Introduction

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Across Europe, citizens are being encouraged by the state to get involved in their neighbourhood activities, community groups and civic life; in public sector consultations and decision-making processes, and even in the delivery of services that once lay firmly within the domain of the public sector. Within and between the European Union's (EU) nation states this emerging 'civil society' policy environment (Alcock, 2011) for service delivery is being played out in contextually specific ways. It is also occurring within the shared conditions of a global economic crisis, strained public sector budgets, varying degrees of civic unrest in relation to government cuts and a demographic shift resulting in increased proportions of older people in contemporary society.

Against this backdrop, the Conservative–Liberal Coalition government in the United Kingdom (UK) has drawn upon the Conservative Party's 'Big Society' agenda to promote local, needs-led service delivery via non-state providers and encourage citizens to work towards the creation of 'a society where people come together to solve problems and improve life for themselves and their communities; a society where the leading force for progress is social responsibility, not state control' (Conservative Party, 2010:1). Elsewhere in the EU, citizens are similarly being asked to engage in activities that sit within the social economy with its long roots to voluntarism, philanthropy, co-operatives and organisations that use business practice to achieve social aims. For example, across Scandinavia social businesses are promoted as a means of combating social exclusion through work integration. Sweden has notably instituted a centrally driven agenda to encourage service user choice and create new opportunities for non-state provision. In other EU countries the rhetoric surrounding the movement to engage civil society is focused on the development of partnership working between the social economy and the state (Addari et al, 2008). This nuanced business-like approach to meeting social need requires sections of the public sector to become proactive in engaging service users in decisions affecting the nature and delivery of their services. This scenario sees sub-contracting to, and procuring from, social economy

organisations as a means of achieving greater public and service user engagement and contributing to users and professionals working in partnership to design and deliver public services (Boyle & Harris, 2009); that is, co-production. This model of service delivery is assumed to bring added value by helping to maintain the vibrancy of communities, harnessing the latent entrepreneurial power of citizens and encouraging innovation and efficiency. Service provision by community or social economy providers is also understood to enhance wellbeing and feelings of empowerment and encourage the ‘reinvention’ of communities (Aigner et al, 2001) through integration, participation and social inclusion (Lee, 2003).

In contrast to these affirmative approaches, a strand within current critical social science discourse, social policy literature, think-tanks and the mass media questions whether a shift in responsibility for service design and delivery from the state to citizens/civil society is necessary, realisable and likely to result in positive outcomes for service recipients and society in general. Kisby (2010), for example, questions whether capacity exists in the form of additional volunteering, whilst Evans (2011) argues that the promotion of empowerment through citizen engagement in service delivery is simply a device to conceal public sector cutbacks and make them more palatable, and McCabe (2010) suggests that, rather than becoming empowered, citizens will become over-burdened to the detriment of service delivery. Others, such as Bednarek (2011), question the ability of communities and the social economy to respond adequately to the ‘opportunities’ offered by the policy trajectory and regard Big Society-type initiatives as having the potential to reinforce geographies of disadvantage since not all communities will have latent social entrepreneurs who will spring into civic action.

The extent to which communities are willing to embrace the co-production agenda, or have the skills and capabilities to bring citizen energy into play are relatively under-explored, as are the support mechanisms required to pump-prime civil participation (Boyle & Harris, 2009). Indeed, agendas to increase the number of community-run social economy organisations often portray stereotypical situations in which disadvantaged urban communities might benefit from their development, but give little consideration to their occurrence within diverse contexts, including rural areas, or around provision for, and by, specific demographic groups.

In this book, we consider the implications of applying policy that promotes service delivery by social economy organisations in the context of rural communities and older people’s services. We examine the policy contexts, aspects of the process, the complexities of attempting to establish social enterprises, question the meaning and utility of sustainability, demonstrate the problems of evaluating and measuring outcomes and,

using the findings from a large case study of developing social enterprises in rural Europe, point the way to achieving community service co-production through social enterprise.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AS A SERVICE PROVIDER

The current civil turn in policy has identified social economy organisations as a means of channelling citizen enthusiasm and action into bodies that work to produce societal benefit. In this respect, the last 20 years have seen *social entrepreneurship* and *social enterprise* emerge as terms to describe the process of, and organisational model for, achieving social benefit through trading activity although there is no consensus on their meaning, or where social enterprise sits within the social economy or in relation to the public sector and private enterprises. Despite this ambiguity, social enterprise has been conceptualised as a new type of organisation; one that sits at the crossroads of the public, private and voluntary sectors (Nyssens, 2006) and trades primarily for social benefit.

Social Enterprise

Although a social enterprise is generally conceptualised as an organisation that trades for social purposes, contemporary research, literature and policy all highlight difficulty of definition (Haugh & Kitson, 2007; Nicholls & Cho, 2008; Ridley-Duff, 2008; Townsend & Hart, 2008; Neck et al, 2009). In its widest sense, social enterprise embraces the gamut of social economy organisations engaged in trading activities including community enterprises, social firms, social businesses, mutuals, fair trade companies and voluntary organisations that trade (Pearce, 2003). But partly because ideas about the social economy as a service provider are still evolving, academics and policymakers tend to use social enterprise as a 'catch all' term. At policy level, social enterprise is promoted as a cost-effective, flexible and innovative means of addressing the challenges of localised service provision (Scottish Social Enterprise Coalition (SSEC), 2009) and perceived as a useful solution in disadvantaged or difficult-to-supply areas. This is because it can draw on local people to ensure that services are relevant and attuned whilst simultaneously developing skills, confidence and social capital. This focus on generating social benefit through enterprise activity is reflected in a much cited definition from the UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) *viz*, 'A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather

than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners' (DTI, 2002:7).

Social enterprises range from those producing products to those delivering services. They promote economic development and tackle social issues (DTI, 2002, 2005) by providing the means for individuals and communities to: improve their local neighbourhood; develop the skills and talents of local people; bring excluded groups into the labour market; create wealth and jobs; deliver value-for-money services in a wide range of sectors; promote active citizenship; and catalyse innovative solutions to local needs (Social Enterprise London, 2006). For Ridley-Duff and Bull (2011:60), social enterprise within the European context has the flavour of collective action and goals around the 'incremental building of social capital' whilst in the United States of America (USA) it is seen as individual-led businesses that are a 'market response to social issues'. Unsurprisingly, within this broad church of social enterprise conceptualisation, organisations employ different ways of combining social and economic objectives and models of social enterprise differ within and between countries.

Social Entrepreneurship

Though first defined more than 250 years ago (Austin et al, 2006), entrepreneurship remains a complex, variously understood and variously presented notion (Berglund & Johansson, 2007; Gartner, 1990). This complexity is reflected in Harding's definition of entrepreneurship as 'any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self employment, a new business organisation, or the expansion of an existing business by an individual, team of individuals or established business' (Harding, 2006:7). Reflecting this, social entrepreneurship has become a label for enterprising activity with community goals that is designed to generate profit for re-investment in a social business or a community (Harding, 2006); that is, an activity with 'an entrepreneurial embedded social purpose' (Austin et al, 2006:1). Thus, the process of social entrepreneurship is one in which social inequalities and imperfections are addressed in an entrepreneurial way (Steinerowski et al, 2008).

Although definitions and descriptions of social entrepreneurship appear fairly broad, common themes are identifiable. These include: an enterprise or business dimension to the process; an interest in innovation and change in relation to social issues; the need for independence from the state; and the (re-)investment of monies to meet social objectives. By extension, social entrepreneurs are viewed as key actors in the entrepreneurship process and are, according to Bornstein (2004:1), 'people with new ideas to address

major problems, who are relentless in the pursuit of their visions'. Social entrepreneurs look for opportunities to add social impact throughout their value chain and are often presented as romantic heroes; creative risk-taking actors who tackle social problems using new approaches, untapped resources and 'his or her bare hands' (Nicholls and Cho, 2008:111).

Community Social Enterprise

Social enterprise is generally linked with the individualising concept of social entrepreneurship. However, the recent emergence of concepts such as 'The Big Society' in UK policy discourse evokes the notion of mass emergence of community groups eager to use their energy to invigorate neighbourhoods and help their neighbours. This is at odds with commentary about social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. Empowering communities to transform public services is key to the Big Society agenda and reflects the government's desire to empower citizens and communities to take responsibility for local challenges by becoming actively involved in the planning and delivery of services (Cabinet Office, 2010a, 2010b; Conservative Party, 2010). Yet whilst the place of social enterprise seems assured, there is obscurity around how the ideology of co-production will be translated into action on the ground and the underlying assumption that ubiquitous co-productive solutions will emerge from communities in the form of action from pre-established neighbourhood groups. It is thus useful to develop understanding of how communities can translate their current and latent activity into service provision and the benefits and burdens produced. Boyle and Harris (2009) suggest that insights are required into the realities of implementing 'collective co-production' for different communities and social groups. These issues are addressed within this volume, in chapters that examine the extent to which it is possible to actively make community social enterprises happen; the processes and challenges of developing such organisations in local contexts; the challenges for communities and citizens of getting involved; and the sustainability of the enterprises and activities created.

Community Social Enterprise for Older People's Services

Within the EU and USA the proportions of older people in the population are increasing as a result of demographic trends, including the low natural growth seen in the majority of European regions (<2.5%).¹ Most countries in the developed world are experiencing a decrease in the average number of births per woman and a concomitant increase in the dependency ratio, such that between 2000 and 2009 the proportion of the EU population

aged 80+ increased from 3.4% to 4.6% and those aged between 65 and 79 increased from 12.3% to 12.7%.² These trends underpin concerns at both national and local levels about the ability of services and budgets to meet the needs of higher proportions of older people, particularly frailer older people who are known to consume high levels of health and social services.

Apocalyptic descriptions of ageing populations are often accompanied by calls for innovative, potentially non-state provided, service solutions. This suggests that the sector is ripe for community-based social enterprise service provision; as does the assumption that the growing proportion of older people harbours an under-utilised army of volunteers with the capacity and desire to participate in service delivery. The challenges of delivering appropriate services to ageing populations offer a contemporary context for discussion around the civil society turn in policy and service provision.

As an approach, community social enterprise appears to offer a variety of benefits including acting as a counter to the challenge of providing local, needs-led state-funded services and as a means of engaging an untapped source of free labour from amongst younger, fitter ‘baby-boomers’ and early retirees. Indeed, Scott (2011) suggests that an outcome of the use of ‘moral persuasion’ to ‘encourage’ fitter retirees to volunteer and participate in social enterprise creation is likely to be the harnessing of latent entrepreneurial skills within communities. And, through contributing to the maintenance of physical and mental activity and social interaction, there will be health and wellbeing benefits for those who engage in enterprise development. Furthermore, harnessing their life experience and networks to create and run organisations that provide services for other older people (such as social support, domestic help, shopping, transport, exercise schemes, health care, community alarm schemes, snow-clearing and fuel provision) should encourage a shift in the paradigm that views older people as a societal burden. Whilst services such as those listed might be criticised for not being professional or medicalised, they are specifically tailored to older people’s needs and designed to enhance their quality of life. They also address areas of provision that may be difficult for statutory providers.

An attraction of community social enterprise lies in its articulation with the concept of enhanced services; that is, supporting and working in partnership with the public sector to maintain health and wellbeing. This aligns with the twin thrusts in contemporary social policy to keep people out of long-term institutional care and avoid crisis admissions. Ultimately, such costly institutional or technical service interventions are not beneficial to the wellbeing of older people whereas facilitating older people to help themselves, and each other, through collective activities aligns with

wider health policy around illness prevention and health maintenance. Community social enterprise thus has credence as an approach to care because of its potential to maintain older people in their communities and because it implies multi-dimensional beneficial health and healthcare system impacts.

Service Provision in Europe's Rural Areas

Population ageing is most pronounced within Europe's rural regions due, in part, to the out-migration of younger people and the in-migration of older people from urban areas seeking a perceived higher quality of life. These regions are also home to the highest cost of service provision *per capita* and where, contrary to perception, older people often experience loneliness and isolation linked to the out-migration of younger family members, changing community structures and dispersed settlement patterns. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the ageing populations in rural areas are placing increasing demands on public sector service provision – and will continue to do so as the proportion of those aged over 55 years increases. Concomitantly, local services such as shops, banks, schools, post offices and health services, and the availability of professional jobs have been in decline across rural and remote areas (Sederberg, 1987; Kearns & Joseph, 1997; Civil Renewal Unit, 2006; Argent, 2008; Sawer, 2008). As many aspects of service provision affect quality of life, it is likely that their reduction will impact adversely on the health and wellbeing of older people in rural areas. This likelihood is compounded by a cycle of decline resulting in fewer jobs for young people and higher-paid professionals which raises the likelihood of sparse, disparately located concentrations of retired, part-time or low-paid workers developing in remote and rural areas. In terms of planning and service provision, this scenario will lead to sporadic case loads and mitigate against the possibility of justifying locally based full-time continuing jobs for health and social service professionals (Bryant & Joseph, 2001).

Within the health and social care professions, a move to specialisation and the technicalisation of work has seen a concentration of career opportunities which, together with a perception that the exciting jobs are those with high volumes of specialist cases (and therefore urban-based), has made it difficult to attract ambitious professionals to generalist rural work. In a similar vein, a push for economies of scale through team-working and service hubs has encouraged health and social care to provide services through outreach or 'drive-in, drive-out' models of care to the detriment of community-located services. Thus, across rural Europe there is a growing sense of panic about how to provide services to rural areas in a context

where demand is likely to rise and access to health service staff likely to decline. In this context, policymakers and service providers are keen to consider novel ways of providing services that involve communities and citizens.

Rural social enterprises are likely to experience many of the same structural challenges faced by public sector service providers, including limited access to finance and information (Osborne et al, 2002; Farmer et al, 2008), but more profoundly, given their already diminished experience of service provision, rural citizens may resent the imposition of responsibility for developing and delivering services and associate social enterprise provision with second-rate services (Farmer et al, 2008). However, other contextual factors suggest that a rural environment is conducive to social enterprise as social networks are denser (Hofferth & Iceland, 1998); and their impacts of high levels of trust and active civic participation (Dale & Onyx, 2005) are key components of the social capital associated with social enterprise development, as is the existence of co-dependence, reciprocity and collective activity. These characteristics imply that rural areas should represent a nurturing context for social enterprises (Shucksmith et al, 1996; Granovetter, 2005).

THE OLDER PEOPLE FOR OLDER PEOPLE (O4O) PROJECT

Given rural population ageing, the challenges of rural service delivery and a policy turn favouring the engagement of civil society, the O4O project set out to test the extent to which state-driven policies promoting community social enterprise can be enacted and the extent to which community social enterprise can be facilitated and produce the outcomes and benefits suggested by policymakers. The benefits of social enterprise are often discussed in relation to deprived urban neighbourhoods but rural regions across Europe also share challenges that indicate they too may provide a needy environment for community social enterprise delivery. The O4O project (funded by the EU Northern Periphery Programme from 2007–2011) aimed to work with communities across five European regions (see Map I.1) to facilitate community social enterprise for the delivery of older people's services in rural settings. Project staff worked with communities in Scotland, Greenland, Sweden, Finland and Northern Ireland to identify older people's needs and establish community social enterprises that local citizens thought would enhance the quality of life of local older people.

The O4O project was specifically designed in response to the costs and

Map I.1 Europe, highlighting countries that participated in the 040 project

difficulties of providing services for rising proportions of older people within remote and rural communities and tested policy ideas around the promotion of service co-production through social enterprise. It engaged with the notion that many older people remain fit and active long after retirement and saw them as a resource for social entrepreneurship;

potential social entrepreneurs with the life experiences, skills and wisdom to establish, lead and manage community-based social enterprises. O4O also sought to determine whether there is the potential to build on older people's willingness to volunteer so that the 'younger, fitter old' might support the 'frailer, older old'. Current policy and research suggest a theoretical process of value creation from O4O-type social enterprises in which the engagement of older people in the development of community-led service provision has additional benefits. These include helping to keep older people active for longer with resultant positive impacts on their physical and mental health and the development of trust and social networks within the community. This is seen in Figure I.1, which outlines the process of social enterprise development and outcomes.

The aim of implementing O4O in rural communities was to engage older people in service co-production. To achieve this, O4O Project Managers were employed in each of the countries and regions involved, with a remit to mentor community members and groups through the process of community social enterprise development. The Project Managers, some of whom contribute to chapters within this book, used an action research approach to capture information on the processes in which they were involved. From the outset it was envisaged that whilst each of the participating communities would aspire to develop an ideal type of social enterprise – that is, a social business model – their different contextual factors, state of readiness and choice of service(s) to deliver made it highly likely that a range of forms of community social enterprise would transpire. Indeed, the production of different types of organisations and services was of particular interest and a range of comparative contextual information was collected for each region so that the emergent models might be compared with knowledge about the environment within which they grew. O4O Project Managers supported communities to develop organisations that met their objectives and, as Tables I.1–I.5 demonstrate, this resulted in the production of different organisation and service types.

Whilst the particularities of each of the communities involved in O4O contributed to differences in the community social enterprise models they developed, these differences were also partially attributable to, and shaped by, the wider socio-economic and political contexts of the participating countries.

Figure I.1 A theory of social enterprise processes and outcomes production

Table I.1 O4O project emergent community social enterprise types – Scotland

Country	Social enterprise context	Community/ies	Description of O4O development	Emergent organisational type at O4O project end	Community social enterprise model
Scotland	A social enterprise (social business) sector is relatively well established and supported by public policy.	Ardersier	An informal voluntary group was established to produce an oral history DVD.	An informal group of oral history volunteers and a community development company.	Company limited by guarantee.
		Tongue	A multi-faceted transport scheme was developed including volunteer drivers.	The transport scheme was set up as a sub-group of an existing community development company (company limited by guarantee).	Company limited by guarantee.
		Lochinver	Following closure of a public sector centre for older people, a community group formed an organisation to run the centre.	The community group organisation (Community Care Assynt) was established as a not-for-profit legal form and won a contract from the public sector to run the local centre.	Community Interest Company (CIC).

Table I.2 O4O project emergent community social enterprise types – Northern Ireland

Country	Social enterprise context	Community/ies	Description of O4O development	Emergent organisational type at O4O project end	Community social enterprise model
Northern Ireland	A social enterprise (social business) sector is relatively well established and supported by public policy.	Ards Peninsula	Developed a pilot community radio station.	A pilot radio station staffed by volunteers.	Voluntary group that may not continue beyond project-end.
		Markethill	Development of social enterprise activities relating to a drop-in centre and outreach centre.	An existing charity worked to develop a plan for engaging in trade through a socially entrepreneurial approach.	Charity that trades.
		Cookstown	Development of social enterprise activities linked to a lunch club, restaurant and drop-in centre.	An existing charity expanded trading activity.	Charity that trades.

Table I.3 O4O project emergent community social enterprise types – Greenland

Country	Social enterprise context	Community/ies	Description of O4O development	Emergent organisational type at O4O project end	Community social enterprise model
Greenland	Social enterprise sector almost non-existent.	Aruk, Paamiut, Kuummiut, Kulusuk & Ittoqqortoormiit	Activity groups of older people formed in each community, e.g. needlework, befriending.	Informal community groups with volunteers and a trained volunteer 'leader'.	Informal voluntary group.

Table I.4 O4O project emergent community social enterprise types – Finland

Country	Social enterprise context	Community/ies	Description of O4O development	Emergent organisational type at O4O project end	Community social enterprise model
Finland	Strong public sector service provision with social enterprise generally performing a work integration function.	Nurmes	O4O Project Manager worked with an existing 'association' to increase community capacity for volunteering, e.g. through development of guidance for volunteers.	Social economy organisation established as an 'association' with focus on volunteering.	Village association.
		Vuonsilahti & Koli	Replication of the 'association' model developed in Nurmes.	Social economy organisation established as an 'association' with focus on volunteering.	Village association.

Table I.5 O4O project emergent community social enterprise types – Sweden

Country	Social enterprise context	Community/ies	Description of O4O development	Emergent organisational type at O4O project end	Community social enterprise model
Sweden	Strong public sector service provision with social enterprise generally performing a work integration function.	Sundom	Community secured funding from the public sector to deliver IT training.	Specific projects within the remit of an existing 'association'.	Co-operative.
		Jamton	A café and meeting place in a grocery store. An employee was hired for grocery deliveries and recycling collections.	Public sector subsidy for employment of 'hard-to-reach' groups used to support hiring a delivery/collection person. Scheme may be extended using volunteers.	Work integration function added to existing private business.
		Niemsel	Within a private school, the community created a hub for older people's services.	A private school association that facilitates volunteering and aspires to facilitate social enterprise.	An association working towards social business creation.

Scotland

Scotland has a total resident population aged 16+ of just over 5 million. Approximately 18% of the population is of pensionable age, with 7% aged over 75 years.

The O4O Project Manager worked with communities in the Highland region, which is Scotland’s largest region in terms of geographical size and is classified as rural by the Scottish government. The region is internally varied and encompasses remote, dispersed settlements, small coastal and market towns, and the regional capital, Inverness, which has approximately 45,000 residents. Within Highland, 19.5% of the population is of

Map I.2 Highland region within Scotland and location of communities that participated in the O4O project within the Highland region

pensionable age and 39.6% fall under the Scottish government's definition of an older person (i.e. 55 and over) compared with 35.4% within the Scottish population as a whole. O4O worked with four communities in the Highland region (see Map I.2): *Tongue* and *Lochinver* have small populations of between 500 and 700 people and are situated over one hour's drive from Inverness; *South West Ross* consists of a cluster of three small settlements with a combined population of around 1,500 and *Ardersier* is a former industrial/military town of around 1,000 residents less than 20 miles from Inverness. A Project Manager was employed to work with citizens across these four locations over a period of three years and in three of the four Highland communities this process resulted in a community social enterprise being established. The needs that communities chose to address reflect previously identified concerns about poor rural transport, older people's day and residential care, and social isolation.

Scotland sits within the UK context where social enterprise models are promoted in policy, fairly well recognised within the general population and have existing support bodies such as the Scottish Social Enterprise Coalition and various legal structures available to them. Three of Scotland's Highland communities worked towards establishing formally constituted social enterprises using not-for-personal-profit business formats available in the UK including a company limited by guarantee (*Ardersier* and *Tongue*) and a community interest company (*Lochinver*).

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's population of approximately 1.6 million comprises roughly 3% of the UK population. Just over 16% of the Northern Irish population is of pensionable age. Within Northern Ireland, the population is concentrated in the capital city of Belfast and the surrounding rural areas, giving a population density of 122 per square kilometre. The O4O Project Manager was based in Belfast but worked with communities in the rural areas of: *Cookstown*, which has a population of around 11,000 and is one of the largest towns within County Tyrone; *Markethill*, which is a small market village in County Armagh with around 1,200 residents; and *Kircubbin*, a settlement of around 2,000 residents that sits on the Ards Peninsula in County Down (see Map I.3). As with Highland in Scotland, social enterprise models have been adopted by some existing social economy organisations within Northern Ireland and the concept of social business is, to a degree, established. However, the Northern Irish context is particular in relation to its history of social, political and economic unrest which has been seen as damaging to social capital and civil society activity. As a consequence, the O4O Project Manager worked

Map I.3 Communities in Northern Ireland that participated in the 040 project

with existing voluntary groups and charities with a view to building their capacity for social entrepreneurship. This involved business management and governance training for a voluntary group that went on to develop trading activities for social benefit (Cookstown), a ‘drop-in’ centre with an existing voluntary group (Markethill) and a pilot community radio station (Kircubbin).

Greenland

With a population of only 56,500 people Greenland is characterised by an extremely low population density of 0.07 people per square kilometre. This

Map I.4 Greenland, showing the location of the communities that participated in the O4O project

reflects the distribution of the population around coastal towns and villages at considerable distances from each other. Around 26% of the population live in the capital city of Nuuk, in the Kommuneqarfik Sermersooq region in the south of Greenland which spans from the east to west coast and comprises the five municipalities that participated in O4O. The two O4O Project Managers were based in Nuuk but worked with five settlements dispersed around the east and west coasts of the country (see Map I.4): *Arsuk*, a small village of around 150 residents situated to the south of Nuuk; *Paamiut*, a fishing town of around 1,600 residents in southwest Sermersooq that is a six hour boat ride from *Arsuk*; *Kulusuk*, a village

of around 280 people on an island to the east of the region, served by an airport; *Kuummiut*, a village of around 360 citizens located on the region's east coast and 30 kilometres north of Kulusuk; and *Ittoqqortoormiit*, a village of around 450 people, one of Greenland's most remote communities and the most northerly of the communities with which O4O Project Managers worked.

At the start of the O4O project, the Greenlandic team felt that very little was known about the characteristics of older people, their needs and capacity to be involved in volunteering. Social enterprise was an unfamiliar format, with little activity within the country that could be defined under this banner and none related to older people's services. The O4O Project Managers travelled extensively. They held several community meetings in each participating town or village and collected information on older people's lives and their service using interview, survey and community discussion methods. Working groups were established to bring older people together, to engage in activities that they had identified as beneficial, and were supported to submit applications for grant-funding for their groups. This is seen as the first stage in building community capacity for more formalised social enterprise service provision and co-production.

Sweden

Sweden has almost 10 million inhabitants but its population density of around 20 people per square kilometre is illustrative of its large rural areas outside the urban centres – particularly in the north of the country where the population densities are lower and distances between communities greater. Norrbotten county, which participated in O4O, is located in the north of Sweden (see Map I.5). It has borders running from the coast to Swedish Lapland and a population of almost 200,000, of which 21% are retired. The Project Manager was based in Norrbotten's capital city, Lulea, and worked with three rural communities to develop community social enterprises: *Sundom*, a coastal village of about 180 residents situated some 20 miles northeast of Lulea; *Niemisel*, a village with a population just over 100, lying further inland than Sundom and some 30 miles north of Lulea; and *Jamton*, a coastal village of around 240 residents and the most northerly of the Swedish O4O communities.

Sweden has a long history of welfare state provision but the social enterprise concept is gaining momentum as the state looks for innovative ways to meet certain service delivery challenges, including older people's care. There is also a tradition of work integration social enterprises which are part-funded by the state and provide employment opportunities for

Map I.5 Sweden and neighbouring countries, highlighting the Swedish communities that participated in the O40 project

hard-to-reach groups, and of community associations that tend to operate under what are seen as the voluntary model in definitions of the social economy. Within this context, the O4O Project Manager worked with communities to develop a phased process for facilitating social entrepreneurship opportunities around: a private school initiative (Niemisel); a meeting place within a grocery store, with associated grocery delivery and recyclable collection services provided through a work integration organisation (Jamton); and an inter-generational IT training programme run through an existing older people's voluntary organisation (Sundom).

Finland

Situated in the north-east of Europe, Finland has a population of almost 5.5 million, a population density of roughly 16 people per square kilometre and, away from the capital city, Helsinki, is largely rural. Finland's North Karelia region, which is located in the central east of the country bordering Russia, participated in O4O (see Map I.6). The Project Manager was based in the town of Nurmes, which has a population of around 8,500 people. He worked with citizens within *Nurmes* and the small villages of *Vuonislahti*, which has a population of 250 residents (rising to 750 in

Map I.6 Finland and neighbouring countries, highlighting the Finnish communities that participated in the O4O project

the summer due to second-home ownership) and *Koli*, which has 300 residents. Both villages are in Lieksa, situated on the opposite shore of Lake Pielinen from Nurmes and are accessible by car ferry in the summer or ice road in the winter. Like Sweden, the Finnish context is one in which citizens have high expectations of public sector service delivery and this saw the Finnish Project Manager work to extend existing voluntary sector support for older people as a mechanism for building community capacity. This was done by developing volunteer guidance documents (Nurmes) and replicating existing voluntary organisational models (Vuonislahti and Koli).

THE O4O EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: A SUMMARY

The community social enterprises that emerged through O4O had different aims and organisational structures that were conditioned by both the priorities of the communities involved in their creation and wider contextual features. The Project Managers found that facilitating community social enterprise was a gradual process, with some communities unwilling or 'unable' to create a social business. As a consequence, the variety of emergent O4O social enterprises reflects the community capacity-building work begun by O4O Project Managers as part of a wider aim of working towards an ideal-type model of community social enterprise for service provision. In Greenland, where social enterprise as an organisational form is virtually unknown, the organisations developed amounted to little more than informal local groups, bringing people together to talk, to consider their needs and how these might be addressed. In contrast, in Scotland, which in terms of the countries participating in O4O has one of the most established social enterprise sectors, the process of developing community social enterprise occurred at a far quicker pace and resulted in social enterprises legally constituted as companies within the life-time of the project.

The different organisations emergent from O4O can be seen to be at different stages on a trajectory towards community social enterprise as social business, with the goal either to obtain contracts from the public sector or to sell directly to service users. Accordingly, when the authors in this volume discuss community social enterprise they are referring to a variety of social economy organisational types that emerged by working with citizens to create solutions to their identified priorities.

WHAT FOLLOWS IN THIS BOOK

The work of the O4O project provides evidence-informed commentary on community social enterprise development issues, including the impacts of contextual features, the roles of different players, the extent to which communities can and should be requested to be resilient and look after themselves, the kinds of enterprises communities build, the nature of community enterprise (as compared with individual social enterprise), and issues around sustainability and measurement of impacts and success. By drawing on evidence from O4O, this book addresses the need for greater evidence on the potential role of communities in co-producing their services. Due to its large focal case study of O4O, the book concentrates on community social enterprise within rural areas, but the themes and findings discussed have implications for other locations as there are no typical communities and policy needs to move away from its focus on social enterprise as a way of addressing stereotypical decayed urban community-scapes. This book also considers a specific type of social enterprise; one that governments, communities and opinion leaders widely assume it is possible to build, but is as yet under-researched. The community social enterprises at the heart of this book are, in a sense, a range of small projects to develop self-sustaining social economy organisations of various types that sit on the cusp between community associations, volunteering organisations and social businesses – yet they are very much attuned to the *zeitgeist* of embracing social responsibility for one's community combined with operating on business principles.

In Chapter 1, Hill explores demographic, economic and ideological trends; the socio-political factors that both drive and constrain the development of community social enterprises as service providers in rural areas and the reality of/potential for policy implementation. Skerratt, in Chapter 2, continues the contextualisation of social enterprise by providing a comparative analysis of existing national structures and processes affecting their development as service providers. Together, these chapters set the context for the rest of the volume. Chapters that follow highlight the strengths and weaknesses of small, local community social enterprises as a genre and open up discussion of new areas including the apparently conflicting portrayal of social entrepreneurs as heroic individuals and policy which assumes communities can be socially entrepreneurial. In Chapter 3, Muñoz and Steinerowski explore this apparent conflict by identifying the entrepreneurial skills needed for community social enterprises within remote and rural areas and testing the feasibility of policies that promote the notion that communities ought to be involved in service delivery – and that it will be beneficial. Farmer and Stephen discuss this

further in Chapter 4 by reflecting on a Project Manager's lived experience of implementing O4O, how local context affects social enterprise development, and the pros and cons of a bottom-up approach.

The O4O case study has facilitated exploration of how many of the issues play out in relation to two problematical areas for local and national governments; that is, how to provide services at the nexus of two highly expensive service imperatives: services for older people (with high service demands) and services for rural areas (which lack economies of scale, have difficulties recruiting workers and may be constrained by community norms). In Chapter 5, Radford and Shortall use evidence from O4O to reflect on whether communities are ready to engage with the process of setting up and running social organisations by drawing on the particular context of community engagement in Northern Ireland.

The authors acknowledge that governments are promoting community social enterprise as having multiple benefits and do not seek to undermine that argument *per se*. Rather, our interest is in exploring and critiquing the extent to which it might be possible to engineer the building of ubiquitous community social enterprises and in probing issues around their establishment and lifecourse. Whitelaw, in Chapter 6, reflects on the meaning of, and potential for, organisational sustainability of community social initiatives and suggests that a more nuanced understanding of sustainability is called for. Authors explored elements in the process of community social enterprise development; specifically, what affected process and what elements in the process helped or hindered social enterprise development. This relates to a need to understand the theoretical importance of measuring the value of social organisations for different stakeholders and the difficulties of capturing value and impact. This is discussed by Farmer and Bradley in Chapter 7.

The O4O case study has allowed the authors to observe the process of expanding community social enterprise in different countries, regions and communities which helped to illuminate the role of contextual factors and agency in social enterprise development. This book draws on theory, evidence and empirical findings and its authors are a similarly mixed bag of theorists, pragmatists and practitioners whose approaches represent the multiple perspectives necessary to examine the concept of community social enterprise. Consequently, the book is intended to be pragmatic but also thoughtful and analytical. It is meant to be helpful to the range of stakeholders, including community members, planners, service providers and policymakers, and to bridge the worlds of practice and academic research.

Much is made by politicians of the promise that communities should, can and will co-produce with the state, and of the attendant range of

benefits, so it should be no surprise that the authors were concerned to test policymakers' claims that this was achievable. Sometimes the results were surprising. O4O was a highly complex project; it involved real people, real communities and real service delivery issues, and as a consequence was often painful in aspects of its delivery. In their Conclusion, Hill, Farmer and Muñoz analyse the body of evidence within the book to comment on the feasibility of the ubiquitous emergence of community social enterprises as rural service providers. They highlight particularly challenging issues and offer concrete recommendations for the future, if governments and societies continue along the road towards a changed paradigm of service delivery; one for the people, by the people. It may be difficult but just possible . . .

NOTES

1. Eurostat. Available at <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu> (accessed 17 February 2012).
2. Eurostat. Available at <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu> (accessed 17 February 2012).

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