Scottish Theme Towns:
Have New Identities Enhanced Development?

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Introduction

This paper examines the creation and development of three theme town initiatives in Scotland. The underlying motive of these initiatives, which have branded the towns with specific identities, is to increase the attractiveness of the towns to tourists and day-trippers, thereby improving the economy. The research deals primarily with Wigtown Book Town (WBT), Kirkcudbright Artists' Town (KAT) and Castle Douglas Food Town (CDFT) which are all within 40 miles of one another. The central research quest is to investigate whether the branding initiatives have led to enhanced development for the towns and what form this development takes. The research looks in particular at issues including the making of the theme town brands and their relationship with the original identity of the towns, the economic changes that have resulted post-branding, and the social and cultural repercussions of the initiatives including the impact on social capital. Actual changes are detailed, primarily in terms of economic growth, identity and the creation of networks and organisations. Research has taken the form of primary work through observation and interviews and secondary work on reports, websites and library-based material.

Tangible results have been quantified in terms of increasing service outlets, related businesses, employment, visitors and so on; however, there are also subtle developments that may not be so easily measured. These can be vital to the local indigenous community, relating to quality of life, cultural and social sustainability, personal wellbeing and local morale. This study is an attempt to appreciate the overall 'holistic' experience of the theme town branding exercise, while recognising the primary importance of economic regeneration and the growing number of networks enhancing social capital. Lesley Roberts (2004: 54) draws attention to the increasing realisation among those concerned with development of the importance of social capital:

> Social capital is believed to be a predictor of both individual income and macro-economic growth in most countries (Bjornskov, 2002). At the level of the individual, social capital reflects a person's ability to generate and maintain social connections and networks; in this respect it is a private good. At the level of society, the focus of most development interest, social capital as a public good is about collective action, social participation, and the number, nature and quality of groups that constitute governance (Mateju, 2002). However, although the vital consequences of social capital are recognised, its sources are not, and its means of production have become the Holy Grail of the development fraternity.

A central argument made in this paper is that the focus of development in the towns has been economic, and that social and cultural aspects have received much less attention, yet they are important and should not be overlooked. Indeed, the successful development of theme towns owes much to network and community support, and aspects of the overall social structure, such as social capital are vital to future survival.

Branding Scotland and the Theme Towns

The concept of branding has been described in various ways, and a critical review of definitions will give a clearer picture from which we can glean the common denominators and pinpoint areas of weakness. In 1998 Seaton and Hay stated that:

> The concept of branding is one which has been used to market physical goods for decades. In the last ten years it has been extended into tourism…The concept of treating Scotland as a brand was developed in the mid-1990s by the Scottish Tourist Board as an attempt to promote the image values of Scotland across a range of Scottish products including its tourism' (Seaton, A and B. Hay 1998: 231)

Seaton and Hay (Ibid) also point out that in 1996 the Scottish Tourist Board defined core brand values of Scotland as 'the clear "green" unspoilt environment, natural produce, dramatic scenery, romantic heritage, different culture and friendly people'.

In 2002, VisitScotland (formerly the Scottish Tourist Board) stated that 'branding has been used for centuries to differentiate between the products of one supplier from those of another' (website). They also added 'modern branding relies on a mix of values, both tangible and intangible which appeal to customers and influence their purchasing decisions.' They listed qualities that are common across the most successful brands - *differentiation*: develop an appealing personality and relationship with consumer based on trust; *consistency*: brands must deliver against consumers' expectations; *presence*: be omnipresent and easy to access; *understanding*: advertising modified to suit changing needs and conditions; packages delivered to keep the brand appealing and attract new devotees.

VisitScotland developed the most extensive consumer branding exercise they had ever conducted in their Spring Campaign for 2002. It investigated why people visited Scotland and what the country represented as a brand: answers included world famous icons such as whisky, tartan and castles. Three key words emerged representing the Scottish brand: *enduring, dramatic* and *human*. Core values in delivering the brand promise were seen as: *integrity, pride, proficiency* and *innovation*. VisitScotland hopes to create a 'strong brand' that positions Scotland in the minds of consumers as a 'must visit destination'. It would seem that the Theme Towns could enhance or at least, complement this in terms of history, culture and traditions and hence develop a stronger, more salient image for the country. This process happens world-wide, and increasingly so with the changing nature of tourism demand, for example the re-imaging of Malta (Theuma 2006).

RGA Ltd consultants produced an 'Audience and Sales Development Plan 2002-2004' in which they gave a Brand Strategy for a theme town under the heading of 'Market Positioning'. It states the following:

'A brand is used to demonstrate the character and product and if successful should become recognisable and cue appropriate messages to the consumer.' It listed five areas believed to be essential for development of a strong brand:

1. High quality products, services and standards.
2. New events and ideas developed ahead of other competitors.
3. Positioning must be unique in the market place and evaluated against external changes.
4. Strong and distinctive communications.
5. Consistent and clear message with distinctive tone.

A final example: in his examination of destination branding, focusing on niche marketing and national image projection in Central and Eastern Europe, Derek Hall wrote:

> As a symbol, slogan, name or design, or combination of these elements, a brand should comprise at least a) a clear and distinct image that truly differentiates it from its competitors; b) associations with quality and with a particular way of relating to the customer; c) ability to deliver long-term competitive advantage; and d) overall, something greater than a simple set of physical attributes. Such elements should produce a collection of core intangible values existing in the mind of the customer. (Hall, D. 1999: 230).

There are consistent messages from these various writers about quality, uniqueness, intangible and tangible values in the minds of the customers, and good communications. However, there is an overriding orientation of these branding guidelines in their focus towards the customer. This seems inevitable due to the intention of the planners to draw the attention of outsiders, the public, the consumers, to the branded item. But, there is no straightforward mention in the abstract definitions of successful branding regarding the relevant importance of the product's original identity.

Part of this paper's goal is to highlight the relevance of the original product's characteristics to the new brand identity. It makes comparisons between different towns whose inhabitants have pre-existing identities such as farming, fishing or market towns, and these are related to the new branded identity with differing degrees of correlation. Thus, it is proposed that consideration should be made of the constituent components of the original product, in this case a town before it has been branded, as well as the potential image it will create in the eye of the beholder after it has been branded. We should therefore, for the purposes of this exercise, add a new criterion for a good branding guideline: – *The new branded theme should have a strong association with the original qualities of the product, especially its identity, in order for the product to be successful*. This would make sense in giving the new brand identity a platform on which to build, that is an authentic historical relationship. Moreover, it should indicate that here is a social base of people currently associated with the proposed theme project who may already form an embedded network on which to grow, for example artists, book-sellers or those in the food and drink business.

The paper now goes on to examine the theme towns in detail, drawing attention to specific developments within each one.

Figure 1. Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland.

Theme Towns: Case Studies

The theme towns examined in this research seek to enhance and build on a cultural element related with varying degrees to the particular town, ranging from books to artists to food. Theme towns are not exceptional to Scotland, there are towns in other parts of the world that have been strongly associated with products and marketed with specific themes, including Montolieu, the 'Village du Livre' (book village) and 'Vasles, Mouton Village' (sheep village), both in France (see *Espaces* 2000). There is also a development in Brittany where small towns of character are recognised and pinpointed in a deliberate marketing ploy: they share common characteristics possessing historic built heritage (see WBTFR 2007: 39). Nevertheless, there do not seem to be examples of regions where numerous theme towns with varying product identities have been established in very close proximity to one another with the intention of attracting visitors, as has happened in the Dumfries and Galloway region of Scotland.

A detailed introduction to each Scottish theme town will serve to outline its characteristics, the pattern of development and the outcomes to date. It is important to note that they are all in the early stages of the branding experience, and that they are all small towns (between 1000 – 4000 in population) residing in Dumfries and Galloway, a predominantly rural region in South West Scotland (see Figure 1).

Wigtown Book Town

In South West Scotland the recent fashion for branding a town around a particular product or theme began in 1998 after Wigtown was awarded the status of Scotland's one and only National Book Town, following a national competition. It was chosen

4

because it satisfied certain criteria including: being within two hours driving distance of a major centre of population (Glasgow); having regional attractions that complement the site; being located in a scenic area with a rich history; a small enough town to be visibly transformed by becoming a book town, and the community were likely to become involved in the development. Seaton (1999) gives a detailed discussion of book towns, development and the choice of Wigtown.

Wigtown (pop. 1100) has been a small market town with a strong farming tradition based as it is in an agriculturally rich zone. In the late 1990s it was economically depressed with high levels of unemployment, some of the lowest wages in Scotland and a static property market (WBTFR 2007). In the ten years since its launch Wigtown Book Town (WBT) (pop. 1,100) has developed from a town with one large second-hand bookshop and two book-related businesses, to a place supporting 13 bookshops, eight book-related businesses and one gallery in 2008. There have been numerous tangible material changes in the town relating directly to its launch as a book town. A representative of the Wigtown Book Town Company has outlined some of the following developments:

- In 1996 there were 44 properties for sale ranging from homes to shops and the market was stagnant; by the year 2002 they had been sold and there was a steady rise in local property values.
- There are well over 250,000 books in stock in the town, a figure that is the minimum recommended 'critical mass' for such a town according to Seaton (1996).
- There has been an expansion of the Co-operative shop; the sustained growth of a café; and refurbishment of the old County Hotel.
- Capital investment has been made in the town: it is estimated that £2.1million has been spent on County Hall and related renovation – it now houses a library, offices, and an interpretation centre. £463,000 has been spent on the funding for staff of the WBT initiative – coming from various sources including the council, Solway Heritage and the EU supported European Partnership.
- A post of Development Officer was funded from 2002-2004 to work with the Wigtown Book Town Company.
- Marketing: WBT joined together with Kirkcudbright Artists' Town on a joint marketing initiative to sell themselves as two jewels on the coast. There is also a website for the town. A recent initiative, the Glorious Galloway FAB (Food Art Books) group has begun as a means of marketing the three towns and the region.
- Niche marketing to book related trade fairs has been encouraged (about 12/year), such as Northumberland, Ireland, Galloway Fair.
- A Wigtown Festival Company has been created to organise the book festivals and other events.
- A District of Wigtown Chamber of Commerce has been established.

WBT holds an annual book festival in the autumn and occasional events in spring including the European Book Town fair in May 2004. In terms of 'high culture' this is certainly an example of the generation of a niche-product market, and in turn is helping to sustain the town economically and (potentially) socially and culturally.

There has been an influx of new people bringing financial and cultural capital into the town and region. They are proactive in its development and through the economic multiplier effect with direct, indirect and induced spending on local services and produce, help to sustain regional businesses as well as the property market (WBTFR 2007). Moreover, the presence of more people and capital improves the chances of local public services surviving – from schools to health centres. It is reported by inhabitants that morale has been raised by the apparent economic success of the new businesses. However, there have been some dissenting voices suggesting that the only winners are newcomers to the village opening their shops and businesses (see Press 2001). Moreover, Professor Anthony Seaton, who was involved in the national book town project, has written about the development of book towns and listed relevant characteristics of successful projects noting that tourism businesses often reap more benefits than the bookshops themselves, which become *de facto* admission-free cultural attractions (Seaton 1996, 1997, 1999, Seaton and Hay1998).

The Wigtown Book Town Company ceased operating in 2007 when its funding ended and led to the creation of The District of Wigtown Chamber of Commerce, and The Wigtown Festival Company which currently operate in 2008. The Chamber of Commerce has over 50 business members, and the Festival Company has three staff working part-time. All these organisations are excellent examples of how social capital has been created and enhanced in terms of formal organisations such as business related networks, with positive aims to develop the town. Regarding informal developments, bookshop proprietors report that networks of business people and local inhabitants have supported and promoted events including musical performance and art classes, some held on the shop premises, or in the local whisky distillery which has a large bar and stage area. Such networks reportedly enhance the quality of life for people in terms of leisure activities and social interaction and serve to draw others into the area: at least four people under 40 years of age have returned to Wigtown permanently to work for book-related organisations recently and many others stay for work experience on short-term contracts: this helps the demographic profile in terms of potentially maintaining and growing the population.

An international connection has been established with the business community in Becherel, a small book town in Brittany, France, and they suggested a cooperative research project with Wigtown in 2006, leading to the production of the report WBTFR 2007, as well as exchange visits. This experience has also led to some thought among people in Wigtown about developing the French concept of '*Petite Cites de caractere'* (small towns of character) in the Galloway region.

Kirkcudbright Artists' Town

Kirkcudbright (pop 3600) has been a home to fishermen for centuries and there remains a scallop fishery as well as a processing industry for agricultural products; it was also the base for a large oil terminal until the 1980s. However, these industries are diminishing, whereas the service-based businesses continue to develop. There have been artists visiting Kirkcudbright for more than one hundred years, in particular the 'Glasgow Boys', a group of artists who rejected the views of the establishment during the 1880s and were mainly based in Glasgow. Kirkcudbright has reinvented itself as 'Kirkcudbright Artists' Town (KAT) launched in the year 2000, and has

designed a logo. The town boasts the following attractions: an art gallery at The Tolbooth historic building; Broughton House, the former home of a famous artist (E.A. Hornell) that exhibits his works; a small museum, and in 2008 six small private galleries, four of which have opened since the year 2000 as a result of the Artists' Town initiative.

A successful exhibition held in the Town Hall 'The Homecoming' attracted around 15,000 visitors in the summer of 2000, featuring works from regional artists. Other annual exhibitions (Fleming Collection 2002; Glasgow Boys 2003) attracted equivalent numbers. In 2004 French artists from Pont Aven in France were exhibited interspersed with Scottish artists, and there was a loan of impressionist paintings including Monet in 2005. In 2008 paintings were loaned by the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. These exhibitions attracted between 13000-15000 visitors and are complemented by others, such as the South by South West exhibition at The Tolbooth which increased visitor numbers, bucking the trend in the summer of 2008. The art exhibitions bring in additional visitors to the town, where an average of around 850 people visit the Tourism Information Centre per day during the summer season (according to the staff), and the exhibitions draw thousands of day visitors who purchase goods and services in the town.

Two organisations, the Kirkcudbright Forum and Kirkcudbright 2000, were instrumental in promoting the Artists' Town project. They successfully managed to attract funds for a Development Officer, and one of their main objectives is to see the opening of a major gallery, possibly an outstation of the Scottish National Gallery, which looks increasingly likely to happen. A school building will be made available and Heritage Lottery funding sought to develop the proposed 'Kirkcudbright Art Gallery'. Studies of the recently built Tate St Ives, a gallery in Cornwall, England, suggest that a significant small gallery can act as a powerful attractor to visitors (see Macleod 2002). A representative for the Kirkcudbright Forum wrote:

> Kirkcudbright Artists' Town is a branding which with complementary development could regenerate the whole surrounding area, and provide a basis for the future growth and well-being of the entire community.

It was predicted that long-term benefits would include: an extension of the tourist season to embrace the winter months; improvements to the catering facilities and hotels in the area; a boost to confidence in the region; the stabilization of property values.

Another initiative by the two organisations includes developing strong relations with Pont Aven (pop.3000) in NW France, where a thriving artists' town has grown since the mid-1980s. It was kick-started by the establishment of a major gallery and supported by strong historical associations with the artist Paul Gauguin and the School of Pont Aven Art originating in the 1880s. Over recent years the numbers of private galleries has grown to 85 in 2002. KAT had an exhibition of Scottish artists shown in Pont Aven, as well as displaying Scottish food, music and dance. This relationship has been developed and resulted in the 2004 exhibition in KAT, giving the Scottish town an international connection.

There is a proposal to convert redundant premises into low-rent studio space for professional artists. This move is supported by the Kirkcudbright Forum and the local council has agreed to provide premises. It is believed that this could provide a dynamic aspect to the Artists' Town which will complement the historical pedigree and give a 'continuum of creativity' in the words of one member of the Forum.

Castle Douglas Food Town

Finally, Castle Douglas Food Town (CDFT) (pop: 3,800) is the latest arrival to the designated theme town fraternity. It has had a long association with food (beef, dairy and fish products) since its inception in the early 1800s and acts as the marketing centre for many farming and related businesses. It is the home of the annual Stewartry Agricultural Show, the Dumfries and Galloway (D&G) Horse Show, and it houses a modern livestock auction market.

As a place to shop for quality food and other products it is recognised throughout SW Scotland, which is among the most productive livestock regions in the country. One of the inspirations for the food town idea was the 'Food Futures' project of the Soil Association – intended to develop sustainable local food economies throughout the UK in 2000. A panel at a Galloway Food Festival associated the town with food and various members of the community were aware of the development of WBT and KAT and envisioned the success of their own town through promotion as a food town. Again, the primary motivation was economic, and it was believed that this would lead to economic support for the regional agriculture-based businesses. The CDFT initiative was officially launched in June 2002. It is reported that businesses have experienced a significant increase in customers since the launch, and on the actual launch day a survey estimated the visitor numbers to have increased fourfold (personal communication from a member of the Action Group).

A number of things have resulted from the branding initiative: the production of a small brochure; the launch of the town as Castle Douglas Food Town involving a week-long celebration headed by a festival day increasing visitor spend; an Action Group has been formed which has become the Castle Douglas Food Town Initiative (CDFTI); the CDFT logo is linked to the Area Tourist Board marketing campaign and strap-line emphasising the region as a 'natural place'. There is now an annual Food Town festival and a Christmas Fair which promotes the food theme.

 Currently, in 2008, the town has around fifty local businesses involved in producing or selling food and drink including six restaurant/cafés (town website www.cd.foodtown.org). Some of these outlets may have been established as a direct result of its food town branding campaign, and one member of the CDFTI believes that businesses have been attracted by the marketing advantages afforded by associated campaigns.

In terms of formal networks the CDFTI occasionally links with the Castle Douglas Initiative (a community-focused organisation) and the Civic Committee in order to represent broader community interests. Another grouping 'Savour the Flavour' was established as a direct result of the Food Town in order to promote small-scale artisan food producers. This project has been supported by Scottish Enterprise funding for a

dedicated co-ordinator for three years. It was intended to concentrate on business to business activities.

The two towns, KAT and CDFT have already seen advantages in promoting a wide range of products under the regional umbrella (spatial complementarity): hence food displays at the artists' exhibition in Pont Aven. This leads us to consider the concept of complementary markets, the joint marketing and sharing of resources drawing strength from grouping attractions clustered together within the region. Eventually the theme towns will form a critical mass of attractions, and this potential has been seen and acted upon by the Glorious Galloway group. Already, within Dumfries and Galloway, there are small towns with strong distinct identities: Gretna Green, world famous for its marriage ceremonies, and Moffat which has begun to promote itself as a wellbeing town since 2003, building on its Victorian Spa heritage. Writers have suggested joint marketing advantages (Cai 2002), and it is attractive to a particular type of tourist who has an interest in a range of niche products such as 'high culture', quality food and walking: for example, the mature 'Empty Nesters' or SKI (Spending Kids Inheritance) groups targeted by the local tourist board (see DGTB 2001; Macleod 2003).

Glorious Galloway

The three theme towns are based in Galloway, southwest Scotland, and a recent initiative known as Glorious Galloway, established in February 2007, has begun to promote them using the strapline *'Glorious Galloway It's Absolutely F.A.B. (Food-Arts-Books) and SO much more.'*
There is a website and a brochure produced which colourfully illustrates the towns and region, as well as advertising businesses based in the towns. In marketing terms we see the development of a 'cluster' of attractions, which help create a stronger attraction to visitors, and also leads to cooperative advertising to the mutual advantage of these three towns. A critical mass of theme towns is being utilised to give strength in numbers – with the intention of enhancing the competitive advantage to make the most of the comparative advantage which the region already possesses.

Identity Acquisition

In terms of identity and branding, the three towns exhibit markedly different developmental histories, a factor that has a direct bearing on their acquisition of a brand identity. To paraphrase Shakespeare, CDFT was 'born' with its identity as a market town associated with food and the farming industry. KAT has 'achieved ' its identity over some 100 years through its association with famous artists. And WBT had its identity 'thrust 'upon it by outsiders, albeit willingly accepted by some of the inhabitants.

These various and very different experiences merit serious consideration as original developments and as long-term projects; one of the reasons is to assess their relative success and whether it relates to their various types of identity acquisition. For example, it has been suggested (personal communication) by the Marketing Officer of the economically successful Tate St Ives in Cornwall, UK, that in order for a new gallery or museum to be successful it must be situated in an environment that is prepared for it 'in the right place at the right time': this advice was directed to

Kirkcudbright and their application for funding an outpost of the Scottish National Gallery. Relevant services should already exist, i.e. there should be a genuine artistic base to build on. We would therefore assume that KAT has a strong base and is prepared for development.

Press (2001: 76) in a study of WBT during its earliest stage of development, reported that the local people saw the new book town as a veneer: ' The relationship between book town and Wigtown remains shaky, with relatively little integration between communities and few economic benefits flowing to long-time residents'. Whereas, in contrast, Dundee, which has a major industrial history (Jute) has promoted itself as the 'City of Discovery', and apparently local people are proud of its industrial heritage and their personal involvement in the industries (M. Di Domenico 2001).

One result of a disengaged local community might be apathy and antagonism towards incoming businesses and visitors. Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) see destination residents as becoming part of the destination brand, and able to influence directly the success or failure of the product development. Presumably disgruntled residents would not present a good image or experience for tourists or customers. Howie (2003: 154) notes that 'The most successful destinations are those with brand identities based on enduring values'.

Heritage and Authenticity

At this point it is useful to consider the abstract concepts of tradition and authenticity. It would seem that both KAT and CDFT have a historical tradition relating to their brand products (artists and food) whereas Wigtown has only recently been involved with books on a large scale. Does this weaken any *future* claims of heritage, tradition and therefore authenticity made by WBT? Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992) suggest that many traditions are but inventions, deliberate cultural constructions, and Trevor-Roper supported this view with his example of Scottish Highland traditions:

> Indeed, the whole concept of a distinct highland culture and tradition is a retrospective invention. Before the later years of the seventeenth century, the Highlanders of Scotland did not form a distinct people. They were simply the overflow of Ireland. (Trevor-Roper 1992)

Moreover, how much time must elapse before something becomes a 'tradition'? This problem is particularly appropriate to the case of WBT. It also sheds light on the issue of authenticity, which is wrapped up in the context of power in terms of defining and conferring the authentic, a concept that Cohen (1988) sees as socially constructed, but which may also be understood as a personal, subjective response (Wang 1999). The example of Glasgow is instructive as a city that radically changed its image in a short period of time to become 'European City of Culture' in 1990:

> Glasgow embraced and used its past as part of a strategy to exploit commercially all available resources, which could be used 'against all odds' for urban regeneration. It is said by many to be an excellent example of how well the re-imagining of a city can work if this innovative approach to 'culture', the city's current buzzword, is used. Glasgow makes clear just how powerful a marketing message can be if it is strongly reinforced. The opening of many museums along with participation in festivals helped to promote the

new image of Glasgow as a postmodern city of culture, fashion, arts and cultural tourism. (M. Di Domenico, 2001: 199)

Bearing in mind the ambiguity, arbitrariness and essential cultural context of definitions of heritage and authenticity, it might be argued that in the *long-term view* there will be no great difference between the three theme towns' hypothetical claims on heritage and authenticity. It is a debate dependent on relative perspectives- hence it might be thought that in future the towns will have equal claims to authenticity. Perhaps it is not about time elapsing, but about the power of certain social groups to label something as heritage, tradition, authentic: or an Artists' Town, Food Town or Book Town? In this way the creation of identity, tradition and heritage happens before our eyes, and we all become participants in the increasingly open development of this cultural process (see Prentice 1993 on tourism and promotion). In their examination of Scotland and its marketed image, McCrone *et al* drew attention to the cultural context of heritage:

> We will discover that heritage has only a tenuous connection to actual events, to history. It has a much stronger one with the past, that is to say our interpretation formed in the context of the present. (McCrone *et al* 1995: 4)

Hufford (1994: 50) also highlights the use of power in the making of heritage:

> This act of invention, implicated in the act of description, is a creative, culturally generative act and paradoxically it renders the ethnographer a collaborator in the making of heritage. Culture is indeed 'politically constituted.

However, we are dealing with recent changes within the Theme Towns, and in the short-term their pre-branding identities are important to their post-branding development in terms of local acceptance and local networks relevant to the new identity. Issues of authenticity began to arise shortly after the branding exercise had been completed and have centred on the new identity and related provision in the towns, such as the ownership of bookshops in Wigtown, actual living artists in Kirkcudbright, and food outlets such as restaurants in Castle Douglas.

Conclusion

This paper has considered the theme towns and has shown that the new theme branding initiatives have led to economic growth in the towns, and it has argued that there is more to development than simply material economic growth; factors including social and cultural qualities, some of which can be quantified, should also become part of the consideration. It has also suggested that these developments are related to the relationship between the original identity of the town and its new branded theme identity.

We might consider the proposition that the new brand identity is more likely to be successful if it is tailored to fit the existing identity or shape of the product to be revitalised. This notion would seem to be supported by the findings of research by Press (2001) into the early stages of the development of WBT:

> If book town, or another development, is to be successful, attention must be paid to how place identities are affected, represented and/or contested. This suggests the need to move beyond solely economic analyses to a more inclusive understanding of what development may mean at the local scale. How residents identify with a project is influenced by the relationship between the project and the place, which flows when there is a successful integration of initiatives and place meanings. In addition to upgrading the built environment, true integration would reflect what is important to locals, both in their values and concretely in increased jobs and services. (Press 2001: 86)

The question remains as to what extent it is an advantage to build on existing strengths when developing a branded theme town? Currently in 2008 both Wigtown and Kirkcudbright seem to be benefiting economically from the developments in the short-term; Wigtown is certainly expanding as has been detailed by the WBT Company and the WBTFR 2007. Kirkcudbright has experienced a growth in visitor numbers, and the increased possibility of a major attraction being located in the town in the form of a Scottish National Gallery outpost. CDFT also reports a growth in visitor numbers related to its festival and its increased marketing as a food town. Following on from this, we must consider how we think about 'development' in the different areas of social and cultural experience.

We should appreciate and take into account the fact that the very act of intentionally developing theme towns, with the creation of interest groups, the organisation of town events, the inclusion of traders in campaigns, means an increase in co-operation among groups of people, and the establishment of recognised networks, formal and informal: this is a form of social capital, and recognised as being of great value for a community wishing to develop successfully.

> Networking has long been a hallmark of innovation organizations, and refers to a wide range of cooperative behaviour between otherwise competing organizations linked through economic and social relationships and transactions. Networked small and medium enterprises appear to be an important component of successful regional economies (e.g. Cooke and Morgan, 1993), and may offer considerable potential to assist in cushioning the effects of economic restructuring, particularly in rural and peripheral areas. (Roberts and Simpson: 2001).

There has been a heightened sense of community through the pursuit of a common goal and an enhanced sense of unity through the consolidation of an identity. This is not to say that there has not been any opposition to these developments – which again, might be interpreted as a creative force that strongly delineates divisions and opinions leading to a healthy discussion of differences. The following are examples of such groups created through the theme town initiatives: Wigtown Book Town Company, Kirkcudbright Forum, Kirkcudbright 2000, Castle Douglas Food Town Initiative, The District of Wigtown Chamber of Commerce, Wigtown Book Town Festival Company, Glorious Galloway. Additionally, international links have been made with towns including Pont Aven and Becheral, and WBT belongs to and has hosted a festival (2003) for the International Organisation of Book Towns. There are also

numerous informal networks that have resulted and are beyond the scope of this study to investigate and record.

Although these processes are preparations for economic and other forms of development, they are in themselves extremely important cultural processes and community experiences. They help to forge links and networks that can be used for numerous purposes not immediately associated with the original objective – this is the growth of social capital. To an extent, the creation of a theme town is an end in itself, and the process helps to forge a stronger social group that is then able to deal more effectively with future diverse economic, social and cultural problems.

Another consideration is cultural sustainability, involving the arts, heritage, cuisine, and so on, as well as social sustainability relating to a critical population mass able to sustain services such as housing and schools. The introduction of 'new blood' into the community in the guise of in-comers with new ideas and lifestyles, that is, energetic actors who are able to supply a creative input to the community, is an important component. In addition the notion of a community boost in morale (in terms of a sense of pride, confidence, achievement, group spirit) leading to a positive outlook and belief in an improving future, is an element that can be regarded as indicative of successful development. For example, in a study of Dundee, 'City of Discovery', Di Domenico writes:

> It is clear that local authority and tourism officials in Dundee now recognise the economic, social and political potential of a focus on urban industrial heritage tourism as part of Dundee's culture and history. It is claimed, with some support from this research, to provide an increased sense of pride and awareness of identity for residents who still remember their own or their family's involvement in Dundee's industries. History in the form of urban industrial heritage is being actively developed and used by the authorities to attract visitors and their money to the city. (M. Di Domenico, 2001: 209)

This paper takes into account the pleas of such scholars as De Kadt (1990: 60) for a more holistic approach towards development (including ecological, cultural and socio-political contexts), and Mowforth and Munt (1998) in regard to the complexity of sustainability. It is also cognisant of the social impacts of the arts in general, as noted by Matarasso (1997). During the period assessed for this research it would seem that all three of the towns have received a boost in cultural terms: the encouragement of booksellers and related industries, the arts and artists, as well as those people involved with food. And in terms of the economy and social development, there have been clear benefits.

It would be fair to say that the theme town branding initiatives have, to date, led to an enhancement of development in terms of the economy, the cultural life and the social fabric of the towns and region. Furthermore, the growth of social capital in terms of formal and informal networks has been an undervalued result. It remains a crucial component of the broad process and continues to be one of the fundamental structures underpinning the ongoing development experience.

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