SCALING LAND-BASED INNOVATION
CASE STUDY

About these case studies:
This pack contains five case study sheets, each one detailing the development of a community-led innovation in the UK.

Based on desk research and qualitative interviews, the sheets mix outlines of each innovation's development with personal reflections from practitioners working in each sector.

Themes are unpacked from these stories, allowing parallels to be drawn across sectors and for tensions intrinsic to the scaling process, detailed in our **info-graphics pack**, to be illustrated with personality and detail.

These case studies anchor our understanding of what scaling means for different innovations, people and sectors.

About the research
This pack was produced as part of Shared Assets' **'Learning Lessons from Social Innovation'** research project, running from October 2013- April 2014.

About Shared Assets
Shared Assets is a social enterprise, established in 2012, which supports community use of environmental assets such as woodlands, parks and waterways. Our vision is the creation of a 21st Century commons.

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Research conducted by Shared Assets and funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. All quotes from anonymised qualitative interviews conducted by Shared Assets.

2014

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CREATING A 21ST CENTURY COMMONS

SCALING LAND-BASED INNOVATION

CASE STUDY

A: DEVELOPMENT TRUSTS

Fact file

1970

Development trusts, where communities own and manage assets to benefit local areas, have been going since the 1970s.

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Since 2005, economic downturn, localism and legislative change have renewed enthusiasm about trusts' potential.

Some feel policy is pushing too hard and too fast, without making sure communities are able to take on assets sustainably.

Trusts are usually tailored to the needs of local assets and local people, openness to diversity is often cited as a key strength.

Many envisage this customisable innovation developing through diffusion, being replicated and adopted across the country by communities that want to own their assets.

What's the innovation?

Development trusts use trading and ownership of buildings and land to bring about long-term social, economic and environmental benefits in their communities.

In what context did it emerge?

Though community and charitable groups have owned and managed assets for centuries, using this arrangement to deliver social goals and generate income was formalised in the 1970s and 1980s. Groups such as Coin Street Community Builders pioneered the model, developing this economic development movement.

Since the early 2000s, the innovation has been recognised and formally encouraged by a number of policy drivers. Establishment of the Asset Transfer Unit, the Localism Act 2011 and cuts in public spending have combined to form a concerted '**push**' for the transfer of assets from public bodies to community ownership.

How has it developed over time?

Trusts in the 1970s-80s were largely practitioner-led, developed through the '**pull**' of community activists working to establish ownership, manage assets and nurture local enterprise. Pioneers of the change such as Coin Street Community Builders and the Westway Development Trust are still in business. They often invite other social enterprises to make use of their assets, renting space to charities and community groups and bringing social enterprises together.

Legislative changes since 2003, followed by the Quirk Review and the establishment of the Asset Transfer Unit, have facilitated the transfer of assets into community ownership. In recent years, the Coalition's public deficit reduction programme and the Localism Act have strengthened interest in using development trusts as drivers of local regeneration.

However, despite policy support for such schemes, support in the form of grant subsidies is shrinking. Some practitioners believe the growing social investment sector may be able to bridge the gap. Looking forward, many have concerns about the capacity of community groups to manage demanding assets. The shift of publicly valuable assets into essentially private (even if not for profit) ownership is also criticised.

What kind of business model did it use?

In general, development trusts are modelled on generating income through enterprise to meet local needs. However, in reality development trusts occupy a spectrum, between relying totally on grant funding or totally on enterprise income. Indeed, trusts may be more or less reliant on grant funding at different times.

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A: DEVELOPMENT TRUSTS

"Stability is a problem, if one or two people leave the whole thing collapses."
Supporter

"If you are trying to improve an area then ownership of land and buildings is going to be important. If you are just providing services you don't need to do this, it's going to be a cost."
Supporter

"Development trusts are really by and for locals."
Practitioner

"Success would be if every community that wants one, has one."
Supporter

Development trusts are often celebrated for their diversity; with the forms and activities of each trust responsively tailored to the asset they manage and the community in which they operate.

What themes characterise its development?

The development trust sector invites diversity. The replicability of trusts' fundamental features leaves space to tailor each trust's design and activities to meet local needs. Developing through diffusion, trusts are able to negotiate local complexities whilst being replicated in enough localities to be considered 'mainstream'. Indeed, interviewees reflected on the importance of trusts being 'by and for' locals, seeing diversity as key to their mission and strength.

The surge in public sector support for development trusts, however, brings about new tensions. Though communities '**pulling**' for asset ownership may be granted their wishes, the pace of policy '**push**' is often raised as a concern. As policy drivers combine with reductions in financial support, communities may end up saddled with liabilities rather than assets. The demands of asset management may sap the resources of community groups and potentially diminish their **value**; failing to meet these demands could lead to the degradation of the asset, trust and the local community.

What does scaling mean for this innovation?

Well-established development trusts such as Coin Street Community Builders have achieved scale by diversifying their activities, taking on new assets and entering new sectors. As a whole, development trusts have spread mostly through diffusion, with groups from different localities taking on the form and moulding it to local needs. Interviewees saw this method as a success, hoping that 'every community that wants a development trust can have one'.

As time goes on, issues of viability, capacity and value creation within the sector may need to be confronted. To ensure the '**push**' of asset transfer does not weaken them, trusts may need to focus on scaling activities – capacity building and the strengthening of routines – rather than pure innovating.

So tensions between **scaling and innovating** may need to be negotiated. Interviewees mentioned problems with trusts' stability after key personalities and visionaries left projects. As development trusts organise the diverse activities, groups and assets they manage and fortify themselves as viable organisations, the freedom and fluidity of innovation may need to be put on hold.

SCALING LAND-BASED INNOVATION
CASE STUDY
B: COMMUNITY FOOD ENTERPRISES

Fact file

Community food enterprises don't just produce or process food, but aim to provide a range of social and environmental benefits.

Food scares, supermarket dominance, economic downturn and localism contributed to the innovation's emergence.

£150 million is the estimated size of the community food enterprise sector.

Many practitioners experience tensions between wanting to be good and needing to be financially sustainable.

'Connecting up' into inter-enterprise co-operatives, sharing skills and resources, is thought by many to be the best way to grow this innovation.

What's the innovation?

Community food enterprises are enterprises that produce, process or distribute food at a local level, whilst also working to provide multiple outcomes, such as environmental sustainability, local economic development and community cohesion.

In what context did it emerge?

Well-publicised food scares, such as the foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001 and the 2013 horsemeat adulteration scandal, contributed to widespread concern about transparency and accountability in the food chain.

Alongside this, the post-2008 economic downturn and the subsequent 'anti globalisation' movement have worked to raise interest in the range of benefits – social, political, environmental and economic – community food enterprises can deliver.

Policy wise, localism and sustainability agendas have driven the sector forward. On the ground, the dominance of supermarkets in the UK agri-food sector has contributed to rural poverty by driving down prices paid to farmers, creating a desire for change in how we produce our food.

How has it developed over time?

From the early 1990s, it largely developed through a 'pull' from practitioners. Activists and communities have experimented, forming food co-ops, farmers' markets, growing communities, box schemes and more.

Box schemes such as **Riverford** have grown into sizeable businesses, whilst farmers' markets now take place across the country. Recent years have also seen **pushes** to the sector with programmes such as Big Lottery's 'Making Local Food Work', a funding and support programme for community food enterprises that ran from 2007-2012. Community food's move toward the **mainstream** has also spurred some supermarkets to appropriate its language in a bid to sell new product lines.

Though awareness is widespread, the sector itself remains small – and some argue this is to be celebrated – with its total value estimated at £150 million a year. The supply chain infrastructure of local producers, distributers, processers and sellers remains in dire need of regeneration. Many advocate enterprises 'connecting up' to share skills and resources as a remedy to this, and a means to compete with large supermarkets. Online food hubs like **www.stroudco.org.uk** are one way of doing this.

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"People don't want to be bigger – maybe we should question the whole foundations of 'get bigger' logic."
Practitioner

"Learn to share things so you get high impact but don't grow as organisations. Then you keep volunteers, local knowledge and relationships."
Support organisation worker

"We are a nice business, but we are still a business."
Practitioner

"If a social enterprise is like a party with constituents who benefit from its work, then scaling undermines its ability to have relationships with these constituents."
Researcher

What kind of business model did it use?

Community food enterprises tend to be small in scale. Whilst they often earn income from sales, they tend to be sustainable only with outside funding and dedicated volunteers. The community food sector is distinct from the wider 'local food' sector, which consists of mainly privately run businesses focussing on artisanal and high quality food production.

Community food enterprises tend to have a level of community ownership, as well as volunteer input. Beyond these general characteristics, there is a vast amount of diversity across the sector's business models. Legal structures range from co-operatives to registered charities, and organisational forms are shaped by the needs of local communities and ecologies.

What themes characterise its development?

Many community food enterprises are caught between 'doing good' and being a business. Some believe there is an inherent tension between an enterprise's social aims and financial viability. Indeed, interviewees discussed having to balance the demands of their social projects and the viability of their business. When considering scaling, some were concerned that the **social value** of their projects would be lost and were enthusiastic about avoiding scaling to retain this value.

Connected to concerns about social value were those related to the importance of locality and the need for sectorial scale. Scaling community food enterprises beyond their communities of origin was deemed not only unfeasible but also **undesirable** by many interviewees. However, the need to rebuild the ecology of processors, distributors, producers and sellers weighs heavy on the sector. Here tensions around how **replicable** local schemes are blend into issues of inter-enterprise co-operation.

What does scaling mean for this innovation?

Thus far, community food enterprises have mostly spread through diffusion, emulation and the sharing of knowledge. Though innovators retain little control over this kind of scaling, it allows a free development of ideas and permits each enterprise to be built in the image of its local context.

Moving forward, the 'connecting up' of small enterprises into co-operative arrangements such as 'local food hubs' has not yet been widely successful. Though this is advocated by many as the best path to retain local involvement and **social value** whilst maximising viability, a robust organisational form of this nature has yet to be realised.

To do this, a funding and policy '**push**' that allows for smallholdings, medium sized producers and local contextual interpretations is needed from government. The specifics of local communities, local land, diverse enterprise arrangements and **value creation** come up against the need for generalised change and standard-setting.

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SCALING LAND-BASED INNOVATION
CASE STUDY
C: COMMUNITY-LED RECYCLING

Fact file

Community-led recycling schemes not only recycle local household waste, but often incorporate social outcomes into their work.

With policies obligating local authorities to recycle, the innovation mainstreamed rapidly.

Community schemes found it difficult to compete with commercial waste management contractors, and had their innovation adopted and scaled by private companies.

Whilst the key innovation – recycling waste – has mainstreamed well, the loss of social value from community schemes is often discussed.

Kerbside recycling was replicated and scaled through the private sector.

What's the innovation?

Community groups such as Avon Friends of the Earth pioneered kerbside recycling in the 1980s, often with funding from job creation programmes. They collected a range of recyclable materials from the kerbside, often generating income through the sale of these materials. Other schemes included the recycling of furniture and clothing. Groups often sought to produce multiple outcomes, through activities such as employing disadvantaged local people.

In what context did it emerge?

Household waste changed dramatically during the 20th century, as dust and cinder waste declined and packaging waste increased. From the late 1950s onward, the West experienced the rise of a new 'consumer' economy based on the idea of obsolescence, leading to increasing amounts of refuse.

In the 1970s, municipal recycling collection schemes declined, because of waste efficiency – handling one stream of waste rather than multiple streams – and cost cutting. Alongside this increase in the amount of waste reaching landfill, environmental activism was building. Government programmes to provide work experience and reduce unemployment provided the funding for early community-led schemes.

How has it developed over time?

Community recycling schemes created a sector, with support networks and thriving organisations delivering local recycling and waste minimisation services. In the 1990s, waste management became a key social issue locally, nationally and internationally. Legislation obliging local authorities to recycle household waste, alongside Lottery funding programmes to support community waste projects, led to increased interest in the sector. Over time, schemes increasingly bid to deliver commercial contracts to local authorities, or as sub-contractors for commercial waste management companies.

By the early 2000s, commercial waste management companies were not just competing with community schemes for contracts, but had actually copied their kerbside business model. Companies also adapted the innovation, investing in large waste sorting infrastructure that dramatically increased the capital costs associated with recycling and reduced the need for staff to sort materials at the kerbside. Local authorities tended to bundle recycling contracts into wider waste management or street cleaning contracts, making it harder for community recycling schemes to compete.

Ultimately, community recycling schemes were largely shut out of the sector, and the majority of household waste is now recycled by the private sector. Many of the social and local economic outcomes of the original schemes have diminished in this process, though the innovation itself – kerbside collection of recyclables – has been taken to a national scale.

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"It's hard to respond to the marketplace if you have strong ideas of what you should be doing."
Supporter and practitioner

"Doing good quality work in a dark sector is a good enough start."
Practitioner

"It was a lifestyle thing, in a way. I want to do something I believed in, a bit like the farmer or the fisherman, engaged in physical, mental, spiritual side of the work."
Ex-practitioner

"Long term survival in this business does require some kind of scale."
Current practitioner

"There was too much money around, people made bad decisions."
Supporter and funder

What kind of business model did it use?

Initial schemes were established amongst local communities, funded by grants, income from job creation and training programmes and the sale, to processors, of collected materials. As the landscape changed, schemes began to rely more heavily on local authority contracts. Interviewees discussed tensions between managing the **social outcomes** of the schemes, and meeting targets or producing profit.

What themes characterise its development?

Whether the scaling of community recycling is considered an innovation 'success story' centres around issues of **impact and value**. The core of the innovation (recycling household waste), and its environmental benefits, are now delivered on a national scale. This – its impact – has scaled. However, the methods used to deliver this impact, including local neighbourhood participation, local job creation, commitments to employ the disadvantaged and the strengthening of local economies through creating jobs and capital from household waste, have largely been lost. Interviewees discussed the importance of aspiring towards the particular contributions they wanted their innovation to make. As one posited the dilemma: 'What is it that you want to do? Change the way recycling is done, or build a community?'.

Looking at the situation that created this tension, the effect on the ground of citizen-led '**pull**' for change, as opposed to the '**push**' of government and funders, also shaped the sector's development. The '**pushes**' of recycling legislation were a key force in scaling recycling to the level it is at today, and yet the rapidity and method of this '**push**', especially with regards to local authority procurement practices, made it unlikely that the **alternative**, community led business model would succeed.

What does scaling mean for this innovation?

Kerbside recycling has largely developed through private-sector adoption. This has allowed the core of the innovation to be **mainstreamed** rapidly. As a highly **replicable** practice, kerbside recycling can be seen to lend itself to this kind of growth, though the **push** of policy was a huge driver.

Looking back, as several interviewees reflected, those involved with early community recycling projects were not equipped with the business knowledge and financial literacy to compete with commercial companies; their skills, interests and passions perhaps lay more with **innovation** than with organisational management at **scale**.

SCALING LAND-BASED INNOVATION

CASE STUDY

D: COMMUNITY-LED HIV SERVICES

Fact file

Community-led HIV services worked with donations to spread awareness and provide care for those affected by HIV.

Specialist knowledge, community connections and the urgency of the epidemic made practitioners experts in developing a high priority public health sector.

Organisations with consistent statutory funding, grew, merged with other organisations and expanded into different sexual health services.

The growth and professionalisation of these organisations led to a 'boom and bust' of activists splintering off, forming new organisations that then professionalised themselves.

This innovation transformed the public health sector, across and beyond HIV services, though community participation and activism declined.

What's the innovation?

Community groups and charities provided direct services, ranging from home-help to HIV testing, almost as soon as HIV/AIDS was identified as a new medical condition.

In what context did it emerge?

HIV spread as an urgent issue amongst the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) community in the 1980s with the vast majority of diagnoses being given to gay men. Alongside the shock and urgency of the epidemic, misinformation, stigma and fear of the disease were rampant throughout health services, politics and the general public.

Stigmatising policies, such as barring gay men from donating blood, emerged almost immediately. Those suffering or affected by the disease, and those at fear of contracting it, were left isolated and unable to access help.

One example, the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), was established by friends of Terry Higgins (d. 1982), one of the first people in the UK to die as a result of HIV/AIDS, in response to the poor treatment Higgins had received. They aimed to raise research funds, create awareness and provide direct services to those affected by HIV.

How has it developed over time?

HIV/AIDs emerged as a public health policy priority throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and organisations like THT collaborated to deliver services and formalise the infrastructure of HIV diagnosis, care and treatment.

With public money, many community-led HIV services professionalised and increased their organisational capacity. This led to a decline in volunteer and community participation, and an expansion into new activities and services. In the late 1990s, THT merged with other charities to become the largest voluntary sector sexual health organisation in the UK, handling a variety of sexual health issues.

This formalisation of services led to a 'boom and bust' cycle of professionalisation, where volunteers and activists splintered from organisations as they became more professional and **mainstream**, often setting up new organisations to maintain their own particular interest, political standpoint or community **niche**. Many of these splintered groups then had to professionalise to win contracts and attract funding, causing members to splinter off once again to maintain activism and volunteerism.

The innovation has also had to adapt, changing activities and serving new demographics. Treatment for HIV/AIDS has developed from being primarily short-term hospice care to long term 'condition management'. Though gay men are still the largest percentage of the total population living with HIV in the UK, heterosexual African people and older people (of all sexual orientations) are experiencing rapid increases in infection rates.

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D: COMMUNITY-LED HIV SERVICES

"We innovate but then we end up delivering the service, constrained by the targets."
Practitioner

"Lay people became the experts."
Supporter

"When you are working with public money, you lose the freedom to criticise health services."
Practitioner

"Groups splinter off when they feel things getting rigid. Yet, seeking credibility, they go through the same cycle."
Supporter

What kind of business model did it use?

Charities such as THT began with donations from individuals and high volunteer and community participation. Statutory funding has been integral to the scaling of the innovation.

What themes characterise its development?

In the urgency and confusion of the epidemic, practitioners fast became experts in the field. With complex medical knowledge and strong relationships with stigmatised communities, community-led HIV services were not an easily **replicable** innovation. Public health bodies relied on the experience, relationships and knowledge of early innovators to reach their goals; as one interviewee described, 'lay people became the experts, and could critique health services'. The dynamics between activist '**pull**' and public sector '**push**' were formative for this innovation. Its scaling would not have been possible without the prioritising of public funds.

The boom and bust cycles of HIV/AIDs services groups illustrates the tensions of working in the mainstream. Whilst some practitioners were committed to activist work and splintered off, only to be ushered into professionalising themselves, others sought to increase core **impact**, compromising on the **social value** of activist campaigning and community participation. The demands of reaching targets and the need to be accountable for public money led to shifting relationships between practitioners, communities and mainstream public health institutions.

What does scaling mean for this innovation?

Community-led HIV services largely scaled through organisational growth and mergers. With concerted **push** and low **replicability**, organisations such as THT were able to grow their **impact** by growing themselves and integrating with mainstream services. This innovation has scaled its work to a national level, into new activities and communities, transforming public health services, caring for patients and reducing the stigma associated with HIV. This innovation has scaled its work to a national level, into new activities and communities, transforming public health services, caring for patients and reducing the stigma associated with HIV.

This scaling has been troubled by the decline of community involvement, activism and 'freedom to criticise', as one interviewee discussed. Others argue that reliance on statutory funding and organisational growth has led community-led HIV to lose its original mission by 'chasing targets and funding'. The 'boom and bust' cycle of professionalisation and activists splintering off demonstrates these tensions.

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SCALING LAND-BASED INNOVATION

CASE STUDY

E: COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

Fact file

Community renewable energy generation schemes are partly or solely owned by the local community.

Projects can be seen as the solution to environmental, financial, political, social and security concerns.

Projects take a variety of forms, a diversity many see as a strength.

Developed largely by community 'pull', policy, infrastructure and funding 'push' is desperately needed and is starting to contribute to the sector's growth.

Practitioners and policymakers need to negotiate between local, social needs and national and corporate support to grow the innovation well.

What's the innovation?

Community energy projects generate renewable energy and are partly or solely owned by their local communities.

In what context did it emerge?

The community energy sector has developed against a background of multiple overlapping concerns. Environmental concerns around climate change and the destructiveness of alternative energy solutions (such as hydraulic fracturing) have motivated many to act. Fears around energy security have also acted as a driver for change.

Additionally, the monopoly of the 'big six' energy companies, rapid rises in energy prices and economic recession have pushed many to look for energy alternatives. The potential for community participation, ownership and financial return has increased interest in the innovation; it has been seen as a means to regenerate local economies as well as solve energy problems.

How has it developed over time?

Community energy projects, growing from the 'alternative energy' and eco-sustainability movements of the 1970s, have mostly been driven by action on the ground. The number of community energy enterprises is increasing rapidly: generation from community energy projects has increased from 4MW in 2003 to 60MW in 2014. The vast majority of these projects have been set up by individuals and groups with an appetite for change: a concerted '**pull**' from citizens aiming to solve problems.

Whilst still dominated by the activities of practitioners and support organisations, a '**push**' from government bodies and the private sector is growing, and the community energy sector is responding with rapid growth. The coalition government called such enterprises a '**perfect expression of the Big Society**'. With the introduction of Feed-In Tariffs and the Renewable Heat Incentive, the Rural Community Energy Fund, the Low Carbon Buildings Programme and the Community Energy Strategy published in 2014, the sector is being bolstered with legislative and financial support.

Joint ventures between communities and private companies are being encouraged, with large amounts of funding available for community schemes that have secured planning permission. However, planning permission, access to the national grid, a lack of pre-planning permission funding and obstructive policies remain a challenge for community energy schemes.

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SCALING LAND-BASED INNOVATION

CASE STUDY

E: COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

"Get the policy right, and the rest falls into place." Researcher and campaigner

"There will be a different business model depending on place and needs.'' Support organisation

"Government policies must recognise diversity and support local solutions." Researcher

"We wanted to do it ourselves - local benefits, local assets. We don't want external funding or anything from elsewhere." Practitioner

"How do we stop people abusing that it produces high returns - how do we keep it social?" Supporter

What kind of business model did it use?

Community energy is a flexible concept, applied to many different models, ranging from co-operatives to joint private-community partnerships. Such diversity has been heralded as a strength of the sector.

The majority of community energy enterprises currently rely on at least partial grant funding. Investing in such schemes can have steady financial returns, and the sale of energy produced can attract investment.

What themes characterise its development?

Thus far, community energy enterprises are negotiating a dynamic between the **pull** of practitioners and activists and the complexities of **pushes** from government, funders and private sector partners. There remains great grassroots demand for community energy schemes, with the sector ballooning when encouragement is given. Interviewees expressed that many practitioners are just 'getting on with it', seizing opportunities as they arise.

Although the high activity and diversity of the sector is often cited as its strength, it is difficult for many practitioners to 'get on with it' when faced with the lack of comprehensively supportive policy, pre-planning funding and infrastructure available to realise their schemes. The need for a '**push**' from above is keenly felt. Challenges remain around how such a '**push**' would be able to contain and nurture the diversity and activity that characterises the sector.

Looking forward, the **impact and value** of community energy enterprises is debated. Some discussed the schemes as a 'trojan horse' for **social value** – whereby financial concerns around energy bills lead to projects that create wider benefits such as local employment, bolstered local economies, greater community cohesion and environmental benefits.

Though some see the potential for **impact and value** to be delivered together, concerns remain about the effect of high returns on investment and the danger of large private companies abusing planning support given to community schemes.

What does scaling mean for this innovation?

Considering the sector's diversity of motivations and forms, it is clear that some projects are willing and able to scale, and may be encouraged to do so, while others will remain small and localised. As one interviewee noted: 'there will be a different scheme for every community'. Negotiating between the importance of locality, community and impact, projects may need to decide how they envisage their futures.

To facilitate the growth of the sector as a whole, policy and infrastructure development is needed. As one interviewee put it: 'get the policy right, and the rest falls into place'.