

# Uniqueness and Ubiquity: making rural places in a global era



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<https://youtu.be/xJCv3LLY-e8?t=1m31s>

# Placing Newtown

- The largest town in the county of Powys, population of ~11,500
- “The oldest New Town”
- One of two New Towns in Wales (the other is Cwmbran)
- Birth place of Robert Owen
- International mail order began here (the Royal Welsh Warehouse)

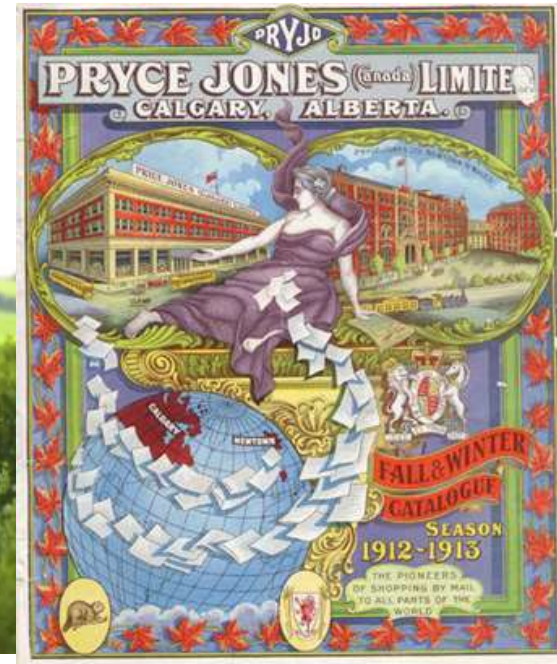


Robert Owen  
1771-1858

Reformist, utopian,  
cooperative,  
social(ist)



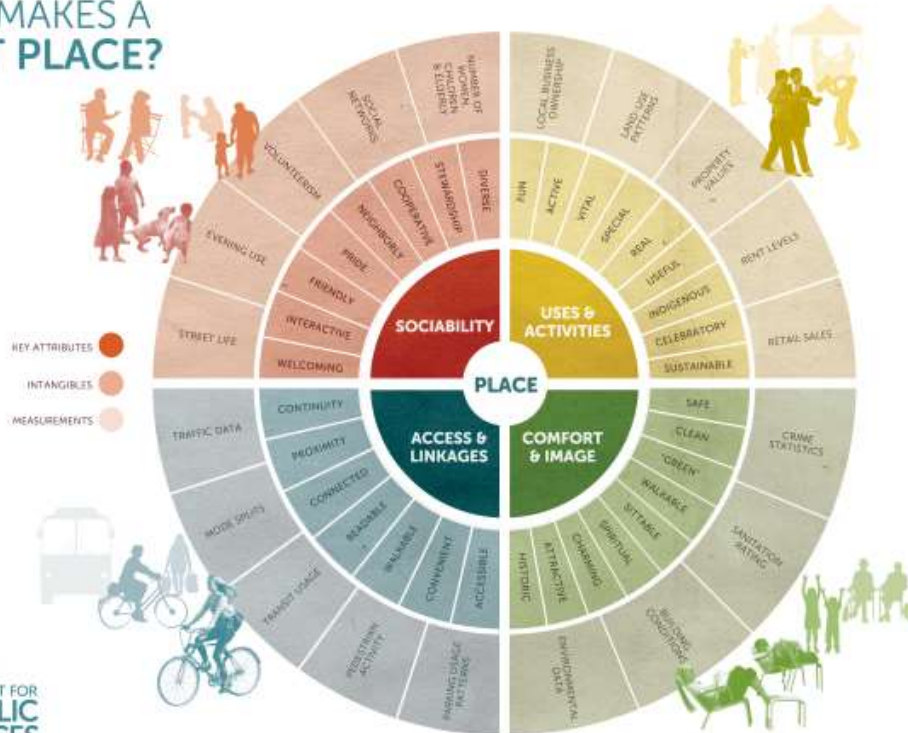
Pryce Jones – Present day warehouse  
and past mail order advert



# Place assemblage and place-making

- Places have meaning (Tuan, Relph, Cresswell),
- Places are not fixed but always-already assemblages of becoming (Thrift, Deleuze),
- Places can be anchors (Massey)

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?



*Relational place-making draws on scholarship and insights about place, politics and networks by explicitly recognising the flexible, multi-scalar and always developing meanings of place: meanings that are produced via socially, politically and economically interconnected interactions among people, institutions and systems.*

(Pearce et al, 2011: 59)



# Sense of place and ubiquity



“The big names have come in the independents have gone, and I think that’s a great loss.”



## Burger King wants to open in Newtown

By Jonny Drury | Newtown | Mid Wales entertainment | Published: Oct 5, 2017

Plans for a third fast-food chain within half a mile of two other restaurants in a Newtown have been revealed.

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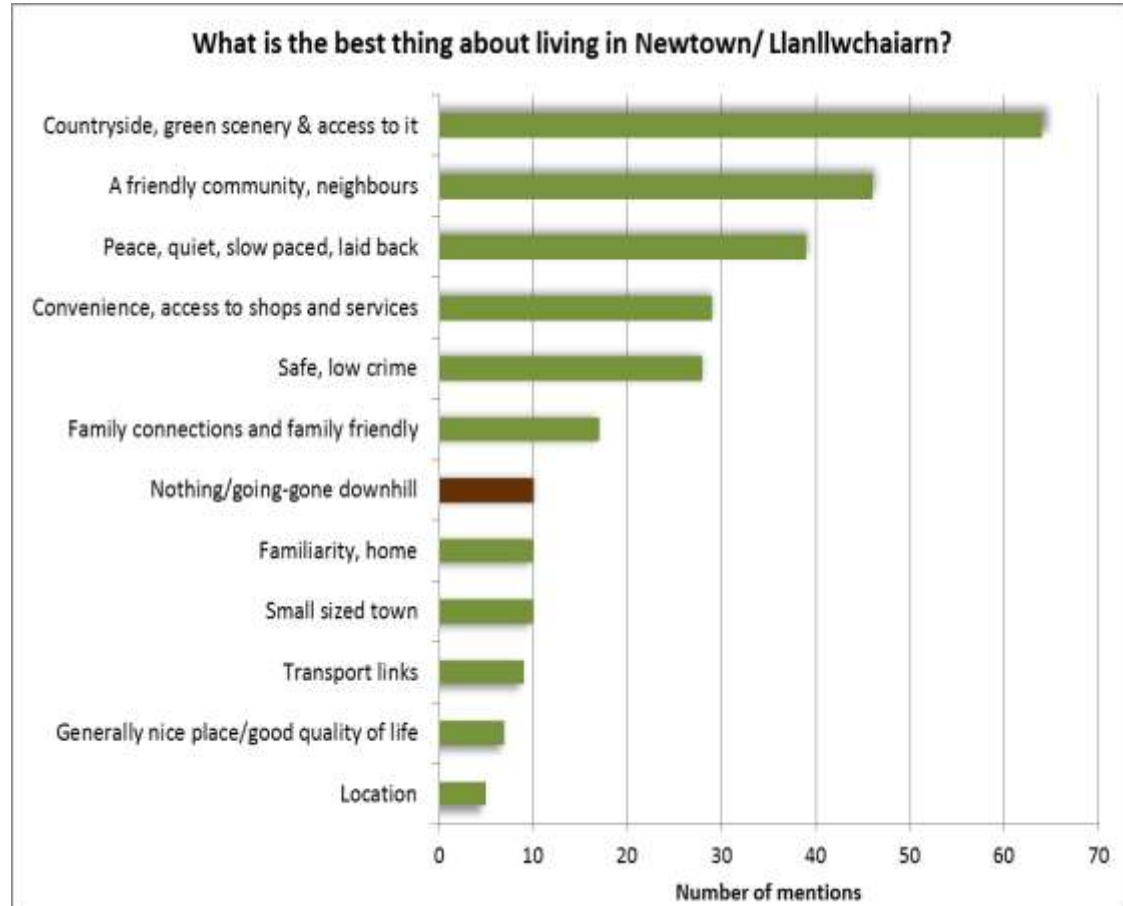
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“You start getting a UK brand name, like Gregg’s coming into the area and you think, oh okay this is a positive ... Somebody has obviously seen our town and thought there’s potential there”.

# Living in Newtown

- 81% agree Newtown is a 'welcoming place'
- Most agree it has a 'strong sense of community' and a 'good standard of living'.
- Schools, shops and leisure facilities are rated as fair, good or excellent by most.
- Residents: talk to their neighbours, are engaged in the community.



*Global-Rural Newtown residents survey 2016*

# Hopes and fears for the future

## Hopes

More houses will be built

That it grows and becomes economically vibrant place

I'd like Newtown to be a thriving town again

**More jobs for younger people**

*That Laura Ashley and Control Techniques stay*

To see more people speaking Welsh in Newtown

FOR NEW BUSINESSES AND SHOPS TO ESTABLISH HERE

*Keeping Newtown a "personal town" and place to live rather than just to reside*

**That the canal gets opened all the way to Newtown**

More investment

It will become more environmentally, socially and economically friendly town to live in

**Bring in new business**

That the bypass improves travel routes, making Newtown appealing to businesses and better-paid jobs

To create more jobs, security and better health services

*Hope population will increase and town expands*

That big employers stay in the town

*Newtown becomes bigger*

For a stronger local economy (especially local food production)

**More opportunities for young people**

**HOPE TO SEE IT BECOME MORE FULLY INTEGRATED - A BIT SPLIT AT THE MOMENT**

That it keeps its friendliness

For more activities for youth

*For openness to change*

Health services will improve

*Would like to see a more diverse culture and community*

**ENCOURAGE TOURISM TO SUPPORT ECONOMY**

## Fears

*That it becomes a 'ghost town'*

**Worried about drugs coming into the town**

That the town centre dies

CHANGE IS BEING PREVENTED BY THE OLDER GENERATION

**We're going to be a dead town**

**The town will have a natural death**

That the bypass causes decline of town



That the next generation have to move away as there are no career paths here

That it becomes forgotten

*Town used as a depository for drug problems, ex-convicts or other vulnerable people*

**The ongoing 'brain drain'**

That the window of opportunity with the bypass will be lost

**MORE EMPTY SHOPS**

Will be an increase in anti-social behaviour

*Teenage delinquency*

Will be too many migrants

**That no-one will interact with each other anymore**

Things like post office and banks will have gone, replaced by pubs and charity shops

Build more housing estates without the jobs to support them



**Local businesses will struggle**

**People will become fearful of difference**

That people's values will change - less community minded, more anti-social behaviour

That social isolation increases

**CONTINUE TO HAVE LONG DISTANCES TO TRAVEL FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT**

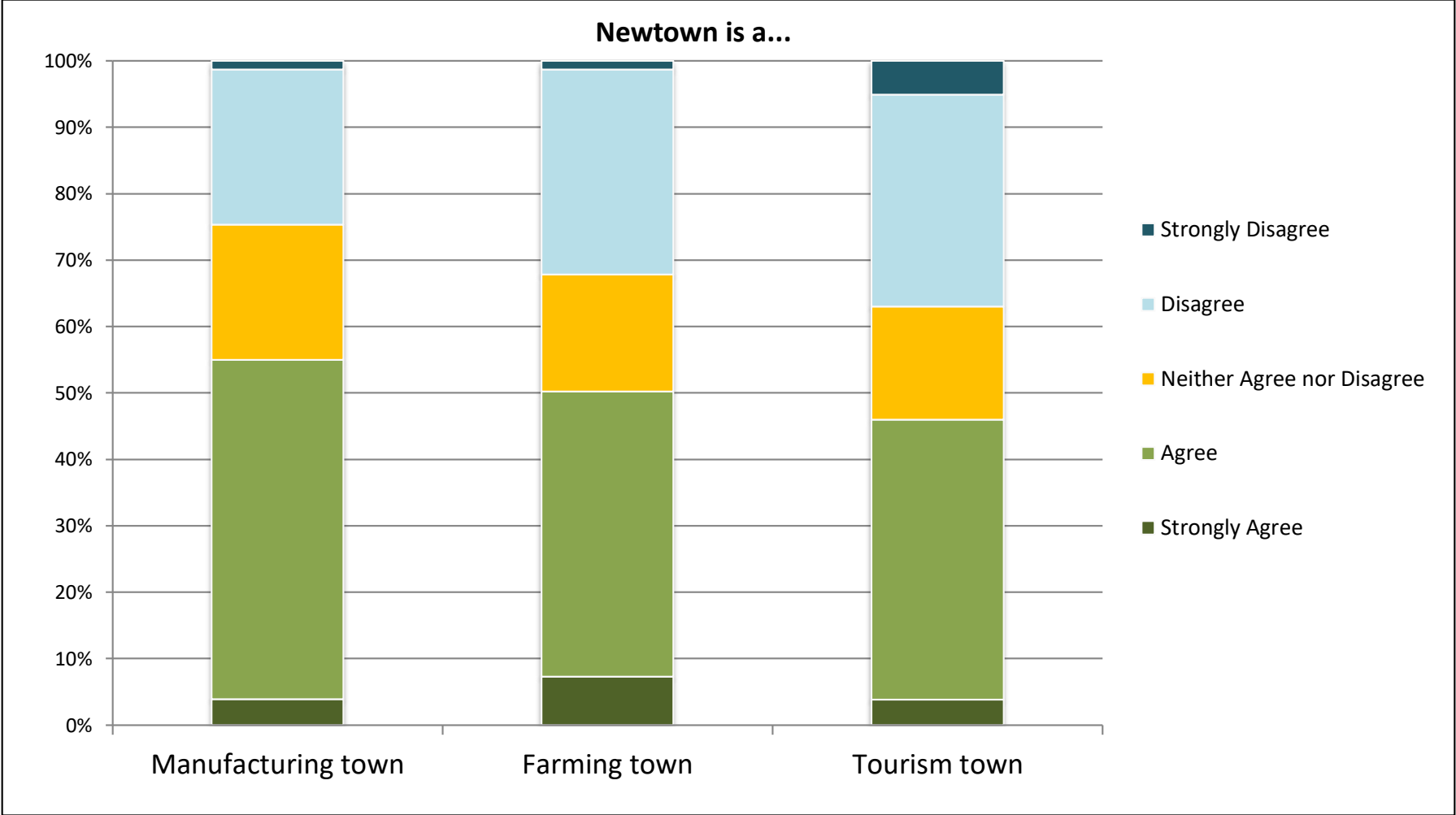
Overdevelopment

Facilities and resources will be diverted to other towns e.g. Welshpool

“We travel a lot... you go to other parts of the country and you see all these things have happened, and this part of East Wales seems to be **totally neglected**. You go to Cardiff, once you've got beyond Brecon going over the top there, it seems to be money's no object”.



# Identity



# Farming town to countryside leisure?

“I somehow sense that we’re a bit peripheral... I mean, how much longer are they going to take any milk from Mid Wales? The end of quotas has made such a dramatic change. The Dutch and the Irish are rapidly expanding. I think the dairy industry is in real trouble. Not as a whole but certainly I think in areas like Mid Wales I think it is....”

**I just don’t think it’ll be like it used to be, but other things will come. ... the rural economy here hugely benefits from shooting. I think if you totted up the gross national product of game shooting in this area and farming there wouldn’t be too much difference.”**

*Interview with local politician*



*Bettws Hall, one of five farms delivering shooting experiences in the area*

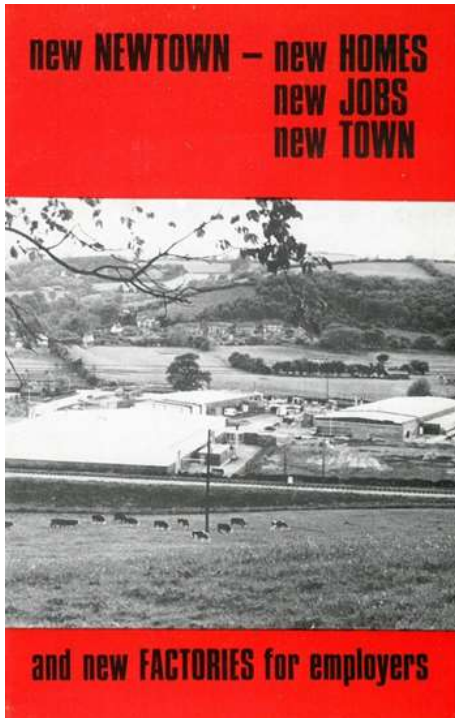
# Farming to Food Town



“There’s been a tension between food versus community, because the Town Council were very keen that it was community...but if you’re a visitor you want food, and you’re not interested in that because it’s not your community.”



# Manufacturing Town



- Wool weaving, flannel production 1800 – 1930s ('Leeds of Wales')
- Designated a 'Newtown' in 1967
- Aimed to double the town's population in a decade:
  - Building/ subsidising factory units,
  - Building housing and community facilities
  - Offering business incentives.
- High manufacturing employment
- Variety of specialised, innovative global-operators with a manufacturing base in Newtown



*Laura Ashley  
Exhibition, Ceredigion  
Museum, December  
2017*



# Manufacturing success

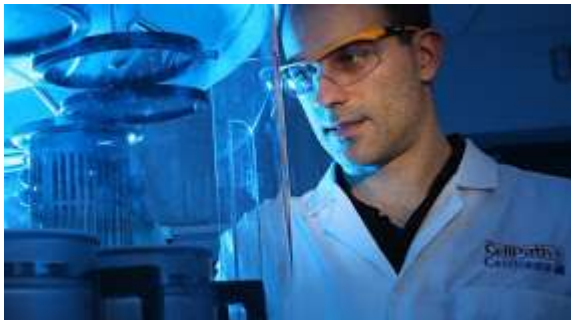
## Contact Attachments

- Forklift truck attachments
- Used in construction, pharmaceutical, petro-chemical, waste and agricultural sectors



## CellPath

- Medical supplies and diagnostic equipment (Cellular Pathology)



## Makefast

- Yacht and powerboat fittings
- Personal safety equipment incl. fastenings on life jackets and climbing harnesses



The screenshot shows the BBC News website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'News', 'Sport', 'Weather', 'iPlayer', 'TV', and 'Radio'. Below this is a red banner with the word 'NEWS' in white. Underneath the banner are more navigation links: 'Home', 'UK', 'World', 'Business', 'Politics', 'Tech', 'Science', 'Health', 'Education', and 'Entertainment'. A sub-navigation bar for 'Wales' includes links for 'Wales Politics', 'North West', 'North East', 'Mid' (which is underlined), 'South West', 'South East', and 'Cymru'. The main headline of the article is 'Newtown firm Control Techniques sold to Nidec by Emerson'. Below the headline, it says '4 August 2016 | Mid Wales'. At the bottom right, there are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Email, and a 'Share' button.

# Tourism Town?

- Low tourist numbers (10,000 visitors per year)
- Lack of accommodation and town 'brand'

*"Newtown needs to make more of itself – talk up the place – promote itself and the positive things about the town".*

- A 'hidden gem'? museums, art gallery, theatre
- Enthusiasm to develop: **'Going Green' Scheme**, 'Heritage hub', Canal restoration



*The Textile Museum, one of three museums in the town.*

*Overview of land in Newtown being developed as part of 'Going Green' scheme*



# Newtown Bypass



# The Brimmon Oak



**Mervyn:** everybody said it to us, 'why the tree?'  
But when you see my Auntie and you see my  
Uncle...

**Andrea:** And she still loves it now.

**Mervyn:** ... still loves it and she used to play shop  
round it and she'd been on films and telling us the  
stories of it and she still goes up regular now and  
she's 89



# Translocal social action

One Brimmon Oak, 238 ancient oaks remaining in whole of Wales, thousands combined their voice to take action to protect it

## Aug 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015:

- 22 initial members in local area
- One member adds over 200 people – including from London, Exeter, Bristol, Cardiff, Hereford, Isle of Wight
- Rob McBride (Tree Hunter) adds members in Belgium, Spain, and France.

## Aug 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015

- Group reaches 1000 members
- 5 members added in Thailand

Today – three years later :

- 5,764 members incl. large number in USA and Australia

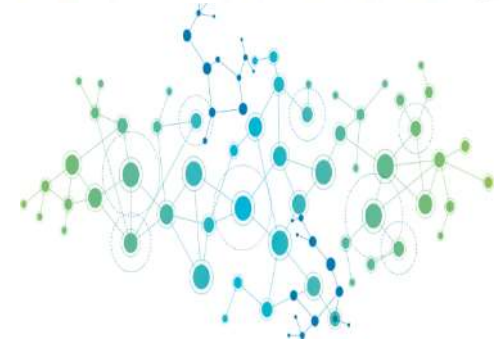
**Mervyn:** ‘With the grandson, we put it down on Facebook; ‘save the Brimmon ancient oak tree’ and within 24 hours, we had over 1000 members!’



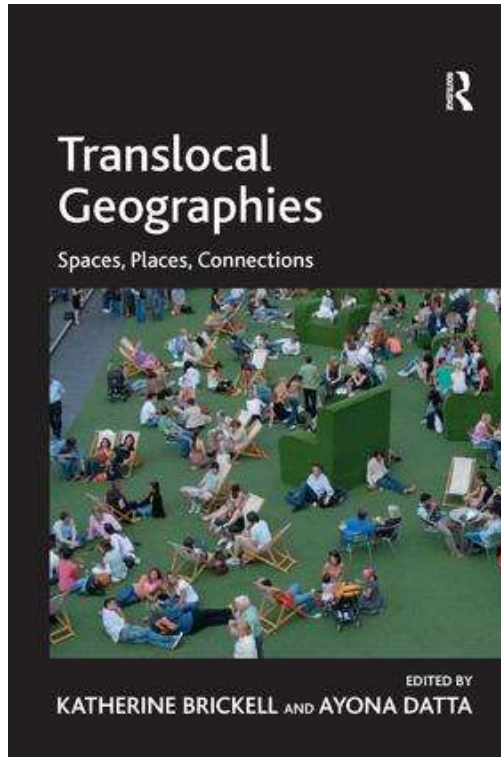
### About this group

#### Description

Currently the markers for the bypass are within 3 to 4 metres of Brimmon Oak No.1. We are discussing with project contractors for the Welsh Govt. to ensure that the British Standard BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction is adhered to here and the tree is given at least



# Translocality?



- Lineage of use within globalisation and migration literatures (Appadurai, Hannerz) – geography, anthropology, development studies, sociology...
- But still an emerging and developing concept

“Translocality refers to the emergence of multidirectional and overlapping networks that facilitate the circulation of people, resources, practices and ideas”.

Greiner and Sakdapolrak (2013 p375)

# Conclusions

- The 'global countryside' - Specific place to place connections are important
- Constant change and churn
- Sense of place endures
- Local and external forces at work

