



Death from Nostalgic Sentiment Or a New Narrative for Rural Ireland?

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Previously.....

- **27th October, 2016**
***Revitalising Small Towns on the Island of Ireland:
The Role of Local Government***
- **26th April, 2018**
Rural Policy: A Coherent Approach or Mis-mash!
- **26th September, 2019**
***Death from Nostalgic Sentiment Or a New
Narrative for Rural Ireland?***

Last in the Series!

- You will be glad to hear that I will not be talking about the scourge of one-off rural housing.
- The Proliferation of septic tanks.
- One-off rural houses that cost more to build than they are worth.
- “Local Need” – one definition fits all?

Nostalgic Sentiment

- What do “I” mean?
Several ways of looking at “it”
- Like an adult dwelling on the great times he/she had **one** day as a child playing, and longing for that nonsense/happiness to be again in their present life
- As a child I remember the “fair day” on the 18th of every month on the streets of our little town –
 - Now we have them on the streets of our big towns

Nostalgic Sentiment – cont'd

- Or, perhaps, the 5 bedroom concrete box / house built inappropriately in the countryside for Mam and Dad and the 1.4 children
- Or, perhaps, the Shoe shop in the middle of the street that was once there
- Or a longing for a world without online shopping – so that we can justify our Rates
- Or, Buildings in town centres that are dead – bring them back to life – Or more appropriately to bury them (demolish them)
- Longing for horse and carts and bicycles

Nostalgic Sentiment – cont'd

- Perhaps some of you are inclined to cry – thinking of your past, childhood when towns were full
- Churches were full too
- When we weren't allowed to think for ourselves
- When those who were privileged by their wealth or their past, kept "the poor" in their place
- No refugees, no questions of morality to be asked
- A small world

Nostalgic Sentiment – cont'd

- Great times!
- We need to get over it
- We need to plan for the future
- We need to get rid of our chains and shackles
- We need to use our intelligence
- We need to do what is right
- We need to give, create and define *hope*

Today!

I am going to concentrate on Town Centres

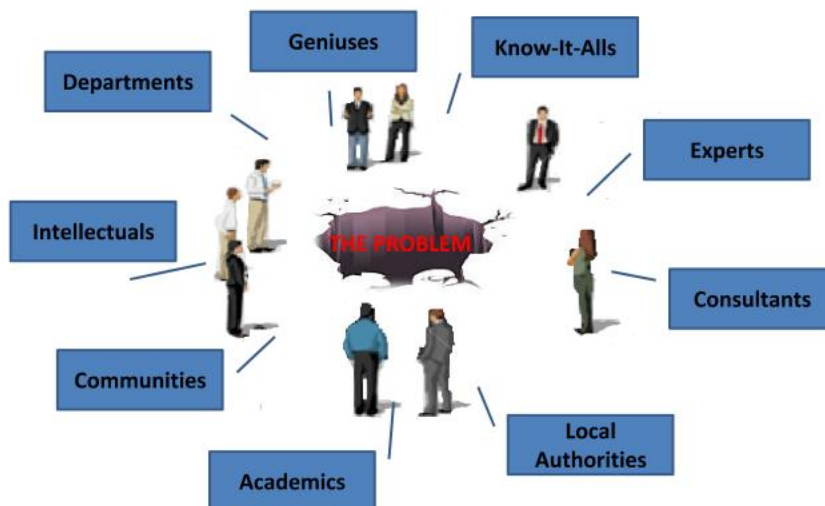
Town Centres are fundamental to our Society

- Previous Conferences
- Town Centre renewal and regeneration
- The curse of dereliction
- The growing need for housing
- Modern **“town”** centres or perhaps **“family/community”** centres
- A mechanism to gather people – to let them mix, talk, bump into each other, chat....
- We need to create little parks, places for people to sit and relax, to bring air and light into people lives
- The need to be in a crowd – to see smiles, laughs and families living – to get a sense of what *living* is

Dereliction – “The Problem”

- If **Dereliction** is “**The Problem**” – we might for the moment see it as **‘a hole’**
- Local Authorities, Departments, Communities etc. – each reflected as **‘a person’**
- Many attempts to solve the problem over the years
- Papers, Conferences, Theories – but the problem still exists
- Every Department and Local Authority getting involved – but the problem is still there

Consider then!



Consider – cont'd



Is there any Hope?

- Yes – definitely – somewhat obvious solution... - but before I give the solution...
- Consider two towns:
 - Town A – Full of *Nostalgic Sentiment* – little hope
 - Town B – Full of *Hope*
- What makes **Town A** and **Town B** so different?
- What happened?
- What's different?



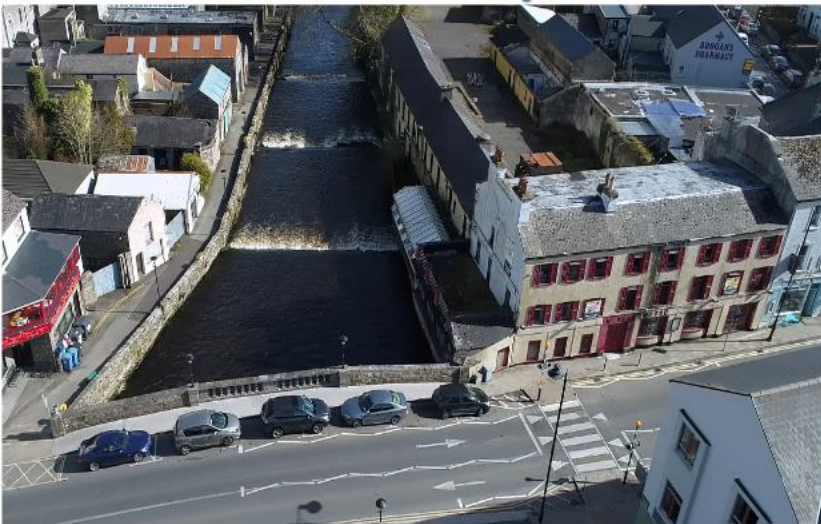
Comhairle Contae
Ros Comáin
Roscommon
County Council

Town A



Comhairle Contae
Ros Comáin
Roscommon
County Council

Town B - Boyle



Boyle - The Story!

- In June 2017, Roscommon County Council buys Royal Hotel – derelict for years - an eye sore
- Slowly thereafter we consulted with the Community and prepared a vision and a plan for the town and Environs
- **Boyle 2040** – The Plan
- The Irish Times – Thursday, 3rd January, 2019
- *Smith, a partner in Smith Kelly Scott estate agents, had an insight into the downturn. He had seen his own workforce drop from 11 to 2 within weeks when, as he recalled, “the phone stopped ringing”. But now he is happy to report it is ringing off the hook and residential property around Boyle is “flying”.*
- Suddenly, almost everything changed

Historic Towns Initiative

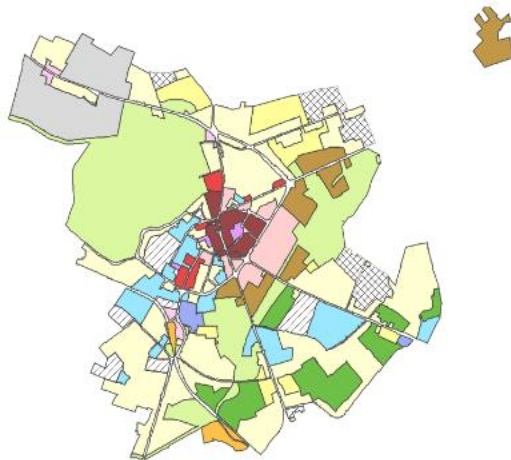


Local Authorities!

- All suffering from chronic Nostalgic Sentiment
- **Cure** still being trialled but in the meantime the odd Town had **died**
- Our Planning Department and Planners are weighed down with the burden of the past and obsessed in conserving the *past*
- Landlords with unreasonable expectation holding Communities to ransom
- And of course one off **rural housing** or as I prefer to call them - nails for town centre coffins

What is this?

(about as useful as an ash-tray on a motorbike)



Solution

- Only three ***“Things”*** needed
- 1. ***Direct and Proactive Local Authority intervention***
 - ***Acquisition of Derelict Sites***
- 2. ***A Plan***
- 3. ***Buy-in from the Community***

Everything is possible when these three “Things” are in place

Solution – cont’d

- Of course the solution must bring with it
 - ***Innovation***
 - ***Imagination***
 - ***Freedom***
- Planners
 - Of course must respect the past but not be controlled by it
 - Loose their obsession with architectural conservation and perfection



Thank You

