



**SURF**  
Scotland's Regeneration Forum

SURF : sharing experience : shaping practice

## **SURF 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Annual Conference 2017**

### **Some context and some key questions**



### **Who pays and who benefits?**

**From Urban Aid to the Community Aspirations fund; via SIPs and the Fairer Scotland Fund, the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund, Urban Regeneration Companies and SPRUCE; SURF has kept working hard to support better and more cooperative regeneration policy and practice. Now, after a quarter of a century of SURF sharing experience and ideas, in this special 25th Anniversary Conference, we pause to ask:**

#### **What has changed? What's been gained and what's been lost?**

Have our collective efforts and investments so far been enough to overcome the forces of degeneration? Most importantly, what does our collective experience so far tell us about how we should address future challenges and opportunities?

Some key questions:

What we mean by regeneration?



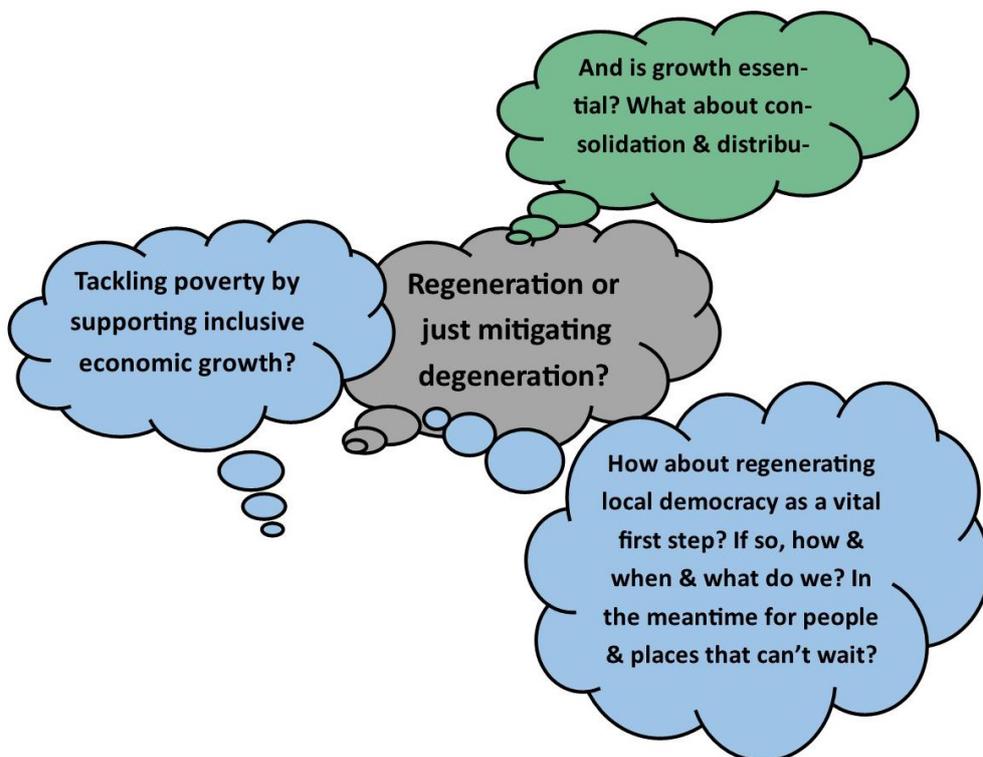
.... and who we mean by 'us'?



## Who pays and who benefits most?



## What is the main task?



## A SURF take on the Scottish Government's view

The SG says *'regeneration is a coordinated process that is directed towards addressing physical, social, economic and environmental challenges in places where people live and work.'*

Its current approach is based on the 'twin pillars' of addressing poverty and inequalities and supporting more inclusive economic growth. It is keen to stimulate more community led regeneration via a range of support measures aimed at greater community empowerment, enterprise and ownership. Intelligent, well directed public services are seen as being an important

foundation for successful communities and the SG remains keen that these are developed within Community Planning processes and focused on disadvantage through a 'Locality Planning' dimension of the work of local authority run Community Planning Partnerships.

There has been a recent strengthening of focus on places and especially town centres, where the aim is to develop distinctive place based assets and policy in support more coordinated local activity and enterprise, within a supportive national policy framework.

### **And SURF's view?**

Based on what we have learned from practitioners, policy makers and academics over the last 25 years, SURF broadly agrees with the SG's priorities. We would add that the biggest challenge in regenerating more disadvantaged communities is in overcoming the effects of the external degenerative forces. The root causes of degeneration are in macro-economic trends and policies. Other influential factors include demographic, technological, cultural and ecological shifts.

For many communities, these remote external forces have caused damaging upheavals, disconnections and deprivations. Proportionate regeneration policy responses should therefore focus on addressing degenerative causes 'upstream'. That is a massive and long-term challenge, which requires sustained investment and committed political leadership.

For a variety of pragmatic reasons, over the last 50 years we have seen mostly short-term approaches which try and address more immediate pressures. Some have been aimed at increasing employability, health and education Scotland wide. Others have been place specific. Some have involved relatively large sums of money directed at specific places. Others have relied more on engaging and increasing local resources. Some have had successes, some haven't. All have struggled with the complexity of highly variable local circumstances and dynamics.

#### **For SURF, successful community regeneration is:**

- **rooted in the particular identity, culture, assets and connections of people and places;**
- **based on the meaningful involvement of the community of focus in both planning and delivery;**
- **a collaborative long-term process, which takes decades rather than months;**
- **a mechanism for appropriately linking local circumstances and assets to wider policies and resources.**

In conclusion, SURF agrees that significant benefits for real people in real places can be achieved via local action but they are unlikely to produce long-term change where the main causes of degeneration are out with the community of concern and remain unaddressed. The main challenges for all of us are therefore about creatively connecting local knowledge and assets with national policy and resources. This conference is an important part of SURF's ongoing programme of activities to that end.

For more information on that work and how to get more involved, please visit [www.surf.scot](http://www.surf.scot)

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