

How to conserve, protect, live and work in peripheral rural regions?

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Keynote presentation delivered at the final Seminar of BuSK
Building Shared Knowledge Capital:
How to listen to locals in land use planning?
Rovaniemi, Finland.
Feb 11th -14th 2019





And this is all being played out

....in peripheral rural areas that are undergoing massive change
.....change characterised by its

- 1. **pace** and **persistence**
- 2. **totality** and **interconnectivity**
- 3. **contradictory** nature

So where do we go with this ? ... where might be our starting point?

- Sustainability!

Big Q to start with here of course is

Sustainable for whom?

- Who decides what is sustainable and based on what circumstances?
- now ... *system of knowledge largely favoured is that dominated by science butConflict and bad decisions are often made equally in this paradigm*
- and maybe if we don't always want a result that ends with 'Winners' v 'Losers' (Farmers v environmentalists for ex.)
- Then ... maybe we need to make space for more voices to be heard ... (to listen to the 'Locals'??)

Tension - Conflict

Us or Them

Winners v Losers

- *Farmers don't want people on their landI've literally been ran off a site by a farmer a few weeks ago, he told me to get off his land and he was a bit of a lunatic*
(archaeologist)
- *I was listening to a lady from Teagasc (State Agri body) ... she really had her own take on accessing farmers land and their concerns and it kind of opened my eyes ...I realised there are so many other issues, they've so many legitimate concerns, it's not that they just don't want to let us in. (new rural dweller)*

What might this be telling us?

- Maybe ...the sustainability of peripheral rural areas
- entails the striking of some sort of **viable balance** between society (economic and social) and environment
- Need to see the management of rural land use **not as something to be imposed** on local peoples by so-called outsiders;
- But something that is **negotiated collectively** as part of the overall good

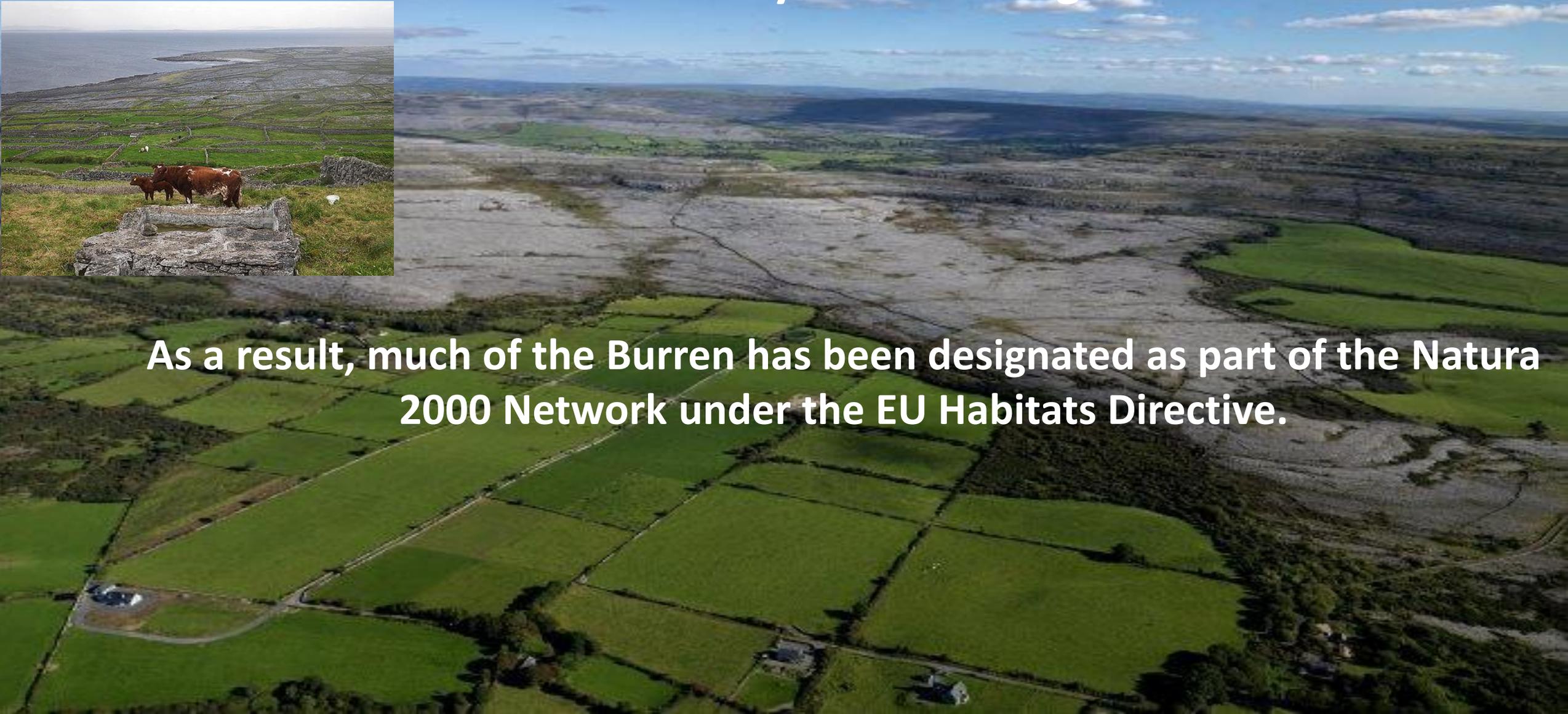
IRELAND



The Burren is internationally recognised for the uniqueness, wealth and diversity of its heritage.



As a result, much of the Burren has been designated as part of the Natura 2000 Network under the EU Habitats Directive.



Last number of years ...the Burren ... at the **forefront** of 'farming for conservation'

- **viewing the farmer as a resource**
- **Targeted** - the needs of particular area (*avoiding 'one size fits all'*)
- **Ground up** - in its development and delivery (*avoiding 'outside experts telling us what to do'*)
- **Focussed** on outputs / results so allowing greater **flexibility**
- Generates **local benefits** (creating local employment)
- Provides **value for money** service to the taxpayer ...
 - Protecting the Burren's/Ireland's priceless heritage (landscape, monuments, habitats, species, cultural traditions etc.)

- But ... to an extent this is the exception and what BUSK is largely arguing is that this should be the RULE!

Main messages from the 3 Irish cases?

- 1. There's a **participation deficit** – great intentions not necessarily backed up by delivery on the ground – not necessarily deliberate – often don't know how to facilitate this.
- 2. '**Local**' knowledge 'perceived' to be largely given **tokenistic** status (again as in 1)
- 3. Very often a **top-down** driven process – dominated by the few (Policy / EU Directives / Government Dept's (Often a one size fits all mantra).... often with a fairly narrow view on what land use management should entail (scientific designations?)

- 4. Sense of **disconnect** on the ground between local communities and those in positions of authority making decisions about what should / should not be done on certain landscapes (SACs); who can / cannot have access etc.,
- 5. Strong characterisation of a **Paradoxical approach** – contradictory yet interrelated! Need to manage landscape – so ‘we’ decide how to do it But we want / need ‘the farmers’ ‘the locals’ to do the actual managing!

What needs to be done according to our research??

- 1. **Policy** – the idea of ‘governing at a distance ‘ may have some merit – State gives responsibility to groups but still retains control -> sets the parameters Essentially governing ‘through’ community
- 2. **Capacity building** – (collectively and individually) this may be one of the core elements that will be necessary to ensure the sustainable management of rural areas
 - There appears to be a move toward greater participation (tokenistic?) – needs resources, training, building the capacity to participate - a long way short of what’s required.

- 3. **Targeted** – management practices need to be appropriate to the landscape in which it is rolled out— one size fits all, hasn't ever worked!
- 4. Local **buy-in** – needs to be an increase in bottom-up / locally driven land-use / land management approaches (communities need to be driving the process).
- **'change agents'** - key **activists**, community leaders (maybe community org / or an individual) really important part of this.



And where does this leave us?

- It is all about **Science** ...

we can't ignore this ... have to understand what's going on in the landscape around us – we have to have the scientific knowledge to help us make the right choices / decisions on how we manage our landscapes

- It is all about **Policy**

We have to support a policy /political system that is based on the long-term and on sustainability principles (esp. when it comes to landuse / resource management and exploitation decisions), - not on short term political desires for quick 'wins' and re-election!

- It is all about ‘People’

..... And particularly the **interrelationship between people and landscape** between culture and nature (a humanized landscape) and what has clearly been shown in this project:

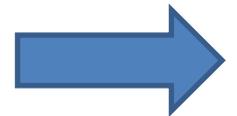
The **significance of place, tradition and customs**

The need to recognize and include **local / indigenous knowledge** in to the decision making process

The importance of **sharing knowledge capital** within and between all sectors (bottom-up and top-down)

Finally

- Scientific knowledge **isn't always right** ... but it's very necessary
- Local knowledge **isn't always wrong** (or out-dated!) – but it does have important ingredients to add to decision making processes and 'buy-in'
- And in moving forward?



We need to continually ask ourselves the questions

What do we want from our peripheral rural areas?

Places to **visit**?

Places to **gaze** at?

Places to **live** in?

or

Places to **work** in?

The answer !!!!

Scientific Knowledge + Local knowledge

+ Political Will =

'Best possible' Decisions



Sustainable Future!

Thank you!



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