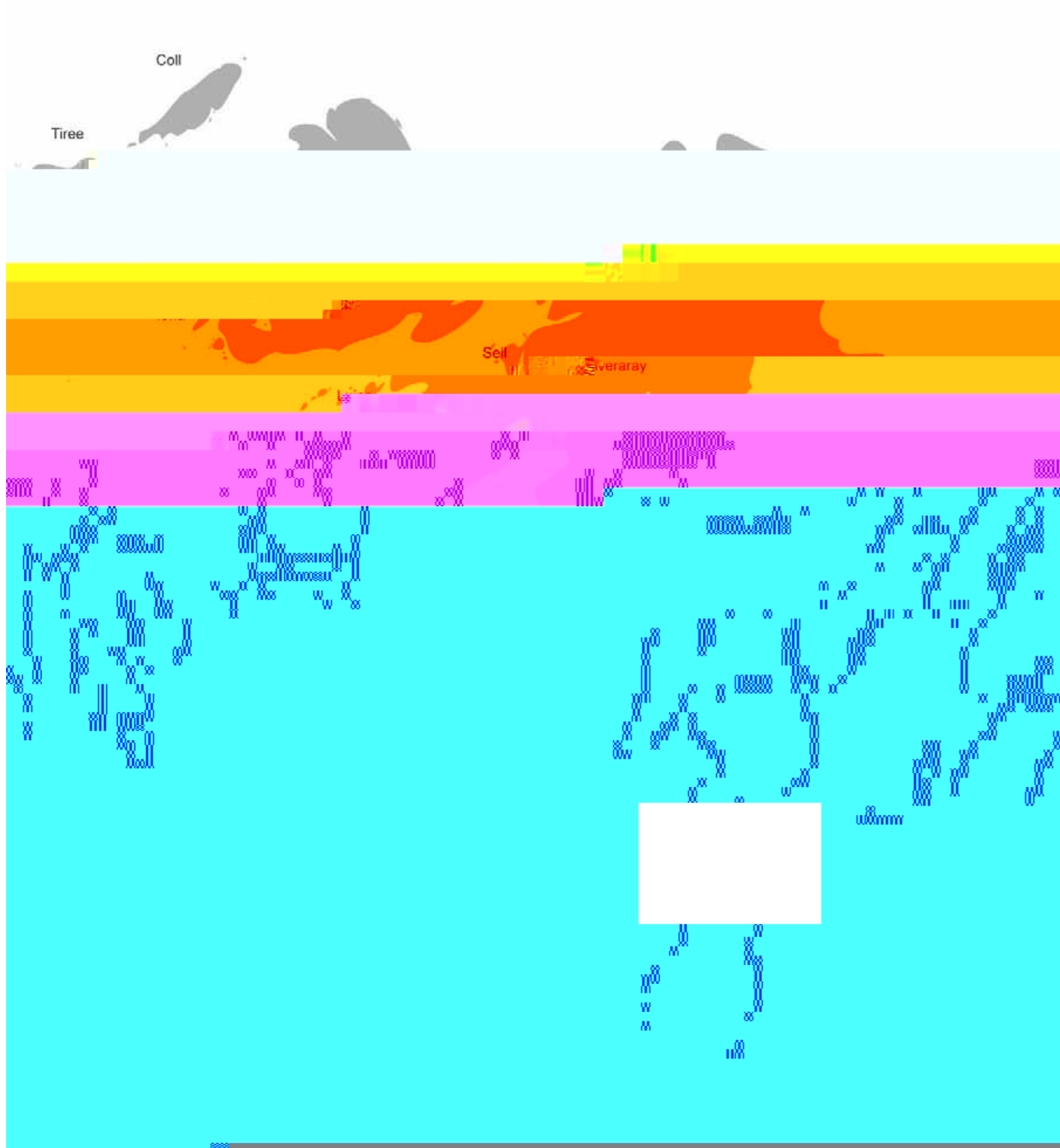


Bute and Cowal



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Bute and Cowal Landscape Character Assessment

Bute is divided by the Highland Boundary Fault with an area of craggy upland to the north, which borders the Kyles of Bute, creating a distinctive mottled, wild, moorland appearance, when viewed from the mainland. This craggy slope profile gives way to broad open slopes with smoother profiles which extend down to the Highland Boundary Fault.

South of the fault, the landscape has a rolling, lowland character. Fertile farmland comprises large fields which are enclosed by shelterbelts or stone walls and sandy bays are backed by flat, open coastal plains. The southern part of Bute is more inhabited than the wilder north and includes the port at Rothesay and the designed house and gardens of Mount Stewart.

The Cowal area is divided into two broad areas of relatively consistent and distinctive character: Cowal Ridges; and Loch Linnhe.

The Cowal Ridges extend from the Kyles of Bute in the south to Crianlarich in the north, covering the eastern section of the Cowal peninsula. The scale of the landscape is large and increases as the landscape extends north. Dramatic mountain ridges have steep slopes with rocky outcrops; there are some areas of commercial forestry; and open moorland covers large areas of the ridges. The valleys contain narrow flood plains with meandering rivers or narrow lochs.

Loch Linnhe is a large scale patchwork of forestry plantation and wild, open moor which dominates the hills surrounding the loch. The area extends along the edges of the loch, from the loch head at Loch Linnhe down to Lochgilphead on the western edge, and down to the Kyles of Bute on the eastern shore. Large forestry plantations cover the hillsides, which contrast with wild and open moorland. Development is concentrated around the edges of the loch and views across the sheltered loch are stunning enhanced by castles and other large estate properties.

Part 3 of the Argyll and the Shire of Clyde Landscape Character Assessment document divides the area into 25 Landscape Character Types (LCT). It provides a description of the specific characteristics and sensitivities relevant to each landscape type and outlines detailed aims, guidance notes and suggestions on how to conserve or enhance the landscape through appropriate sensitive land use, management or development.

Within the Bute and Cowal areas the following are applicable to this landscape capacity study:

- LCT 1: Steep Ridgeland and Mountains
- LCT 5: Open Ridgeland
- LCT 7: Craggy Upland
- LCT 13: Rolling Farmlands with Estates

Bute & Cowal

- LCT 17: Basalt Lowlands
- LCT 19: Coastal Plain
- LCT 20: Rocky Mosaic

Steep Ridgeland and Mountains LCT

The key characteristics of this landscape character type, relevant to the study, are:

- Dramatic mountain ridges with steep, plummeting slopes and numerous rocky outcrops;
- Ribbon lochs and meandering rivers on narrow flood plains from dramatic contrasts to the surrounding slopes;
- Extensive conifer plantations on lower slopes;
- Open moorland or bare rock faces on upper slopes and summits; and
- Settlement confined to narrow strips along loch edges and concentrated in small bays and heads of lochs.

The main landscape issues that need to be considered, with regards to the proposed type of development, within this landscape type are:

- Avoid built development on mountain ridges, on lower slopes with distinctive landform and on valley bluffs which would form part of prominent views;
- Concentrate new built development at the foot of slopes, avoiding ribbon development;
- Ensure that any new development respects traditional settlement patterns and styles;
- New built development should always be set within a framework of woodland, to integrate with the wider landscape – plant native trees to screen, if required;
- Retain the open character of river floodplains and dramatic contrasts with surrounding steep mountain ridges.

Open Ridgeland LCT

The key characteristics of this landscape character type, relevant to the study, are:

- Broad, even slopes form rounded ridges and occasional steep summits;
- Upper slopes are predominantly open moorland;
- Marginal farmland confined to broader glens and loch fringes;
- Built development is concentrated along very narrow shoreline strip.

The main landscape issues that need to be considered, with regards to the proposed type of development, within this landscape type are:

- Retain strong contrast in scale and character of landscape on upper slopes and small-scale, more diverse landscape pattern within valleys;

- Conserve and extend existing broadleaf woodland within gullies on valley slopes to strengthen visual links between landform and landscape pattern;
- Conserve natural character of sensitive, undeveloped shoreline landscapes and give careful consideration to the impact of any new built development on views from the opposite shores of narrow ribbon lochs or long peninsulas;
- Ensure that all new development is associated with broadleaf planting and that property boundaries with an ornamental character do not extend onto the upper moorland slopes;
- New development and infrastructure should follow existing practices of having buildings built into slopes to help 'anchor' the buildings into the landscape.

Craggy Upland LCT

The key characteristics of this landscape character type, relevant to the study, are:

- Upland moor with irregular, rather amorphous landform;
- Rounded knolls, rock outcrops and numerous lochs in low-lying hollows;
- Open moorland predominates, but extensive conifer plantations camouflage the landscape pattern in some areas;
- Isolated farmsteads and small villages in sheltered sites within glens;
- Numerous archaeological remains, often concentrated on rounded knolls on lower slopes; and
- Historic, irregular landscape pattern in valleys.

The main landscape issues that need to be considered, with regards to the proposed type of development, within this landscape type are:

- Development should be strictly controlled in upland valleys and along coastlines, particularly the shorelines of the Kyles of Bute;
- Should development be applicable in coastal areas, utilise existing woodland or incorporate new broadleaf planting to ensure development is integrated sensitively into the landscape;
- Conserve the setting of archaeological sites; and
- Consider opportunities to renovate traditional farm buildings, currently in disrepair.

Rolling Farmlands with Estates LCT

The key characteristics of this landscape character type, relevant to the study, are:

- Broad, rounded ridges with occasional steep banks, knolls and conical upstanding hills;
- Flat coastal plain with sandy bays along the Shire of Clyde;

Bute & Cowal

- Groups of fairly large, rectangular fields, enclosed by linear shelterbelts and blocks of mixed woodland;
- Large estate houses with estate policy woodlands;
- Scattered large farmsteads;
- Urban development on coastal plain and broader valleys.

The main landscape issues that need to be considered, with regards to the proposed type of development, within this landscape type are:

- Estate policy woodlands have historic and visual importance and should be protected, restored and managed;
- Give particular attention to key views from local roads and public rights of way;
- Traditional hedgerows are essential element in the visual structure and should be conserved;
- Linear development along roadsides should be avoided;
- Built development should be associated with woodland planting or shelter belts.

Basalt Lowlands LCT

The key characteristics of this landscape character type, relevant to the study, are:

- Indented coastline – low headlands have a distinctive stepped profile;
- Open moorland broken by rocky outcrops and ledges;
- Diverse, patchy mosaic of woodland, bog and marginal pasture on lower fringes of moor;
- Scattered small-holdings and cottages on edge of moor;
- Small estates influence the landscape character in some sheltered coastal bays.

The main landscape issues that need to be considered, with regards to the proposed type of development, within this landscape type are:

- Built development should be carefully sited, taking guidance from existing settlement patterns and vegetation structure;
- Buildings should be sheltered by distinctive terraced ridges and rocky outcrops;
- Excessive earthworks should be avoided, particularly the construction of raised platforms;
- Traditional buildings and stone walls should be conserved and restored;
- Take opportunities to restore / convert derelict buildings.

Coastal Plain LCT

The key characteristics of this landscape character type, relevant to the study, are:

- Completely flat, linear coastal plain, backed by a coastal road;

- Straight, angular field patterns and lanes;
- Open, exposed character;
- Isolated farmsteads and some development along the coastal road.

The main landscape issues that need to be considered, with regards to the proposed type of development, within this landscape type are:

- Sprawling linear development along the coast road should be avoided;
- Built development should be carefully sited, taking account of long views from the coastal road as well as views from adjacent elevated land.
- Development should always be associated with low, scrubby planting, stands of trees and stone walls to integrate it with the surrounding landscape;
- Attention should be given to the massing and silhouette of any new buildings;
- Development in particularly open, visually sensitive areas should be restricted.

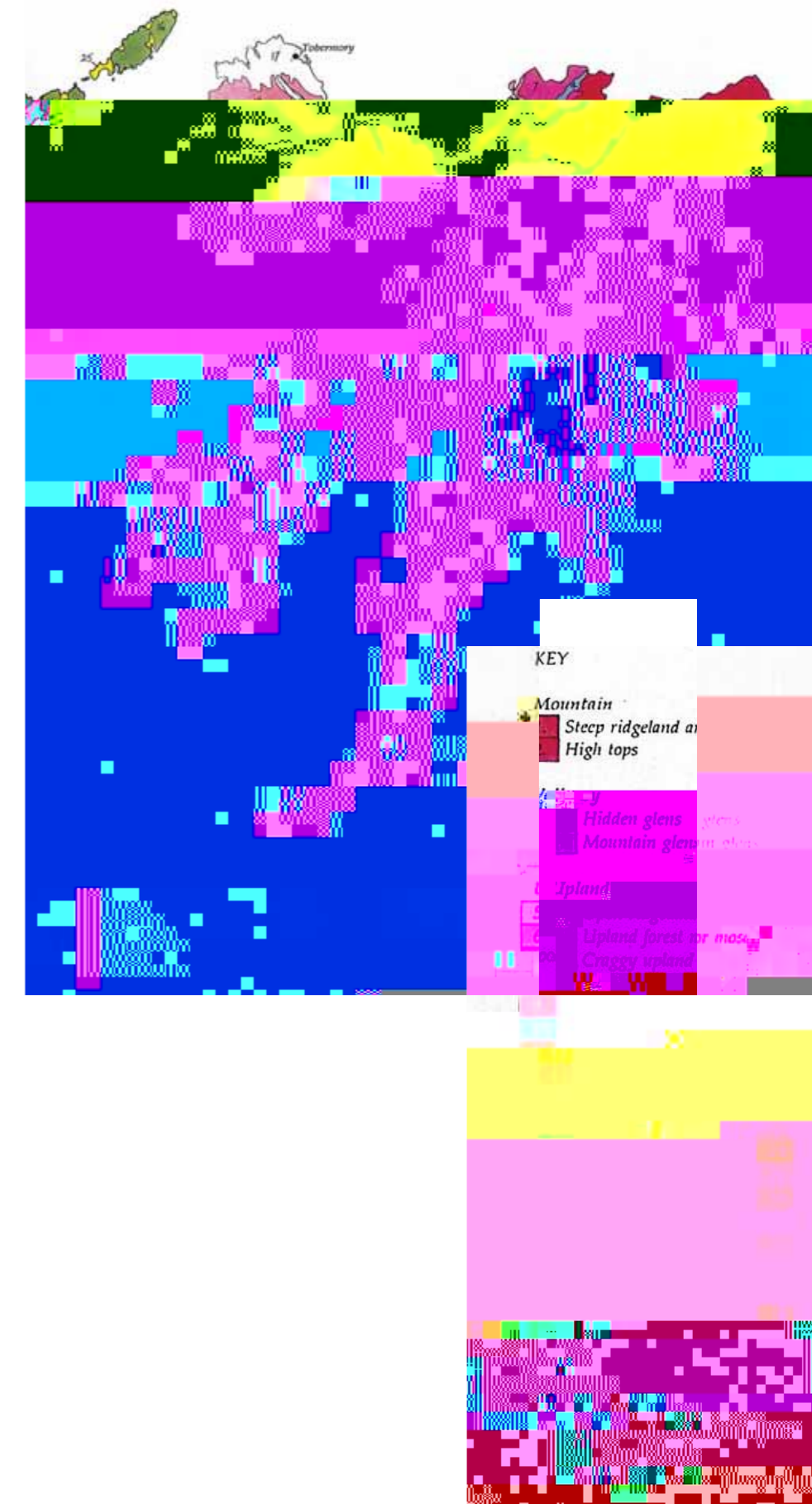
Rocky Mosaic LCT

The key characteristics of this landscape character type, relevant to the study, are:

- Uneven, hummocky landform with rocky outcrops and narrow glens;
- Raised beaches, cliffs and distinctive rounded knolls;
- Rocky, indented coastline with offshore islands and sandy bays;
- Relatively small-scale landscape with a diverse mix of colours and textures;
- Scattered, isolated farm buildings and small villages in sheltered sites; and
- Archaeological sites.

The main landscape issues that need to be considered, with regards to the proposed type of development, within this landscape type are:

- New built development should generally be small in scale so that it can be integrated within the surrounding, diverse landscape;
- Built development should always be associated with planting and/or landform to shelter and screen buildings;
- Conserve the characteristics of the diverse, small-scale landscape pattern; and
- Conserve the landscape setting of important archaeological sites.



Extract from Landscape Assessment of Argyll / The Birth of Clyde
(SN⁶¹ Review number 78, Environmental Resources Management, 1996)