Do health impacts of development differ between rural and urban settings?

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It started with a windfarm…

- Population influx
- Pressure on infrastructure
- Employment
- Traffic
- Heritage
- Community conflict
- Mental wellbeing
Scottish HIA Network
Methods

• Workshops with scenarios to scope common impacts
• Policy context and data
• Critical literature review
  – Significance of the impacts for health
  – Differences between rural and urban impacts
• Review of HIAs and HIA guidance
• Using the evidence - Key questions
- 94% of land mass
- 20% of population – 1M people
- Older population
- Low pay, high costs
- Low unemployment, seasonal / second jobs
- High neighbourhood satisfaction
- Heterogenous population
- Urban-rural dynamic
‘Rural communities are often attractive for the very reasons that give rise to their problems.’

Social context

• Many reasons to live there!
• Low crime
• Sense of place and community
• Resilience of people

• Youth out-migration and ageing
• Different populations
Economic context

- Economy – few major employers, lack of diversity
- Employment – ‘portfolio’ careers; low wages; few jobs for young people
- Cost of living – fuel and food
- Housing – cheaper than equivalent in cities but less choice so high overall costs
Physical context

- Access to Services – need to travel long distances
- Physical Environment – land use, physical terrain, water
- Infrastructure – vulnerable supply and distribution chains
So in this context…

- How might a development affect people and health?
Psychosocial impacts
– ‘Solastalgia’
– Good evidence of health impacts
– Many influences – community involvement

Social capital
– Good evidence of health impacts
– Concerns in many HIAs but limited evidence, could be positive or negative
– Integration of existing and new communities
Employment

– Clear impacts on health
– Importance of ‘good’ work
– Common lack of required skills

Impact on local economy

– Could be positive or negative
– Smaller local businesses more likely to use local supply chains
Infrastructure
  – Water
  – Transport / Traffic
  – Housing
  – Loss of amenity

Pressure on services and/or needs for new and different services
Underpinning issues

– Population movement
– Magnitude of comparatively small changes in rural and remote areas with sparse populations.
Plus all the more direct impacts...

- Noise
- Accidents
- Pollutants
- Zoonoses
- Allergens
- Etc

- Sector specific
Conclusions

• Many issues commonly identified in EIA but health impacts not unpicked

• Rural context does matter
Postscript…