SMART VILLAGES IN SCOTLAND

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The context

- The term Smart Villages is almost unknown… but a subset of communities "performs" above expectation… and they are smart

- Scottish policy frameworks enable community empowerment with respect to land and buildings acquisition, renewable energy etc

- Capacity to use the power given is critical: local civil society must be able to address development challenges and build capacities

- A key challenge is building capacity in weaker communities

- The breadth of smart village action is enormous: land ownership, retail, renewables, transport, social care, housing, environmental projects

- IT infrastructure is important but is not a major determinant of smart villages
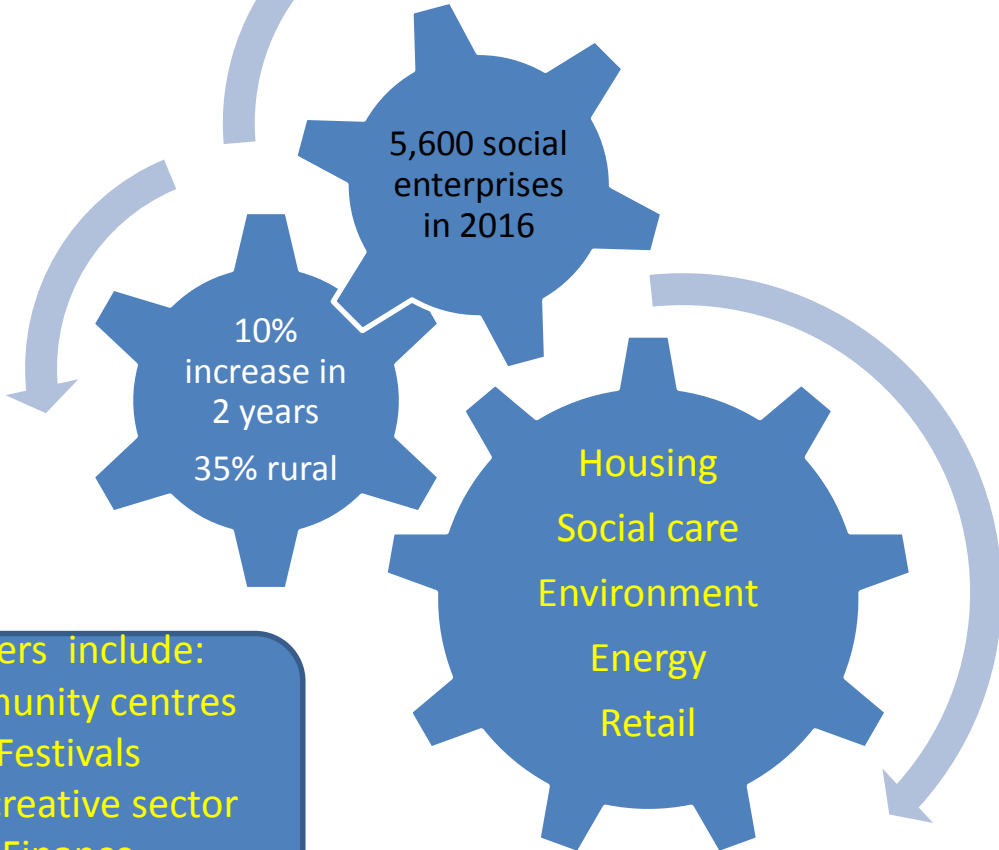
Scope and spatial scale

- Spatial scale: largely the knowable physical community of place, sometimes sub-regional (small town and hinterland) (large municipalities leave space below with no formal public institutions)

- Scope: everything from social care, housing, tourism, heritage transport, renewables, waste, retail, recycling, rural land management to plug the gaps left by the retreating state and the failing market

The scope is framed by demand and by supporting institutional architecture, sometimes, but not often, LEADER

The economic scale of third sector activity in Scotland

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Social Innovation in
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rural development company ltd

5,600 social enterprises in 2016

10% increase in 2 years

35% rural

Housing

Social care

Environment

Energy

Retail

Including 250 Development Trusts as key "anchor organisations" in community based development

Others include:
Community centres
Festivals
Arts/creative sector
Finance
Land (farms forests)

Over 80,000 employees in social economy

This is what it looks like in practice

What is needed at local scale ?

- Robust local institutions to lead local development- i.e. agency architecture: the key is the local development trust – entities "to help their neighbourhoods flourish through community-led activity, partnership working and enterprise" or equivalent anchor organisation

- But their success is still highly contingent on enabling policies and room to manoeuvre/operating space in relation to challenges to meet/opportunities to seize.

- …as well as on local actors with appropriate skills

- Mentoring, nurture and capacity building is needed in weaker communities, otherwise inequality is in danger of being compounded

What policy instruments are needed?

- Legal entities appropriate to nurture and deliver local development (needs supporting legislation)

- Sector-specific, national policies such as CARES for renewable energy, Self Directed Support Scotland Act for social care; Community Empowerment Act for community land purchase etc etc.

- Innovation policies to nurture new approaches and take risk, especially social innovation (maybe a role for LEADER or its proxy in post-Brexit Scotland)

And does the Scottish policy deliver?

- Definitely to the smart villages. They prosper. But
- Where funds are chased by all, the smart win all the money for projects, leaving the un-smart to lag further behind
- And those chasing funds may not be representative of all, but of sectional interests
- So communities with weak human and social capital can lose out, so may the poorest
- Affirmative action is needed

THANK YOU