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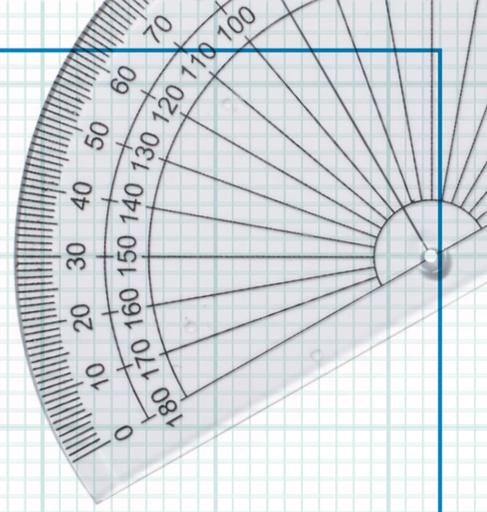
Community Business in 2030: Literature Review

About this paper

Over a number of months in 2018, Forum for the Future convened an inquiry into the future of community business, working with Goldsmith's University, Steve Wyler, Cooperatives UK, Locality, the Plunkett Foundation and Social Enterprise UK. The report of the inquiry can be accessed on the Power to Change website.

As part of the work of the inquiry, the team from Goldsmith's University undertook a thorough literature review relating to community business – looking at its history and its possible future. This paper shares the findings of their review.

About the author

Goldsmiths University of London is known for bringing together research expertise from across the humanities, arts, social sciences and computing to commit to making a real difference to society, culture and the economy. They respond to the challenges and opportunities affecting lives both locally and globally, while looking beyond to help shape a better future.

The research for this project was directed by Professor Natalie Fenton in the Department of Media, Communication and Cultural Studies. It was carried out by Dr. Deborah Grayson, who has a PhD in media and communications at Goldsmiths university. Her research interests include the interfaith sector, civil society and the politics of knowledge production. She is co-founder of intergenerational archiving project The GLC Story, retelling the history of the 1980s Greater London Council for current Londoners.

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Executive summary

In the context of rapid social, political and technological change in the contemporary moment, 'community business' is emerging as a potential solution to many endemic and systemic problems. The term 'community business' has been adopted by Power to Change, a grant maker set up in 2015. Their definition of community businesses, which this report broadly follows, are initiatives which are locally rooted, trading for the benefit of the community, which are accountable to the local community and have broad community impact. These can sometimes be hard to disaggregate fromother kinds of activities, and this report also considers connected movements such as social enterprises and cooperatives.

Community business has a long history, from mediaeval guilds and friendly societies to philanthropic model communities. Centralisation and nationalisation in the first half of the 20th century incorporated many community business-like activities, but others also flourished in the context of the social changes in the post-war period. Neoliberalism and more recently austerity have both provided opportunities and placed restrictions on the advancement of community businesses. Key themes throughout this history have included ambivalent relationships with the state, an association with very different political projects, and the influence of external factors such as empire and migration.

Power to Change estimate there are 6,600-7,000 community businesses in operation in the UK (Diamond *et al.* 2017), with a total market income in 2017 estimated at £1.2 billion. Community businesses have 35,500 reported paid staff and involve around 119,500 volunteers. They have a range of positive social impacts, including improved health and well-being, and facilitating reductions in loneliness. Some subsectors such as community energy, community shops and pubs have a strong evidence base, while there is very little data on others. Community businesses are supported by a range of infrastructure organisations.

Trends which are likely to shape the future of community business include demographic changes and movement and migration; automation and changes to communication technologies; globalisation, developments in nonconventional economic metrics, and growing inequality; climate change and resource depletion; and Brexit, devolution and a shrinking state, alongside changes to British political culture.
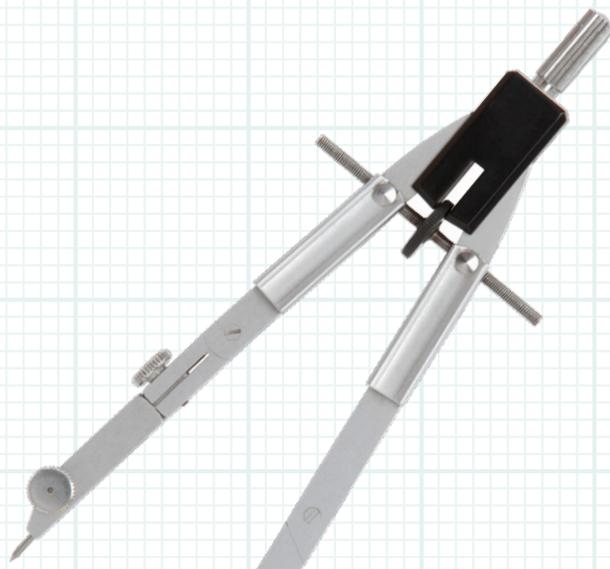
Community businesses are imagined to play a strong positive role in the future. Contributions they are seen as being able to make to society include meeting growing care needs and harnessing technology for equitable ends. They are also seen as a means of keeping investment in the real economy, reorienting trade away from profiteering, providing homes rather than investments, building resilient local economies and addressing inequalities. Other benefits could also include adapting to resource scarcity and decarbonisation, enabling co-productive relationships with the state, and embedding democratic participation in everyday structures.

A range of actions which could benefit community business are identified. For the state, these might involve tightening company law to create a level playing field for ethical businesses, devolving meaningful decision-making powers, reorienting state commissioning to favour local providers, enabling a cultural shift towards coproduction, and bringing in policies for land reform. Independent funders could support asset transfer and community share issues, strengthen business support, and provide grant and other subsidy in ways which enhance social impact without discouraging trading. For the community business movement, actions which could bring about a positive future for community business include engaging critically with concepts of community, devolving power within the movement and enhancing community engagement and control, making realistic claims for the sector, providing education to enable participation, articulating the political positions of the different actors, and developing robust knowledge practices.
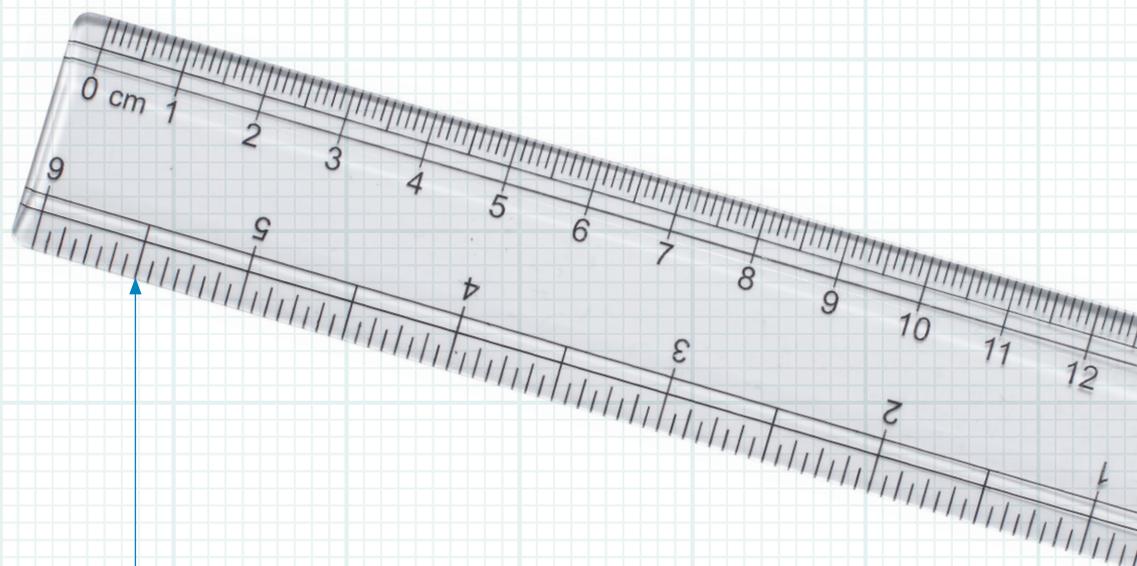
1. Introduction

The contemporary moment is characterised by rapid social, political and technological change: a time when old orthodoxies are being challenged and innovative solutions to long-standing problems being developed. But this is also a time of deep and intensifying social inequalities and perhaps irreversible environmental destruction. In this context, 'community business' is emerging as a potential solution to many endemic and systemic problems.

The term 'community business' was first used in a systematic way in Scotland in the 1980s, but fell out of favour after some high profile collapses of these enterprises (see section 2.3). More recently it has been adopted by Power to Change, an organisation set up in 2015 to distribute Big Lottery grant money to community businesses. It also seeks to promote the concept, and to create a "comprehensive evidence base for community business" (Annual Report 2015, 8) through an attached Research Institute.

This report was produced by Goldsmiths University, as part of 'The Future of Community Business' inquiry being led by Forum for the Future. This programme was commissioned by Power to Change, with advice and input from four strategic partners: Cooperatives UK, Social Enterprise UK, Locality and the Plunkett Foundation. It seeks to produce a vision for a thriving community business sector in 2030, with the following overall objectives:

1. Support the long-term sustainability of community businesses by offering tools and insights, and setting out opportunities for future success;

2. Build the capacity, knowledge and confidence of the sector by giving them the opportunity to meet, reflect on common challenges and solutions, and explore long-term strategic issues;

3. Suggest new ways of supporting, enabling and advocating for the long-term success of community business;

4. Inform and inspire civil society more broadly about the role community business could play.

This literature review constitutes part of the insight gathering phase, and sits alongside expert interviews, two regional workshops and a toolkit to enable stakeholders to run local events. This phase will be followed by a series of visioning and roadmapping workshops to produce a vision for the future of community business.

The report traces the history and origin of community business (section 2); provides an overview of the sector today (section 3); looks at trends affecting community businesses (section 4); looks at how those within the sector have imagined the future of community business so far (section 5); and suggests actions that might drive towards a positive future for community business (section 6).

1.1 Definition and related terms

Power to Change's definition of community business is an organisation which fits the following four criteria:

Locally rooted: They are rooted in a particular geographical place and respond to its needs. For example, that could be high levels of urban deprivation or rural isolation.

Trading for the benefit of the local community: They are businesses. Their income comes from things like renting out space in their buildings, trading as cafes, selling produce they grow or generating energy.

Accountable to the local community: They are accountable to local people, for example through a community shares offer that creates members who have a voice in the business's direction.

Broad community impact: They benefit and impact their local community as a whole. They often morph into the hub of a neighbourhood, where all types of local groups gather, for example to access broadband or get training in vital life skills." (Power to Change 2018)

Some of the complexities and ambiguities of this definition have been explored in an additional document produced by the organisation (Power to Change 2017). This report broadly follows the definition above, while recognising that there are overlaps with initiatives classified using other terms. Other terms which are commonly used in the sector include:

Social Enterprise: this is by far the most widely used term, and refers to asset-locked trading businesses, designed to deliver social goods, in which profits are reinvested into the business or into other activities with social benefit. Community businesses can be considered a subset of social enterprises, but with a stronger local base and with additional forms of accountability to the communities they serve.

Cooperative: organisations owned and run by members using cooperative principles. Many community businesses are cooperatives, but with an additional emphasis on being locally rooted within small geographical area, and on providing broad community impact and accountability. (For example, a worker co-op where only employees had decision-making rights would not be a community business, but a pub which had both workers and clientele as members would be.)

Mutual: "an organisation owned by, and run for, the benefit of its members" (BIS 2011, 2). Mutuals are a type of cooperative legal structure. Cooperative Societies and Community Benefit Societies are specifically mutual legal structures, and many community businesses use them, although the structures themselves do not have to be locally rooted or have broad community impact.

Community Interest Company: legal structure created in 2004 for social enterprises. Some community businesses use this structure, but the definition of 'community' when incorporating a CIC is not necessarily linked to place.

Community Anchor Organisation: defined by Locality as "place-based, multipurpose organisations, which are locally-led and deeply rooted in their neighbourhoods" (Locality 2017, 6). Broadly equivalent to the kind of community business that Power to Change describes as a 'multipurpose hub'.

Community Development: "a way of strengthening civil society by prioritising the actions of communities", seeking empowerment and ways of strengthening the capacity of people as active citizens, as well as the capacity of institutions to work in dialogue with them (SCDC 2018). Community businesses have often been an outcome of community development work to identify local needs.

Development Trust: "community-led organisations using a combination of enterprise and creativity to improve the quality of life for local people" (DTAS 2018). Development Trusts have often taken on running assets following Community Asset Transfers. The majority of DTs are likely to fit with the criteria of community businesses.

Community shares: a form of share capital established in 2008 which can only be issued by co-operative societies, community benefit societies and charitable community benefit societies, and often used to support community businesses. The Community Shares Unit, a joint initiative between Locality and Co-ops UK, was launched 2012 (Locality/Co-ops UK 2015).
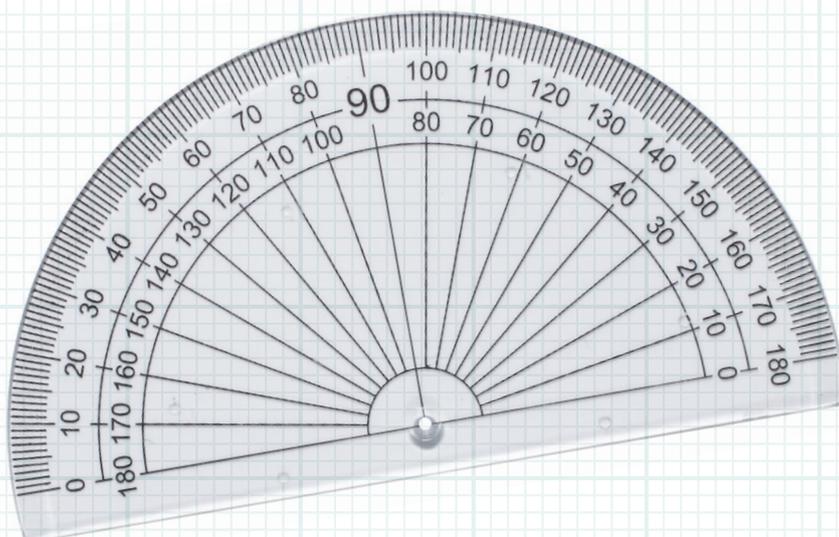
2. The history and origins of community business

'Community business' is not a widely-used term in the literature, of Power to Change's own research reports. Given the vast changes to both concepts of 'community' and 'business' which have occurred historically, this account is largely of initiatives which could be considered part of connected movements rather than strictly meeting Power to Change's current criteria. The first five sections give a broadly chronological account: 2.1 provides earlier historical background up to the end of the 19th century, 2.2 looks at community business in the context of nationalisation centralisation in the first half of the 20th century, 2.3 considers community business in the context of the social changes of the 1970s and 80s, 2.4 looks at the neoliberal period up to the financial crash, and 2.5 brings the history up-to-date with the Big Society and austerity policies since 2010.

Section 2.6 explores three key themes which emerge from this account: one concerning the relationship to community business and the state, a second looking at divergent approaches and political commitments within the movement, and a third bringing in external factors such as empire, migration, global financial cycles and access to or exclusion from land.

2.1 Early history

Two recent books, Wyler's (2017) In Our Hands: the history of community business and Mayo's (2017) A Short History of Cooperation and Mutuality, trace the long history of how cooperation and mutual aid have been combined with forms of trade and enterprise. Early examples include the collegia in ancient Rome which brought together artisans in different trades, and rotating savings and credit associations which can be found around the world.

In Britain, the best documented organisations which prefigured today's community businesses were the mediaeval guilds: small-scale membership-based enterprises, usually based around a trade such as blacksmithing or locksmithing, although towns could also be run as guilds. Members who were apprenticed within the trade would then have social obligations to one another, such as supporting the widows and children of members who died. They would often also fulfil social obligations to the wider community, building and maintaining infrastructure within towns and taking in turns to police the local area (Wyler 2017).

Before the advent of the modern state, guilds were responsible for regulating working hours and determining the number of rest days and religious holidays, as well as setting prices and establishing local monopolies. These powers were lost over the Tudor period, with guilds having much of their wealth confiscated when Henry VIII broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, and Elizabeth I withdrawing a number of delegated powers from working class guilds in 1562, after which the right to set working hours and prices for goods were held by local magistrates (Mayo 2017). The first national systems of tax

and provisions for relief of the poor were also established in the Elizabethan period, with charitable purposes defined for the first time in law, with poor relief subsequently increasingly provided by charities (ibid).

Forms of mutual self-help re-emerged with the foundation of friendly societies or mutual aid societies which began to be established in the early 1600s — by 1801 it was estimated that 7,200 existed in Britain, with 630,000 working-class subscribers (Eden 1801). These were often responding to the social problems arising from the rapid urbanisation which followed the enclosures of the common land across Britain. Workers coming together to try and improve their conditions also acted as proto-trade unions, such as the Fleet Street print compositors in the 18th-century who tried to organise to improve their wages and went on strike when these negotiations failed. Five men were prosecuted, with worker corporation being described by the judge as "a very heinous crime" (Mayo 2016, 26)

While the Rochdale Pioneers — a group of workers and weavers who came together to establish a food store in 1844 — are often talked about as the birth of the cooperative movement, there were in fact many cooperative societies already established by that time (Mayo 2017, 36). Holyoake's 1857 book Self-help by the People told the story of the Rochdale Pioneers, and helped popularise the cooperative principles they developed. The Plymouth Mutual Cooperative Society, for example, was founded in 1860 inspired by Holyoake's book, and was highly successful: within a year they had enough surplus to establish a library, and 20 years on the co-op was running a range of enterprises including seven grocery stores, butchers, bakery and two coal stores. The pattern of rapidly diversifying activities to meet different community needs is one which continues with today's community businesses.

Alongside forms of mutual aid by and for working class people, other kinds of community business were instigated by philanthropists. Towns such as Saltaire, Bourneville and Port Sunlight were established in the second half of the 19th century by wealthy businessmen to house their workers in conditions that were considerably better than those elsewhere, although the degree to which they permitted community control of these resources varied (Wyler 2017, 95-100). These model communities were partly inspired by Robert Owen's experiments in the early 1800s. After providing housing and education for his workers in New Lanark, Owen developed a wide-ranging vision of a society run as self-governing and self-sufficient villages of cooperation where everyone would engage in enterprise for the common good. However, he failed to enlist the support he expected from other industrialists and from lawmakers to make this a reality within Britain — and his attempt to bring his ideas to life in the colony of New Harmony in the US was short lived (Wyler 2009a, 35).
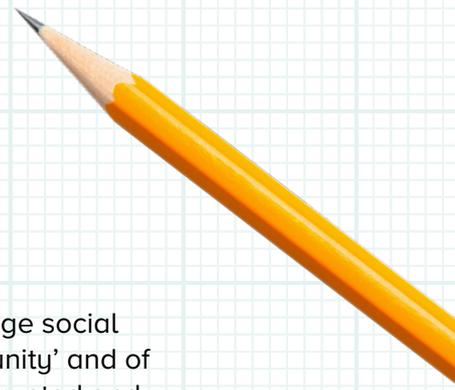
Between the medieval period and the 20th century there were huge social and economic upheavals, changing the meanings of both 'community' and of 'business'. Long-standing rural communities found themselves disrupted and dispersed to the growing towns and cities, as well as to far-off colonies, and had to learn how to engage in new forms of self-organisation in these different contexts. Industrialisation and the development of capitalism, fuelled by the extraction of resources from the British Empire, changed the nature of trade and enterprise, detaching it from local roots. Community businesses emerged as a way of trying to stem the extraction of resources from local areas within these wider dynamics.

2.2 Early twentieth century: community business and the expanding state

The first half of the 20th century saw a huge expansion of the state, and the progressive centralisation of many services which had previously been provided on a more local basis. These national systems of service provision were often based on incorporating organisations and initiatives which bore a resemblance to community businesses. For example, when the Central Electricity Generating Board was founded in 1957 it incorporated 300 companies who were providing gas and electricity at that time, including many being run by local government agencies (Julian 2014).

This process also took place within education. The 1870 Education Act created non-denominational schools run by elected school boards, who could raise taxes locally to subsidise their activities such as offering free places to the poorest children. Such organisations thus closely conformed to the current definition of 'community businesses'. However, their distinctive form of accountability to their hyper-local community – school board elections – disappeared when the 1902 Education Act abolished the boards and transferred their functions to the newly established Local Education Authorities.

Similarly, the Tredegar Workmen's Medical Aid Society – the model for the National Health Service – had many of the features of a community business. The society emerged in the late 19th century when employees of the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company took control of the medical service which had been established by their employer (Thompson 2012). Initially the service only covered miners and steel workers, but soon extended to include the wives and children of members, elderly in the community and other workers in the town, reaching near universal coverage by the mid-1940s. Weekly subscriptions, which were proportional to income, provided members access to a range of medical professionals, and at-cost goods such as false teeth, glasses and dietary supplements. Aneurin Bevan, who was raised in Tredegar and had been closely involved with the scheme, adopted many of its features when designing the NHS (Thompson 2012).

Where nationalised systems of education and health involved large amounts of infrastructure which had previously been locally run — much of it by religious organisations — being handed over to the centralised state, housing developed slightly differently. Prior to the first council housing in the late 19th century, community housing took the form of almshouses provided by the church, the philanthropic model communities described above, and forms of mutual aid through building societies. State-led house grew in the interwar period but then expanded after the bomb damage of World War II. However, although most council housing was council built from the start (rather than incorporating housing built through other means) it did have the same effect as the nationalisation of education and health in that it crowded out localised and mutualised solutions, which are only now re-emerging as a solution to current housing need. State housing allocation was probably more equitable, partly because of vastly expanded supply.

The first half of the twentieth century thus saw the replacement of locally rooted initiatives by those controlled by the nation state, which was seen as the best way of addressing inequalities. The emerging political consensus was that national systems were the best to achieve efficiencies of scale and to provide uniform and equal provision. It was precisely this uniformity that the social movements of 1968 were pushing back against (Wainwright 2018); the next section looks at how community business developed in the wake of them.

2.3 Diversifying communities in the 1970s and 80s

Rapid social change continued throughout the 20th century, including the disruption to geographically rooted communities and traditional family structures associated with the world wars. The post-war period also saw the beginnings of mass migration back to the 'Motherland' by Commonwealth citizens. As with earlier migrant groups (such as Irish and Jewish communities) these newcomers were often forced to live in geographically concentrated areas due to poverty and racism when accessing housing. Many opened businesses to cater to these newly established communities and channelled profits back into improving their collective social conditions.

For example, following the 1980s violent community uprisings in areas such as Brixton and Toxteth, 40 black and minority ethnic-led housing associations were set up to specifically address their own housing needs (Wyler 2017, 135). It is not clear if these would fit the Power to Change definition of community business since they primarily focused on supporting people from particular ethnic groups rather than the 'broad community'; however, this was in a context of being excluded from mainstream services through racist practices.

The new social movements which evolved in the 1960s – antiracism, feminism and lesbian gay activism – often resulted in enterprises being set up to cater to these communities of interest. Squatting was a common way to access cheap infrastructure, and a wide range of radical community businesses and services could be found in certain areas. Squatted buildings along Railton Road in Brixton in the 1970s and 80s, for example, hosted a wide range of initiatives including the Race Today Collective, a black advice centre and bookshop, the South London Gay Community Centre, an offshoot of the Brixton Women's Centre, and the Anarchist News Centre (BAC 2018). The squats associated with East London Big Flame hosted a similar range of activities (ELBF 2018).

Alongside this, the modern environmental movement was emerging and arguing for a radical re-localisation of economic activity in the context of environmental degradation and resource depletion – a perspective which gained traction with the oil crises of the early 1970s. A Blueprint for Survival (Goldsmith and Allen 1972) advocated 'steady-state' economics and recommended people live in small decentralised and largely de-industrialised communities, which they argued would result in both considerable social benefits and the reduction of impact on the environment. This inspired the foundation of what became the Green Party; there are echoes of these arguments in the movements around community energy and for Transition Towns today.

The 1980s saw very different political programmes at the national and local levels. While the Thatcher government was reconfiguring the state along neoliberal lines (see below), the municipal socialist experiments taking place in cities such as London, Sheffield and Liverpool in the first half of the decade often involved supporting citizens to establish community businesses such as housing cooperatives. In Scotland, the community business movement flourished throughout the 1980s, with over a hundred in operation by the end of the decade. Activities included managed workspace, property maintenance and security, shops, community transport and community launderettes, alongside a wide range of activities such as tractor hire, salmon farming and peat cutting (Wyler 2017, 144). This was followed by a series of high-profile collapses, such as the failure of Barrowfield community business in 1990.

Pearce (2003) notes that these collapses led to the term 'community business' being tarnished for a time in Scotland (2003, 50). He argues that this reputational damage may have been related to inflated claims which had been made about what community business could achieve, leading to unrealistic expectations – for example, that they could be highly financially successful while also meeting social needs such as helping long-term unemployed people back to work (2003, 56). However, Wyler (2017) observes that many rebranded as social enterprises and are still in operation today, such as Govan Workspace in Glasgow.

2.4 Community business under neoliberalism

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the context of community business was shaped by the neoliberal economic and political changes instigated by Thatcher and continued by New Labour. One aspect of this was an increasingly globalised economic system, and the growth in wealth and power of multinational corporations who were able to undercut smaller, locally rooted business models. The Ghost Town Britain reports produced by the New Economics Foundation (NEF 2002, 2003) charted the rapid loss of local economic outlets, with 30,000 local amenities such as banks, post offices, pubs and corner shops closing between 1995 and 2000. While in some cases community businesses may have emerged to replace the services, these have not nearly been at the scale of what was lost – for example, there are fewer than 400 community shops in existence today.

A second dimension of neoliberal policy making was a growing preference for outsourcing public services. Crouch (2004) describes this as the state reimagining itself along the lines of the corporate firm, which manages subsidiaries rather than directly delivering work itself. Initially this was framed as good for localism because community providers could step in, and some community businesses such as the Goodwin Trust in Hull have successfully taken on a wide range of responsibilities previously held by the state (Bailey *et al.* 2018). However, a number of reports have identified that in practice large multinational corporations and national charities have taken the bulk of public service commissioning (Locality 2017), and that private sector providers have squeezed out charities and social enterprises even though these were identified by successive governments as ideal providers (Williams 2012).

On a more cultural level, neoliberalism has been described as a system which sees market principles of the best way to organise society, and which encourages people to treat all dimensions of human life as if they are being traded within a marketplace (Gilbert 2013). The emergence of 'social enterprise' as a category can be seen is an expression of this attempt to embed entrepreneurial values within arenas that were previously seen as operating outside of a market logic. Pearce (2003) specifically identifies social enterprise as a replacement term for the 'community and cooperative enterprises' which were talked about in the 1980s, with figures who had previously been called 'community leaders and community activists' being renamed 'social entrepreneurs' by the early 2000s (2003, 66). He argues that this change in language indicated shifts from "an emphasis on collective action to individual entrepreneurialism, albeit for social benefit", from "emphasising the ownership and accountability structure of organisations to focus on the social purpose" and from "a political perspective working towards fundamental change to a more technical approach aimed at getting on with the job in hand" (2003, 66).

A final aspect of neoliberalism which has been relevant to the development of community businesses has been continued centralisation. While localism has been talked about by successive governments, in practice over the past thirty years such initiatives have largely "progressed through bypassing local government to empower centrally sanctioned quangos" (Blond and Morrin 2014, 3), being managed through centrally monitored mechanisms such as targets and league tables. On the other hand, devolution to the Scottish parliament and Welsh and Northern Irish Assemblies has resulted in some of the most meaningful forms of decentralisation. This has resulted in direct benefits for community businesses in Scotland in particular, with the strengthening of community rights in the 2003 Land Reform Act (Scotland).

While the New Labour era saw many neoliberal policies such as liberalisation of financial markets and rolling out New Public Management procedures (Hall 2003), these were also combined with high public spending and support for community businesses and related initiatives. Social enterprises were supported through programmes such as ChangeUp, Futurebuilders and the Social Enterprise Investment Fund (Huckfield 2014). The £70 million Communitybuilders programme also provided a mix of grants, loans and business support for community businesses (DCLG 2011). More indirectly, initiatives directed at poor neighbourhoods such as Sure Start, the New Deal for Communities and Decent Homes were in part intended to create conducive conditions for volunteering and community participation, and thus to benefit citizen-led projects like CBs. However, while these programmes were found to result in a number of improvements on quality of life (Lupton 2013), there was little genuine sharing of power, with many local communities during this period feeling side-lined within decision-making (Purcell 2014).

2.5 The Big Society and austerity

The financial crisis of 2008 and subsequent election of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010 saw a shift in the political climate more broadly, with implications for community business. The coalition swiftly announced a range of policies for establishing and strengthening a 'Big Society', i.e. forms of community participation which could take over areas of responsibility previously held by the state. These were intended to promote community empowerment, to open up public services to community providers, and to encourage social action (Civil Exchange 2015, 6). While this in theory should have provided a highly conducive context for community business to flourish, and in some cases successfully did so, overall the final Civil Exchange audit (2015) concluded that the results of the policies were "largely negative" (2015, 6). They found that "power has not been transferred from the state on any scale" (ibid, 7, emphasis removed), that "fewer people feel they can influence local decisions" and that "communities are less strong" (ibid, 6).

Overall, the report argues that the intentions of the Big Society programme were undermined by two factors. The first was privatisation and marketisation, with public services largely outsourced to private providers rather than community-based nonprofits; and the second was the accompanying cuts to public spending with the government's commitment to austerity. The report from Civil Exchange echoes findings from Unite the Union (2015) and the Panel on the Independence of the Voluntary Sector (2013), both of which criticise the expectation that community groups will take on service delivery in the context of declining resources, arguing that this has served to distort the distinctive role and mission of the voluntary sector.

One area of growth for community businesses has been associated with Community Asset Transfers, in which responsibilities for running assets such as buildings, or even ownership of the assets themselves, are passed to community bodies (Wyler 2009a). While CATs predate austerity, as predicted by Wyler and Blond (2010) they have become more common as local authorities have found themselves unable to afford to provide services such as libraries (Wyler 2017, 175). They were also supported through the Localism Act 2011 with the Community Right to Bid for assets which were designated to be of community value. A number of community businesses which have received support from Power to Change have been set up to manage assets which have been transferred from the public sector. However, there are concerns that these may act more as liabilities than as assets (Alakeson 2016). They could also be interpreted as forms of privatisation, if the democratic structures of the community bodies they are passed to are not sufficiently robust.

The Conservative-led governments since 2010 have had a manifest commitment to devolving power, with the Localism Act 2011, devolution to the Greater Manchester Authority and establishment of mayors in a number of large cities. However, as with previous initiatives the degree to which this amounts to a significant decentralisation of power remains questionable, particularly given the ongoing resistance to fiscal reform such as the abolition of council tax capping. In other areas, the passing of responsibilities to frontline operations such as schools and NHS trusts has tended to "increase the power of government departments" (Blond and Morrin 2014, 12), with free schools, for example, managed directly from Whitehall rather than by Local Education Authorities.

Inequality has grown rapidly in the UK since the financial crisis and poverty has risen. This has exacerbated pre-existing regional inequalities, with job creation in the past 10 years heavily weighted towards London and the south-east (SPERI 2015). There has also been and a growth in far-right activism and a sharpening of anti-immigrant sentiment, which found expression in the campaign to leave the European Union – racist hate crime spiked in the wake of the Brexit vote (Bulman 2017). Concepts of 'the local' and 'community' are highly charged and politicised terms in this context, and some of the implications of this for community business will be drawn out in section 2.6.2.
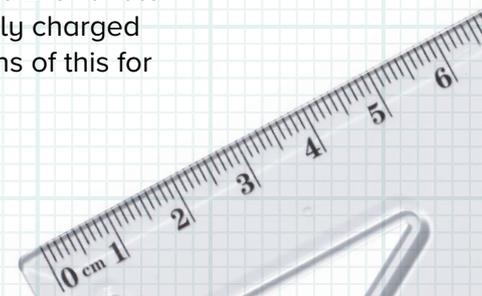
<mark>2.6 Key themes</mark>

The history of community business has many crosscutting currents. The following sections highlight three themes which are of particular concern when considering the possible future of the sector: first, the relationship between community business and the state; second, the wide range of political approaches than within the movement itself; and third, external factors enabling and disabling possibilities for community business.

2.6.1 Relationship with the state

As described in sections 2.1 and 2.2, there has been a progressive centralisation of state powers since Elizabeth I, and an often ambivalent relationship between regulation and control. Throughout the last 500 years, state recognition (such as the legalisation of friendly societies in 1757) has both enabled community businesses to grow, and also placed limitations on their activities.

Productive relationships with the local state have often been crucial to the founding of successful community businesses. Coin Street Community Builders emerged out of the Coin Street Action Group, which was founded in 1977 to resist the commercial development of a 13-acre site on London's Southbank. When the left-wing of the Labour Party led by Ken Livingstone took control of the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1981, the community group was supported in a number of ways. First, the GLC funded them to undertake feasibility studies through which they secured planning permission; second, local borough councils and the GLC put in place planning controls which lowered the commercial value of the land, reducing it from £4 million to £1 million; and third, the GLC and the Greater London Enterprise Board provided some of the capital to buy the site, alongside private mortgages and other borrowing (Future Communities 2018).

Cooperation between the local state and an established and politically engaged community group was thus highly successful in enabling a very different form of development to take place than that which would have been provided solely by the market. However, the GLC was prevented from repeating this elsewhere in London because of the hostility of Thatcher's national government to this kind of approach. Planning powers for London's Docklands were transferred from the GLC to the newly formed London Docklands Development Corporation, meaning that the People's Plan for the Royal Docks – an alternative community-generated proposal for the area that became City Airport – could not be implemented, despite support from the municipal authorities (Wainwright and Mackintosh 1987). The abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan County Councils in 1986 further centralised powers and made local plans which went against national government policy more difficult to implement.
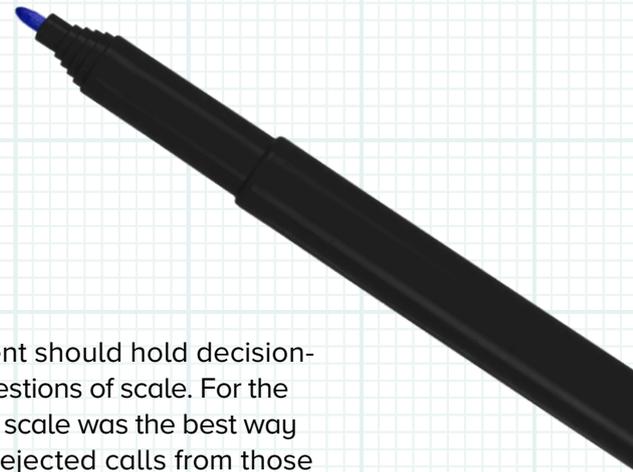
The battle in the 1980s over what level of government should hold decision-making powers for the Docklands raises important questions of scale. For the founders of the welfare state, provision at the national scale was the best way to achieve equality; it was on this basis that Bevan rejected calls from those involved in the Tredegar Workmen's Medical Aid Society (and similar schemes) to allow their local versions to continue once the National Health Service was in place (Thompson 2012). Some in the Labour Party have argued that this prioritisation of the national and crowding out of locally rooted initiatives has undermined support for the welfare state (Glasman *et al.* 2011). For community business, it should be noted that the tension between universal provision of services from a distant state, and more uneven provision on a more localised basis is long-standing and not easily resolved.

A related aspect of this is whether the best role for the state is as the direct provider of goods and services, or as an enabler of grassroots action originating within communities. Community Energy England's report on local authorities (2017) highlights that support from the local state can be instrumental in allowing energy schemes to be instigated by citizens, such as the Bristol Community Energy Fund recently established by Bristol City Council. However, they also note that ongoing cuts to the public sector, and pressure to diversify income streams, might mean that local authorities increasingly need to leverage assets (such as roof space on council buildings for solar panels) themselves, rather than allowing community initiatives to make use of them.

Local councils organising themselves according to cooperative principles have been navigating some of these complexities. Preston City Council has focused on procurement, doubling the proportion of its spend going to businesses based in the city from 14% in 2012 to 28% in 2016 (Jackson and McInroy 2017). The Social Value Act, which requires commissioners of public services to consider social and environmental benefits of the contracts they tender alongside economic ones, is intended to create a more level playing field for initiatives such as community businesses. However, analysis of its use so far has found many councils interpreting it narrowly or ignoring it (Butler 2017), with generally low use of the Act by Clinical Commissioning Groups, for example (Redding and Butler 2017).

Box: Timeline of legislation affecting community business

1534
Act of Supremacy
Henry VIII breaks from the Roman Catholic Church, seizes guild property and guild funds retained for religious purposes

1562
Statute of Artificers (England)
Withdraws many delegations to guilds and transfers them to magistrate

1601
The Statute of Elizabeth I
Defines a charitable purpose as 'the relief of aged, impotent, and poor people' — charities increasingly take on the roles previously taken by guilds

1757
Friendly Society Act in Britain
Legalises friendly societies

1773
Inclosure Act (followed by 15 other Enclosure Acts between 1845 and 1882)
Creates legal property rights to land that was previously held in common, leading to profound disruption of rural communities and rapid urbanisation

1902
Education Act
Abolishes school boards

1948
NHS founded

1984
Rates Act
Limits local tax raising powers

1986
Abolition of the Greater London Council and Metropolitan County Councils

2003
Land Reform (Scotland) Act
Establishes Community Right to Buy

2004
Companies Act
Introduces Community Interest Companies

2007
Sustainable Communities Act
Provides a bottom-up mechanism for local communities to propose things which would benefit the sustainability (social, environmental or economic) of their local area, but which require national government action. The Act places obligations for government to reach agreement with local communities, not just consult them (Local Works 2012).

2011
Social Value Act
Requires commissioners of public services to consider the social, environmental and economic benefits of the contracts they tender. This was intended to create a more level playing field for the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector (Jones and Yeo 2017).

2014
Lobbying Act.
Limits activities of charities around election periods.

2.6.2 A movement of many politics

Looking historically, it is clear that very different political projects can be pursued or implied by those championing community business. The examples provided in Wyler (2017) span the political spectrum, from the founder of Port Sunlight who refused to allow the working-class residents of the village control over how profits were invested (2017, 99-100), to Titus Salt who supported suffrage but not trade unionism (ibid, 97), to the Diggers of the 17th century. The latter, which Wyler describes as "community business in its most radical form" (ibid, 38), were led by Gerrard Winstanley, who imagined collective communities taking over common land across England, working for cooperative benefit and trading without money. This was quickly suppressed by landlords and clergy; the friendly societies and mutuals established by the Quakers in the wake of this were more reformist.

This range of political perspectives can be found in the literature on community development (Gilchrist and Taylor 2016) and on social enterprise (Pearce 2003). Gilchrist and Taylor (2016) distinguish between radical models of community development, aimed at "fundamentally transforming how society operates" (2016, 20); pluralist models which aim to rebalance "the system to be fairer and more equitable" (ibid, 22); and communitarian models which aim to "responsibility to maintain existing structures and services" (ibid, 24). Similarly, Pearce found that social entrepreneurs included those who wanted radical change and to challenge capitalism, and those who presented themselves as a business like any other (2003, 50).

Community business sits at the intersection of the public, private and voluntary sectors, and which sector it is primarily seen in relation to has a bearing on the politics underpinning it. For some, community business is about addressing the limitations of large-scale private enterprise. For the authors of People Powered Prosperity (Boyle and Greenham 2015), for example, the need to take a "ultra-local approach" is framed as "a response to the mainstream emphasis on large business, which appears not to be effective where it is most needed" (2015, 24); much of the book looks at how initiatives which bear a strong resemblance to Power to Change's definition of community business can be used to address market failures. Locality's report Powerful Communities, Strong Economies (2017), while not explicitly anticapitalist, describes resilient local economies with social justice at their heart, in which economic growth is not an end in itself – implying a radically different basis for economic life.

Others such as the London Communities Commission (2016) are primarily critical of the public sector, seeing community business such as micro-enterprises in social care as sources of "more personalised care, more valued outcomes, and innovation in how services are delivered without higher pricetags" (LCC 2016, 6). This implies a more reformist position in which the main purpose of community business is to

be a more efficient means of maintaining the status quo. Finally, there are those for whom the emphasis is on bringing business practices into community work, enabling more rigorous forms of measurement and control into the voluntary sector – associated with a right-wing neoliberal position (McCabe 2012).

Concepts of 'the local' and 'community' can also be associated with radically different political projects. The Transition Towns movement emerged in the mid-2000s, and there is now a global network of communities trying to reduce their resource use and prepared to adapt to climate change and peak oil. However, around the time Transition Towns were formed the British National Party developed an interest in peak oil (Evans 2011), producing a report which talked in similar terms about the need to re-localise economies, attached to a fascist politics that advocated forced repatriation of those not considered 'indigenous' to Britain. This potential confluence of green politics and the far right also has a history: Teddy Goldsmith, who wrote A Blueprint for Survival (Goldsmith and Allen 1972) was instrumental in launching what became the Green Party, attended far right events and advocated separation of ethnic groups in Rwanda and Ulster (Monbiot 2002).

Historically, champions of community business have sometimes shown a degree of political naïveté: Robert Owen, for example, assumed that the benefits of providing better quality housing and education for workers was self-evident, and that he would be able to enlist widespread support of industrialists and politicians (Wyler 2017, 63), without recognising the conflicting interests at play. More recently, similar dynamics could be seen in relation to Maurice Glasman's attempt to conceptualise 'Blue Labour' – which included a critique of the Labour Party's historical preference for national and centralised forms of service provision, and valorisation of locally rooted business practices (Glasman *et al.* 2011). However, he failed to anticipate how this would be instrumentalised to spin an anti-immigration line, resulting in several of those who had initiated the project distancing themselves from it following an ill-advised interview with the Telegraph (Hodges 2011).

A central question for the sector is whether community business is fundamentally conceived of as a more communal way of doing business, or about bringing market values and business practices into the community. Given the hegemonic status of neoliberal values and marketisation in the current moment, initiatives which fail to name an oppositional politics are likely to fall into the latter camp.

2.6.3 External factors

The viability and vitality of community business has of course been shaped by many other factors at different historical periods. European colonial expansion in 17th and early 18th centuries was a spur to a wide range of cooperative resistance movements all around the Atlantic, engaging in piracy, fermenting revolts such as the short lived New York rebellion, and founding utopian communities based on principles of equality (Linebaugh and Rediker 2002). Unlike later utopian experiments such as Owen's New Harmony, these early attempts were multiracial. Migration has also been a key factor, both internationally and domestically: it was in the context of rapid urbanisation following the enclosures that the first friendly societies were established, and the need to establish locally rooted enterprises has often been at its most acute at times of rapid population change.

A major driver of such movements has been the rising value of land, which is hugely disproportionate earnings in the UK (Roberts and Lawrence 2017). Gaining access to low-cost land and real estate has often been a necessary enabling factor for community businesses, either through legal routes (such as Community Asset Transfers) or informal ones, such the occupation of land by the Diggers and the squatting of buildings in the 1970s. A major barrier to such community initiatives has been the persistent failure of governments to enact and implement a Land Value Tax (Wyler 2009a).

Rapid population change raises questions of who is 'the community' and whether community businesses are redressing or reinforcing inequalities within them. A report from the Friends Provident Foundation (2016) identifies a link between 'alternative economics' and gentrification in Bristol, where the existence of a vibrant culture which celebrates and supports local business is itself a draw for wealthy incomers from London and elsewhere. However, these initiatives are not well connected with the poorer areas of Bristol, with alternative economic practices themselves potentially acting as a means of widening inequalities within the city. At a different scale, the Isle of Eigg has also seen its status as a community owned island act as a draw for newcomers to set up businesses there, raising objections from some long-standing residents (Scott 2003).

Cultural factors have also influenced the development of community businesses. Among the reasons that they have taken hold more strongly in Scotland than England is a stronger interest in land access and a greater understanding of the value of community ownership there. Bailey *et al.'s* (2018) comparative study of community business in England, the Netherlands and Sweden found differences in how people related to the state. In the latter two countries, the state was seen as part of society and thus Community Asset Transfers did not really exist, since they considered assets to already belong to the community if they were publicly owned. Specific histories can also contribute to the development of particular sectors: it was following the Chernobyl disaster, which profoundly disrupted farming across southern Germany, that community energy emerged as a highly popular alternative to nuclear power, with strong buy in within rural areas (Julian 2014).

A final factor has been global financial cycles, with periods of recession but destroying businesses and also creating conditions in which people turn to alternative models of enterprise. The Brynmwyr experiment in 1930s Wales was an innovative approach to community development in the context of the Great Depression (Wyler 2017, 115-118), while the oil crises of the early 1970s prompted thinking about re-localising economies to deal with depleting resources. Large-scale market failures have historically both constrained community businesses (for example, by restricting access to credit) and provided opportunities for fresh approaches and thinking.
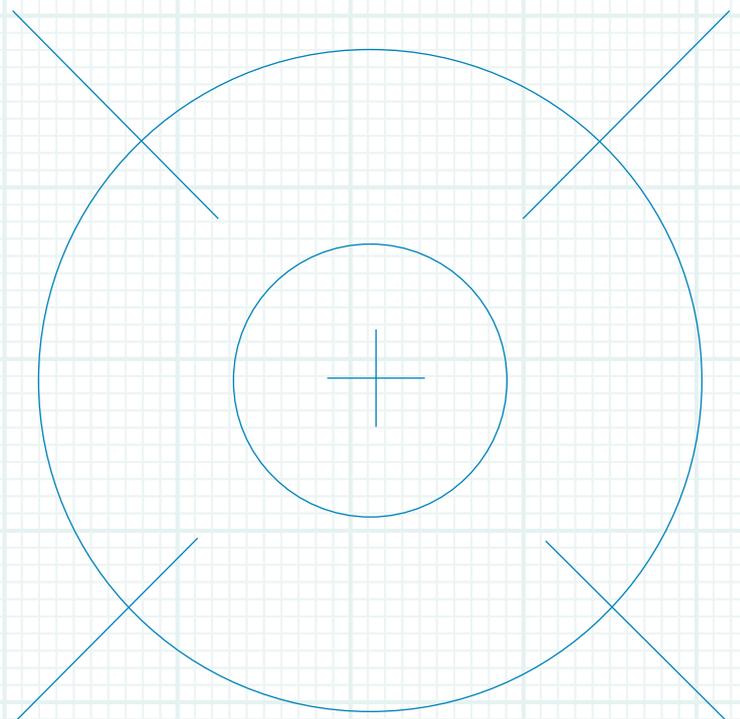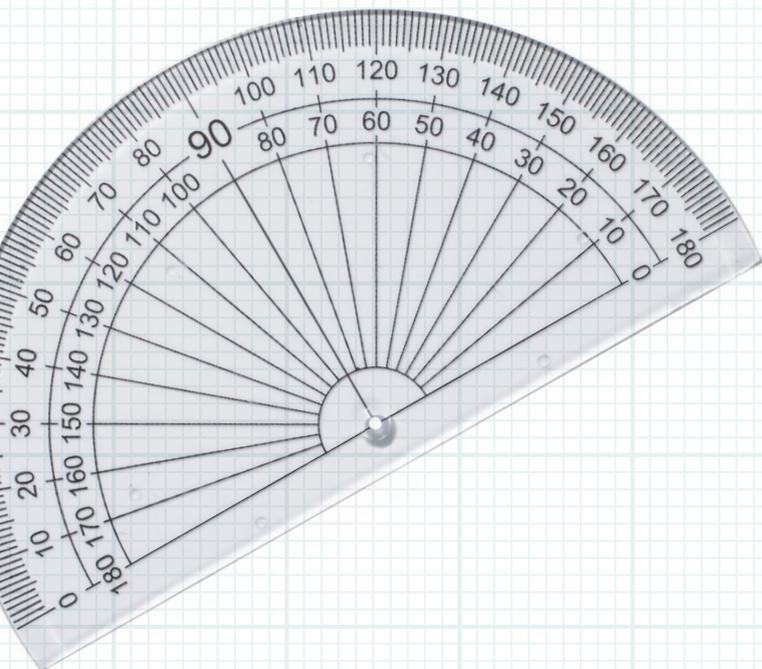
3. The community business sector today

This section provides an overview of the sector (3.1), followed by a more detailed look at some key subcategories: hub/venues, culture and leisure (3.1.1); infrastructure and essential services (3.1.2); and manufacturing and production (3.1.3). Section 3.1.4 gives a summary of the infrastructure organisations supporting activities in the sector. Part 3.2 looks at connected movements with an overlap with community business – social enterprise (3.2.1) and cooperatives (3.2.2).

3.1 Overview of the sector

Power to Change's report The Community Business Market in 2017 (Diamond *et al.* 2017) estimates there were 6,600 community businesses operating in England in 2017, which is likely to be an underestimate due to the lack of evidence in some sectors. This is lower than the headline estimate for 2016 of 7,085 community businesses, which anecdotal evidence suggested was too high. Changes in the methodology used in 2016 and 2017 reports mean that the numbers are not comparable (for example, they shouldn't be interpreted as showing that the sector has contracted). However, they provide a relatively stable ballpark for the number of community businesses, which is likely to lie somewhere between 6600-7000.

The number of volunteers involved in community businesses was estimated at 119,500, lower than the 193,000 volunteers estimated in 2016. Again, changes in methodology should mean that this reduction should not be interpreted as a contraction of volunteers between one year and the next. There were 35,500 reported paid staff. Total market income in 2017 was estimated at £1.2 billion, with assets of £0.7 billion (Diamond *et al.* 2017). This may be a major underestimate given that Locality's 600 members alone were found to have 779 million of assets in 2016 (Locality 2016).

Sector	No of orgs	Income (£m)	Assets (£m)	Staff	Volunteers
Community hubs	1,650	230	110	6,600	41,300
Employment, education and training	880	73	40	4,400	5,300
Housing	400	70	170	2,200	3,800
Health & social care	300	90	15	5,700	4,500
Transport	1200	400	230	9,600	9,600
Sports & leisure	350	40	30	2,800	7,700
Arts centres & facilities	200	10	5	500	4,000
Libraries	440	n/a	n/a	450	18,500
Pubs	46	6	16	160	1,400
Shops & cafes	348	55	n/a	1,100	9,600
Food catering & production	200	50	25	1,200	7,500
Energy	192	123	n/a	110	2,270
Craft, industry & production	150	20	n/a	150	2,500
Finance	50	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Environmental/ nature conservation	150	15	5	450	1,500
Total	6,600	1,200	650	35,500	119,500

Adapted from Power to Change (2017, 3).

The most commonly-cited social impact of community businesses is health and well-being, with the second most common being reductions in loneliness. Seven in 10 community businesses operate in areas classified as urban, and three in 10 in rural ones. 75% have accessed grant funding, and there are ongoing debates about the extent to which continued dependence on grant funding rather than trade might exclude some initiatives from Power to Change's definition. Those involved in community businesses are generally positive about the future: 63% of community businesses are confident about their financial prospects for the year ahead, foreseeing continued steady growth, in contrast with smaller businesses in general where confidence has fallen (Diamond *et al.* 2017).

The following sections provide more detail on different kinds of community businesses; however, the data picture is very uneven with some areas significantly better understood than others.

3.1.1 Hubs/venues, culture & leisure

This section includes a more detailed look at shops and cafés, cooperative pubs and community hubs. Other kinds of activities which could be included under this umbrella include art centres and facilities, libraries, digital organisations and sports and leisure, but these are not well covered by the existing literature.

There were 348 community shops trading in the UK in 2016, providing essential services to 1,400 remote rural communities. Collectively, these are owned by over 62,000 shareholders, who elect members to management committees who make business decisions. Turnover ranged widely but averaged £156,043 per shop. 95% of community shop stock and sell local food, and many offer other services such as café's (43%) and postal services (59%). Community shops are highly resilient, with a 95% survival rate (Plunkett Foundation 2017a).

46 cooperative pubs were trading across the UK in 2016, with 9000 members nationally. Most are new businesses and trading performance is difficult to measure; however, no cooperative pubs have ever closed. They offer a wide range of services for the benefit of local communities, including libraries, allotments, meeting rooms, an adult education and training (Plunkett Foundation 2017b).

Community hubs are likely to have a close crossover with what Locality term 'community anchor organisations' – local organisations who run diverse activities depending on the area's particular needs, including taking over the running of local assets. Locality (2016) have 600 member organisations, who deliver an average of 15 different activities and support 11,000 community groups and 10,000 small businesses. 406,300 people benefit from the services provided by their members every week. The most common activities they provide are community development, community facilities and room hire, advice and information services, and volunteer training and placement. Their members have a combined income of £372 million, and assets of £779 million (Locality 2016).

3.1.2. Infrastructure & essential services

This section includes a more detailed look at community energy, housing and finance, but could also include community transport, health and social care and environmental/nature conservation organisations.

There were 222 community energy organisations operating in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in 2017, with 30,000 members (CEE 2017). There were also 510 community energy generating projects in Scotland in 2016 (Energy Savings Trust 2016). Community energy projects have produced a wide range of benefits for their communities, including raising money for Community Benefit funds, reducing energy bills, providing advice for those in fuel poverty and increasing awareness of renewable energy in the locale (CEE 2015). However, many projects have had their viability damaged by changes to feed in tariffs.

The cooperative/mutual housing sector is much smaller in the UK than elsewhere in Europe, with 836 bodies managing 169,000 homes (0.6% of UK households). A larger proportion are managed by Housing Associations but these are often large-scale and unlikely to fit within the definition of community business. Homes being provided by Community Land Trusts are the clearest fit with Power to Change's definition: 718 CLT homes are due to be completed in 2018, with 2,500 in development (Heyward 2016).

Power to Change recognise that there is limited data on community finance organisations, although some can be gleaned from other sources. Glasgow Social Enterprise Network's (2013) data on social enterprise in Glasgow found that 26 of the 34 credit unions in operation in the city are community-based. There are also 48 Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETSF 2018), over 250 time banks (Timebanking UK 2018) and five local currencies in operation in the UK (CCKG 2018). Community currencies can support the small and medium enterprise economy (NEF 2015). For example, the Brixton Pound was found to increase customer loyalty to businesses that take the currency (NEF 2015, 5). Another study of the Bristol Pound found it increased trust and community cohesion amongst users (Fereirer and Perry 2015). Community share schemes are also an important former finance, with almost 120,000 people investing over £100 million to support 350 community businesses in the UK since 2009 (Community Shares 2018).
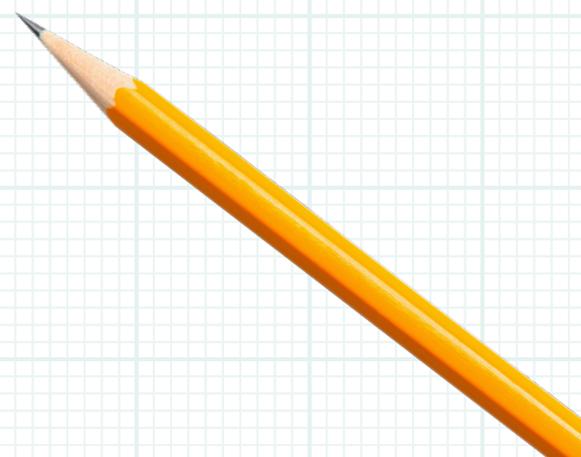
3.1.3 Manufacturing & production

This subcategory includes food catering and production/farming, and craft, industry and production. Power to Change note the difficulties in estimating the size of both of these areas given the lack of data. While there is some information on very specific activities, such as that produced by the Furniture Reuse Network mentioning a network of 250 organisations, these are primarily charities and there is no way to identify which might be community businesses (Diamond *et al.* 2017, 64). Food catering and production/farming also does not have specific infrastructure organisations and Power to Change's estimates are based primarily on extrapolating from applicant data. Their case studies do include examples of successful community businesses of this kind, such as Porlock Futures, a community oyster farm which provides employment opportunities, training and apprenticeships for local young people (Power to Change 2016).

3.1.4 Infrastructure organisations supporting community business

There are a range of infrastructure organisations which support community businesses, and brief descriptions of the main players in this area are provided below. A number have closed in recent years, such as Social Firms UK and Community Matters, and austerity has negatively affected many Community Development Organisations, especially in England (Gilchrist and Taylor 2016). The Urban Community Energy Fund, which gave financial aid and expertise, closed in 2015 (CEE 2017), and 10:10's Solar Schools scheme closed in summer 2016 because of changes to Feed in Tariffs. Other infrastructure organisations have emerged in recent years, such as the Access Foundation, the Big Local and Power to Change.

At a national level, the principal support organisations are:

Locality: formed in 2010 following a merger between bassac (originally the Federation of Residential Settlements in 1920), and the Development Trusts Association, which was founded in 1993 to help groups set up community enterprises and to promote community ownership of land and buildings. The organisation's mission is "to develop a network of ambitious and enterprising community-led organisations with a strong, collective voice and to inspire community action so that every neighbourhood thrives" (Locality 2018a). It works with its 600 members to support them through different development stages, from start-up advice and help through early years of trading, to support with strategic planning and developing resilience.

Social Enterprise UK: formed in 2002, SEUK aims to achieve "a favourable environment in which social enterprises can thrive", seeing social enterprise as "our best chance of creating a fairer world and protecting the planet". Principal activities include raising awareness about social enterprise, building the evidence base, helping social enterprises learn from one another, engaging in advocacy with government to create a supportive regulatory and policy environment, and opening up markets in the private, public and social sectors to social enterprise (SEUK 2018).

Plunkett Foundation: founded in 1919, the Plunkett Foundation predominately supports people in rural areas to set up and run community cooperatives, in order to tackle a range of issues such as isolation, loneliness and poverty. Plunkett aims to help the active network of over 500 rural community cooperatives trading across the UK to thrive, alongside offering support to groups wishing to set up as community cooperatives (Plunkett 2018).

Cooperatives UK: founded in 1870 as the Cooperative Central Board, Co-ops UK exist to support and promote the values of the cooperative movement in the UK. Their mission is to grow the cooperative economy, by promoting, developing and uniting cooperatives, and they primarily give advice, influence policy, and raise awareness about the benefits of cooperation. In 2017, they helped create 121 new co-ops, and launched The Hive, a business support programme for new and existing co-ops (Co-ops UK 2017a).
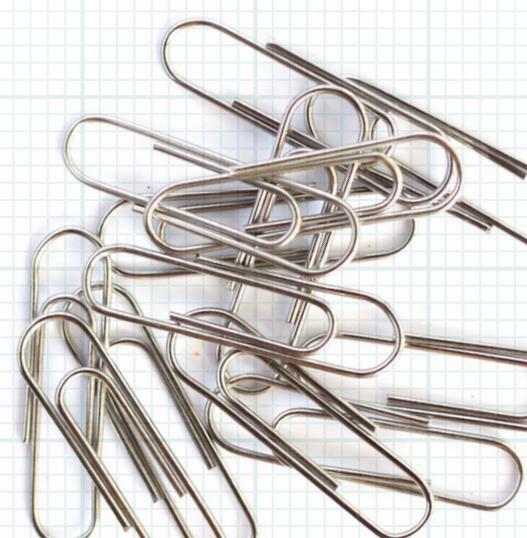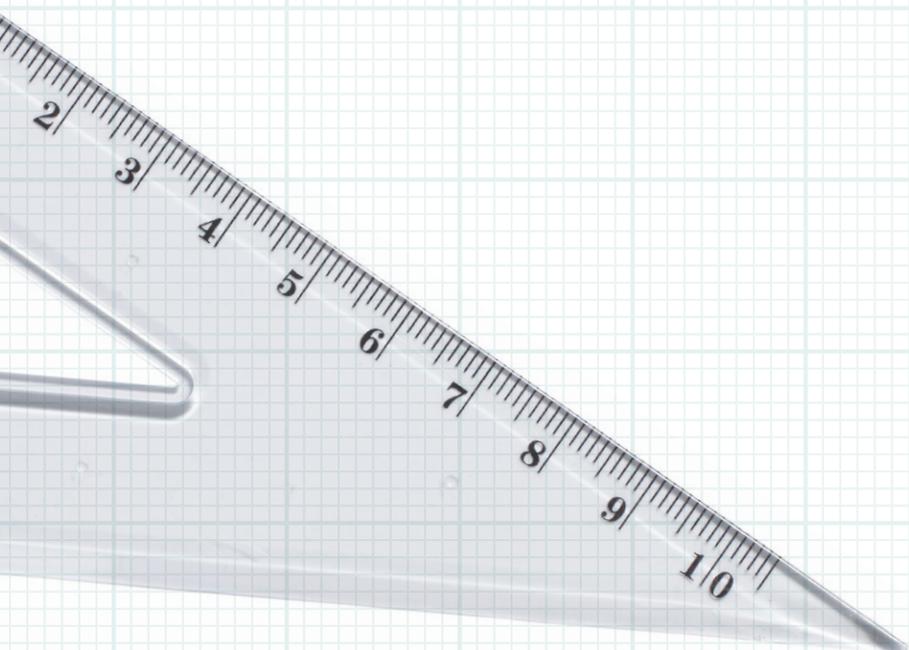
Box: other support organisations in the UK

Funders
– Power to Change
– Big Lottery Fund
– Esmee Fairbairn Foundation
– Tudor Trust

Sector specific:	
– CAMRA (pubs)	– Architectural Heritage Fund
– Community Energy England	– Community Land Trust Network
– Renewable Energy Association	– Cohousing Network
– Association of Community Theatre	– National Federation of Tenant Management Orgs (NFTMO)
– Schools Co-operative Society	– Confederation of Co-operative Housing Ltd (CCH)
– Responsible Finance	
– Association of British Credit Unions Limited	– Radical Routes Limited
– UK Credit Unions Limited (UKCU)	– ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)
– ACE Credit Unions	– New Economics Foundation
– Supporters Direct	– Association of Community Transport
– Working Men's Club and Institute Limited (CIU)	

Regional/devolved nations CB development support:	
– Localise West Midlands	– Development Trusts Association Scotland
– Social Enterprise Scotland	– Development Trusts Northern Ireland
– Scottish League of Credit Unions (SLCU)	
– Ulster League of Credit Unions (ULCU)	– DTA Wales
	– Wales Co-operative Centre

3.2 Community business and connected movements

Community business has strong overlaps with other movements; the following sections provide more detail on social enterprises and cooperatives.

3.2.1 Social enterprises

There are an estimated 70,000 social enterprises operating in the UK, including 13,000 Community Interest Companies founded since 2005 (SEUK 2017). The sector has seen continuous growth in the last 10 years: 25% of social enterprises are under three years old and almost 40% are under five years old. These are more representative of communities than traditional businesses, with 41% led by women, 12% being BAME-led, and 36% having a director with a disability. 78% of social enterprises report paying the living wage to their employees. Over 70% of social enterprises made a profit or broke even in the last year, although many are reporting having difficulties with accessing finance and cash flow (SEUK 2017).

Social Enterprise UK estimate that 34% of social enterprises operate at "neighbourhood or local level" (2017, 8), indicating that they may be operating at the same scale as community businesses. This echoes data from Glasgow, which found that 36% of the 509 social enterprises in operation there were based in just one area of the city (GSEN 2015).

Temple's (2018) report on small and medium-size social enterprises found that a third self-defined as community businesses. A third described themselves as an organisation that delivers public services, 32% provided goods either as a main activity or alongside services, and 23% said they were a regular business who had impact primarily through those they employed. For social enterprises with turnover of less than £1 million, the most common activities they engage in were retail, providing business support and education (2018, 21). The main social/ environmental objectives for these small social enterprises were improving a particular community, supporting vulnerable people and creating employment opportunities (2018, 23).

3.2.2 Cooperatives

There are 6,815 cooperatives in the UK, employing 226,000 people (0.7% of the workforce) (Co-ops UK 2017b). These have 13.6 million members and an annual turnover of £35.7 billion. The 560 cooperatives operating in retail have the strongest trading base, with a turnover of £25 billion. The most common type of cooperative of those classified as 'sports, leisure and social clubs', with 2,905 clubs with an annual turnover of £1 billion. Particular areas of growth have been identified in Liverpool, Leeds, London and Edinburgh (Co-ops UK 2017b).

Co-operative schools are a form of co-operative which may operate very similarly to community businesses. Cooperative schools were enabled through the 2006 Education and Inspections Act, and the Co-operative College worked with a number of schools to develop a multi-stakeholder co-operative model, giving parents/carers, staff, learners and the local community a direct engagement in the governance of the trust through membership, alongside institutional partners (Wilson 2015). There were 811 co-operative schools in existence in 2016 (Rustin 2016), which receive additional support from the Schools Co-operative Society.

Other cooperatives which are likely to meet the criteria for community business include sports clubs and media co-ops. There are 52 community owned clubs and a further 150 run by supporters' trusts, with have a total membership of 422,972 (Supporters Direct 2018). Media cooperatives such as the West Highland Free Press and the Camden New Journal have been argued to be more sustainable financially and provide better accountability to the communities they serve (Boyle 2012). For example, the Bristol Cable is owned by over 1850 members, who can join for £1 a month, who then have a say in how the organisation is run (Bristol Cable 2018).
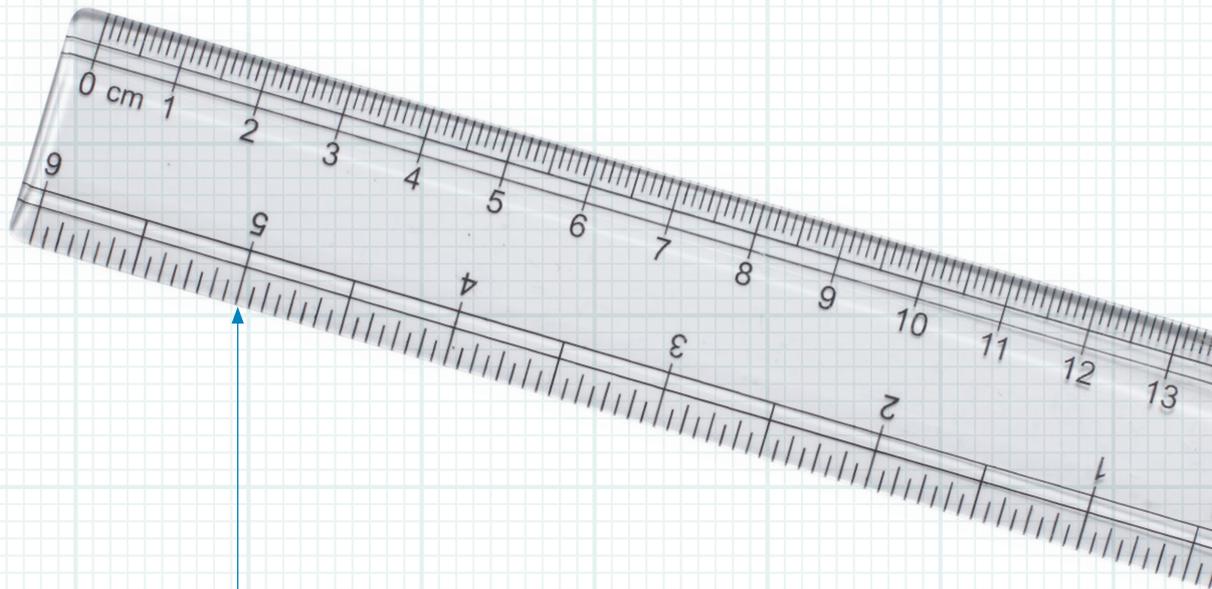
4. Trends shaping the future of community business

This section looks at some of the trends likely to affect the future of community business, classified according to STEEP (Social, Technological, Economical, Environmental and Political).

4.1 Social

4.1.1. Demographic changes

Worldwide, population growth is bringing roughly 40 million people into the labour market each year, "meaning that between now and the year 2030 the world economy needs to create over 600 million new jobs" (Schwettmann 2015, 3). The population of the UK is projected to reach 69.2 million in 2026, an increase of 3.6 million from 2016 levels (ONS 2017). As life expectancy increases and the population ages, the workforce will need to work for longer which "may have a negative effect on youth unemployment" (Schwettmann 2015, 4) as well as leading to higher costs for health and social care. This may provide openings for community businesses to meet these social care needs, but may also undermine the volunteer base they rely upon as young people are pushed into precarious working conditions.

4.1.2 Movement and migration

The number of international moves made to and from Britain currently stands at around a million a year, although net migration to the UK has fallen since Brexit (Local Trust 2018). Gilchrist and Taylor (2016) note that international migration has significance for understandings of place, with community development being necessary for bridging between suspicious communities, especially where the far right is active. However, the larger picture may be one of internal migration, with internal moves within the UK increasing to nearly 3 million a year (Local Trust 2018). When approached as a form of joint enterprise, community business could play a role in bringing different groups within particular areas together. However, they could also facilitate further division particularly along class lines (see below on gentrification).

4.2 Technological

4.2.1 Automation

Schwettmann (2015) writes that "[c]oncern about technological unemployment grew in 2013, due in part to a number of studies predicting substantially increased technological unemployment in forthcoming decades" (2015, 6). This trend is unlikely to hugely affect the workforce of community businesses themselves – an employee in a community shop is unlikely to be put out of work by automation – but may result in a wider context of high unemployment which puts additional
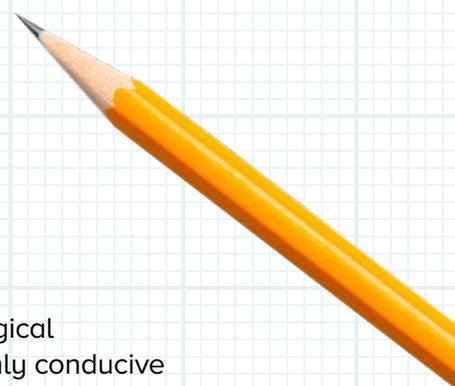
pressure on CBs. On the other hand, policies to deal with technological unemployment such as Universal Basic Income could create a highly conducive context for community business, by expanding the volunteer base and providing a degree of security in which risk-taking entrepreneurialism becomes possible for more of the population (Painter and Thoung 2015).

4.2.2 Communication, digitalisation and the internet

Digitalisation is expected to have a wide range of impacts on the economy and on community businesses. While internet-based commerce may lead to the loss of local amenities such as shops or bank branches (Schwettmann 2015, 7), patterns of work are also predicted to be radically re-localised when high-definition videoconferencing becomes widely available and affordable (Wyler 2009b) (more recent studies suggest that it is Virtual Reality rather than videoconferencing that will make this possible (Moshinsky 2016)). Wyler (2009b) argues this will lead to a sharp reduction in commuting to centralised offices, with employees preferring to use co-working spaces in geographical proximity to their homes. There will thus be opportunities for the community sector to provide mixed use spaces which build locally rooted relationships.

Developments in big data, smart cities and the internet of things – all of which are in their infancy – will also shape the space in which community businesses operate. Braggins and Sollazzo (2017) find that there is not much evidence of datasets being used in innovative ways by local authorities at this point, and that community businesses find most local authority data unhelpful since it is produced at the ward level and has little relationship with organic geographies. The development of hyper-local datasets may help CBs to understand their context and impact better in the future. However, this will also need to be within a context in which digital exclusion is being actively tackled or else it is likely to exacerbate inequalities between 'data rich' and 'data poor' areas (see Crawford 2013).

A further trend is the loss of local newspapers, which has been very rapid in the past 10 years as a result of the shift to online advertising which has undermined their traditional business model (Ramsey 2017). Mergers and buyouts have also resulted in consolidation of titles, with journalists removed from the locale they serve and unable to play that necessary role in holding powerful interests to account (Boyle 2012). If this trend continues, it may create a context in which community initiatives find it harder to become established because of difficulties gaining publicity for their efforts; on the other hand, a new wave of news co-ops emerging in the context of these market failures could provide a solid basis for other forms of enterprise, as well as themselves constituting a form of community business.

4.3 Economic

4.3.1 Globalization and protectionism

Globalised supply chains create a difficult context for community businesses, which often find themselves undercut by large companies which can exploit lower cost labour or raw materials elsewhere in the world. The interconnectedness of global trade is identified by the World Economic Forum is generating a "growing vulnerability to systemic risks" (2018, 15) where "a risk cascades through a complex system" (ibid, 16). Community business thus might grow in popularity as a means of building local resilience to such risks.

At the same time, the WEF also identifies a trend towards increased protectionism within the current shifting political climate, which has "upend[ed] previously stable economic principles and practices, particularly those relating to trade" (2018, 22). Protectionism might make for a more conducive environment for community business; this does however raise questions about the political project it might be attached to when such calls for protectionism are currently associated with figures such as Donald Trump.

4.3.2 Developments in economic metrics

The Social Value Act has raised questions for local authorities about how to incorporate measurement of social value into decision-making; Jones and Yeo (2017) identify a number of different options for this such as Cost Benefit Analysis and Social Return on Investment, arguing that whatever metrics are chosen they will need to develop a strong evidence base and consistent forms of application. The Local Multiplier Effect method developed by the New Economics Foundation also tries to calculate the additional value to a local area of keeping money circulating within the area (Locality 2017). Within the private sector, there are related developments amongst businesses who are attempting to reimagine CSR as a fundamental principle at the heart of their work rather than an add-on (LCC 2016, B Corp 2018), although it is unclear how this would interact with conventional forms of accounting or legal obligations to maximise shareholder value.

For community businesses, the mainstreaming of such metrics may help them to demonstrate their value in non-cash terms, and become more able to compete with profit-making providers, for example when bidding for public service contracts. Conversely, these metrics might make community businesses more professionalised and exclusive by creating additional forms of accounting which are inaccessible to people without highly specialised training.
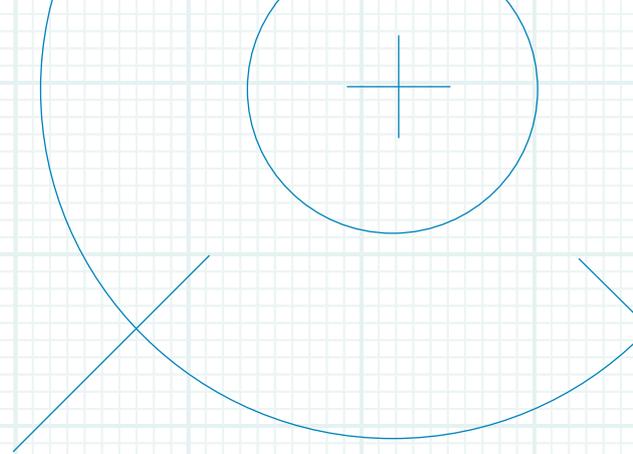
4.3.3 Growing inequality

Inequalities are growing at both national and international levels – inequalities of income, but also of access, rights, participation and protection (Schwettmann 2015). Low paid and precarious work is increasingly normalised, and self-employment is forecast to rise in the years ahead, with 78% of the self-employed having low income and no access to holiday or sickness pay (Conaty *et al.* 2016). While the decline in full-time work may provide more time for volunteering, this has been criticised as potentially exploitative and distorting of the original mission of voluntary work (Independence Panel 2013).

Given the disproportionate cost of land and housing within the UK, these are a site of particularly acute inequalities, as well as widely divergent trends in different areas. In wealthier regions, gentrification is likely to continue to force poorer residents to relocate, especially those reliant on public housing (Butler 2016); in poorer ones, this may lead to opposite patterns of ghettoisation (Foster 2015). These trends indicate that community businesses will face different opportunities and barriers, and may require significantly different strategies, in the diverse context in which they are found. Concepts of 'community accountability' and 'broad community impact' are likely to need particular reconsideration in contexts of very high population churn.

4.4 Environmental

4.4.1 Climate change

Global warming and climate destabilisation is forecast to have significant impact on the global economy in the coming decade, with estimates that by 2030 the cost of climate change and air pollution combined will be 3.2% of global GDP (Schwettmann 2015, 11). The World Economic Forum rated extreme weather events, natural disasters and climate change as the top risks faced in 2018 in terms of likelihood and impact (WEF 2018). This has positive prospects for community businesses, for example in the growth of community energy from renewable sources – especially as renewable energy projects which are instigated by large companies often face resistance from local people, while those instigated by communities themselves have far greater buy in (Devine-Wright 2007). Climate change might make for a more difficult context for CB through unpredictable weather events such as flooding, and through its overall impact on the economy.

4.4.2 Resource depletion

Demand for resources is at highly unsustainable levels, with the United Nations Environment Programme estimating that by 2050 humanity will demand 140 billion tons of fossil fuels, biomass, minerals and ores and every year if current trends continue (UNEP 2011) – far beyond the Earth's supply. Particular attention has been paid to 'peak oil', the point at which demand outstrips supply and the price will

rapidly rise (Dale and Fattouh 2018). Resource depletion has been argued since the 1970s to require significantly relocalisation of economic activity and the shortening of supply chains, and may consequently lead to growth in the community business sector, while also undermining economic stability more generally.

4.5 Political

4.5.1 Brexit

At the time of writing (halfway through the two-year negotiation process) there are huge areas of uncertainty about what the UK's exit from the EU will mean, in terms of membership of the single market or customs union, restrictions on freedom of movement, or economic contraction once Brexit takes place. The specifics of any future deal might have a wide range of impacts on community business, for example by changing the procurement of public services by relaxing EU competition laws (White 2017).

More broadly, it has been argued that Brexit "has brought questions of power to the forefront" (Steele 2016) and that community business can itself be a solution by giving "real power back to our fractured country" (ibid). Locality (2018b) has stated that community economic development can address problems in left behind communities who voted Leave, suggesting that it is possible to "capitalise on this moment as an opportunity for national renewal" (2018b, 17). They do however recognise that there are deep tensions within communities which have been surfaced by the Brexit vote, and while they argue that community organisational development can help with community cohesion, it is equally possible that community business could exacerbate and deepen divisions.

4.5.2 Devolution and the shrinking state

Continued austerity and cuts to local council budgets have been forecast by some studies to lead to a growth in community business (Thorlby, 2011; Percy et al, 2016). However, as the Civil Exchange audit of Big Society policies found, if this is accompanied by privatisation and continued centralisation of power then it will also undermine the foundations of a functioning civil society (Civil Exchange 2015).

Devolution e.g. to cities may serve to encourage community business by enabling more localised forms of decision-making, especially where local democratic structures take on cooperative practices and principles (CCIN 2018). Some have warned that the focus of city growth may sideline surrounding areas (Locality/ Power to Change 2018, 35), and that the shrinking state devolution of powers to a local level may sharpen inequalities between areas (Gilchrist and Taylor 2016). Devolution will also affect implementation of recent legislation such as the Social Value Act (White 2017), which may make attempts to use the legislation to promote

community business more complex. Devolution may also become a mechanism to preserve command and control political systems, be it at more localised levels – for example, through the introduction of directly elected mayors – and does not necessarily lead to 'double devolution' in which decision-making and control is distributed to local communities (Blond and Morrin 2014).

4.5.3 Changing political culture

The World Economic Forum note shifts in the current political climate amongst their global risks (2018). The Scottish Independence referendum of 2014 saw very high voter turnout, and strong engagement of young people, while the surge in membership amongst the Labour Party since 2015 has bucked the trend of decline seen amongst social democratic parties across Europe. These indicate a growing interest in participation in institutions and increased willingness amongst millennials to join groups (Ramsay 2015), which may be to the benefit of community business. However, the growth of the far right and anti-immigrant sentiment indicate that exclusive and nativist understandings of 'community' may be the more likely outcome of the current political moment.
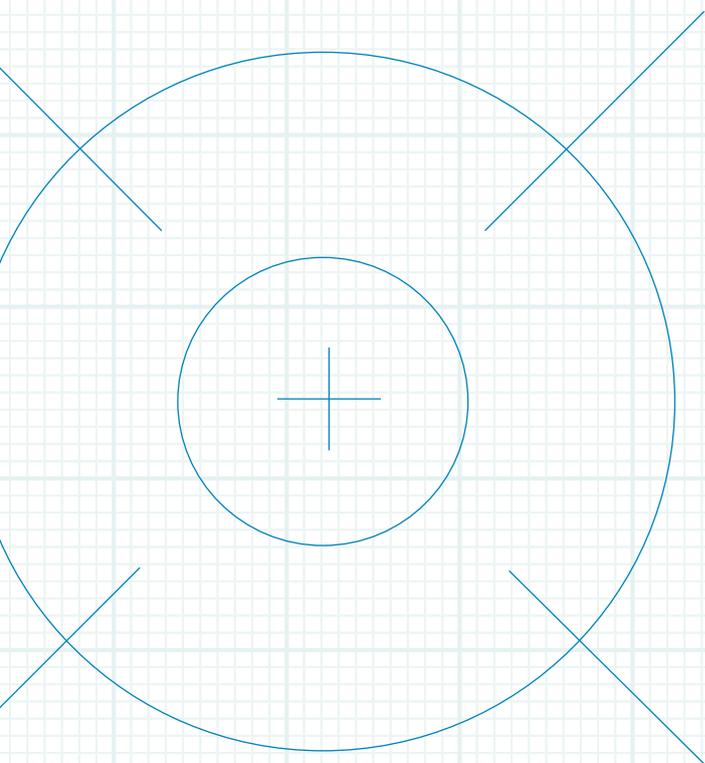
5. The future of community business

There has been little visioning work to date on community business. However, ideas about the positive role that community businesses could play in the future, and the contribution they could make to society, the economy and the environment can be gleaned from the literature. Some key possibilities are categorised according to STEEP below.

5.1 Social factors

Meeting growing care needs. Cooperatives UK identify opportunities "for multi-stakeholder co-operatives to make workers and users partners in care; for home care services offering a mixed pricing system and a targeting of a full spectrum of care service users; for new models of integrated health and social care, where costs are lower and standards of care higher." (Co-ops UK 2017c, 52). Because they don't need to provide returns to shareholders, community businesses can help provide good quality care by workers with good employment conditions.

5.2 Technological factors

Harnessing technology for equitable ends. Cooperatives UK sees an area of growth in new digital ventures, or 'platform co-operatives', using new technology for shared ownership services. Although they note that the 'sharing economy' prefers venture capital they argue that "co-operative models could be start-up competitors to these", challenging "new incumbents by offering something different, such as true shared ownership" (Co-ops UK 2017c, 52). Wyler's (2009b) proposal for community workspace hubs are also suggested to be an alternative to the elite private co-working spaces, which are likely to emerge once technology allows remote working to replace face-to-face offices.

5.3 Economic factors

Keeping investment in the real economy. Community businesses are unsuited to speculation, and can help address imbalances in the British economy where investment tends to flow towards asset bubbles (Haynes 2012). Community currencies have been argued to act as tools of empowerment, demystifying economic processes (NEF 2015).

Reorienting trade away from profiteering. The School for Social Entrepreneurs (2013) has suggested that the future of social entrepreneurship should be that it "becomes the norm for all business activities... Not being social becomes the exception, and brings negative attention. The shift will be so deep that young people won't accept business any other way" (2013, 2).

Providing homes rather than investments. Community led housing can provide affordable homes for excluded groups, and provide these benefits into perpetuity through an asset lock (NCLTN 2018). This could be part of a broader cultural shift towards treating houses primarily as homes rather than investment vehicles.

Building resilient local economies. Community businesses may be able to survive external shocks better than those which are not locally rooted — the ability of local people to "weather any storms together" is attributed by Power to Change as "one of the reasons we saw almost no community businesses close [in 2017]" (2018b).

Addressing inequalities. The growing inequalities resulting from today's 'gig' economy could be addressed through supporting freelancers to come together to develop cooperative and trade union solutions (Co-ops UK 2017c, 52). Gordon (2017) found that BME respondents were more interested in community business than the white majority, indicating that they could be a mechanism for addressing racial inequalities. They may also stem the extraction of resources from deprived areas, enabling local people to find collective routes out of poverty.

5.4 Environmental factors

Adapting to resource scarcity and decarbonisation. By shortening supply chains and reducing dependence on fossil fuels, community businesses can help adapt to a low carbon and low resource use economy. Community energy schemes can also help move away from fossil fuels and overcome objections — for example overcoming objections to windfarms by offering community control (Devine-Wright 2007).

5.5 Political factors

Enabling coproductive relationships with the state. Community business can be part of a reconfigured relationship with the state, which is less paternalistic and one-way, in which citizens are active participants in delivering and governing services rather than passive recipients. SE Scotland (2016) state that social enterprises should not just be seen as providers of "cut-price alternative[s]" but raising questions about how public services "are designed and organised", shifting modes of commissioning towards principles of coproduction (2016, 18). Community businesses are particularly well suited to this role because they are locally rooted, responsive to the specific needs of the community, and because they encourage forms of participation in which citizens can play multiple roles. For example, somebody who receives a service such as childcare from a community cooperative might also volunteer there, and participate in democratic decision-making about the co-op at yearly AGMs.

Embedding democratic participation in everyday structures. SE Scotland recognise the link between participatory business practices and democratic structures stating that they "believe that the full potential of community owned and controlled enterprises can only be fully realised through genuine local democracy" (2016, 8). The value of community business is that the broad community accountability required means that citizens can come to experience democratic participation through engaging in decision-making with local enterprises.

5.6 Barriers

Some of the barriers which might prevent a positive future for community business include:

— Undercapitalisation: community businesses struggle to access finance and build up reserves, making them vulnerable to shocks (Locality/Co-ops UK (2015).

— Capital costs and lack of access to assets, particularly in the south-east.

— Loss of local media: SE Scotland (2016) recognise the need to connect with hyper- local media to tell the story of the positive impacts of social enterprise (2016, 16). However, these are rapidly being lost which prevents powerful interests in the local area being held to account, but also fosters a culture in which the most valued kinds of activities are those happening at the national scale (Boyle 2012).

— Lack of cooperation within the sector: Cooperatives UK identify a lack of cooperation even within their own movement (2017c).

— Fracturing communities: a climate of suspicion and growing inequalities between different groups make it less likely that businesses can truly achieve 'broad community impact'.

6. Actions for a positive future for community business

A range of actions which could help build a positive future for community business are identified below, including those that need to be undertaken by the state (6.1), by funders (6.2), and by the community business movement (6.3).

6.1 Actions to be undertaken by the state

Tightening company law to create a level playing field for ethical businesses. Currently, large multinational corporations can externalise costs through tax avoidance, paying poverty wages, and failing to pay the true cost of pollution etc. (Boyle and Greenham 2015). Measures to force private enterprise to re-internalise costs – such as raising the minimum wage, and closing tax loopholes – will stop them from being able to undercut community businesses.

Devolving meaningful decision-making powers according to the principle of subsidiarity. Decentralising power is widely accepted by all political parties, but needs to involve significant powers such as the ability to vary local tax rates (Blond and Morrin 2014). There may also need to be forms of redistribution between stronger and weaker parts of the economy in order to address regional inequalities.

Reorienting state commissioning to favour local providers. Measures such as strengthening the Social Value Act should enable community businesses (rather than multinational corporations and national charities) to take on services and assets (Redding and Butler 2017, Butler 2017).

Shifting towards coproduction. Creating a cultural shift among civil servants at local and national level towards understanding citizens as active participants in co-creation of services (Boyle and Harris 2009).

Land reform. The impact of community land rights in Scotland has been identified as a major impetus to developing the social enterprise sector there, with calls to extend them (SE Scotland 2016). Similar calls have been made elsewhere in the UK, including to introduce a Land Value Tax (LVT 2018).

Supporting a diverse civic finance sector. Create a legislative context which promote civic finance institutions, for example enabling building societies to operate on a level playing field and encouraging them to lend to small and medium-size enterprises (Llewellyn and Wildman 2014).

6.2 Actions to be undertaken by funders

Supporting community ownership and control. This could be through supporting community asset transfers (Wyler 2009a) and encouraging community share issues (Community Shares 2018).

Providing subsidy without discouraging trading. This could involve supporting initiatives such as Match Trading, recently launched by the School for Social Entrepreneurs, which pound-for-pound matches increases in trading income (School for Social Entrepreneurs 2018).

Strengthening the system of business support. The need for low-cost or free business support, especially in the early stages of development, is identified in Diamond *et al.* (2017).

6.3 Actions to be undertaken by the movement

Engaging critically with concepts of 'community'. Some definitions of 'community' and 'locality' are actively in tension with equalities — for example, when used in nativist ways to exclude immigrants, or when a strict focus on geographical proximity excludes minorities who are unlikely to be geographically concentrated (e.g. LGBT communities). The movement could engage with intersectional understandings of power (Crenshaw 1989), and work with concepts developed by radical geographers such as 'progressive localism' (Featherstone *et al.* 2012).

Devolving power as a movement. Grantmakers and national organisations could investigate participatory processes for allocating resources, such as those developed by the Edge Fund (2018).

Making realistic claims for the sector. As Pearce (2003) notes, overinflated claims for community business (followed by a few high-profile collapses) contributed to the term going out of favour in 1990s Scotland. Acknowledging the limitations and trade-offs of any vision might enable the sector to avoid repeating this.

Providing education to enable participation. SE Scotland (2016) have called for social enterprise education to be integrated into every school in Scotland, as well as within further and higher education (2016, 22). The expansion of Cooperative Schools themselves might be an ideal starting point for raising a generation who have practical understanding of what cooperative endeavours entail. Adult education will also be important to facilitate broad-based participation in community businesses.
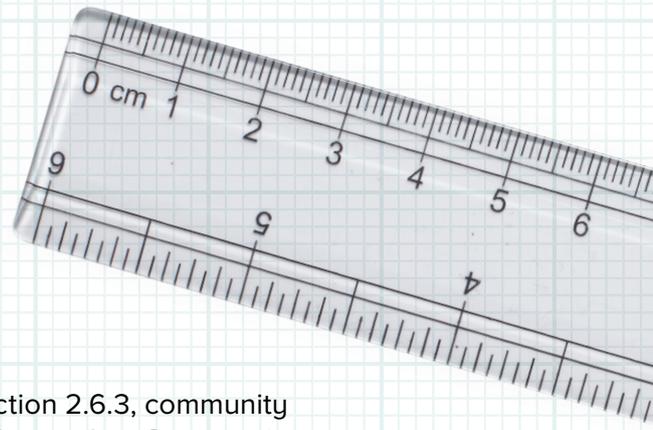
Articulating political positions. As discussed in section 2.6.3, community business can be attached to very different political agendas. Cooperation between different parts of the movement might be facilitated by enabling actors to articulate how these politics differ, rather than presuming that they are shared. This should also include those whose political agenda is unstated because of its close alignment with the status quo.

Developing knowledge practices to better assess community accountability. Although community accountability has been explored in Buckley *et al.* (2017), at present the impact of community businesses is largely based on claims made by the businesses themselves, without investigating the perspectives of the broader communities around them. Stated values such as inclusivity need to be tested to assess whether they are in fact welcoming of minorities. Robust procedures for understanding negative impacts of community businesses might be particularly important in context of high population churn, given the role of 'alternative economics' in furthering gentrification identified by the Friends Provident Foundation (2016).
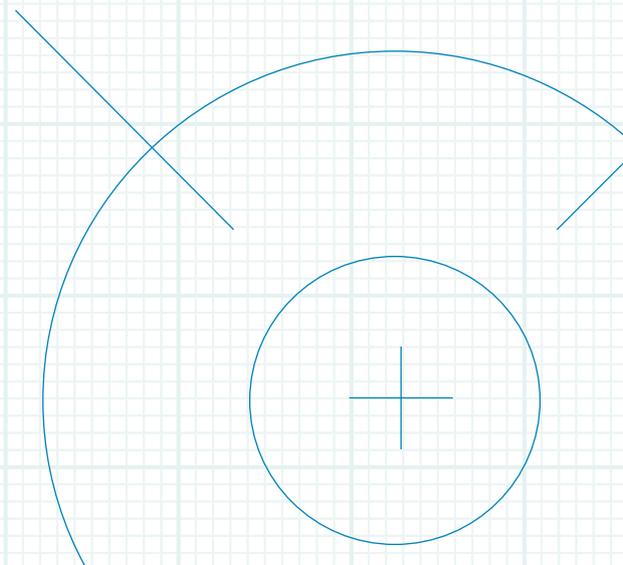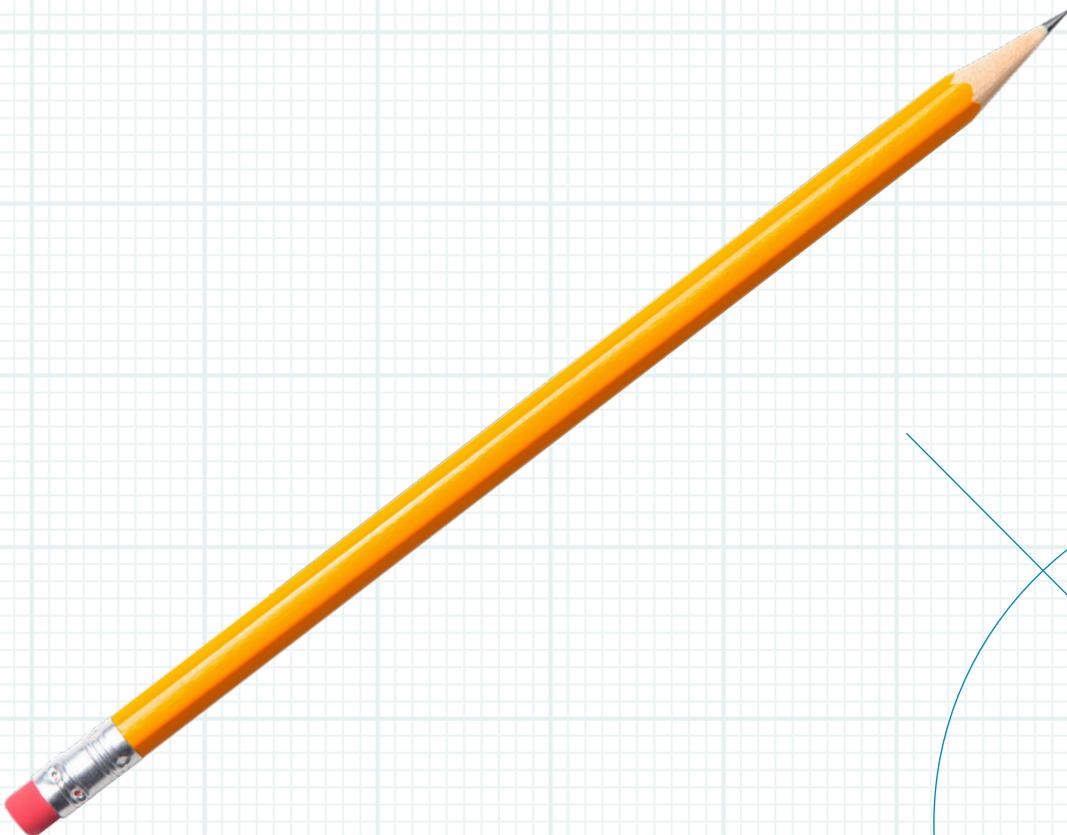
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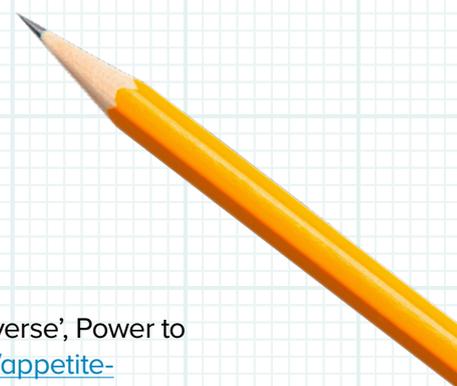
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