

Annex E

Service function of settlements

At the present time, availability of data on private sector services and employment within settlements is limited. This cannot, however, be taken as a justification for permanently excluding such services from forming any part of the definition of “urban” and “rural”, for the general literature assumes that service provision is a part of urban function. Population alone is a limited basis for classification of settlements.

Pilot Study: Shop and service assessment of some County Down settlements: private sector services

Accordingly, to inform the working of the Group, a pilot classification of services was established (see Schedule 1 below), with a weighting for the estimated value of individual transactions likely to be handled by establishments. A pilot survey of establishments was carried out in nine settlements of varying size within County Down: Downpatrick, Comber, Ballynahinch Carryduff, Ballygowan, Killyleagh, Saintfield, Ardglass and Crossgar (see Table 1 below)

No claim of definitive accuracy in numbers or categorisation can be made, but the results have decided indicative value. Whilst it is reasonable to assume that the catchment population required to support establishments of a given type will not vary greatly from area to area, it cannot be assumed that the catchment population is necessarily resident in the settlements where the establishments is located. Establishments in small towns will be apt to have low resident population available, with their custom largely drawn from outside. Larger towns will tend to have greater population per establishment, reflecting greater self-sufficiency, but a very high level of population per establishment is an indication of a settlement that directs its custom outside.

Carryduff, which on morphological grounds is part of the Belfast Metropolitan Area, is shown to have the highest levels of population per establishment provided for primary shops and services and for consumer durable shops, whilst maintaining a moderate per capita level of other services. This is consistent with the status of a dormitory suburb to Belfast.

Table 1
Service availability in some County Down Towns

	Downpatrick	Comber	Carryduff	Ballynahinch	Ballygowan	Killyleagh	Saintfield	Ardglass	Crossgar
A. Food, Fuel and Groceries	15	11	7	15	6	15	11	14	12
B. Recreational and Food Services	45	27	8	28	8	10	13	12	11
C. Other Pers. Services & Consumables	28	30	8	25	7	7	17	1	12
D. Post Office	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
E. Financial Services	12	7.5	4	11	1	1	3.5	2	0
F. Legal & Commercial Services	7	9	5	4	0	1	8	1	3
G. Industrial & Construction Services	1	2	1	2	0	0	3	1	3
H. Consumer Durables & Capital Goods									
H1. Small	36	10	1	26	1	4	9	2	3
H2. Medium	11	12	2	11	2	1	14	1	6
H3. Large	2	3	1	1	0	1	2	0	2
I. Large Composite	7	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	0
Total	165	113.5	38	128	26	41	81.5	35	53
Population (2001 Census)	10320	8952	6564	5334	2670	2490	2955	1659	1542

Of the other towns examined, Downpatrick and Comber were about twice the size of Ballynahinch in population terms, four times the size of Ballygowan, Killyleagh and Saintfield, and about six times the size of Ardglass and Crossgar. In terms of total services offered, Ballynahinch, Comber, Downpatrick, and Saintfield form a discernible group, well ahead of the other settlements, with Ardglass and Ballygowan lying behind the remaining three. Their ranking is by no means the same as that which would be derived from population size alone.

When all types of establishment was considered, Crossgar and Saintfield consistently had a relatively low level of population per establishment, suggesting that they supply services to an outside population as well to their own. Comber and Downpatrick have relatively high populations per establishment for primary and other services, compared to Crossgar and Saintfield, but less markedly high for consumer durables. This suggests that for the first two categories, these two settlements are providing services to meet their own needs rather more than the needs of outside population, whereas for durables, the outside population is more significant.

Of the other settlements, Ballynahinch, Ardglass and Killyleagh probably draw in external population for primary services, whereas Ballygowan probably does not. For durables, Ballynahinch draws in external population whilst the other three may well go elsewhere since the population per establishment is high. In regard of other services, Ballynahinch, Ballygowan and Ardglass may draw in population, whilst Killyleagh goes elsewhere.

The conclusion to be drawn from this pilot study is that a classification of the nine settlements on the basis of their service functions would be distinctly different from a classification based on their populations. Carryduff is effectively a dormitory satellite of Belfast, rather than an urban centre. Saintfield, Crossgar and Ballynahinch support a wider range of services than might be expected from their resident population, by serving a more extensive catchment area - a classic urban function. Comber and Downpatrick provide rather more services, but these are supported more extensively from their resident population.

Public sector service function of settlements

Public sector services are also located in settlements, and the level of provision characterizes the settlement. Information on the location of public sector services is available throughout Northern Ireland. As with private/community services, it is possible to distinguish between settlements on the basis of the services provided, as well as on the basis of population. Once operational definitions of settlements are also available, an analysis of the service data, much of which is already available, would be feasible.

Accordingly, the Group recommended that when an operational definition of settlements is available, a project be established to use the existing GIS data sources already available for establishing public sector service provision and employment availability. This would assist with the monitoring of "urban health" and development, as well as in refining urban/rural classifications. This project should be carried forward by the Group proposed above regarding private sector services, as it forms a logical and simple extension of its suggested remit.

At the present time, data simply are not available to take account of private sector services on a Northern Ireland wide basis, and so this aspect of urban function cannot form an operational basis for settlement classification. Similarly, community and voluntary sector services are not adequately reflected in the classification (although it is arguable that historically, services which would now be classified in this manner have been a major reason for establishing settlements). The consequence of this, however, is that any settlement classification in absence of such data must remain, at best, provisional.

Accordingly, the Group recommended that a project be established to examine the sources available to establish private sector and community/voluntary sector service provision and employment availability in settlements, and to determine what level of services should be regarded as basic/good/wide. This would assist with the monitoring of “urban health” (see Glossary) and development, as well as in refining urban/rural classifications. Such a project should be carried forward on an interdepartmental basis.

Schedule 1

Pilot Classification of Settlement Shops and Services

The classification is broadly in line with that suggested by the Association of Town Centre Managers. The weights are a subjective measure of the value of the transactions undertaken in each type of establishment.

A. Food, Fuel and Groceries (Weight 10)

Includes small supermarkets, garages (counted twice if there is a garage shop), butchers, greengrocers

B. Recreational and food services (Weight 15)

Includes public houses, off licences, takeaways, restaurants, cinemas, video rentals, bookmakers

C. Personal services other than recreational, and consumable goods other than food and fuel (Weight 20)

Includes newsagents, card shops tobacconists, hairdressers, beauticians, opticians, pharmacies, travel agencies

D. Post Office (Weight 15)

E. Financial Services (Weight 50)

Includes banks, building societies, credit unions (counting ATMs as 0.5 of an outlet, in addition to banks)

F. Legal and Commercial Services (Weight 500)

Includes solicitors, estate agents, design, IT software

G. Industrial and Construction Services (Weight 500)

Includes builders' yards, DIY, builders, heating engineers

H. Capital goods and consumer durables

1. Generally valued up to £100 (Weight 50)
2. Generally valued over £100 but under £1000 (Weight 600)
3. Generally valued over £1000 (Weight 2000)

I. Large Composite (Weight 75)

Larger establishments carrying out a range of functions. Includes department stores and large supermarkets