structure of Gweedore over the years to that of the county, regional and national level. This enables a truer picture of the demographic situation of Gweedore to be painted.

Fig. 3.4.2 compares the four areas for each of the age cohorts. From the bar graph it is clear that Gweedore exhibits weaker demographic characteristics than the county, regional and national averages, with the lowest proportion of its population in the younger age categories and a proportionately higher 45 plus age category.

Fig 3.4.2 - Percentage distribution of age structure of Gweedore, Co. Donegal, The Region and the State in 1996



3.4.2 - Change from 1986 to 1996:

An overall decline or increase can be estimated through the analysis of the 1986 and 1996 census. A contrast in the total population for each area became apparent through these calculations.

Gweedore and the North West Region both experienced a decrease, between 1986 and 1996, of - 4.5% and - 0.88% respectively but an over all increase of 2.36% was recorded in the Republic and a slight increase also occurred in Co. Donegal (0.25%). Again this may be attributed to the concentration of younger people around urban centres, Letterkenny in Donegal and Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Cork on a national level. Figs 3.4.3(a), 3.4.3 (b), 3.4.3 (c) and 3.4 (d), illustrate the change in the distribution of the age structure of Gweedore, Donegal, the Northwest and the Nation respectively. The younger age categories (0-14) experienced a decrease in all areas, some slightly more (Nation and Gweedore) than others (Donegal and Region). Gweedore experienced the greatest decline in the younger population and a high increase in the older sector of the population.

The overall divergences in the age structure of Gweedore from the national average are issues of concern. The decrease in the younger age band in the productive sector reflects the changing settlement pattern towards urban belts, to within commuting distances of urban towns and cities. Given the absence of any towns with a population of over 1,500, dependency ratios are likely to be higher as the core working age population decreases. The change in the age structure experienced in Gweedore is slightly different to that of the county, region and nation. The uneven, top heavy, age distribution seems to have established itself in the ten-year period whereas, increases in the younger age bands (15-24) in the county, region and nation were experienced. The natural maturation of the older population will have more severe consequences for Gweedore.

3.4.3 (a) - Change in the Distribution in the Age Structure of Gweedore for 1986 & 1996

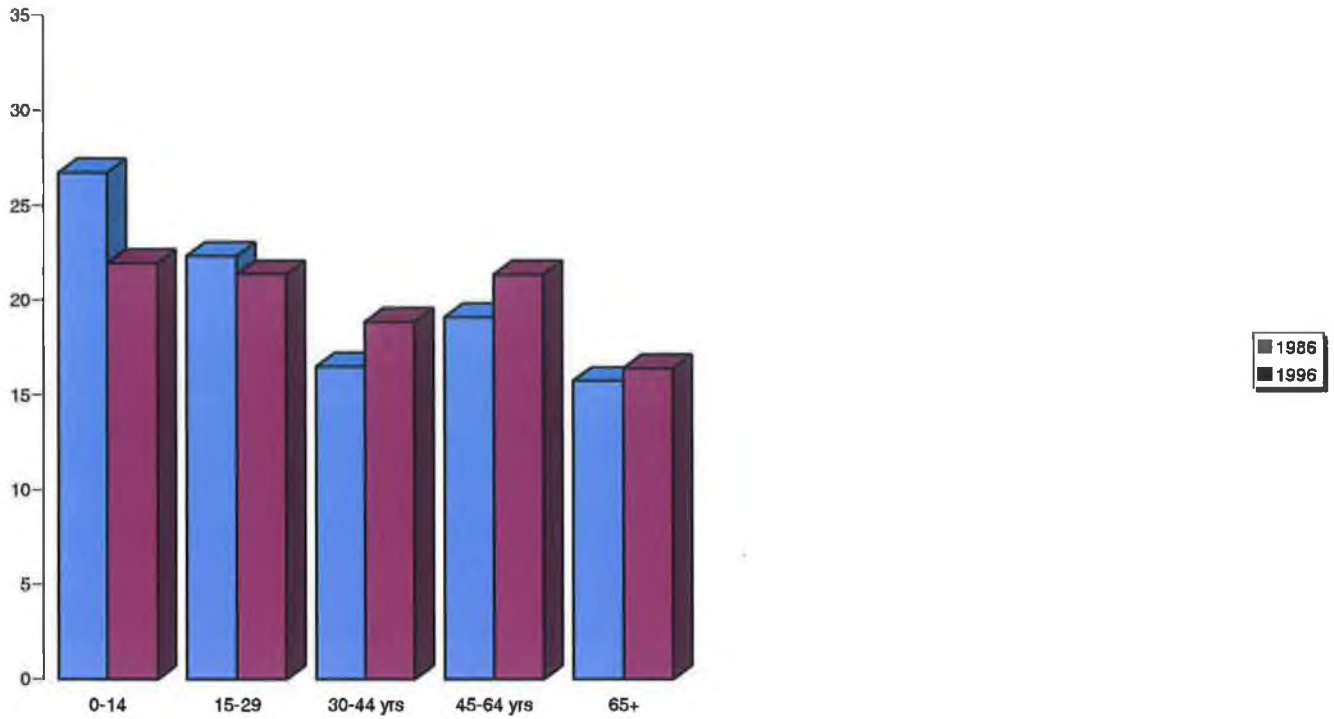
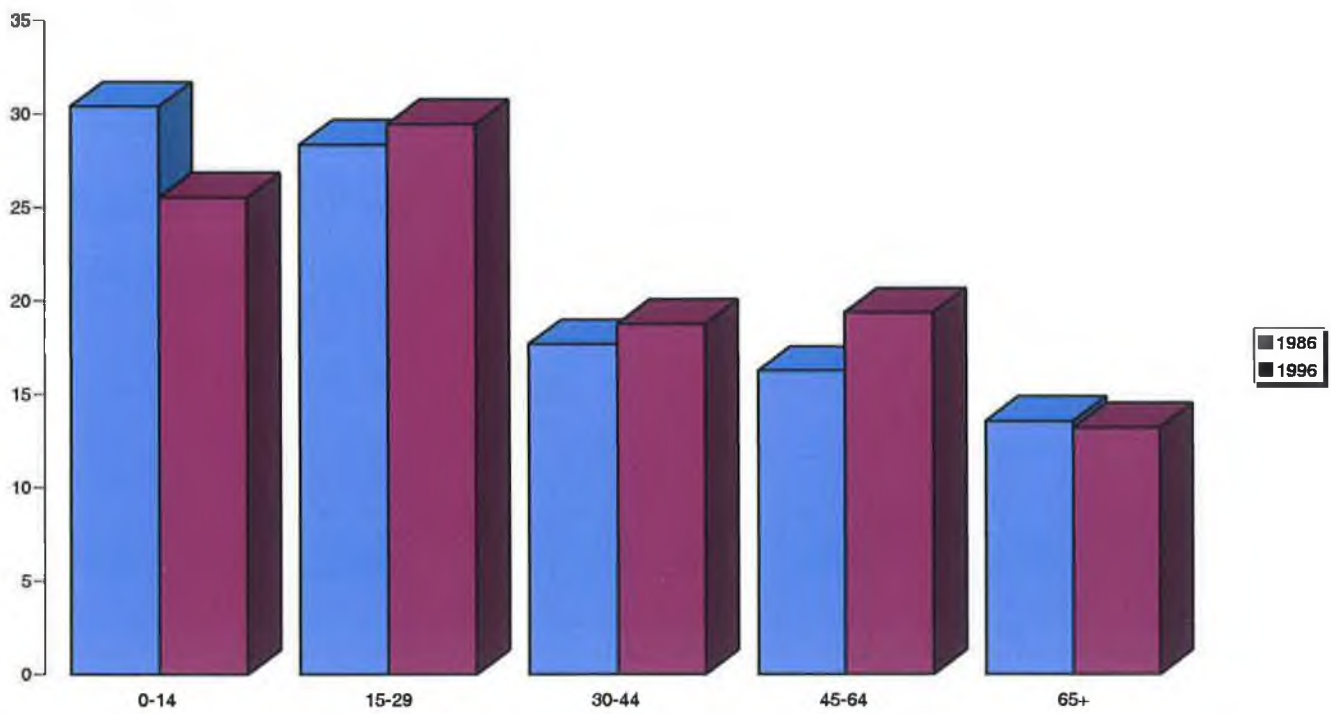


Fig 3.4.3 (b) - Change in the Distribution of the Age Structure in Co. Donegal in 1986 & 1996



3.4.3 (c)- Change in the Distribution of the Age Structure for the Northwest Region in 1986 & 1996

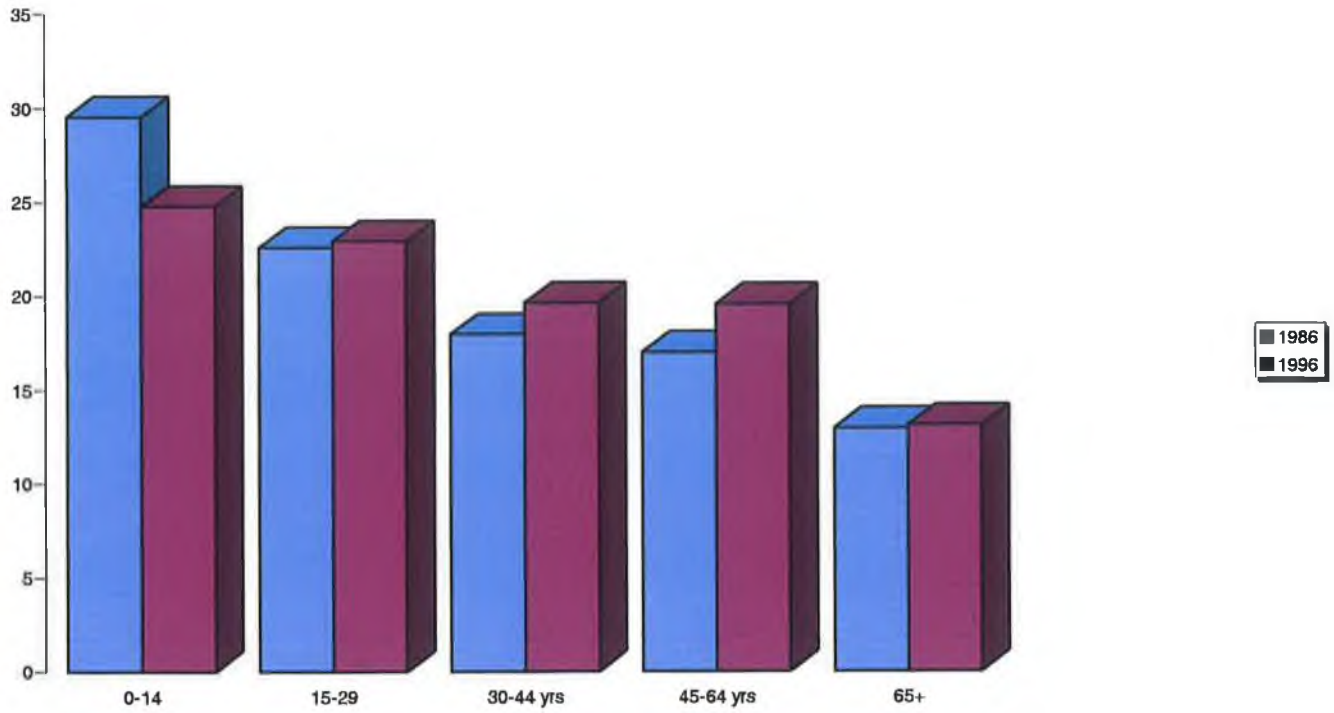
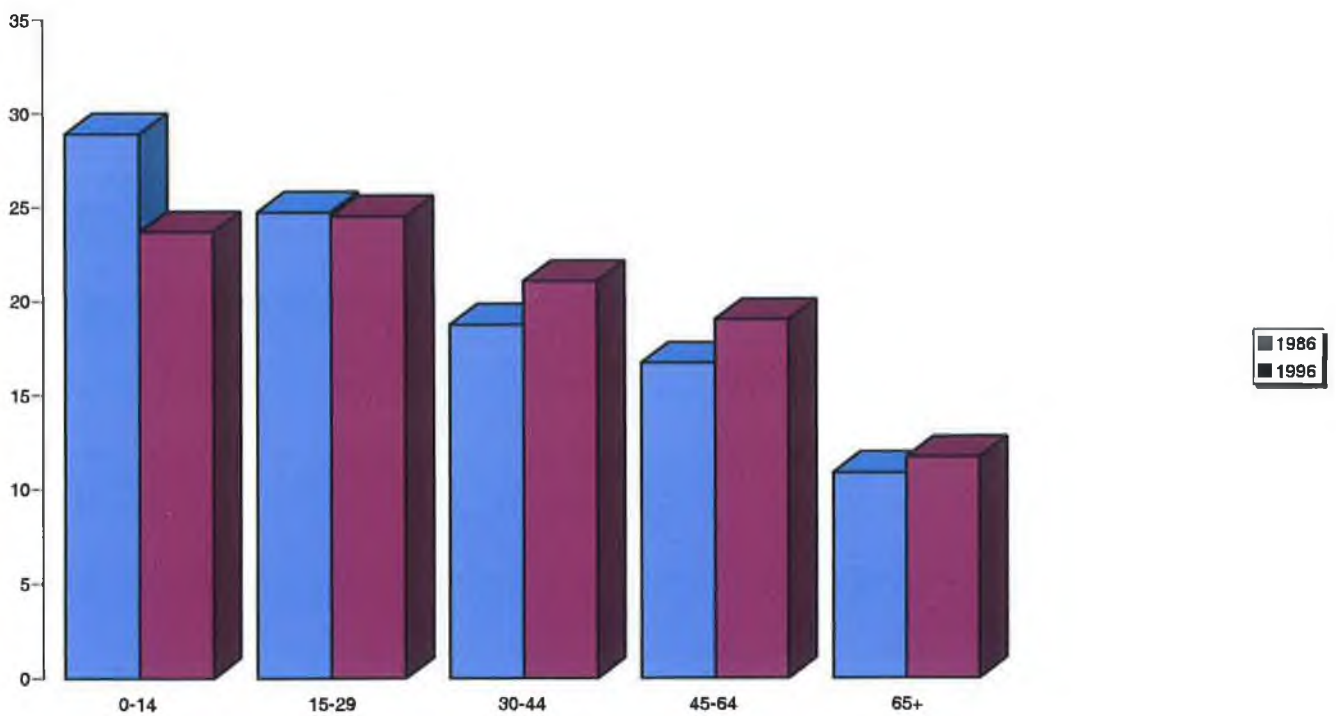


Fig 3.4.3 (d) - Change in the Distribution of Age Structure at National level for 1986 & 1996



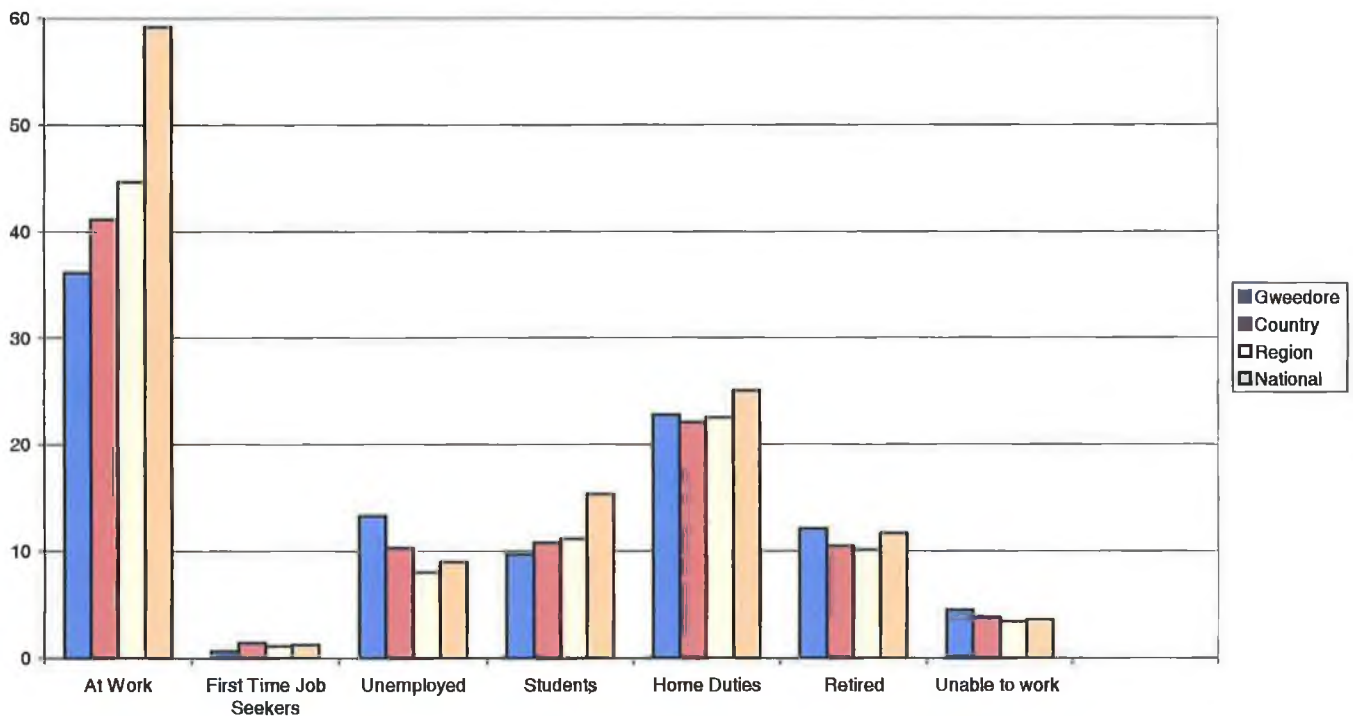
3.5 – Employment

Employment is an important characteristic to analyse as it roughly indicates the level of income of a population. Analysing this also involves investigating the amount of people at work and the level of unemployment of a region. Needless to say the type of employment opportunities dictates, to a large extent, the lifestyle of the people.

3.5.1 - The Labour Force and Unemployment:

Fig 3.5.1 shows the percentage distribution of positions held by those 15 years and over in 1996. The first 3 areas (Gweedore, County Donegal and the Region) fared badly in relation to national statistics, exhibiting a lower percentage at work and a corresponding higher rate of unemployment and retired people. The student population is somewhat under represented in Gweedore. The study area has the highest proportion of its population 'unable to work' perhaps reflecting an absence of employment facilities and support for those with disabilities.

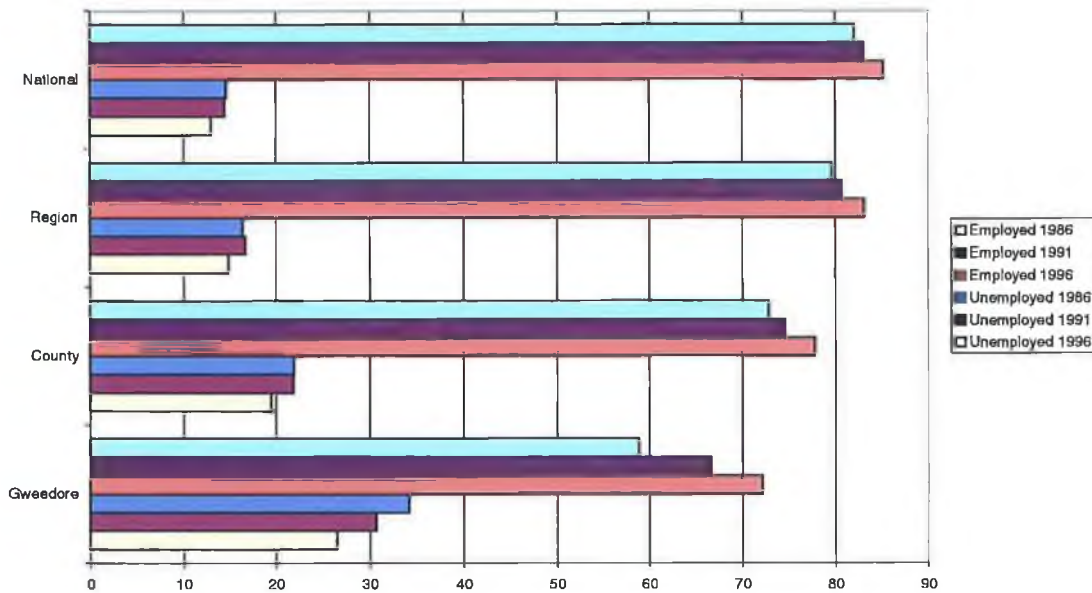
Fig 3.5.1 - Percentage Distribution of Occupation the (15yr old +)



The poorer performance of these areas has continued since 1996.

According to the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) carried out in September/November 1999 Donegal had the third highest number 'signing on' at 10,705 (Dublin- 40,973, Cork 16,204) (Donegal Democrat August 17 2000). By looking at the varying situation of the labour force over the ten-year period from 1986 (Fig 3.5.2) a more precise conclusion can be derived on the employment situation. The level of employment grew steadily in all areas and Gweedore exhibited a greater increase, from 59% in 1986 to 72% in 1996. However, as referred to above, it lags behind the national average by 13.05%. Accordingly unemployment is highest in the study area even though it experienced a decrease over the period.

Fig 3.5.2 - Rate of Employment & Unemployment 1986, 1991, 1996

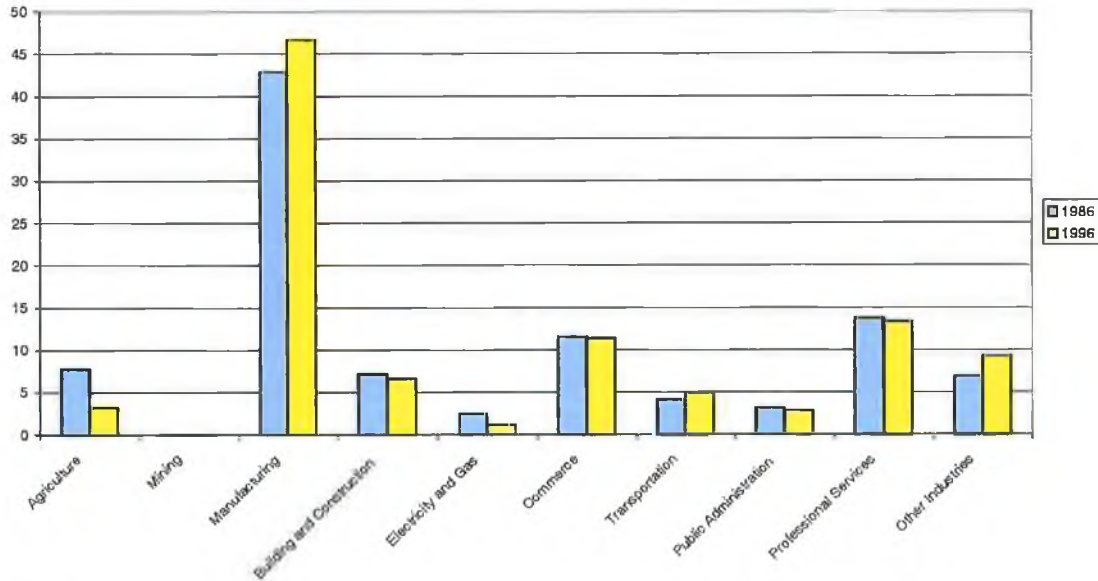


This decline in unemployment did not occur in the other regions to the same extent as Gweedore. The reason for this is somewhat evident from Fig 3.5.3 (Change in the distribution of occupation in Gweedore) where a decrease in agricultural employment coincided with an expansion of the industrial sector.

The levels of unemployment vary, regionally, between the sexes also with women in rural Ireland experiencing higher unemployment rates. Traditionally low-skilled textile, clothing and knitwear industries were the main employment sources for women in Gaeltacht areas (MFG 2000:9). However, the recent closures occurring in these sectors have largely affected low-skilled women. In 1996 over 15% of the

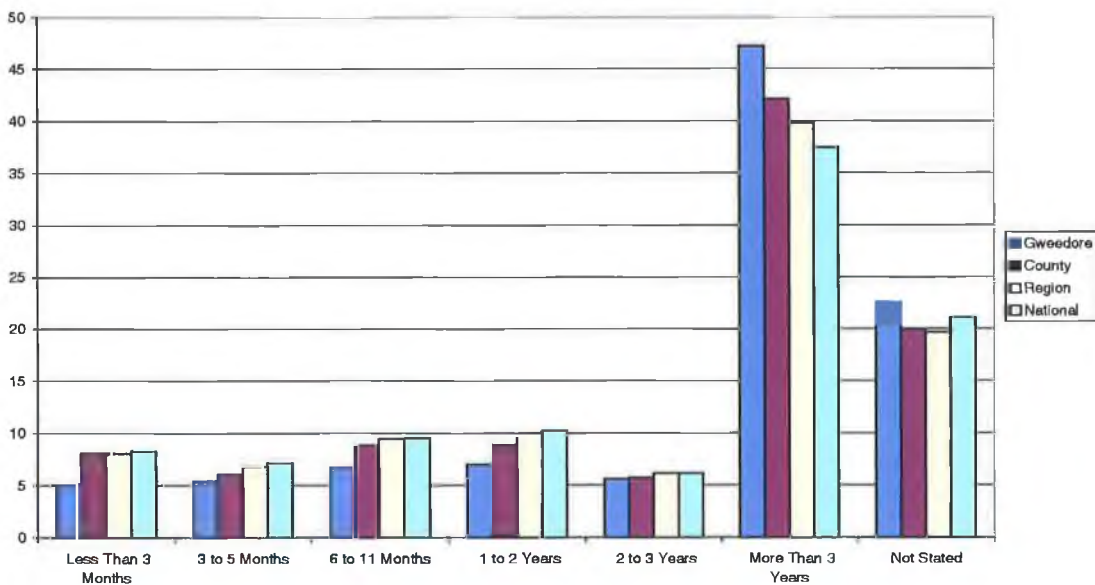
female labour force in Gweedore were unemployed compared to 10% at the national level.

Fig 3.5.3- Distributional change of Occupation in Gweedore



Another aspect to the high rate of unemployment, meriting investigation, is the duration of unemployment. Fig 3.5.4 illustrates the length of time the unemployed had been out of work in 1996.

Fig 3.5.4- Duration of Unemployment 1996



A relatively large proportion (around 20%) of the unemployed went unrecorded. Setting this aside, an obvious pattern emerged.

Gweedore exhibited the most pessimistic trend as over 40% of its unemployed were out of work for more than 3 years in 1996. This left smaller proportions, experiencing a shorter period of unemployment as compared to the other areas. Another reflection of the problem of long term unemployment is evident from Fig 3.5.1 where Gweedore has the smallest amount of first time job seekers i.e. only a minor proportion (0.64%) of those unemployed for less than three months, are first time job seekers.

Hidden unemployment is an important issue concerning rural regions. Shuttleworth *et al.* (2000) studied this in Donegal, specifically. They noted that perhaps more people are unemployed but have been discouraged from registering as such, due to the lack of jobs. Housewives were among the groups identified as experiencing hidden unemployment. These women may have been out of the workforce, raising families, for so long that they don't consider themselves as unemployed. Others may find jobs inaccessible due to "childcare and elder care responsibilities and a lack of support structures and inflexible working hours" (MFG Report 2000:9).

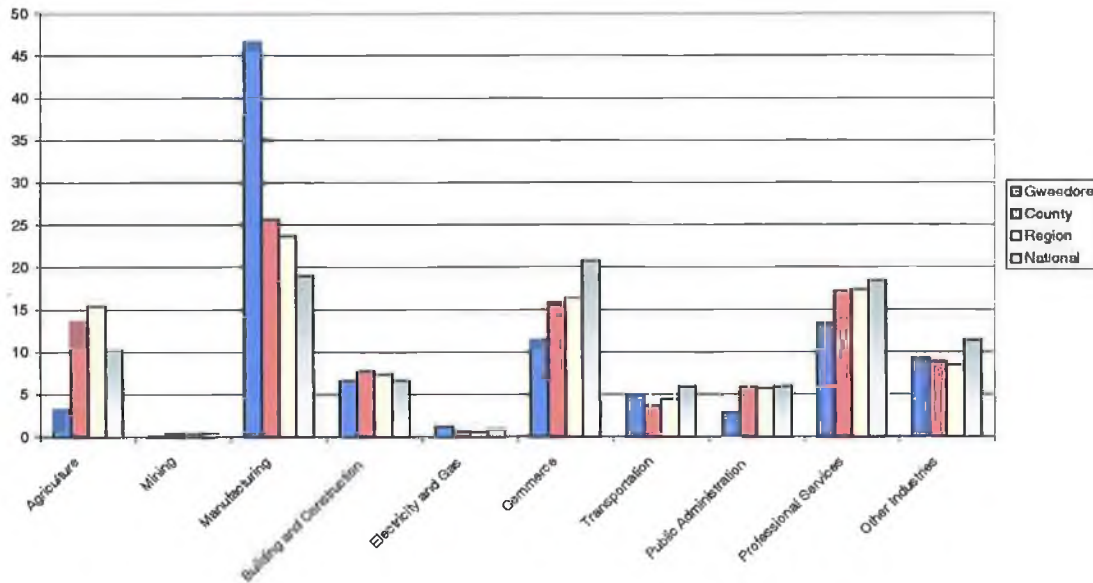
Shuttleworth *et al.* noted that those categorised as 'retired' and 'unable to work' may accompany this group, maintaining that if job opportunities were at hand a proportion of these categories would avail of the work.

Gweedore exhibits the largest proportion of its over 15s population in the retired (12.90%) and unable to work (4.5%) categories and is second to the national level in those engaged in home duties (22.8%). An interesting fact was revealed on closer inspection of the over 45 age groups. Although Gweedore has a higher concentration of over 45s only 21.4% were 'at work' in 1996 as compared with 27.4% at county level, 31.8% at regional level and 44.9% at national level. Furthermore, smaller percentages of the over 65s were 'at work' in Gweedore 1996 (only 2.9% compared with 6.4% in the County, 8.5% in the Region and 7.8%-Nationally). This may reveal a higher incidence of hidden unemployment in the area, with a greater amount of people opting for retirement.

3.5.2 - Occupations

As mentioned in chapter 2, professional employment is concentrated around urban areas with agriculture more pronounced in rural regions. Fig 3.5.5 echoes the findings on the employment variation whereby commerce and professional services dominate on a national scale.

Fig 3.5.5 - Percentage Distribution of the Type of Occupation



Agriculture is not the main employment source in Gweedore, unlike most rural regions in Ireland. In Gweedore agriculture accounts for just 3.3% of the workforce, compared with 10% nationally and 14% in Donegal. This is due mainly to the presence of the Derrybeg industrial estate and the poor natural base for agriculture in the area.

Despite the area's poor topography, Gweedore, unlike other rural communities, has a dense settlement pattern. Evidence of this is shown in Plates 3.5.1, 3.5.2 and 3.5.3 on the following page.

Plate 3.5.1 – Bunbeg



Dense settlement of Bunbeg in Mageraclogher (Mt. Errigal can be seen to the back of the photograph)

Plate 3.5.2 –Magheraclogher



The dense settlement pattern of Magheraclogher

Plate 3.5.3 - Meenaclady



A dense settlement pattern coupled with a poor terrain

It is clear from Fig 3.5.5 that the study area is heavily dependent on the manufacturing sector, generating over 45% of work in 1996. The location of Údarás na Gaeltachta's head office at the Gweedore industrial estate is the main instigator of this dominance. An tÚdarás, established in 1979, has effectively pursued economic development for the Donegal Gaeltacht with specific emphasis on the foundation and expansion of manufacturing industries. The employment benefits An tÚdarás has brought to Gweedore is evident from Fig 3.5.2 and 3.5.3 whereby declines in agriculture and smaller falls in other sectors were offset by increase in manufacturing jobs. The rapid increase in employment levels also reflects beneficial work done by An tÚdarás.

The study area relies heavily on the manufacturing industries while no service or finance companies located in the region. This composition and its implications are discussed in Chapter 6.

3.6 – Education

Education is intrinsic to any socio-economic study of an area as it plays a role in all demographic behaviours. The level of education attained by individuals reflects their acquired type of employment. If the job opportunities offered by a region don't reflect the level of education achieved by individuals, they migrate.

Mc Hugh (2001), among others, discussed the distribution of the educated workforce, with the higher educated more skewed toward urban areas. Here the relevant infrastructure, in the form of employment opportunities, social networks etc, are found. Mc Hugh (2001:314) thus noted the higher concentration of professional and business type jobs to the East of the country.

Shown in the previous section, Gweedore is heavily reliant on manufacturing employment. This sector requires little skilled labour. It is the intention of this section to investigate if this is reflected in the level of education of the study area.

From Table 3.6.1, one can see that Gweedore exhibits a higher proportion of people who ceased education at a relatively low level. 45.5% of people have, at most primary education, compared to 28.4% at National level. The statistics for the County exhibit a similar trend. As one ascends the level of education the pattern becomes obvious, proving the past observations made by Mc Hugh (2001) and Walsh (1995) that the lower educated are more concentrated to rural areas.

A conversation with the principal of Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair revealed a different story for Gweedore in 2002. Mr. Noel Ó Gallchóir informed the researcher that only one or two students, annually, left school before the completion of the leaving certificate. Furthermore those who left, "left with a purpose", i.e. they continued their education via apprenticeships and not to work in "a factory or shop". This change might reveal itself through the next census with the level of education rising for Gweedore.

Table 3.6.1 – Percentage Distribution of Educational Attainment in 1996

| | No Formal Education | Primary Education Only | Lower Secondary Education | Upper Secondary Education | 3rd Level Education | Not Stated |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Gweedore | 0.05 | 45.6 | 18.6 | 22.5 | 11.8 | 1.5 |
| County | 0.2 | 42.1 | 19.2 | 22.61 | 13.1 | 2.7 |
| Region | 0.3 | 36.8 | 20.6 | 25.3 | 14.4 | 2.6 |
| National | 0.2 | 28.3 | 20.2 | 28.9 | 19.05 | 3.3 |

Source: Census 1996

The incessant economic growth of the 1990s has led to a change in labour force requirement towards a more highly skilled labour force. Census figures for Gweedore revealed a high proportion of early school leavers. Table 3.6.2 shows that low educational qualifications tend to increase the risk of unemployment in Gweedore. The table shows the rate of unemployment as a percentage of total education. e.g. in Gweedore 17% of those who ceased education at primary level are unemployed.

Table 3.6.2 – Percentage Distribution of the Unemployed and Educational Qualification

| Unemployed with.... | No Formal Education | Primary Education Only | Lower Secondary Education | Upper Secondary Education | 3rd Level Education |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Gweedore | 0 | 17.1 | 16.9 | 14.2 | 6.4 |
| County | 8.1 | 11.7 | 17.9 | 12.4 | 10.6 |
| Region | 8.3 | 10.2 | 14.4 | 9.9 | 5.1 |
| National | 12.8 | 10.5 | 13.6 | 8.4 | 4.5 |

Source: Census 1996

The participation rate in third level education has increased, particularly among young people in recent years.

However, as previously noted, students generally migrate to participate in third level colleges and universities and do not return due to the lack of employment

opportunities for graduates. Table 3.6.2 shows that the three areas of Gweedore, County Donegal and the Northwest region exhibit larger rates of unemployment for people with third level qualifications than the national average. Hence a lack of skilled job opportunities in the three areas is evident from the table.

3.7 – Dependency Ratios

Factors such as the age structure and employment rate of an area dictate the economic and age dependency ratios. From the socio-demographic characteristics discussed in the previous sections it is unsurprising that Gweedore has a high rate of dependency. The large proportion of elderly and high rate of unemployment influence this trend.

Table 3.7.1 – Age Dependency Ratio¹ in 1986 and 1996

| | 1986 | 1996 | Decrease |
|-----------------|------|------|----------|
| Gweedore | .72 | .62 | .1 |
| County | .78 | .63 | .15 |
| Region | .73 | .61 | .12 |
| National | .66 | .54 | .12 |

Source: Census 1986, 1996

Table 3.7.1 shows that the age dependency ratio decreased during 1986- 1996 inter-censal period. The decline is due to an increase in the productive sector of the population and the depletion in the proportion of people aged 0-14 (evident from figs 3.4.3 a-d).

Gweedore exhibits the second highest age dependency ratio at 0.62. This may be surprising as in section 3.2 the study area had the largest proportion of over 65s, however divergences were also present in the young age cohort (0-14) where Gweedore had a lower percentage than its counterparts at, 22%. Further divergences from the national average were apparent in the 15 to 29 age group where Gweedore was the only one to experience a decrease.

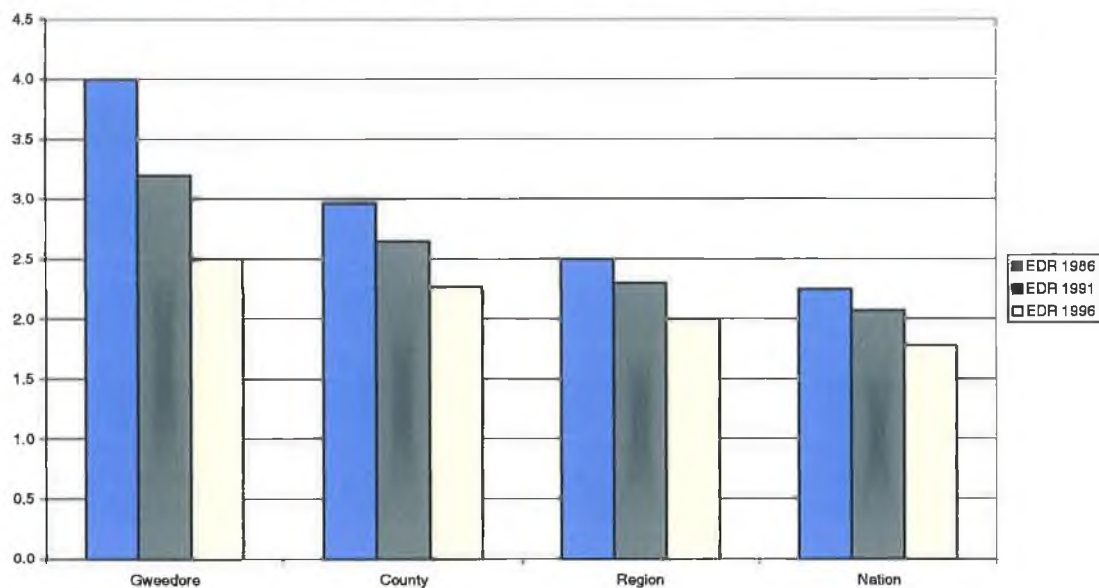
¹ Age Dependency Ratio: Ratio of people aged 0-14 and over 65 to the population aged between 15-65 (i.e. the potentially economically active section of the population)

At the moment the Age dependency ratios present a positive outlook, showing a decline in figures, however this will change as the numbers entering the 15-64 age bracket decline and the older population matures, moving into the over 65 category. A high age dependency will put pressure on public services and welfare provisions.

Likewise, the figures for economic dependency² displayed in Fig 3.7.2, is an issue of concern. Although the ratio declined from its level in 1986, Gweedore exhibited the largest economic dependency ratio at 2.5 in 1996.

The high unemployment rate and the lack of job opportunities attribute to this large score.

Fig 3.7.2 - Economic Dependency Rate for 1986, 1991 and 1996

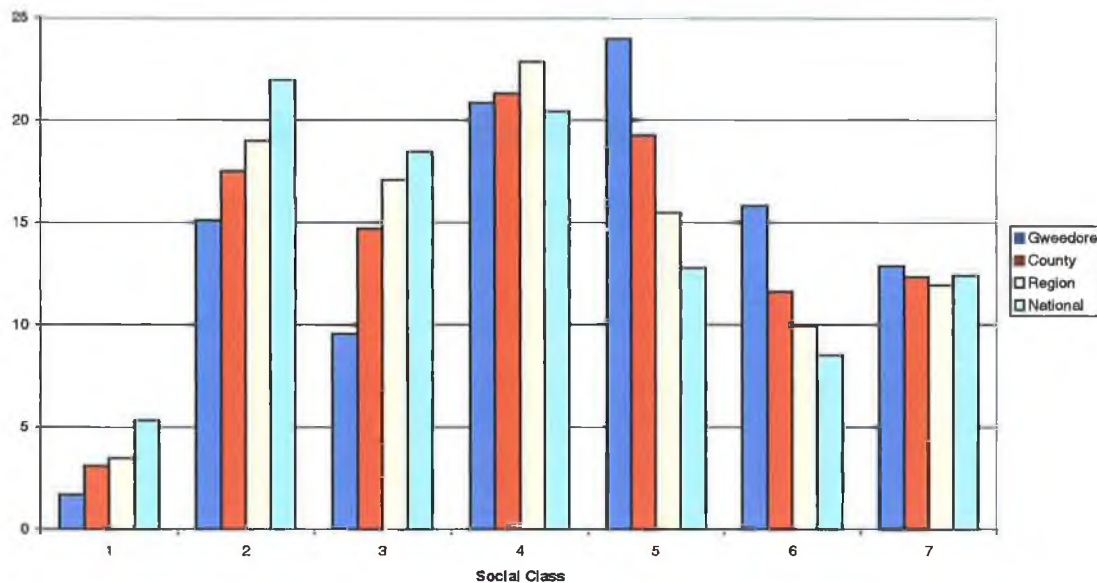


² Economic Dependency Ratio: The number of people not at work to the working population.

3.8 – Social Class³

The spatial distribution of the social classes, as discussed in Chapter 2.8 is reflected in the Study area. The higher ranks of the social classes (professionals and managerial) are poorly represented in Gweedore, especially when compared to the national average. It is evident from Fig 3.8.1 that Donegal and the Northwest experience similar discrepancies and, as one ascends the social class ladder, greater proportions of their populations are represented. The distribution of the social classes is unsurprising given the unemployment levels of the region and the employment opportunities. Since the social class one belongs to reflect the skill required in one’s job, there must be a lower level of skilled required in Gweedore than at a national level.

Fig 3.8.1 - Percentage distribution of the Social classes



³ Recalling from chapter 2 there are 7 social class categories:

Social Class 1- Higher Professional and higher managerial; proprietors and farmers owning 200 or more acres

Social Class 2- Lower Professional and lower managerial; proprietors and farmers owning 100-199 acres

Social Class 3- Other non-manual and farmers owning 50-99 acres

Social Class 4- Skilled manual and farmers owning 30-49 acres

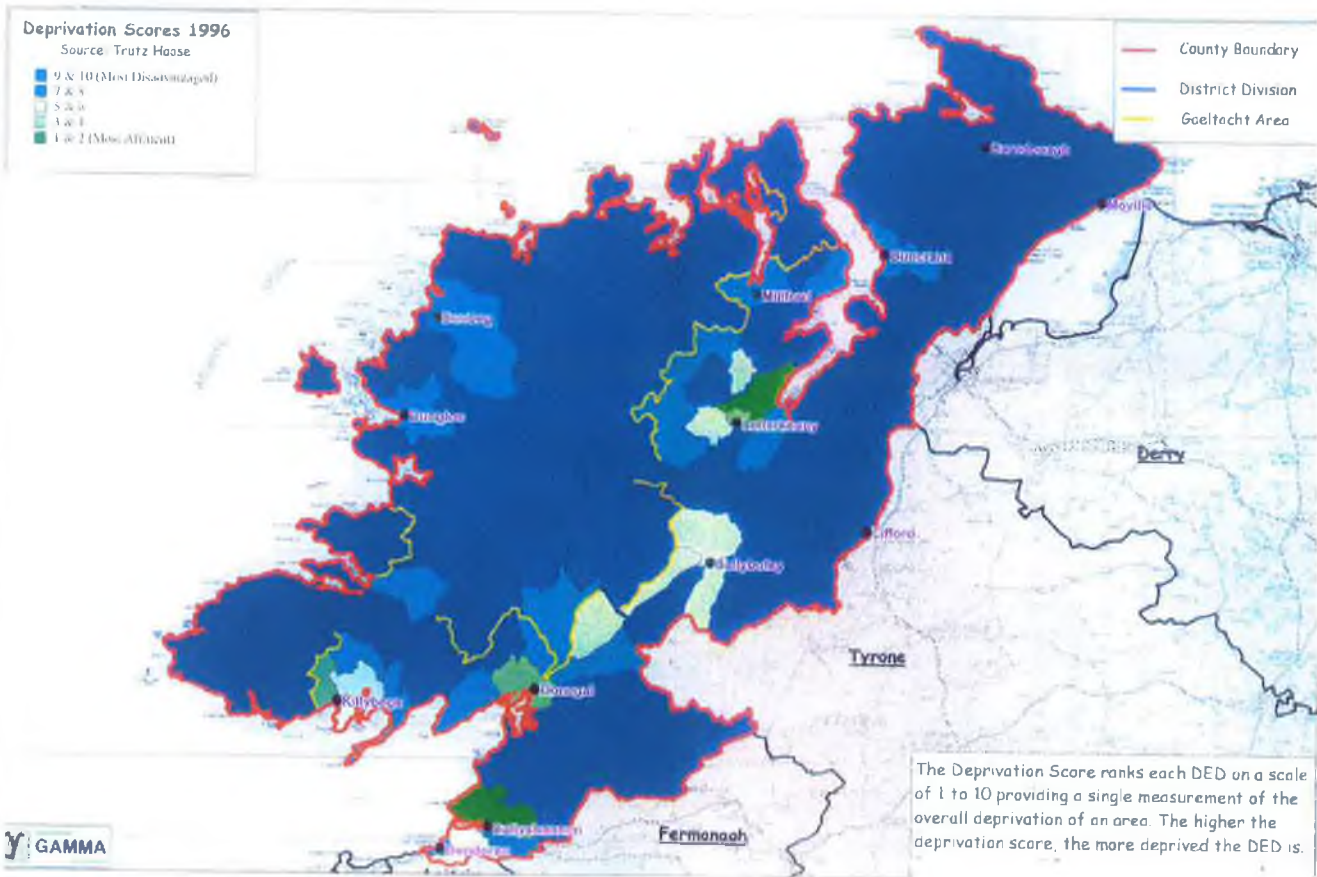
Social Class 5- Semi-skilled manual and farmers owning less than 50 acres

Social Class 6- Unskilled manual

Social Class 7- Others gainfully occupied/ unknown.

The MFG (Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta)2000 investigated the levels of deprivation in the 49 DEDs of the Gaeltacht Thír Chonaill (Donegal) in 1996. 34 DEDs recorded the highest possible deprivation score of 10, with only one showing a score of 7 (MFG 2000:7). Map 2 shows the decile deprivation score for 1996, Gweedore is located in the ‘most disadvantaged’ category, however there is a difference between the 3 DEDs which make up Gweedore.

Map 2: County Donegal – Composite Deprivation Score



Source: MFG 200:5 (adapted from Trutz Haase)

Meenaclady rates as the most deprived with a score of 9 or 10 whereas Annagary and Magheraclogher are located in the group above. This variance is apparent at national level in Map 3 with Meenaclady exerting the characteristics of a highly deprived area. Indeed much of the Gaeltacht regions fall into this category but it isn't confined to rural areas with parts of the capital experiencing high deprivation levels also.

Map 3: National Deprivation Index for the Republic of Ireland

Deprivation Level



SHARU - Area Health Research Unit

The census information for 1991 and 1996 revealed that the situation deteriorated in Gweedore during the five-year period, with the deprivation score of Magheraclogher and Annagary increasing. Meenaclady had already attained the highest possible score in 1991 which hadn't improved by 1996 (Table 3.8.1).

Table 3.8.1 – Deprivation Score for 1991 and 1996

| | Deprivation Score 1991 | Deprivation Score 1996 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Magheraclogher | 7 | 8 |
| Meenaclady | 10 | 10 |
| Annagary | 9 | 10 |

Source: MFG 2000:8

The report (MFG 2000) equated a higher number of low-income farmers with the level of deprivation. However as revealed in fig 3.5.5, agriculture only provides about 3% of employment in Gweedore. Further investigation, at DED level (Table 3.8.2) found that the employment rate differed between Magheraclogher, Meenaclady and Annagary, which might account for the divergences.

Table 3.8.2 – Changes in the Labour force in the 3 DEDs of Gweedore for 1986, 1991 & 1996.

| | Percentage Employed | | | Percentage Unemployed | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1986 | 1991 | 1996 | 1986 | 1991 | 1996 |
| Magheraclogher | 67.6 | 72.4 | 79.3 | 27.6 | 26.7 | 19.8 |
| Meenaclady | 40.0 | 39.2 | 56.8 | 49.0 | 46.5 | 41.5 |
| Annagary | 58.8 | 67.6 | 72.2 | 33.8 | 27.8 | 26.2 |

3.9 – Summary

From the brief socio-economic profile of Gweedore, presented in this chapter it is clear that this study area exhibits many of the characteristics of a rural region as discussed in Chapter 2. The age structure of its decreasing population is a concerning issue in itself but when coupled with the wider economic factors these issues become

increasingly problematic. A cycle of decline is identifiable whereby one problem off sets the next. For instance an area characterised by early school leavers means a low presence of skilled labour, which acts alongside the infrastructural deficit as a disincentive for new investment. College graduates migrate to locations that offer better job opportunities leaving older, lower wage earners behind. Lower incomes and an elderly population lead to difficulties in welfare provision and the viability of other services such as transport.

Gweedore, however, exhibits some peculiarities for a rural area: low levels of farming and high manufacturing levels.

The recommended solutions and attempts being made to improve the socio-economic profile in Gweedore are discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 - Introduction

The author's interest in the research topic arose from rural geography and sociology courses taken at undergraduate level where the problems and inequalities facing rural Ireland were brought to her attention. The colossal amount of literature available on rural Ireland reflects the need for drastic action to be taken to curb the decline of rural communities. From studying the various literature it was noted that the West of Ireland displays poorer qualities than Eastern regions in social, economic and demographic areas.

Given the significant economic growth in recent years the author found this decline both worrying and intriguing. Having a basic knowledge of the perceived problems of rural regions it was decided to investigate the factors influencing the characteristics of Gweedore, Co. Donegal. This area was chosen as it displays some characteristics which diverge from those of a typical rural area, i.e. a large population (in rural terms) and a dominant manufacturing base. It is also a Gaeltacht community and as such has undergone a significant decline in recent decades.

An investigation into the change of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Gweedore is the intention of this research. For the purpose of this aim information was gathered from both quantitative and qualitative sources:

1. Literatures
2. Census Data
3. Questionnaires
4. Interviews

4.2 – Quantitative Analysis

This positivistic philosophy is seen as the scientific method of research. Here the hypothesis is deduced from theory and is tested to demonstrate its truth or falsity.

4.2.1 – Literature Review

This thesis sets out to explore recent change in Gweedore and so Chapter 2 was devised to produce the variables by which to measure such change. Readings specific to the study area were not readily available however those focusing on rural regions throughout Ireland proved sufficient in their identification of rural traits.

4.2.1 – Census Data

Census data from 1961-1996 was collected on Gweedore and various percentages and figures were calculated. Gamma file for the 1996 census was used to correlate graphs for the area, county, region and the nation. Microsoft Excel allowed socio-economic and demographic comparisons to be made between the regions and thus illustrated if and where discrepancies lie in relation to Gweedore.

4.2.3 – Questionnaires (see Appendix one and two)

159 residents completed structured questionnaires. A data codebook was compiled to interpret the questionnaire and the codes were then inputted into SPSS computer package. These questionnaires successfully developed a household, demographic, occupational and migration profile of the Gweedore area with the use of SPSS. They provided some information which is unattainable from the census such as migratory patterns.

4.3 – Qualitative Analysis

The philosophy indoctrinated in this type of research is phenomenology, the social method of research.

4.3.1 – Interviews (see Appendix three and four)

Unstructured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis to investigate:

- What developments have occurred in the region in recent years in regards to employment and infrastructure

- What type of development agencies are located in Gweedore
- What do the interviewees perceive the problem areas to be
- What are the future plans for the area

The researcher arranged interviews with representatives from the government agency, Údarás na Gealtachta, and the partnership group, MFG over the phone. Interviews with two students were arranged on speck. The researcher had a rough outline of the type of questions to ask, the order of which was influenced by the interviewees' responses.

4.4 – Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodologies used to formulate the research strategy. A relatively wide variety of mechanisms were used in order to obtain a true perception of the change in the socio-economic and demographic profile of the study area.

CHAPTER 5

SURVEY FINDINGS

5.1 - Introduction

The main focus of the survey was to develop a household, demographic, occupational and migration profile of the Gweedore area. It was carried out in a single day by 25 pairs of second and third year students. They were dropped off at intervals along Bloody Foreland in the north to Annagry in the south of the area, and on the road from Bunbeg heading east towards Errigal. In all, 159 questionnaires were completed incorporating 500 people: 383 adults and 117 children.

5.2 – Question 1: How many people normally live in this house?

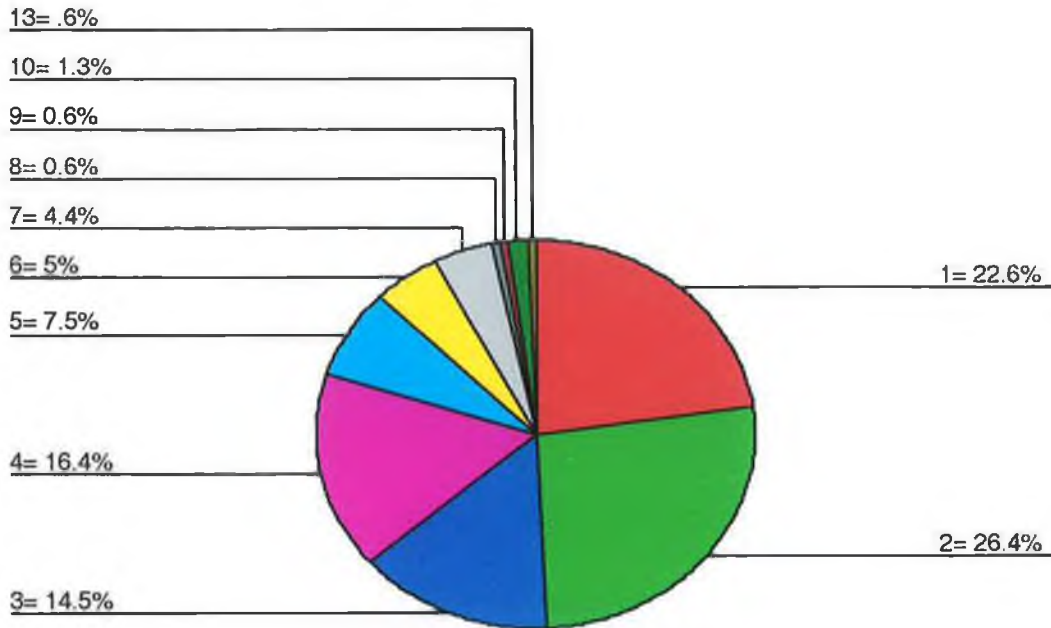
During the last three decades social and demographic change has been clearly reflected in family structure and household composition (Grimes 2002). Between 1960 and 1990 the number of households increased by 44.3% in Ireland; however, as Lewis notes (1998:143) this does not reflect an increase in population as this depends on the composition of the household. In 1991 the average family size in Ireland had been reduced to 3.5. This decline is determining the type of problems facing a decreasing and dispersed population (see chapter 2)

Question 1 revealed the household composition of the 159 houses. These findings are represented on the pie chart **Fig 5.2.1**.

49% of households have between 1-2 people residing in them which is probably a reflection of out migration. In the long term these will prove enviable on an economic and social scale. The many one-person households experience isolation and tend to be of an older age category and are therefore more vulnerable.

38.4% of respondents were households with between 3-5 people while 10% had between 6-8. A smaller amount, 2.5%, had between 6-8 people.

Fig 5.2.1 Distribution of household size



5.3 – Question 2: How many are in each of the following categories:

Adult: Males & Females 18+

Children: Secondary school, Primary School and Pre-school

383 of the 500 people accounted for in the first question were adults. The proportion of males and female respondents did not reflect that of a rural region i.e. male did not dominate female numbers as there were 192 male respondents and 191 female respondents. Nor is this the case in the census figures for the area in 1996 (refer to chapter 3, Fig 3.3.1) where 3151 males (50.95%) and 3033 (49.05%) females.

117 people were of school-going age and younger, comprising of:

49 Secondary school pupils

59 Primary school students and

09 Pre-school children. This is a very low number when you consider that 159 households were surveyed.

67.9% of the respondent households had no children in this category, reflecting out migration. By cross tabulating the three school categories it was found that only 11.3% of houses had children in both primary and secondary education.

This question reflects a low amount of younger people in the region. From the census information in Chapter 3 it is evident that the 0-14 age group has dramatically declined from its maximum number reached in 1981.

A declining young population has major implications for the survival of an area in the long term as well as the type of amenities and public services available in the region. Less people will be around in the future to take care of the elderly thus placing more pressure on public service provision.

5.4 – Question 3: What are the occupations and place of work of the adults?

Information on the occupation of 338 adults was obtained. CSO criteria were used to categorise the occupations.

Six categories were compiled as follows:

1. Professional, Business and Managerial

e.g. Doctor, Hotel owners, Shop owners, Teachers

2. Skilled and Semi-skilled

e.g. Builders, Machine operators, Hairdressers, Bar staff

3. Retired

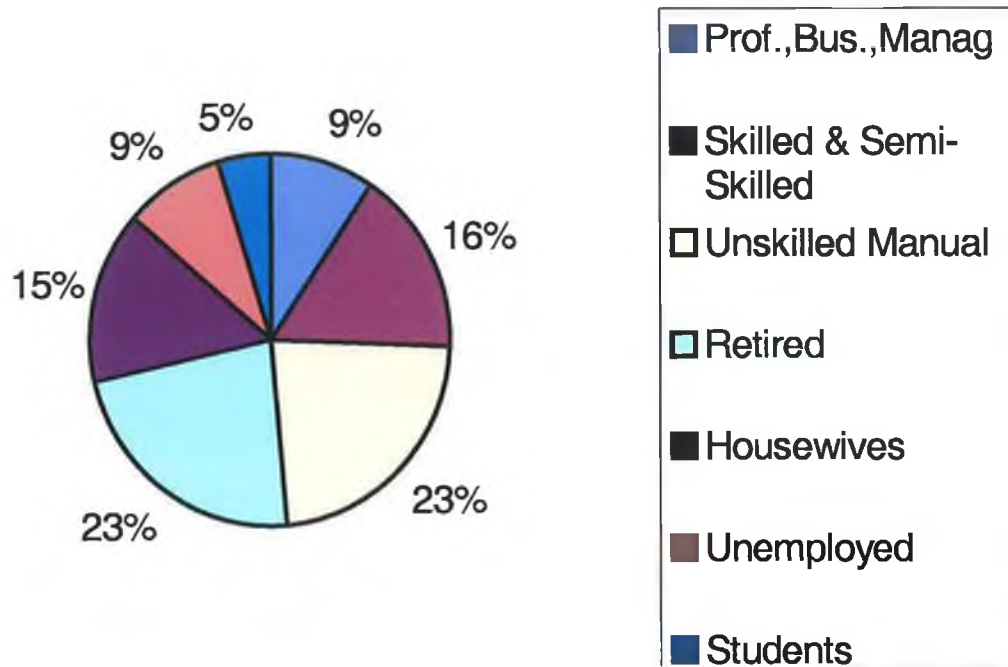
4. Housewives

5. Unemployed

6. Students

The composition of each category is represented in **Fig: 5.4.1.**

Fig 5.4.1 : Occupational Structure (N=338)



Professionals, Business and Managerial workers:

9.5% of adults were classified as either Professional, Business or Managerial but as people such as Walsh and Mc Hugh (2001:358) discussed the population of the Border region which fall under this category (3.5%) is below that of Dublin (6.9%) and the Mid- East (5.6%). The numbers engaged in this sector, especially those classified as Professionals, increase higher up the settlement hierarchy.

Skilled and Semiskilled workers:

Manufacturing employment is a stronger feature in Gweedore than the typical occupation of agriculture, forestry and fishing of rural areas as can be seen from Mc Hugh’s thesis (2001:300, Map 94). This is mainly due to the location of the industrial estate in Derrybeg.

Both farming and factory work were placed under this category and by looking at the responses given for place of work i.e. “in the home” it can be estimated that 4% may have been farmers. A higher number of adults were engaged in industrial/ manufacturing work than farming.

Unemployed:

Border regions have typically a higher unemployment rate, in 1996 it was 16.9%. Although unemployment rates have fallen since 1996 this region still displays the highest rate while the Mid-East exhibits the lowest unemployment rate. Mc Hugh (2001:332) identified Donegal, Leitrim and Cavan as particular zones of weakness with some areas experiencing an increase in unemployment rates.

In this survey, 8.5% of adults classified themselves as unemployed leaving 43% outside the labour force.

Hidden unemployment is identified as a problem in many rural areas where individuals may be excluded from the workforce due to inaccessibility to the workforce. If you recall from Chapter 2 three groups were identified as being at risk, namely young, disabled and those carrying out house duties. 15% of adults classified themselves as housewives. Perhaps some of these women might be hindered from gaining paid employment through inaccessibility to child minding facilities or training programmes.

Students:

A relatively significant amount of adults were classified as students. Policies in the area must be targeted towards keeping the higher educated in the region, ensuring that relevant employment opportunities are available to the type of education received.

Place of Work

The second part to this question revealed who works where, if there was significant employment being generated locally or did the residents need to commute to work.

138 work locations were recorded in total (**Fig 5.4.2**). At first glance there seemed to have been a good level of work generated locally as 76% of the recorded locations were in Gweedore. However, further investigation revealed that the type of employment undertaken at the local level was mostly, unskilled, manual work (**Table 5.4.1**). Of the 111 unskilled, semiskilled and skilled workers 101 (91%) worked locally. 16 (59%) of the 27 Professional, Business and Managerial workers were also employed locally. This reflects the lack of high skilled employment in the area.

Fig 5.4.2 – Locations of work

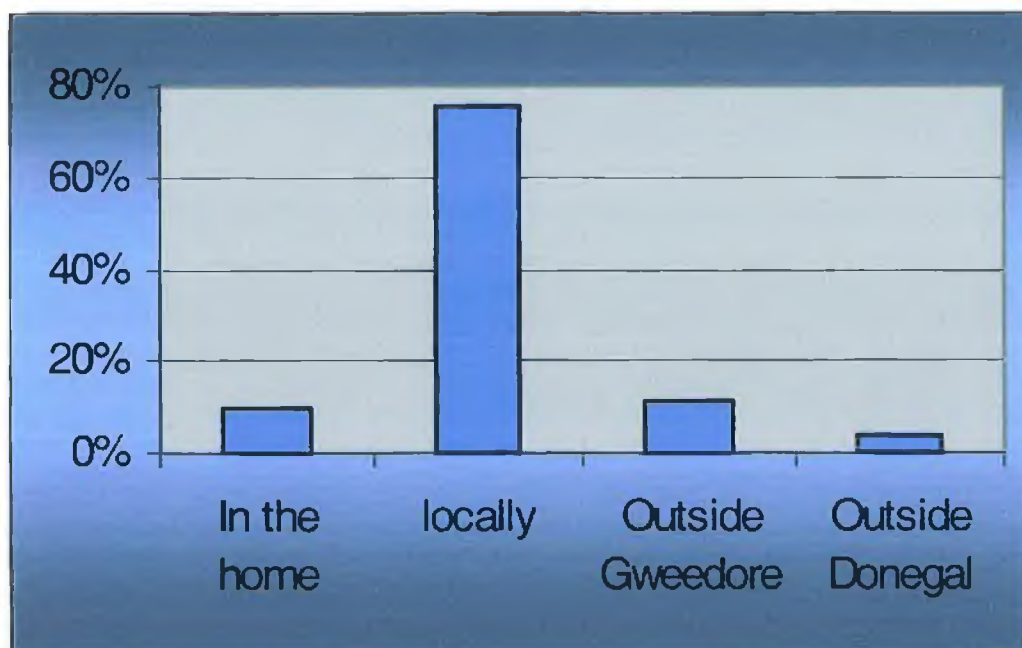


Table 5.4.1 – Cross Tabulation of Work location and Occupation

| | Profess. Managerial Business | Skilled & Semiskilled | Unskilled Manual | Total |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Home | 1 | 3 | 7 | 11 |
| Locally | 15 | 37 | 54 | 106 |
| Outside Gweedore | 7 | 7 | 2 | 16 |
| Outside Donegal | 4 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| Total | 27 | 48 | 63 | 138 |

5.5 – Question 4: Have any of the adults living in this household previously lived abroad at any stage? If yes where?

Migration engenders demographic and compositional changes in rural communities. It also affects their economies, housing market and the provision of services (Lewis 1998:154). Much literature has been devoted to this phenomenon, most of which suggests that a very complex set of interrelated factors are at work in rural areas (refer to Chapter 2).

This question allowed some analysis of the residential history of the adults. Recent studies (Pryor 1979 and Warnes 1992) have adopted this longitudinal approach as it reveals the possible influence of previous migration experiences on present and future movements (Lewis 1998:153). These movements can usually be interpreted in relation to events occurring at the time.

Although the survey did not inquire the reasons for migration it did reveal the destination of some 105 return migrants. 49.1% of households had adults who had previously lived abroad. Six categories of former residency were recorded (Fig 5.6.1). Scotland was the most popular destination, followed by England revealing a short distance of travel in the past. This reflects the comments of NESC (1991), Walsh (1996) and Fahy and Fitzgerald (1997) that there is a relationship between trends in migration and the relative performance of the Irish and UK economies and their respective labour market circumstances.

5.6 – Question 5: Apart from those living at home, are there any of the children of the head of the household, at present, living elsewhere?

This revealed that 176 children had left the area (representing 57 houses). This is a relatively high depletion number when you consider that the questionnaire represented 500 people.

Four response categories of residency were given to choose from:

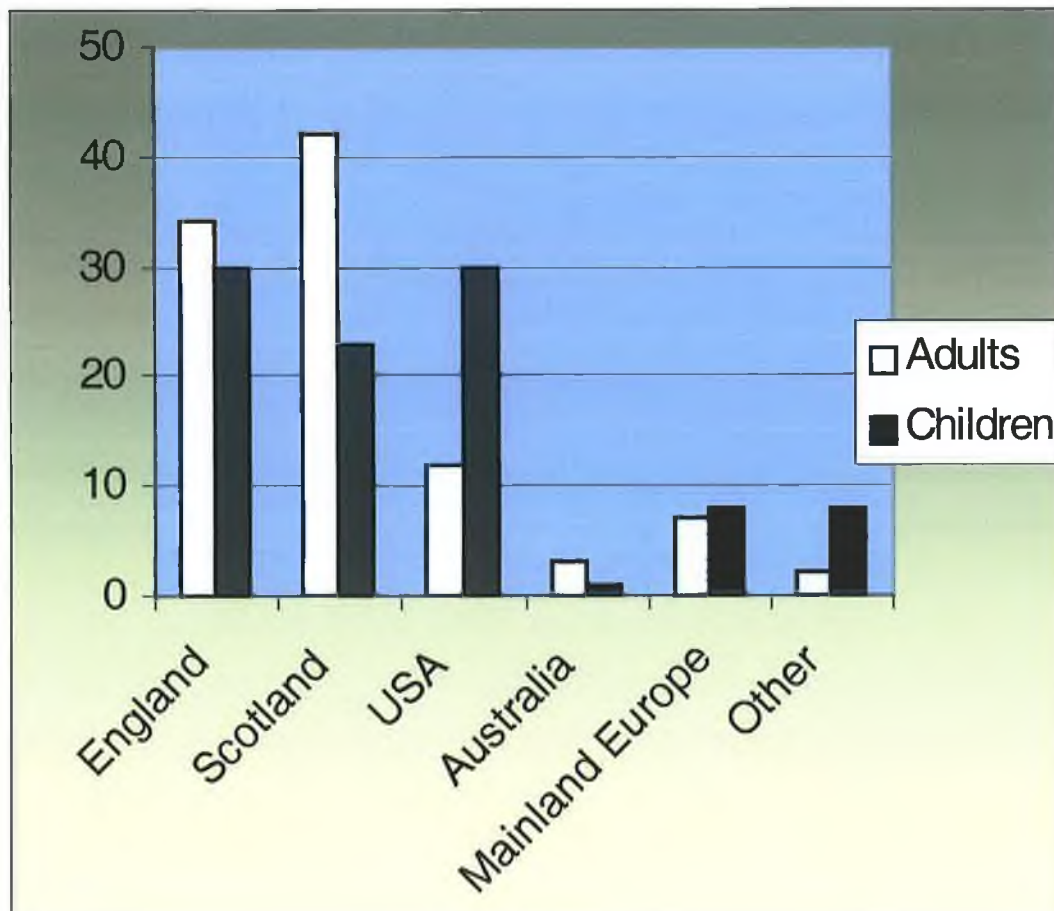
| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| - Elsewhere in Donegal: | 34.66% |
| - Dublin | 13.64% |
| - Elsewhere in Ireland | 13.07% |
| - Abroad | 38.63% |

One third of those who moved out of the area stayed in the county. This may reflect the shift in the population to the east of the county with the focus on Letterkenny (County Donegal Development Plan 1998:10). Coinciding with this shift, the NESC report no.84 (Community Care Services) discussed a change in the rural community towards a more urbanised, private pattern of life. This has led to the breakdown of the traditional network of reciprocal support and care, thus increased pressure has been placed on public welfare and service provision.

69 children lived abroad and their locations were recorded. This allows a comparison to be drawn between the destination of migrants in the past with those of their children.

The bar graph, **Fig 5.6.1** compares the destination of the adults and their offspring in percentage form. Again Scotland figured strongly but England and America were the most popular among the children. This is probably linked to a higher education level among younger people as well as the changing patterns of migration witnessed, globally, in the last two decades or so.

Fig 5.6.1 – Destination of adults and children



Cross tabulation : O.1 * O.5

An interesting result was found by cross tabulating the numbers residing in the house with question 5, if there were any children of the head of the household living elsewhere. Migration could be accounting for the small household composition and a low number of school children revealed in question one and two. Only 55% (43) of the 1-2 person household responded to this question and out of these 79% (34) had children residing outside the area. 12 of the responses from one-person households, to question 5, remained blank. This perhaps signified a bachelor, spinster or widower who never had children.

5.7 – Dependency Ratios

As was discussed in Chapter 2 a high age and economic dependency ratio is characteristic of rural regions.

A very crude age dependency ratio can be derived through the data presented in question 2 (number of children - 117) and question 5 (occupation category i.e. Retired people - 77). The ratio was found to be 1.6, i.e. for every one person in the productive segment of the population (in this case over 18s, excluding those retired) there were 1.6 persons in the dependent segment.

There is a low age dependency ratio due to a depleting 0-14 age cohort. This has enlarged the proportion of the population that is of working age and, as Mc Hugh discussed (2001:350) lays the foundation for a decrease in economic dependency.

A rough economic dependency ratio can also be determined for this survey by looking at the number employed to the rest of the respondents, who are deemed economically dependent. The ratio was found to be 1.72. This was derived from calculating the under 18 year olds and those recorded as either retired, housewives, unemployed or students as a ratio (291).

From this survey it is evident that the respondents are dependent on a lower income from unskilled and semiskilled jobs as revealed in question 3 whereby 147 people were employed in this category.

5.8 – Conclusion

The data supplied by the survey proved both interesting and informative. Analysis regarding household composition, occupation and migration were permitted. Further interpretation on the levels of fertility, employment opportunities and the levels of migration in Gweedore were also carried out.

The findings of the questionnaire reflected:

- A declining household size reflecting both part out migration and declining fertility
- A predominance of semiskilled and unskilled work in the region
- A relatively high migration pattern
- A small and decreasing number of young people (only 9 pre-school children)

The implications of these trends are discussed in various publications and reports and were referred to in Chapter 2. The development policies and projects being implemented in the area are the focus of Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6
INTERVIEW FINDINGS-
PROBLEMS AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

6.1 – Introduction

Four interviews were conducted in June 2002 with Cathal Mac Suibhne (Údarás na Gaeltachta), Seán Ó Gallchóir (Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teo [MFG]), Majella Gallagher (Third level student) and Eimear Ferry (Leaving Certificate student). These interviews were undertaken with the hope of outlining the perceived problems of Gweedore and the work being done to counteract them.

From the questionnaire findings and the census information Gweedore appears as a typically poor rural region, with low education levels, weak employment base and an elderly population. The interviews gave broader, more up to date information on Gweedore. The student interviews roughly indicated the perception of the study area from a young resident's viewpoint.

The chapter begins with a brief discussion on the role of the two agencies involved in the interviews, i.e. Údarás na Gaeltachta and Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta Teo. The chapter then proceeds by illustrating, under appropriate headings, the findings from the interviews.

6.2 – Brief introduction to two development bodies at work in Gweedore

6.2.1 - Údarás na Gaeltachta

Údarás na Gaeltachta is a state-sponsored body whose remit is that of industrial development in Gaeltacht regions through the creation of sustainable jobs and attracting investment, within the context of the preservation and promotion of the Irish language.

Located in the Derrybeg industrial estate, An tÚdarás provides support for over 25 units and over 1000 jobs.

In co-operation with FÁS, an tÚdarás administers community employment schemes for local development groups in relation to environmental, recreational, cultural and heritage projects. It also provides a measure of support for the Naíonraí, the Irish speaking pre-schools.

Over the next few years two challenges have been identified as facing An tÚdarás.

1. To strengthen the existing industrial base by continuing to support inputs into R&D, marketing, human resources development and strategy development in companies.
2. To attract new-economy type projects that will stem the outflow of graduates and educated young people from the area
(Údarás na Gaeltachta)

6.2.2 - MFG Teo

This partnership has been in operation since 1991 when it was established to operate the Leader I and II programmes in the Gaeltacht regions. Its head office is located in Dingle Co.Kerry. MFG aims to

“generate and facilitate new directions for rural development that are grounded in the experiences, aspirations and character of the people of the Gaeltacht”.

(MFG 2000:5)

It has representation from the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Údarás na Gaeltachta and community groups, social partners and state agencies on its board. It is concerned with delivering services, both directly, and indirectly through groups already active in the area. In this respect the MFG has been a delivery agent but in its 2000 report it undertook to extend this role, and become more orientated towards activities such as “needs assessment and influencing change in other existing agencies” (MFG 2000:42).

6.3 – Employment and Infrastructure

6.3.1 – Agriculture

Agriculture has always been associated with rural areas, even the most recent of studies, (Mc Hugh, 2001), noted this: “the importance of agriculture increases as one moves ‘deeper’ into rural Ireland”(Mc Hugh 2001:291). There are some exceptions to the rule where the proportions of the population working in agriculture, forestry and fishing are quite low, despite their ostensibly rural location. Gweedore is one such exception to this rule where manufacturing employment prevails over agriculture.

The rough terrain and poor soil type makes agriculture relatively unsustainable and unviable in Gweedore and Co.Donegal. The whole Gaeltacht area is classified as Severely Handicapped for the purposes of EU agricultural support payments. Many small-holders are moving towards part-time farming, and rely on subsidies and off-farm income earned by the farm holder or spouse to maintain their existence. Low-output dry-stock cattle and sheep husbandry dominates agricultural activity in the region. From the census information shown in Chapter 3, agricultural employment declined significantly from its 1986 level to 3% in 1996. The future farming options are outlined in the MFG’s Strategic Plan for 2000-2006: “options are limited to more specialised activities such as glasshouse produce, mountain sheep farming and afforestation” (MFG 2000:32).

On-farm diversification has been identified as the way forward for farmers in Gweedore (and indeed much of rural Ireland). Recent decades have witnessed the introduction of various schemes to promote higher farm incomes e.g. REPS (Rural Environmental Protection Scheme) and other direct payment schemes.

MFG Teo is among the partnerships trying to breathe new life into the increasing unviability of farms in Gweedore. However, as different rural literatures have noted, it is hard to motivate elderly farm owners. This is one of the problems associated with high youth migration whereby the older populations are left to run the farms, remaining steadfast in their values and not adopting appropriate measures to move with the changing times.

MFG Teo is a bottom-up organisation, concerned with “providing a blanket approach to training”, to equip communities with the necessary tools to develop the area:

“...the thing we do is set up networks for fishermen, small farmers and that sort of thing. We try and get themselves to influence their own destiny through policy formulation. We try and get them to be more strategic in their thinking, rather than thinking for own person- what’s in it for me, what’s in it for us? Try and get more collective initiatives be it themselves or be it us trying to push it for themselves”.

(Seán Ó Gallchóir on the work carried out by MFG.)

It is clear from this abstract that MFG is concerned with instigating bottom-up strategies to target groups, mainly those employed in declining sectors (such as agriculture).

The continuation of agricultural activity, even in new forms (e.g. afforestation) is recognized as vital to maintaining rural communities (MFG 2000:10).

6.3.2 - Manufacturing

The interviews with Cathal Mac Suibhne and Seán Ó Gallchóir substantiated the findings of chapter 3 and 5 that there is a heavy reliance on the manufacturing in the area. This is worrying in light of the recent change the economy has undergone in recent years. Already this year, 150 job losses have been announced for the Derrybeg industrial estate in Gweedore (Irish Times 19 April 2002). The interviews divulged information on the present employment situation and the future plans of the agencies at work in the region.

The Derrybeg industrial estate is the focus of manufacturing employment, not only for the people of Gweedore but also the surrounding hinterlands. Opened in the late 1960s it has attracted over 20 manufacturing industries, the oldest being Comer Yarn. These have “survived through thick and thin and have been very profitable throughout the years” (Cathal Mac Suibhne). Presently (July 2002), 1100 people are employed full time among the 25 units of the industrial estate.

Manufacturing does not solely occupy the industrial estate and there are plans to develop industries beyond manufacturing. The 25 units comprise some service and administrative industries also, such as the Údarás office, FÁS training centre, Radio Na Gaeltachta, the

NorthWestern Health Board and NCT testing. The sectors in the manufacturing industries are textiles, food, engineering and electronics.

The national trend of traditional manufacturing jobs in rural areas being lost and replaced by modern service jobs in urban areas is particularly felt in Gaeltacht areas. There is currently limited scope for development of modern service jobs because of a shortage of a skilled workforce and a deficient telecommunication infrastructure:

“In the 60s, 70s and 80s the big emphasis was on manufacturing but now the life cycle, for that type of product is coming to an end and we are now going into the next generation of high tech, high skills, telecommunications”.

(Cathal Mac Suibhne)

The County Donegal Development Plan 1998 emphasizes 3 interest sectors; the service sector (especially tourism), food processing (especially in the fisheries sector) and IT and telecommunication. Call centres and IT industries have been proposed for the Gweedore estate. Two new buildings are undergoing completion (June 2002) on the estate. These are advanced units, built to attract new industries. It is hoped that over 100 technology jobs will be generated annually.

Mr. Ó Gallchóir discussed the presence of IT in Gweedore. The Cáite initiative, under the Department of Enterprise is based on IT training in remote areas. These training facilities are found in FÁS offices but also in pockets around the area where “community groups have come together and set up their own facilities”.

6.3.3 - Infrastructure

A number of obstacles exist in Gweedore which may hinder the establishment of the intended service and IT sectors. The presence of poorly developed infrastructure is a long established fact in the rural peripheral and Gaeltacht regions of Ireland, and Gweedore is no different.

Transport Network:

Gweedore is not served by any primary route, and by only one national secondary route, the N56. Although the Letterkenny- Gweedore road has seen some improvement in the last decade, “increased usage, from extra car traffic and heavy haulage has led to considerable and ongoing deterioration of the road infrastructure” (MFG 2000:29). This has been somewhat accepted by the agencies:

“Well we never had great emphasis on the roads. We said 20 years ago, 30 years ago, 10 years ago the roads are diabolic we can not develop them nothing would happen. The roads are there that’s a fate to accompany”.
(Cathal Mac Suibhne)

Gweedore isn’t served by a railway line, leaving travel and transport almost totally reliant on the road network. There is a regional airport, Carrickfinn, which has scheduled flights to Glasgow and Jersey, and a daily service to Dublin. However, the approach road is a minor route in extremely poor repair. Increased pressure has led to the introduction of a morning service to Dublin (from July 2002) which it is hoped will benefit the region.

Power:

The poor transport conditions act as one hindrance to the establishment of the proposed sectors but, more importantly there is an absence of a high voltage power line (110k power line). The industrial estate, like much of West Donegal, operates on a 38k line, installed in the 1940s. These kilowatts are inadequate for powering IT.

“Somebody coming from Dublin say it’s very slow, the power isn’t there. We don’t notice but again, someone from Limerick staying in one of the hotels was using his lap top and the light was flickering which shows the power isn’t there”.
(Cathal Mac Suibhne)

Mr. Mac Suibhne revealed that the ESB had plans to put in a 110k line but the planning was rejected due to an “up swell to against pylons in the area....In the end Bord Pleanála rejected it. But the ESB would be looking for that again”. This upgrading is vital in the attempts being made to attract new industries.

A Broadband technology link around the estate has been approved in the last six months and there are plans to link this to Letterkenny. This is a necessary step to take in order to

bring the technology more in line with that available in urban areas and so will aid the competitiveness of Gweedore.

Sewerage Disposal:

Sewerage disposal units were the final element to the weak infrastructure discussed by the interviewees. The households in the Gweedore area rely on septic tanks, however these are not suitable for densely populated areas, neither are they an option in places of underlying bog or rock.

“If you take this area, the Gweedore area, everyone is living on septic tanks- there’s no sewerage scheme. That’s a hindrance to development. That to some extent has restricted planning permission because they say the place is floating in septic tanks.

(Cathal Mac Suibhne.)

The new sewerage scheme, which has been sought for the last twenty years, is due to start construction in 2003.

Údarás has been faced with the challenge of developing the area, economically, within this infrastructurally weak base. They could not, and can not, afford to wait until this infrastructural deficit is rectified, had they done so the implications would have been dire. Mr Mac Suibhne discussed this:

“...we always work on the basis that we have to work with what we have. If we wait to get things done the people will be gone so it is a balancing act”.

6.3.4 - Alternative Employment opportunities

In recent years there has been a move towards re-valuing the rural space and resources. The multi-sectoral nature of Gweedore was highlighted not only through the interviews but also from census figures. Gweedore has the opportunity for developing successful enterprise such as agri-business, fishing, tourism, forestry and employment generally. Mr Mac Suibhne remarked that one of the positive aspects associated with Gweedore is its different source of incomes, and this has always been the case.

“There's a mix of incomes. That was always a strength of the area even in weaker times where there was a mix of incomes from accommodation, Irish students, turf, fishing, home craft knitwear and all that. There was always a mixture. That mixture is continuing in various forms and that is a strength of the areas”.

The tourism industry has been a major growth sector in Gweedore in recent decades. It has the potential to become a valuable addition to the activities of the small scale farming and fishing families “whose livelihoods have been adversely impacted upon through the changes in these sectors” (MFG Business Plan 2000:35). Údarás na Gaeltachta subsidiary company, Imeachtaí GaelSaoire Teo, has committed staff and resources for the promotion of cultural tourism, using GaelSaoire as a brand name by which to market. Gweedore has much to offer the tourist, from its mountainous terrain, coastal landscapes and rich culture and heritage. Gweedore has a number of successful guesthouses and hotels. Ostan Gweedore is a “luxury hotel nestled in the village of Bunbeg’ and is equipped with leisure and conference facilities” (www.holiday-ireland.com/northWest/stay). The following attractions are also available to the tourist ; mountain climbing, golfing, fishing, swimming, windsurfing, boating, walks, festivals and parks (e.g. Glenveagh National Park).

The photograph, plate 3.6.1, shows new holiday cottages in the area.

Plate 6.3.1 – Holiday Homes in Meenaclady



Gweedore has a strong link with traditional music, having produced the renowned musicians Altan, Clannad and Enya. The vibrant culture associated with this Gaeltacht region is its main commodity.

The potential for further development in the tourism sector has also been realized. For example, in July 2000, Mr. Eamon Ó Cuív granted £30,000 for work on the Golf clubhouse and £52,000 for pitch improvement, tennis courts and car parks for the ‘Celts Soccer Club’ in Gweedore. These developments will benefit the community on the whole, particularly the young people.

Imeachtaí GaelSaoire Teo has developed initiatives such as ‘An Baile Beo’ (The Living Town), involving six community groups in the improvement of towns and villages in Gweedore and the surrounding Gaeltacht, such as the development of the Lakeside Cultural Centre in Dunlewy, the restoration of the railway line in Finntown and “An Chúirt” heritage centre in Gweedore.

The Leader II initiative, administered in Gweedore by MFG, has also played a major role in developing cultural tourism. During 1995-99 the initiative assisted over 60 projects in the Gaeltacht area, ranging from support for accommodation to the development of leisure facilities which include pony-trekking, sport angling, water sports, guided walks, as well as the development of visitor attractions such as craft shops and restoration of cultural or heritage sites.

6.3.5 – Unemployment and its hidden side

As noted in Chapters 3 and 5, hidden unemployment may be an issue affecting Gweedore. The lack of transport and care facilities may inhibit some people from gaining employment. Although mechanisms are in place to overcome the problem of accessibility (buses transport employees to and from the industrial estate), the high unemployment figures and low labour force participation rate among females and the over 40s are proof that more needs to be done.

Lone parent households are particularly vulnerable to hidden unemployment. 10.9% of households in Gweedore are headed by a lone parent. The Mobile Information Unit is one service benefiting lone parents. Staff assist lone parents and other marginal groups seeking employment and provide information on social welfare and related entitlements.

As Shuttleworth *et. al* (2000) noted, plans to tackle unemployment should include the identification of jobless households whose sole income is social welfare. These researchers found unemployment can be concentrated within households as certain households are isolated from the labour market and information about job opportunities. Under the MFG Strategic Plan for 2000-2006 an information office is to be appointed to the Gweedore area to promote the dissemination of information on training, upskilling and employment opportunities to the socially excluded. This action is a positive step towards alleviating unemployment and hidden unemployment.

Among other measures, the Strategic Plan intends to develop an 'Integrated Rural Transport Strategy' "which will ensure greater equality of opportunity and access to all groups" (MFG 2000:78). The research necessary for this strategy has yet to be conducted.

Unemployment is one of the dominant traits of rural regions but as research has shown (Shuttleworth et. al 2000), factors such as inaccessibility to training, education, information about job vacancies, child and elderly care facilities exclude many people from even registering as unemployed. This seems to be the case in Gweedore which the Strategic Plan hopes to address.

6.4 – Education

Traditionally rural areas were identified with early school-leavers and a higher proportion of people who have, at most, primary education. The census figures for 1996 revealed that this was still the case with 45% of adults having left school after primary education. MFG is committed to undertaking actions to retain children at risk of leaving their education and to enhance their educational experience. There are a number of activities underway in Gweedore to tackle educational disadvantage such as:

- Spaoisbus and reading programmes aimed at pre-school age children
- Employment of an education co-ordinator, computer training courses, school language assistant at primary level
- Tourism skills training for post-primary students
- Recognised Irish Language skills

(MFG 2000:20)

6.4.1 - Shortage of skilled job opportunities and out migration:

As noted in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5, education levels in the region are increasing (increased number of students). However there is a shortage of skilled jobs. The interview with Cathal Mac Suibhne revealed that the provision of skilled employment opportunities is the focus of plans:

“there’s a lot of young graduates coming on stream . . . If they go for a few years experience and then come back, there’s jobs available to suit their skills that’s the target. That’s the program over the next number of years.

And we have some projects coming on stream to do that”.

The interviews with the two students reflected the lack of skilled job requirements in the region, the focus of the industrial estate as the main source of employment and the association of Gweedore with migration. Majella Gallagher, a final year arts student remarked-

“No I don’t think I will [settle here when I graduate]. I think I’ll move away and get a job. Maybe [I’ll move to] Galway and then I might come back.”

This reflects what Mr. Mac Suibhne said about recent migration trends:

“With the whole Celtic Tiger that was predominantly in the cities rather than in the rural areas. For the last number of years they [graduates] were ending up in the cities but since the downturn a lot of people have come back and certainly we want to get those back”.

The shortage of adequate high skilled jobs is also evident through Majella’s interview where she seems to speak for her fellow graduates also:

I: Why are you thinking of not staying around, is it job related?

M.G: Job wise basically. People who go to college come back and there’s nothing here. You’ve done a degree and there’s nothing here to suit you.

Both Majella and Eimear maintain they will settle in Gweedore, job permitting. It may be unsurprising that Eimear, a secondary school pupil, expresses these sentiments having not experienced life outside her home. Majella, on the other hand, has lived in Galway for the past three years and declared:

“I love Gweedore and if I did get a job in Údarás or somewhere like that doing law, what I set out to do, I’d definitely take it. If I could live in the Gaeltacht, I’d definitely take it. But there isn’t really that many opportunities at the moment”.

This perhaps shows an unwillingness to leave Gweedore but job opportunities don’t permit graduates’ residency in the area. However, job location is not the only factor

influencing where a person may settle, personal and other external factors also come into play. Unfortunately these weren't evident from the interviews.

6.4.2 - Early school leavers and those with second level qualifications:

The pattern of migration between the more highly educated was also evident from Majella's statement; "those who didn't go to college definitely will stay around".

She backed up the point made by the principal of Pobal Scoil Gaoth Dobhair that those who didn't receive third level education have furthered their education through apprenticeships – "They are working in trades, FÁS courses from which they get jobs locally because Údarás are helping them get jobs locally".

The FÁS Training Centre for the Donegal Gaeltacht is located within the Derrybeg industrial estate. An tÚdarás, working with FÁS, sponsor 80 apprenticeships per annum for the Gaeltacht areas. Cathal Mac Suibhne informed the interviewer that these apprenticeships are run under Youth Schemes, aimed at early school leavers, sponsoring "any skill that anyone wants to take on board".

On looking up the FÁS website (20/July/2002) the researcher found 14 courses on offer in Gweedore. These reflected the cultural and heritage aspects of the area (Courses in: Traditional stonewall building and general construction, restoration projects, educational programme in traditional music and song) as well as the skills required in today's economy (e.g. ECDL, computer applications and office skills, hospitality training course). However there were no courses for service and electronics which have become an important source of employment in Ireland and is hoped will become a source of employment in Gweedore.

FÁS is also represented on the Board of MFG where there is a good level of co-operation on a range of training initiatives. From 2000 the partnership has administered "Jobs Club" and "Job Initiative" Projects on behalf of FÁS in Gweedore.

6.4.3 – A University for the Gaeltacht ?

Four universities have recently submitted (Irish Times July 2002) a joint plan for the establishment of a new Irish education service mainly located in the Gaeltacht areas. This is intended to curb the brain drain from rural communities. The graduates, it is hoped, could then use their skills to enrich their community. Courses in a range of areas would be offered. Although the potential size of the student market may be small it would undoubtedly help regions such as Gweedore. Teenagers would no longer have to leave their home area to attend third level colleges and this, in turn, could encourage companies to locate there. This educational establishment might instill positive attitudes towards the Irish language.

6.5 – The Irish Language

6.5.1 – Promoting Irish

As a Gaeltacht area the Irish language is a vital component of Gweedore's culture and heritage. "It is the language of the home and workplace, and it is the social language through which people conduct their normal business throughout the day" (Gaeltacht Commission 2002:9). As a Gaeltacht region, Gweedore merits separate policies to other rural areas. Seán Gallagher remarked on this:

"Without the language we wouldn't have these programmes. We would be lumped in with the other programmes that are being run in Donegal.

Only for the language that's the only difference for us having a programme for ourselves and have employment for ourselves. So the language is a big thing, it's a basis for all these programmes and initiatives. A lot of people don't realise how important that is. You'll find that Cathal says the same about Údarás, that only for the language they'd be under the IDA or Enterprise Ireland".

The preservation and strengthening of Irish as a living language and its transmission to the next generation forms the basis of Gweedore's policies. For instance, An tÚdarás has a language programme accompanying each business and industry it provides support to. These businesses must agree to promote and develop the use of Irish in their activities. However policy implementation is not always easy:

I: In relation to Irish would you use it all the time when talking to your friends and that?

E.F: Well my friends don't speak it at home, well maybe two of them because one of their parent's are from around here and the other is not from around here. It depends but usually, always Irish at school. Probably when you're in company when we're out we talk English."

(Eimear Ferry)

However on further discussion it was revealed that Eimear's friends had no problem understanding Irish at school which, evidently, is a Gaelscoil. So perhaps this is proof of the unwillingness between the younger generations to use Irish. Cathal Mac Suibhne maintained this to be the case:

I: Do you think younger people are still inclined to use Irish? Say going into a shop for example the person behind the counter seems to use English to the customer.

CmacS: Very much so. Again what's fashionable, what's in, what's cool whatever else the young people don't see the language as cool".

Mr. Mac Suibhne noted that the younger person who leaves the region to attend third level institutes returns with revived optimism towards the language. This was the case for Majella:

"you go through this phase where it's not cool but when you go to college you cop your self on and realize we are different". [Majella Gallagher]

Peoples' attitude towards Irish is seen as deterring the progression of the language. Various commentaries on the subject (Gaeltacht Commission Report 2002, Údarás na Gaeltacht) maintain that a stigma is attached to the Irish language whereby it is associated with poverty among some people. This issue needs to be addressed.

6.5.3 – Planning Restrictions

Planning legislation in the Gaeltacht regions has been seen as contributing to the demise of the Irish Language (Gaeltacht Commission Report 2000). Residents have complained

that local authorities have employed policies which result in planning permission being refused to local people on their own land and as a consequence natives are being forced to move outside Gweedore. Furthermore, the movement of non-Irish speakers into the Gaeltacht and the increasing number of holiday homes were said to be adding to the demise of the language. Cathal Mac Suibhne shed light on the subject, pointing out that Gweedore is not only a high amenity area but also is deficient in its sewerage disposal, hence planning permission has been slowed down to allow the development of the latter.

The decreased number of planning permission has negative implications for the proposed expansion in the employment sector. An insufficient housing stock would be a deterrent for return migrants and graduates.

6.5.4 - Government Agencies

According to the Gaeltacht Commission Report (2002:9) the language faces pressures, externally, from State and private sector organisations who give no linguistic recognition to the distinctiveness of the Gaeltacht community. The question was posed to Mr. Mac Suibhne if government bodies have inadequate policies towards the Gaeltacht regions and he gave this response:

“Well yes, if you take the Gaeltacht area you have, Údáras the Gaeltachta, Roinn na Gaeltachta, they have a government brief to develop and promote the language. But you’ve other government agencies that have a brief in the Gaeltacht but they would handle a project or whatever else here as they would in Co.Longford or Co.Carlow etc. That’s the problem, that’s a negative thing.

Because you have the government at one end funding development with a conscious Gaeltacht brief and other agencies that don’t and they’re cutting across”.

There needs to be stronger communication between the agents at work in the region. This, it is hoped, will be the outcome of the Gaeltacht Commission Report and the Language Bill.

6.5.5 – Future Prospects

It is clear from the interviews and literature reviewed that the Irish language is facing a crisis. Census information, studied by the Gaeltacht Commission Report, showed that the percentage of Irish speakers in the Donegal Gaeltacht declined in the forty year period following 1961 (Gaeltacht commission 2002:21).

Attitudes towards the language must change in order to stop this decline in Gweedore. Although positive measures have been implemented in recent years to promote Irish (e.g. TG4, learning classes for adults) the Government has been rather negligent in Irish language policy. It lacks seriousness about the issue, perhaps evident from the absence of a university unit to develop language planning, resulting in a lack of expertise and understanding about the severity of the issue.

6.6 - Social Exclusion

Due to the scattered settlement pattern in parts of Gweedore, and the lack of transport facilities many groups face social exclusion.

Area Development Management Ltd. (ADM) drew up guidelines for a Social Inclusion Programme for partnerships and community groups in May 2000. Its aim (ADM) is to support integrated local economic and social development. The ADM provides funding to those partnerships and groups that ‘adopt a partnership approach to tackling local issues on the basis of comprehensive, integrated local action plans designed to counter exclusion’ (ADM 2000:5). Partnership 2000 defined social exclusion as

“cumulative marginalisation from production (unemployment) from consumption (poverty), from social networks (community, family and neighbours), from decision making and an adequate quality of life”

(Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands 2000)

Three action areas have been identified as areas in need of assistance:

- Measure A – Services for the Unemployed
- Measure B – Community Development
- Measure C – Community Based Youth Initiatives

Strategies and objectives for each of these areas have been undertaken by MFG, each are targeted with specific groups in mind:

- Long Term Unemployed
- Disadvantaged Women
- People with Disabilities
- Returning migrants
- Lone Parents
- Elderly
- Underemployed
- Early School leavers
- Low-income Family Units

The strategies adopted to tackle social exclusion must comply with government guidelines, outlined under Partnership 2000. Different groups, from statutory to non-statutory agents, must work together to alleviate social exclusion. From the data presented in chapter 3 Gweedore has many characteristics of a rural region hence many of the groups targeted for assistance will be similar to its rural counterparts.

The implementation of the social exclusion plan in the coming years will ease some of the physical and social problems facing the study area.

6.6.1 – An example of recent developments for a target group

The Elderly

There is a high elderly dependency ratio in Gweedore. The scattered settlement of some parts of Gweedore and its poor service and road situation means that a high proportion of elderly are at risk of becoming isolated and excluded. Different actions have been taken and proposed to assist this problem area. An tÚdarás, in partnership with the North Western Health Board (NWHB), established a day centre in Derrybeg with relevant transport facilities provided. It provides a space for the elderly to socialize on a daily basis. Work has commenced on extending the building to a nursing home, which will be a 40-bed unit, which is due to be opened by the middle of next year (2003). The establishment of this nursing home in the region means that the elderly person no longer has to move to Stranorlar to receive care. This makes the already difficult transition a little easier as the patient moves within the same region allowing them to use the language they have spoken all their lives.

The day centre and nursing home also have spin-off effects in employment as referred to by Mr. Mac Suibhne:

“health by its very nature is very labour intensive and that will employ about 30-40 people from management, nursing staff, everything else. It’s another area and the type of services has a few angles to it, it creates jobs but also it is a service to people giving them a way of life”.

The nursing home, it is hoped, will also serve as a mechanism for attracting past residents back to the area:

“We would hope that there’ll be plenty of people around, at management level, that can avail of that work, nursing staff that can avail of that type of work, that are probably maybe nursing someplace else or working that will come back. So it all adds to the building of the community”.

(Cathal Mac Suibhne)

Day Care Centres and Hospices are especially important to elderly living alone. In 1996 32.5% of over 65 year olds in Gweedore were living on their own compared to 27.2% at county and 25.8% at national level. This group is particularly vulnerable to isolation.

6.7 – Conclusion

This chapter presented the issues raised in the interviews and the proposed plans to alleviate the social and economic problems facing Gweedore. Positive initiatives are being implemented by both An tÚdarás and MFG Teo in the region, from plans to expand the employment opportunities and to increase education and training facilities through to policies to combat social exclusion.

The negative characteristics associated with this peripheral rural region have become more pronounced over the years due to the incessant economic growth which primarily dominated the Eastern half of the country. The lack of skilled jobs and a decline in skilled labour, coupled with the out migration of graduates, has become the focus of planning policies for An tÚdarás who intend generating I.T jobs in the near future.

MFG Teo work at the micro-level, providing support and assistance to groups most affected by the change in the labour requirements of the last decade or so. Mac Donagh

(1998:53) is rather skeptical of this type of partnership approach as it is “trying to involve people in development projects that have already been decided”. This is not the case for MFG Teo in Gweedore, as Seán Ó Gallchóir noted, the plans are devised on the basis of discussions held with the targeted group. The community needs are identified and appropriate mechanisms (“blanket support”) are put in place to allow the communities to initiate development programmes.

Mac Donagh (1998) maintains that the gap between the local and state needs to be bridged in order for sustainable rural development to occur. MFG, in Gweedore, seem to have constructed this bridge.

The Irish language is an integral part of Gweedore which makes its development agencies and policies different to those undertaken in non-Gaeltacht rural areas. On both a local and national level necessary steps need to be taken in order to strengthen Irish within Gweedore as outlined in section 6.5.5.

Some positive changes have occurred in Gweedore, (e.g. the establishment of the Day Centre, educational services) but more is needed in way of social and infrastructural development.

CHAPTER 7

OVERVIEW and CONCLUSIONS

7.1 – Overview

This thesis originated from research and publications documenting the declining trends of rural communities in Ireland. Gweedore was chosen as a case study area due to its larger rural population size, the predominance of a manufacturing base and the fact that it is one of the strongest Irish-speaking areas in Ireland. The aim of this thesis was to investigate if Gweedore exhibits the declining features of rural Ireland, highlighted in the various literatures.

Chapter Two provided a synopsis of recent literature on rural discourse and this outlined eight basic features by which to investigate the study area.

The empirical core of this thesis is in Chapter Three, which discusses the demographic and socio-economic performance of Gweedore compared to that exhibited at county, regional and national level. This is achieved using census data for 1996.

From this chapter it was clear that Gweedore displays most of the features of a rural community, performing poorly in both its demographic (a relatively small proportion of its population in the productive sector) and economic variables (high unemployment, low labour force participation rates, low education levels, lower income per capita).

Chapter Five reveals interesting information regarding household composition, occupations and migratory patterns of 159 household in the region. This added to the research and discussion of Chapters Three and Six.

Considering Chapter Three, Five and Six in aggregate, a number of changes were experienced in Gweedore which help highlight its strengths and weaknesses.

The most powerful indicator of Gweedore's demographical viability is its age structure. Detailed in Chapter Three, the area has a higher proportion of its population in the older age bands and a smaller proportion under the age of twenty than that of the county, region and nation.

The additional, inter-related factors of employment, education and migration further complicate the already fragile age structure.

The reliance on manufacturing employment could prove detrimental to Gweedore in light of recent job cuts. The low education level associated with the area is an obstacle to the establishment of new industrial sectors. Correspondingly, education levels within the younger population has been increasing but the deficiency in the area of skilled employment has led many of the graduates to migrate.

Inadequacies in the physical and social infrastructure also pose constraints to Gweedore's development in both the provision of good quality services and the location of new companies.

It must also be noted that the issues facing Gweedore are more complex than other rural regions due to its status as a Gaeltacht. The various statutory and partnership bodies at work in the area are faced with the dilemma of developing a demographically, physically and economically weak region while attempting to maintain the status of the language for future generations.

The recent Gaeltacht commission report (May 2002), publicizing the demise of the Irish language, noted that the language faces mounting pressure from internal and external influences. The state and private sector organisations were reputed as giving no linguistic recognition to the distinction of the community. From within the region it was noted that the communities are losing confidence in its status as a distinct language.

7.2 – Future Outlook

In spite of the many threats posed by the socio-economic fabric of Gweedore, it possesses a number of strengths which could be the key to its future development. These include its unique language and culture associated with the Donegal Gaeltacht with its traditional music, dance and folklore. Its natural, unrivalled landscape, inland and coastal waters and its close proximity to Mt. Errigal.

Interviews revealed that there is a history of strong community activity in Gweedore which is a distinct advantage in being able to seize development opportunities and maximize on them. The presence of such agencies as Údarás na Gaeltachta, FÁS, VEC, MFG etc. which are fully committed to creating job opportunities and alleviating social problems hold the key to the region's future viability. In the short term the employment issues, regarding the lack of skilled job opportunities for the new graduates coming on stream and recent job losses in the manufacturing sector, have to be addressed. If these areas are successfully tackled knock on effects may be felt in the demographical viability of the region where people could be attracted to the region.

Steeped in natural beauty and heritage, Gweedore, on Ireland's periphery, should not be allowed fall prey to the roaring 'Celtic Tiger' of the urban jungle. Hopefully this won't be the case as the community and the various agencies work together to enhance this unique locality.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1-

Questionnaire carried out in Gweedore, findings are discussed in Chapter 5

St. Patrick's College, Maynooth

Department of Geography

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | | |

NORTHWEST DONEGAL QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Good morning/afternoon,

We are students from Maynooth College, and we are doing a short social survey in this area as part of our studies. We would be glad if you could answer some questions for us.

1. How many people normally live in this house

| Total | Code |
|-------|------|
| | 4 |

2. How many in each of the following categories:

| | Males | Code | Females | Code | Total | Code |
|--------------|-------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
| Adults (18+) | | 5 | | 6 | | 7 |

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|----|
| Secondary School Children | | 8 |
| Primary School Children | | 9 |
| Preschool Children | | 10 |

3. What are the occupations of the adults?
[Include housewife, student, unemployed, retired and sick/disabled as occupations]

If employed outside the home, ask also for place of work

| | Occupation | Code | Place of Work | Code |
|---------|------------|------|---------------|------|
| Adult 1 | | 11 | | 12 |
| Adult 2 | | 13 | | 14 |
| Adult 3 | | 15 | | 16 |
| Adult 4 | | 17 | | 18 |
| Adult 5 | | 19 | | 20 |

4. Have any of the adults living in this household previously lived abroad at any stage?

Yes No 21

If yes, where?

| | Location 1 | Code | Location 2 | Code |
|---------|------------|------|------------|------|
| Adult 1 | | 22 | | 23 |
| Adult 2 | | 24 | | 25 |
| Adult 3 | | 26 | | 27 |
| Adult 4 | | 28 | | 29 |
| Adult 5 | | 30 | | 31 |

5. Apart from those living at home, are any children of the head of household at present living elsewhere?

Yes No 32

If yes, where?

| | Number of children |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Elsewhere in Donegal | 33 |
| Dublin | 34 |
| Elsewhere in Ireland | 35 |
| Abroad | 36 |

If abroad, where?

| | Location | Code |
|---------|----------|------|
| Child 1 | | 37 |
| Child 2 | | 38 |
| Child 3 | | 39 |
| Child 4 | | 40 |
| Child 5 | | 41 |
| Child 6 | | 42 |

That's all. Thank you very much for your help.

Appendix 2- Questionnaire Code book

| Box No. | Variable Name | Variable Label | Value Labels |
|---------|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | House no | Number living in home | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 7 7 8 8 9 9 10 10 |
| 2 | Males | No. in household | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 3 | Females | No in household | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 4 | Total | | 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 7 7 |

| | | | |
|---|------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | 8 8 9 9 10 10 |
| 5 | SecEd. | No. of children in secondary school | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 6 | PrimEd. | No in Primary school | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 7 | Preschool | | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 8 | Occupation | | 1 Business, Professional and Managerial 2 Skilled and Semi skilled manual 3 Unskilled manual 4 Other, non manual 5 Retired 6 Housewives 7 unemployed 8 Student |

| | | | |
|----|------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9 | Place | Workplace | 1 Local 2 Derrybeg 3 Bunbeg 4 outside donegal 5 in the home 6 outside Gweedore |
| 10 | Occupation | | 1 Business, Professional and Managerial 2 Skilled and Semi skilled manual 3 Unskilled manual 4 Other, non manual 5 Retired 6 Housewives 7 Unemployed 8 Student |
| 11 | Place | Workplace | 1 Local 2 Derrybeg 3 Bunbeg 4 outside Donegal 5 in the home 6 outside Gweedore |
| 12 | Occupation | | 1 Business, Professional and Managerial 2 Skilled and Semi skilled manual 3 Unskilled manual 4 Other, non manual 5 Retired 6 Housewives 7 unemployed 8 Student |

| | | | |
|----|------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 13 | Place | Workplace | 1 Local 2 Derrybeg 3 Bunbeg 4 Outside Donegal 5 in the home 6 outside Gweedore |
| 14 | Occupation | | 1 Business, Professional and Managerial 2 Skilled and Semi skilled manual 3 Unskilled manual 4 Other, non manual 5 Retired 6 Housewives 7 unemployed 8 Student |
| 15 | Place | Workplace | 1 Local 2 Derrybeg 3 Bunbeg 4 outside donegal 5 in the home 6 outside Gweedore |
| 16 | Occupation | | 1 Business, Professional and Managerial 2 Skilled and Semi skilled manual 3 Unskilled manual 4 Other, non manual 5 Retired 6 Housewives 7 unemployed 8 Student |

| | | | |
|----|---------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 17 | Place | Workplace | 1 Local 2 Derrybeg 3 Bunbeg 4 outside Donegal 5 in the home 6 outside Gweedore |
| 18 | Abroad | Ever lived abroad | 1 Yes 2 No |
| 19 | Adult 1 | 1 st Location of adult 1 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 20 | 1Loc2 | | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 21 | Adult 2 | 1 st Location of adult 2 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 22 | 2Loc2 | 2 nd Location of adult | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 23 | Adult 3 | 1 st Location of adult 3 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA |

| | | | |
|----|----------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 24 | 3Lco2 | 2 nd Location of adult 3 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 25 | Adult 4 | 1 st Location of adult 4 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 26 | 4Adult2 | 2 nd Location of adult 4 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 27 | Adult 5 | 1 st Location of adult 5 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 28 | 5Adult2 | 2 nd Location of adult 5 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 29 | LiveAway | Children of head of house | 1 Yes 2 No |

| | | | |
|----|----------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | 9 N/A |
| 30 | Donegal | No.living elsewhere in Co. | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 31 | Dublin | | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 32 | Ireland | Elsewhere in Ire | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 33 | Abroad | | 0 0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 |
| 34 | Location | Place of child 1 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |

| | | | |
|----|----------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 35 | Location | Place of child 2 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 36 | Location | Place of child 3 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 37 | Location | Place of child 4 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 38 | Location | Place of child 5 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |
| 39 | Location | Place of child 6 | 1 England 2 Scotland 3 USA 4 Australia 5 Mainland Europe 6 Other |

Appendix 3

Guideline questions for the interviews with

Cathal Mac Suibhne and Seán Ó Gallchóir.

Employment

- What type of industries are in the area and how long have they been established in Gweedore
- Who owns the companies, where have did the companies originate?
- Are there any service industries?
- What type of infrastructure is present
 - Social
 - telecom
 - transport
- Discuss the job losses, factory closures
 - what are the job alternatives available to those made redundant.
- How are an tÚdarás, the regional development agency addressing the issues
- Is long term unemployment a significant issue effecting Gweedore?
- Type of labour force available- skilled or unskilled

General- Education and migration

- What are the main issues concerning Gweedore?
- Are early school leavers still a problem?
- Are there training facilities for the lower educated?
- Are graduated living the area?
- What do you see are the problems of the area?

Irish

- Is Irish usage declining- refer to the Gaeltacht commission report?
- What are the policies in operation to halt its demise?
- Are the government and local authorities doing enough to promote Irish?
- Is the curriculum in the local schools being taught through Irish?

Future objectives and development

- Are there any partnerships at work in the area?
- What approach does Udaras take towards development?
- What are the future plans for employment generation in Gweedore?

Students

- What are you currently studying?
- Do you intend settling in Gweedore?
- What do you think of the area?
- What do you feel the area lacks?
- Do you speak Irish daily?

Appendix 4

Interviews- June 2002

Interview with Cathal Mac Suibhne Údarás na Gaeltachta

[I = Interviewer CS= Cathal Mac Suibhne]

I: I'm looking at three DEDs in Donegal, Annagary, Meenaclady and Magheraclogher. I'm looking for information regarding employment, infrastructure and the like.

CS: Do you have specific questions

I: I have a general outline but really I want your viewpoint

R: Right, that's ok. Well, I suppose to begin with would be the strongest Gaeltacht in Donegal, ie Language wise. Gortahork, Ranna Feirste, Gweedore would be very very strong. The Irish language would be very much the daily language for many households of the area especially Gortahork to Gweedore and Rann a Feirste.

The main Industrial base for that area is the main industrial state here. It was set up in the late 60s and today there's about 25 units on the industrial state. Mostly manufacturing industry but some service industries as well including sort of the Udaras office, FAS has a training centre here, Radio Na Gaeltachta the North Western Health Bord and even such things as the NCT testing unit for cars.

Manufacturing industries covers a lot of the sectors from engineering, electronics, textiling, food.

I: How old are they now?

CS: Some of them date back to 1972, the oldest being Comer yarn it being set up in 1972. It survived through thick and thin of the last 30-40 years. And Comer Yarns and its sister company down in Kilkenny are probably the last two worsted yarn companies left in the country. Survived and have been very profitable throughout the years.

Respondent took a brief break to take a phone call.

Right now, what were we talking about? CY and the Industrial estate.

So the industrial estate there's about.... Well in the gaeltacht Donegal region there's about 2850 full time employees in projects assisted by Údarás and one and the other. And something about 1200 part time/ seasonal workers. And then we come to this area this estate itself you have about 1100 people employed full time in the industrial estate plus then spin offs in transport and everything else. And that has dropped in the last six months, we've lost about 150 jobs.

I: And why is that?

CS: It's basically there's the whole manufacturing base, whole manufacturing industry is changing. Sort of ...two things happen sort of..there's a lot of companies came in here, electronics related and that sector worldwide has taken a hammering in the last year and certainly after the September the 11th in the States so the whole electronics sector has contracted and subsequently industries here 3, 4 , 5 of them in this region have contracted as well. They haven't closed which is a good thing but they have reduced their workforce because that type of business now is no longer viable in Ireland and is moving to third world countries, Eastern Europe and everything else. And I suppose when industries started here in the late 60s, 70s and into the 80s the big emphasis was manufacturing industry. And even for a rural area with totally bad infrastructure etc we got industries in but now that phase, that life cycle for that type of product is coming to an end and we are now going into the next generation of high tech, high skills, telecomms that sort of end. So you could say, in one sense that we are restarting the wheel again so the success with the manufacturing industry has to be used again to get the whole IT sector going.

I: And how do you hope to do this...attract firms?

CS: The start of it is there's two new buildings just being completed out there, totally geared for technology type companies.

I: So they are there to attract, is the infrastructure there?

CS: It's built in advanced units to get companies there. There's a broad band technology link going around the estate. It was approved in the last six months.

I: Has that been implemented yet?

CS: That hasn't started yet but it's gone to contract at this stage. And also to link that to Letterkenny that's also approved. So..Ok Money's been put in place and approval

has been got in the last few months. You're talking about planning those sort of things to get those buildings ready, planning and the whole process get things signed..that's a three year lead in. We started that three years ago. We thought that by the time this was in the mainstream the old manufacturing would still have another few years but the two didn't meet as such. So having said that there will always be a need for a manufacturing industry and there's still projects being approved in manufacturing because there'll still be niches that will still be successful here. And the other thing the whole buildings, the telecom linkages and the labour pool - I mean there's a lot of young graduates coming on stream

I: Do they tend to leave the area or will these new industries entice them to stay?

CS: With the whole Celtic Tiger that was predominantly in the cities rather than in the rural areas. For the last number of years they were ending up in Dublin but since the down turn a lot of people have come back and certainly we want to get those back. If they go for a few years experience and then come back. There's jobs available to suit there skills that's the target. That's the program over the next number of years.

And we have some projects coming on stream to do that.

I: How many jobs do you hope the new firms will generate?

CS: Well suppose, over the next number of years if we could get 100 technology jobs in place per annum it would help the situation in this immediate area. And again because of the very nature of the technology jobs there's a whole raft of infrastructure needed as well. Those types of jobs are more sort of organ orientated jobs. Where you have the social infrastructure all the ambience that goes with that and sort of Rural areas lack that. So that has to be addressed as well. Before this people said well, if there is roads and basic infrastructures everything is ok, that is no longer the picture. The whole lot has to come on stream. And taking this area Bunbeg, Derrybeg there's a huge buzz around it. Although it's a rural area it's very much urban because the two villages run into one another now. You have the Hotels, several hotels, there's always something going on at the weekends. You have some of the up market pubs and so some of it is in place but not all of it is in place.

I: Do you think Long- term unemployment is a major issue in Gweedore?

CS: It's one of them but not the only one. We also have to balance our development from economic and language so that's always a balancing act. Not every project is

suitable for the area because it would be detrimental so there's a balancing act going on. The whole value system has changed as well so people are as much interested here in the world cup as they are in Dublin or Japan or where ever else. Likewise with companies, a company setting up here faces the same advantages, difficulties and whatever else as a company in Japan. They're open to world trends, globalization.

Because they're located here they have to have something extra, we must be up to standard with good communication, trends in manufacturing, production. We need to be better. Down through the years companies survived here were very profitable because they were as good if not better than companies in other places. That has to be the kernel to what we are doing as well.

I: Is that what you're doing now at the moment?

CS: Yes, upgrading skills, upgrading companies, keeping a breast of technologies and all that. That's all part and parcel of progress and industrial development as well.

I: And do you think this area is still dependent on farming, is it a major farming area?

CS: This area has changed. Fishing was relatively strong, farming was poor, I suppose the area we're talking about you had subsistence farming here. It was always weak but it still maintained families.

You also had turf was an important product.

Fishing has declined and is declining. The turf has declined because the station is no longer there that the farmers produced turf for. The station is closed.

The other emerging one is tourism although you had tourism here because of the areas colleges all the time. That is still very strong but from that as well you have other tourism growing. So tourism is a growth area. The industrial base is a growth area and services to some extent but we are weak in services in comparison to urban areas.

There's a mix of incomes. That was always a strength of the area even in weaker times where there was a mix of incomes from sort of accommodation, Irish students, turf, fishing, home craft knit wear and all that. There was always a mixture. That mixture is continuing in various forms and that is a strength of the area.

I: I know there is a mixture but is it enough to keep families going?

CS: I think it is, yes, and it's all the time improving. Suppose one indicator of that is, take the hotels, the pubs, whatever else they both survive from incoming tourism but also from local community. It shows that there's money locally..to be able to maintain that and for people to have the money to invest in the leisure end of things.

I: Turning to the Irish language what is being done to promote it in the workplace, home....

CS: The Irish language and you have always several schools of thought where the language is at, at any given stage. Certainly it's under a lot of pressure from the whole media in the broader sense, there's one angle, the whole globalisation and everything else. Traditionally as well because the language was ran hand in hand with poverty and that stigma still survives in some places.

Having said that there's a lot of initiatives in place to do things. From an Údarás point of view every company that we support we also tie in with that a language culture plan for that company. Some are very good at implementing it more are not. The most positive people to implement it are the continental companies because they are aware of language whereas in Ireland and England we have either Irish or English they look at it in that shape. Whereas somebody coming from the continent or Canada or somewhere else have experienced languages in the continent in one or two or three forms. They understand the principles of language. We are the worst to understand it and England because we are mono..they're into a mono language situation.

We attach a language programme to every company.

We have several initiatives in starting with the pre-school we have a programme of Naíonraí. There are over twenty in the Donegal Gaeltacht. That is for three, four, five years. That is growing all the time.

I: How many kids would be in each Naíonraí?

CS: Probably an average of 10 in each.

I: Do you reckon there's a lot of children who aren't going?

CS: Yes there are still more that wouldn't go because, again, you have distance, you have travel, you have work situation. But it is our target to have a Naíonraí in every focal point. That's growing all the time.

And also the whole childcare crèches and all that, that's another area that we are developing into. If children get language at that age, if they are made aware and have awareness it helps them. They've no inhibition to learn language. Whereas we all have it at later ages, we are very conscious of the mistakes we make.

So that's on the very...at that end.

If you take it then at another end an area we have developed into, with the health boards, is the whole area of health, community and social care. For example in this area people that have to go to a home...there's no nursing home in the area and they have to go to Stranorlar or somewhere like that, miles away. They've lived here all their lives, talk to their neighbours in Irish. They go to a home in Stranorlar or wherever else and it's all in English so it's a terrible travesty. So we have now approval with the health board, local community and Údarás have now approval for the building of a nursing home in the Gweedore area. It has started and will be ready by mid 2003. That will be a 40 bed unit.

Take the employment end of that, health by its very nature is very labour intensive and that will employ about 30- 40 people from management, nursing staff, everything else. It's another area and the type of services has a few angles to it, it creates jobs but also it is a service to people giving them away of life.

I: Will the workers who come in have to speak Irish? Will that be a criteria?

CS: Well again we will have a language and cultural plan attached to that. That means from management down...

I: Does that impinge on the equality law at all?

CS: Well we would hope that it doesn't. We would hope that there'll be plenty of people around, at management level, that can avail of that work, nursing staff that can avail of that type of work, that are probably maybe nursing someplace else or working that will come back. So it all adds to the building of the community.

The other place we are involved in is day centres. We have Tory island there is through again, the Údarás the local co-op on the island, peace and rack, IFI and cross border fund etc to pull all that together there is a day centre, it's nearly complete on Tory Island at the moment. So you have a day centre there servicing the old people it will also have a Naónraí in it and facility for the doctor and nurse and all that. So

again these are new areas we have developed into. Same is happening in Finn Town Baile na Finnta.

Other areas we do something for the language is sort of ..we have a whole programme of through Gael Saoire, our tourism angle. Our tourism development is cultural tourism and developing some of the richness of the area let it be the Dunlewy centre or music festivals or whatever else that are based on cultural language of the area that will draw people in. There's various, on the youth end, one scheme that's running in the school is the apprenticeship scheme for people that want to do apprenticeships. The Údarás working with FÁS sponsor 80 apprenticeships per annum for the Gaeltacht areas....any skill that anyone wants to take on board.

So there's several angles like that we've become involved in and they're all very much language orientated based.

I: Do you think younger people are still inclined to use Irish? Say going into a shop for example the person behind the counter seems to use English to the customer.

CS: Very much so. Again what's fashionable, what's in, what's cool whatever else the young people don't see the language as cool. Take the world cup at the moment I don't think TG4 are broadcasting any world cup matches. So it's all television, high powered marketing and that's all in English. Young people watching that, I mean that's it if it's not coming through that it doesn't exist.

I: Do you think then has TG4 helped?

CS: It has, the radio and TG4 has helped very much so.

What we find not only in the Gaeltacht but other places as well, young people growing up secondary level, I don't have the language or I'll go away from it. But I know several people who have gone on to Third level have come back and have no trouble speaking Irish. They went through the phase and they appreciate it, once they left they appreciate it..we are different here we didn't know it.

As regards the language, it's strength, survival. You have two other positive things you have Commission na Gaeltacht report that came out 2 weeks ago and the Billa Teanga, the language bill that'll be enacted through the Dail. They are two positive instruments for the language as well. But there's still a huge language resource there. People have been saying it wouldn't last, 20 years ago they said it wouldn't last 10

years ago they say today it won't last 20. So in other words if we're in 20 years and it'll still be here.

I: In regards to that Gaeltacht Commission report, it said that the Government isn't doing enough do you agree?

CS: Well Yes, if you take the Gaeltacht area you have, Údáras the Gaeltachta, Run na Gaeltachta, they have government brief to develop and promote the language. But you've other government agencies that have a brief in the Gaeltacht but they would handle a project or what ever else here as they would in Co.Longford or Co.Carlow etc. That's the problem, that's a negative thing.

Because you have the government at one end funding development with a conscious Gaeltacht brief and other agencies that don't and they're cutting across. Those are difficulties and hopefully the Commission and the language network prop will hopefully try and sort that in some shape or form.

I: Do you reckon that will be implemented soon, will it take long to put these sort of things into effect?

CS: I suppose Eamon Ó Cuív who is the minister with responsibility for that has been appointed in the last week and certainly he's very much focused on those. Certainly from a government level there couldn't be anyone stronger to that then him so that's a very positive thing.

I: Do you think is the community actively involved in policies and attempts which has been made to promote the language?

CS: Some communities are but generally speaking no. The people don't go around everyday saying will I use English it's a way of life with most people. That way of life can be, sort of, Ireland's first language to speak it and that's just the done thing.

The places where it's weak, they've adopted English so over the years there was very little debate of the Gaeltacht and everything else. One place that debate is wanted and decisions have to be made and they're not often made is young couples marrying, starting a family where one of the partners had Irish and they just start talking English to the children. So I think at that level probably there's a need for interaction, guidance or whatever else.

I think unconsciously, they just drift into it.

I: Is there any policies trying to.....

CS: It's one of the areas we have identified and I think the commission has also identified that. You have young families with either the mother or father have probably more Irish than English but they end up talking English to the children. That's a negative thing that could do with some assistance.

I: Also the Commission report said that maybe planning restrictions are causing problems, where local people can't set up here...

CS: Yes. For the first time ever under the 2000 act the Gaeltacht has been identified as having special planning needs. Now before this the physical planning never considered the language, no onus on the language. So you could have any kind of building, any kind of signage and there was no...so again they looked at that. So it's a rural area in Co. Mayo or wherever but the planning act of 2000 has taken this into account and the council now are working with the Údarás to come up with some kind of guidelines or some kind of monitoring system or some kind of guidelines as to how to look at planning applications in the Gaeltacht.

So that's on hand. All the councils along the west coast, councils in the Gaeltacht are taking this into account.

I: So it is stopping people?

CS: So that was just the language in the planning the other is environmental planning. Yes, that is a very much a widespread at the moment where local people cannot get planning to build houses. On the farm a piece of land, one of the family looks for planning but can't because of various, physical planning restrictions.

I: Because of the look of it?

CS: Well I suppose the county plans for this county, several things come into account. Along the coastal area, because the area of the Gaeltacht is a high amenity area by its nature a lot of the area has been declared an SAC, Special Area of Conservation. So it's very, very difficult, it's possible but very, very difficult to get planning within the SAC area. With the result you cut out a lot of the Gaeltacht land mass. So that causes problems, it's a huge issue Donegal, Connemara, every Gaeltacht area.

I: so what do you think?

CS: Well these plans are reviewed every so often and the next one starts at the middle of next year.

I: So if you want to attract graduates back to work etc you'd need to settle this issue?

CS: It's a constraint yes.

I: In that respect do you think the government is doing enough or is it creating more obstacles?

CS: what is happening up till late is there was a lack of co-ordination.

The council's role, they looked at their role. Dúchas had another role in regards conservation, they had another role. There was no integration or co-ordination.

So I think under the new ministry that Eamon Ó Cuív has taken over rural development Gaeltacht and the community that's some effort to try and get some sort of co-ordination into activities. So hopefully out of that, in the past he is know to be very strong in getting a bit of co-ordination into programmes he is under so that might help in that.

I: In regards to funding, how much would Údárás get from the government and what type of initiatives does it go on?

CS: Well we get our money on annual budget of a year. The Údárás would have a budget of 30 million, that's for all the areas.

I: Is that Euro?

CS: No, I'm still thinking old money, that's about 30 million old pounds.

On top of that we avail of EU schemes, cross boarder schemes, whatever else. Not necessarily for direct Údárás funding but for community funding for example, take the health sector in Tory the Údárás on their own wouldn't be able to fund that but by trying to put facts together of Piece and Rank, IFI, cross board funding and everything else. So a lot of our work would be trying to leverage funding from other sources for community type projects and community type projects are very strong in Donegal.

I: Would Údárás be over that or is that more partnerships, like MFG?

CS: Well no, where there's big money involved Údárás is involved. Take for example the Dunlewy centre and Caislean Dunlewy that over 1 million pound investment, they draw about 70,000 visitors per annum. Started of as a small embryonic project but has

grown and again that was getting funding together, the want now to move onto the next stage so we'll be involved in trying to source funding for that as well.

The old barracks in Falcarragh has been restored, it was built over 100 years ago. So again you have Údáras and IFI (international fund for Ireland) in the areas. They were set up because of the peace process, and they fund projects in Northern Ireland and the boarder counties.

Other places like Ionod Chapel in Dunloe, which is the old church has been totally refurbished, it's an enterprise centre. So again you have Údáras, IFI and various cross-boarder funding.

Because of our location in Donegal we can avail of cross boarder funding which is helpful.

I: what are the main government agencies at work in the area?

CS: Well I would say one of the weaknesses, if you take any place in Ireland and you probably some more in the Gaeltacht. Because of the North and the cross boarder thing you probably have more again. If you counted all the government agencies dealing with any rural community in Ireland you probably have over 30.

I: Overlooking different areas?

CS: Yes, from fishing, agriculture, ESB, Cert.....

I: Do you think a decentralisation of power would help?

CS: The government are being driven to have a more focus decentralising their base away from Dublin. Hopefully that'll be another source of jobs. The government are talking about a programme of decentralisation. Again they were looking at the larger towns, Letterkennys, Castlebars, Athlones and that. But I think they're even now going deeper, into the smaller ones and that's a source of jobs well coming on stream.

I: So just in general, what do you think have been the main improvements in the area, and what needs to be done?

CS: What needs to be done? Well the whole infrastructure in the braoder sense. From the old road situation, from the roads..

I: How bad is the road situation? Everyone comments on them when talking about development

CS: Well we never had great emphasis on the roads. We said 20 years ago, 30 years ago, 10 years ago the roads are diabolic we can not develop them nothing would happen. The roads are there that's a fate to accompany. How do we develop things?

The big cry from Dublin over the last few years, is we can't develop the region because the infrastructure is so weak.

I: You mean telecommunications...

CS: Well roads, telecommunications, water, sewerage and all that.

That's what the big cry from Dublin is but despite of the weak infrastructure development took place. So we also say right, it would still make life easier for, let it be the community and industry or economic development or whatever else if the roads could be developed. For example, travelling from here to Dublin by road it takes much longer now than it did 5 or 10 years ago. Although the roads have improved somewhat there's more traffic and there's huge bottlenecks going through Omagh and Northern Ireland. So that's a problem.

We have air access in Carrickfin, that is a Dublin service. The pressure is to have a morning service out from here and that's going to happen soon, from July onwards so that's a big thing. If you take this area, the Gweedore area, everyone is living on septic tanks- there's no sewerage scheme in this area. That's a hindrance to development. That to some extent has restricted planning permission because they say the place is floating in septic tanks. So the sewerage scheme is on its way at last but that's been fought over the last 20 years. Hopefully that'll start construction 2003. The council are saying we are prepared to slow down in giving planning permission until the sewerage scheme is there. The lack of sewerage scheme has hindered development over the years.

The other big hindrance here is the high power line or the 110k power line. In this industrial estate, like the most of West Donegal we are on 38k line which is, we just get by. The ESB had plans to put in a 110k line but the planning was rejected. Because again we had an up swell of anti-pillions in the area, people said we don't want pillions. This is a high amenity area. So you've that on one end and people looking for high power on the other end. In the end Bord Pleanail rejected that. But the ESB would be looking for that again.

If you take computers and whatever else here, the speed they operate at. Somebody coming from Dublin say it's very slow, the power isn't there. We don't notice but again, someone from Limerick staying in one of the hotels was using his lap top and the light was flickering which shows the power isn't there.

There are lots of things we've grown up with and we've got ways of getting around them that we don't know they're deficient. But people coming in for the first time notice it.

I: Putting in Broad band and the like will that help?

CS: No Broad band is for the telecommunications that's going to give high speed but to get that high speed you need ESB power to drive that.

I: So there's a lot of work in the pipeline.

CS: Yes but we always work on the bases that we have to work with what we have. If we wait to get things done the people will be gone so it is a balancing act.

I: Do you see a lot of hope for the area then?

CS: There's a lot of hope. The community is very vibrant. You have communities around here and in the Gaeltacht that have developed as a place, Falcarragh etc as I've mentioned, have buildings, enterprises centres, tourism facilities and all that- some of them up to a million pounds worth. Now that was unheard of a few years ago. The communities are taking a role in their own destination.

And again we have positive schemes to do that. We are a good active community it helps sell the area, build up the area and everything else.

I: Thanks very much for your time.

Interview with Seán Ó Gallchóir
Meitheal Foirbartha Gaeltachta Teo

[I = Interviewer SG = Seán Ó Gallchóir]

I: What is MFG?

SG: It runs a number of projects. It applies for funding for programmes like the Leader or the National Rural development programme and the social inclusion programme.

We also run things such as Caite initiative, which is based up on the department of enterprise, it was Mary O'Rourke department. Basically it's based on IT training in remote areas.

I: Is there any IT around here, this area?

SG: There's in the likes of FÁS offices and that but they are too far away from the rural area. There's community base IT in different areas in the Gaeltacht, Kilcarn, Gweedore. I think there's one in Gortahork as well.

This would be communities themselves developing this as a community, basically community groups coming together and setting up their own facilities. We would support this by providing a blanket approach to training, that sort of thing.

In the social inclusion programme there's 3 measures in it. There's Youth at risk, community development and enterprise. So basically we control all those three measures.

It's all governed by guidelines. We have to work along the guidelines.

I: Do you find that restricting or helpful?

SG: They are restricting from the point of view they are supposed to be a community or bottom up approach but it doesn't always work like that you get top down guidelines to govern bottom up initiatives. Basically, a lot of these things would be open to abuse only for guidelines. So we're all governed by some kind of regulations.

I: So they're from the government?

SG: Yes

I: And all the Gaeltacht regions are under those?

SG: All the Gaeltacht regions in Ireland are under MFG but they all have their own programmes. They're not delivering the same programme.

I: Would you work with the other MFG.

SG: Our head office in Kerry in Dingle.

I: Are there many community groups in the area?

SG: There's about 30.

I: How many would be in each?

SG: It's hard to say. We've a tendency to stay away from this area, the Gweedore area because it's not seen as disadvantaged, it need of much help as other areas. Facilities are already there, it's been developing over a longer period so there's critical mass of services and all that, more densely populated as well which makes a difference.

I: Is that in the three DEDs?

SG: In this DED especially, Magheraclogher and Annagary, maybe not so much in Meenaclady. Meenaclady was very much dependent on the turf cutting which closed in...maybe that would be an important point to note. The turf burning station in Meenaclain closed in, I think, 1995.

I: Did anything else take over?

SG: No a lot of the peat suppliers would have turned to emigration, migration or other alternatives. They couldn't all cut turf because the market wouldn't be there to support it so it was basically a question of alternative types of employment.

I: Would they come over here to Magheraclogher then?

SG: They probably would go to the factories.

I: The factories in this estate?

SG: Yes

I: Has there been many closures lately?

SG: There has been a few closed lately. There isn't as much emphasis on big investments, there more geared towards indigenous now or home based industries rather than going for investment from outside, big multi-national investments.

I: what about employment opportunities for those who've been laid off?

SG: It's very limited really. Cathal will probably explain it to you that alternative types of employment like call centres and that sort of thing, new types of opportunities. Small services are getting increasingly more important.

I: Would you be concerned with going out into the community and seeing what their concerns are?

SG: That planning was based on talking to the community but, unless it's falling under the programme you can't do much about it. All you can do is refer to other agencies. We wouldn't be a main stream agency, we would be more seen as a partnership or a leadership company.

We wouldn't have the powers of the mainstream.

I: What type of mainstream are you referring to?

SG: Government departments, FÁS, they'd be more statutory agency and Údarás which is more economic developments.

I: So if you had more power do you think it'd be better?

SG: No, not really, not necessarily. The power you get the harder it is to justify yourself. We are more involved in pre-development, that sort of thing rather than supplying the big support or grant aid we are concerned with the smaller, micro when it comes to the community then it's pre-development, preparing for the next step.

I: What type people would go for the community initiatives?

SG: There'd be communities who want to do things for their own local areas. They are trying to make the area better.

They'd have their own development plan.

I: I'm talking about is there a type of age group, gender... maybe there's not?

SG: The problem is there's a lot of the same type of people, the same people are involved in everything.

Trying to get new people to initiate this sort of thing is difficult.

I: How do you go about trying to motivate people to get involved.

SG: It's hard to... our programmes are very much targeted at target groups as you'll see from the literature. It's very hard to get these people to do anything for themselves for starters because it takes a lot of work to get them motivated.

The programmes are for them but we also want them to be involved in the sub groups and the groups, the main board and all that. We've tried to do that, the thing we do is set up networks for fishermen, small farmers and that sort of thing. We try and get themselves to influence their own destiny through policy formulation. We try and get them to be more strategic in their thinking, rather than thinking for own person-what's in it for me, what's in it for us? Try and get more collective initiatives be it themselves or be it us trying to push it for themselves.

I: Do you think graduates come back to work and settle in the area after college?

SG: There's very limited opportunities for graduates at the moment in this area. We find that they move away or they get a lot better opportunities elsewhere.

I: Do you think it's getting better or will get better?

SG: Possible yes. A lot of people, I think, wouldn't have the ambition to stay around. Maybe some of them would but a lot of them wouldn't.

You find that there are a lot of people coming back to the area

I: They go away for a while and then come back, is it?

SG: Yes, maybe they'd marry somebody from around here and that puts a lot of pressure on the language. Especially when their children go to school, it's hard for the children to have two languages instead of one. You find that it creates problems within the school and outside the school.

I: The schools around, are they being taught through Irish, is the curriculum being taught through Irish?

SG: Yes but the fact that some of the children don't have Irish is diluting the language and it's taking the emphasis away from speaking the language on a daily basis.

Without the language we wouldn't have these programmes we would be lumped in with the other programmes that are being run in Donegal.

Only for the language that's the only difference for us having a programme for ourselves and have employment for ourselves. So the language is a big thing, it's a

basis for all these programmes and initiatives. A lot of people don't realise how important that is. You'll find that Cathal says the same about Udaras, that only for the language they'd be under the IDA or Enterprise Ireland.

When your talking about Meenaclady, Magheraclogher and Annagary you'd be talking about some of the strongest Gaeltacht community in Ireland. Maybe the most progressive Gaeltacht. It moved ahead of other areas and as a result maybe the language is suffering.

I: Do you think is this area growing, is their hope? Do you see a difference in the last 20- 30 years?

SG: Big difference. Employment wise, attitude wise, very progressive... young people and that sort of thing. It'd be like any big town really but it's not classed as a town it's classed as a rural area. It's densely populated, it's...still it's like a big town, they'll still be disadvantaged. Not everyone is going to benefit from the economic boom.

**Interview with Majella Gallagher (21).
Final Year Arts student at NUI Galway.**

[I = Interviewer MG = Majella Gallagher]

I: Really I just want your opinion of the area in regards its economy, services and the like. And will you, personally stay here and what your friends think of the area.

MG: Well my friends have gone to America, England and Scotland for the summer, they'll be back. They don't like spending summers around here.

I: When they are at college, do they come back every weekend?

MG: Yes, most of them

I: When you finish college do you think you are going to live here?

MG: no I don't think I will. I think I'll move away and get a job.

I: Where to?

MG: Maybe Galway and then I might come back..

I: Maybe you'll settle here then.

MG: Maybe.... Maybe

I: What do you think of the area to live in, like what do you and your friends think of the area?

MG: Well facilities, there's only one nightclub, which I suppose is ok ... well I suppose there is enough young people who'll go to it but it's just there's not that much of a selection. As for other facilities there's no facilities at all, there's no canoeing, you know, things that people would be interested in. There's so much that could be done.

There use to be horse riding but I don't know if its there now.

I: Would you be interested in developing this in the area, helping to develop it? You know the way there's community initiatives starting now, would you be interested in joining them?

MG: Yeah, I think there'd be so many young people who would be interested. I think we're too late for it now.

I: But starting it up...would you

MG: Yeah, like starting it up I think 17 year olds would be interested, it would be better for them.

I would if I was here all the time but I only come home on weekends.

I: Do you think there's many who will stay around, those who didn't go to college maybe?

MG: Yeah those who didn't go to college definitely will stay around.

I: Do they have jobs, what type of jobs are they working at?

MG: They are working in trades, FÁS courses which they get jobs locally because Udaras are helping them get jobs locally. Which is good but some of them go to Letterkenny as well but most of them are interested in staying in Gweedore.

I: Why are you thinking of not staying around, is it job wise?

MG: Job wise basically. People who go to college come back and there's nothing here. You've done a degree and there's nothing here to suit you.

I do love Gweedore and if I did get a job in Údarás or somewhere like that doing with law, what I set out to do, I'd definitely take it. If I could live in the Gaeltacht, I'd definitely take it. But there isn't really that many opportunities at the moment.

I: In relation to Irish do you use it much?

MG: Oh yeah, of course with my family and my friends as well. Once you go to college that's completely different, they don't speak much Irish at all. But at home definitely, around here it's all Irish.

I: When you were 15-16 did you still use Irish?

MG: Ah you go through this phase where it's not cool but when you go to college you cop your self on and realise we are different.

I: Your friends who didn't go to college and stayed here are they still speaking Irish?

MG: Yeah, it depends if your parent speak Irish though. My parents both spoke Irish but if you are talking to someone who you know their parents speak English you automatically speak English or be weary of speaking Irish, but you shouldn't be.

I: So just in general, do you think there's good hope for the region?

MG: Ah yeah, there'll always be people who'll come back, a good few.

You never know, I might end up here, you never know.

I'd say most of the ones, definitely those who didn't go to college will definitely stay around here. I can't see them moving away anyway.

Interview with Eimear Ferry (17)

Leaving Certificate student.

[I = Interviewer EF= Eimear Ferry

I: I'm doing research on the area of Gweedore and I just looking for your opinions on the area. I have a few general questions like, what problems do you perceive the area as having and your experiences.

So are you intending on staying around the area next year or are you going to college?

EF: Yeah, I'll go to college, I'll stay around for the summer because I like it but go to college in September.

I: What do you like about it?

EF: I don't know, I think the people and scenery... the whole place like, it's just very friendly.

I: Have you ever spent summers away from the area?

EF: No just went on holiday.

I: So you might settle here?

EF: Oh yeah, hopefully.

I: What sort of occupation do you eventually hope to get?

EF: Hopefully teaching or something.

I: In relation to Irish would you use it all the time when talking to your friends and that?

EF: Well my friends don't speak it at home, well maybe two of them because one of their parent's are from around here and the other is not from around here.

It depends but usually, always Irish at school. Probably when you're in company when we're out we talk English.

I: What about the people whose parents speak English would they have to learn through Irish

EF: Yeah it's all through Irish at school.

I: And they get on ok?

EF: Yeah, grand.

I: Are the parents who speak English or who grew up outside the area are they trying to learn Irish, are they attending classes?

EF: Some of them do. There are plenty of classes going on, but I don't know, I'm not sure who goes.

I: What about transport? Do you find that a problem?

EF: It's alright. I get the bus from the bottom of the lane. I get taxis everywhere else.

I: Do you see any problems for the area?

EF: Well there's not really anything for people of my age, 17 year olds, especially under, 14, 15 year olds. There's nothing to do, they just go down to the local Café and that's probably about it.

I: Would you be interested in getting involved in the community, like trying to get something started for the younger aged?

EF: Yeah I would if there was something going on or something.

I: Are you aware of the work Udaras and different partnerships are doing in the area?

EF: Not really, no.

I: That's basically it. Is there anything you'd like to add?

I hope to look at the characteristics of a rural area and relate it to Gweedore. I'm looking at things like gender, age - there's an older population, migration - are graduates leaving the area are those who leave coming back? They might go away because they mightn't get jobs around that sort of thing.

EF: Like stay here or go to college, would we be looking to come back or just go and go some place better?

I: Yeah, but it seems to be positive at the moment from what others have said.

EF: Well if there's jobs going here for anyone they'd definitely want to stay because the place is nice.

I: Is that the general consensus with your friends as well?

EF: Yes. A lot of them want to get away as well, away to college, as far away as possible but they'll still miss home.

I: Do you think they will come back to settle down?

EF: Yeah, if there's jobs going around here yeah.

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