THE CONCEPT OF RURAL DEPRIVATION IN THE HIGHLANDS

AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND

by

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1   URBAN DEPRIVATION

DEFINITION

Deprivation is a word commonly heard among planners and laymen alike nowadays - housing deprivation, income deprivation, the deprived child, the deprived family, the deprived area. It is an emotive word evoking one's own individual picture of a deprived person depending on one's knowledge, background and experience. Perhaps the image is of a dirty child from a large family playing in a decaying Glasgow tenement. Perhaps it is of a vandal wrecking schools in a housing estate while his parents drink and gamble (the depraved rather than the deprived.)

It is a word open to very wide subjective interpretations as Holman (1970) demonstrates:

> "Discussion between the various national representatives . . . . .
> soon revealed differences over the term "socially deprived families".
> To some it was confined to the small group known in this country as
> "problem families" of the type amongst whom Family Service Units
> have worked. To others the term was broad enough to include all
> females on the basis that they suffered discrimination and deprivation
> in the sense of lower employment opportunities." *

If "deprivation" is to be used to define a particular state that a group of

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* In 1967 the United Nation's Division of Social Affairs established, within the framework of the European Social Development Programme, a standing Working Group on Socially Deprived Families.

people are in and that requires some sort of remedial action then it must have

a narrower and less subjective definition - a functional definition. Unfor-

tunately the concept of deprivation - excessive suffering or hardship - can

never be completely objective and must rely on some sort of majority definition.

The first things that must be selected for a "functional" definition are those

aspects of life that can give rise to deprivation. Some are more generally

acceptable than others - most people would regard poverty, homelessness, and

slum housing as forms of deprivation but what about lack of car ownership? In

some cases being deprived is a discrete state, for example, the homeless and the

unemployed, but more often it is a high or a low level of some factor - a low

level of household amenities, a high chance of a baby being stillborn, a low

level of income. This is even more difficult to define. Above or below what

level on this continuum of hardship is our narrower definition of deprivation to

be set?

This is where the idea of some sort of tolerable standard arises. A functional

definition of deprivation would be the level at which the degree of hardship

is regarded as unacceptable. This "cut off" point on the continuum has

(necessarily) a high degree of subjectivity and is strongly influenced (if not

completely determined) by cultural and temporal factors. A group convened

by the British Social Science Research Council made this point in their dis-

cussion of poverty (1968):

> "People are poor because they are deprived of the opportunity comforts
>
> and self-respect regarded as normal in the community to which they

belong. It is therefor the continually moving average standards of that community that are the starting points for an assessment of its poverty and the poor are those who fall sufficiently far below these average standards."

Finally care must be taken to ensure that a factor really always constitutes deprivation. Poverty is almost always an unacceptable hardship but being a New Commonwealth immigrant may give rise to hardship but not necessarily. It is not a direct form of deprivation.

Although our definition of the state of deprivation is that which the 'majority of people' accept as being intolerable it is not in reality the majority of all people but of a group of our population who generally have similar values (and are interested in defining deprivation). Those people who fall into the deprived category may not consider themselves to be deprived. The "objective" view of deprivation may often not coincide with the perceived view of deprivation.

Our working criteria are only valid in one context in one limited time interval. The rest of this chapter will be a discussion of the work done on the deprived in an urban situation in Great Britain over the last couple of decades.

It is now understood that one form of deprivation seldom exists in isolation. Someone with a low income is likely to be found in inferior housing, run a higher health risk and have children with lower educational attainment. Several forms are meshed together with a variety of direct and indirect links where

cause and effect become obscure. The person is trapped by this tangled web of his physical social and economic environment. At one time it was believed that this 'cage' could be destroyed by providing improved housing. The failure of many of our peripheral housing estates would seem to indicate that this approach is inadequate. The problem must be solved by a corporate approach to all these facets, and attacked from within as well as without.

AREAS OF DEPRIVATION

As this understanding of multiple deprivation developed so did the realisation that those people affected tended to be concentrated in a number of often quite large pockets in our urban areas. A concentration of people with such a variety of problems was bound to exaggerate the difficulties. It was this knowledge that led to the "areas of need" approach to solving the problems of these individuals.

The development of interest from single aspects of deprivation to multiple deprivation to areas of multiple deprivation is worth recounting.

Cullingworth (1972) states that three major elements can be identified in the development of thinking on deprived areas: inadequate physical conditions, the presence of a large number of coloured people and a multiplicity of less easily measured 'social problems'.

During the 40's and early 50's little research was done on housing deprivation and the incidence of poverty but by the 60's a plethora of housing statistics had appeared and light was thrown on the plight of the poor. The policy on housing, at this time, was, despite a number of social surveys, physical in nature and concerned with improvement of areas of poor housing and, to a much

7

lesser extent, the environment.

The Milner - Holland Report (1965) looked at the problems of overcrowding
and multiple-occupancy and recommended designating the worst areas as
"areas of special control" where sales and letting could be controlled and
grants for improvement be made more available.

The National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (1967), concerned
about exploitation and overcrowding, recommended "areas of special housing
need", but also noted that the deficiencies in other social services be examined
at the same time.

A report published in the same year by the English Housing Advisory Committee
(1967) on the "Needs of New Communities" demonstrated that problems related
to housing provision were not restricted to older areas but also affected the
new housing estates and new towns. The social provision was seen to be
inadequate and the report advocated a social development plan as well as a
physical development plan.

Although these reports made some attempt to look at broader social issues they
were still housing orientated. The physical aspects dominated as indeed they
have the whole of British town planning. It was the field of education that was
the vanguard of the development of thought about deprived areas. From the
early 50's research was drawing attention to the educational handicaps
associated with children from poor environments and there was a growing
realisation that education alone did not bring equality. A series of three
reports were published in the 50's and 60's by the Central Advisory Council

for Education (CACE).

The first, "Early Leaving" (1954) found that the children from manual workers did less well academically than other children and tended to leave at the minimum age. This was not in itself a surprising find at the time, but what was surprising was that this could not be blamed on lower intelligence alone. As the Report states:

"It is beyond doubt that a boy whose father is of professional or managerial status is more likely to find his home circumstances favourable to the demands of grammar school work than one whose father is an unskilled or semi-skilled worker. The latter is handicapped".

The Crowther Report (1959) "15 to 18" dealt with the same theme. Young men were given intelligence tests on entering the RAF and Army and a closer correlation was found between length of education and parental occupation and family size than intelligence scores.

The third report, the Newson Report "Half Our Future" (1963) showed that this discrepency still existed but suggested it might be lessening, at least in grammar schools. It realised that schools in slums suffered in many ways - obsolete buildings, poor facilities, and a shortage of teachers. A possible policy of injecting extra resources into schools or areas which were educationally deprived was considered.

This idea was further developed in the Plowden Report (1967) in its quite radical recommendations for 'positive discrimination' for deprived areas. The proposals were for Education Priority Areas (EPA) to be designated for extra

spending on the schools within them. The intention was to devote increased

resources to the 2% of most severely deprived children, building up to 10%

over five years.

"The first step must be to raise the schools with low standards to

the national average, the second quite deliberately to make them

better. The justification is that the homes and neighbourhoods from

which many of these children come provide little support and stimulus

for learning. The schools must supply a compensating environment".

The Report is particularly interesting because although it is basically an

education document its outlook is very broad. This is reflected in the

selection of priority areas rather than schools or children, possibly stemming

from their discovery that the single most important identifiable factor in a

child's educational attainment is the parental attitude.

The choice of criteria for assessing deprived areas were social rather than

educational. As the Report remarks:

"The criteria* required must identify those places where educational

handicaps are reinforced by social handicaps".

The Seebohm Report (1968) had wider terms of reference than the Plowden

Report "to review the organisation and responsibilities of the local authority

personal social services in England and Wales and to consider what changes

are desirable to secure an effective family service". The Report recommended

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*The criteria suggested by the Report were Occupation: Size of Families:
Supplements in cash or kind from the State: Overcrowding and House Sharing:
Poor Attendance and Truancy: Proportion of Retarded, Disturbed or Handicapped
Pupils: Incomplete Families: Children unable to speak English.

a new local authority department providing a community based and family

orientated service which would be available to all. In this context it

considered that:

"Concern for the development of communities is frequently linked with

the notion of areas of special need, that is localities which have a

profusion of pressing social problems offer only a dismal and squalid

physical environment, are inadequately served by social services and

are considered to justify special attention, a generous allocation of

resources."

(However, beyond a reference to the Plowden Report and the "Needs of

New Communities", and a call for "immediate consideration" it gives no

idea of what criteria should be used to indicate "social development areas".)

This short review shows how rapidly the concept of areas of multiple depriv-

ations developed and by the start of the 70's was firmly established as a

basis for policy.

The priority area approach is being developed by the Government through its

Educational Priority Areas, urban aid programme, and community development

project. The statutory basis for these programmes are the Local Government

Act 1966 (Section 11) and the Local Government (Social Need) Act 1969.

The EPAs and Urban Aid Programme have a strong educational basis and were

conceived in terms of Local Authority action. The Seebohm Report realised

the value of supporting the local unofficial effort and recommended the

Government to take responsibility for community development in these deprived

areas (the attack from within).

Research is being carried out on determining which factors, individually and composite, are true measures of urban deprivation. Before looking at some of the work that is being done, it is worth making a few remarks about an area based approach to multiple deprivation, something which is, after all, a problem of individual people.

By no means all the urban deprived are located in deprived areas, nor are all those in such an area deprived - a fact that can easily be forgotten. However, because most forms of deprivation can usually be linked to income deprivation, most people suffering from multiple deprivation are found in the older decaying urban areas or on the less desirable housing estates, and because a concentration of such people increases the individual's problems an area based policy is thought to be both appropriate and practical.

A second point is that within these areas client based policies are still the main source of aid - supplementary benefits, free school meals, rent and rates rebates etc.

INDICATORS OF DEPRIVATION

The first section of this chapter outlined the problems of defining deprivation. This is clearly seen when attempts are made to plot the geographical location of multiple deprivation. It may be possible to test all those factors that are aspects of deprivation but they may not be of any use when trying to define an area in practice. Consideration must also be given to whether the criteria are direct or indirect indicators of deprivation, for example, car

ownership may be a reflection on the level of income but it may also be dependent on levels of accessibility (distance and availability of public transport) and parking space.

Taking our definition of deprivation as an unacceptably low level of welfare one would ideally like to look at all factors that affect an individual's welfare - housing amenities, security of tenure, employment income, morale, illiteracy, quality of environment, accessibility to nearest services and work, level of educational attainment, health standards, proportion of one parent families, to name only a few. A lot of these factors are, however, intangible or have little accessible data on them.

Again, one would ideally like to approach the problemby locating those individuals who are multiply deprived, determining what constitutes their deprivation, looking at their special distribution and selecting the areas in that way. This approach is obviously not feasible because of the numbers that are often involved so the opposite approach of looking at areas and finding out how many are in need is the one generally adopted.

The most common data source is the census which can provide information on a wide range of factors that are indicators of living standard - house condition, provision of household amenities, density of occupation, household size and composition, and unemployment. It does not provide information on some very important indicators. The most obvious is that it tells nothing of the income levels. If as Holman (1970) claims, all forms of deprivation are usually linked to income deprivation, this is a serious failing indeed. Nor does the census provide information on service provision or crime rates, other

13

major aspects of multiple deprivation.

Despite these limitations, however, it is widely used in the mapping of
areas of deprivation and I would like to demonstrate its uses in two studies.
The first is the work of the Department of the Environment (1975) on the
Enumeration Districts (ED), the small unit in the census. They looked at
all the urban ED in Great Britain using the 1971 census data. Thirty-seven
indicators were chosen which fell into several broad categories:

a) Housing

b) Employment

c) Education

d) Assets

e) Socio-economic structure

f) Special needs

g) Housing tenure

h) Residential mobility.

Thirteen of these were considered direct indicators of deprivation eg those
relating to housing and unemployment. The remainder were regarded as
potentially useful as sources of descriptive information once the deprived
areas had been identified.

For housing and employment indicators they chose a level that they felt would
be widely thought of as a tolerable standard: - use of all basic amenities - hot
water, fixed bath and inside WC, less than 1.5 persons per room etc.
The extent or severity of deprivation in each ED was measured by the proportion

14

of households or persons deprived. These ED were ranked in order of severity and those falling into the worst 1%, 5%, 10% and 15% were identified for each indicator. These severely deprived areas could then be mapped and their distribution nationwide found.

Attempts at defining multiple deprivation by this percentage "cut-off" method were more difficult. They took three factors, severe over-crowding, lack of exclusive use of all basic amenities and male unemployment and looked at the overlap between pairs and all three at the various percentage levels. In other words, they attempted to see which EDs with a high percentage of deprivations in one aspect also had it in another. The characteristics of these areas with 'overlap' were examined in greater detail by calculating the average values of a number of indicators in these EDs for comparison with the average values in Great Britain as a whole. They came out on average worse than the Great Britain average on all direct indicators as well as many of the indirect, eg educational qualifications.

This method does not pick out areas that are truely multiply deprived but only those that simultaneously suffer from two or three forms of deprivation. Those areas which suffer from less tangible or easily measured forms of deprivation are not picked out. Nor does it answer the important question of how many individuals or households suffer from this combination of deprivations.

This report showed the Clydeside conurbation to be the part of Britain with the most ED's in the deprived category. This finding caused a considerable stir. Research now being done, however, shows that the ED vary in size to a

significant extent from area to area and are not really comparable. This is an important further limitation on the use of the census for inter city comparison.

A further difficulty of using these ED to define the worst areas of deprivation is that they can conceal areas of concentration but more individuals eg Clydeside has more ED with extensive overcrowding than inner London but inner London has more individual households living in severely overcrowded conditions but in more dispersed distribution.

These errors will not be so significant when areas within one city are being looked at. The ED will be more homogeneous in size and local knowledge can locate areas where anomolies might arise. One such study is the "Areas of Need" Report by Glasgow Corporation in 1972. On this occasion the 1966 census data was used. Twenty-three factors were selected, broadly falling into the following subjects:

a) Age structure

b) Unemployment

c) Retired persons

d) Social Grouping

e) Housing Conditions

f) Occupancy Rates

g) Household Size

This study used the idea that the DOE are now looking at weighting factors in order to find the areas of multiple deprivation. The weighting method must

necessarily carry a very high level of subjectivity which is a major disadvantage. The twenty-three factors were classified into seven groups of intensity and each area of the city allotted a score. The areas with the highest scores had least problems and those with the lowest scores the most problems. The composite scores were placed in six catagories and the worst three were mapped city wide. Other data indicative of social problems were mapped and these showed a close affinity with the areas above.

These two studies have shown some of the limitations of using census data in urban areas. The kind of information collected by the census would be of great value if a realistic method of areal analysis could be developed and the census organised in such a way that this method could be used. Despite these limitations, however, the DOE and SDD have demonstrated an association between the census pattern and for example those which emerged from analysis of information on social work case loads and selected crimes and indeed the subjective assessment of Local Authority officials. (Levein 1976). Further research may confirm that census material provides at least an adequate basis for the selection of areas of multiple deprivation, although it will never be sufficient to identify the total extent or form of the deprivation or the type of action required.

SUMMARY

Deprivation has become a fashionable concept but it is both difficult to define and difficult to measure. It requires a careful selection of criteria, many of which may be abstract and lacking in data. Those criteria for which data is

available may not be indicative of the full extent of the deprivation. The

selection of these criteria contains a high degree of subjectivity but those

who are in need of aid are rarely (if ever) those who chose the criteria or

formulate the policy.

This chapter has dealt with deprivation in an urban context only. To what extent

can these criteria be used as a definition in a different society? What other

factors might constitute this different deprivation? These are the questions I

would like to look at in the different cultural society of the rural areas of the

Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Summary of Dates

1954 - "Early Leaving" - Educational attainment found not to be simply
a function of intelligence.

1959 - "15 to 18" (Crowther Report) - Correlation between length of
education and parental occupation and family size.

1963 - "Half Our Future" (Newsom Report) - Schools in slums found to
suffer in many ways. Introduction of idea of EPA's.

1965 - Milner Holland Report - advocated areas of special control.

1967 - Report of R.C.C.I. - areas of special housing need.

1967 - Plowden Report - development of EPA report.

1968 - Seebohm Report - recommended reorganisation of welfare services.

CHAPTER 2   THE PROBLEMS OF THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS
                 OF SCOTLAND

The last chapter discussed the definition and identification of deprivation in the urban parts of Britain. The questions that now arise are whether deprivation is an urban phenomena or does it also occur in rural areas and if it does is it different from the urban situation. I hope to answer these in the context of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (the term Highlands may be taken as synonymous with the Highlands and Islands). This area was originally defined as the seven crofting counties of Shetland, Orkney, Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty, Inverness and Argyll and although now divided between five regions* they remain the domain of the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB).

The Highlands are physically distinct from most rural parts of Britain being an area of high and infertile ground with only small coastal strips and valleys which are habitable. Varnell (1973) has described it as a peripheral area because of its sparse population and long distances and a marginal one because of its high degree of subsistance farming and low levels of manufacturing. Much of it is also culturally distinct - the west and north mainland and islands having the gaelic culture and language; and Caithness, Orkney and Shetland where the Norse origins can still be identified.

Before any study can be made of deprivation, however, the main problems that affect people living in the Highlands must be identified and examined. Only through an understanding of these problems can the aforementioned

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* The Highlands and Islands are now split between the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland "all purpose" authorities, the Highland Region and Strathclyde Region.

questions be answered.

Collecting data on the problems of the Highlands proved to be extremely difficult. The census is very limited since the areas covered by the ED's are large and the population often small (Sutherland had an ED of one person in the 1971 census'.) This also applies to local authorities who often have a small staff but a large geographical area to administer.

I visited officials in Inverness, Caithness and Sutherland and found everybody extremely eager to discuss the problems of the Highlands but often unable to supply data. The figures that I did obtain were seldom of much value. For example, Caithness and Sutherland could both provide me with a list of the proposed house building and the number of people on the waiting list, but neither knew how long it would be before the houses would be ready (months or years?).

For this reason I can only outline the problems but not in many cases quantify them. Some research has been done by a number of bodies and where possible I will draw on their work. For convenience I will deal with the problems under a number of headings: Accessibility, Population and Migration, Employment, Housing, and Services. In reality, of course, they are not isolated but are strongly dependent on one another in a complex cause effect relationship.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Highland road network has evolved from a mixture of drove roads, military roads and coach roads whose purpose was to give access to the dispersed settlements in the glens and central lowlands in response to the activities of

the time (Sutherland County Council 1973). The advent of the motor car meant that existing roads required to be surfaced, widened and given a smaller vertical and horizontal alignment.

The roads in the Highlands are still generally of poor quality making accessibility difficult in some parts. In Sutherland, for example, 90% of the roads are single track. This makes travelling time considerably longer. The east coast is by far the most accessible part of the region being served by the A9, the main trunk road, as well as the railway. The railway runs from Thurso and Wick in the north to Inverness, the Highland Region capital where there are connections to Glasgow, Edinburgh and London. There are at present three trains a day in each direction but there exists a capacity for expansion. The A9 is the main commercial route for the east coast and most of the larger towns and villages lie along it. This leads to a continuity in the settlements. South of Invergordon there is a major reconstruction programme for the road which is now underway and although there will only be local improvements in the north it will bring the east coast nearer the industrial central Lowlands. Accessibility on the west coast is not so easy. The majority of the roads are single track and the indented coastline and hilly terrain means that they are often tortuous and slow. This also gives rise to the long cul-de-sac routes common to the area. There is no railway running along the west coast although the ferry terminals of Oban, Mallaig and Kyle of Lochalsh are served by lines that run across from the east. The communities of the west are more isolated and less continuous than the east.

The Islands on the whole are in the worst position (although some of the

mainland peninsulas are extremely remote). There are about 120 inhabited

islands, and approximately one-third of these all rely on ferry connections

to other islands and the mainland and most goods must be imported. Ferry

rates are high and have been increasing rapidly with inflation. At the same

time however the service has been reduced.

Air travel is now an important factor in accessibility in the Highlands. Viscount

aircraft connect Inverness, Caithness and the main island groups and are the

chief links between Lewis and Uist and Orkney and Shetland. Lighter aircraft

serve a growing number of island airstrips.

POPULATION AND MIGRATION

The total population of the region, from the 1971 census, is 285,000 persons,

about 5% of Scotland's population (in an area of 47% of Scotland). The

average density of the area is less than 20 persons per square mile. About two-

fifths of this population live in settlements of less than 1,000 and a further one-

fifth live on crofts.

The most populated areas are the most accessible where services have become

concentrated and industrial growth has occurred. These areas are concentrated

along a line running from Cowal and Mid-Argyll in the south west through

Lochaber and the Great Glen north-eastwards towards Inverness, Easter Ross

and Caithness. (McKay 1973). In the remainder of the region the population

is generally sparse and dispersed although the degree varies: for example, Lewis

has only a limited dispersal pattern since crofting is strongly based on townships.

In Orkney, on the other hand, the township system is limited and the dispersal of population is greater.

This population distribution pattern means that most of the main towns and service centres are on the east coast and their hinter land can stretch as far as the west coast and even the Islands. (The county councils for Sutherland, Ross and Cromarty and Invernesshire were based on the east coast and although the Western Isles now have their own authority these mainland districts are still governed from the east.) The dispersed population on the west coast allows only Ullapool, Kyle and Mallaig to exercise any significant district function. (Turnock 1974). On the islands Kirkwall, Lerwick, Portree, Stornoway and Stromness have quite large hinterlands but the districts of Barra, Harris, Islay Mull and the Usts are small or poorly integrated hence dependence on outside centres may be heavy.

In 1801 18.8% of the Scottish population lived in the Highlands. This figure has been falling off since 1841 although migration from the distant northern and western Isles was delayed until the turn of the century. (Graph 1).

The decade 1961-71 showed the first intercensal increase since 1841 an increase of 1.8% on the 1961 figures. In fact the region grew at a faster rate than Scotland as a whole. This increase which was centred mainly on Caithness, Wester Ross and Shetland masks the continuing grave decline in the peripheral areas – Skye, Lewis, Harris, Sutherland and Orkney. The Islands are in the worst position. In 1951 they had 32.8% of the Highland population but by 1971 they had only 28.0%.

24

GRAPH 1: Population of Highlands and Islands, 1801-1971

POPULATION
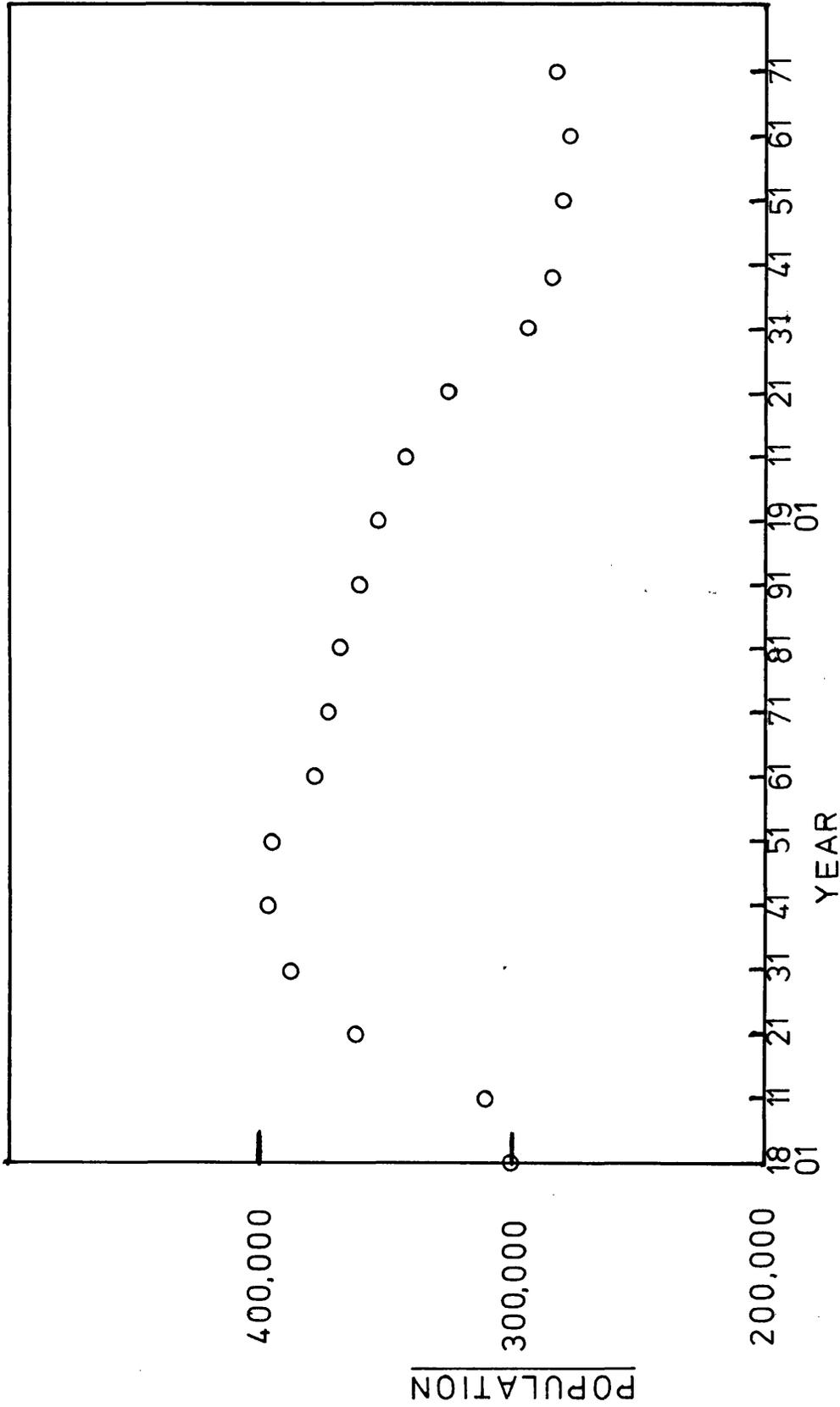
YEAR

Source: Census (1939:mid-year estimate)

The decline is most marked in the 15-45 age group where migration has been most severe. This, combined with a low natural increase, has resulted in the unbalanced and top heavy age structure found in most of the region. (In some areas the proportion of people over 65 is twice that of Scotland.) (See Graph 2). Again it is the more peripheral areas that are affected. The age pattern is further unbalanced by the number of people who are retiring in the region.

The advent of oil since 1971, when the first signs of the boom appeared, has increased the population of the Highlands even more but again this increase is centred around the Moray Firth area.

This steady decline in the population and the ageing population structure has always been regarded as the classic "Highland Problem". The first annual report of the HIDB noted that "......most opinions as we have studied and listened to them accept that depopulation is the central problem." As William Ross*, Secretary of State for Scotland, has said, the Highlander is the "man on Scotland's conscience". The Clearances of 19th centry have cast a long shadow and help to explain why curbing depopulation is seen as such a desirable aim.

Depopulation is not in fact the problem. It is those factors which cause it and arise from it that are the real problems. The decline of population gives rise to

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* William Ross MP, Secretary of State for Scotland. Speech at Third Reading of Highlands and Islands (Scotland) Bill, House of Commons, 17th July 1965.

GRAPH 2: Population by age, 1971

Highlands and Islands

24,000
22,000
20,000
18,000
16,000
14,000
12,000
10,000

Sutherland County

1,200
1,000
800
600
400
200
0

0- | 5- | 10- | 15- | 20- | 25- | 30- | 35- | 40- | 45- | 50- | 55- | 60- | 65- | 70+
4 | 9 | 14 | 19 | 24 | 29 | 34 | 39 | 44 | 49 | 54 | 59 | 64 | 69

AGE
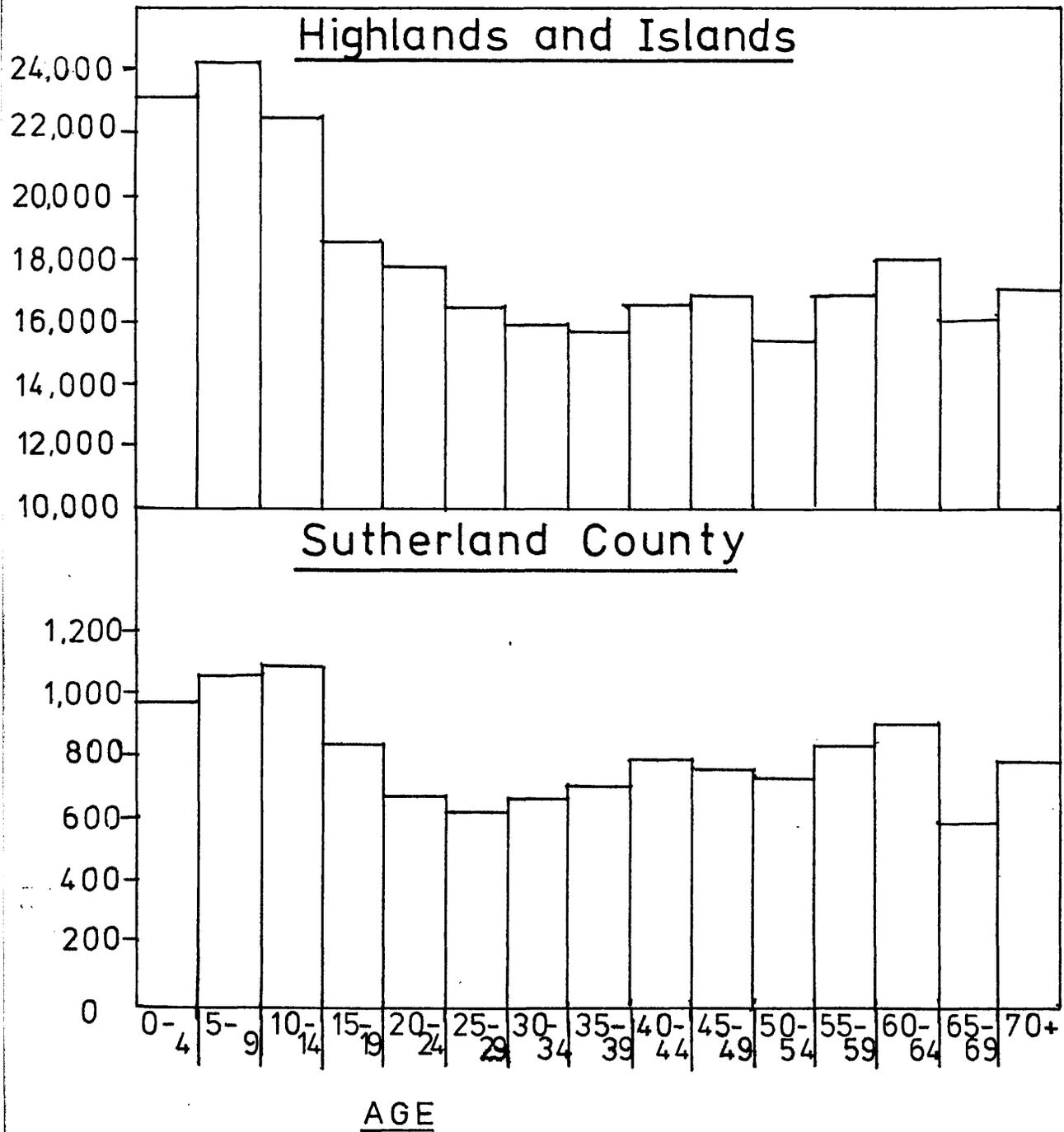
Source: 1971 Census

difficulties in maintaining services and the unbalanced age structure has an impact on the type of social services supplied and even on housing requirements.

EMPLOYMENT

The economy of the region is heavily dominated by the primary sector (comprising fishing, agriculture, forestry and a little mineral extraction). This sector according to the 1971 figures accounts for 9.5% of Highland employment (4.8% of Scotland's). (See Table 1). The level of manufacturing in the Highlands is very low compared with the rest of Scotland (14.3% for the Highlands and 33.3% for Scotland).

The numbers employed in the primary sector have been declining steadily but the rate of decline has been slowed down since 1968 as a result of the expansion of the fishing industry especially in Orkney and Shetland (white fish) and the West Coast (herring). Loss of employment in agriculture and the consequential population loss from the landward areas is not being compensated for by a development in other sectors of the economy. The local towns are not expanding enough to hold the population in the locality in the peripheral areas.

Tourism is an expanding source of employment in the Highlands. Many houses do "Bed and Breakfast" and the hotels and restaurants provide some employment albeit seasonal in many cases, and highly dependent on external factors.

The real core of the employment problem is the lack of manufacturing in the Highlands. The first aim of the HIDB when it was established was to promote manufacturing in the region and hence strengthen the most deficient element in the economy. The main areas of manufacturing follow the line of population

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGES EMPLOYED IN MAIN INDUSTRIAL GROUPS IN HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS AND SCOTLAND 1971

Industrial Groups	Highlands and Islands			Scotland		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Agriculture	7.3	1.5	5.2	2.9	0.8	2.1
Forestry	2.6	0.3	1.8	0.4	0.1	0.3
Fishing	3.1	0.0	2.0	0.7	0.0	0.4
Mining and Quarrying	0.8	0.1	0.5	3.2	0.0	2.0
TOTAL PRIMARY	13.8	1.9	9.5	7.2	0.9	4.8
Food Drink & Tobacco	4.8	3.5	4.4	4.9	6.1	5.0
Textile Manufacturing	1.9	2.1	2.0	2.7	5.3	3.3
Other Manufacturing	10.1	4.1	7.9	31.4	16.6	25.0
TOTAL MANUFACTURING	16.8	9.7	14.3	39.0	28.0	33.3
Construction	21.4	1.7	14.2	12.3	1.2	7.9
Gas, Electricity, Water	2.1	0.5	1.5	2.0	0.7	1.5
Transport & Communication	8.5	3.4	6.7	9.3	3.4	6.9
Distributive Trades	7.6	16.7	10.9	7.5	18.7	12.0
Professional Services	7.7	30.9	16.2	9.8	29.5	17.7
Miscellaneous Services	12.7	28.8	18.6	5.4	12.5	8.2
Public Admin. & Defence	7.7	5.0	6.7	7.3	4.9	6.3
TOTAL SERVICES	67.7	87.0	74.8	53.6	70.9	60.5
Unclassified	1.6	1.5	1.6	NA	NA	NA

Figures supplied by HIDB (Original Source: Department of Employment)

The self-employed are not included in the totals and this results in an underestimation of the size of the total labour force. The primary sector is the one where the figures are most underestimated both because of the number of self-employed in agriculture and because crofters may be listed under their subsidiary occupation.

described before. The Moray Firth has the greatest amount and variety of manufacturing and the peripheral north and west the least (See Map 1). The lack of the skilled jobs that would be associated with manufacturing has been one of the main causes of the high emigration among the 15-45 age group. Those who are better educated and qualified cannot find suitable jobs in the area and are therefor forced to go elsewhere. The areas with the least employment in manufacturing are generally those to loose population most readily. These areas have been drained of their youth intelligence and skills for so long that they lack the entrepreneurship and confidence necessary to help revive them. A self-generating pattern of decay has set in. A cause/effect relationship between migration, lack of employment and a lack of growth of manufacturing would be far too simplistic. Housing, education and welfare provision and transportation patterns all have a part in the vicious circle. They influence the chances of development taking place which in turn influences the migration rates etc.

The unemployment level is higher in the Highlands than the rest of Scotland but over the last six years there has been a decline in the number unemployed both in absolute terms and with respect to the rest of Scotland, ie there is real evidence of catching up. In the 60's unemployment in the region was customarily twice that of Scotland but in 1974 it was one and a quarter times the level (HIDB 1975). The main reason for this drop in unemployment is the oil boom experienced by the region. The major areas affected by the oil are Shetland and the Moray Firth although there is some development on the West eg Loch Kishorn: Provision of housing and infrastructure in these areas

27

Map 1: Types of Industry
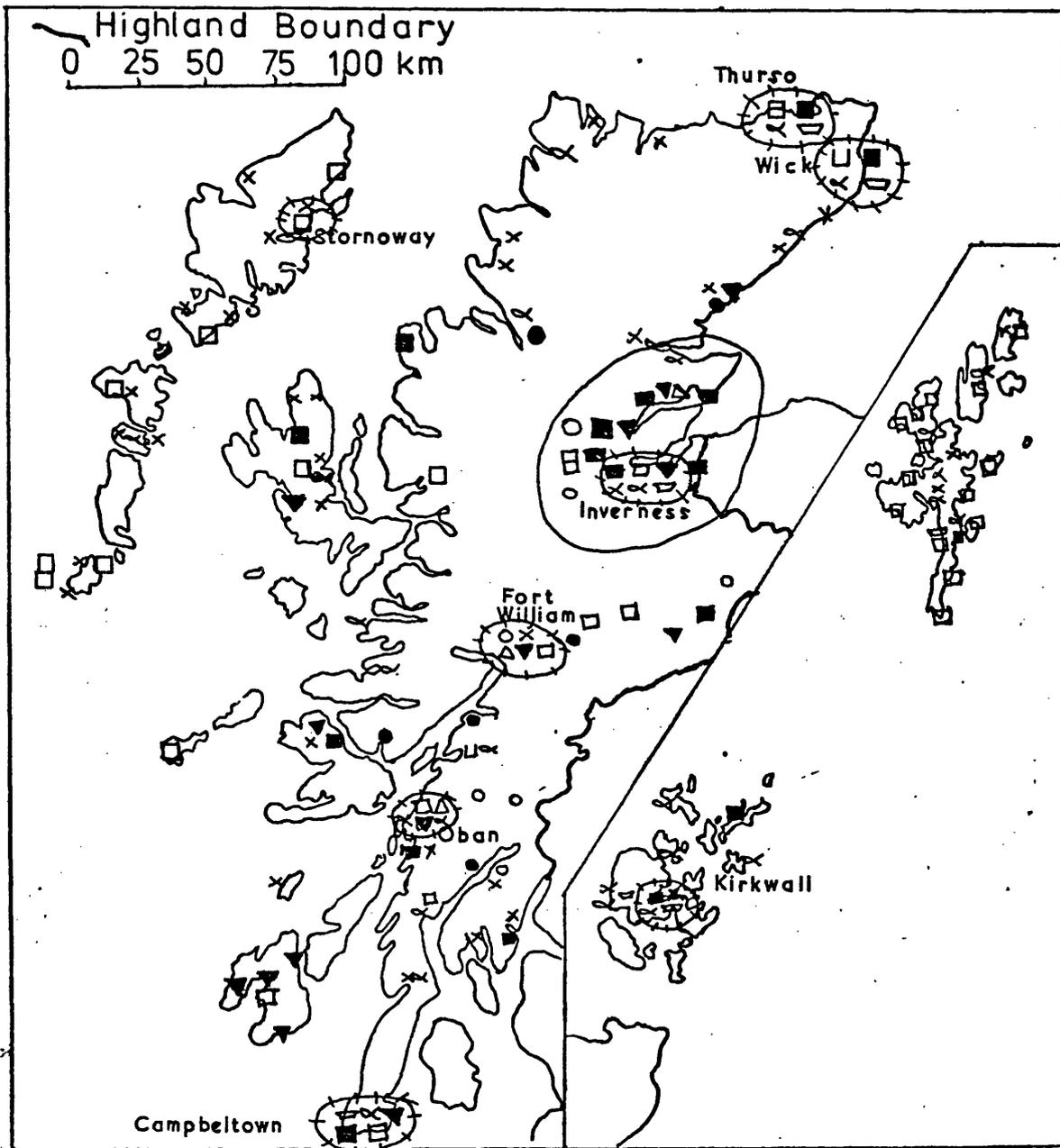
Main industrial groupings: (local)   (regional)

△	Aluminium	▢	Textiles
∝	Fish and food processing	○	Wood and paper
▣	Engineering	▽	Boatbuilding
⊔	Chemicals and glass	▼	Distilling
●	Extractive	⊟	Building materials
✕	Crafts		

Source: Turnock (1974)

has presented some problems but they are realised and a lot of work is in progress to alleviate them.

The impact of the oil stretches further afield and is not always desirable. Competition with existing firms for a limited labour supply is one of the more serious effects. In Sutherland, where many services and industries are running very near to the limit of viability, they are unable to pay the kind of wages that the oil companies can afford. The work done by East Sutherland Council of Social Services (Pease 1975) showed garages and building contractors had lost 40% and 38% respectively of their staff. So far no firms have had to shut down but if any further development takes place in Easter Ross the situation could become critical.

The increase in employment has not removed the violent seasonal fluctu- ations found in the region based as it is on agriculture and tourism although it has declined considerably. The high wages paid by the oil companies has not affected an overall decrease in the disparity between wage levels paid in the Highlands and Scotland and Britain (See Table 2).

I spoke to social workers in Wick and Inverness and to three local residents in Golspie and Brora in Sutherland about the social effects of the oil boom. These are obviously subjective and there was no data to back them up but they are worth reporting.

The Highlands have a tradition of heavy drinking (Primrose 1962) and the impression of all those I spoke to was that a considerable proportion of the increased earnings was being spent in that direction. There has been no

TABLE 2

PERSONAL INCOMES

Average gross annual earnings in the Highlands and Islands 1964/65 to 1972/73 and also as a percentage of Scotland and Great Britain.

	1964/65	1967/68	1969/70	1970/71	1971/72	1972/73
Males Highlands	£870	£1,044	£1,166	£1,340	£1,504	£1,702
Percentage of Scotland	98	96	93	93	95	95
Percentage of Great Britain	88	88	85	87	88	88
Females Highlands	£401	£545	£604	£744	£818	£935
Percentage of Scotland	83	93	91	97	95	97
Percentage of Great Britain	78	89	87	94	92	93

From the HIDB Ninth Report 1974

Original source: Scottish Abstract of Statistics 1973

history of high earnings in the region and few ways of spending it. Enter-
tainment is limited and shops provide less of a range of goods than in
urban areas. Many more marital problems have come to the social workers'
notice and in more than half of these cases drink has played a significant
part. They felt that the employment in the oil industry had been an important
factor in some cases because of the increased earnings and travelling time.

HOUSING

The housing problem in the Highlands can be divided into two categories:

    i)   the 'urbanised' Moray Firth where there is an absolute
        shortage of houses arising out of the oil expansion; and

    ii)   the rural remainder where the absolute housing need is less
        but the relative need is greater.

The difficulties of the Moray Firth are the same as any urban area in Britain
that is experiencing a rapid expansion and there are standard methods of
dealing with them. It is in the truly rural parts of the Highlands that the
housing need is greatest and the solution less easily defined.

There are three main types of housing problems in the rural Highlands and
Islands (HIDB 1974):

    i)   low standard of existing stock;

    ii)   lack of houses in the right place at the right time;

    iii)   competition between 'locals' and 'incomers' for housing.

Standard: About 19%* of houses in the Highlands and Islands are 'sub-
standard' (as defined by the Housing (Scotland) Act 1969) but this can rise as

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* Data from the Housing Research Unit of the SDD.

high as 50% in some areas eg the Invernesshire Outer Hebrides.

At present 50% grants are available to bring houses up to tolerable standards (a much cheaper method than building new ones). The HIDB sponsored a project by Strathclyde University (HIDB 1972) which looked at the difficulties experienced in Barra in attempting to renovate houses. These included:

i)   the difficulties people had in meeting their share of the costs (then only 25%). Often those in the worst housing were those who could least afford to pay;

ii)   the expense of architectural advice, availability of contractors and the cost of construction materials was a serious handicap to these areas;

iii)   the bureaucratic red tape involved in these areas is often daunting. As the report says, a croft is a "small house on a small holding entirely surrounded by regulations";

iv)   in order to qualify for a grant to put in a bathroom, or hot water, the house must be brought up to tolerable standards in all respects, which may mean raising the roof and enlarging the windows.

Housing action areas, where a subsidy can be obtained, are not at all practical in an area of dispersed population. As one of Sutherland's Housing Department officials said "Most of Sutherland would need to be an action area".

Availability: The housing shortage can delay or prevent economic develop-
ment in an area and it can force young people to move away. This of course varies from area to area and although there is evidence in some cases

30

that development has been prevented, other areas eg Farr and Spean

Bridge have council houses standing empty.

Council houses are built on demand rather than in advance (for perfectly

understandable reasons) but the length of time it takes to build a house in

the Highlands is generally longer because of a lack of contractors.

Any firm wishing to expand or establish itself has the prospect of possibly

a couple of years delay before houses are built. Some local authorities

allocate points to key workers and incoming workers which puts them

higher on the priority list in an attempt to overcome this problem, eg

Sutherland allocates four points to key workers and two points to incoming

workers.

The lack of housing stems from more general problems of the region: low

incomes, small dispersed communities, high construction costs because of

transport of materials, lack of labour, lodging for personnel, shorter

building period and difficult sites, unpredictability of need, and difficulty

of obtaining land.

Competition: A further aspect of the housing problem is the increase in second

home ownership and in some areas the holiday homes constitute a sizeable

proportion of the total eg in Dervaig in Mull the holiday homes predominate.

In an area where there is no housing shortage, the renovation and upkeep of

the surplus has some advantage. Where there is competition between outsiders

and locals the problem becomes serious. The generally lower incomes of

the Highlander means he is often unsuccessful in bids and resentment towards

the newcomers can often be bitter in a community.

The influx of wealthy people into an area can be galling for the locals who have little prospect of greatly increasing their incomes and inflation hits those who are nearer subsistence level harder. A number of these second homes are in fact homes for people who want to retire in the Highlands and this can further unbalance the age structure, although many of the areas that attract these people are already suffering from this problem. Another social effect is the possible destruction of a culture so strongly adhered to in some districts by an influx of a large number of self-assured incomers with a very different lifestyle.

A final aspect of the housing problem is that of "tied-houses". This problem is by no means a purely rural one although it is the plight of the agricultural worker that is most commonly brought to our attention. In fact about one-fifth only of Scotland's tied houses are occupied by farm workers (Shelter 1976). None of the local authorities that I visited had any idea of how many tied houses were in their area.

The people in tied houses include farm workers, estate employees, teachers, policemen, forestry workers and those attached to firms eg Dounreay Power Station in Caithness provides quite a number of houses for employees. The security of tenure, which is now available in both the furnished and unfurnished privately rented sector, is not available in tied houses. If the occupier is unable to work for any reason or is dismissed he may be required

to leave the property. In the Highlands where there is a severe housing
shortage, it may be difficult to find alternative accommodation. On estates
and farms the provision of a house is often an excuse to pay lower wages and
the houses may be in poor condition (Shelter 1974).

The Government is making moves towards giving security of tenure to
agricultural workers but it is difficult to say what sort of percentage of those
in the Highlands it will help.

SERVICES

The Jack Holmes planning group (Sutherland County Council 1973) carried
out a survey of the services provided in Sutherland's larger villages and
towns (Table 3). This is a most detailed study of the service provision in
the Highlands and although it is only for Sutherland it does bring out some
interesting features. It is very noticeable that it is the east coast communities of
Golspie, Dornoch, Brora and Helmsdale as well as the more centrally placed
Lairg that have the greater concentration of services.

I Shops etc

The table shows the number of services that are provided on a part time or
mobile basis. The mobile shops are very much a part of the Highland life and
play a very important role in many communities. The increase in petrol
recently has jeopardised the viability of some of these and increased the price
to the consumer.

Although shops may be classified as serving one function they often carry a
wide range of goods from food to shoes and caravan equipment. This is

	Golspie	Dornoch	Brora	Lairg	Helmsdale	Lochinver	Bonar	Tongue	Kinloch	Bettyhill	Durness	Melvich	Scourie	Embo
Community Centre Hall	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
District Nurse	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Library	*	*	*	P	*	M	P	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Primary School	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Grocer	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	M	M	*	*	M		*
Hotel	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Variety/General Store	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fishmonger	*	M	*	M	*	P	M	M	P	M		M		M
Restaurant/Cafe	*	*	*	*	*	P	*	*	*	P	P			P
Bank	*	*	*	*	*	P	*	P	M	P			M	
Butcher	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	M	M	M		M		
Caravan/Camp site	*	*	*		*	P		*		*	*		*	*
Doctor	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*		*	
Joiner/Undertaker	*	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*			
Police Station	P	*	P	P	P	P	P		P	P		P		
Registrar	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*		*	
Repair Gar/Blacksmith	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*		
Coal Merchant	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*			*		
Baker	*	M	*			*	*	M		M		M		
Draper	*					M		M	M	M	M	M	M	
Ironmonger/Chandler	*	*	*	*	*	*		*				*		
Tourist Office		*	P	P	P	P	P				P	P		
Clothing	*	*	*	*	*	M			M					
Hairdresser	*	*	*	*	*		*				*			
Plumber	*		*		*	*		*						
Taxi/Self Drive Hire		*	*	*	*	*	*				*			
Tourist/Souvenirs	*	*		*		*		*			P			P
Chemist/Photo. Dealer	*	*	*	*	*		*							
Dairy	*	*		*		*		M				M		
Driving Instructor	*			*		P			P		*		P	
Newsagent	*	*	*	*	*								*	
Playing Fields	*	*	*	*	*					*	*			
Ambulance	*			*		*			*	*				
Builder	*	*	*		*						*			
Golf Course	*	*	*		*		*							
Railway Service	*		*	*	*		*							
Car Sales	*	*	*	*										
Furniture/Carpets	*	*				M			M					
Greengrocer		*	M	*	*									
Radio/TV/Electrical	*	*		*		*								
Secondary School	*	*	*							*				
Tennis Courts	*	*	*		*									
Bowling Green	*	*	*											
Fire Station	*	*		*										
Shoes	*	*		*										
Airstrip/Helicopter Pad		*					*					*		
Accountant		*					P							
Coach Hirer			*				*							
Craft Centre		*										*		
Electrician	*						*							
Solicitor	*	*												
Youth Hostel					*			*						
Architect	*													
Gas Works	*													
Laundry				*										
Medical Centre	*													
Painter/Decorator			*											
Social Security	*													
Swimming Pool	*													

Source: Sutherland County Development Plan

Key:

* Full time service

P Part time service

M Service provided on
a mobile basis

especially true in the remoter north and west where the post office is also

the general store. It is difficult to assess what sort of service a community

is really getting. Similarly those services carried out at home are not

listed eg hairdressing, jobbing tradesmen, sales on commission etc. It is

however clear that only the larger centres can support a variety of services

but it is hard to estimate what levels of population are necessary to support

what services in the Highlands. This will be discussed more fully when I

come to look at threshold levels.

Another feature of the Highlands and Islands has been the extensive use that has

been made of mail order firms. This was an extremely valuable service

because it allowed people to buy a wide range of goods without having to

travel to the large centres. Because of inflation however these firms have

decided not to supply the Islands with any goods that cannot be sent by mail.

This has been a great loss to these areas (Radio 4).

II Health and Welfare

The very low densities in the Highlands also present difficulties in the

provision of welfare services. Rationalisation by the hospital boards has

lead to an increased centralisation of hospitals. Golspie on the East Coast

has the only hospital for Sutherland and Inverness is the centre for specialist

and critical cases for most of the Highlands. The distances that must be

travelled from some areas to visit patients in the hospitals can be very long and

can put an unbearable cost on relatives both in terms of time and money.

Emergency cases can be difficult to deal with although the service of heli-
copters is available to many areas.

There is a good ratio of doctors and district nurses to patients (most islands
including some with populations under 200 have their own doctor) but the
distances that must be covered means that the service is stretched very thin.
This may be partly compensated for by a more personal knowledge of the
patient. The services of dentists and chiropodists are often supplied on a
mobile basis making use of village halls etc.

According to the Highland Region Social Work Department some of the most
serious problems arise out of the top-heavy age structure and again it is
the peripheral parts of the Highlands where the population is dispersed and
existing services already strained that have the most unbalanced structure.
Inflation seriously affects those whose incomes are largely dependent on
subsidy.levels which do not rise as fast as other incomes, or those whose
income is fixed. The old fall into this category. The problem has been
increased by people retiring in the area with what they believed to be an
adequate income who have since been hit by inflation and require help.
It is particularly difficult for the elderly to travel to services so the service
must be brought to them. This creates serious problems where the population
is spread very thinly. Because of the unbalanced structure there are prop-
ortionately fewer younger people who could man voluntary services eg meals-
on-wheels and home helps and a lot more responsibility is placed on the
welfare authorities.

The provision of houses is also affected by the age structure. There is a demand for small and especially sheltered houses for the elderly which would not really be suitable for families at a later date should such a demand arise. The disabled also require a specialised type of housing and in Caithness the high proportion of elderly people and also those suffering from multiple sclerosis creates a particular demand for this.

III Education

This is the field in which I was most interested for a number of reasons:

i)   Education authorities were one of the most advanced bodies in the development of thinking about deprivation in urban areas;

ii) The Highlands have had a long tradition of high educational attainment;

iii) Migration is extremely high among school leavers and the system of education provision is often held responsible.

The education provision can be looked at in two parts: a) primary; and b) secondary.

a) Primary: The number of primary schools all over rural Britain has been on the decline with the one teacher schools being closed down wherever possible. This involves greater distances for children to travel although transport is provided for any distance over two miles for 5-8 year olds and three miles for older children (although most authorities provide it on a more generous basis). The Highlands have experienced similar school closures but still retain a high number of one teacher schools.

The closure of schools has arisen as a result of the belief that one teacher

schools were inadequate and also as a result of the depopulation that has been such a common feature of the Highlands. It is difficult to assess what effect the increased travelling has had on the children.

Solstad (1971) looked at the education performance in English and Arithmetic tests sat by school children in Sutherland at the end of their primary school education. Although the results for Arithmetic showed a trend to higher achievement among those living nearest to school the tests for English were not statistically significant. He felt that the total number of pupils was too small to draw any firm conclusions.

According to Lee (1971) who looked at rural primary schools in Devon there is a correlation between adjustment of a young child and the distance from school. The age group looked at was 6-7 year olds. They were assessed by teachers for absenteeism, energy, aggressiveness, concentration, general anxiety, popularity with other children, withdrawal, depression, response to affection, and intelligence. They found that the children who travelled by bus were more badly affected than children who walked and there was a progressive decline in adjustment with time by both those who walked and those who used transport. The reason for this effect was thought to be psychological break with the mother because the child who is using transport is unable to make his own way home. The child who walks feels he can return any time of the day whereas the child who goes by bus is often left at the school while his means of escape is removed.

Fears are often expressed about the effect on a village if the school is lost.

The school can often act as a community centre and the teacher is a prominent citizen in a small community.

b) Secondary: The 1960's with the introduction of "O" levels and the move towards comprehensive education saw a reduction in the number of secondary schools. (Some of the junior ones had simply been a small department on top of a junior school). Limiting the number of schools has meant that some children are required to live in hostels or lodgings. Like all the problems mentioned previously the worst affected areas are the West and North mainland and the Islands.

The district of Sutherland demonstrates this well. There is one six year comprehensive school for the whole district, Golspie High School. All the children west of Lairg are required to attend it from the beginning of their secondary school education at the age of eleven or twelve. All these children must board near the school - 157 live in hostels and 47 in lodgings. The East Coast, however, has three two-year feeder schools at Brora (six miles from Golspie), Helmsdale (eighteen miles) and Dornoch (ten miles). All the children transfer to Golspie after two years and travel daily.

The provision of education is by no means standard and comprehensive education has not arrived completely in the Highlands. Some areas still have a selective system - with segregation at the beginning of secondary school, after two years or after four years.

Education is often held responsible, at least in part, for migration by teaching children the values of the outside world or by removing them from their home

environment for a long period and hence severing the ties.

Aberdeen University (1975) carried out a survey in the peripheral parts of the Highlands to see whether education provision did play any part. They found that there was only a very slight increase in expectation of migration between the first year in secondary school (SI) and the fourth year (S4). The children started school with a high expectation of migration which resulted from the home environment. Very few non-manual jobs exist in these localities and parents accept that social mobility must involve geographical mobility. In all but one of their study areas the parents did not want the curriculum to prepare the children for work in their own area ("What work?" they asked) but wanted the children to be able to compete in a wider labour market. These children, therefor, come from areas where there is a long tradition and high expectation of migration.

The evidence would seem to indicate that it is employment and not education that is the key factor in emigration. The education provision can it seems affect the in-migration of an area. Lochinver and Kinlochbervie have a capacity for expansion of the fishing industry. From this area all the children travel to school from the beginning of their secondary school education. This is accepted, although not with satisfaction, by the indigenous population but many people are reluctant to put themselves and their children into such a position. It is difficult to encourage the Moray fisherman to settle in the area or to attract the key workers necessary to stimulate growth. Education isplaying a part in retarding development although many other factors are

involved (hospitals, accessibility, etc).

TRANSPORT

One of the key features in a modern economy is the transport cost and
service in an area. The transport problem in the Highlands has two facets:
i) public transport; and ii) commercial transport.

i) Public transport: The public transport system provides the crucial
linkages between jobs, services and housing that exist in the sparsely
populated Highlands. With services so dispersed there is a great dependence
on the transport system. The cost of providing public transport in the
Highlands is so extremely high because of the lack of people using it at
any time and the long distances that must be covered.

Car ownership is higher in the Highlands than would be expected but this
increased car ownership has an effect on the public services. Strathclyde
Region Planning Department (1975) remark that:

> "The relationship between declining levels of public transport
>
> provision and increasing car ownership is complex; it is a system in
>
> which positive feedback takes place eg a decrease in level of service
>
> stimulates an increased level of car ownership which results in less
>
> use of public services and so on".

The problem is even more serious in the Islands where ferry charges are
extremely high. The HIDB (1975) believed that ferry charges should be
related not to operating costs as at present but to the equivalent road journey
on the mainland.

Coordination of services is another difficulty. Connections between buses,
trains and ferries require to be improved to make accessibility easier.
School buses which can run only at certain times may be the only service
available to some areas, and they are not geared to synchronise with other
services.

ii) Commercial Transport: The Highlands is an area which imports most of
its manufactured goods and is therefor highly dependent on commercial
vehicles. The road network, with the exception of the east coast is of
very poor quality and not very suitable for large lorries, and the railway
system is not extensive. Raw material also needs to be transported within
the region eg timber to the pulp mill in Fort William, and fish is exported,
usually to Aberdeen.

Again, because of the long distances that are covered the cost of importing
or exporting is high. It often means that prices of goods are higher than
in the South. A survey carried out in Sutherland showed that food prices
were twenty or thirty percent dearer than Glasgow or Edinburgh (Turnock 1974).
The excuse of high freight charges can often be used to put the prices up.
Many of the large companies eg Cadbury/Schweppes will supply any part
of Britain for the same price. On the Islands vegetables and fruit can be as
much as ten pence a pound more expensive than the Mainland, but ferry
operators estimate that it only costs one or two pence a pound to transport
it. Perhaps a 'consumer watchdog' is needed in the region.

These problems of the Highlands and Islands form the basis of the study of
Highland rural deprivation to which I would like to devote the remainder of
this thesis.

CHAPTER 3   RURAL DEPRIVATION

Deprivation is generally thought of as an urban problem perhaps because

it is often concentrated in identifiable areas in the cities. A poor

environment has a strong visual and emotional impact. Urban deprivation has

become a big political issue and as I mentioned in Chapter I work is now

well under way in identifying the forms of deprivation, the indicators of

deprivation, the relationships, the areas affected, and even possible

solutions.

The plight of our urban areas tends to colour attitudes towards the concept

of deprivation. If the word "deprivation" (as opposed to simply "problem")

conjures up a picture of a blighted physical environment as experience of

the cities tends to, then it would be extremely difficult to visualise

deprivation in the Scottish Highlands.

The visual impact of the Highlands is of a wholesome environment of great

beauty. The emotional impact is often romantic - an idyllic alternative

to the pressures of urban living. People and houses are not assessed by

their own merits but by their environment. The seriously substandard croft

in an urban situation would be regarded with horror by many of those who

idealise it in its original setting. The standard image most people have

of the Highlander is of some quaint but canny Lillian Beckwith character.

This rose-tinted attitude of 'Lowlander' towards the Highlands is helped by

the traditional British 'anti-urban' belief - somehow cities are 'evil' but

the countryside is 'good'.

If one accepts, however, that the elements of deprivation are as described

in Chapter I, dependent on the society and time period being considered,
and often represents some socially determined point on a sliding scale
of hardship, then deprivation would be expected to exist in the Highland
society. It could be argued that the Highlands don't represent a different
society but are part of a larger British society, and any differences are
not really enough to seperate them. I believe, however, that the physical,
economic and cultural environment described in Chapter II is distinct
enough to justify an alternative study of deprivation.

Taking the universal definition of deprivation as a generally accepted
level at which hardship becomes intolerable, what needs to be done is to
define the aspects that constitute deprivation and the 'intolerable' levels
in the Highland society.

Differentiating between the Highland society and urban Britain society
presents a number of difficultues. It is easy to compare a developing country
with an advanced country and understand why the 'intolerable' level is
different and why some aspects are common to only one culture. But
what about backward areas in an advanced country?

The Highlands form a remote rural fringe of a highly urbanised country. Like
the other marginal regions of Europe its economic problems arise out of
a dependence on a declining primary sector. For this reason the marginal
regions are sometimes compared to underdeveloped countries. As McKay
(1973) points out, however, this approach can be misleading since the
problems of marginal regions do not arise as a result of being bypassed by

various revolutions in agriculture, technology and industry. Because

certain local factors were strong the revolutions were affected in such a

way that their impact has been very different from the rest of the country.

In the Highlands these features are derived from the historical development

of the region and its culture.

In spite of the fact that the Highlands are physically, economically and

culturally different from both undeveloped countries or advanced regions in

developed countries they are still subject to national standards eg housing

and education, and also to national legislation. The situation that

arises is of a set of values derived from one lifestyle being superimposed on

a different lifestyle. The definitional difficulties arise out of this ambivalent

situation in the Highlands.

I will deliberately ignore the 'urban' parts of the Highlands and deal only

with the two-thirds of the population who live in settlements of under one

thousand. This is not to say that the larger settlements do not contain

deprived people. A visit to Wick would demonstrate it. I believe, however,

that there is a difference between urban and rural society, even within

the broader Highland society. The very subtle differences between urban

areas in the Highlands and urban areas in the rest of Britain is beyond the

scope of this thesis. When I discuss Highland deprivation, it will be

referring to the rural areas.

The work of urban deprivation is based on an area approach. This is not

because it is the ideal method, but because it is believed to be an adequate

workable method. The most common data source, despite its limitations is

the census, which is arranged on an area basis - the ED's. The reason

that this area approach is felt to be adequate is because of the marked

polarisation of similar people in towns and cities. This means that people

with a multiplicity of problems tend to be located in one or two areas.

Because of this high concentration of problems in relatively small areas

there is a chance of more being created.

Within the rural Highlands there is no marked polarisation of people.

The unbalanced age structure (especially in the northern and western

periphery) is mainly a result of people moving out of the area rather than

a rearrangement. (The young, skilled and educated tend to leave the

Highlands most readily). Many of the problems described in Chapter II

arise as a result of the sparsity of population. Looking for areas of depri-

vation, as in an urban area, does not therefor seem a sensible approach.

The ED's in the Highlands can cover large areas and often contain few

people. The margin of error could therefor be very high eg schoolchildren

or fishermen enumerated away from their normal residence could completely

distort the data. This means that even if an area approach were adopted,

the census could not be used.

Having rejected an area approach to deprivation it then becomes extremely

important to distinguish between forms of deprivation and indicators of

deprivation. When it is areas rather than individuals that are being looked

at it is possible to say from experience that a high or low percentage of

something suggests that the area being looked at is multiply deprived.

They do not themselves constitute deprivation. A high number of manual workers or immigrants are two of the indicators used in urban situations. The validity of these indicators varies with the situation and because they depend on a relationship with the direct forms of deprivation their application in a different social structure is limited.

The direct forms of deprivation are less culturally dependent. Poverty and poor housing are fairly universal problems. It is the point at which different societies consider them to be unacceptable that is variable. It can be difficult to decide whether some aspects are indicators or forms of deprivation eg high unemployment is commonly used as an indicator but is unemployment itself a form of deprivation? Perhaps it is not so crucial to make such distinctions when a deprived area is being examined but it is when it is individuals.

Because the indicators of deprivation are very culturally dependent and are based on experience of the relationship with direct forms of deprivation, when looking at a different society one must first establish the direct deprivation and then, if necessary, the indicators. I intend simply to establish the direct forms of deprivation but not the indicators.

The alternative to an area approach is an individual approach. Locating the deprived people or families and studying the form of their deprivation and its relationship to their environment. It is not possible to study deprivation in such detail in this thesis. I intend simply to identify those

aspects of Highland rural living that constitute deprivation and the kinds of people most likely to be affected.

Because this is a field in which very little research has been done I will start by drawing on aspects of urban deprivation and assessing their meaning and value in the Highlands.

Holman (1970) in his discussion of urban deprivation believed that all forms of deprivation were usually related to income deprivation. This makes it the most critical form of deprivation in an urban area, but what about the Highlands?

The first point that must be raised is that poverty is a standard, a level on a continuum that is socially determined. If the Highlands are regarded as a different society then the level on this continuum at which low income becomes poverty might be expected to be different. This presents certain difficulties since the Highlands are not a separate country and are thus subject to national standards. The subsistence level as determined by Social Security and pensions is standard throughout Britain and allows no regional variation. However, the prices of foods are high in the Highlands and the long distances that must be travelled to services puts a high cost on obtaining them. One might therefor expect the level of poverty to be set higher on the continuum.

On the other hand, incomes are generally lower in the Highlands than the rest of Britain so the gap between the higher incomes and lower incomes is not as substantial as it may be in urban situations. It was said before that:-

48

"People are poor because they are deprived of the opportunity,

comforts and self-respect regarded as normal in the community

to which they belong." (BSSRC 1968)

The lower incomes in the Highlands would suggest that the material level

regarded as normal is lower than other areas which would suggest that the

poverty level might not be higher on the continuum.

A further consideration when determining the poverty level is the relation-

ship of this income deprivation to other forms of deprivation. To what

extent and why does poverty give rise to other deprivations?

The commonest pattern in urban areas is the poor only being able to afford

the worst housing in an inferior physical environment where schools are

old and facilities limited. These are the areas of deprivation. But small

areas of concentration of people with problems do not exist in the Highlands

which would suggest that the relationships between deprivations are not

the traditional ones.

Housing is the form of deprivation normally most closely associated with

poverty. This is largely a result of the urban housing market. In the

Highlands there are constraints other than income on the standard of the

house. Admittedly the very poor are generally found in the poorest housing

but the relationship is far from simple. The locality of the house is

determined largely by the work place and a change of house is usually

associated with a change in employment. As mentioned in the previous

chapter there is a shortage of houses and in any locality the choice will

be limited.

Again the problem of the level on a continuum appears in this case with respect to housing standards. The "tolerable standard" is a national one made mainly with urban areas in mind. The substandard house in an urban area is generally located in a poor physical environment. This is not true of the rural Highlands. The relationship between poor housing and poor environment must affect the criteria selected for a tolerable standard. Since this relationship does not exist in the Highlands the criteria could be expected to be different. A house defined as substandard by official criteria may not be felt to be substandard by the occupiers. What would then be considered as an inferior house by national standards is not necessarily found in association with an impoverished family.

Even if a house were felt to be substandard by the occupiers the choice of alternative housing is limited. The other option is improvement of an existing house. The difficulties of improvement mentioned in Chapter II often deter people who could afford to from taking advantage of it.

The income/housing relationship is far more complex in a rural area because a lot more factors are involved. Some of these factors eg tolerable stand- ard are the effect of the superimposition of one culture on to another. Poverty and poor housing are types of hardship that exist in the Highlands. According to the definition, deprivation is determined by some generally accepted level of excessive suffering. Because deprivation is determined by the particular society unless all people are materially equal there will

still be groups of people who are considered deprived. What needs to be researched into is the locally derived level on the continuum that represents deprivation. The following points must, however, be borne in mind:

i)   The "cut off" level cannot be determined by extrapolation from the urban situation because the cause/effect relationships between forms of deprivation, and between rural life and deprivation is not the same;

ii)   Nor can the Highlands be considered completely in isolation because no matter how different the physical, economic and social environment they are still part of Britain. Even if national standards were no longer applied to the area the Highlands are still penetrated by nationwide media - television, radio and newspapers etc - which have an impact on the Highlands.

Since the housing/poverty/environment relationship does not exist in the rural Highlands, the critical effect on children of this combination, discussed so much in the Plowden and other reports, would not be expected. The schools even at the primary level usually have large catchment areas. The main comprehensive schools can serve an enormous area and bring together children from both west and east coasts. The pattern of schools suffering because they are in a poor area which in turn is detrimental to a child's education just does not apply to the Highlands.

The educational standards in the Highlands are good with a high percentage of the children obtaining qualifications and going on to further education.

Aberdeen University (1975) showed that in the peripheral areas a very large majority of parents were in favour of the schools providing a curriculum which prepared the children for competition in the wider labour market. Only in areas where there was a perception of a supply of more local jobs by parents were they more in favour of a locally vocationally orientated approach.

The Plowden Report found that the parental attitude was the largest single most identifiable factor in a child's academic achievement. This was why a child's home environment was chosen for action, rather than simply the school. It would therefor seem that on the whole the parental attitudes are conducive to children realising their educational potential. This however disguises the fact that there may be educationally deprived children in the Highlands - not because they come from a deprived area but because their home affects them thus. The best example of this is probably the children of tinker stock who "all suffered the effects of a below average (home) environment" (MacCallum).

I have found no other study on the relationship between incomes, housing education and IQ in the Highlands. Solstad (1971) looked at the relationship between social class and educational level in Sutherland and Ross and Cromarty and found that the children of skilled or semi-skilled manual workers had lower educational attainment than non-manual and professional workers. This correlates with the finding of Newson and Plowden etc. There is however a danger of misinterpretation. It may demonstrate that

52

children from these backgrounds are deprived but only if their potential

were thought to be higher than their achievement. This is an area where

selective migration has been taking place for many years - the brightest and

best qualified leaving most readily, seldom to return. These findings may

simply be a result of a "brain drain" (if one accepts that at least part

of intelligence is hereditary).

Although the environment has not the impact on the educational provision

and child's attainment that is found in urban areas, the school provision has

an impact on the environment in a way very unique to the Highlands.

In parts of the Highlands, mainly the peripheral north, west and islands,

children are required to board away from home in order to obtain secondary

education. In some cases the children transfer at the start of secondary

school, in others after two years or four years. This is again a result of

national standards being applied to the region. In order to provide six year

comprehensive schooling the degree of centralisation requires children to

board. Without this provision the children would be considered educationally

deprived (at least in the opinion of the Education Department). Against

this must be considered the hardship experienced by the families and, indeed,

community, who loose their children for forty weeks of the year.*

Since this is a unique form of hardship it perhaps requires some justification to

call it deprivation. While the children are at school the family and

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* The Education Authorities pay half the cost of the home journey every
  fortnight but weather conditions and remoteness often mean that the
  visits are less frequent.

community are literally deprived of their company. This is no continuum

type of deprivation. It is a simple case of "have" or "have not" deprivation.

The only alternative open to parents is to migrate - to leave their home,

employment and community in order to retain their children.

One of the officials that I visited in the Education Department believed

that if parents felt that loss of their children was an excessive hardship they

had complete freedom of choice to move over to the east coast to where the

school for the area in question was located. This was regardless of the

fact that there are insufficient houses and employment for those already

in the east coast, let alone an influx of new people. By alleviating one

problem they could be giving themselves a few more. It is for this reason

that I consider the educational provision in part of the Highlands causes

deprivation.

The families are the worst affected because they are left behind and they

experience a sense of loss more acutely. The children's ties with the home

are being severed at an earlier age than would otherwise happen. After a

while the children stop wanting to go home at weekends because their

friends and social life are centred on the school.* This loss is not perhaps

so strongly felt by the children themselves. According to the Social Work

Department and the Education Department in the Highland Region there is very

little incidence of maladjusted children among those who live away from home

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* These are the opinions of social workers, councillors and a resident of
  Golspie who provides board for seven children who attend Golspie High School.

and apart from an initial homesickness few children are thought to be badly affected.

This deprivation also applies to the whole community which loses its youth and vitality for such long periods at a time. The areas affected thus are the same areas where migration among school leavers is high and the community already has a top heavy age structure. One can only question the meaning of the word community when it is unbalanced to the extent that it is with a severe depletion of the young from as early as eleven or twelve.

As far as the families who have children of secondary school age are concerned, there is a strong temporal element to this form of deprivation. They are only deprived during the time that the children are at school. Before and after the children attend secondary school this deprivation is removed. I know of no other deprivation that has such a strong temporal relationship. There is also a non-temporal element. The communities in the areas affected continue to suffer from the removal of the children although the individual children only attend for four to six years. In a different sense from the urban one, these areas could be described as deprived areas. The distinction between the two is in their origins. The urban deprived areas arise as a result of the polarisation of people already suffering from some kinds of deprivation. In the rural Highlands the "deprived areas" have not arisen out of any existing deprivation but because a policy has been imposed on the area, which is inappropriate to the situation.

It is rather ironic that the Education Authorities who were so advanced in

their understanding of deprivation in cities should be the cause of

deprivation in the Highlands. It was the Plowden Report that noted that:-

"Educational policy should explicitly recognise the power of the

environment upon the school and of the school upon the environment."

The rationalisation of the hospital service gives rise to a similar form of

deprivation as the education provision although at any time it affects fewer

individuals. This deprivation has the same temporal, non temporal and area

elements as education deprivation but is less severe because proportionately

less people are involved. In Sutherland the hospital is in the same village

as the high school so the areas affected by hospital provision are the same

ones to be affected by education provision.

Both the families and the patients suffer, however. The hospitalisation of an

individual can impose unbearable costs upon relatives both in terms of money

and time. The resulting isolation of hospital patients, especially the old

and the very young may have an adverse effect upon them.

Schools and hospitals are the extremes of difficulty in obtaining services because

they are essential and probably the most centralised. Chapter II outlined some

of the difficulties in providing and obtaining services: transport, shopping,

health and welfare, and education, as well as building contractors, architects

etc. The degree of hardship in obtaining a service depends on the service

and the individual but at some point this hardship becomes excessive and can

hence be described as deprivation.

As already mentioned, the characteristic of urban deprivation is the

polarisation and concentration of people. Although rural Highland depriv-

ation is very different an underlying trend does seem to exist. This is the

availability of, and accessibility to, services. In urban areas there may

be a low uptake of welfare benefits but the services are readily available

in terms of time and distance. In the rural areas the statutory services,

at least, are available in terms of the numbers of population. Often, in

fact, the provision per head of population is more generous eg the numbers

of doctors and district nurses. The high employment in the service sector

also demonstrates that. Because of the sparsity of population however the

services are spread over a wide geographical area and are difficult to

obtain. Other services may simply not exist because the population within

an area is insufficient to justify it eg cinema, sports facilities etc.

The problems of accessibility affect not only deprivation in education,

hospitals and other services but also in housing and even to an extent

incomes. The difficulties of improving houses and building new ones has

been discussed fairly extensively but many of these arise out of the remote-

ness of the areas from materials, workers, management etc. Incomes are

affected because employment opportunities are limited (without migration).

This chapter has attempted to bring out the main aspects of deprivation in

the rural Highlands. This is necessarily a rather subjective assessment although

I have tried to incorporate the opinions of officials and residents in the

Highlands. Two forms of deprivation are common to most cultures - poverty

and poor housing. The other deprivations are however distinct to the rural Highlands and arise out of the physical features of the area. (Similar problems are found in the other marginal regions of Europe and North America).

In the following chapter I would like to look at these deprivations in more detail by examining the problems of accessibility to an availability of services. The next stage after deprivation in relation to services is the point at which an existing service can no longer function. In many cases this is a triggering off reaction to rapid depopulation. Associated with this is the perceived deprivation and perceived "threshold" level at which people feel they must evacuate.

CHAPTER 4   SERVICE DEPRIVATION AND THRESHOLD LEVELS

The key to most aspects of Highland rural deprivation seems to be the provision of services. This raises a number of questions. Which services can a community or individual manage without before the hardship becomes extreme? At what point does it become deprivation and at what point does a community become non-viable? What is the relationship between population levels and service provision? Such little work has been done on this in Britain that it is impossible to answer these questions fully. All that can be done is to expand them a little and attempt to look at the variables that may be involved.

It is important to bring out a point concerning deprivation and provision of services. Certain services have recently undergone a rationalisation process which has resulted in a greater degree of centralisation. This is a result partly of the philosophy that only large scale units can provide an adequate service and partly of economies of scale. Using the example of education again, the Highlands have more money spent on them per pupil than other parts of Britain. It may be argued that the present provision is the best possible without an increase in expenditure out of all proportion to the numbers of population. This argument may be perfectly valid but it does not mean that deprivation is not a result of this situation and is felt by those involved. For this reason I include all those features of deprivation which may seem to some to be unavoidable.

Harden (1960) in his study of the social and economic effects of community size came to the conclusion that goods services and population are closely

related but not in any directly proportional sense.

Sutherland County Development Plan (1973) grouped settlements into four categories according to their size, economic function and administrative role:-

a) Dispersed dwellings which include individual farms, crofts and lodges with a single economic function and often with access difficulties;

b) Crofting townships which are fairly inaccessible, range from less than ten to fifty people with a dominant agricultural purpose but with occasional secondary service activity such as tourism;

c) Minor service centres more accessible than the above, comprising villages of about one hundred to three hundred people. The service function is as important as fishing and agriculture but only a limited form of public service provision is available and a significant proportion of commercial services, such as mobile shops and banks are on a part-time basis;

d) Service centres ranging in size from six hundred to thirteen hundred people where full-time commercial services and public administration together dominate the economic base of the settlement. Accessibility is not too difficult and a choice of methods of transport exists.

This only gives a very rough guide to what size of population can support services and a great variation exists. The interdependence of communities plays an important part in the service provision. Embo on the east coast of Sutherland has a population of three hundred but the service provision is limited (see Table 3 in Chapter 2). It is situated very close to Dornoch and

Golspie both of which can provide a wide range of services. Scourie on

the west coast has a population of only one hundred but carries slightly

more services than Embo. It is far more isolated than any east coast

community and for those who lie within reach of its shops, welfare and

social services it is an important centre.

The importance of a centre is determined by the relative accessibility to

other centres. A remote community will tend to try to provide more services

but there is obviously a limit. I have found very little work on what size

of population is capable of supporting what services. The study of services

in Sutherland was unable to say beyond the broad generalisations mentioned

above what services required what population. It did, however, remark on

the tenacity of places like Scourie where the margin of survival, it felt,

must necessarily be small.

The level of service provision that constitutes deprivation needs to be

distinguished from the level that constitutes non-viability of an area (and

consequential population loss) ie what services can a community or individual

manage without and what services are essential? Deprivation and the

threshold of viability of a service are simply two different points on the

same continuum of hardship.

There are four factors that can be distinguished in the service deprivation:-

    a)   Depopulation as a result of lack of housing and employment
            causes a decline and death of services especially non-statutory,
            because of lack of custom.

    b)   Increases in the standard of living means that the services

62

which were once sufficient are no longer so in a modern
society. At one time communities could be self-sufficient.
Crofting/fishing settlements survived in isolated and inacces-
ible areas where the remoteness was a protection. (Simply
staying alive however was a fairly full-time occupation.)
The sparsity of population in many cases means that there is
insufficient custom to establish the necessary non-statutory
services. The statutory services are provided usually at
highly subsidised rates and on what is often deemed to be an
insufficient basis. The demand for new services is even more
difficult than the maintenance of old because of the amazing
tenacity of some shops and trades. (This is also seen in some
of the old inner city areas.)

c)   The application of national standards and policies, not suited
to the society, which plays such a big part in Highland
deprivation has been discussed extensively already and
requires no further elaboration.

d)   The geographical area that a service can cover is dependent
on the ease of accessibility. In some cases it is a question of
the service going to the customer eg doctors, home helps,
mobile shops, banks and libraries etc. This will be determined
by the distance from the point of origin of the service and
whether there is sufficient custom en route to justify it. In
other circumstances the customer travels to the service. In this
case it is dependent on the distance from the service and the
availability of transport. A car makes a service more access-
ible but reliance on public transport can make it less access-
ible. This goes back to the problem of insufficient population
to justify an extensive transport system (itself a service.)

If a service is not accessible to an individual either in terms of time to reach it

or transport provision then it might as well not exist as far as he is concerned.

It is unfortunate that the difficulties of providing a transport system are so great

in an area of scattered communities where accessibility is so vital. (One

very interesting feature of service provision in the Highlands which has

unfortunately been curtailed is the extensive use that has been made of mail

order catalogues. In this case accessibility of an individual did not matter

provided there was at least a road to the individual's house.

Service deprivation also carries a temporal element. This was mentioned in

Chapter 3 with reference to the school and hospital provision. Different

age groups have different needs. The very young give rise to some specialised

care but it is the old who present the biggest problems and because of

differential migration their proportions are high in some areas. They place a heavy

demand on the mobile services of doctors, chiropodists, nurses, meals-on-

wheels etc and are less able to travel to the non-mobile ones. They tend

to have low car ownership and are hence very dependent on public transport.

They also have a generally low spending power which is not very helpful

to small shops struggling to keep going.

At some point this deprivation becomes extreme and a threshold of viability

is overstepped. The same four factors are probably involved in this although

it is difficult to assess their relative importance. There are two aspects to

the viability problem: 1) the effect of population on the service; and

11) the effect of the service on the population.

When the population drops, or is unbalanced enough, it is no longer capable

of supporting a service. In the opinion of the Highland Region Social Work Department, Sutherland is just on this threshold level where, in some areas, the loss of only one family could result in the rapid decline and con-sequential "death" of a service. Unfortunately this was a very subjective view and they could supply no empirical data to verify it.

Depopulation is not necessarily the only factor in the non-viability of services. It can be encouraged by an increase in retail prices out of proportion with the local incomes. The petrol price rises severely affected mobile shops and the cost of transportation of goods. Another factor is the competition with other areas. This was discussed in Chapter 2 where it was noted that the oil industries in Easter Ross had removed labour from some trades, especially garages, in Sutherland.

Of equal interest is the effect that loss of a service can have on the viability of a community. At some point the difficulty of obtaining a service (or services) becomes so extreme that the gradual rate of depopulation that has been such a characteristic of the Highlands is drastically accelerated and a whole area is deserted. This can be seen as a change of state in one rapid jump from populated to empty.

It is extremely difficult to assess the point at which service becomes non-viable. This could only be decided from case studies of services that have collapsed. Nor is it easy to decide which services are the corner-stones of a community.

Children boarding at school is considered a deprivation by many parents but

there is no evidence that it encourages any significant number of families

to migrate (Aberdeen University 1975). It is not a severe enough hardship

to trigger off the vicious circle of service/community destruction. It does

have an impact on other services, however, because it acts as a disincentive

to incoming workers who could help reverse the gradual decline which will

eventually lead to the threshold level. I have no data on whether the

hospital provision significantly increases migration.

The public transport system is probably the most vital service to communities

especially where car ownership is low since it is so critical for the provision

of other services. The Islands give some examples of this.

Moisley (1966) remarked on the similarity between the western island of

St Kilda which declined and was eventually evacuated and the small northern

islands of Foula and Fair Isles which are still inhabited. St Kilda relied on

boats from other islands and mainlands to provide the communication links.

Foula and Fair Isles, in contrast, maintain their own boat service. He further

noted in his study of the desertion of the Hebridean Islands that the minimum

size for viability varied according to circumstances but accessibility played a

major part.

Fraser-Darling (1955) again with reference to the Scottish Islands was of

the opinion that one of the critical thresholds that resulted in evacuation was

the inability to man a boat (four able-bodied men). The island of Tanera

was emptied suddenly in 1931 because there was no longer a boat crew.

Although this work has been carried out on the islands, perhaps because they

form discreet geographical areas, the problems of accessibility have played

a major role on the mainland. There are a large number of rural settlements

and even ones that have one or two people left where there is no access

apart from a pony track or a boat.

A threshold is not necessarily a fixed standard. It is the point at which

people decide that their community has declined to such an extent that it

no longer offers a suitable existence. This raises the issue of perceived

deprivation and perceived threshold.

Perceived deprivation is different from objective deprivation in the sense of

demonstrably lacking something. As Runciman (1966) said:-

> "People's attitudes aspirations and grievances largely depend on
>
> the frame of reference within which they are conceived".

This was demonstrated in the attitudes towards education in the Highlands.

The degree of satisfaction with the provision was related to whether the

alternative was viewed favourable or unfavourably eg in Ullapool children

attend the local secondary for the first two years and then all transfer to Ding-

wall Academy. The parents feel that they could reasonably expect a four

year school so their satisfaction is low. Cross in Lewis has a similar provision

(two years locally and then transfer to Stornoway) but the degree of satis-

faction was higher since the perceived alternative was transfer at the

beginning of secondary school (Aberdeen University 1975).

This also applies to the threshold level in a community. The amount of

hardship an individual is prepared to tolerate is dependent on the perceived

alternatives. It is not simply dependent on the push factor (the loss of the services) but on the pull factor (the attraction of an alternative). Again the islands demonstrate this point.

Two islands that have been deserted this century are Mingulay and Borery. Although there were people on Mingulay until 1931 it was effectively evacuated when the nearby island of Vatersay with one large farm was raided in 1907. Although landing was difficult on Mingulay the evacuation seems to have been triggered off by the availability of land. If Vatersay had not been so accessible it is likely that Mingulay would still be inhabited. Borery was the subject of a planned evacuation by the seventeen crofters in 1922. The reasons why the crofters wanted to move are not clear. Relocation was fashionable at the time and the crofters were offered land on the mainland. (The island was lashed with bad gales at this time and an old rumour that the island was going to sink was revived – the push factor perhaps!)

In these two cases, the cause of evacuation was the perceived attraction of an alternative which raised the threshold level higher than it might otherwise have been. The perceived threshold is probably also dependent on the age and family structure. An individual may be prepared to tolerate a certain amount of hardship himself but not subject his children to it. Similarly the old may be less inclined to move voluntarily despite the fact that they are often most in need of help. (On those islands with less than twenty people the majority are elderly),

There is a great need for some extensive study to quantify the deprivation
and threshold levels. Services exist in a hierarchy - daily, weekly, monthly
etc. The population required to maintain them and the geographical area
they can serve will also vary. The relationship between frequency of use,
population, geographical area and accessibility all need to be more fully
understood if any policy concerning deprivation and viability were to be
produced. The perceived thresholds and factors that affect the perceived
threshold would also need to be analysed in any attempt to curb depopulation
of the Highlands.

CHAPTER 5   SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND PROPOSALS

It has been shown that deprivation does exist in the rural Highlands. There are people who suffer from hardships that are considered excessive not only by the local societies' values but in some cases by the wider societies (and vice versa). Because their deprivation is in many ways distinct from the rest of Britain (as indeed are many of the economic problems) it does not mean that it is no less important than the urban deprivation which has become the subject of a considerable amount of work.

Deprivation is essentially an individual's problem, although the concentration on areas may obscure this fact. The minimisation of deprivation is considered a laudable aim in our society at present. It must however include all the deprived and the Highland deprived are a part of them. It is often argued that the amount of money spent on the Highlands per head of population is out of proportion to urban areas but this is no justification for neglecting their deprived.

I have not identified those who suffer from deprivation in the Highlands but I have attempted to outline the forms of deprivation that exist in the region. Deprivation in the Highlands, it has been seen, can be divided into two categories:-

    i)   Some forms of deprivation are common to most cultures. The ones that have been mentioned are poverty and poor housing. What distinguishes them from the urban situation is the point on the continuum that defines deprivation. It cannot be said unequivocally that it is different in the rural Highlands from the urban areas but it seems very probable that it is. This is where perceived hardship plays such an important role because

both these aspects are subject to national standards, the appropriateness of which is questionable. The deprivation point needs to be assessed in the light of local values before its extent could be determined.

Two aspects that have not been mentioned are the homeless and the unemployed. Obviously for most homeless people this is a deprivation and whether it is in an urban or rural area makes little difference. For this reason they have not been included in any survey of the deprived in rural areas. The unemployed have not been mentioned for much the same reasons. It is not an indicator of deprivation in the Highlands (although it may be an indicator of economic malaise). An individual who is unemployed might consider himself to be deprived but not necessarily. Unemployment could of course give rise to deprivation – poverty or homelessness (eg tied houses).

ii)   Other forms of deprivation are common only to remote peripheral and marginal regions. These deprivations arise as a result of the sparsity of population and the difficult terrain which limits accessibility. They are mainly the problems of service provision at a time of increase in living standards and expectations and decreasing population. They can also be augmented by the imposition of national standards conceived with concentrated urban areas in mind or by competition from outwith the area or other external factors. These forms of deprivation have a serious impact on the population because in its extreme form a viability level is overstepped and the death of a community becomes imminent.

A stated objective of most policies concerning the Highlands has been the curbing of this steady depopulation. The HIDB has tried to encourage the growth of manufacturing in the Highlands to provide a wider range of employment

72

and income opportunities. This should in turn help remove the housing and

poverty deprivations. Most assistance has rightly been given to the peripheral

north and west where the problems of depopulation are worst but this work

alone cannot remove the deprivation of the Highlands because lack of

employment is not the only factor involved.

The imposition of the national standards in the Highlands mentioned so often

before gives rise to a form of deprivation with respect to schools, hospitals

and even housing. The policies are made in isolation of the circumstances

of the area and of their impact on other policies. The Highlands have a

large number of bodies concerned with the provision of services, management,

advice and financial support but there is no body to co-ordinate their

activities. There are the standard departments eg Planning, Education and

Social Work that are common to all regions, but the Highlands also have a

number of bodies dealing with the specialised interest of the region eg The

Crofters Commission, Forestry Commission, DAFS, and HIDB.

A call for a corporate approach in the planning and development of a region

is often made but this need is especially acute in the Highlands where there is

such a collection of bodies , some localised and some nationalised. The

effects of a department pursuing its aims to the exclusion of others can be

seen in the Education Department. The HIDB spend most money on the

peripheral north and west in its attempt to stimulate the economy. Some

places are believed to have a potential for expansion but they require key r

workers to move into the area. They seem to be reluctant to do so because

the education (and hospital) provision is so poor. The Education Department

believes that their policy is the most suitable because it provides the

children with a broad education but it seems to ignore its responsibility

to society as a whole.

The policies in a region of decline and low population density have very

little leeway before they conflict with another policy. In an urban area

the change in an education, transport, hospital or welfare provision could

be quite extensive before the impact on other aspects of life became severe.

Since so many of the national policies are derived from the urban situation

understanding of the effects on other areas seems to be lacking. It is because

these policies are not derived from the requirements and circumstances of

the area that their effects on other policies can be so extreme.

One can only question the need for standardisation throughout the whole of

Britain when such economic and social heterogeneity exists. There is a

contradiction of aims of policies. On the one hand there is the move towards

centralisation eg regions, comprehensive schools. On the other hand there

is the attempt to get down to the community and individual level - community

councils, public participation, housing associations etc. In an urban area

or conurbation both of the aims may be able to exist in relative harmony but

in a low density area this contradiction leads to conflict. In the west and

north of the Highlands and the Islands the communities are small and dis-

continuous. The whole lifestyle is centred around naturally small units and

not, as in an urban area, subdivisions of a larger unit. This is an ideal

setting for the community and individual approach but not for the large

scale centralised one.

There is a great need for an understanding of the impact of a policy on all

aspects of rural Highland life and not on the aspect which is its main concern.

For this a co-ordinating body is needed so that departments are obliged to

work as a corporate team and not in isolation. This may manage to improve

the conditions, both social and economic in the Highlands without any

significant increase in the already high expenditure. Similarly, policies

derived from the specific needs of the area and not imposed from the outside

have a far more advantageous effect than the present situation.

As has been mentioned before, any attempt at halting depopulation must be

made in the light of full knowledge of the factors that are behind it. Certainly

employment and possibly housing are the main factors and these problems

are being tackled but the service provision and threshold levels must also

be important. This is a field in which a substantial amount of research is

needed.

The first thing that requires to be ascertained is how far the population can

decline before rapid depopulation results ie what population is necessary

to support the key services in a locality. This means identifying the key

services which may vary with the structure of the community (a high percentage

of elderly or a particular employment etc). This could only be assessed through

case studies and surveys in the Highlands. The educational survey by Aberdeen

University managed to interview 80% of the families involved and the Barra

Survey (HIDB 72) noted the eagerness of people to help. Both of these

suggest that a survey might get a high response.

The services can be divided into statutory and non-statutory. The non-

statutory are more dependent on an adequate supply of custom to remain

viable because they are seldom subsidised. (Transport is an exception

because of its critical role in the Highlands.) In both cases, however, it

is important to understand what area they are capable of serving without

the difficulty of obtaining the service resulting in deprivation or non-

viability of a community.

Diagram 1 may help to illustrate the research that needs to be done. Two

hypothetical areas of population A and B each have a service S_1 and S_2

respectively. These services can cater for areas x and y without any

excessive hardship. (This is where perceived deprivation would be important.)

If however as a result of non-viability or of rationalisation of the service S_1

ceases to exist and S_2 is the nearest source of that service then difficulties

arise. Although, as in the case of centralisation, S_2 is expected to serve

the population areas B and A the area it can in practice serve without

causing deprivation remains the same. Improvements in the transport system

- better co-ordination or timing of services - or car ownership could enlarge

the area but only slightly.

At some distance Z from the service a space/time barrier is reached. Beyond

this barrier the difficulty of obtaining the service becomes excessive and hence

constitutes deprivation. In some cases it is a discontinuity point ie the

DIAGRAM 1

A

B

DISTANCE

S/T_2

S/T_1

X

Y

Z

S_1

S_2
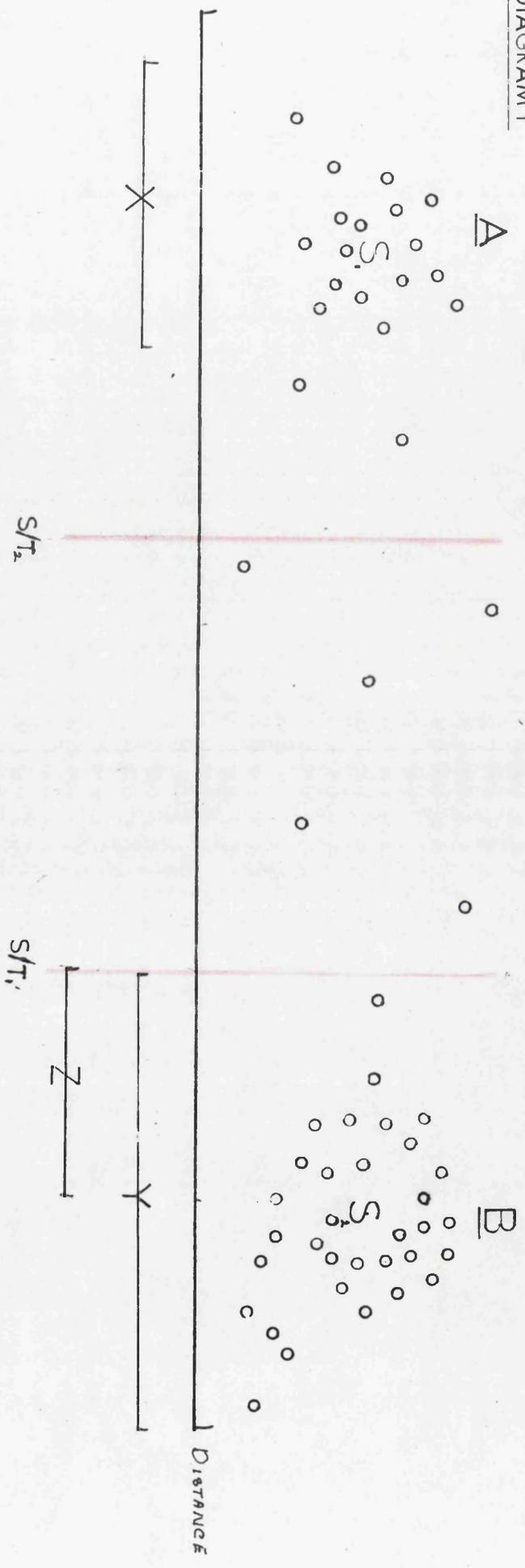
o   Points of population

AB   Areas of population

X   Area served by S_1 before hardship is considered deprivation.

Y   Area served by S_2 before hardship is considered deprivation

Z   Maximum distance from S_2 before hardship is considered deprivation

$S_1 S_2$ Same service at two different localities

S/T_1 Space/time barrier 1 – determines deprivation level

S/T_2 Space/time barrier 2 – beyond this point it is impossible to obtain S_2 at the required frequency ie discontinuity level.

journey becomes impossible for the required frequency of the service eg

school children living beyong a certain point do not travel daily to school

but are moved into the vicinity of the school. In some parts of the Highlands

the public transport system does not allow a return journey in a day to be

made to services (eg Lochinver to Golspie).

The position of this space/time barrier is dependent on three variables:

i)   the frequency of use of the service - daily, monthly etc;

ii)   the type of individual using the service - child, adult;

iii)   the ease of access to the service ie the time the journey takes
       and the frequency of the transport.

Example

Child or elderly person X daily journey X bus → Z is small eg school

Adult X twice weekly X bus → Z medium size ⎞ eg Shopping or

Adult X twice weekly X car → Z longer   ⎠   hospital visits

Adult X twice yearly X car → Z longest eg dentist or major household goods.

A study of the position of this barrier would lead to a quantification of

deprivation and threshold levels which would allow a policy based on relevant

data to be formulated. This may involve investment at a small number of

points to support services. Obviously this is easiest with the statutory services

because it is possible to exert control over these but the support of non-statutory

but essential services eg shops may also be considered.

This is not the same as a growth centre policy where a large amount of

investment is poured into one area of the region. This was an early policy

of the HIDB who selected three growth centres, Lochinver, Moray Firth, and

Wick/Thurso. This has been seen to be unsuitable since it is essentially imposing urban solutions on a rural area. Supporting a number of small areas would not totally eliminate the need for some people in very remote areas to migrate but it might be possible to move within the sphere of services. This could be seen as an intersection zone which holds people in the locality rather than moving out of the area altogether as in a west-east transition or migration out of the region.

The feasibility of this solution would have to be examined more closely in the light of work on services and threshold levels. How high the cost of small scale investment would be is dependent on whether services could be organised efficiently and whether a corporate approach to the region could be achieved.

Public participation, another phrase commonly heard today, is worthy of some consideration in this thesis. For so long the Highlands and Western Islands have been governed from the east coast. There is a very strong feeling of impotence and disillusionment among the people of the west and the islands. They have been drained of their youth and intelligence for so long that the people lack the enterprise and confidence necessary to stimulate indigenous growth.

Many of the policies applied in the Highlands have been seen to be inappropriate, conceived as they were in another society. In this case Edinburgh or London are the seats of power. They are even further removed both in experience and lifestyles than the east coast. It is therefore not surprising that a feeling of powerlessness is so common in the Highlands and Islands.

In the urban areas deprivation is well defined according to a number of criteria but many of those who are classified as deprived may not consider themselves to be (and vice versa). The human side of deprivation is the suffering that people experience and this is what should be important. The question of perceived deprivation has already been raised and this ought to be an important part in any attempt at identifying the deprived in the Highlands. Because of the difficulty of using traditional data sources the best and often only way of acquiring it is by survey. This would be the ideal opportunity to incorporate the opinions of the people of the area.

Using this form of participation one would include people in an assessment of their own deprivation and possible solutions. This does not occur in the urban situation. As well as helping quantify deprivation it may stimulate some of the activity and self-help that is required to remove many of the broader economic and social problems of the region.

Highland rural deprivation is a subject that requires extensive study. It involves many facets of life and is dependent on numerous factors. The time available for research for this thesis was inadequate to do more than lay down the barest skeleton. I have tried to outline the forms of deprivation that exist in the rural Highlands but the main difficulty has been the lack of data. This is what is most needed before any of the deprivations can be studied in more detail. There may be other hardships giving rise to deprivation in the Highlands that have not been mentioned which would show up if more information were available or from personal experience of the region. I do not claim to have made a complete coverage of the topic but this work may serve as a basis for further study.

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