Encouraging sustainable lifestyles through community-led action in remote rural Scotland

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

BACKGROUND

Research aim and context

The cases

FINDINGS

The 'double-edged sword' of grant funding for community initiatives

CONCLUSION

Separating the 'ends' and 'means' of policy

Integrating forms of localism

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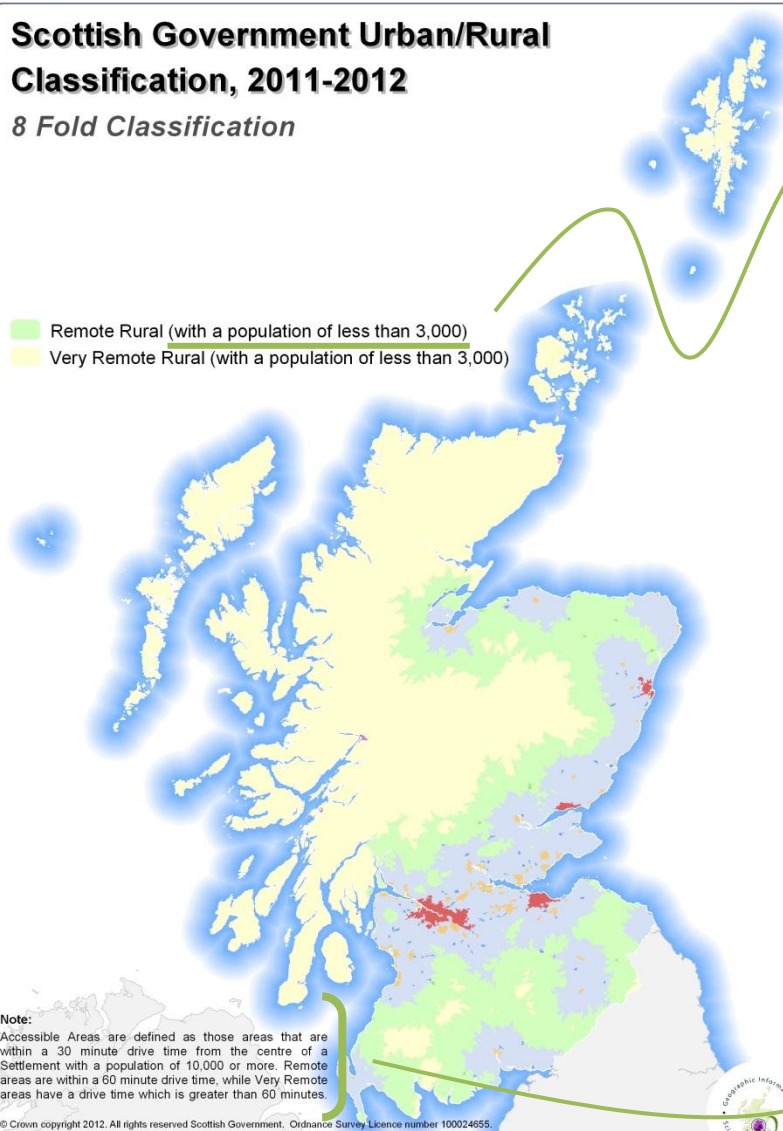Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group

PROJECT AIM

To better understand how **grant-funded, community-led** sustainability action groups in **remote rural Scotland** interact with, and influence, the **lifestyles** of the individuals in **the local community**.

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CONTEXT

Scottish Government Urban/Rural Classification, 2011-2012

8 Fold Classification

Remote Rural (with a population of less than 3,000)
Very Remote Rural (with a population of less than 3,000)

Note:
Accessible Areas are defined as those areas that are within a 30 minute drive time from the centre of a Settlement with a population of 10,000 or more. Remote areas are within a 60 minute drive time, while Very Remote areas have a drive time which is greater than 60 minutes.

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Scottish Government GI Science & Analysis Team, August 2012, Job 5274 - KT

'Rural'

A population of 3,000 people or fewer

'Remote'

> 30 minutes' drive from settlement of 10,000+

69% of Scotland is 'remote rural'

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RESEARCH METHODS

Case Study

- Two remote rural communities.

- Undertaking Climate Challenge Fund projects to encourage more sustainable living.

Participant Observation

- Full-time volunteer with CCF group for two months.

- Research diary + qualitative interviews.

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CASE STUDIES

Island: Oct – Dec 2011

Population: ~ 1,500

Community-led projects:

- Vegetable growing trials
- House insulation surveys and trials

Total CCF funding: ~ £250,000 between 2010 and 2012

Lowland: Apr – Jun 2012

Population: ~ 2,000

Community-led projects:

- Recycling collection and processing
- Community allotments
- Furniture restoration
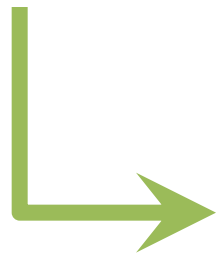
Total CCF funding: ~ £550,000 between 2009 and 2013

FINDINGS

IMPACT OF FUNDING

Creamer (2014) "The double edged sword of grant funding", *Local Environment.*

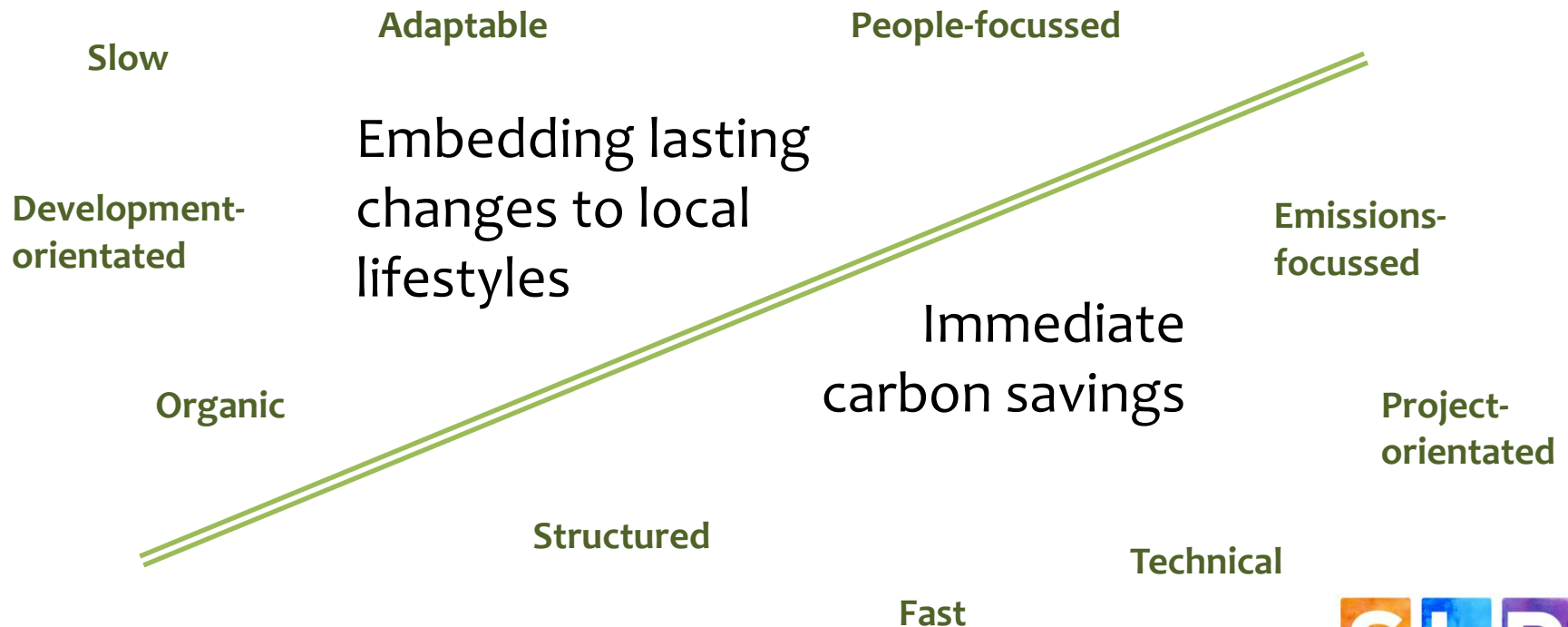**The receipt of grant funding can be a 'double-edged sword' for community groups**:

1. Misaligned timescales
2. Administration
3. Local competition

Funding may exacerbate some of the challenges of engaging with the community more widely.

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1. TIMESCALES OF GRANTS

Short timescales of funding are not aligned with the long-term ambitions of community groups.

Slow

Adaptable

People-focussed

Embedding lasting changes to local lifestyles

Development-orientated

Emissions-focussed

Organic

Immediate carbon savings

Project-orientated

Structured

Technical

Fast

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1. TIMESCALES OF GRANTS

"**I've seen it time and time again**. You get waves of them coming in and they last 5 or 6 years and then **they peter out** and another lot take over"

Credibility of community projects diluted by a perception that the group will not last → lack of buy-in from the community.

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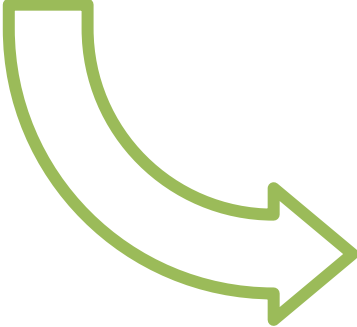Sustainable Lifestyles Research Group

2. ADMIN FOR GRANTS

Community groups often **manage multiple ongoing grants** alongside applications for new grants.

A large proportion of the groups' time becomes **office-based**.

Attention is diverted away from 'hands on' community activity.

The administration demands embedded within the conditions of grant funding may contribute to a **distancing between the group and the community**.

May also affect the type of people who get involved in community-led initiatives.

Dan said that he has noticed that **it's always the same kind of people**… Jess asked if he thought it was **an incomer-local thing**. He said maybe, yes. Claire agreed… She thinks that **the locals often perceive things to be run by posh incomers**…

Research Diary

2. ADMIN FOR GRANTS

The typical 'incomer' may be better suited to the demands of grant-funded community-led activity:

- Well-educated;

- Middle-aged or older;

- Retired professional;

- Relatively affluent;

- Actively seeking change of lifestyle;

- No personal ties to traditional ways of life.

The "civic core"
(Mohan, 2011)

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3. COMPETITION

Evidence of local rifts and rivalries exacerbated by competition for grants:

...a rival local environmental community group have handed out a leaflet which details all the funding the CCF group has received and questions their motivations... Ben [the CCF project manager] thinks it is probably because of the "claustrophobic atmosphere" – *they're stepping on people's toes*.

Research Diary

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3. COMPETITION

"…my job is really making sure that people know what other people are up to – if they want it to be known – because **there's always sensitivities… competing for the same funding**, you know? Trying to get that very fine line between social enterprises…who are **in a competitive situation** and want to keep their cards very close to their chest, versus the fact that I think **that that's not a particularly good way for people to operate**."

Local Authority 'Community Co-ordinator'

BEYOND THE CCF

Investigation of alternative means of support

+ semi-structured interviews with ten community groups with experience of various forms of funding and finance.

- Grant funding essential to community-led activity – communities are not businesses;

- Funding should assist in a long-term development plan, not just isolated 'projects';

- Funding alone does not lead to community empowerment – need more effective mechanisms for the devolution of power.

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CONCLUSION

WHY 'COMMUNITY'?

Community as the 'means'

"Individuals can make a difference, but… **Community groups working together** with their communities can make an even bigger difference in **reducing carbon emissions in their communities** and helping tackle climate change"

Keep Scotland Beautiful (2014)
'The Climate Challenge Fund'

Community as the 'ends'

"People are more able to live fulfilling lives and realise their social and economic potential in **strong, resilient and supportive communities**… It allows more people to contribute to a growing economy, lead healthier, more independent lives and **live in a more sustainable way** that is better for the environment."

Scottish Government (2012)
'National Outcomes: Communities'

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COMMUNITY JUSTICE

The community members involved in the projects (the 'means') were not representative of '*the community*'.

The 'community' being made stronger and more resilient by the projects (the 'ends') were a sub-community of 'well-resourced elites'.
(cf Aitken 2012)

COMMUNITY JUSTICE

*"If an elite group operate within an invited space and purport to represent broader interests, **it is entirely misleading** to setup these structures and systems of governance and claim that they are acting wholly in the real interests of the community"*

McAreavey (2009)

NUANCED LOCALISM

Local governance requires a mixture of 'community', 'managerial', and 'representative' localism.

Community groups must be linked into a network of local service providers and representative local government.

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Thank you

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