

***The social sector: How does  
a future 'big society'  
translate to localities?***

CLES Summer School  
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Coalition

# Opportunities and challenges for the social sector

- Is there substance to the concept of ‘big society’?
- How is it different from what currently exists?
- What the opportunities and challenges that the creation of a ‘big society’ offers in terms of transforming our communities?

# *(Actually existing)* Big Society

- Speeches by David Cameron
- Big Society adviser Lord Wei
- Office for Civil Society
- Big Society Network
- Your Square Mile
- Love where you live
- Social Investment for all
- Ground Up

# Is there substance to the concept of 'big society'?

- Austerity, self help and responsabilisation
- One nation conservatism
- The Red Tory
- State, Market and Civil Society
- Civil Society = unfunded community groups
- Tescoisation of the Voluntary Sector
- Reimagining the state
- Updating localism: control shift
- Ecosystem or ideology
- People volunteer less at times of recession

# How is it different from what currently exists?

- Financial crisis, austerity and coalition govt
- Return to Victorian era role of state
- Stress on mutuals and organising
- Marketing and philanthropy
- The rise and rise of social enterprise
- Not the usual VCS suspects
- Not third sector and not infrastructure
- Mergers, redundancies and closure
- Hegemonic or built to last?

# Opportunities and challenges to transform our communities?

- Focus on smaller grassroots groups
- Appreciation of scale of the sector
- Recognition of civil society
- Private sector new skills and ideas
- Govt ideology and control
- VCS predators and competitors
- Cynicism over passionate pragmatism
- Local Government cuts over investment

# David Cameron – The Big Society: Hugo Young Lecture 10th November 2009

- *“(T)he size, scope and role of government in Britain has reached a point where it is now inhibiting, not advancing the progressive aims of reducing poverty, fighting inequality, and ... promoted not social solidarity, but selfishness and individualism ... it doesn't follow that smaller government would automatically bring us together again ... Instead we need a thoughtful re-imagination of the role, as well as the size, of the state. The first step must be a new focus on empowering and enabling individuals, families and communities to take control of their lives ... in the fight against poverty, inequality, social breakdown and injustice I want to move from state action to social action”.*

Foreword by David Cameron from 'A Stronger Society: Voluntary Action in the 21st Century'.

Policy Green Paper #5 p3 June 2008

- '(B)eyond the sphere of the private and informal, there is a public, organised expression of society ... what some would call, quite inaccurately, the *third* sector. The time has come for us to think of the voluntary sector as the *first* sector; not just in recognition of the historical origin of the public services and institutions we rely on today – but as the first place we should look for the answers that neither the state nor the market can provide.

# Phillip Blond - The Civic State. Demos 2009

- *'The ... goal of modern, progressive conservatism is the recapitalisation of the poor. Under the reign of the monopoly market, the poor have been ... dispossessed. In 1976 the bottom 50% of the population owned 12% of the nation's liquid wealth; by 2003 they had just 1%. ... Even when property is included, the bottom half of the population still only own just 7% of the country's wealth ... A new ... philosophy of asset extension ... is required'.*

# Building the Big Society: Cabinet Office May 2010

- *‘Building the Big Society isn’t just the responsibility of just one or two departments. It is the responsibility of every department of Government, and the responsibility of every citizen too. Government on its own cannot fix every problem. **We are all in this together**’*

# Community Sector Coalition

- Since 1994 – collective action, policy change, programmes of research
- Members with a national community focus
- Vision – to be active in local democracy
- Mission – authoritative independent voice
- [www.communitysectorcoalition.org.uk](http://www.communitysectorcoalition.org.uk)
- Tel: 020 7336 9461