



Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development



Case Study Report
Strengthening Communities on the Isle of Lewis in the
Western Isles, United Kingdom

Authors: Mags Currie, Annabel Pinker and Andrew Copus

Report Information

Title: Case Study Report: Strengthening Communities on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles, United Kingdom (RELOCAL Deliverable 6.2)
Authors: Mags Currie, Annabel Pinker, Andrew Copus
Version: Final
Date of Publication: 29.03.2019
Dissemination level: Public

Project Information

Project Acronym RELOCAL
Project Full title: Resituating the Local in Cohesion and Territorial Development
Grant Agreement: 727097
Project Duration: 48 months
Project coordinator: UEF

Bibliographic Information

Currie M, Pinker A and Copus A (2019) *Strengthening Communities on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles, United Kingdom*. RELOCAL Case Study N° 33/33. Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland.

Information may be quoted provided the source is stated accurately and clearly.

Reproduction for own/internal use is permitted.

This paper can be downloaded from our website: <https://relocal.eu>

Table of Contents

i. List of Figures	4
ii. List of maps.....	4
iii. List of tables.....	4
iv. Abbreviations.....	5
Executive summary	6
1. Introduction	7
2. Methodological reflections.....	9
3. The Locality.....	10
3.1 Territorial Context and Characteristics of the locality	10
3.2 The Locality with regards to Dimensions 1 and 2	16
4. The Action	22
4.1 Basic characteristics of the Action	22
4.2 The action with regards to dimensions 3-5.....	24
5. Final Assessment: Capacities for Change.....	28
5.1 Synthesising Dimension A: Assessment of promoters and inhibitors	28
5.2 Synthesising Dimension B: Competences and capacities of stakeholders	29
5.3 Synthesising Dimension C: Connecting the action to procedural and distributive justice	29
6. Conclusions	31
7. References	33
8. Annexes	34
8.1 List of Interviewed Experts.....	34
8.2 Stakeholder Interaction Table	35

i. List of Figures

Figure 1: Rough field sketch of the ways different communities in Lewis are working together to facilitate spatial justice and place-based approaches in communities.....	26
---	----

ii. List of maps

Map 1: Map of Scotland (with Lewis highlighted in red).....	7
Map 2: Map of the Western Isles and the west coast of Scotland with main settlements and island names.....	7

iii. List of tables

Table 1: Basic characteristics of Lewis.....	7
Table 2: List of interviewed experts.....	31
Table 3: Stakeholder interaction table.....	32

iv. Abbreviations

AM -	Account Management
AMR -	Account Management Relationship
CAM -	Community Account Management
CLS -	Community Land Scotland
CPP -	Community Planning Partnership
EU -	European Union
ERDF -	European Rural Development Fund
ESIF -	European Structural Investment Fund
ESF -	European Social Fund
HHP -	Hebridean Housing Partnership
HIDB -	Highlands and Islands Development Board
HIE -	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
NHS -	National Health Service
SC -	Strengthening Communities
SIMD -	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SPA -	Sparsely Populated Areas
UHI -	University of the Highlands and Islands
UK -	United Kingdom

Executive summary

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the Scottish Government's quasi-autonomous development agency for these areas of Scotland, is charged with fostering an integrated approach towards economic and social sustainability in a region that covers more than half of Scotland's land mass. As the name 'Highlands and Islands Enterprise' (like that of its prior instantiation, 'Highlands and Islands Development Board') suggests, HIE is explicitly orientated towards supporting and promoting the development of a specific geographical area that has long been considered one of the most 'deprived' and 'remote' in Britain. It is HIE's unusually place-specific mission, and its emphasis on addressing economic and social issues in a consolidated, joined-up fashion, that makes it a particularly interesting case to follow with respect to place-based policy-making aimed at addressing spatial inequalities in Scotland.

In this case study, we consider how place-based interventions carried out under the remit of one of HIE's core priority areas, Strengthening Communities, have tackled spatial inequalities on Lewis. Lewis forms part of the Western Isles, a network of islands located off the west coast of Scotland. Population decline is considered a key challenge on these islands. Local practitioners often note that without targeted action in place to address this ongoing decline, the long-term sustainability, viability and resilience of the islands is under threat. Similar issues are faced not only on Scotland's other islands, but also throughout much of the Scottish Highlands. The work organised under Strengthening Communities is designed to address local challenges and foster social and economic development in communities, particularly in HIE's self-defined "fragile areas". We specifically focus 1) on how HIE's work under Strengthening Communities has facilitated community land buy-outs in a bid to promote greater spatial justice on Lewis and 2) on the nature and effects of HIE's ongoing support for communities – and specifically for community trusts – in the aftermath of the buyouts. Communities in the Highlands and Islands have also received substantial support from the European Union, and many of our research participants expressed concerns about the future of local projects after Brexit.

To carry out this research, we conducted interviews with key figures within HIE as well as with other actors with experience of community planning and land buy-outs on Lewis. Some of the key issues considered in this case study include:

- The story of Land Reform in Scotland and how community land ownership enhances (and/or curtails) the autonomy and empowerment of communities
- Place-based processes of empowerment and enablement in communities
- The contribution of HIE's Strengthening Communities priority area to the facilitation of community land buy-outs
- The effectiveness of spatially-targeted interventions in addressing inequality
- New models of local governance and their effects on community-based organisations (community trusts, buy-outs, the centralisation of HIE)
- The interactions of multiple institutions working towards social and economic development on Lewis.

1. Introduction

The ‘Action’ we chose to explore for this study was the cluster of practices and programmes of work implemented by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) in the service of their ‘Strengthening Communities’ priority area. This core aspect of HIE’s work is aimed at building “community capacity” and fostering “sustainable growth”; it preceded and helped to shape the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Land Reform agenda (see section 3.2.2 for more details about these Scottish policies). We chose to focus our study on the Isle of Lewis, which constitutes the northern portion of the Western Isles (see maps 1 and 2 below).

‘Strengthening Communities’ does not refer to one singular set of interventions; instead it entails a range of different approaches, which seemed at times somewhat diffuse and difficult to pin down. This was perhaps partly because of HIE’s active integration of economic and social development. However, one core dimension of this priority area is HIE’s long-term work to support communities seeking to buy out privately and publicly-owned landed estates the Western Isles and throughout the Highlands. A second dimension of the Strengthening Communities theme is HIE’s key approach to working with localities, ‘Account Management’ (AM). AM effectively describes the cultivation of a long-term relationship between HIE and the communities, trusts and social enterprises it supports¹. – HIE offers the communities and organisations under its account management ongoing financial and business mentoring, network- building and funding over three to five years (at the outset), with the goal of fostering economic growth and building capacity. Account management can apply to a whole community seeking to produce a plan for local development, in which case it is known as Community Account Management (CAM). It can also apply to the process of supporting a community organisation, such as a Trust or a social enterprise, to produce its own plan, in which case it is referred to as an Account Management Relationship (AMR). AMRs have been offered to a number of the community trusts that have formed in the wake of land buyouts, and constitutes one of HIE’s principal tools for supporting their continuity and sustainability. In this respect, AMRs might be seen, in part, as a complement to HIE’s work to facilitate community ownership on the Western Isles.

Although HIE provides other forms of support, with respect to energy and innovation, for example, under its Strengthening Communities remit, we chose to focus our research on HIE’s account management of communities and community trusts, and its support of community buyouts, given that both sets of practices clearly draw on place-based approaches. . This focus immediately entailed a range of different actors, including – in particular – a number of the different community land trusts that have been beneficiaries of HIE funding over the years, and members of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), a statutory body that brings together service-providers and institutions in order to foster cross-institutional community planning (see section 3.2.2). The CPP included, but is not limited to, the following organisations: HIE, the Western Isles Local Authority, whose role has been closely intertwined with that of HIE over several decades – not least insofar as many staff members in the council had previously worked in HIE and vice- versa; the Hebridean Housing Partnership (HHP), a housing association, whose staff reflected on issues relating to the infrastructural and social development of Lewis, as well as on the ever- present theme of

depopulation; the Western Isles Health Board (the NHS), and Community Land Scotland, a charity that supports community land organisations across Scotland.

¹ Community trusts are non-profit sharing organisations established to manage an asset – in many cases in Lewis, the land – for public benefit. Community land and asset owners are social enterprises, by which we mean that they re-invest profits to deliver community benefit. However, not all social enterprises are community-led.

2 Methodological Reflection

For this study, we employed a snowballing technique in selecting our research participants. We conducted a total of 16 interviews: six with Highlands and Island Enterprise employees (one with a senior member of the Strengthening Communities and Place Directorate based in Inverness; one with a senior member of staff who oversees HIE's activities in the Western Isles; we also interviewed three local account managers, all of whom were based on Lewis, as well two further staff members). We interviewed members of the CPP, including the Western Isles NHS (one interview), Community Land Scotland (one interview), the Hebridean Housing Partnership (two interviews), and the Western Isles Local Authority (two interviews). We also interviewed members of three different community land trusts (see list of interviewed experts in 8.1).

One of the research team (Pinker) had been working on Lewis on an ethnographic project (funded by the Leverhulme Trust) related to community energy and the politics of energy decentralisation prior to the commencement of the RELOCAL case study. This meant that she was already embedded on Lewis, knew the area and context well and had previously met with some of our interviewees. Pinker's participation in the project has enriched the study, since the focus of her work overlapped with the concerns of RELOCAL. We also found that those interviewees who were involved with her project were more open during the RELOCAL interviews.

Currie spent two weeks on Lewis from 23–27th July and 5–10th August, whilst Pinker spent around 6 months living on Lewis between 2017 and 2018. Of the fifteen interviews conducted, Pinker attended all of them and Currie attended eleven. Pinker undertook extra interviews outwith the two weeks that Currie was present.

Reflecting on the effects of our methodological choices, we found that the snowballing approach was helpful insofar as it supported engagement with a variety of different actors. Whilst members of HIE were perhaps over-represented amongst our interviewees, this allowed us to deepen our understanding of AMRs and HIE's support of community asset buyouts, which are the principal mechanisms through which the Strengthening Communities theme is delivered.

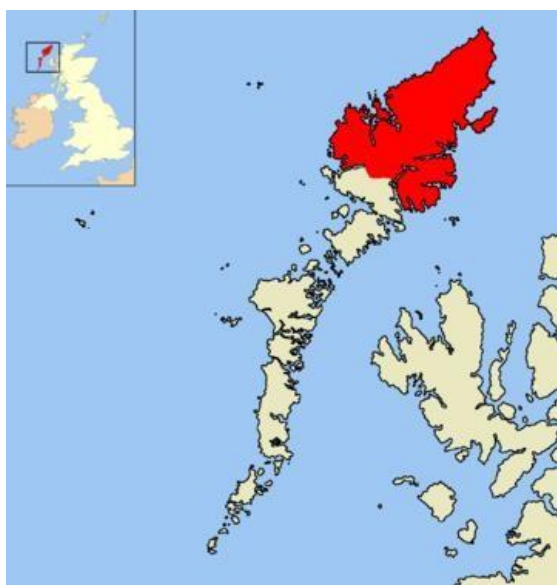
We spoke predominantly to women, the majority of whom had grown up on the islands, returned to the islands or lived there for a long time, so their knowledge of the action and the place potentially spanned more time than they had been in their current position. It is also important to note that our interviewees were engaged in a variety of roles on Lewis – and spoke, therefore, not only from their positioning as employees, but also as community members, and additionally in some cases as Trust directors and members of other bodies, such as Community Land Scotland.

3. The Locality

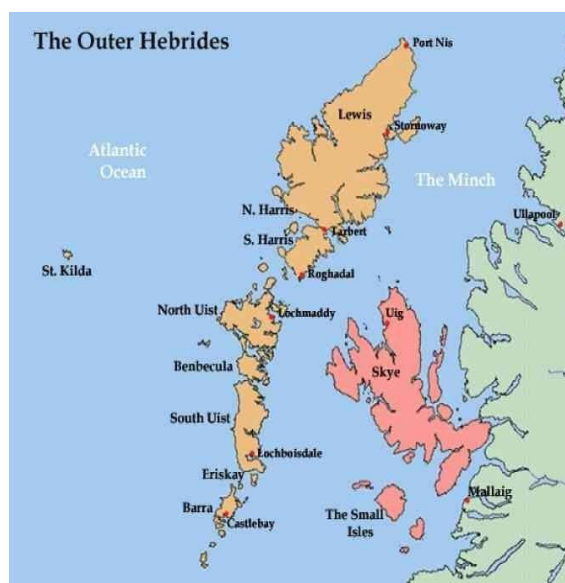
3.1 Territorial Context and Characteristics of the locality

Name of case study area	Strengthening Communities (on Lewis)
Size	1,770 km ²
Total population (2016)	18,500
Population density (2016)	10 persons per km ²
Level of development in relation to wider socio-economic context	Disadvantaged within a wider under-developed region.
Type of the region (NUTS3-Eurostat)	Predominantly rural

Table 1: Basic socio-economic characteristics of Lewis



Map 1: Map denoting Lewis (highlighted in red)



Map 2: Map of the Western Isles and the west coast of Scotland with main settlements and island names.

Basic information

The Isles of Lewis and Harris comprise one landmass that make up the third largest island in the United Kingdom (see Maps 1 and 2). They are part of a group of islands called the Western Isles/Outer Hebrides/Eilean Siar (the terms are used interchangeably and the last is in Gaelic), which are located off the west coast of Scotland. From hereonin, we refer to them as the Western Isles. Around 18,500 people live on Lewis, of which around 8,500 people live in the main town, Stornoway. Lewis falls under the remit of “Comhairle nan Eilean Siar”, the Western Isles Local Authority, which also oversees the other islands that make up the Western Isles. The dominant sources of employment include the public sector (e.g. the local authority and the NHS), fish farming, tourism, construction and community energy. Many islanders also leave the islands for periods of time to work (e.g. in construction and offshore oil installations).

Although Scotland’s rural areas are on the whole slightly increasing in population (+0.5% in recent years), population decline on the Western Isles is rapid, and there have been recent calls to consider place-based differences in rural areas within Scotland in terms of six clusters of “Sparsely Populated Areas” (SPAs) in Scotland (Copus and Hopkins, 2018). Population decline leads to a reduction in or withdrawal of services, making it less attractive for people to move to affected areas. This work notes that there will be challenges to the long-term futures, sustainability and resilience of people living in these areas without targeted action to address population decline.

There are several noteworthy issues affecting the dynamics of development on the Western Isles that should be taken into account in a case study such as this:

1. Crofting and land ownership

Since 1814, Lewis has been heavily shaped by crofting, a system of land tenure that combines “private enterprise and communalism”. Unlike the communal form of land tenure that it replaced, crofting enshrined a two-part structure. This comprised, firstly, a five to ten-acre plot of land (the croft itself) located within a settlement (or ‘township’) and tenanted by an individual crofter and, secondly, the crofter’s share (or ‘shareholding’) in a large area of common grazing, usually located immediately beyond the boundaries of the township (The Angus Macleod Archive, 2019).

At the outset, crofting was organised to serve the interests of the landlords who owned the landed estates on which local people lived and worked. Angus Macleod writes that crofting was “deliberately structured by the landowning fraternity in the 18th century so that the crofters and their families would not be fully occupied with crofting agriculture, hence the smallness of the crofts, so that the crofter population would be available, and indeed obliged, to participate in the kelping and fishing industries which were very lucrative activities for the landowners, who claimed absolute rights to all the seaweed growing on the shores of their estates, as well as all the seaweed cast up on shores by the action of the sea and wind” (The Angus Macleod Archive, 2019) .

However, in 1923 the balance of landed power on the Western Isles shifted, with the transfer of ownership over a portion of the estate of Lord Leverhulme, who owned South Harris and the entirety of Lewis at the time. 28,000 hectares of land surrounding the capital, Stornoway, was turned over to islanders, and a community organisation, the Stornoway Trust, was established to administer it. A second wave of bids for community land ownership began after crofters on the mainland, in Assynt, successfully bought out the estate they lived and worked on in 1992. This landmark case prompted a stream of buy-outs, which charted new territory in the reform of landownership in Scotland (see section 3.2.2 for further details on Scotland's land reform process) in the Highlands and Islands over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s. On the Western Isles, the first of this cohort to take place was on North Harris in 2003, closely followed by the buyout in South Uist in 2006, the Galson estate in 2007, in West Harris in 2010, the Pairc and Carloway estates in 2015, and most recently, the Barvas Estate in 2016. Currently, around 70% of Lewis is under community ownership, a fairly extraordinary state of affairs relative to the wider Scottish picture.

2. Community land trusts

Some of the land buyouts that have taken place across the Highlands and Islands were instigated in the face of changes that were considered potentially harmful to the lives of community-members. For example, the buy-out in Assynt was a response to plans to break up the estate, to the detriment of crofters. On Lewis, meanwhile, some buyouts were forged in an attempt to provide autonomy and protection for crofting communities who might otherwise have been subject to landowner-led developments that some – though not all – considered threatening or disadvantageous. Thus, in two of the Trusts interviewed, concerns around potential windfarm schemes played a role in the move towards buying out the estates. In every one of the buyout cases on Lewis, a community trust has been formed, sometimes in the early stages of the negotiations as a means of coordinating local efforts, but ultimately to administer estate land after its passage into local hands. Having gained control over the land, the Trusts began to demonstrate the viability of deploying community ownership as a basis for tackling place-based issues with locally-devised responses.

The effects of this transformation in land ownership are still making themselves felt. However, it is clear that partly because of changes in conditions and regulations with respect to renewable energy developments (see below), the Trusts that formed earlier on have become self-sustaining to a degree that has not been matched by those entering the fray at a later stage. Thus, for example, the Galson and Storass Uibhist Trusts (the latter on Uist) – which were among the first to take possession of their estates and were both able to take advantage of generous renewable energy subsidy arrangements in installing community wind turbines – are flourishing economically, are significant local employers, and are extending themselves well beyond the role of 'community landlords', effectively becoming instigators of local development and cultural regeneration. Others, such as the Carloway and Pairc Trusts, which did not take shape until a few years ago, are much smaller in scale; whilst they employ between one and three members of staff at any one time, these posts are funded by other bodies, including by HIE. Whilst HIE staff noted that it usually takes 5 – 7 years for community-owned estates to "start delivering very tangible outcomes", they also

observed that the funding climate is more challenging now than it was at the time the older trusts were establishing themselves.

3. Renewable energy

As noted above, renewable energy has been one of the key factors influencing this uneven trajectory. West Harris Trust, North Harris Trust, Storas Uibhist, and the Galson Trust were all able to take advantage of the government subsidies available for energy schemes until 2015 (when the feed-in tariffs were significantly cut) to install various infrastructures, particularly wind turbines. The funds arising from these projects have brought these trusts a degree of autonomy, enabling them to cover core staff costs and push forward some of their own initiatives, whilst also attracting further financial support through their capacity to match-fund incoming grants. Staff and board members at the Galson Trust were clear that they would not be in the position they are in now, with almost twenty staff working for them and working towards a joint project to establish a care home on estate- owned common grazing land, if they had not been able to install the three turbines that stand overseeing the southern reaches of the estate. By contrast, Carloway, Pairc and Barvas Trusts came into being at around the same time that subsidies for wind energy were cut (and Carloway in particular might have struggled to install turbines regardless, due to its proximity to the well-known heritage site, the Callanish stones). Lacking the stable income ensuing from feed-in tariff payments, Carloway and Pairc have not been able to generate sufficient funds to cover the cost of their project managers.

Thus, whilst the community land buyout process is widely celebrated, and rightly so, it's important to note that its effects have not been evenly distributed between localities; the trusts that have emerged are highly differentiated in terms of their asset base and capacity. Arguably, then, the process of community land reform, in particular due to the link with trusts' varied capacities to install renewable energy schemes, may certainly contribute to new and emerging forms of spatial injustice, though it is difficult as yet to establish how exactly this will play out over time¹.

4. Gaelic: Gaelic is spoken more widely in the Western Isles than anywhere else in Scotland. Although the language is considered to be in steep decline, it is highly valued. For example, there are efforts to promote it through schools throughout Scotland, and particularly in the Western Isles, and there is also a Gaelic college, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, which forms part of the University of the Highlands and Islands and is located in Sleat, Skye.

5. 'Locals' and 'incomers': One of the themes that arose relatively frequently in our interviews and in Pinker's ethnographic work concerned the role of 'incomers' to Lewis. Whilst some asserted that few distinctions were now made between 'incomers' and 'locals', it was nonetheless fairly often implied that some of those coming to live on the islands were more highly valued than others. It was frequently noted, for example, that the preponderance of people of retirement age amongst those moving to the Western Isles was not wholly welcome given the region's existing struggles

¹ It is also worth acknowledging here that some income arising from community energy schemes is currently and will in the future be re-invested outwith the communities that installed them.

with an ageing population. Meanwhile, young families and those “coming to the table with skills and commitment” were often spoken of in enthusiastic terms. “That’s what people measure, and that’s what people appreciate really”, one woman, who had lived on Lewis all her life, reflected. Longevity of residence was also noted; as another Lewis resident put it, “If somebody was born in London and moved up here when they were 16 and they’ve been here for 50 years...just because they speak with a different accent it doesn’t make them any less local than me as far as I’m concerned.” However, those we spoke to who had moved to Lewis from elsewhere in the UK as adults pointed to their difficulties with integration. Whilst they told us that they enjoyed good friendships and were well-received, they nonetheless found that their relative lack of kin networks tended to place limits on their ability to integrate locally and cultivate supportive relationships. Divisions seemed to become more marked where controversial decisions over infrastructural developments, such as windfarms and housing, were in the offing. In such instances, however, tensions fractured and blurred along multiple lines, not only between locals and incomers, but also between those who had recently returned to the island after a long period spent on the mainland or abroad and those who had never left; and – particularly where such developments were to be constructed on common lands to which crofters held rights and could therefore expect financial compensation – between crofters and non-crofters.

6. Church: The Presbyterian Church (particularly the Free Church) remains a strong presence. The most obvious manifestation of its continued influence is the closure of most shops on Sundays; it was only relatively recently that the ferry was allowed to operate on a Sunday. In this sense, then, the Church appeared to make itself felt even for those who were not active church-goers. Sabbatarianism – the name given to the commitment to keeping the Sabbath – is resented and protested in some quarters (particularly with respect to the question of whether or not the golf course and the leisure centre should open on a Sunday). However, a number of non-churchgoers Pinker spoke to saw the keeping of the Sabbath and the retention of church traditions less as a religious imposition than as a key aspect of Lewis’ uniqueness, and therefore as a practice to be valued and sustained. Although many of the islanders we spoke to felt the Church continued to shape electoral outcomes, particularly in the case of recent elections held to vote in new board members of the Stornoway Trust, most interviewees reflected that the church is less influential now than it has ever been and did not affect power relations to the degree that it had in the past. One woman, who had played a key role in the establishment of one of the trusts we interviewed, told us: “I think the role of the church is much overstated in terms of today’s society, and that’s not being disrespectful to anybody who’s in the church. I think it’s just the place and power of the church within the small [communities]...it’s absolutely not what it was and it’s not because there’s been a big fall out, it’s just that as time has gone on and people have become engaged in doing things for themselves, that’s what drives much of what’s happened in these islands”.

Administration and Governance

The Western Isles Local Authority

Until 1975, the Western Isles fell under the remit of the mainland local authority of Ross and Cromarty. The establishment of a dedicated local authority (one of Scotland’s 32 local authority areas) on the Western Isles in 1975, constituted a sea-change for Lewis. The Western Isles Council (renamed Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in 1997 under the Local Government (Gaelic Names)

(Scotland) Act 1997) has since become a key driver of employment and local development on the islands, and a principal player in the policy trajectories we explore in this study.

HIE

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the Scottish Government's quasi-autonomous development agency for these areas of Scotland, is charged with fostering an integrated approach towards economic and social sustainability in a region that covers more than half of Scotland's land mass, but contains less than ten percent of the country's population. HIE was established in 1991, after the dissolution of its predecessor, the Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB), which had been founded in 1965 to "assist the people of the Highlands and Islands to improve their economic and social conditions and to enable the region to play a more effective part in the economic and social development of the nation".

HIE's headquarters are in the city of Inverness, in the Scottish Highlands. There are a further eight HIE areas throughout the Highlands and Islands, of which Innse Gall (Outer Hebrides) is one. The Innse Gall base office is in Stornoway, Lewis with a satellite in Lionacleit, Benbecula.

The Community Planning Partnership

The Community Planning Partnership (CPP) is a statutory strategic planning body that brings together an array of local institutions in each of the 32 local authority areas in Scotland (in the Western Isles, those organisations particularly relevant to this case study include, HIE, NHS Western Isles, the local authority, local community councils, local housing associations, and the fire service) for the sake of making integrated, joined-up decisions around upcoming social and economic development on the Western Isles. They are intended to drive public service reform and lessen inequalities in access to services in localities (more information about the origins of CPPs is available in section 3.2.2).

Community Trusts

Community Trusts, as described above, are coming to the fore as key local governance actors, driven by the spate of land and asset buyouts that has gone hand in hand with land reform in Scotland, and the availability of subsidised renewable energy. On the Western Isles, as elsewhere in Scotland, a distinction is made between community trusts that own land and those that do not, but which may own and manage other assets, such as wind turbines and buildings, on behalf of a locality.

Introducing the Action

This case study focuses on how place-based interventions carried out under the remit of one of HIE's core priority areas, Strengthening Communities, have worked to address spatial inequalities on Lewis. Strengthening Communities aims to build capacity within communities, mainly through supporting development trusts and social enterprises by means of grant and loan funding, as well as mentoring in business development, networking, and strategic planning. Such support is designed to foster the profitability and independence of local bodies, enabling them in turn to facilitate further local social and economic initiatives. HIE's website (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2019: online) states that the specific aims of the Strengthening Communities programme are to:

- Invest in building community capacity and confidence
- Empower communities to acquire, manage and exploit community assets for community benefit
- Enable sustainable growth in the social economy through strong social enterprises.

Strengthening Communities thus aims to be explicitly place-based and attempts to address spatial injustices by empowering and enabling communities to become more autonomous in an area that faces the paired challenges of remoteness (though many from Lewis contest the language of remoteness) and de-population. Lewis is also an area where European money has been heavily invested and there are questions around where that financial support is likely to come from post-Brexit.

This case study report seeks to understand the extent to which HIE's work has facilitated local development and how far in turn this has contributed to the mitigation of spatial injustice. Our initial plan was to focus exclusively on work carried out under the remit of Strengthening Communities between 2007 and 2013. However, given that HIE staff members emphasised that this area of work had essentially continued in more or less the same form after 2013, it made little sense to impose a cut-off date. Instead, we focused our research on emergent narratives and practices around the land buyouts, spatial inequalities, local development and trajectories of socio-political change on Lewis, and on the effects of HIE's work towards supporting and enabling local communities. We specifically focus 1) on the ways in which Strengthening Communities has facilitated community land buy-outs in a bid to promote a new mode of spatial justice in the area and 2) on the nature and effects of its ongoing support for communities – and specifically community trusts – in the aftermath of the buyouts.

3.2 The Locality with regards to Dimensions 1 and 2

Analytical dimension 1: Perception of spatial (in)justice within the locality

Predominantly, interviewees discussed spatial inequalities within Lewis or the Western Isles, rather than in comparison to other areas of Scotland or the UK. However, interviewees did draw comparisons between the Western Isles and the Northern Isles (comprised of Orkney and Shetland); in particular, one interviewee observed that where Shetland has benefitted considerably from the North Sea oil and gas industry, the Western Isles is known primarily for its export of a meat-based delicacy: “They have black gold and we have black pudding”). HIE interviewees sometimes referred to inequalities between Lewis and the mainland with respect to the mainland when seeking to justify the support that HIE were giving to Lewis. For example, one HIE staff member (HIE 2) stated that, “If you take the Highlands and Islands region and GDP over the last 10 years, GDP has risen by 14% regionally. At the same time, the Outer Hebrides [Western Isles] has fallen 14%...well, that actually means that if you took the Outer Hebrides out of that,

regionally they've done much better than 14%. So [the Western Isles are] pulling the region down."

Our interviewees referred to different measures of spatial justice with respect to Lewis. A number of interviewees we spoke to cited the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) – a statistical tool used by Scottish Government agencies to identify areas of multiple deprivation – in speaking about the spatial dimensions of inequality on Lewis. However, despite having won awards for being statistically robust, the SIMD is often criticised for not being particularly applicable or relevant to rural communities, where deprivation is less likely to be geographically clustered and where car ownership (one of its measures) is considered to be a necessity not a luxury (see Ralston et al., 2014 and others). Most interviewees who mentioned the SIMD spoke of the difficulties of applying it in the context of Lewis. Time and again, our interviewees noted that households of highly varied economic means, and engaged in very different occupations, were to be found 'cheek by jowl' (i.e. side by side) across all Lewis' townships and regions. By way of example, interviewees often pointed to the phenomenon, commonly seen in Lewis, of households that continued to dedicate time to crofting – machinery and livestock dotting the land surrounding the house – neighbouring households that were only scantily or not at all engaged in crofting. Others observed that the existence of just one secondary school serving the whole of Lewis, the Nicolson Institute, ensured that the child of the 'local butcher' was educated together with the child of the 'lawyer or doctor', thereby levelling out class and socio-economic differences (CPP 1). Thus, if interviewees acknowledged any spatial distribution of inequality within Lewis, it was often understood to be relatively minimal.

Nonetheless, some geographical differences were noted. Some suggested, for example, that the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) had pinpointed the areas of West Stornoway, Carloway, and Pairc as relatively more deprived areas of Lewis. They emphasised, however, that the reasons for these areas having been highlighted were diverse, suggesting, for example, that in West Stornoway, an area of the main town where there was a greater preponderance of social housing, 'deprivation' was primarily used to denote low levels of income. In Carloway (to the west of Lewis) and South Lochs (south of Stornoway), meanwhile, they cast deprivation more as a function of distance from key services, such as schools and healthcare. There was reference in particular to the fact that Carloway's school had recently shut. Over the course of wider, more informal conversations with local people, specific epithets were sometimes attached to one or another of Lewis' regions. Occasionally, these seemed to bear some association with notions of deprivation or scarcity. Thus, one member of a community trust [Trust 2] noted, for example, that she had grown up hearing that the area she now lived in was a slightly 'rough' place. However, it's important to note that characterisations made about place extended beyond relative perceptions of deprivation per se. We heard some, for example, relate the perception amongst those who weren't from the area that Ness, the northernmost end of the island, had in the past been regarded as 'backward' or under-developed. Meanwhile, Ness residents themselves often referred to the 'independent' spirit of the place, whose relative isolation had demanded that people get things done for themselves. Both characterisations tended to be explained as by-products of the 'remoteness' of Ness relative to Stornoway.

More generally, Stornoway was often seen as a centralised site of bureaucracy and commerce to which resources were disproportionately directed. Interviewees commented that Stornoway benefitted from services that other communities on Lewis did not (e.g. Trust 3). One woman who worked in Stornoway, but lived elsewhere, observed that whereas her local community “has had to work to make [things] happen”, in Stornoway, “the local authority will provide sports facilities...meeting facilities...play facilities for children” (Trust 3). Similarly, Stornoway Primary School is the only primary school on Lewis offering wrap-around childcare (i.e. childcare before and after school times); other primary schools provide fewer opportunities for parents working full-time. This has led to parents living outwith Stornoway (but working in the town) enrolling their children in Stornoway Primary school to the detriment of local schools, some of which are now threatened with closure due to lack of pupils. Commenting on this dynamic, one HIE staff member noted that “the loss of a primary school to a rural area is ripping the heart out of a community”, causing “clashes” as those who have placed their children in “the big school where they’ll have a broader, better education and have better social interaction...face isolation from others in [the] community who maybe haven’t got the means, time or money to do that”. Some of our interviewees suggested that there was a relative lack of local involvement in decision-making over how such resources were allocated in Stornoway. Others, however, pointed out that some local people – particularly those living outwith Stornoway – worked hard to influence how services were provided, in order to ensure that their areas were adequately attended to. Such conversations suggest that spatial injustice is often perceived to occur when local people in one community have to fight for action or positive change that takes place without a struggle elsewhere.

The term “fragile areas” (specifically with respect to Strengthening Communities) was used by HIE staff to refer to areas characterised as having a declining population; under-represented proportions of young people; a lack of economic opportunities; below-average income levels; problems with service provision, such as transport; and other issues reflecting their geographical location. They also made reference to recent work, commissioned by the Scottish Government, and authored by Copus and Hopkins (2018), which defines “Sparsely Populated Areas” as regions where residents lack access to a population of 10,000 people within a 30-minute drive of where they live. This differs from the Scottish Government’s own rural-urban classification, which uses drive times to population centres of 10,000 people as indicative of rurality and remoteness. Interviewees often associated the more resilient communities on Lewis with the presence of vibrant populations and strong service provision. Interviewees (e.g. Int 9 and 10) commented that in the past the Local Authority (Eilean Siar) had built social housing in areas of population decline as a way of maintaining fragile rural populations: “How they’re deciding [where to build] now is to support the diminishing communities...They’re saying to us we need you to build houses there to prevent that community diminishing any further” (Int 9).

Dynamics of spatial (in)justice are also shaped by multiply interacting power relations and layers of governance that can constrain or open up possibilities for progressive action. In particular,

configurations of land ownership, the distribution of common and crofting land, and opportunities for taking action on the land are critical dimensions of local empowerment on Lewis.

Perceptions of spatial inequalities can also vary within different sectors of the population. For example, older adults may be spatially disadvantaged due to the absence of health and social care opportunities; children may be disadvantaged due to the absence of schools and extracurricular activities; and teenagers and young adults may be disadvantaged due to a lack of transport opportunities. A HIE staff member noted that she had met with children living on Lewis between the ages of 14 and 16 years to find out what was important to them, and had been told that there were limited or non-existent bus services for those living in rural areas to enable them to “get to the football match or get to their friend’s house, and they felt isolated in a way that I found quite shocking”. She said that some of these teenagers had parents who didn’t drive or didn’t have time to drive them to where they wanted to go. That was one of the myriad reasons that people across Europe were becoming increasingly urbanised, she said.

Although community land buyouts on Lewis and the establishment of community trusts have opened up possibilities for greater local autonomy in addressing local issues, and some decentralisation of power and resources to localities, the buyouts should not be perceived as leading to spatial equality per se. As noted above, not all community trusts have access to the same opportunities. In the case of Lewis, we found that this was specifically related to whether or not the Trust had established early enough to tap into the potential of community energy; those Trusts that had been able to do so were more financially successful than those that hadn’t. Thus, for example, one Trust, which completed its buyout in the last 4 years, told us that it had struggled to “because we don’t have [a] money-making scheme like... the turbines that Galson has”. The community-owned Galson estate recently installed three turbines on communal land, a project that has brought in a substantial income and enabled Galson to initiate a range of local projects. By contrast, the newer Trust, which was established at around the same time that subsidies for wind energy were cut and was therefore unable to install a renewables scheme as a funding resource, had to “look at the money that [was] generated by the estate already, which would have gone to the landlord – so things like the agreements with the electricity companies, any leases”, as well as exploring new possibilities for working with fish farms in the area.

Analytical dimension 2: Tools and practices for development and cohesion

The European and national policy context

This section discusses the national policy context influencing Lewis and of relevance to the case study. However, it is worth noting that some interviewees – specifically some of those who worked for community trusts – felt removed from policy processes at a Scottish or European level. As one Trust employee put it, “Personally I feel a bit detached from that high level...I think we are really viewing things from an island perspective, from services, from...our own local needs of retaining the population, making sure there’s employment.” (Trust, 1). To many of those we interviewed, policy mattered to the extent that it empowered or enabled communities to take action that was viewed as beneficial to themselves.

Place-based approaches in Scotland have been promoted in recent years due to an austerity-driven neo-liberal emphasis promoting local governance in a drive to encourage cross-sectoral service provision. This has been described by some as the responsabilisation agenda attached to neo-liberalism (Peeters, 2013). This approach demonstrates the Scottish Government's recognition of the need for greater autonomy, whereby communities are empowered to take more action. This Scottish approach is addressed in two key policy documents, specifically the Christie Commission's Review of Public Services Delivery in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2011) and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. However, also important to this case study, and explained in detail below are the evolution and function of CPPs and the Land Reform (Scotland) Acts of 2003 and 2016. These will be explained in turn.

The Christie Commission (Scottish Government, 2011) called for significant reforms to public services due to a need to meet the mounting challenges they faced; arguably this challenge is even greater in remote and rural communities. The report argued that one of the problems with current forms of practice was that services were delivered to communities rather than for or with them. The Commission called for radical reform of public services to meet challenges in service provision as a way of tackling (growing) inequalities. The four key objectives for reform were reported as being:

1. Services built around people and communities
2. Organisations that ensure that services work together and are not duplicated by different providers, thereby improving efficiency.
3. Public service organisations prioritising prevention strategies over current 'responsive' approaches; this was felt to support decreases in inequality.
4. Services that constantly seek to improve performance and reduce costs

The key recommendations emerging from the review included the five Ps - participation, partnership, prevention, performance and place. The review resulted in new statutory powers, specifically the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The Act has set new targets around community participation and engagement and provides a more place-based focus on localities as being the key drivers of reform, and specifically aims to promote greater emphasis on a smaller scale than was happening previously.

Community Planning Partnerships emerged in 2003 and replaced Social Inclusion Partnerships, which were seen to be unable to address poor public service provision to more deprived neighbourhoods. Every local authority has a CPP, which brings together all the agencies providing services in that local authority area. This change was intended to promote spatial justice and to target areas of deprivation. The Christie Commission argued that CPPs had done little to tackle inequalities and so the Community Empowerment (Scotland) 2015 Act includes a statutory requirement that Community Planning Partnerships divide their areas into smaller localities.

These recent policy developments demonstrate a proactive approach to enabling autonomy and encouraging governance to operate at multiple levels across different sectors. The Land Reform (Scotland) Acts of 2003 and 2016 also promote autonomy and a place-based approach in a bid to tackle the spatial injustices implied by the concentration of large areas of land in the hands of a

small number of private landowners. In the 2003 Act statutory rights of access to land were gained and bodies representing rural and crofting communities were allowed to buy land. Specifically relevant to this case study, the “community right-to-buy” was established, which allowed populations of up to 10,000 people to register an interest in land and allows them to buy land ahead of other buyers if the owners put it for sale; meanwhile, crofting communities are allowed to purchase crofting land from existing landowners regardless of whether it is for sale or not. The 2016 Act has progressed the 2003 Act by including provisions for regulations relating to Part 5 ‘Right to buy land to further sustainable development’. When these powers are enforced it is anticipated that compulsory land sales to community bodies will be implemented, where it is considered that the transfer of ownership is assessed as to further the achievement of sustainable development in relation to land, and where maintaining the status quo is considered to be ‘harmful’ to the local community and public interest.

The Scottish Land Fund, which is financed by the Scottish Government and administered by a partnership of the National Lottery Community Fund and HIE, provides funding to communities aspiring to buy land to. Each community can apply for grants of up to £1 million to support its purchase, and the fund covers practical as well as financial support.

HIE are specifically facilitating many of these policies by supporting communities and services and supporting the process of land reform on Lewis. More broadly, HIE delivers the Scottish Government’s Economic Strategy using Scottish Government funds and, to some extent, it is funded through European Structural Investment Funds. The Scottish Government is the managing authority for these funds in Scotland – specifically, the European Rural Development Fund and the European Social Fund – which it distributes to ESIF partners, of which HIE is one. Thus, to some extent these processes are facilitated by European money.

Atterton (2017) provides a useful description of the origins of place-based approaches in Scotland and Currie (2017) provides a critique of the implications of the Christie Commission for Rural Areas in Scotland.

4. The Action

4.1 Basic characteristics of the Action

We looked at two streams of HIE's work that make up its Strengthening Communities priority area: the support it offers to communities that are seeking to buy land and/or purchase infrastructures, such as schools, for local use - and its Account Management programme, which offers financial and other assistance to community trusts (usually after a prior land buy-out) and social enterprises to enable them to become self-sustaining. We explored the workings of these programmes in relation to Lewis' Community Land Trusts in particular.

Community Assets

HIE's Community Assets team supports groups that are looking to acquire land or buildings for their communities. Members of the team act as case officers for the Scottish Land Fund, a Scottish government-supported programme, delivered in partnership with HIE and the National Lottery Community Fund, that serves as the "main financial vehicle for supporting acquisition". The Scottish Land Fund offers grants of up to £1 million to help communities "take ownership of the land and buildings that matter to them, as well as practical support to develop their aspirations into viable projects (The National Lottery, 2019). Lewis has been at the forefront of efforts to bring land into community ownership; around 72% of the population now reside on community owned land.

Account Management

The second lynchpin of HIE's Strengthening Communities work is a system called "Account Management" (AM). AM is process where HIE enters a relationship with a client organisation over a sustained period of time to help it grow and develop its business. The client could be a private business, social enterprise or community enterprise and support is tailored to need. HIE currently account manages around 26 community trusts and social enterprises across the Western Isles, with a similar number of businesses in account management.

In some instances, HIE will support the delivery of a community wide plan, channeling support through a lead organization acting on behalf of the community. This is generally referred to as CAM (Community Account Management) or AMC (account managed community). A new asset owning body will normally be taken into account management to help it grow and become financially secure, although there may be exceptions where there is no immediate development plan or growth aspiration. Once an estate become self-sustaining the Trust may shift its focus to wider community priorities such as service delivery, housing or environmental improvements. At this point the relationship with HIE could shift from AM to CAM if that is deemed more appropriate.

A social enterprise or community trust is judged to be eligible for HIE account management if it is able to "demonstrate growth, both social and economic". One HIE staff member differentiated account management from pre-existing forms of support, noting that, "Similar to other grant funding bodies, our support in the past tended to be project based and a single intervention

subject to usual due diligence. Account management is a closer relationship usually lasting 3-5 years where the organisation - or community - is supported to deliver a growth plan. Support goes beyond financial and recognises the many components required to achieve resilience such as good Board Governance, succession planning, Leadership, Innovation etc.”

It should be noted HIE support is not limited to account management and the flexibility still exists to provide one-off interventions to non-account managed clients where appropriate. Examples include project development support, project funding and training.

The plan is produced and owned by the relevant community trust although HIE can support the process through consultancy support or by funding a development worker. The Plan establishes the steps needed to enable the Trust to realise its objectives, and forms the basis for HIE’s support, which is usually offered over a period of 3-5 years. This support – which this staff member described as “a suite of products and services” – could include direct capital or revenue funding, specialist advice where specific expertise is required, for instance in renewable energy development, mentoring, strategic guidance, capacity building support including board and staff training, knowledge exchange opportunities or graduate placements to bring certain skills into the organization.

HIE has frequently offered Account Management to community trusts that have successfully completed buyouts of privately-owned estates, as a means of supporting their efforts to manage and develop their land and assets. The case of the Galson Trust offers a clear example of this. In 2001, a steering group of community members was formed with the intention of purchasing the privately-owned Galson Estate, constituting 22,260 hectares of land in north-west Lewis. The estate had been in the hands of the same family for around eighty years. Having conducted a local feasibility study, the steering group established the Galson Estate Trust and applied for grant funding, which culminated in an award of £509,882 from the Scottish Land Fund, as well as a further £127,470 from HIE. In January 2007, the Trust acquired the Galson Estate. HIE’s Community Assets Team, which works closely with the Scottish Land Fund, supported the Galson Trust throughout the buyout process. In particular, members of the Galson Trust – like many other trusts across Lewis – emphasised the critical role played by a key member of HIE. Members of a number of different trusts pointed out that their buyouts would have been far less likely to succeed had they not benefitted from this support.

Once the Galson Trust had purchased the estate, it entered into account management with HIE. In practice, this meant that HIE part-financed the construction of the offices that were built to house the Trust and funded the posts of two key staff members until the organisation had garnered enough monies through its turbine scheme to sustain them itself. HIE has also funded five graduate placements at various stages since the estate acquisition, most recently supporting a post designed to promote Gaelic in the locality. HIE staff members were very clear that they would not enter into an account managed relationship with a community trust unless it was evident that the organisation would be capable of becoming financially self-sustaining in the foreseeable future – though they noted that other forms of support could be accessed by organisations that were not under account management. HIE staff members acknowledged that those trusts that had not been able to take advantage of renewable energy as an economic driver faced more challenges in

securing financial autonomy. HIE has, however, supported and continues to support trusts in this position.

In the case of those estates that have not been able to install grid-connected, state-subsidised renewables schemes, efforts have instead been directed towards investing in a broad array of smaller projects. These have included explorations of shared ownership energy schemes, whereby the Trust would directly supply a particular business based on the estate (such as a fish farm) with energy supplied from a wind turbine, for example. However, these projects can be high-risk; one such project that HIE had supported in North Uist, one of the southern islands making up the Western Isles, had initially been found not to be viable due to objections from the Ministry of Defence, which has operations on the neighbouring island of Benbecula. In this particular case, the issue was overcome, but, as one HIE staff member reflected, “Sometimes you can invest in things and they just reach a dead-end”³.

Whilst the vast majority of Trusts that have gone through community land buyouts are now under HIE’s account management, a handful are not. One estate, for example, that was very recently purchased by the local community, is not account managed, because of current limits on its development prospects. As one HIE staff member put it, account management is not guaranteed post-acquisition but HIE will engage in other ways if the Trust has ambitions to develop the asset and until it has a Growth Plan in place.

Representatives from the Trusts we interviewed stated that CAM was fundamental in their ability to reach the stage of community development they were currently at. CAM is flexible and is place-based; it does not impose a one-size fits all solution, but it does replicate successes from elsewhere where appropriate and desired by local communities.

4.2 The action with regards to dimensions 3-5

Analytical Dimension 3: Implementation of HIE’s Strengthening Communities priority area; power; leadership; decision-making; and structures of coordination

i. Cooperation with other actors and between policy levels

HIE’s working relationships with the Western Isles Local Authority

It is important to note the historical entanglements between HIE and the local authority with respect to economic and social development practices on the island. Thus, for example, during the 1990s, the local authority had established a relatively large team of community development staff, a number of whom were located within different townships on Lewis. When HIE was planning its own programme of work in local communities, discussions were held about the possibility of the local authority and HIE working together to implement a joint community development programme in order to prevent the potential duplication of effort – and specifically the duplication of community-based roles. Ultimately, however, HIE went ahead with its programme and the local authority opted to withdraw most of its community-based staff. One HIE staff member told us that she regularly met with a staff member with a similar role in the Economic Development Department of the Western Isles Council. Such meetings ensured that they could “keep abreast of what’s coming

our way for both of us, so we share a lot of information particularly on things like capital projects that could potentially be coming to us”.

However, there were also frustrations at work in the relationship between HIE and the Council. Staff members, both in the Council and in HIE, referred to occasional miscommunications and the difficulties involved in navigating the overlaps between their activities. In many respects, the local authority and HIE still appear to be negotiating their relative roles.

Partnership working

The relational dynamics between the local authority and HIE point towards the complexities and challenges of enabling collaboration between different institutional bodies. However, some we spoke to – although these did not include members of HIE – saw the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), the aforementioned statutory framework for enabling joined-up action amongst different public bodies, as largely not fit for purpose. Some chose not to attend meetings because they regarded it as a “talking shop”, rather than a genuine space for action. A number stated that the bodies engaged in the CPP already adequately communicated with each other and that it was unnecessary to formalise the links between them. It was often implied that the CPP continued as it did largely because its presence was a statutory requirement in all Scottish Local Authority areas.

Whilst some put its inefficacy down to the frictions between personalities sitting on the local authority and the health board, what also emerged were the difficulties of streamlining relationships between institutions ordered around radically different scales and dynamics of power. Thus, for example, where the local authority considered itself “autonomous”, beholden to the regions (throughout the Western Isles) that its councillors represented, the Health Board, like the HIE office, was heavily orientated towards fulfilling obligations set higher up their respective institutional chains elsewhere in Scotland and more widely in the UK. Similarly, each body was subject to the demands set by their different funding streams, requiring them to spend money, for example, within specific timeframes – with the effect that, by necessity, taking action as an individual organisation tended to be prioritised over collaborative strategic planning, sometimes with deleterious effects. One recent example of this had arisen in the Carloway area of Lewis, where the Hebridean Housing Partnership had hoped to build up to twenty new housing units as part of a large-scale programme of house-building funded by the Scottish Government. A key stipulation of this funding required that new constructions be completed within around three years of finance being issued. The pressure to build quickly made it difficult for HHP to coordinate with other members of the CPP, such as the Health Board and the Council, as well as with local communities, who were concerned about how the planned constructions should be coordinated with service provision.

Analytical Dimension 4: Autonomy, participation and engagement

Autonomy of HIE’s Stornoway-based Strengthening Communities team and other local actors

A broadly shared view emerged that, over the past ten years, there has been an organisational trend towards centralisation. A number of our interviewees – many of them now working in other roles outside of HIE, including in the Local authority, Community Trusts and elsewhere – fondly recalled

earlier days in the organisation's life, when HIE's local offices enjoyed greater autonomy from the headquarters in Inverness, enabling staff to respond more flexibly and creatively to local needs than they are able to currently. Many of our research participants noted the crucial contributions of key HIE staff members at that time in supporting nascent community associations through the complex and laborious navigation of the land buyout process. The names of these figures seemed to gather their own valence in this context; in our ethnographic conversations, which were not dictated by the specific theme of HIE, these names were often brought into conversation without any immediate accompanying reference to the organisation behind them. One or two indicated how such figures, who continue to work for HIE now, pointed up a more relational and locally grounded mode of organisational practice that had been perceived to be in decline over the previous ten years.

What had come in its stead, they said, was a gravitational shift in decision-making and control towards Inverness, somewhat stymying the capacity of area-based HIE officers to respond with versatility to local needs and desires. One interviewee observed that many of HIE's former employees now worked in roles that enabled them to exercise the kind of freedom they felt was no longer available to HIE staff; community trusts were one of those spaces. The centralising movement was exemplified, one interviewee reflected, by the recent massive investment in HIE's Inverness headquarters and in the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) campus on the same site. This interviewee expressed concern that this signified a focalising of resources in Inverness, and a diminution of funds for outlying areas, including UHI sites – to which HIE funds have been heavily awarded – across more remote Highland and Island locations, including Lewis.

Autonomy of account managed community land trusts

In terms of HIE's working relationships with there was a general sense amongst some interviewees, that whilst the organisation remained crucial to the survival of community trusts in some cases (not least by virtue of its direct funding of management roles trusts not in receipt of benefits from renewable energy projects), HIE's capacity to tailor its offering effectively towards local needs had been increasingly curtailed. Some pointed particularly to HIE's uneven practices of account management; styles and requirements for account managed trusts seemed to vary widely according to the characteristics and tendencies of the HIE staff member at the helm. Trust staff often reported receiving vastly different answers, or being subject to different bureaucratic requirements, depending on who within HIE they communicated with. There were also suggestions from different quarters (within localities) that HIE funding wasn't necessarily best tailored to local needs, particularly in the sense that they were pitched to large- rather than small-scale economic projects. Some reported that they were never quite sure as to why some projects were funded and others not, or as to why certain trusts were taken into account management and others not – the logic of HIE decision-making was not clear or well-understood by those outside the organisation.

Nonetheless, it was clear that those who were within account managed trusts benefitted considerably from it, finding that they were given grants, as well as guidance and orientation on external funding that they would not otherwise have been privy to. At the same time, some suggested that non-account managed community organisations had been left out in the cold, and suffered greater challenges in progressing their work; in this, there was a suggestion that HIE

account management was something of a zero-sum game: it was constituted as a near guarantee for growth – or failing that, continuity – for those landowning trusts that were in receipt of account management. But one or two non-landowning trusts that were not account-managed attested to the difficulties of progressing without HIE's support.

Analytical Dimension 5: Expression and Mobilisation of place-based knowledge and adaptability

Forms of place-based knowledge: common understanding of problems, joint learning and shared network capital

The research participants we interviewed as part of this project were found to occupy multiple roles at different levels of governance, or represent both their organisation and a community, and, on occasion, a Trust and the CPP too. Participants described this as “wearing multiple hats” or being actors in a number of different contexts and/or organisations. For example, one research participant was a member of a community, a community trust, another organisation and the CPP. Wearing multiple hats has meant that research participants were present, in different roles, across different levels and layers of governance. Being engaged in multiple roles means that spatial inequalities and injustices are understood in more complex ways. There was good awareness of HIE's work and the fact that local practitioners took on multiple responsibilities helped – in some respects – to facilitate common understanding, joint learning and shared networks. Thus, a cultural environment with evidence of both bridging and bonding social capital helps to facilitate the success of Strengthening Communities. A further example of this capability is implied by the annual meeting that takes place between HIE-managed community landowners to share best-practice and facilitate joint-learning. This enables successful approaches to be understood and applied elsewhere where applicable. Whilst HIE originally facilitated this process, this annual meeting has recently been taken over by the landowning trusts themselves, and is known as the Community Landowners Network meeting. This suggests that HIE has fostered a process for joint-learning that has gained longer-term buy-in and resilience.

Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) represent a formalised mechanism by which joint-learning and best practice are meant to be instigated. HIE's inclusion on the CPP allows them to collaborate with different governing actors, translating and improving top-down and bottom-up contexts and methods of delivery that best meet needs and target spatial inequalities and injustices.

The entanglements between different layers of governance and multiple governing actors were challenging for us to understand initially. Figure 1, below, shows Currie's fieldwork notebook of her understanding of the interplay of these different organisations and governance levels.

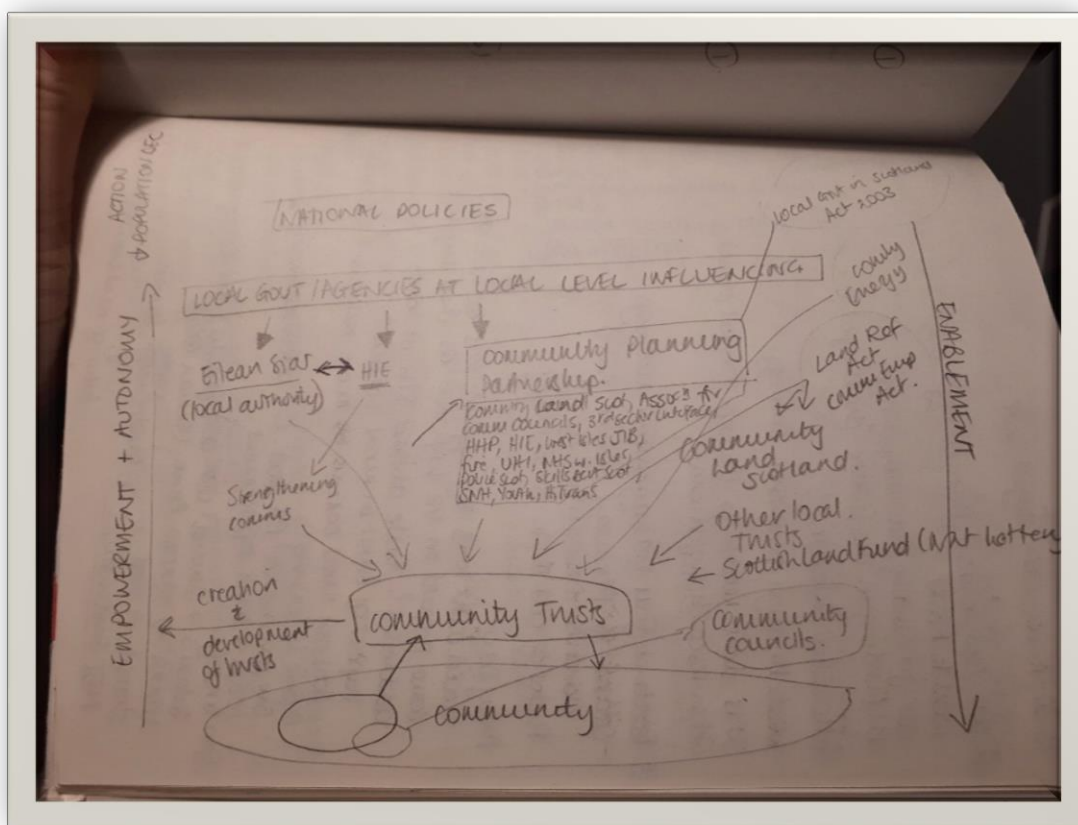


Figure 1: Rough field sketch of the ways different communities in Lewis are working together to facilitate spatial justice and place-based approaches in communities.

Spatial scope of intervention and the mobilisation/adaptability of knowledge

Our interviews suggested that Trusts have mechanisms for assessing the impact of their work. These differ to those used by HIE to assess impact. On the whole assessment of impact was related to progress and the benchmark of what was happening before the community buy-outs. Trusts often compared their progress to other Trusts, with those who perceived themselves to be less successful usually attributing this to a lack of access to community energy.

HIE (thus Strengthening Communities) were found to be highly responsive to place-based needs and the unique characteristics, dynamics, assets, social capital and human agency related to each community. The programmes of work organised under Strengthening Communities has been the result of HIE's long-standing investment in the region, which has been fundamental in mobilising place-based responses by instigating and employing adaptable approaches to suit needs identified by communities to a greater or lesser extent through the years.

5. Final Assessment: Capacities for Change

Synthesising Dimension A: Assessment of promoters and inhibitors

Promoters

- Communities on Lewis and Harris that have bought out their land from private landowners over the past two decades have been able – as a result – to develop locally-tailored projects and initiatives. These include land-based and cultural regeneration schemes; investment in local transport; and small grants programmes for local activities, amongst others. It is unlikely that similar schemes would have emerged had the estates remained in private ownership. HIE was viewed as being critical to this process.
- HIE's account management process has proved a crucial source of support for community land trusts seeking to establish themselves after completing buyouts, as it recognises that communities that have gained autonomy must be enabled to establish their longer-term resilience. This is important, as it demonstrates HIE's recognition that processes of empowerment and autonomy do not stop when Trusts form and assets are purchased.
- Recent Scottish Government legislation must not go unrecognised, in particular the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Land Reform (Scotland) Acts of 2003 and 2016. These have helped to create an environment that enables communities to seek to own their own assets. However, as one of our interviewees emphasised, the wider support and funding provided by the Scottish Land Fund, HIE, the Comhairle and others made the most practical difference to the capacity of communities to take ownership of assets. As she put it, "If you map availability of acquisition funding against acquisitions, there is a very clear direct relationship".
- This case study has highlighted that the actors that we interviewed were highly networked and often "wore multiple hats" representing numerous interests. As mentioned in 4.2.3, this meant that research participants were present, in different roles, across different levels and layers of governance. This practice heightened awareness of spatial inequalities and injustices and allowed actors to respond with increased awareness of complexity. The CPP is meant to perform such a role, but our research suggests that the CPP effectively added another layer of bureaucracy to relational processes that were already underway on Lewis.

Inhibitors

- The effects of community buyouts have not been equal across Lewis; those Trusts that own large assets or have been able to take advantage of government subsidies to install wind turbines on their land enjoy more resources, which enable them, in turn, to facilitate more wide-ranging place-based action. In short, community land buy-outs may have decreased spatial inequalities between Lewis and the rest of Scotland, but could be seen to have promoted greater spatial inequalities within Lewis, due in large part to differential access to community energy.
- With respect to Account Management, HIE's emphasis on the need for community trusts to demonstrate a capacity for economic growth in order to qualify for financial support meant

that smaller, newer community landowners – often with fewer assets to develop - experienced more difficulties in attracting funding. There is potentially a danger here of creating a two-tier system, whereby older, more asset-rich trusts are privileged over newer, more economically precarious trusts.

- Although not specifically mentioned by research participants, Brexit represents a threat for a number of reasons: lack of access to EU funds; uncertainty leading to economic downturn; and difficulties sustaining the current and future population of migrants, who play a key role in the rural economy of Scotland.

Synthesising Dimension B: Competences and capacities of stakeholders

The Action has increased the competences and capacities of the communities it works with by enabling communities to operate more autonomously. By facilitating the purchase of land or other assets that were previously unavailable or unattainable, Strengthening Communities has supported the creation and establishment of a new layer of local governance in the form of community trusts. What Trusts learn as they develop is shared through HIE, Community Land Scotland and the Annual meeting to support other Trusts in earlier stages of development.

Synthesising Dimension C: Connecting the action to procedural and distributive justice

The Action directly responds to the wider needs of Lewis - as it facilitates a process of empowerment that increases autonomy and access to assets, most specifically land. Better access and community rights to and ownership of the land have been seen to reverse population and service decline, which is a major source of injustice and inequality in comparison to other Scottish areas.

The Action answers calls by the Christie Commission in their review of public service delivery about place-based solutions to challenges involving multi-levels of governance across sectors. Arguably this process has been facilitated more through Trusts rather than through the Community Planning Partnerships, working in localities.

Most of our interviewees viewed HIE's work as having been integral to the process of land reform in Lewis. In this sense, HIE's work has supported the reform of a major spatial injustice – the right to land. However, HIE can only support those Trusts that are able to demonstrate a basic capacity for economic growth, which not all can, though it should be acknowledged that communities seeking to buy assets would need to demonstrate sustainability to any potential funder. The focus of a place-based approach at this level of governance thus runs the risk of promoting autonomy in the stronger communities to the detriment of weaker communities; which may lead to place-based disparities within Lewis. Due to the relatively early stage of Trusts' development on Lewis, it is not yet clear how exactly development processes will play out. The increased withdrawal of the local authority in community development processes

due to austerity measures and concerns that they duplicate HIE's efforts may also result in future distributive inequalities, particularly where the local authority has been supporting communities that HIE currently does not. It is important to note that HIE is only one amongst a number of agencies working to support communities in the Western Isles.

It should be noted that the Action is located within a culturally and politically supportive environment that enables actors working at different levels of governance to come together and facilitates working across policy sectors.

The Action is implicitly spatially just - it does not discriminate in terms of who can apply and is designed around empowering actors to take possession of (and manage) previously inaccessible assets in flexible ways. Although the benefits of this are only now beginning to be seen, the full extent of this enhanced autonomy in Lewis is still at its early stages. Since its establishment, HIE has sought to tackle the place-based disparities and challenges faced by some of Scotland's most remote communities. HIE is inherently place-based and its current programmes, including the Action, are the result of 50 years of refinement to support such place-based processes. It should be noted however, that these programmes are not without their external challenges. Specifically, austerity has, in the view of some Trust interviewees, led to some withdrawal of HIE's activities on Lewis itself. Brexit also poses challenges, not least uncertainty, as well as the likelihood of lack of access to European funding mechanisms.

6. Conclusions

In the introduction, we introduced the Action and stated that it was an interesting case because it sought to understand the following points:

1. The story of Land Reform in Scotland and how community land ownership enhances (and/or curtails) the autonomy and empowerment of communities
2. Place-based processes of empowerment and enablement in communities
3. The contribution of HIE's Strengthening Communities priority area to the promotion and facilitation of community land buy-outs.
4. The effectiveness of spatially-targeted interventions in addressing inequality
5. New models of local governance and their effects on community-based organisations (community trusts, buy-outs, the centralisation of HIE)
6. The interactions of multiple institutions working towards social and economic development on Lewis.

In summary, we presented the spatially unjust picture of access to land in Scotland and showed how the Action has worked to address inequality on Lewis, through its support of community land buyouts and the establishment of trusts. We have described the new models of local governance that have arisen in the form of community trusts, and commented on the ways they have supported local action, as well as describing the interactions of multiple institutions at different levels of governance in fostering community development.

We wish also to highlight that:

- Spatial injustices occur both within Lewis as well as with respect to the wider Scottish context. In Lewis, people living outwith Stornoway were felt to be disadvantaged and have to work to obtain services and opportunities that residents in Stornoway take for granted.
- This case study has highlighted that HIE has been instrumental in the process of facilitating community land buy-outs (and thereby Land Reform) on Lewis.
- Community land buy-outs facilitate place-based responses, but these opportunities are not necessarily equitable across Lewis. The opportunities presented to communities when the buy-outs occur are uneven; those Trusts who already have community energy schemes in place enjoy more resources, which enable them to facilitate place-based action. It should be noted here that some of the wealthier trusts (both land-owning and non-land-owning), are, to some extent investing funds arising from renewable energy schemes and other developments outwith their immediate communities.
- Community land buy-outs lead to greater autonomy, but this may not always equate to empowerment for all sectors of the community. Community land buy-outs represent only a first step towards facilitating a place-based approach in community; however, continued support from HIE has been required after the process, particularly for those Trusts without the asset of community energy available.

- Interviewees never represented “one thing”. The majority of interviewees at a minimum represented the organisation they worked for and the community they lived in. Many had previously worked for other organisations, or were also part of the CPP or CLS. Their stories often reflected their (conflicted) entanglements of their multiple roles.
- HIE and Strengthening Communities have changed over time; increased centralisation and co-ordination from Inverness and less contact with a dedicated person were noted. However, this appears to be linked to interviewees’ perceptions of what deteriorating economic situations mean for these areas; external factors such as austerity and Brexit will influence current processes through their impact on HIE.

From our Strengthening Communities case study, it is apparent that spatial justice can be promoted through place-based action, specifically in this case by enabling local communities to access resources that allow them to initiate activities that are tailored to local needs.

7. References

- Atterton, J. (2017) Place-based policy approaches and Rural Scotland, Working Paper from RESAS Research Deliverable 3.4.2 Place-based policy and its implications for policy and service delivery (July). Available at https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/3808/342_placebased_policy_approaches_and_rural_scotland.pdf
- Copus, A., and Hopkins, J., (2018) "Demographic Change in the Sparsely Populated Areas in Scotland 2016 – 2046" Research Note. Available online at <https://www.hutton.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/research/srp2016-21/RD3.4.1%20Note%20WP1-3%20web%20-%20published.pdf>
- Currie, M., (2017) Implications for rural areas of the Christie Commission's report on the future delivery of public services. Produced as part of the Scottish Government's Strategic Research Programme 2016-2021. Available online at https://www.sruc.ac.uk/downloads/download/1338/implications_for_rural_areas_of_the_christie_commission_s_report_on_the_future_delivery_of_public_services
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2019) "Strengthening Communities and Fragile Areas" Available online at: <http://www.hie.co.uk/about-hie/our-priorities/strengthening-communities-and-fragile-areas/default.html>
- The Angus Macleod Archive, (2019) <http://www.angusmacleodarchive.org.uk/view/index.php?path=%2F1.+History+of+Lewis%2F2.+Land+Ownership+and+Crofting%2F8.+Crofting+Land+Tenure.pdf>
- Peeters, 2013 'Responsibilisation on government's terms: new welfare and the governance of responsibility and solidarity' *Social Policy and Society* 12(4) pp. 583-595
- Ralston, K., Dundas, R., and Leyland, A. H. (2014) "A comparison of the Scottish index of multiple deprivation (SIMD) 2004 with the 2009 + 1 SIMD: does choice of measure affect the interpretation of inequality in mortality?" *International Journal of Health Geographics*, 13, 27.
- Scottish Government (2011) "The Commission of the Future Delivery of Public Services" Chaired by the Christie Commission. The Scottish Government, Edinburgh.
- The National Lottery (2019) "Scottish Land Fund". Available at: <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/scottish-land-fund>

8. Annexes

8.1 List of Interviewed Experts

Number	Organisation represented	Type and place of interview	Date of interview
1	HIE	In-person Lewis	25/07/18
2	HIE	By phone	23/11/18
3	HIE	In-person, Inverness	07/06/18
4	HIE	In-person Lewis	12/07/18
5	HIE	In-person Lewis	25/07/18
6	HIE	In-person Lewis	12/07/18
7	Western Isles NHS	In-person Lewis	12/07/18
8	Community Land Scotland	In-person Lewis	26/07/18
9	Hebridean Housing Partnership	In-person Lewis	02/08/18
10	Hebridean Housing Partnership	In-person Lewis	27/07/18
11	Local authority	In-person Lewis	06/09/19
12	Local authority	In-person Lewis	28/07/18
13	Trust	In-person Lewis	13/07/18
14	Trust	In-person Lewis	11/07/18
15	Trust	In-person Lewis	27/07/18
16	Trust	In-person Lewis	08/08/18

Table 2: list of interviewed experts

8.2 Stakeholder Interaction Table

Type of Stakeholders		Other governance level also involved in	Stakeholders' ways of involvement in the project
HIE – head of Action	1	N/A	Interviewee
HIE – Head of economic development	1	N/A	Interviewee
HIE – Local account manager	2	Community	Interviewees
HIE – staff in Lewis	1	Community	Interviewee
CPP (HIE – Area manager)	1	Community	Interviewee
CPP (Western Isles NHS)	1	Community	Interviewee
CPP (Hebridean Housing Partnership)	1	Community	Interviewee
CPP (Local authority)	2	Community	Interviewees
CPP (Community Land Trust)	1	Community, Community Land Scotland	Interviewee
Community Land Scotland	1	Community, Community Land Trust	Interviewee
Hebridean Housing Partnership	1	Community	Interviewee
Community Land Trusts	3	Community	Interviewees

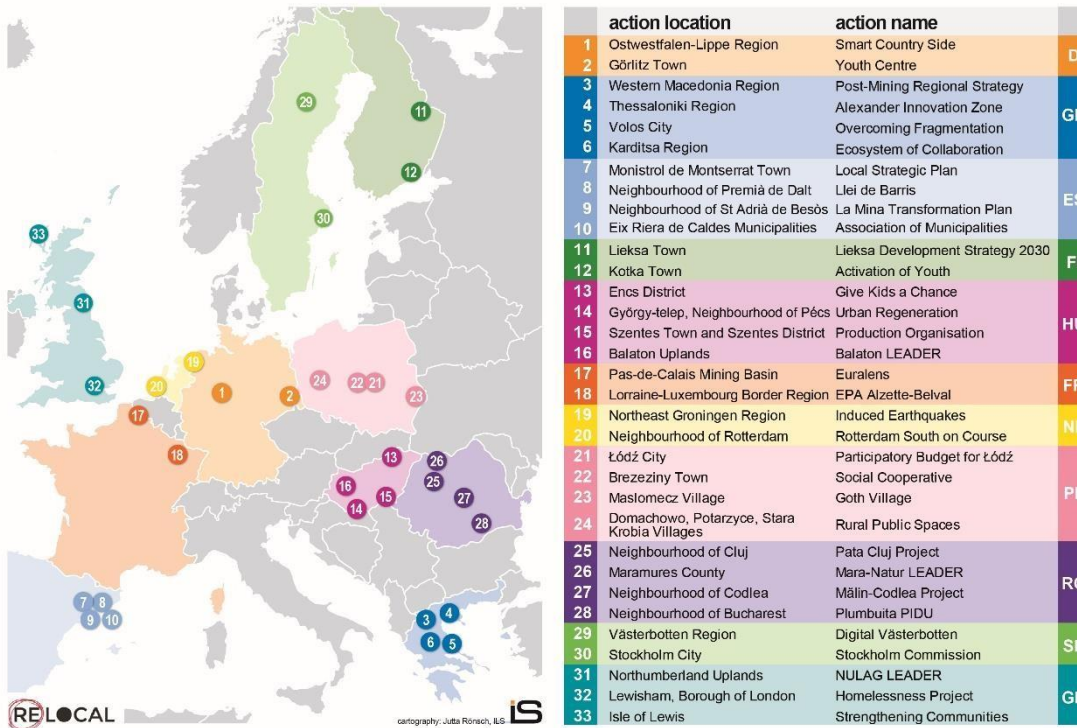
Table 3: Stakeholder interaction table

The RELOCAL Project

EU Horizon 2020 research project '**Resituating the local in cohesion and territorial development**' –**RELOCAL** aims to identify factors that condition local accessibility of European policies, local abilities to articulate needs and equality claims and local capacities for exploiting European opportunity structures.

In the past, especially since the economic and financial crisis, the European Social Model has proven to be challenged by the emergence of spatially unjust results. The RELOCAL hypothesis is that **processes of localisation and place-based public policy** can make a positive contribution to spatial justice and democratic empowerment.

The research is based on **33 case studies** in **13 different European** countries that exemplify development challenges in terms of spatial justice. The cases were chosen to allow for a balanced representation of different institutional contexts. Based on case study findings, project partners will draw out the factors that influence the impact of place-based approaches or actions from a comparative perspective. The results are intended to facilitate a greater local orientation of cohesion, territorial development and other EU policies.



The RELOCAL project runs from October 2016 until September 2020.

Read more at <https://relocal.eu>

Project Coordinator:

University of Eastern Finland

Contact: Dr. Petri Kahila (petri.kahila@uef.fi)

