TOWARDS A CULTURAL POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY
TRANSITIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ARTISTIC
ACTIVISM IN SCOTTISH COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

Rod Bain

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
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TOWARDS A CULTURAL POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ARTISTIC ACTIVISM IN SCOTTISH COMMUNITY WOODLANDS

Rod Bain

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD at the University of St Andrews

28 November 2016
Abstract

Sustainability, and transitions away from currently prevailing unsustainability, is a project with political (economic) and cultural dimensions. Yet, the potential of a cultural political lens to investigate sustainability prefigurations is neglected by the academy. Moreover, existing cultural political conceptualizations are ontologically incoherent with green political perspectives. In this thesis, I articulate a revised notion of cultural politics consistent with normative visions of sustainability transitions, and validate the new approach through an exploratory investigation of Scottish community woodland organizations (CWOs). CWOs are alternative organizations troubling hegemonic land tenurial and forest management practices. However, these organizations are under-researched by sustainability scholars. The study shows how one CWO prefigures sustainability transitions, not least through distinctive woodland artistic activities.

The thesis narrates threefold theoretical originality, and also extends empirical knowledge. Originality lies (first) in the practice-theoretical recasting of cultural politics theory, (second) in the synthesis concept describing practices of everyday artistic activism, and (third) in the green republican interpretive framework of sustainability subjectivities, against which cultural political performances may be evaluated. Empirical originality lies in the exploration of community woodlands. I argue that through practices of everyday artistic activism and more general woodland practices, woodland activists perform alternative conceptions of human-nature relations, intrahuman relations, and organization. Through these performances, woodland artistic activists enact a cultural politics of sustainability transitions, and make visible alternative modes of humans being in the world. The study contributes to theoretical debates concerned with cultural politics and artistic activism, with researching community organizing for sustainability transitions, and with interpretive approaches to sustainability knowledge production. Empirically, it extends alternative organizational knowledge, showing how sustainability subjectivities can be communicated through woodland practices.
Declarations

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I, Rod Bain, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 85,000 words in length, has been written by me, and that it is the record of work carried out by me, or principally by myself in collaboration with others as acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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Writing this thesis was not an easy process, and I owe eternal gratitude to my wife and supervisors, who supported me during throughout the highs and lows.

Although doctoral research may be intensely solitary, it is also inherently social. Research not only involves practices of reading, thinking, and writing that are often done alone, but is inseparable from more social activities including supervision meetings, coffee-shop chats, beach-walks, reading groups, interviews, fieldwork, seminars, conferences, and teaching. Ideas, for me, flow from and are sharpened through both solitude and social encounters. Hence the following work would be very different without the intellectual challenge and stimulation, emotional support throughout the highs and the lows, and fun from and with the following people:

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**Abbreviations**

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CWA</td>
<td>Community Woodlands Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWO</td>
<td>community woodland organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCMS</td>
<td>Department of Media, Culture, and Sport (UK Government)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC/ FCS</td>
<td>Forestry Commission/ Forestry Commission Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPT</td>
<td>Green political theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRPE</td>
<td>Green republican political economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGAA</td>
<td>Practices of grassroots artistic activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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<td>WCED</td>
<td>World Commission on Environment and Development</td>
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INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELUDE AND RATIONALE

*How can we live less unsustainably?* is an apparently simple question, yet one that elides complex and pressing problems facing contemporary societies. Problems include *(inter alia)* climate change, resource and biodiversity depletion, and growing inequalities on multiple spatial and temporal scales (Dorling 2014; IPCC 2014; McLellan *et al.* 2014; Meadows *et al.* 2005; Rockström *et al.* 2009a; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2014; Shiva 2006; Wackernagel *et al.* 2002; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). The significance of these problems is highlighted by emerging debates about the Anthropocene - the notion that human activities are now sufficiently intensive and extensive as to be marked, epochally, on the geological record (Crutzen 2002; Steffen *et al.* 2015, 2011). It is well-established, although not always widely accepted, that the activities of global North societies in particular are contributing to these problems (Barry 2012; Cato 2011; Jackson 2009). Dominant practices and institutions of those societies are among causes of ‘actually existing unsustainability’ (Barry 2012:7), hence there is a concern to identify alternative ways of being, doing, having, and thinking that are capable of supporting continued human and ecological flourishing within planetary limits.

This thesis is an applied response to that broad problem of less unsustainable living, and to the ancillary problem *how can we research less unsustainable ways of living?* I offer a narrative of theoretical and empirical originality in contribution to debates on sustainability transitions. My substantive concern is theoretical, with cultural and political aspects of sustainability transitions. I articulate a new theoretical synthesis of cultural politics with practice theory as *contestations of hegemonic practices,* an

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1 Although the double negative construction of ‘less unsustainable’ may appear convoluted, I use it following John Barry’s (2012) insight that concrete examples of unsustainability are more readily apprehensible than the contested terrain of elite debates to define sustainability.
innovation required for a conception of cultural politics that is ontologically coherent with (some) normative prescriptions for a less unsustainable society. I derive an interpretive-evaluative framework from green republican political philosophy, against which cultural political performances may be analysed.

However, the thesis is not wholly theoretical. Seeking to validate this new conceptual and evaluative framework empirically, I also narrate an applied investigation of the under-researched phenomenon of Scottish community woodland organizations through the cultural political and green republican lenses. I focus particularly on the artistic and creative activities that are a distinctive aspect of that woodland scene. The social-ecological context of trees, woodlands, and their management, is extremely important for sustainability. Scottish community woodlands are distinctive organizations that may prefigure alternative, less unsustainable ways of living. As I will argue, woodland activists are enacting – not least through practices of everyday artistic activism - counter-hegemonic conceptions of humans’ relations with nature, each other, and organization. These alternative conceptions resonate with green republican thinking, and thus anticipate a less unsustainable society.

The thesis contributes to sustainability debates, particularly the arena concerned with community organizing for sustainability transitions, which has to date neglected (conceptually) a cultural political lens and (empirically) Scottish community woodlands (e.g., Feola & Nunes 2014; Franklin et al. 2011b; Heiskanen et al. 2010; Kirwan et al. 2013; Middlemiss & Parrish 2010; Moloney et al. 2010; North & Longhurst 2013; Seyfang & Smith 2007; Stevenson 2011; White & Stirling 2013). The thesis also contributes to debates around cultural politics (Alvarez et al. 1998; Jordan & Weedon 1995; Nash 2001), alternative organization (Parker et al. 2014a, 2014b), and adds some empirical richness to emerging conversations around the prescriptive philosophy of green republicanism (Barry 2012). Finally, the empirical findings point toward future research that promises to support the Scottish woodland movement’s broad aim to regenerate an atrophied woodland culture.

This chapter introduces the key concepts and domains of the thesis. First, I outline the normative, conceptual, and empirical contexts within which this thesis is located.
I then discuss sustainability science, the epistemological framework informing my intellectual approach and empirical focus [1.3]. The research questions are established, and justified with a short commentary [1.4]. Scottish community woodlands are introduced; I review the historical contexts and contemporary contours of this complex scene, and conclude by defining community woodlands as alternative organizations [1.5]. Finally, I outline the remaining chapters [1.6].

1.2 PUTTING THE RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

This thesis is an artefact of particular motivations and can be located, intellectually, within particular contexts. Below, I identify these normative, conceptual, empirical, and personal contexts.

Normative

I accept the arguments that humanity faces a complex set of sustainability problems, including the biophysical, moral, and political issues of social and ecological justice. Biophysical problems include climate change (IPCC 2014), biodiversity loss (McLellan et al. 2014; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity 2014), and resource depletion (Meadows et al. 2005). Human activity - particularly that of global North societies - has extended beyond the earth’s carrying capacity (Wackernagel et al. 2002). Indeed, the recently ‘diagnosed’ Anthropocene (Lorimer 2012:593) highlights the geological scale of contemporary human activity (Crutzen 2002; Steffen et al. 2015, 2011). Safe operating limits of a number of planetary systems are increasingly...
transgressed, raising consequential threats to continued human flourishing (Rockström 
et al. 2009a). The benefits and costs of human activities understood as drivers of these biophysical problems are unevenly distributed, leading to inequity and injustice within and between nations and generations (Dorling 2014; Shiva 2006; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). From this perspective, global North societies may be understood as existing in a condition of ‘actually existing unsustainability’ (Barry 2012:7), a combination of socially and ecologically deleterious practices and institutions driven by the prevailing political and economic consensus around continued economic growth (Cato 2011; Jackson 2009).

Sustainability (and its occasional synonym sustainable development [SD]) is understood here as the process of responding to, but not necessarily solving, these wicked sustainability problems (Barry 2007a). However, sustainability (and SD) are contested concepts (Gallie 1955), that may be viewed from diverse perspectives, some of which are mutually incompatible (Blewitt 2008). Green republicanism, the normative foundation of this thesis, assumes that transitions away from unsustainability are essential, and will necessarily involve significant changes to the political and economic practices, organizations, and institutions that shape our social world (Barry 2012). Green republicanism is a normative political philosophy proposing an alternative way to organize society, and I discuss its insights in chapters 2 and 4. For now, I note two points. First, green republicanism is post-liberal, not anti-liberal (Barry 2012). Although green republicanism flows from an immanent critique of liberalism - and particularly neoliberal governance and neoclassical economics - there are many positive elements within liberal philosophy and practice which are not summarily dismissed. Second, sustainability understood in this way is a project, not a target. For this reason, I use the term sustainability transitions to describe this project of societal change towards a less unsustainable society. The concept of transitions captures the essentially processual - rather than goal oriented - character of sustainability.

Anthropocene is a totalizing term, suggesting that everybody is implicated in the growing human imprint on the global environment, and thus occluding the uneven distribution around the planet of benefits and impacts associated with that impact. Hence, for some critical scholars it has become more appropriate to talk of Capitalocene (Malm & Hornborg 2014; Moore 2015), Plantationocene, or Chthulucene (Haraway 2015), concepts that seek to acknowledge the global imbalance between those humans whose activities have contributed to sustainability problems and those who struggle to escape their consequences. I do not engage with the increasingly contested social scientific Anthropocene literature at great length, but the concept does form a thread woven, and sporadically visible, through the text (particularly in chapters 2, 3, and 4).
The transitions required to escape unsustainability are not simply a matter of altering policy, nor of continuing with business ‘greened’ but otherwise broadly as usual (Barry 2012:89; Cato 2009). Nor can sustainability be ‘post-political’ (Swyngedouw 2010), presented as a technical exercise about which consensus is possible, rather than an inherently normative arena requiring debate (Barry 2012; Dobson 2007b; Mouffe 2013a; Swyngedouw 2010). Rather, sustainability transitions require cultural and political change. Cultural, because new ways of being, having, doing, and thinking are required, not least about humans’ place in our social-ecological world and our relationships with the vital, material, spiritual, and aesthetic resource that is nature (Barry 2012; Castree 2013; Jackson 2009; Korten 2006; McIntosh 2008). Political, because these changes require decisions to be made, reshaping the organization of society, about what is to be sustained, why, and how. Those decisions will have consequences, for human and nonhuman species, that will inevitably be unevenly distributed across different groups, communities, and regions (Barry 2012; Dobson 2007b; Swyngedouw 2010). Sustainability transitions, then, is a project with cultural and political dimensions, and, articulated in green republican terms, is the normative perspective that informs the research reported in this thesis.

These transitions are seen to require not only significant cultural and political changes, but also different approaches to investigation within the academy (Barry 2007a; Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014; Gibson et al. 2015). Sustainability science is a framework informing scientific knowledge production in support of sustainability transitions. It recognizes the complexity of sustainability problems, and understands they are unlikely to be solved by the same thinking that caused the problems in the first place (Kates et al. 2001a; Komiyama & Takeuchi 2006; Viederman 1995). Proposing a different mode of investigation, sustainability science calls for interdisciplinary research focused on human/‘nature’ interactions, following problem-oriented and participatory approaches to knowledge production that acknowledge the inherent normativity of sustainability (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014). Principles of sustainability science -

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4 The scare quotes draw attention to the problems associated with the concept of ‘nature’. Particularly in the English language, this is a word with many meanings, some of which proceed from an assumption that nature is separate from culture (Williams 1983). As noted in the previous footnote, such conceptual separation is problematic from many green political, sustainability, and critical perspectives (Barry 2007a; Castree 2013; Plumwood 1993). I discuss these issues in chapter 2. Recognizing that ‘human/ nature’
discussed below [1.3] - inform the empirical focus, conceptual framing, and research questions of this thesis.

**Conceptual**

Conceptually, the thesis is located within civil society. My concern is with communities - specifically, community woodland organizations - as potential sites for sustainability transitions. Community is a contested concept (Hillery 1955), as is civil society. Notably, I do not understand these terms as ‘camouflage’ for a neoliberal hegemony further rolled out by states seeking to reduce their size and perhaps also social responsibility (Tom Morton 2000:1, in Gibson-Graham 2006:85; Harvey 2007; Laclau & Mouffe 2001; Peck & Tickell 2002). Rather, I understand communities and civil society as a foundation from which counter-hegemonic change might emerge. Matthew Paterson suggests that ‘greening’ society - meaning sustainability transitions - will ‘necessarily involve governmentality - a reshaping of what sort of people people are’ (2007:194). However, following Dick Tommel, I start from an assumption that green governmentality is unlikely to be enacted by states until the average citizen is likely to support them (Tommel 1990, in de Geus 2010). At the risk of simplifying an extremely complex nexus of power relationships between at the very least citizens, governments, corporations, think-tanks, and the media, governments are empowered to govern (at least in part) by civil society. From this perspective, civil society is understood as an important focus for sustainability transitions research.

In identifying civil society as a promising arena wherein prefigurations of a sustainable future may be found, I follow a number of other researchers (Feola & Nunes 2014; Heiskanen et al. 2010; Kirwan et al. 2013; Meyerricks 2015; Middlemiss & Parrish 2010; Moloney et al. 2010; North & Longhurst 2013; Seyfang & Smith 2007; Stevenson 2011; White & Stirling 2013). From these perspectives, community groups, alternative organizations, and grassroots movements may be prophets, ‘speaking before’ and ‘announcing what is taking shape even before its direction and content has become clear’ (Melucci 1996:1). In this way, communities may be a context in which less suggests a (critiqued) dualism and separation, yet desiring to acknowledge that human societies are entangled with ecological and material realities, I henceforth use ‘human-nature’. 
unsustainable ways of living may be identified, nurtured, and propagated until support for greener governmentality spreads across society.

Moreover, it is within civil society that enactments of cultural politics are conceptually located. Cultural politics - understood provisionally as ‘contestation[s] of normalized identities and social relations’ (Nash 2001:85) - invites us to see politics not as reserved to an elite political domain, but prevalent throughout the social, inherent in people’s identities and subjectivities, and made durable in conceptions of (e.g.) nature, economy, democracy, woman, race, or citizenship (Alvarez et al. 1998). Cultural political performances are constitutive of social change (Alvarez et al. 1998; Jordan & Weedon 1995; Nash 2001), and thus cultural politics promises an appropriate lens through which to investigate prefigurative community organizing.

**Empirical**

Chapters 6 and 7 present an exploratory study of Scottish community woodlands – woodlands that are controlled by ordinary people in the communities local to the site. The woodland focus is justified in two ways. First, forests and woodlands are ‘among the most important providers of ecosystem services for the whole world’ (Nasi et al. 2002:1). Trees and forests absorb carbon, influence local and regional climatic systems, are sources and reserves of biodiversity and genetic material useful for current and future medicines and foods, provide woodfuel for energy, influence local hydrological systems, and also play social, health, cultural, and aesthetic roles in improving lives through greener living spaces (Ambrose-Oji 2010; Dauvergne & Lister 2011). Yet, trees, woods, and forests are implicated, largely through humans’ deforesting practices, in many sustainability problems including climate change, energy, food, and water security, dwindling biodiversity, environmental degradation, and rapid urbanization (Ambrose-Oji 2010; Dauvergne & Lister 2011). Forests and woodlands - complex nexuses of ecological processes and human activities - are at the cusp of

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5 An ecosystem is a ‘dynamic complex of plant, animal, and micro-organism communities and the nonliving environment interacting as a functional unit’, and ecosystem services describe the benefits to humans of those ecosystems (MEA 2005:v). Services include provisioning services (e.g., food, water, timber, fibre), regulating services (influencing the climate on local, regional, and global scales, as well as floods, disease, waste, and water quality), cultural services (providing aesthetic, spiritual, and recreational benefits), and supporting services (e.g., photosynthesis, soil formation, and nutrient cycling) (MEA 2005). Ecosystem services are essential for human life.
human-nature relationships, and deserve attention from sustainability transitions researchers.

Second, Scottish community woodlands are noted for ‘political and social achievements in contesting existing patterns of land tenure, legislation, and power relations within forestry’ (Calvert 2009:4). These woodlands are ‘places of possibility’ (Mackenzie 2013) animating a critique of liberalism through alternative land relations. The Community Woodlands Association [CWA] (a sectoral umbrella organization for representation and knowledge sharing) asserts a link between ‘sustainable forests for sustainable communities’ (figure 1.1). A commitment to artistic and creative woodland activities is a distinctive feature of several community woodland organizations in Scotland (Calvert 2008). My intuition is that through the alternative tenurial and artistic practices in which they consist, Scottish community woodland organizations may prefigure less unsustainable human-nature relationships and ways of being in the world. Yet, neither artistic activities, nor Scottish tenurial alternatives have to date stimulated transitions research interest.

Figure 1.1 Sustainable forests for sustainable communities (CWA, from www.flickr.com/photos/communitywoods)

Summarizing, the thesis emerges from contexts (normatively) of sustainability transitions understood as a cultural and political project, explored (conceptually) within civil society understood as a wellspring of counter-hegemonic activity, and (empirically) within the slice of the social-ecological world formed by Scottish community woodlands. However, there is a final context that must be articulated: the personal.
The researcher unveiled

As is evident, this thesis is not written in a totalizing third person narrative, from an abstract external position. Although use of a third person voice may be a relatively common academic writing practice (Billig 2013), it is problematic from at least two of the fundamental philosophical commitments that will be established. First, green republicanism proposes an egalitarian account of social relations that challenges (inter alia) valorized elite voices and putative veils of ignorance (Barry 2012; Rawls 1999). Second, practice theory suggests a social world without levels (but not without power relations), populated by embodied thinking and doing people whose lives hang together in coexistence (Schatzki 2002). Donna Haraway (1988) argues that all vision is embodied and all knowledge is situated, and from a practice perspective this is certainly the case. Acknowledging that abstract positions external to society are problematic from these perspectives, and because hegemonic practices may (and maybe even should) be contested, I write this thesis in the first person. Consequently, I acknowledge the experiential and intellectual stimuli that impelled me to assume these normative and conceptual postures, and to explore this particular artistic and sylvan context of social life.

Before returning to higher education to read initially for an MSc Sustainable Development, I trained in music and worked as an arts project manager with professional orchestras. While working in the arts leads rarely to a life of luxury (nor do I aspire to one), such a career does involve a lot of international travel, and to experiencing first-hand the marketing, communications, and branding imperatives of large (sponsoring) corporations. I had a somewhat critical but essentially uneducated understanding of environmental issues, and what I now understand as political economy; from these flowed an intuitive scepticism about the empirical possibility of limitless economic growth, and about relationships between environment, economic growth, and corporate sponsorship. Gradually, I grew disillusioned with aspects of the arts; substantively, the corporate sponsorship imperatives, ecologically problematic air travel, and unequal access to arts participation. This situation crystallized in 2009 during a concert tour of India. I’m not the first Western visitor shocked by the starkly uneven distribution of wealth and opportunity in India; sadly I’m unlikely to be the last. However, experiencing six different Indian cities, observing the slums that we were
driven through - in air-conditioned luxury - *en route* between airports, fine hotels, concert venues, and sparkling corporate receptions, prompted me to pause and consider my situation. Ultimately, this reflection activated a latent interest in environmentalism, and eventually led me to St Andrews and sustainability.

During an intensive year of master's studies, I was by turn despondent, stimulated, and perplexed. Despondent to learn of human impacts on climate and biosphere, and stimulated by the surge of post-growth discourse initiated by the then recent publication of Tim Jackson’s (2009) book, *Prosperity without growth: Economics for a finite planet*. Jackson, and gradually other green political and economic thinkers, galvanized my dedication to sustainability transitions. Perplexed, because coming (albeit indirectly) from an humanities undergraduate degree into a social science masters that drew heavily on natural scientific knowledge, I was frequently struck by the low profile - at that time - of qualitative and interpretive interventions in academic sustainability debates that all too often privilege positivist knowledge.

Also during that masters year, I worked part-time for a community woodland organization in Highland Scotland. Previously ignorant of this diverse and fascinating movement, I became intrigued by community woodlands and their apparent cogency with sustainability discourses. Although under-researched, particularly by sustainability researchers, at first glance community woodlands are suggestive of a contribution to sustainability transitions, not least because they are explicitly about human-nature interactions. A second glance, prompted by Professor Jan Bebbington, encouraged my observation of the artistic and creative activities that can be seen in several community woodland sites. Thus, community woodlands and their artistic projects became the empirical focus of my attentions.

Together these experiences, stimulations, and frustrations, coalesced into the foundation of my nascent theoretical interest in sustainability transitions as a cultural political project, and empirical intrigue with community woodland organizations. With the foundations of the thesis now explicit, I move to literature review; specifically, the principles of knowledge production informing my approach.
1.3 SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE

‘Sustainability science’ is an epistemological framework proposing a distinctive mode of knowledge production in response to a particular diagnosis of the character of sustainability problems (Kates et al. 2001a:641), and seeking to support transitions to a less unsustainable society (Komiyama & Takeuchi 2006). Although extensive, sustainability science discourse can be distilled into four motifs (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014). As I will demonstrate, these inform the empirical focus and intellectual framing of the thesis.

The distinctive approach proposed by sustainability science flows from a particular understanding of the sustainability problems facing humanity, including climate change, biodiversity and resource depletion, and injustice [1.2]. These problems are complex, multi-scalar, and multi-faceted. Spanning social, ecological, and climatological domains, these problems are seen to require ‘solutions’ that are ‘integrated’ across those scales and domains (Jerneck et al. 2011:72). Many of these problems are ‘unintended consequences of scientific progress’ (Kates et al. 2001a:642). Hence, responses to sustainability problems are understood to require a new mode of knowledge production, rather than relying on the same approaches to knowledge production that caused these problems in the first place (Kates et al. 2001a; Viederman 1995).

Although the term ‘sustainability science’ is widely accredited to Robert Kates and colleagues (2001a:641), their work synthesizes a number of earlier concepts including, *inter alia*, ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel & Webber 1973:155), to which there can only be ‘clumsy’ responses (Verweij et al. 2006:817), developed through ‘post-normal’ science embracing ‘extended peer communities’ (Funtowicz & Ravetz 1993:739), and disciplinary ‘consilience’ (Wilson 1998:131). While definitions of sustainability science may be contested (Jäger 2009), the approach is characterized by four motifs (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014). First, research should be focused on human-nature interactions and pursued through interdisciplinary approaches. Second, an applied approach is understood as vital to comprehend and respond to those problems. Third, participatory or co-produced approaches to knowledge production are valorized, acknowledging that non-scientist members of civic society, living or working in proximity to a sustainability problem, may have knowledge about the problem and
possible responses. Fourth, there is an explicit recognition that sustainability is inherently normative. These motifs are discussed below.

First, attention to the ‘fundamental character of interactions between nature and society’ lies at the heart of sustainability science concerns (Kates et al. 2001a:641), because sustainability problems span social and natural domains. Thus, researchers are encouraged to investigate not only the complex climatological, and terrestrial and marine ecological systems that natural scientists have identified, but also the equally complex dynamics of the human societies whose lives are entangled with the natural world through diverse interactions. Because of the complexity of these domain-spanning problems, sustainability science calls for interdisciplinary research that can offer diverse perspectives, including normative, interpretive, and factual insights on particular problems or contexts (Barry 2007a; Castree et al. 2014; Kates et al. 2001a; Lövbrand et al. 2015; Spangenberg 2011).

Second, sustainability science calls for a problem-focused and applied research, and is thus defined not by the disciplines that contribute to it, but by the problems it seeks to address (Spangenberg 2011). Such an approach is understood to be essential when sustainability problems are accepted as complex and emerging from human-nature interactions, outcomes are uncertain and changes non-linear (Kates et al. 2001b; Spangenberg 2011). Relatedly, knowledge production becomes concerned with the particular, rather than universal or generalizable knowledge. However, a problem-oriented concern with particular settings should not be confused with a lack of concern for fundamental questions, because these remain at the heart of sustainability science (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014; Kates et al. 2001a). Furthermore, a concern for the particular should allow space for individual voices to be heard, possibly allowing exposure for the normative and moral questions that sustainability researchers must also address (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014).

Third, co-produced knowledge is valorised by sustainability science discourse. Notions of civic or citizen science and participatory research are salient tropes within the

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6 However, it is important to note that interdisciplinary research that spans knowledge production paradigms (e.g., between interpretivism and positivism (Lincoln et al. 2011)) must inevitably encounter tensions between different ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological postures. I return to this point in chapter 5.
Citizen science seeks to involve ordinary people in knowledge production, and is (in part) a response to the complexity identified within sustainability problems. Those people whose daily lives are directly affected by problems may have insight, denied to more distant scientific experts, into the nature of those problems. Thus, scientists are encouraged to accept ‘extended peer communities’ (Ravetz 1999:647) who participate in knowledge production (see also Jasanoff 2003, 2007).

Fourth, sustainability problems - and responses to them - contain a political dimension. Sustainability requires decisions to be made about what is to be sustained, why, and how; these are political issues (Barry 2012; Dobson & Eckersley 2006; Swyngedouw 2013). How we define sustainability is important, because it informs the choice of research questions and the direction of research. If sustainability is defined as reformist project that doesn’t require significant change of social institutions and organizations consistent with economic growth, then very different questions are of interest than if sustainability is understood more radically as requiring a move away from growth (Blewitt 2008; Cato 2011; Dobson 2007b). Sustainable development is not simply an analytical or policy construct but a ‘normative ethically justified utopia, describing a state of economy, society, and environment considered optimal’ (Spangenberg 2011:275). In order to respond appropriately to this normative dimension, sustainability research should be explicitly, but critically, normative (Marsden 2011).

Sustainability science, in summary, suggests a mode of knowledge production that is significantly different from existing approaches. Sustainability science seeks (first) to draw researchers’ attention to human-nature interactions through interdisciplinary approaches, (second) a problem-focused and applied approach, (third) collaborative and participatory approaches to knowledge production, and (fourth) to acknowledge the inherent normativity of the problems it studies (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014). Complexity and normativity are inherent characteristics of sustainability problems, so research knowledge can never be perfect; in consequence there are unlikely to be solutions to these problems, rather ‘messy’ and ‘clumsy’ responses (Barry 2012; Frame 2008).

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7 In this way, sustainability science intersects with green political theories calling for a more democratic society, as will be discussed in chapter 2.
Sustainability science is now firmly established across numerous fields (Pretty 2011), and emerging in others (including, e.g., social and environmental accounting Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014). However, there are questions about the breadth of interdisciplinarity in some investigations. Noel Castree and colleagues (2014) note that much sustainability research does embrace interdisciplinarity but only within the positivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln 2011), and tends to neglect the insights offered by critical and interpretive social sciences and humanities. Similarly, Eva Lövbrand et al. (2015:211) argue for a greater engagement by interpretive social scientists to ‘open up multiple interpretations of the Anthropocene’, and extend debates hitherto dominated by natural scientists. These critiques highlight both the importance and current neglect of cultural as well as political interventions in sustainability debates. The conceptual and interpretive framework I articulate in this thesis is such an intervention. Responding to Castree, Lövbrand, and their colleagues in chapter 8, I reflect on the contribution this framework can make to future work.

Sustainability science debates inform and justify my approach in at least seven ways. First, sustainability is inherently normative, legitimating the explicitly political foundation of the conceptual and interpretive lens. Second, human-nature interactions should be a central investigative focus; theoretical framings (such as green republicanism and practice theory) capable of making visible both human activity and nature can facilitate such a focus. Third, cultural aspects of human-nature interactions are neglected by existing work; the interpretive and cultural political approach I propose helps to redress that imbalance. Fourth, interdisciplinary approaches are vital to better understand human-nature relations; my eclectic literary engagements (with philosophies of society, politics, and aesthetics, as well as theories from organization studies, sociology, and geography) is rationalized. Fifth, research should be applied and problem-oriented, rather than abstract; I articulate an applied response to the problem of less unsustainable lives, (and hence to the ancillary problem of best to research less unsustainable ways of living). Sixth, and relatedly, the thesis is not wholly theoretical and abstract; rather, the theory is both enlivened and evaluated through empirical

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8 Although sustainability science debates may be beginning to influence accounting investigations, there appears to be less penetration of management and organization studies research by the concept.

9 From such an interpretivist stance, sustainability science becomes less a ‘mode of knowledge production’ and more an approach to research, because interpretivists resist (positivist) notions of knowledge as something to produced (a point discussed more fully below [5]).
engagement with Scottish community woodland organizations. Seventh, community woodland organizations are themselves justified as a worthy investigative focus by virtue of existing at the human-nature cusp. Sustainability science, then, underpins the approach taken in this thesis and, although not explicitly discussed in every chapter, its prescriptions run, threadlike, throughout.

1.4 PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research project responds to an overarching problem best couched as a question: how can we live less unsustainably? Within that broad context, two motivations impel the research. First, is my intellectual aspiration to articulate an approach to investigate sustainability transitions in cultural political terms, coherent with green political insights into the human condition. Second, is a desire to better understand whether and how community woodland activities (particularly artistic and creative activities) might anticipate ways of living less unsustainably. These motivations influence the research questions, which I introduce with a short narrative.

Sustainability is a contested concept; contingent framings have implications for its pursuit or investigation. Acknowledging that clarity is important here (and also that any ‘answers’ to complex and wicked sustainability problems must be messy, partial, situated, and provisional) research question [RQ] 1a asks: how can sustainability be best conceptualized (in the context of post-growth political economy)?

Community groups and social movements organizing for sustainability transitions form a broad set of social phenomena recognized by scholars for their potential as liminal spaces (Meyerricks 2015) that anticipate (Jackson 2009), prophesy (Melucci 1996), prefigure (Parker et al. 2014a), or present exemplar blueprints (Böhm et al. 2015) of less unsustainable ways of living. Empirical accounts of these phenomena are accumulating, in a welcome and relatively recent development; between 2011-2016, the years of my doctoral research, the literature on sustainable communities has expanded. Concerns within this corpus include, inter alia, local currencies (Seyfang 1997, 2006b), energy (Catney et al. 2013; Seyfang et al. 2014, 2013), car-sharing (Ornetzeder &
Rohracher (2013), local food production (Franklin et al. 2011a; Kirwan et al. 2013; White & Stirling 2013), Transition Towns (Barry & Quilley 2009; Cato & Hillier 2010; North 2010; North & Longhurst 2013; Quilley 2015), and low-carbon behaviour change (Moloney et al. 2010).

Despite these varied concerns, and the inherent political and cultural character of the sustainability project, cultural politics has not been a noteworthy conceptual framing within the sustainable communities arena. Although cultural politics is a promising lens through which to explore communities’ anticipations of sustainability, the most strongly theorised existing account of cultural politics is ontologically problematic from a green political perspective, because it assumes humans are separate from nature. Hence my primary motivation is to articulate a framework, to investigate and interpret sustainability transitions in cultural political terms, that is consistent with a green ontological perspective. Responding to that problem, RQ1b asks: how can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be appropriately articulated and interpreted (in the context of post-growth political economy)?

The secondary impulse of this research project has been to better understand Scottish community woodlands, and in particular the artistic and creative activities organized within some of them. Despite accumulating accounts of community organizing for sustainability transitions, Scottish community woodlands have not been conspicuous empirical concerns. Policy-driven concerns with governance, management, and impacts on social indicators dominate the modest literature on this scene (Cochrane 2008; Crabtree et al. 1994; Edwards 2000; Lawrence & Ambrose-Oji 2014; Lawrence et al. 2009). Although from non-forestry perspectives the community woodlands literature is limited, it is clear that these woodland organizations are complex, multi-faceted phenomena. There is no precedent in the literature suggesting a conceptual approach to community woodlands capable of supporting this investigation into prefigurations of sustainability.

Artistic and creative activities, similarly, are neglected as an empirical concern by sustainability transitions research. Many contemporary investigations into artistic work are dominated by notions of the creative industries, notions that are problematic from
sustainability perspectives critical of economic growth.\textsuperscript{10} Again, there is no immediately obvious precedent in literature suggesting a conceptual approach to artistic and creative activities appropriate to this investigation. Hence, RQ2a acknowledges that clearly identified conceptual approaches, to woodlands and to their artistic activities, are vital investigatory stages: \textit{how may Scottish community woodlands, and the artistic activities undertaken within them, be conceptualized?}

Also flowing from the impulse to better understand the community woodland scene, RQ2b maintains focus on woodlands and their artistic and creative activities, while also responding to my intuition that Scottish community woodlands might prefigure less unsustainable ways of humans being in the world and relating to nature. \textit{RQ2b: What artistic and creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, and how do these activities intersect with the wider woodland movement and with sustainability transitions discourse?}

The empirical investigation of community woodlands activities that I narrate is, itself, an original contribution to sustainability transitions knowledge. However, I also claim an original theoretical contribution. Articulated in chapter 3, the notion of \textit{cultural politics as contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices} is a new synthesis consistent with green republican ontological insights. Analysis of cultural political performances is possible against an interpretive framework, articulated in chapter 4 and derived from green republicanism, of \textit{sustainability virtues, subjectivities, and identities}. The woodland investigation presents an ideal empirical context to interrogate the success of that theoretical contribution, and to consider future applications of the conceptual and interpretive framework; hence RQ3 seeks to \textit{critically evaluate the success and future potential of the conceptual and interpretive framework to understand a cultural politics of sustainability transitions.}

These five distinct research questions take a particular approach in response to the overarching problem of living less unsustainably and are summarized in table 1.1. The questions are answered throughout the thesis, as outlined below [1.6].

\textsuperscript{10} I critique the concept of the creative industries, and define my understanding of art, in section 2.4.
Table 1.1 Research questions

| RQ1a: How can sustainability be conceptualized (in the context of post-growth political economy)? |
| RQ1b: How can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be appropriately articulated & interpreted (in the context of post-growth political economy)? |
| RQ2a: How may Scottish community woodlands, & the artistic activities undertaken within them, be conceptualized? |
| RQ2b: What artistic & creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, & how do these intersect with the wider woodland movement & with sustainability transitions? |
| RQ3: Critically evaluate the success & future potential of the conceptual & interpretive framework to understand a cultural politics of sustainability transitions. |

1.5 SCOTTISH COMMUNITY WOODLANDS: AN INTRODUCTION

The first Scottish community woodland organization was founded in 1987, at Wooplaw in the Scottish Borders, and there are now believed to be over 200 such groups (Lawrence & Ambrose-Oji 2014; Voysey & Hollingdale 2010). This is a complex scene, consisting in many organizations and individuals, with broadly shared interests, forming a movement or network across the country (Calvert 2009). Community woodland organizations take a variety of organizational forms, legal status, and tenure types, pursuing a range of social, ecological, and economic objectives, planting and managing native and exotic species for various purposes, and spread across the country in rural, urban, and peri-urban locations (Calvert 2009; Lawrence et al. 2009; Ritchie & Haggith 2004; Voysey & Hollingdale 2010).

This section responds to the first part of RQ2a - how may Scottish community woodlands be conceptualized? To apprehend this dynamic and complex scene, I review the literature and describe the historical context and contemporary contours of the woodland movement. Below, I outline the historical situation globally and in Scotland [1.5.1], contextualizing the scene’s contemporary contours [1.5.2], and finally justify my conceptualization of community woodlands as alternative organizations [1.5.3].
1.5.1 Community woodlands: historical contexts

The Scottish woodland movement emerges from at least three partly interrelated historical contexts. First, a growing commitment, particularly among people in global North societies, to environmentalism. Second, changing international forestry discourses that have broadened from an exclusive focus on trees and productive forests to embrace biodiversity and people within a postproductivist stance. One consequence of that broadening is a shift empowering local communities to participate in management or governance of forests, leading to international debates about community forestry and woodlands. Third, although to some degree cognate with these international debates, the Scottish community woodland movement is profoundly shaped by the country’s distinctive patterns of land and forest ownership, and by the land reform movement those patterns have engendered.

Environmentalism, the understanding that nonhuman nature has intrinsic as well as extrinsic or instrumental value and should be protected, has grown in salience around the planet in activist and policy discourses (Barry & Frankland 2002; see also Corry 2013; Cudworth 2003; Dobson 2002; Dryzek et al. 2003; Falkner 2012; Gottlieb 1993; Seel et al. 2002). That growth is made visible not least through increased concern for biodiversity, animal rights, and the acknowledged importance of (what academics and policy makers know as) ecosystem services (Cudworth 2011; Mace et al. 2012; MEA 2005; Redclift & Woodgate 2010). Although this short discussion occludes some complex debates within environmentalism, it suffices for present purposes; moreover, I discuss key issues of those debates in a later review of green political theory [2.1].

Internationally, forestry as discipline and practice has broadened since the 1980s, from a technical, natural scientific activity, to embrace people and society alongside timber production in policies, frameworks, and activities. There are at least three interconnected influences upon this transformation (Ambrose-Oji 2010). First, tensions around tropical rainforest management developed between global North countries and global South rainforest nations in the form of conflicts between Northern conservation interests (concerned to protect forests for ecosystem services, including climate change mitigation and genetic reserves) and Southern development interests (intent to preserve national autonomy and rights to exploit natural resources). Second, conservation and
natural resource management practitioners began to understand forest governance would be improved by devolving power to local communities; participatory decision-making involving communities was a key step towards more fully decentralized administration. Finally, the earlier primacy of scientific epistemology was increasingly challenged, exposing limitations of natural scientific knowledge for conservation action. Partly seeking to ameliorate those limitations, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio (UNCED) established the potential role of communities and civil society in achieving sustainable development aims (Ambrose-Oji 2010).

As material demands for timber have diminished, so too have productivist concerns for timber production. Rather, forestry concerns have broadened to a ‘post-productivist’ embrace of biodiversity, ecosystem services, and recreational use (Mather 2001:249). Combined, these stimuli resulted in transformation from existing technocratic forest management towards broader approaches recognizing that social scientific insights to human behaviour and values could play an important role alongside ecology and forestry in conservation and forest management. Gradually, people, society, and biodiversity were incorporated into a new mode of forestry policy (Ambrose-Oji & Fancett 2011; Edwards et al. 2008). That new mode is described as ‘sustainable forest management’ and it seeks to balance economic interests with social and ecosystemic concerns (Warren 2009a).

Community forestry has become an increasingly substantive aspect of forestry policy within that broader changing context (Agrawal et al. 2008; Belsky 2008; Loyko 2010). Many community forestry debates address commons resources and community user groups in Asia, and their potential role in social justice and poverty alleviation (Agrawal & Ostrom 2001; Gibson et al. 2000). However, there is also community involvement with arboreal resource management in the global North, particularly in Europe and North America (Jeanrenaud 2002; Lawrence et al. 2009). Many European

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11 There is some ambiguity around the terms ‘community forestry’ and ‘community woodland’. For Calvert (2009:5), the ‘concept of community forest or woodland refers to wooded landscapes where typically the aim is to encompass a mosaic of different land uses’, whereas ‘community forestry’ can refer to commercial forestry operations which may or may not take place in a community-controlled wood. In this thesis, I use the term community woodland to describe woodland sites under community control, and community woodland organization (CWO) or group to describe the nexus of people and woodland that they control.
manifestations of community forestry originate from the ‘maintenance or reassertion of historic rights’ (Lawrence et al. 2009:282), whereas North American community forests respond to historic injustices and rural poverty (Glasmeier & Farrigan 2005; Lawrence et al. 2009; McCarthy 2005). Although British community forestry initiatives are partly cognate with global trends, the Scottish scene in particular is distinct because of historic and uniquely concentrated patterns of land ownership, that persist to the present day (Lawrence et al. 2009; Wightman 2012).

Notably, neoliberal influences on forestry policy are not conspicuous in the above summary. Despite that, some scholars have noted such a link. James McCarthy’s (2005) analysis of US community forestry policy in the United States suggests the increasing number of community forests is influenced by ‘rollout’ or ‘third way’ neoliberal rationalities (Peck & Tickell 2002: 380, 384), that valorize empowering partnerships between communities and the state as part of a broader project to minimize the state’s social responsibilities (see also Gibson-Graham 2006). Scottish land reform and woodland campaigners Bill Ritchie and Mandy Haggith (2004:1) acknowledge a similar influence in Scottish policy responses to woodland activism. They describe the country’s ‘forest devolution’ as a ‘pushme-pullyou’ experience with activists ‘pull[ing] down’ power from the state, while the state ‘push[es] down’ further power to communities. However, McCarthy (2005) concludes that US community woodlands are ‘hybrids’ that supplement, not oppose, neoliberal practices and institutions. Ritchie and Haggith, and fellow activist Amanda Calvert (2009), are clear that Scottish land reform and woodland activism contest existing practices and institutions (although they do not explicitly identify these as neoliberal). This suggests that Scottish community woodlands perform alternatives to neoliberal practices and institutions.

However, discussion of the Scottish forestry context ought to begin from the assertion that present-day Scotland is a deforested country (Warren 2009a). Consequently, many historic practices of woodland use and care (and abuse) are no longer performed (Smout 2003; Smout et al. 2005). Forest cover contracted from a historical maximum, roughly 5,000 years ago, when 50-60% of Scotland’s total land mass was forested. Humans
exploited the forests and by 1750, cover was less than 10% (Smout et al. 2005). Organized afforestation began on a small scale during the 18th and 19th centuries, by landowners following new scientific forestry practices imported from Europe (Lawrence et al. 2009; Mather 2004). This planting phase introduced exotic species, largely non-native coniferous trees imported from Europe and North America (Smout et al. 2005; Warren 2009a). These interventions notwithstanding, forest cover in Scotland continued to decline to a historical minimum of 4.5% by the early 20th century (Warren 2009a). The state Forestry Commission (FC) was established in 1919; subsequent decades saw extensive land acquisitions and intensive coniferous plantations reversing centuries of deforestation.

The Forestry Commission’s founding objective in 1919 was to plant 720,000ha of new forests across the UK by 1999, with around 66% of that in Scotland (a goal almost achieved, with 453,000ha in 2011). The purpose of these plantations was to create a reserve of timber in case of future war (Lawrence et al. 2009; Warren 2009a). These state-owned plantations followed a commercial logic prioritizing timber production above all else, favouring monocultures (that are more productive and easier to manage than mixed forests), of hardy species (that could establish forest ecosystems in marginal and exposed sites), forming geometric plantations with straight edges (so easier and cheaper to fence), in large areas (hence economies of scale) (Warren 2009a).

Commercial forestry - most of the country’s arboreal cover - was initially dominated by the state. The private sector has come to dominate since the 1950s; new private plantings exceed state plantings since 1973 (Warren 2009a). Private forestry began as the preserve of large upland estates, but since the 1960s forestry investment companies have dominated the sector. These companies act as agents for individual investors and corporate owners (e.g., insurance companies and pension funds), whose interest in the sector was prompted by fiscal incentives (Warren 2009a; Wightman 2012). A growing

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12 These figures, both for dates and for percentage of land covered, can only be approximations given the temporal and spatial scales of the topic, and the sparse data (Smout et al. 2005).
13 There is an extensive literature on the environmental impacts of commercial forestry, and in particular investment-driven forestry’s insensitivities towards local environment. While important context for this thesis, these debates lie beyond my main concern. However, Charles Warren (2009a) offers a useful summary.
critique of investment forestry’s deleterious environmental impacts eventually forced removal of the incentives in 1988 (Warren 2009a).

The country’s afforested areas remain dominated by monoculture plantations, although more recent interventions flowing from the 1992 UNCED Rio conference and led by the European Union have encouraged more planting of native species to fulfil biodiversity and conservation objectives (Warren 2009a). Commercial plantations are predominantly in the rural parts of the country, often on marginal land that is agriculturally unproductive (Warren 2009a). However, post-industrial rehabilitation projects in urban and peri-urban areas have sought to restore woodland landscapes, significantly across the terrain between Glasgow and Edinburgh. Since 2004, over 11,000ha have been planted in and around towns (Lawrence & Ambrose-Oji 2014).

Clarity on land and forest ownership in Scotland is difficult, because the UK and Scottish Governments, and their Forestry Commission, collect minimal data on the topic. However, some broad figures have been established (Mather 1987; Wightman 2012). In 2011, afforested land in Scotland totalled 17.1% (1,385,000ha) of the country’s total area. The state owns 32.7% (453,000ha) of the total forest area, managed by Forestry Commission Scotland. The remaining 67.3% (932,000ha) of forest cover is owned by a total of 4,017 private and other public owners. Of that 932,000ha of privately owned forest, 91% is in the hands of landed estates and investment owners, many of whom are not resident in or near their holdings. The average size of woodland in private ownership is therefore 232ha, and only 0.1% of the Scottish population are woodland owners (Wightman 2012). Thus, rural Scotland is extensively covered by commercial plantations controlled by absentee owners and managers (Wightman 2012), giving rise to the observation that Scotland represents the ‘last bastion of [Britain’s] colonial forestry’ (Inglis & Guy 1997), with residents in these areas enjoying little or no

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14 For brevity, my discussion neglects the evolving policy context relating to woodland reform. Amanda Calvert’s (2009) report offers a good overview and timeline of that context.
15 Other public owners include the UK government (particularly the Ministry of Defence), UK Crown Estates, Scottish Government (Scottish Natural Heritage), and local authorities, who own 9% of the 932,000ha. Private owners include individuals, investment companies, insurance companies, sawmills and other forest sector organizations; environmental NGOs (Scottish Wildlife Trust, John Muir Trust, Royal Society for Protection of Birds); other bodies and agencies (Church of Scotland); and communities (Voysey & Hollingdale 2010; Wightman 2012).
opportunity for decision-making about or benefit from the plantations surrounding their communities.\textsuperscript{16}

Compared with other European countries, these are low figures. In contrast to Scotland’s 17.1\% total forest cover, average cover across EU countries is 37\% of land mass, and far higher in the Scandinavian countries, with (e.g.,) Finland 74\% afforested (Warren 2009a). Similarly, the average size of privately-owned woods across many other European countries is considerably smaller.\textsuperscript{17} Table 1.2 illustrates this, with a selection of four countries compared against Scotland in terms of private woodland size, area, and percentage of population owning forest. Not only do these European countries have many more smaller woods, they also have a wider range of organizational forms involved in forestry, including small-scale family woods, cooperatives, resident owners and municipal ownership (Wightman 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Private forest (ha)</th>
<th>Forest owners</th>
<th>Average size (ha)</th>
<th>Population (millions)</th>
<th>% Population owning forest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>1,076,000</td>
<td>838,608</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>180,000</td>
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<td>6.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>10,498,000</td>
<td>443,800</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>17,916,200</td>
<td>268,235</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>932,000</td>
<td>4,017</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Scottish situation of forest ownership dominated by absentee statist and affluent elites holding large plantations is part of a wider context of land ownership in Scotland, which for historical reasons has tended towards large holdings owned by few people (Wightman 2010b). Notably, only in 2004 did the country relinquish the medieval

---

\textsuperscript{16} Scotland’s experience of colonialism was significantly different from the global South. However, analysis of issues such as Scottish land reform reveals the tensions and unequal power relations within the British state, despite devolution of many issues to a Scottish Government. Thus understanding can move beyond straightforward binaries which present the UK (and Scotland) simply as a colonising force, to a more nuanced appreciation that colonisation also happened internally (Hechter 1975), and that parts of Scotland have been subject to similar colonial discourses and practices (often with devastating effect) as areas formerly under British rule around the world (Hunter 1999; Toogood 2003).

\textsuperscript{17} Andy Wightman’s (2012) report into Forest ownership in Scotland offers a comparative table placing Scotland, and the UK, in to a broader EU context of the 19 EU countries that make forest ownership data available. Because this information is not directly germane to my discussion, I only highlight some examples rather than including whole tables of data.
tenurial practice of feudalism (Wightman 2010b, 2012). Of the country’s 7,800,000ha land mass, 10% is in public ownership (Warren 2009a). The privately-owned 90% is held by very few individuals. Only 432 people possess 50% of the country (Hunter et al. 2013), whereas a minuscule number of people (representing 0.025% of the population) own 67% of the country’s rural land (Warren 2009a). This pattern has roots reaching back centuries, even before enclosure and subsequent clearance of the people from the land in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Hunter 1999; Warren 2009a; Wightman 2010b). In summary, as James Hunter and colleagues (2013:5) note, Scotland’s patterns of private land ownership are ‘the most concentrated […] in the developed world’.

Those campaigning for reform to land and forestry policy, and relatedly land use and rural and community development policies, argue that the contemporary situation produces various consequences. These include (but are not limited to) dwindling rural populations, limited opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship, and restricted access to land for agriculture, woodland management, or domestic or commercial building (Hunter 2012; Hunter et al. 2013; Wightman 2012). Policy tends to ‘perpetuate and reinforce’ existing structures (Hunter et al. 2013:5). Land reform is, from this perspective, seen to address these problems. At least six changes are sought. First, a reduction in average woodland size, to increase the number of forest owners. Second, a broadening of ownership models, potentially following European patterns of cooperative-, community-, and municipally-owned woods, as well as small-scale individual and family-owned sites. Third, legislation supporting the right-to-buy for tenant farmers, crofters, and communities. Fourth, changed hereditary succession law (such that all offspring, not only the oldest, inherit land). Fifth, a reorganized tax regime favouring Land Value Tax in preference to the existing council tax. Sixth, publicly available (wood)land ownership records, challenging a currently opaque scene in which proportions of overseas owners (who contribute less to local tax regimes) are unknown (Hunter et al. 2013; Wightman 2010a, 2012). Many of these sought-for changes are not germane to my concern in this thesis, hence I merely note them without discussion.

The policy situation relating to land reform has transformed markedly since devolution led to the re-establishment in 1999 of a Scottish Government in Edinburgh. Competence for land is one of the powers devolved to Holyrood from Westminster, and increased parliamentary time and political support for reform in Holyrood have engendered a
series of acts addressing different aspects of land ownership (Warren 2009a). The key legislation includes: the Abolition of Feudal Tenure etc (Scotland) Act 2000, which ended residual elements of feudalism; the Land Reform Act (Scotland) 2003, which introduced (inter alia) rights for communities and crofting communities to buy land; and the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which extended communities’ rights to buy land and buildings. Emotions run high in debates around these issues, as communities and private landowners have much to gain and lose (Warren 2009a). Activists critique the legislation, particularly the Land Reform Act, for being too timid and complex, presenting considerable barriers to communities seeking to benefit from their newly introduced rights (Macleod et al. 2010a; Slee et al. 2008; Warren 2009a). Certainly, many of the buyouts since 1992 have not relied on the rights introduced by the 2003 Act (Macleod et al. 2010a), and the main contribution of that Act may have been to catalyse change indirectly (Slee et al. 2008).

Against, or perhaps despite, that policy context, land reform activism has led to community buy-outs of 203,200ha land since the first community land buyout at Assynt in 1992 (Black 2012; Warren 2009a). These have taken place on two scales. Large estates, consisting mainly in extensive upland terrain used mainly for sporting (game shooting and fishing) purposes but also including forestry and woodland. On a smaller scale, community woodland buyouts have been more numerous, but more limited in area (Calvert 2009; Hunter 2012; Mackenzie 2013; Ritchie & Haggith 2004).

Summarizing, the contemporary Scottish community woodland scene has emerged from international and national contexts of environmentalism, changing forestry policy, and land tenure and activism. Environmentalism manifests growing concern for the nonhuman, including biodiversity, animal rights, and ecosystem services. Forestry policy discourses have broadened to integrate people, society, and environmentalism, in addition to trees. Nationally, there is an history of forest decline and (partial) recovery through human interventions and, in recent decades, domination by commercial

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18 Detailed discussion of the legislative regime surrounding land reform lies beyond the scope of this thesis. However, it is important to note that land ownership legislation is a matter devolved by the United Kingdom (UK) Government at Westminster, London, to the Scottish Government at Holyrood, Edinburgh. Charles Warren (2009a) offers a useful summary of the policy context, although it is inevitably dated, missing recent developments (notably the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) 2015).
plantations owned by a mixture of the state and private organizations, the latter being artefacts of the most concentrated pattern of forest ownership in Europe.

1.5.2 Community woodlands: contemporary context

Founders of the pioneer community woodlands were motivated in at least three ways. First, by environmental concerns. Second, to re-kindle a long-lost woodland culture. Third, to establish local control of resources by the communities local to them (Calvert 2009; Drever 1989; Smout 2003; Voysey & Hollingdale 2010). Since 1987, when the first Scottish community woodland was established at Wooplaw in the Scottish Borders, there are now over 200 community woodland organizations across the country Scotland (Lawrence & Ambrose-Oji 2014; Voysey & Hollingdale 2010). However, these organizations are not clones; they vary considerably. One relatively common feature is membership of the Community Woodlands Association (CWA), an umbrella group concerned with representation, knowledge and skill-sharing, and lobbying on behalf of members who are mostly woodland-controlling groups in communities across the country.19 The CWA, along with other key sectoral actors including Reforesting Scotland and the Highland Council (Calvert 2009), define Scottish community woodlands as shown in table 1.3. The definition offers a useful starting point for discussion of the contemporary contours of this scene.20

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19 Although a variety of sources suggest that over 200 woodland groups now exist across Scotland, there were 152 members listed on the CWA website in March 2013. Of these, some are local authorities, umbrella groups, and consultants, leaving 130 members that are groups controlling woodland. These 152 member groups are classified in appendix 4.

20 Reforesting Scotland (RF) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that aims to increase arboreal cover and practices across the country. RF members were in the vanguard of the community woodlands movement and were involved in the initial establishment of the Community Woodlands Association.

The Highland Council is a large local authority responsible for the north and west mainland of Scotland (and some of the islands close offshore); within its region are many community woodlands. The Council was a CWA member in 2013.
A community woodland is one partly or completely controlled by the local community, through a community woodland group. The woodland may be owned or leased by the group, or managed in partnership with another organisation, such as Forestry Commission Scotland.

Community woodlands are extremely diverse, embracing all woodland types from ancient semi-natural woods to extensive conifer plantations, & ranging from less than a hectare to over a thousand hectares in size.

Likewise, the communities involved range from crofting townships in the far north & west to small towns & inner-city communities in the central belt.

Some of the larger groups now employ staff to manage & develop their woods, while others are managed entirely by volunteers. Whilst the aims & objectives of individual groups vary according to local needs & aspirations, & the type & scale of the woodland managed, all are working to build sustainable, flourishing, creative, resilient & vibrant communities.

Individuals, groups & their own communities, are increasingly recognising woodland & associated activity as being an important part of their cultural heritage.

Scotland’s community woodlands deliver a huge range of public benefits, including:

Recreation - providing wide-ranging opportunities for outdoor recreation, from informal paths & ‘all ability’ facilities to mountain bike trails & orienteering courses;

Biodiversity & conservation - restoring & expanding native woodlands, & carrying out habitat improvements within other forest types, to conserve & enhance Scotland’s biodiversity & contribute to climate change mitigation;

Economic development - increasing the value of forestry to local communities, creating jobs & developing local processing & markets for timber & non-timber forest products;

Renewable energy - developing local supply chains & markets for woodfuel, to help reduce our dependence on fossil fuels & support sustainable forest management;

Social inclusion - involving all sections of the community in planning & decision-making, & ensuring that the benefits of community woodlands are available to all.

The CWA definition suggests that dimensions can be identified, describing community woodland organizations. These include tenure type, objectives and purpose, woodland type/ species, size, and location. The notion of definitional dimensions is (tacitly) echoed in the literature, where further variations are noted around legal status, age, level of community involvement, income and funding, and community size and visitor size (Calvert 2009; Ritchie & Haggith 2004). Bringing these definitions and analyses together with my own preliminary review of woodland organizations, it is possible to identify at least 8 dimensions that allow analytical traction on the terrain. These are listed in table 1.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1.3 Defining community woodlands (CWA n.d.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A community woodland is one partly or completely controlled by the local community, through a community woodland group. The woodland may be owned or leased by the group, or managed in partnership with another organisation, such as Forestry Commission Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likewise, the communities involved range from crofting townships in the far north &amp; west to small towns &amp; inner-city communities in the central belt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of the larger groups now employ staff to manage &amp; develop their woods, while others are managed entirely by volunteers. Whilst the aims &amp; objectives of individual groups vary according to local needs &amp; aspirations, &amp; the type &amp; scale of the woodland managed, all are working to build sustainable, flourishing, creative, resilient &amp; vibrant communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals, groups &amp; their own communities, are increasingly recognising woodland &amp; associated activity as being an important part of their cultural heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland’s community woodlands deliver a huge range of public benefits, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation - providing wide-ranging opportunities for outdoor recreation, from informal paths &amp; ‘all ability’ facilities to mountain bike trails &amp; orienteering courses;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity &amp; conservation - restoring &amp; expanding native woodlands, &amp; carrying out habitat improvements within other forest types, to conserve &amp; enhance Scotland’s biodiversity &amp; contribute to climate change mitigation;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development - increasing the value of forestry to local communities, creating jobs &amp; developing local processing &amp; markets for timber &amp; non-timber forest products;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewable energy - developing local supply chains &amp; markets for woodfuel, to help reduce our dependence on fossil fuels &amp; support sustainable forest management;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social inclusion - involving all sections of the community in planning &amp; decision-making, &amp; ensuring that the benefits of community woodlands are available to all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As table 1.4 suggests, the community woodland movement consists in a great variety of organizations. However, that diversity is barely recognized in the literature. To date, there is a small but growing corpus of literature concerned with Scottish community woodlands, addressing a number of issues. Most notably, it deals with overviews of the emergence, early challenges, and characteristics of the scene (Calvert 2009; Crabtree et al. 1994; Edwards 2010; Inglis 1999; Inglis & Guy 1997; Lawrence & Ambrose-Oji 2014; Lawrence et al. 2009; Ritchie & Haggith 2004; Tylden-Wright 2000; Voysey & Hollingdale 2010), and policy-driven questions of outcomes, impact, and indicators (Ambrose-Oji & Fancett 2011; Cochrane 2008; Crabtree et al. 1994; Edwards 2000; Evans & Franklin 2008; Hodge & Maxwell 2005; Inglis & Guy 1997; Lawrence 2009; Lawrence & Ambrose-Oji 2014; Lawrence & Molteno 2012; Lawrence et al. 2009; Slee & Wall 2006). Sustainability, or issues cognate with commonplace and policy-makers’ understanding of it, is explicitly noted in many of these articles; salient topics include wellbeing, participation in decision-making and governance, and rural development (reflecting social justice concerns).  

21 While critique of the Scottish Government’s Sustainable Development (SD) related policies is not my concern, it is important to note that those policies are aligned with a different perspective on sustainability than I accept in this thesis. For example, SD is understood by the Government as a target, the goal of which is ‘to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life without compromising the quality of life of future generations’ (Scottish Government n.d.). That definition derives from the Brundtland Commission Report (WCED 1987), and can be critiqued for leaving at least four issues unresolved, (first) giving priority to development with (second) no acknowledgement of limits to growth, (third) occluding nonhumans, and (fourth) giving no indication to when the goal might be or has been attained. Moreover, the Scottish Government’s approach is framed within a broader economic strategy that prioritizes ‘sustainable economic growth’, a notion which from many green perspectives is at least a ‘bad oxymoron’ if not a material impossibility, on account of our planet’s finiteness (Daly & Townsend 1993:267).
the prefigurative potential of community woodlands, nor have there been many investigations of their relationship with notions of sustainability that accept practical transformations of society are necessary to escape unsustainability.\textsuperscript{22} I propose alternative organization as a conceptual framing that will allow attention to anticipatory arboreal aspects.

\subsection*{1.5.3 Community woodlands as alternative organizations}

Alternative organization - a notion articulated by Martin Parker and colleagues - not only critiques dominant market managerial and capitalcentric organizing practices, but also invites consideration of organizational alternatives (Parker \textit{et al.} 2007, 2014a, 2014b). From this perspective, organizing is political, because all forms of organizing are artefacts of particular political stances and can therefore be contested. The Parker team’s notion responds to the commonsense perception, increasingly embedded in the contemporary imaginary, that markets are natural or inevitable mechanisms for deciding costs, benefits, success, or failure, and cannot be altered or questioned (Barry 2012; Davies 2014; Parker \textit{et al.} 2014a). The key insight here is understanding organization as a verb not a noun; organization as process, not static structure. Hence, investigation can attend to the practices creating that process. Organization, therefore, is ‘politics made durable’, because those processes inevitably involve politics (Parker \textit{et al.} 2014a:367). Organizational practices are influenced (explicitly or otherwise) by political perspectives; organizational life transpires through repetition of those practices, which maintain the organization in a recognizable form (e.g., practices of shareholder decision-making, profit-maximizing, competition, employee decision-making, or solidarity).

Alternative organization appears a promising conceptualization of Scottish community woodlands, which are noted for their challenge to existing land tenure and forest management practices (Calvert 2009), suggesting that they may be ‘places of possibility’ (Mackenzie 2013). Community (wood)land ownership troubles norms of clearance, enclosure, and private property ownership, norms at the heart of liberal

\textsuperscript{22} In the terms used by green political theorist Andy Dobson (Dobson 2007b:5), that I discuss below [2.1], much of the existing community woodlands literature tends towards ‘reformist’ sustainability discourse, rather than the ‘radical’ perspective that I accept in this thesis [1.2, 2, 4].
theory and practice (Mackenzie 2013). From this perspective, such tenurial contestation presents a challenge to some of the most basic foundations of the current (neo)liberal political and economic system. Green political theory critiques (neo)liberalism as implicated in unsustainability [2.1, 2.2]. Thus, community woodland organizations may not only be contexts where post-liberalisms are possible, but also where less unsustainable ways of humans being in the world are made durable.

The notion of alternative organization is also consistent with the broader theoretical framing I will develop. There are four points and one caveat to note. First, alternative organization and cultural politics share an interest in prefigurations that contest dominant ways of doing things [3.1]. Second, a processual view of organization is consistent both with sustainability transitions understood as a project not a goal [1.2], and also with a practice theoretical perspective [3.2]. Third, green political philosophies and alternative organization share critical perspectives on neoliberalism and current modes of capitalism [2.1, 2.2]. Fourth, if organization is politics made durable then alternative organizations may be interpreted against an alternative political philosophy, such as green republicanism [4].

However, there may be a problem with this otherwise felicitous synthesis. Drawing upon anarchist thought, Parker et al. propose ‘autonomy, solidarity, and responsibility’ as principles of alternative organization (Parker et al. 2014b:613). While these principles can be critiqued, perhaps on the tension between the simultaneous possibility of autonomy and solidarity, there is also a possible antipathy between the green republican framework (developed in chapters 2 and 4) and these anarchist principles. Republicans are unlikely to quibble that autonomy, solidarity, and responsibility are important concepts, and worthy of protection in a republican polity, although they would argue that autonomy could only be partial among interdependent humans. However, debate about the agreements and tensions between these political philosophies lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Hence, although I do not engage with the anarchist ‘manifesto for alternatives’ (Parker et al. 2014b:623), I accept the idea of organization as ‘politics made durable’, and conceive of woodlands as alternative organizations.
Summarizing, Scottish community woodlands emerged from contexts of environmentalism, changing forestry discourses, and a developing land reform movement. The result is a complex dynamic of activist\textsuperscript{23} passions and energies that have shaped, and are shaped by, policy responses. Community woodland organizations are artefacts of this dynamic, and of their local situation, resulting in a diverse scene of over 200 community-controlled woodlands across the country that can be understood along 8 organizational dimensions. Responding to RQ2a, this section has established alternative organization as an appropriate conceptualization of community woodlands. Located on the human-nature cusp, these woodlands are a context wherein diverse arboreal and artistic practices are performed, including tenurial contestations that may anticipate less unsustainable ways of humans being. Yet, the Scottish woodland scene remains neglected by sustainability transitions researchers concerned with prefigurations of human flourishing within a biodiversity and resource constrained world. In chapters 6 and 7, I investigate whether and how less unsustainable ways of being may be made durable within these woodland organizations.

1.6 SUMMARY AND CHAPTER OUTLINES

This chapter has introduced sustainability transitions, cultural politics and civil society, and community woodlands as (respectively) the normative, conceptual, and empirical contexts of the research. Sustainability science was introduced as an epistemological framework multiply informing the approach. The research questions (RQ) were established, and RQ2a partly answered: community woodlands are conceptualized as alternative organizations. More, the historical context and contemporary outline of the community woodland scene were established. Concluding this chapter, I present below outlines of subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 reviews the field of green political theory and establishes green republicanism as the normative foundation of the thesis. Sustainability, and societal

\textsuperscript{23} By describing people involved in woodlands as activists, I ascribe identity to them. The idea that they can be understood as activists over other identities is justified by Calvert’s (2009) assertion that community woodland organizations are engaged in contestative activities, and also by interview data (discussed in chapter 6).
transitions away from unsustainability, are understood in green republican terms (RQ1a). The chapter discusses key elements of green republicanism, and articulates the first ontological stance: humans as biologically embodied, and ecologically and socially embedded, animals.

**Chapter 3** critiques existing conceptions of cultural politics - the contestation of normalized identities and social relations - for inconsistency with the green republican ontology. In response, the chapter discusses practice theory, including its ontological stance - social reality emerges from and through socialmaterial practices - and establishes mutual compatibility with green republicanism. The chapter argues that recasting cultural politics as *contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices* renders the concept ontologically coherent with green republican insights (RQ1b). As a distinct mode of cultural politics, artistic and creative activities are established as *practices of everyday artistic activism* (RQ2a). The italicized statements describe original conceptual syntheses and highlight two of the thesis’ three theoretical contributions.

**Chapter 4** derives an interpretive framework from green republican philosophy, against which cultural political performances and practices of artistic activism may be analysed. Green republican virtues coordinate with potential new sustainability subjectivities and identities; these can be related to empirical observations of cultural political performances (RQ1b). The interpretive framework forms the thesis’ third original theoretical contribution.

**Chapter 5** locates the thesis within an interpretivist paradigm in the broad terrain of social science philosophy. Following critique of relativist constructivist ontology, the green republican and practice theoretical ontologies are established as relational, and compatible with a transactional-subjectivist epistemology and ethnographically-informed methodology. The chapter discusses the research design and questions, methods, access, data generation and analysis, and presents an audit trail of the research process.

**Chapter 6** presents the data in practice theoretical terms. From a panoramic perspective, an overview of community woodland organizations (CWO) is given, paying particular attention to artistic and creative practices, and activists’ motivations.
for organizing those. Zooming in, the doings and sayings within one particular CWO are thickly-described, illuminating the socialmaterial entanglements of woodland organizing and the enmeshedness of artistic and creative activities with woodland management and the broader goals of the woodland movement (RQ2b).

**Chapter 7** discusses the data in (first) practice theoretical and (second) green republican terms. First, woodland organizers’ aspirations to encourage people’s increased woodland use can be understood as practice-changing interventions. The data describe variably successful interventions, for reasons illuminated by practice-theoretical analysis. I argue that future applied, practice-theory-informed research promises to support the Scottish woodland movement in achieving its broader aims. Second, interpreting woodland doings and sayings against green republican virtues and subjectivities shows how one CWO prefigures elements of a less unsustainable society, understood in green republican terms. Two new sustainability subjectivities are identified, adding empirical richness to emerging debates around green republicanism. The CWO is identified as a context wherein alternative conceptions of nature, the human condition, and organization are performed (RQ2b).

**Chapter 8** summarizes the route taken by the thesis, noting limitations of findings, contributions, and opportunities for future research. In this way, the chapter evaluates the success of the conceptual and interpretive framework, in the light of analysis presented in chapters 6 and 7 (RQ3).
CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALIZING SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS: GREEN REPUBLICANISM

This chapter answers RQ1a: how best can sustainability be conceptualized (in the context of post-growth political economy)? Sustainability and the imperative for societal transitions away from unsustainability form the normative basis of this thesis. Sustainability, though, is a contested concept (Blewitt 2008; Gallie 1955) that can be understood from many perspectives, each with its own worldview, values, and prescriptions of what a sustainable society might look like and be achieved (Blewitt 2008). Green political theory (henceforth GPT) is an intellectual field of political philosophy, concerned with the theory and practice of sustainability, where the latter is understood to be a process of responding to, but not necessarily solving, the sustainability problems - including (inter alia) climate change, biodiversity and resource depletion, and social injustices - that exist within and between human societies, and also between those societies and the nonhuman world (Barry 2002b, 2007a, 2014; Barry & Dobson 2004; Barry & Smith 2008b; Dobson 2007b).

GPT, then, promises to offer a conceptualization of sustainability transitions. Green political theorists are concerned with the questions of how human societies should be organized in recognition of ecological limits, and social and ecological justice. However, GPT is not a single coherent body of thought. Rather, this is a broad field of complex terrain, containing variegated prescriptions of societal organization, articulated through diverse conceptions of the human condition, intra-human relationships, and the role and power of humans within ecosystems (Barry 2002b, 2014; Barry & Dobson 2004; Dobson 2007b).

The chapter reviews the broad field of GPT [2.1], identifying points of distinction and challenge between the emergent green tradition and more established political traditions. This review provides context for the subsequent focus on John Barry’s
account of green republicanism [2.2]. Green republicanism is a strongly
theorized political economic account of a less unsustainable society. I argue that green
republicanism is the most appropriate normative foundation for this thesis. I outline key
points of green republicanism and related political economy. The most significant point
drawn from Barry’s work in this chapter is the understanding of humans’ condition as
vulnerable animals, enmeshed in complex ecosystemic and social webs of
interdependence. This insight represents the ontological foundation of the thesis.
Finally, I reflect on some of the ontological and epistemological implications of green
republicanism for the subsequent direction of the thesis [2.3].

2.1 GREEN POLITICAL THEORY

GPT is a broad field of normative political philosophical discourse, emerging from a
diverse set of intellectual and empirical stimuli. Within sustainability discourses, GPT is
important because a number of key green thinkers offer normative prescriptions for
societal organization that seek to address the sustainability problems that face
humanity. In the following overview of that field, I identify key origins and distinctive
contributions of the field of GPT [2.1.1]. Next, I cast the complex contours of this field
into relief through identification of a temporal developmental dimension, and two
significant fault lines [2.1.2]. The debates associated with these fault lines are
normative; one is ontological, relating to humans’ relationship with nonhuman nature,
and the other political, relating to green theorists’ attitudes to societal change. The
section concludes with discussion of two important points emerging from the second
fault line: green theorists’ responses to liberal political philosophy, and (relatedly) to the
neoclassical economic doctrine of exponential economic growth [2.1.3].

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24 Normative theorizing is a practice of political philosophers who seek to articulate prescriptive accounts of
(aspects of) societal organization. These accounts may be understood as thought experiments; outlines of
how society ought to be organized, that may inform governance practices or activism for social change.
25 Nature is a complex concept, and I discuss this, and my understanding of it below [2.2.1].

36
2.2.1 Origins and commonalities

The origins of GPT can be understood as a complex set of negative and positive reactions to historical intellectual movements and periods of social transformation, largely in or stemming from Western Europe. These include the Enlightenment and consequent Industrial and French Revolutions, and the colonial and imperial projects emanating from global North countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Significant intellectual developments include the emergence of ecology as a scientific discipline, growing awareness of ecological crisis and limits, changing ethical perspectives on human-nonhuman relationships, and a growing commitment to equality in rights, justice, and democratic voice (Barry 2007a, 2014; Barry & Frankland 2002; Blewitt 2008; Cudworth 2003; Dobson 2007b). Table 2.1 is a generalized chronological overview, summarizing the intellectual origins and historical stimuli of contemporary green thought.

Table 2.1 A chronologically-ordered summary of key origins of green political thought (adapted from Barry 2002a, 2007a:295, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative (and ‘romantic’) reaction to the industrial revolution, including resistance to capitalism, mechanisation &amp; factory production, commons enclosure, &amp; despoliation of countryside.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive reaction to the incomplete project of the French (democratic) Revolution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative reaction to the colonizing &amp; imperial projects of nineteenth &amp; twentieth centuries, &amp; related concerns with global ecological injustice, uneven development, &amp; asymmetric global power &amp; inequality relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergence of ecology as a scientific discipline, along with Darwinian evolutionary theory; also integration of scientific knowledge (notably including that of entropy &amp; the second law of thermodynamics), with ethical &amp; political thought in response to socio-ecological problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcendence of industrial politics (the dominant ‘left-right’ spectrum) by a post-industrial politics (beyond left &amp; right) that critiques both capitalism &amp; socialism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing perspectives on the moral aspects of human-nonhuman relationships (including advocacy of animal rights &amp; welfare, &amp; notions of ‘sacred’ Earth &amp; the intrinsic value of nature).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of progressive social, economic, &amp; political policies with politics of transitions to ecologically sustainable society (including universal human rights, socio-economic equality, &amp; democratization of state &amp; economy).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Democracy and equality are important concepts within GPT, as table 2.1 shows. These concepts lie at the heart of calls for decentralization, subsidiarity, and relocalization; green political philosophers argue for moves from paternalistic and centralized decision-making, toward a wider participation in the democratic process (Barry 2012; Cato 2009; Schumacher 1993). The commitment to equality is also evident in the green concern for justice within and between generations and nations (Barry 2012; Dobson 2007b; Dobson & Eckersley 2006).

The green embrace of scientific knowledge, from both the natural and social sciences, makes GPT distinct from many other traditions of political thought (Barry 2014; Dobson 2007b). Many fundamental green insights into the imperative for social and ecological change are informed by knowledge from the natural sciences (including ecology, biology, and physics), and the social sciences (including sociology, demography, and heterodox economics). It is this profound engagement with scientific knowledge that distinguishes contemporary green theory not only from most other traditions of political thought, but also from earlier and Romantic responses to industrialization (Dobson 2007b). However, this engagement with scientific knowledge does not mean that green proponents are uncritical of typical modes of scientific knowledge production. Green concern for democratic approaches to decision-making challenges the valorization of expert, remote, and opaque public management and policy making (Dobson 2007a, 2010). This critique leads greens to support greater civic participation in policy making across a variety of policy arenas, and also in scientific knowledge production (Frame 2008; Frame & Brown 2008). Relatedly, GPT presents ontological and epistemological challenges to social theory (Barry 2007a), a point I return to below [2.3].

The embrace of scientific knowledge is not the only feature that distinguishes GPT from existing political philosophical traditions. Emerging from this knowledge is the green ontological stance from which humans are seen as another species of animal, enmeshed in a complex web of ecosystemic relationships. Relatedly, a number of green theorists share a desire to dissolve theoretical boundaries distinguishing human from nonhuman, and culture from nature (Barry 2007a; Plumwood 1993), and a determination to broaden the moral community to include nonhumans, more explicitly consider the future, and transcend national boundaries (Barry 2007a, 2014; Barry & Dobson 2004; Barry &
Frankland 2002; Dobson 2007b; Dobson & Eckersley 2006). Table 2.2 summarizes the fundamental features, and original aspects, of GPT.

Table 2.2 Basic features of green political theory (developed from Barry 2007a:298, 2014; Dobson 2007b; Dobson & Eckersley 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming the separation between 'society' &amp; 'environment'</td>
<td>(which includes extending environment to include the human &amp; built environment).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation of the biological embodiedness &amp; ecological embeddedness</td>
<td>of human beings &amp; human society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewing humans a species of natural being, with particular species-specific needs &amp; characteristics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting both internal &amp; external natural limits</td>
<td>- those relating to humans’ particular needs &amp; vulnerable, dependent character, &amp; those relating to external, ecological scarcity in terms of finite natural resources &amp; fixed limits of the environment to absorb human-produced wastes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a critical mode of political theory, green political theory criticizes not just economic growth but also the dominant industrial model of development, modernization, &amp; progress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claims that how we treat the environment is a moral issue, not just a technological or economic one. This ranges from claims that the nonhuman world has intrinsic value, to the idea of animal rights.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive aspects: restructuring social, economic, &amp; political institutions to produce a more ecologically sustainable world.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act local, think global: ecological interconnectedness &amp; interdependence that transcends national boundaries.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Futurity: Time frame of green social theory is expanded to include concern for future generations, i.e., concerns of intergenerational justice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific: based on ecological science together with other natural sciences including biology &amp; physics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concluding this sub-section, there are two important definitional discussions to note. First, the complex concept of nature. Second, the scope of GPT. Nature is a contested concept (Ginn & Demeritt 2008), ‘perhaps the most complex word in the [English] language’ (Williams 1983:219). Further pursuit of this discussion of green and environmental politics is imprudent without at least briefly acknowledging that complexity. Williams identifies three meanings of the term: ‘(i) the essential quality and character of something; (ii) the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both; (iii) the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings’ (Williams 1983:219, emphasis in original).
In this thesis, I understand nature in Williams’ third sense. However, that definition encapsulates significant ontological debates: what is the character of the relationship between the human and material worlds? Is the latter external to the former, or are they dialectically or otherwise related? The green ontology developed in this chapter is clear that nature, understood as the material world, does include humans. However, I also understand nature in a constructionist way (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Hacking 1999).

There can be no value-free definition of an untouched nature; rather, as Bruce Braun and Noel Castree have shown, nature is social and has a political aspect (Braun & Castree 1998; Castree 2013; Castree & Braun 2001). In this way, social nature may be understood as a discursive concept through which political challenge and contestation of differing constructions of nature may take place.

Second, green political theory is not necessarily coterminous with the everyday practice and policy interventions of Green political parties (Dobson et al. 2009). There are relationships between green philosophers and theorists, activists, and elected representatives (and John Barry, Molly Scott Cato, and Andrew Dobson, amongst others, combine more than one of these roles). In this thesis, ‘green(s)’ or GPT refer to the intellectual, philosophical or theoretical field and its contributors, whereas I will make any reference to a Green political party or representative explicitly.

### 2.2.2 Key fault lines

The complex intellectual terrain of GPT has evolved over time, and can be apprehended in temporal, developmental terms. However, there are also two normative fault lines that characterize green debates, one ontological, the other political. First, anthropocentric and ecocentric perspectives describe distinct perspectives on human-nonhuman relationships. Second, theorists’ attitudes towards social change vary between reformist and radical perspectives. Discussion of these distinctions helps not only to throw the field’s contours into relief, but also to provide context for the account of green republicanism that forms the normative foundation of the thesis.

The development of GPT over time can be understood as forming three waves (Barry 2007a; Dobson 2007b). First-wave green thought established an ideology of ecologism as a new political tradition (Dobson 1990; Eckersley 1992; Hayward 1998). In contrast,
second-wave debates explored the challenge posed by green thought to existing intellectual traditions, including anarchism (Bookchin 1971; Carter 1999), communitarianism (Eckersley 2006), cosmopolitanism (Dobson 2005, 2006b; Linklater 2006), feminism (MacGregor 2006; Plumwood 2006), liberalism (Wissenburg 2006; Wissenburg & Levy 2004), republicanism (Barry & Smith 2008a), and socialism (Mellor 2006), and to key concepts of political thought including citizenship (Dobson 2003, 2006a; Dobson & Bell 2006; MacGregor 2006; Scerri 2012), democracy (Ball 2006; Doherty & de Geus 1996; Mathews 1996; Smith 2003), justice (Dobson 1998; Shiva 2006; Sterba 2006), and the state (Barry & Eckersley 2005; Dryzek et al. 2003; Eckersley 2004; Hurrell 2006; Scerri 2012). Many of these first- and second- wave interventions can be seen as inwardly orientated debates, largely within the discipline of GPT (Gabrielson 2008). More recently, a third wave of green theory has adopted an increasingly outward orientation, manifesting a growing interdisciplinary and applied focus (Barry 2012). The most recent, third, phase of GPT includes contributions to economic theory by Tim Jackson (2009), Molly Scott Cato (Cato 2009, 2012a), and Serge Latouche (2009), policymaking by Andrew Dobson (Dobson 2003; Dobson & Bell 2006), and political economy by John Barry (2012).

Within GPT there are a number of distinct perspectives regarding the ontological status of humans, and their relationship with nonhuman species. Anthropocentrism, technocentrism, and ecocentrism are the key types on this ontological fault line (Barry 2002a). Originally, anthropocentrism described a worldview in which humans displaced the Christian god at the centre of a ‘grand chain of being’ (Barry 2007a:41). More recently, anthropocentrism has been mobilized in green theoretical debates to describe attitudes and practices that prioritize human interests at the expense of nonhuman interests (Hayward 1998, 2002a). In making moral judgements, a strong anthropocentric perspective sees humans’ purposes or interests as the only priority, whereas a weak anthropocentric perspective would accept other interests in addition to human ones (Barry 2007a). Technocentrism is a particularly strong version of anthropocentrism that sees the world, nature, and the nonhuman as raw material resources for human consumption, and is optimistic about the ability of human ingenuity, through technology, to solve environmental problems (Eckersley 2002). Ecocentrism, in contrast, is a ecology-centred worldview. Ecocentric environmentalists accept that there are physical and social limits to growth, understand that planetary systems are complex,
and argue that human interventions in these systems should acknowledge that human mastery over nature is neither perfect nor infinite (Eckersley 1992, 2002; Plumwood 1993). An ecocentric perspective recognizes that humans are one of many animal species existing within complex ecosystemic webs.

Ecocentric perspectives are critiqued by some greens for being unacceptable to many people in wider society (Barry 1999, 2012), hence challenging the ability of the environmental movement to garner greater support than it has to date (Crompton & Kasser 2009, 2010). Moreover, the distinction between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism may be overdrawn (Dobson 2002). Ecocentrists seek to sustain current levels of biodiversity. Similarly, anthropocentrists concern is at least in part for future generations, whose welfare requires the perpetuation of current biodiversity levels to allow future generations to enjoy the same opportunities as current generations (Barry 1999). However, an ‘enlightened anthropocentrism’ may resolve some of the tensions (Barry 2012:7; see also Barry 1999). Enlightened anthropocentrism recognizes the dangers of an arrogant humanism, but also concedes the power that humans have, potentially over all other earthly lifeforms. This discussion of anthropocentric/ecocentric perspectives is necessarily a concise review of a lengthy debate within GPT. However, it provides useful context not least for exploration of the second, political, fault line.

The political, or transformational, fault line describes a reformist/radical spectrum of theoretical perspectives on the question of societal change for sustainability (Cato 2009; Dobson 2007b). This asks, whether and to what extent it is necessary to change the practices and institutions of global North societies in order to respond to sustainability problems adequately. From a reformist perspective, only slight changes to the current system are needed. From a radical perspective, significant transformation of many societal contexts and practices is required to create a less unsustainable society.²⁶

²⁶ A distinction commonly drawn in Anglophone green discourse - largely in Andrew Dobson’s work - is between ecologism and environmentalism. These two concepts can be mapped, respectively, to radical and reformist perspectives. However, not all languages articulate a distinction between the ecological and the environmental. I acknowledge Bert Eriksson and Joanna Jędruszkiewicz for drawing my attention to it.
Reformist discourse accepts as largely unproblematic the liberal democratic state, its social and political institutions, and embrace of market mechanisms and economic growth. Interventions in this side of the debate include those by environmental economists (e.g., Hanley et al. 2001), adherents of ecological modernization (e.g., Mol & Spaargaren 2000; Murphy 2000), and environmentalist political philosophers (Dobson 2007b). The latter include those who seek minimally to modify liberalism in the face of the ecological challenge, rather than significantly extend it (e.g., Barry & Wissenburg 2010; Bell 2005; Wissenburg 2006). Although some changes are seen to be required - such as technological innovation to solve environmental problems, the greening of capitalism through a shift towards renewable energy, carbon trading, or extending the liberal moral community to include animals or future generations - significant change is held to be unnecessary (Barry 2005; Cato 2009, 2011; Dobson 2007b).

Radical green discourse, in contrast, starts from the perspective that an adequate response to sustainability problems requires significant change of practices across all contexts of global North society, including ‘changes in our relationship with the nonhuman world, and in our mode of social and political life’ (Dobson 2007b:3; see also Barry 2012; Cato 2009, 2011; D’Alisa et al. 2015; Jackson 2009). Theorists working from this perspective understand that many current practices, institutions, and technologies emerged earlier in history - in an ‘empty’ world - when smaller global populations enjoyed greater material abundance (Dobson 2009, 2013), or (in the case of technological innovations) were operationalized in ignorance of environmental or social impacts that subsequently became apparent (O’Riordan & Cameron 1994). From a contemporary perspective - in a ‘fuller’ world - these practices, institutions, and innovations are causally implicated in the sustainability problem set facing our societies [1.2].

Summarizing this subsection, GPT has evolved through at least three waves of intellectual development, and is characterized by ontological (anthropocentric-ecocentric) and strategic (reformist-radical) dimensions. Radical green theorists offer

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27 It is not only green political theorists who hold this view. For example, Urry (2010:8, in Shove 2010:280) observes that climate change entails the ‘total reorganization of social life, nothing more and nothing less’.
compelling critiques of unsustainable societies in the global North, notably focusing on
two important contemporary practices and institutions: economic growth, and liberal
political philosophy. I turn to these below.

2.2.3 Critiquing economic growth and liberalism

The economy is seen by greens as the interface connecting human societies with the
nonhuman world. Thus, regulation of the economy controls the ‘metabolic’ relationship
between humans, material resources and ecological and climatic systems (Barry
2012:118). Currently, economic discourse is dominated by an orthodoxy of neoclassical
economic theory that valorizes economic growth. Economic growth is a fundamental
organizing principle of contemporary capitalist societies (Barry 2012; Cato 2009;
Hamilton 2003; Hobsbawm 1995; Jackson 2009). Growth has helped to deliver many
benefits to many people in our societies, including a better standard of living and a great
choice of many material comforts.

Despite these benefits, undiscriminating pursuit of growth has proven environmentally
and socially problematic. Heterodox economists have argued that growth is
uneconomic, unjust, and ecologically unsustainable. Growth is uneconomic, in
developed economies at least, because ‘illth’ - John Ruskin’s term describing the
opposite of wealth - increases more rapidly than growth (Daly 2007:39, 49). Illth
includes (inter alia) pollution, congestion, long working hours, and bad physical and
psychological health (Cato 2009, 2011; Ferguson 2014; Hamilton 2003; Kallis et al.
2015). More, the benefits of growth have been unevenly distributed (Smith 2010),
leading to inequality (Dorling 2014). Equality, as Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett
(2010) have shown, is more important than growth for improving social wellbeing
above a certain level of national income.

Growth is unjust in at least two ways. First, growth benefits from asymmetric resource
and waste exchanges between peripheral and core regions, within and also between
nations. Benefits accumulate in core regions, and to those in already enjoying political
or economic power. In contrast, peripheral regions - that include under-developed areas,
indigenous peoples’ territories, and those home to subaltern social groups of (e.g.,)
different colour, ethnicity, or class - are marginalized from economic and political
power, and tend to suffer the negative consequences of resource extraction, processing, or waste dumping (Cato 2011; Kallis et al. 2015). Second, growth is unjust because it is facilitated by invisible household labour; reproduction, and other forms of domestic caring, are essential for continued growth yet are hidden from gross domestic product (GDP), the measure of growth (Barry 2012; Cato 2011; Kallis et al. 2015). Finally, growth is not ecologically sustainable - continuous growth will ultimately lead to the transgression of planetary boundaries (Kallis et al. 2015; Rockström et al. 2009a).

Despite these cogent critiques of growth, it is important to acknowledge that transitions away from a growth-based society require careful decision-making. There are at least three social, economic, and cultural reasons why an abrupt stop to growth should be avoided. First, economic growth plays an important role in maintaining social stability: to halt growth risks societal collapse (Jackson 2009). Second, not all growth is necessarily problematic; for this reason green critiques of growth are of undifferentiated growth that does not distinguish sectors, regions, or countries that would benefit from growth against those where growth is not socially or ecologically beneficial (Barry 2012). A green political economy might prioritize growth of certain sectors, particularly those within the social economy (Barry 2012; Jackson 2009), while seeking to maintain a steady state in other sectors. Examples of sectors prioritized for green growth might include libraries or laundrette facilities.28

Third, growth has cultural implications. People within growth-focused societies are accustomed to participate in activities associated with and contributing to growth (e.g., consumption). Consumption - understood not least as practices of shopping - gives meaning to the lives of many people, and (partly) forms their identities and subjectivities as neoliberal consumer-citizens (Dauvergne 2008; Davies 2014; Hamilton 2003; Jackson 2006b; West 2010). Abruptly ceasing such activity would be problematic for not only for those people, but may also have wider societal consequences. A sustainability transitions project that addresses the problems of growth-based society must be seen as a project with both cultural and political dimensions: consumption is a cultural activity, while decisions about which sectors of the economy should grow, shrink, or maintain a steady state are political issues.

28 This point is discussed below [4.4].
Liberalism is the political philosophy that (along with the philosophy of democracy as a system of government) underpins the current system of politics and societal organization in the United Kingdom, and many other countries (Hobsbawm 1995; Wissenburg 2002). Liberal philosophy offers valuable perspectives for reflecting on the just distribution of scarce resources, competition, and the question of balance between the individual and the public good. Individuals’ autonomy and need for justice (including human rights), and the defence of a pluralist society and manifold conceptions of the good life are all important liberal achievements that a post-growth sustainable society should support (Barry 2012; Barry & Wissenburg 2010; Wissenburg 1998, 2002; Wissenburg & Levy 2004).

These achievements notwithstanding, the current liberal system is problematic for many greens. However, rather than a green anti-liberalism that rejects outright the ‘entire cluster of liberal values’ (Eckersley 1992:30), many green responses offer ‘post-liberal’ perspectives that understand the benefits and achievements of liberal models and seek to build on them (Barry & Wissenburg 2010:1, my emphasis). Summarized, green critiques relate to the liberal conception of the individual (homo economicus). Greens challenge the liberal emphasis on citizens’ rights over duties, and related concern with individual autonomy. Although contingent, there is a link between liberalism and its protection of individual autonomy, and the protection of private property and of free-market capitalism as the dominant mode of provisioning (Barry 2012; Barry & Wissenburg 2010; Dobson 2007b, 2009, 2013). There is tension between the liberal defence of individual self-interest, and the green concern with community, the common good, and critique of the growth economy. Green critiques of liberalism resolve into two key points, that (first) liberal conceptions of the individual are flawed, and (second) liberal thought is further flawed by the socio-historical situatedness of its posture on materiality and nature.

29 The term liberal democracy describes many political systems around the world, including that practised in Britain (Hobsbawm 1995). Although ubiquitous, this simple phrase conceals tension: there is a paradox between liberalism and democracy, as Chantal Mouffe has shown. Liberalism is concerned with freedom, and democracy with equality. The tension between these perspectives - and ebb and flow of policy dominated by each of them - is perpetual and conflictual (Mouffe 2000). Green republicanism may help to address this tension, through a distinct concept of freedom [2.3].
Liberalism is a product of Enlightenment thought (Hobsbawm 1995; Wissenburg 2006). The liberal understanding of human/ nonhuman relationships is characterized by the conceptual separation of humans from nature (Dobson 2007b). The liberal individual is conceptually related to Descartes’ *cogito ergo sum* worldview, in which mind is superior to and separate from body. This dualistic perspective extends to similarly distinguish man/ woman, human/ nature, human/ nonhuman, where the second of each pair is seen as inferior to and distinct from the first. These Cartesian dualisms have permeated the Western intellectual tradition since the Enlightenment (Plumwood 1993). Moreover, the liberal individual is closely related to *homo economicus*, or economic man (Read 2009). *Homo economicus*, the classical rational choice model of human behaviour, stands accused of hedonism, individualism, and selfishness (Ferraro & Reid 2013). *Homo economicus* inhabits a world in which the mind and cognitive reasoning dominate the body; reason, science, and objective knowledge dominate other ways of knowing the world; and humans are not only separate from, but have mastery over, nature and the nonhuman (Ferraro & Reid 2013; Plumwood 1993).

Rationalist and cognitivist ontologies, and their associated epistemologies and methodologies, have been widely critiqued from a variety of perspectives across the social sciences and humanities (e.g., Barry 2007a, 2012; Bunnin & Yu 2004; Crossley 2002; Dobson 2007b; Ferraro & Reid 2013; Melucci 1996; Mouffe 2013a; Nicolini 2013; Plumwood 1993, 2003). From a sustainability perspective, the valorization of reason and consequent radical separation of human from the nonhuman environment is problematic because it is argued to have led to a form of anthropocentrism dangerous for a sustainable existence (Dobson 2007b). In addition to the unhelpful dualisms (mind/ body, human/ nature, rational male/ emotional female, rational civilized/ irrational savage), rationalist-cognitive approaches are argued ultimately to lead towards an anthropocentric ethics that prioritizes the human and justifies instrumental use of the nonhuman. Ultimately, such a worldview is in considerable tension with ecological survival (Barry 2007a; Dobson 2007b; Gibson *et al.* 2015; Plumwood 1993, 2003).

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30 Moreover, conceptual separation of humans from nature is problematic in an Anthropocenic age in which humans’ activities are so extensively inscribed upon nature (Gibson *et al.* 2015; Lorimer 2012).
Although the conceptual separation of humans from nature has prevailed since at least Descartes (Ferraro & Reid 2013; Plumwood 1993), it is maintained in contemporary liberal theory. One example is John Rawls’ theory of justice, a thought experiment based around a conceptual ‘original position’ located behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ from which a fair and just social contract might be developed (Rawls 1999:11). The veil of ignorance is rooted in an abstract conception of humans separate from nature. Justice, from Rawls' perspective, requires us to 'forget virtually everything of interest and importance to us as particular human beings living concrete, embodied, socially constituted, and ecologically embedded lives’ (Barry 2012:217). The veil of ignorance isolates anyone occupying Rawls’ original position from the material and ecologically contingent reality of social life. Such isolation is problematic from a green perspective concerned with ecological and social justice in a climate-challenged world. However, Barry’s green republican conception of the human - introduced below [2.2] – draws upon post-Rawlsian thought that accept humans’ ecological embeddedness.

The second important green critique of liberal philosophy is also related to its emergence during the Enlightenment. From this perspective, liberalism is a product of the Enlightenment, and liberal principles are flawed by their contingency on the social and material conditions prevailing during that period of Western European history (Dobson 2009). Europe - or at least the political and philosophizing set of (white, male) European society - was enjoying a period of exceptional relative abundance of material resources, including land, and the now-established system of liberal institutions, states, markets and land ownership is a product of those ‘less-congested-world’ conditions. Given that social and material circumstances have changed, including growing competition for access to dwindling resources, with a global population rapidly nearing ten times the size it was during the Enlightenment, it is questionable whether liberal philosophy would have emerged in contemporary times (Dobson 2009:171). Andrew Dobson is clear that ‘without these exceptional conditions’, liberalism ‘would not/ could not have occurred’ (Dobson 2013:241).

31 An exceptional abundance that was prolonged by the discovery, and subsequent colonization (informed in part by liberal principles) of the New World (Linklater 2014).
32 The western European intellectual Age of Enlightenment is generally accepted to have transpired during the eighteenth century (Hayward 2002b). The United Nations (1999:5) estimates that in 1750 the global population was 0.79 billion, rising to 7.35 billion by 2015 (United Nations 2015:1).
Summarizing this section, green political theory is a field of normative philosophy responding to sustainability problems. GPT offers various approaches, characterized by anthropocentric-ecocentric, and reformist-radical debates, which support conceptualizations of sustainability transitions. Although debates persist around the continued relevance or adaptability of liberal philosophy and practice, and the continued feasibility of undifferentiated economic growth, compelling arguments suggest that alternative, post-liberal political philosophical and economic visions are more appropriate for a world facing potentially turbulent changes in climatic conditions and resource stocks and flows. In this thesis, I proceed assuming that liberal philosophy and practice is inadequate in the face of the ecological challenge, and that exponential economic growth is neither desirable (nor likely to be possible) in the face of ecological, material, and social limits to growth. Rather, I will draw upon the green republican philosophy and political economy developed by John Barry.

### 2.2 GREEN REPUBLICANISM

Green republicanism is John Barry’s synthesis of cognate green and civic republican prescriptions. It is a project that could inform transitions away from ‘actually existing unsustainability’, towards a society prioritizing human flourishing within ecological limits (Barry 2012:6). Green republicanism flows from an immanent critique of liberalism, presenting an post-liberal (but not anti-liberal) alternative that not only responds to liberalism’s problematized aspects but also builds on its many positive aspects. Associated with his account of green republicanism, Barry also offers a green political economic corrective to orthodox neoclassical economics.

Green republicanism is an artefact of the third wave and radical tradition of GPT. It is a normative philosophical project that draws extensively upon empirical research from across the natural and social sciences, generated by a scholar who combines roles of political philosopher and theorist (Barry 1999, 2012), applied social scientist (Curry et al. 2002).

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33 I discuss below those aspects of the civic republican tradition that are mobilized in Barry’s project [2.3.2]. It is important to note that this tradition is only loosely connected with the question of the existence of the monarchy, despite the popular conflation of republicanism with a non-monarchical model of governance (Honohan 2002).
Green republicanism, in Barry’s account, is a pragmatic project. The pragmatism can be identified in Barry’s desire to articulate a post-liberal positive, life-affirming, and optimistic green politics. It is post-liberal rather than anti-liberal, because it seeks to build on the positive aspects of liberal philosophy and practice, seeking only to replace those aspects that are socially and ecologically deleterious (Barry 2012). It is positive and life-affirming because Barry explicitly challenges other, bleaker, green prognoses of ecological and social collapse. These projections, characterized as ‘ecological realism’ (Barry 2012:17), are critiqued for their role in turning people away from green politics. Barry’s account of green republicanism will form the normative foundation of this thesis.

The selection of Barry’s green republican project as the normative foundation for the thesis is justified on at least five points. First, the green republican project is an explicitly political conceptualization of sustainability transitions. Although consensus discourses have gained salience in political theory and practice (Davies 2014; Mouffe 1997, 2013b), they are critiqued for obscuring the political dimensions of many contemporary issues, including sustainability problems and responses. Hence, notions of consensus have depoliticized debates around sustainability problems and responses to them, or resulted in these issues being presented as post-political (Swyngedouw 2010, 2014). Yet, there is a political dimension to sustainability transitions, not least in the process of deciding what should be sustained, why, and how (Barry 2012; Dobson 2007b; Shove & Walker 2007). An explicitly political account of how global North societies might transition away from actually existing unsustainability is therefore important, and allows stronger analysis of empirical social phenomena.

Second, Barry’s project is an empirically grounded green political economy, articulated in green republican terms. Framed within the political economic account is a set of sophisticated principles for policymaking, including proposals for green republican

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34 At time of writing, Barry was a District Councillor, and member of the Green Party, in Northern Ireland.
35 ‘Pragmatic’ and ‘pragmatism’ are here understood in the common-sense way of adopting a practical approach to problems, rather than referring to the philosophical tradition.
36 In this way, Barry’s work can be seen as a response to critiques (Crompton & Kasser 2009, 2010) that the environmental movement, while good at drawing attention to sustainability problems, has been less effective at articulating a positive vision for the future.
regulation of land and property ownership that would support community and cooperative ownership and commons regimes, while restricting extensive holdings by individuals. Community ownership and control of land - and tenurial modes that challenge liberal norms - are an important distinguishing feature of the woodlands that are the empirical context of my investigation. Green republican political economy promises to support analytic insights that are highly relevant for the research reported in this thesis.

Third, green republicanism is articulated partly in terms of new ‘sustainability subjectivities’ and identities related to ‘new ways of being, having, and doing’, commensurate with human flourishing within ecological limits (Barry 2012:57, 290). These subjectivities and identities connect with the principles of green political economy at the heart of Barry’s project, and challenge unsustainable subjectivities and identities. Subjectivity and identity are cultural issues (Chaney 1994; Edgar & Sedgwick 2008; Nash 2010). Barry’s attention to these issues supports my concern to develop an empirical approach to investigate a cultural politics of sustainability transitions.

Fourth, while green republicanism is apparently consistent with potential application across at least the global North, it is certainly consistent within the British and Scottish context: Barry is based in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where he is an active Green politician (as well as a green theorist). Although he makes no claims to universalism concerning the geographical scope or limits to applications of green republicanism, his project is derived from an immanent critique of societal organization predicated upon principles of liberal democracy and neoclassical economic theory. It is reasonable to assume the project would be relevant at least for any country adhering to such principles, as administrations in the UK and Scotland do.

Fifth, green republicanism, in Barry’s terms, emerges from and responds to earlier green debates. Green republicanism is an intellectually robust and increasingly well-developed project (Barry 2012) that draws together a number of earlier articles and book chapters (Barry 1999, 2003, 2006, 2007b, 2008, 2009; Barry & Doherty 2001; Barry & Ellis 2011; Barry & Quilley 2009; Barry & Smith 2005, 2008a, 2008b). Although this is, clearly, a recent and emergent project, it is a highly promising
normative account of what a less unsustainable society may look like. While political theorists continue to develop and finesse the philosophy of green republicanism (e.g., Cannavò 2010, 2012, 2016), other social scientific research - such as reported in this thesis - may be able to strengthen these normative philosophical accounts by adding empirical richness.

Below, I review three key areas of Barry’s green republican project, establishing important concepts that inform subsequent theoretical discussion and empirical interpretation. First, the idea of humans as vulnerable animals, enmeshed in ecological and social webs of dependence, is the ontological foundation of green republicanism [2.2.1]. Second, unsustainability is a compelling and concrete problematization of sustainability, from which green republicanism and its political economy flow [2.2.2]. Third, the republican concept of virtues, connected by Barry to a Foucault-inflected conception of subjectivities and identities that promise consistency with sustainability transitions [2.2.3].

2.2.1 Vulnerable and dependent human animals

An understanding of humans’ condition as ‘biologically embodied and also doubly, ecologically, and socially, embedded’ (Benton 1993:103, emphasis in original, in Barry 2012:45), is the starting place for Barry’s project. This perspective is informed by biologic and genetic knowledge showing that we are not just like animals, but are animals and share variable but often significant percentages of our genetic material with other organisms including (inter alia) primates, invertebrates and yeast (e.g., Goodman 1999; Mikkelsen et al. 2005). Moreover, it is a perspective informed also by ecologic knowledge: as animals we are embedded and entangled within a web of ecosystemic relationships (Liu et al. 2010; Mace et al. 2012; TEEB 2010; Watson & Albion 2011). Relatedly, philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1999) has argued that humans are ‘dependent rational animals’. Synthesizing these biological, ecological, and philosophical perspectives, Barry argues that humans should be conceived as reliant on other humans to satisfy biological, social, and cultural needs, not least ‘to sustain us in our practical reasoning […] as a species of reasoning animals’ (Barry 2012:45). Humans, then, are best understood as another species of animal enmeshed in complex social and ecological webs. As will become clear, Barry’s approach is distinctive in that
he does not adopt an ecocentric *anti*-humanist stance, rather an *enlightened* humanist stance.

This analysis of the human condition has at least two implications. Both implications shape Barry’s prescriptions for relationships both within human societies, and between those societies and the nonhuman world. First, humans, as animals enmeshed in social and ecological webs, are vulnerable and dependent. Yet, vulnerability and dependence are largely neglected by political theory and social science in the Western intellectual tradition. Second, relationships between humans and nonhumans should proceed from an 'enlightened anthropocentric' perspective (Barry 2012:7). Enlightened anthropocentrism treads a path between more extreme ecocentric and anthropocentric-technocentric perspectives on the human condition. Ecocentrism, for Barry, is an anti-humanist deep green view that refuses to distinguish humans from nature; in contrast, ‘arrogant anthropocentrism’ (or technocentrism) falsely separates humans from nature, assuming their mastery over nature (Barry 1999:9). The ideas of vulnerability and dependence, and enlightened anthropocentrism, shape Barry’s account of green republican political economy.

Vulnerability, as an ineliminable characteristic of the human condition, flows from the acceptance of humans as another species of animal. From this perspective, humans are vulnerable and dependent on others. Yet, this is a view of the human condition that has largely been obscured in the Western intellectual tradition. Post-Enlightenment Western thought has assumed a conception of the human being, and degree of human agency, that foreground notions of autonomy, independence, self-sufficiency, separation from, and control of, nature (Barry 2012; Plumwood 1993). This understanding of humans as invulnerable masters of nature is closely related to *homo economicus*, encountered and problematized above [2.1.3]. Together, these perspectives represent a central trope of liberal thought. From a green perspective, these notions are troublesome (Dobson 2009; Ferraro & Reid 2013; Plumwood 1993).

Sequestration and ontological security are two concepts, drawn from Anthony Giddens’ work, that Barry mobilizes to demonstrate how vulnerability has been hidden, and the impact of suddenly confronting it. Sequestration describes a process of concealment or filtering out from ordinary life troubling phenomena including (e.g.) madness,
criminality, sickness, and death. Sequestration is thus related to the psychological concept of cognitive dissonance, which describes the mental discomfort of trying to reconcile two conflicting or contradictory ideas (Lorenzoni & Hulme 2009; Whitmarsh 2011). Cognitive dissonance is a salient concept in social scientific research exploring people’s response to climate change discourse (and particularly to denial of climate change science). Ontological security is a function of our ability to sequester these troubling phenomena that - in this case - disturb our sense of normality in an increasingly urban and post-natural modern society (Barry 2012; Giddens 1991).

Sequestered vulnerability, or assumed invulnerability, is associated not only with liberal theory, but also with actually existing unsustainability. The continued obscuring of human vulnerability is problematic for ontological security in a world facing resource and climate-related shocks and challenges, and creates at least two problems. First, foregrounding invulnerability and the belief that humans can control nature, while sequestering the power of nature and human vulnerability to nature, is not helpful when people are ultimately forced to confront nature’s power. The problems emerging from such invulnerability discourses became evident following extreme weather-related disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in 2005. The impact of the storm was much greater than similar events affecting communities and cultures more aware of the possibility of natural shocks and hazards (Barry 2012). Second, a society that sequesters vulnerability is able to encourage practices and identities that are deeply problematic and damaging to human flourishing, such as debt-based consumption that in turn drives economic growth (Barry 2012; Jackson 2009).

Feminist and ecofeminist thinkers have been largely responsible for the theoretical desequestration of vulnerability and dependence. Ariel Salleh, Mary Mellor, and Sherilyn MacGregor have critiqued the ‘fiction’ of the autonomous and invulnerable human (Barry 2012:44; MacGregor 2006). From this ecofeminist perspective, such a person cannot exist without the reproductive and domestic work of women - the unrecognized, hidden, and often unpaid labour meeting basic, corporeal, and bodily human needs (MacGregor 2006). Men are only able to pretend they enjoy invulnerability because their dependence on women’s work remained obscured. In this way, humans’ dependence on each other for biological, social, and cultural needs is demonstrated.
The autonomous and independent liberal individual is challenged, theoretically, by vulnerability discourse. If humans are dependent and thus vulnerable animals, then to deny vulnerability is ‘ontologically impossible’ (Barry 2012:35). Yet, the defence of autonomy and individual freedom is a core tenet of liberalism. Autonomy and freedom, however, are products of social relations, whereas vulnerability and dependence are ‘ineliminable’ basic and universal aspects of the human condition (Barry 2012:37). These observations have at least two implications. First, because autonomy and individual freedom are products of social relations (and are protected by the state), they are not fixed or essential constants inevitably shaping politics and governance. Second, vulnerability and dependence represent a particularly compelling nexus between green insights about human animals and republican concerns with freedom among necessarily interdependent people.

Conceptions of the human condition are important for any political philosophy, but the acceptance of vulnerability has important implications for how we appreciate different forms of the good life and conceive of human flourishing (Barry 2012). Integrating vulnerability and dependence into the core of green politics can provide a foundation for an alternative vision of social and economic life consistent with human flourishing within ecological limits, and also inform policymaking to support pragmatic responses to help people cope with the likely perturbations of a changing climate and dwindling resources. Resilience, although a contested concept, may be an appropriate intellectual and policy response to de-sequestered human vulnerability and dependence (Barry 2012); I discuss approaches to resilience thinking further in chapter 4.

Summarizing, a conception of humans as animals enmeshed in complex webs of ecological and social vulnerabilities and dependencies is a distinct perspective, and one that marks green republicanism from liberalism. Resilience may be a suitable conceptual and policy response to newly-apparent vulnerability. Such a conception of the human condition is an ontological perspective that informs the principles of green political economy, discussed below [2.2.2]. Moreover, accepting such an ontology - that challenges liberal thought and many cognate perspectives that have emerged during and since the Enlightenment - also has implications for social theory and for subsequent ontological, epistemological, and methodological stances taken in empirical research. These implications are discussed below [2.3].
2.2.2 From unsustainability to green republican good lives

The contrarian notion of unsustainability - the ‘exploitation of people and planet’ (Barry 2012:13) - describes the problem to which Barry’s project responds. Below, I outline the key elements of his synthesis between green and civic republican thought. Republican attention to vulnerable and interdependent humans, a fragile and environmentally contingent polity that relies on active, equal, and responsible citizens, and distinct understanding of freedom, form the basis for a green political economy that challenges problematized neoliberal socio-political institutions and neoclassical economic doctrine.

‘Actually existing unsustainability’ is located in the prevailing modes of governance and production, debt-financed consumerism, and adherence to orthodox economic growth that characterize many contemporary global North societies (Barry 2012:7). In short, actually existing unsustainability is understood as the combination of neoliberal politics and neoclassical economics. The problematization of unsustainability serves two purposes in Barry’s project. First, the concept of unsustainability may be more concrete and readily apprehensible widely across society than the dry academic abstraction of definitional debates around the concept of sustainability (Barry 2012). Arguing that unsustainability may be less alienating to potential supporters, Barry seeks to recast green politics into an optimistic and life-affirming frame that is attractive and garners wide support. Second, actually existing unsustainability is an explicit problematization of significant aspects of the current system, and green republicanism is an explicit response to those problems.

Civic republicanism is a long-standing tradition within political theory, focused on the ‘problem of freedom among people who are necessarily interdependent’ (Honohan 2002:1; Pettit 1997). Republicanism shares with green theory a number of cognate concerns, and a synthesis green republicanism promises to help green theory respond to problematic aspects of liberal thought and practice (Barry 2012). However, the civic republican tradition is not uniformly sympathetic to the green perspective. Not least,  

37 Having acknowledged my debt to Barry for the concept of actually existing unsustainability, I henceforth use this term without quotation marks or citation.
some classic civic republican positions share with liberalism an anthropocentric and instrumental view of human/ nonhuman relations critiqued by greens (Barry 2012).

These problems notwithstanding, a number of republican insights are compatible with green thought. Drawing from the work of philosophers and theorists including, inter alia, Richard Dagger, Iseult Honohan, Niccolò Machiavelli, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Philip Pettit, Barry (2012) argues that the significant areas of sympathetic concern between these two traditions include recognition of the polity's environmental underpinning and (relatedly) attention to the polity’s contingent character, interest in the interdependent, vulnerable and fragile aspects of the human condition, mindfulness of the past and future, and valorization of civic virtues including citizens’ active and engaged participation in democratic decision-making and the life of the polity.

Green republican concern for the contingent character of the polity, and also of the human condition, is a response to the decontextualizing Rawlsian veil of ignorance. In this way, green republicanism is attentive to society's ecological embeddedness, and to the ‘contingent, historical, and ecological conditions and limits within which flourishing human societies are possible’ (Barry 2012:219). Relatedly, this is not a political philosophy that is likely to view its 'own historical moment as unique and everlasting' (Barry 2012:235). Rather, green republicanism, in its concern for the past and the future of the polity, is reflexive and flexible - attributes that are important for responses to contingency and newly emergent vulnerabilities. In this way, green republicanism is a cogent response to some important green critiques of liberal thought and practice.

The economy, from a civic republican perspective, is conceptually located within the social and thus subject to political debate. From a green republican perspective, society and economy are within the environment and consequently subject to limits to growth (Barry 2012; Meadows et al. 1972). This is a challenge to the current depoliticized situation, where economists assert the economy can be guided objectively, and the practices and institutions of the market economy - including ‘the market, private property, competition, and efficiency’ - are presented as both ‘natural (beyond the

38 Such humble green republican discourse may be understood in contrast to triumphalist (and potentially hyperbolic) liberal discourse, exemplified by Francis Fukuyama’s (1992) notorious assertion of the ‘end of history’.
capacity of humans to alter) and also good (if we want economic growth and material wellbeing)’ (Barry 2012:121). However, objective guidance of a purportedly natural economy under this current system has led to social and environmental problems (Barry 2012; Cato 2009; Dauvergne 2008; Hamilton 2003; Jackson 2009; Rockström et al. 2009a; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). Green republicanism accepts economic decision-making as inevitably value-laden and consequently political. In this way, Barry argues for re-politicized economic debate, hence this is a political economy.

Individual freedom, for civic republicans, is another product of social relations. Republicanism recognizes that people are necessarily interdependent; the question of freedom within a society thus conceived is a central concern of republicanism (Honohan 2002). Freedom, for some republicans, is understood as ‘non-domination’. In contrast, liberals understand freedom as ‘non-interference’ (Barry 2012; Honohan 2002; Pettit 1997). Republicanism here combines neatly with the green understanding of humans as vulnerable and dependent animals; the related ontological impossibility of autonomy and independence is also an argument against liberal freedom-as-non-interference. The distinction between these understandings of freedom has implications for equality, and also for human flourishing. A reconceptualization of freedom along republican lines opens up new possibilities for a green republican state to legislate against socially and ecologically deleterious economic practices, and in favour of equality (Barry & Smith 2008a). Equality has a number of positive impacts for societies, including participation in democratic politics - an important republican civic virtue (Barry 2012; Hamilton 2003; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010).

Together, re-politicized economic decision-making and freedom-as-non-domination are the foundation for green republican political economy, based around the ‘4 S’ principles of green political economy: (economic) security, and an associated logic of sufficiency, solidarity, and sharing. Barry (2012) argues these principles will encourage not only equality, but also a greater diversity of interpretations of human flourishing than currently experienced. In contrast, the currently dominant economic practices of actually existing unsustainability - prioritizing economic growth - are associated with maximization, accumulation, and competition. Growth, maximization, accumulation, and competition present barriers to human flourishing, not least through the encouragement of consumption that is problematic for people and planet (Barry 2012;
Jackson 2006b, 2009). Table 2.3 contrasts these alternative political economic principles.

Table 2.3 Contrasting principles of neoliberal and green political economies (from Barry 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principles of political economy</th>
<th>Unsustainable neoliberalism/neoclassical economics</th>
<th>Sustainable green republicanism/green political economy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic growth</td>
<td>Economic security</td>
<td>Economic security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximisation &amp; efficiency</td>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>Solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accumulation</td>
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</tbody>
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A revised vision of economic security, associated with the 4 Ss, promises to support policymaking that will allow human flourishing within ecological limits, and support human communities and societies in the face of anticipated climatic and resource-depletion shocks. Human flourishing, of course, is a contested concept and (green) republicanism has no monopoly of interest in the good life. However, liberal conceptions of the good life, that rest on the idea of freedom as non-interference, have allowed and perhaps justified exploitation of people and planet (Barry 2012). Despite the liberal commitment to multiple interpretations of the good life, empirical observation shows that interpretations not in line with consumer culture are marginalized (Barry 2012; Jackson 2006b). Rather than living the good life, individuals in unsustainable societies are largely encouraged to live a ‘goods life’ in which consumption is a - perhaps the - dominant activity (Doran 2006:152, in Barry 2012; see also Hamilton 2003). From this perspective, Barry argues that there is likely to be more variety in the good life in a green republican society.

A different approach to land ownership is - for this thesis - an important facet of such a green republican political economy. The principles of sharing and sufficiency inform a view of land understood as a resource to be shared, rather than something for individuals to accumulate for their exclusive benefit (Barry 2012). Land as a shared resource is connected to notions of stewardship and usufruct (an historic concept that,
not least, understands land ownership may be distinct from decisions about land use). Green republican notions of stewardship and usufruct are discussed more fully in chapter 4. For now, I merely note that green republicanism offers a fresh perspective on land, its ownership, who benefits from it, and how they benefit from it. Such a perspective is significantly different from the liberal system prevailing in the UK (but perhaps losing influence in Scotland) that defends individuals’ rights to land and property ownership (Linklater 2014; Wightman 2010b). Under this liberal system, land ownership in Scotland has become highly concentrated and a barrier to rural development (Hunter et al. 2013; Wightman 2010b). In this thesis I am concerned with the cultural political aspects of people’s engagement with locally owned or controlled (wood)land resources, rather than addressing the equally important legislative and economic questions around land reform. I return, in chapter 4, to discuss subjectivities, identities, and meanings that may relate to shared, community landownership.

Finally, active and responsible citizens, understood in terms of civic virtues, are a significant aspect of republicanism. This is not surprising; as the foregoing discussion has shown, politics and economics are products of social relations. Active citizens, performing their deontological responsibilities, contribute to political and economic debate. The concept of civic virtue refers to the particular role of citizen that a person may perform (Dagger 1997). Republican citizenship broadens the conception of citizenship from the liberal emphasis on the rights-claiming individual (Marshall 1950) to one who enjoys rights but also observes the duties and responsibilities of citizenship (Dobson 2003; Honohan 2002). Civic virtue is related to participation in the political community (for which citizens must take personal responsibility), the defence of the polity and of freedom (as non-domination) and related laws, and the protection of the common good (and defence of this from various forms of corruption including inequality and self-interest) (Dagger 1997; Honohan 2002; Pettit 1997). Because sustainability transitions are understood as vital for future generations and the future of the polity, civic virtue in green republicanism extends to participation in community organizing for sustainability.

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39 Usufruct describes the right to enjoy the use and advantages of another’s property, as long as it is not destroyed or its substance wasted (Barry 2012).
40 See also 1.5.1
Summarizing, green republicanism and its political economy are explicitly articulated as alternatives to the problematized neoliberal political and neoclassical economic practices that form actually existing unsustainability. From this perspective, humans are understood as animals enmeshed in ecological and social webs of vulnerability and dependence. Freedom, distinctively, is argued to be more appropriately understood as non-domination. Alternative political economic principles are established, of economic security, sufficiency, solidarity, and sharing; these are proposed to be consistent with human flourishing within ecological limits. Active and responsible citizens are expected to participate fully in republican political life. Citizenship, and the principles of green political economy, may be understood in terms of virtues.

### 2.2.3 Sustainability virtues, subjectivities, and identities

The theory of green republicanism and political economy is articulated partly in terms of virtues (Barry 2012). In this way, Barry is mobilizing a long-standing civic republican concern for citizens’ virtues, which are understood to be important for the success of the republican polity (Honohan 2002; Pettit 1997). A long history of civic republican virtue discourse flows from Aristotle and Cicero (Honohan 2002). Virtues were also understood by Aristotle, and also Cicero, in terms of individuals’ characters (Honohan 2002). Similarly, Barry (1999:33) understands virtues as ‘qualities of character’ that allow their holder to react ‘to the inherently contingent and contextual character of human experience’. Virtues, ‘such as courage […]’, are dispositions which humans need or find useful in order to live because of the type of beings they are and the type of world(s) they inhabit’ (Barry 1999:33). Virtues ‘help human beings to cope with, rather than eliminate the problems and contingencies’ of the vulnerable and dependent human condition, including (e.g.) death, conflict, and resource depletion (Barry 1999:33).

In deploying a virtue-based lexicon, Barry draws not only on a very long-standing set of civic republican concerns, but also upon more recent green interest in the concept of sustainability or ecological citizenship (Dobson 2003, 2006a, 2011; Dobson & Bell 2006; Honohan 2002; MacGregor 2006). Citizenship is an important concept for normative political theorists because there is an intimate connection between the ‘kind of society and political community we want’ and ‘the way we define citizenship’
Citizenship debates are a significant facet of green discourse, and closely related to conceptualizations of sustainability transitions.

However, Barry’s project represents a significant extension of existing green debates around the concept of citizenship, by relating green republican virtues to the principles of a green political economy. Here, drawing on Foucauldian insights into governmentality, power, governance, subjectivity and identity, Barry establishes a conceptual connection between green republican virtues and the notion of ‘sustainability subjectivities’ and identities (Barry 2012:57; Foucault 2010). This connection is illustrated in contemporary unsustainable society, where growth may be understood to function as the ‘neoliberal social contract’ (Barry 2012:120). Such a society valorizes virtues relating to individual consumption and competitiveness (Barry 2012; Davies 2014), and many people develop identities and subjectivities as ‘workers and consumers, marginalizing those of ‘parents, lovers, or citizens’ in ways that are deleterious for human flourishing (Barry 2012:71). Green republican political economy valorizes alternative virtues - relating to economic security, sufficiency, sharing, and solidarity - that should lead to new ‘sustainability subjectivities’ and identities consistent with human flourishing (Barry 2012:57).

From this vantage point, virtues are valorized through practices of governmentality, and shape and influence people’s identities and subjectivities. Green republicanism may be viewed as a project developed with aspirations to inform greener modes of governmentality: seeking to influence people into less unsustainable ways of being, having, doing, and thinking. Green republican virtues are in turn related to new ‘sustainability subjectivities and identities’ (Barry 2012:57). In this thesis, however, I am not concerned with a governmentality analysis. Rather, I am attentive to the possible spread of green virtues and sustainability subjectivities and identities within civil society, through community organizing that might prefigure a broader societal transition. Thus, I acknowledge the Foucauldian origins of Barry’s notion of

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41 The Foucauldian concept of governmentality understands that a underlying rationality, or logic of governmental reason, informs all ‘practices of government’, where such practices include (inter alia) policymaking, curing, caring, training, educating, counselling and punishing (Dean 2009:38). In turn, these practices contribute to the shaping of subject positions and identities of individuals within society (Dean 2009; Foucault 2010).
subjectivities and identities but do not engage further with the associated notion of (green) governmentality.

2.2.4 Critical summary of green republicanism

Three key points of green republicanism and its associated political economy are noted. First, the green republican project offers an intellectually robust, well-developed, and pragmatic conceptualization of sustainability transitions. Second, green republicanism draws from the civic republican tradition to recognize the environmental context and contingent character of the polity. Third, green republicans are concerned with the interdependent, vulnerable, and fragile aspects of the human condition, mindful of the past and future, and valorize civic virtues including citizens’ active and engaged participation in democratic decision-making and the life of the polity. A synthesis of these elements creates an account of sustainability transitions that would seek to encourage equality, human flourishing within ecological limits, and civic virtues including citizens’ active participation in their communities and polity.

For this thesis, green republicanism offers at least three benefits. First, an understanding of humans as socially embedded and interdependent citizens appears to be a promising starting place to investigate community organizing for social change. Within community groups, it might be assumed that liberal-inflected notions of self-reliant, autonomous and atomized individuals are unlikely to be shared by activists working together towards shared objectives of social change. Of course this assumption itself is an interesting and worthwhile research question, to which I begin to develop my theoretical response below [2.3].

Second, green republican political economy would regulate land ownership in favour of greater equality in ownership and control. Green republicanism, then, presents an interesting approach to examine community owned and controlled woodland organizations. Fiona Mackenzie (2013) argues that community ownership of land animates a critique of liberal tenurial practices. A cultural political exploration of community woodland organizations through a green republican lens may shed light on alternative relationships between woodland organizers and their community’s land. Third, green republican virtues are connected, conceptually, with sustainability
subjectivities and identities. Subjectivity, identity, and meaning are cultural issues. Barry’s articulation of green republicanism in these terms supports my conceptual and empirical interest in a cultural politics of sustainability transitions.

Notwithstanding the considerable benefits of a green republican conceptualization of sustainability, there are two potential problems with Barry’s project. First, he neglects explicit discussion of the complex concepts of citizenship and community. Despite his attention to the virtues, responsibilities and rights of green republican citizens, Barry does not articulate who those citizens are. It seems reasonable to assume, however, that citizenship of the green republican polity would be at least as inclusive as in the 2016 UK system. Questions of citizenship, and who (or what organisms) warrant rights or responsibilities, lie beyond the scope of this thesis. Hence, I do not engage in further discussion about the scope of citizenship but rather green republican subjectivities and identities, to the extent these may be discerned from people’s activities.\(^42\)

Second, Barry does not define community, or even acknowledge the contested nature of the term (Hillery 1955; Ledwith 2011). However, three distinct ways in which he apparently understands community can be identified. First, communities are one of the ‘three basic institutions of modern society’, along with the state and the market (Barry 2012:5). In these terms it is a firmly place-based conception of community, embedded in and contingent on the local environment, and comprising people to whom decision-making and provisioning responsibility may be devolved from both state and market. Second, communities of interest are (tacitly) described; sometimes identified within spatial communities in the form of the Transition Towns movement, and sometimes apparently separate from spatial communities, in the form of the business community.\(^43\) Finally, Barry touches - although not in depth - upon the moral community, which to many greens should encompass nonhuman life.

\(^{42}\) Debates around citizenship from various green perspectives can be found in work by Andrew Dobson, Derek Bell, Sherilyn MacGregor, and Andy Scerri (Dobson 2003; Dobson & Bell 2006; MacGregor 2006; Scerri 2012). Derek Heater (2006) offers a more general and (relatively) contemporary overview of British citizenship while Thomas Marshall’s (1950) work is an earlier classic source.

\(^{43}\) A community of interest may be part of a community of place, or may span several communities of place; it may even rely only on social media for members to maintain contact. It is worth noting that geographic definitions of community - generally bounded by particular postcodes - are sometimes demanded by funders of community projects, particularly those relating to land assets in Scotland (Macleod et al. 2010b).
What is clear, however, is that Barry’s somewhat imprecise use of community is not problematic for empirical investigation of community woodlands, which are apparently both communities of interest and of place (Calvert 2009). However, it is important to note that tangible and intangible barriers to participation exist, and not everyone enjoys equal access to participating in communities of interest despite living in a particular location (Quilley 2015; Shucksmith 2012). In this thesis, I will understand community as something to be achieved, a product of social relations (Ledwith 2011), that may or may not be geographically confined, and that inevitably arises from a sharing of practices (Nicolini 2013).

2.3 IMPLICATIONS OF GREEN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

Sustainability transitions in green republican terms offers a distinctive worldview, of a material and social world in which humans are biologically embodied, and socially and ecologically embedded. Humans are understood as animals, enmeshed in complex ecosystemic and social webs. In order to achieve and maintain intellectual coherence throughout this thesis, additional social theories brought into the conceptual framework must be consistent with that worldview. The green republican ontology prompts at least two implications for subsequent theoretical discussions in this thesis.

First, this ontology is not intellectually coherent with methodological individualist approaches that understand humans as atomized, autonomous, and self-reliant individuals (Calhoun 2002; Ferraro & Reid 2013; Plumwood 1993). However, the classical social theoretical alternative to individualist accounts of the social comprises those accounts that assume social life is determined by abstract structures (Calhoun 2002; Elliott 2010). Citizens in a green republican society enjoy considerable agency, articulated in terms of responsibilities and rights to participate in decision-making and the direction of the polity and community. These are people empowered to create history, albeit not necessarily under conditions of their own choosing.

To investigate potential prefigurations of green republicanism, it will be important to avoid social theories that occlude elements of analytical interest. Approaches relying on abstract structures to explain social life risk leaving important elements of green
republican citizens' behaviour out of the analytical frame. In this way, the green republican ontology seems, at first glance, to relate to more nuanced social theories that understand structures not as abstract and static objects, but entities that are recursively (re)produced by agents who are simultaneously able to modify structures while also being constrained by them (see, e.g., Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1984). Research exploring potential empirical manifestations of green republicanism is likely to benefit from a social theoretical approach that conceals neither agency nor socially constructed rules, and understands social life as processually constituted.

Second, and relatedly, a green republican ontology that understands humans as embodied and embedded also troubles longstanding distinctions, in social theory and philosophy, between humans, and material objects and nature (Barry 2007a; Dobson 2007b; Plumwood 1993). A green ontology is not coherent with social theoretical approaches that maintain a strict separation between environment and society. Again, at first glance, this ontology seems to relate to more nuanced approaches that acknowledge a hybrid, non-dualistic relationship between humans and nature.

These two challenges, presented by a green republican ontology to social theory, will inform my discussion of how cultural politics may best be conceptualized in the context of sustainability transitions and woodland art projects, in chapter 3.

2.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has responded to research question 1a: how best can sustainability be conceptualized? I have argued that green republicanism, an artefact of green political theory, offers a compelling account of sustainability transitions as an explicitly normative project. Green republicanism and its related political economy are articulated in virtue terms that relate to sustainability subjectivities and identities, and therefore able to support investigation of a cultural politics of sustainability transitions. Moreover, green republicanism offers a distinctive perspective on land and property ownership that promises to make visible aspects of the alternative tenurial practices performed by community woodland organizations that are the empirical context of the thesis. Thus, green republicanism forms the (prescriptive) social theoretical foundation of this thesis.
The chapter’s key outcome is the commitment to a green republican ontology that understands humans as biologically embodied, and ecologically and socially embedded. In chapter 4, I return to green republicanism to discuss operationalization of this normative political theory into an interpretive framework to support empirical research.
CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUALIZING A CULTURAL POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS AND ARTISTIC ACTIVISM

This chapter answers part of research question 1b: how best can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be conceptualized and interpreted? I argue that cultural politics offers an appropriate approach to investigate activities in Scottish community woodlands understood as alternative organizations. Cultural politics - understood provisionally as contestations of normalized identities and social relations (Nash 2001) - invites us to consider alternative notions of normalized concepts, including woman, citizen, nature, economy, or democracy (Alvarez et al. 1998; Jordan & Weedon 1995; Nash 2001). These alternatives may prefigure less unsustainable ways of organizing society, hence this appears an appropriate conceptual lens for my investigation of sustainability transitions. However, the most strongly theorized account of cultural politics is problematic from a green republican perspective, because it rests upon assumptions about individualism and materiality that are incompatible with the green republican ontology articulated in chapter 2. Responding to this problem, I propose a recalibration of cultural politics in practice theoretical terms (Schatzki 2002): cultural politics is better understood as contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, existing accounts of cultural politics are reviewed and critiqued [3.1]. Next, I turn to Theodore Schatzki’s practice theory and argue for a recalibrated notion of cultural politics in practice terms [3.2]. Finally, I synthesize insights from aesthetic and political philosophy, together with practice theory, to conceptualize the role of art in cultural politics as practices of everyday artistic activism [3.3]. Thus, chapter 3 is an account of two theoretical syntheses that contribute to the cultural politics and sustainability transitions literature.

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44 Chapter 4 completes the answer to RQ1b, by deriving an interpretive analytical framework from green republican theory.
3.1 CULTURAL POLITICS

Cultural politics may be understood as ‘contestation[s] of normalized identities and social relations’ (Nash 2001:85). The concept of cultural politics emerged across a number of disciplines including political sociology (e.g., Nash 2001, 2010), anthropology (e.g., Alvarez et al. 1998), and cultural studies (e.g., Jordan & Weedon 1995), from ideas developed within structuralist and post-structuralist thought, and especially within a social theoretical ‘cultural turn’ (Chaney 1994; Nash 2001; Reckwitz 2002a, 2002b). The cultural turn draws attention to issues including identity, subjectivity, and meaning in social life (Chaney 1994; Nash 2010). Interest in this turn is driven by a renewed emphasis on people’s subjectivity and agency as a corrective to earlier deterministic accounts of the social derived from structuralist-functionalist traditions (Chaney 1994; Nash 2001; Reckwitz 2002b).

From this perspective, culture is political, and politics is cultural. People occupy diverse subject positions and assume varied identities, and meanings associated with these subjectivities and identities are ‘constitutive of processes that […] seek to redefine social power. When movements deploy alternative conceptions of woman, nature, race, economy, democracy, or citizenship, they enact a cultural politics’ (Alvarez et al. 1998:7). Although collective action by social movements may be the most ‘obvious’ site of cultural political performances (Nash 2001:86), cultural politics may transpire within any civil society context.

Sustainability transitions is a cultural and political project requiring social change. Green republicanism is one way to understand the direction and scope of that change. Green republican virtues are conceptualized as sustainability subjectivities and identities, concepts at the heart of cultural politics theory, which invites attention to the role of subjectivities and identities in social change. Cultural politics theory, then, appears to support my theoretical concern with cultural and political aspects of sustainability transitions, and (referring to the empirical context of community woodlands) invites investigation of the alternative conceptions of nature, land, tenure and organization that may be performed by community woodland organizations. In this way, subjectivity and identity are the conceptual interface between chapters 2, 3, and 4, although they are not the only concepts discussed in these chapters.
The term cultural politics is used with varying degrees of theorization by a number of scholars. For Kate Nash, cultural politics is ‘the contestation of normalized identities and social relations’ (2001:85). Sonia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar (1998:7) understand cultural politics as ‘the process enacted when sets of social actors shaped by, and embodying, different cultural meanings and practices come into conflict with each other’. For Glenn Jordan and Chris Weedon (1995:4), an interest in cultural politics is a concern for subjectivity and identity, and also for equality and justice among cultural representations. Thus, Jordan and Weedon ask ‘whose culture shall be the official one, and whose shall be subordinated? […] What images of social life shall be projected and which shall be marginalized?’ Further, ‘[t]he legitimation of social relations of inequality, and the struggle to transform them, are central concerns of CULTURAL POLITICS’ (Jordan & Weedon 1995:5, emphasis in original).

For all these scholars, identities and subjectivities are important aspects of a broader political struggle of social transformation. In many ways, their approaches are cognate, and they share common intellectual precursors. However, Kate Nash (2001, 2010) offers the most strongly theorized account of cultural politics, and consequently it is from her work that my discussion begins. Next, I review Nash’s concept of cultural politics [3.1.1], before critiquing her account from a green republican perspective [3.1.2].

### 3.1.1 Theorizing cultural politics

Cultural politics, in Kate Nash’s formulation, draws on earlier work by other scholars, including Anthony Giddens and Michel Foucault. For Nash, cultural politics is a synthesis of existing concepts, including not only culture and politics, but also power, subjectivity, identity, and meaning. The cultural element of the synthesis rests upon Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration, a cultural theory (Reckwitz 2002b) that conceptualizes the (re)production and modification of social life - social order and change - through human activity. Nash mobilizes Giddens’ work to show how identity, subjectivity, and meaning are part of that reproductive process. The political element flows from Foucault’s account of power as manifest in all contexts of social life broadens the conception of politics from a narrow focus on the state, and illuminates the role of power in shaping human identities, subject positions, and meanings (Nash
Although identities and subjectivities are manifold and fluid, some become more durable than others and create symbolic structures. Particularly durable symbolic structures may be understood as hegemonies - meanings that have become the dominant common-sense ways of being, doing, having and thinking that are understood as natural, or the way things should be. Collective action - not least through cultural political performances - is required to challenge hegemonically-fixed meanings. Below, I discuss Nash’s insights to each of these concepts.

Culture is a notoriously complex word, renowned for its resistance to definition (Bennett et al. 2013), and possibly ‘one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language’ (Williams 1983:87). From Williams’ 1983 perspective, there were at least four main uses of the term culture. Thirty years later, Bennett’s (2013) analysis not only illustrates the term’s increased ubiquity and complication, but also suggests the durable relevance of Williams’ four-fold classification. For Williams, culture is (first) a ‘general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development’. Second, it is ‘a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group’. Third, it is ‘the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity’ (Williams 1983:87). Finally, culture may be understood as ‘the signifying stream through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored’ (Williams 1981:13). Seeking a single meaning from this convolution is futile, partly because the complexity ‘is not finally in the word but in the problems which its variations of use significantly indicate’ (Williams 1981:92). These problems include the long-standing social theoretical debates around relationships between individual agents and abstract structures; these form a recurring theme in the literature of cultural politics and I discuss them further below [3.2].

Nash’s concept of cultural politics builds upon the processual and reflexive understanding at the heart of Williams’ fourth view of culture. From this perspective, culture is an ongoing recursive process involving symbolic structures and meanings, by which social actors are constrained and enabled to interpret the world and to act in certain ways: culture is constitutive of society (Nash 2010; Reckwitz 2002a). From this perspective, too, culture is not synonymous with art; I discuss below [3.3] the way that this processual understanding of culture troubles some traditional understandings of art.
or culture as a canonic artefactual set. However, from this processual and reflexive perspective, identity, subjectivity, and meaning are important. In this way, the cultural turn is concerned with ‘making meaningful’, because ‘it is through culture that everyday life is given meaning and significance’ (Chaney 1994:7).

Everyday social life is recursively (re)produced and modified by social agents’ actions, drawing knowledgeably on rules and resources (Giddens 1984); through that (re)production, the social is ordered and stabilized over space and time. Giddens attempts, in his theory of structuration, to negotiate the long-standing duality of abstract structure and individual agency. Structures, in this view, are durable patterns that are both the medium and the result of social interactions. Agents are enabled to perpetuate or reform structures through interactions, but are constrained by resource distributions and existing interpretations of the world (Giddens 1984). Rather than the ‘experience of the individual actor, [or] the existence of any form of societal totality’, Giddens argues that analytical focus should be upon ‘social practices ordered across space and time’ (Giddens 1984:2).

Giddens never actually uses the term ‘culture’, as Nash observes (2010:34), but she argues that his account of structuration is cogent with the processual (re)configuration of society at the heart of her model of cultural politics. Identities - how people understand themselves and/ or are understood by others - are important for the modification and reproduction of symbolic structures. This is because agents’ actions and social interactions, as well as their interpretations and worldly sense-making, are shaped by their identity. Illustrating this claim, Nash discusses the identity of the ‘working mother’ that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (2010:33); she argues that this identity not only described women, but also legitimated - and inscribed upon symbolic structures - a ‘double burden’ of household work and paid employment while simultaneously questioning the ability or commitment of those women to career progression.

Identities and subjectivities are inseparable from power. Nash - as does John Barry [2.3; 4] - draws on Foucault’s (1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1982, 1984, 1991, 1997) work on power to conceptualize identity and subjectivity. In this view, power is more appropriately analysed in social life than abstractly theorized. Analysis of power should be at the
moment its effects are apparent, and subjectification and social relations are such moments. Power is manifold, and is exercised from multiple locations across the social, not just an elite central site. Power can be exercised through knowledge, in discourse. As discourse, knowledge constructs and accords reality to objects it represents; however, because discourse exists prior to the ‘real’ world, it cannot represent objective reality but rather can only present a construction of reality. Because power is implicated in knowledge and discourse, ‘truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it’ (Foucault 1980a:133, in Nash 2010:22). In this way, knowledge is situated and contingent. Analysis of discourse must involve consideration of the conditions and effects of power under which objects of knowledge transpire, and also the effects of power they produce (Nash 2010).

Individuals are transformed by discursive and nondiscursive practices of power into subjects. The subject can be understood both as an individual controlled by others, and also as an individual with an identity created by self-awareness and self-knowledge. In his earlier work, Foucault (1979) showed how ‘docile bodies are produced’ through ‘surveillance that train[s] comportment according to classifications of normal and abnormal’ (Nash 2010:22). However, the subject is not fixed, and individuals can occupy multiple subject positions. More, in his later writing Foucault (1991) developed his thinking on power and subjectivity. Manifold discursive and nondiscursive practices of power, exercised through multiple political and economic institutions, policies, events, and processes, shape individuals’ subjectivities (Nash 2010). In summary: social actors are understood to inhabit diverse, potentially conflicting or overlapping subject positions and identities, largely corresponding to discourses of power but also created by self-awareness and knowledge.

Identities and subjectivities are multiple and fluid, hence interpretations of their meanings cannot be fixed. Interpretation is a social act, and is socially and historically contingent, influenced by different social and temporal contexts. However, some meanings become relatively more durable than others. These more durable identities, subjectivities, and meanings become normalized or hegemonic; they are ‘taken-for-granted, as if they simply reflect how things are and must be’ (Nash 2010:33). It is these normalized or hegemonic meanings that are contested by cultural politics.
What, then, does a cultural political lens make visible? It is clear from Nash’s work that identities, subjectivities, and meanings will be present in the interpretive-analytical frame. These are also the concepts through which (in part) John Barry articulates his green republican account of sustainability transitions [2.3; 4]. For Alvarez et al. (1998:1), 'the disputed parameters of democracy - participants, institutions, processes, agenda, [and] scope' are made visible. Womens’ movements, for example, have struggled to 'resignify the very meanings of received notions of citizenship' (Alvarez et al. 1998:1). Hence, performances of cultural politics prefigure change by unsettling dominant social and political cultures. Alvarez and colleagues’ insight is compatible with Nash’s formulation. Alternative ‘conceptions of woman, nature, race, economy, democracy, or citizenship’ (Alvarez et al. 1998:7) can be performed, or made visible, by ‘contestations of normalized identities and social relations’ (Nash 2001:85). Extending these perceptions, it is also possible that alternative conceptions of organization (Parker et al. 2014a, 2014b), nature (Castree 2013), or land tenure (Hunter 2012; Hunter et al. 2013), may be visible. In this way, a cultural political lens helps to operationalize empirical research into prefigurations of sustainability transitions.

3.1.2 Critiquing cultural politics

Cultural politics theory supports my investigation in four ways. First, enactments of cultural politics are prefigurative and can reshape society. This supports my interest in community woodland organizations as anticipations of sustainability transitions. Second, cultural politics literature suggests questions including: what alternative conceptions are performed within community woodlands? How are these conceptions constructed and/or communicated? How do they relate to sustainability transitions? Third, the literature suggests that empirical research is sensitive to alternative conceptions of ostensibly normalized concepts including woman, nature, race, economy, democracy, or citizenship; that list may be extended to include alternative modes of organization, and of land relations. Finally, Nash’s acceptance of Giddens’ processual account of society is consistent with the ongoing and reflexive character of green republican social life, and with the idea of green republican citizens actively engaged in shaping the direction of their communities and polity.
However, critical points must also be noted about the coherence between the theory of cultural politics and a green republican ontology, and about the operationalization of Nash’s work. Chapter 2 established a green republican ontology that assumes humans are biologically embodied, and ecologically and socially embedded. Intellectual coherence and analytic visibility require consistency between theoretical perspectives within the thesis. Nash’s account of cultural politics is problematic in terms of both individualism and materiality.

Nash’s stance on individualism in this debate is unclear. On one hand, she does not explicitly state affinity for or against individualistic accounts of the social. On the other hand, she mobilizes Giddens’ structuration theory. Giddens’ work has been critiqued from a variety of perspectives; among them, Davide Nicolini (2013) has argued that it relies upon methodological individualist foundations. Relatedly, despite his development of an innovative processual account of society and insistence that ‘practices’ should be the ‘basic domain’ of social scientific study (Giddens 1984:2), Giddens leaves scope for agents to be ontologically superior to practices (Schatzki 1996, 1997), hence his account of the social maintains some affinity to the agency/structure dualism he sought to negotiate. If one accepts Nicolini’s and Schatzki’s critiques of Giddens, a tension becomes visible between Nash’s Giddensian stance and green republicanism.

The conceptual status and location of materiality (hence nature) is also ambiguous in Nash’s work. She notes the importance of symbolic meaning in structuring social life. Cultural politics is not just about words […] and need not be about words at all. Bodily gestures, fashion, flags, global brands - these are all examples of sets of meaningful signs within which we understand particular gestures and movements (Nash 2010:34).

This statement suggests that materiality, for Nash, fulfils a symbolic function and remains a distinct type of entity, separate from the social (Reckwitz 2002a). Moreover, Nash continues to argue that ‘in order for signs to become politically relevant, they must become part of routine use in practice’ (Nash 2010:34). Here, she is mobilizing the term practice in the sense that Giddens uses it. Giddens (1984) is not particularly interested in material things (Shove et al. 2012) and, although acknowledging the importance of
material resources that knowledgeable actors are able to draw upon in practices, does not grant ontological status to materials along with practices as a fundamental aspect of human life (Schatzki 2012). In this way, Nash is in (further) tension with a green ontology, because of her debt to Giddens and his perpetuation of human/ nature separation.

Although this proxy determination of Nash’s stance on materiality may appear to resolve the question, there is one further point that deepens the ambiguity. Nash (2010) draws on insights from both early, ‘archaeological’ Foucault, and later, ‘genealogical’ Foucault (O'Farrell 2005). Although materiality remained separate from society in Foucault’s earlier works, in his later writing - particularly on the history of sexuality, and discipline and punishment - Foucault began to study institutional practices that go beyond discursivity and acknowledge the role of artefacts (prison architecture, developments in biotechnology) in shaping subjects (Reckwitz 2002a). In summary, the status of the material in Nash’s account of cultural politics is ambiguous: Nash herself does not state a wholly clear position, and the main theorists upon whose work her conceptual framework is predicated are apparently occupying divergent positions, two of which are inconsistent with a green ontology.

These tensions between green republicanism and cultural politics may be resolved, as I will argue below. Before doing so, however, two other issues with Nash’s work should be noted. First, she doesn’t engage with the question of art’s potential role in cultural politics, and whether it is ontologically possible or not. Second, Nash doesn’t offer a clear operationalization of her conceptual project. Significantly, there is a lack of clarity around the unit of analysis. Her mobilization of Giddens’ work might suggest that practices, in Giddens’ terms, would be the object of study, but, as I have shown, Giddens’ work is inconsistent with a green ontology and, moreover, has its own operationalization issues (Nicolini 2013).

In response to these problems, I propose recasting cultural politics in practice theoretical terms as contestations of normalized practices. The literature suggests that scholars of cultural politics may not have followed the practice turn taken by a number of other social scientific disciplines (Schatzki et al. 2001). Practice theories are a particular type of cultural theory that conceptualize humans, materiality, discourse, identity and
subjectivity differently from other cultural theories (Nicolini 2013; Reckwitz 2002a, 2002b; Schatzki 2002, 2010). However, Theodore Schatzki’s practice theory can help to negotiate and perhaps resolve the problems I identify in Nash’s work.

Practices are human doings and sayings. From Schatzki’s perspective, discourse is a practice, human life transpires along with nature in an entangled social-materiality, and identity, meaning, and subjectivity emerge from and through practices. Schatzki's insights also promise consistency with a green republican ontology. Adopting a practice approach to investigate cultural politics will allow new ways to ask old questions, as well as allowing new questions to be asked which address the sayings and doings of woodland activists. Below, I discuss Theodore Schatzki’s practice theoretical account of social life, and propose that cultural politics should be recalibrated as the contestation of normalized practices [3.3]. Following, practice theory provides a further ontological foundation and shapes my concluding remarks about art and cultural politics [3.4].

3.2 PRACTICE THEORY

Theodore Schatzki, a philosopher and social theorist, has developed an extensive and sophisticated account of organized human activities, in which practices, and their material relations, are the source of social order and change (Nicolini 2013; Reckwitz 2002b; Schatzki 2002, 2010). Schatzki’s project is to understand social life: how it transpires, and what makes it apparently durable. His work addresses the constitution of social life, and offers a social ontology that seeks to explain how organized human activities - sayings and doings, and the materials implicated in these - are what constitute the social. As I show, Schatzki’s account of practice is consistent with the two requirements of a green republican ontology [2.4] for a social theory that is (first) non-individualist, and (second) does not separate human society from the environment. Moreover, Schatzki’s practice theory offers an appropriate lens through which to refract cultural politics.

Schatzki’s project has emerged from the ‘Wittgenstenian and Heideggerian traditions’ of social theory (Nicolini 2009a:1393). These traditions accept practices as the building blocks of social life, and propose that shared understandings, belief systems, and rules
are contingent on these blocks. Moreover, the purposeful, meaningful, and stabilizing aspects of human activity flow from people’s participation in practices, rather than from beliefs, rules, or goals. Theories emerging from these traditions permit us to ‘decentre such phenomena as mind, meaning, and intentionality’ and instead locate social coexistence in practices that ‘all people qua humans are necessarily involved’ (Nicolini 2009a:1393). However, there is no ‘unified practice approach’ (Schatzki et al. 2001:11). Rather, there is a wide field of theorists who take varying perspectives on practice and between whom lie tensions as well as commonalities (Nicolini 2013; Reckwitz 2002b; Shove et al. 2012). In this thesis I draw from Schatzki’s work for three reasons. First, it is the most strongly theorized account of practices and practising (Nicolini 2013; Nicolini 2013; Reckwitz 2002b). Second, it allows a focus on doings and sayings that can constitute cultural politics. Third, (as I will demonstrate) it is cogent with green republicanism.

Schatzki’s theoretical architecture is sophisticated and extensive. It has evolved over at least two decades (Schatzki 1988, 1996, 2002a, 2010; Schatzki et al. 2001) and through engagement with a variety of disciplines including geography (e.g., Schatzki 2001b), history (e.g., Schatzki 2003a), organization studies (Schatzki 2005, 2006), sociology (e.g., Schatzki 2009, 2011, 2014), and education (Schatzki 2012). Ideas developed through these interventions have been taken up by and operationalized by scholars across a number of social scientific disciplines, including some concerned with sustainability and consumption (Shove 2010, 2015; Shove & Spurling 2013). However, Schatzki's insights appear neglected by cultural politics theorists.

Schatzki’s evolving terminology is not always consistent between texts (Hopwood 2013). My discussion and subsequent operationalization of Schatzki’s work is drawn largely from his (2002a) book, The site of the social: A philosophical account of the constitution of social life and change and (2010) article, Materiality and social life, because these texts form the slice of his work most relevant to my concern with sustainability transitions, and human-nature relationships. Although my discussion

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45 My concern in this thesis is to develop a conceptual framework to support empirical analysis of sustainability transitions prefigurations, rather than to offer a comparative review of Schatzki and other practice theorists, or other social theorists. Such reviews may be found in Davide Nicolini’s (2013) thorough overview of practice theories, Andreas Reckwitz’ (2002b) (now somewhat dated) contextualization of practice theory as a form of cultural theory, or Schatzki’s own work (see especially, 1996, 1997, 2002, 2003b, 2010) in which he defends his project against, inter alia, those of Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and Bruno Latour.
draws on Schatzki’s other texts where necessary, the terminology I mobilize into a conceptual framework for this thesis is that used by Schatzki in his 2010 article.

Next, I review Schatzki’s conceptual framework, addressing practices and their organization [3.2.1], materiality and practices [3.2.2], and the theoretical implications this perspective presents [3.2.3]. Finally, I critically assess the coherence of Schatzki's project with green republicanism, and discuss the implications for operationalizing a cultural political lens consistent with sustainability transitions [3.2.4].

### 3.2.1 Practices and their organization

Practices, at their most basic, are human ‘doings and sayings’ (Schatzki 2012:15). More specifically, practices are ‘organized human spatial-temporal manifolds of human activity’ (Schatzki 2010:129). In other words, practices can be understood as human activities that are organized, take place across space and time, and may be performed by more than one person. Because more than one person is involved, practices are social. However, practices are ‘open-ended’, and can contain more than one activity. From this perspective, preparing this chapter is a practice involving other practices, such as reading, writing, typing, drinking coffee, editing, and proofreading.

Doings and sayings are organized. Hierarchically, practices are organized by tasks and projects, whereas the activities composing a practice are understood to be organized by practical understanding, rules, teleoffective structure, and general understanding (Schatzki 2002). These terms allow practices to be understood as particular and recognizable phenomena that may be treated as a ‘conceptual (and empirical) unit of analysis’ (Nicolini 2013:165).

Tasks are formed by elementary doings and sayings that in turn contribute to more complex tasks and ultimately projects (Schatzki 2002, 2005). A task is formed by sets of doings and sayings. Writing critical reflections on a journal article could be a task, involving more basic practices such as reading and writing. That task can, in turn, contribute to a larger project of leading a seminar discussion, delivering a lecture, or writing a doctoral thesis. The same term - for example, writing - may describe a task (writing a shopping list) or a project (writing an academic article). Writing a doctoral
thesis may be understood as a project, drawing on tasks including writing, reading, critical thinking, analyzing data, and scribbling conceptual diagrams on scrap paper.

Practical understanding describes the know-how that originates in proficiency in a practice. For Schatzki (2002a:77), ‘all participants in a practice are able to perform, identify, and prompt some subset of the practice’s doings, sayings, tasks, and projects’. As a researcher, I know how to identify the practice of taking a book off a shelf, and can prompt my body into the actions required to perform that practice. Moreover, to ‘say that two or more doings or sayings are “linked” by practical understanding is to say that they express the same understanding’ (Schatzki 2002:78). In other words, the doings and sayings that compose (e.g.) research library use are linked by an ‘interdependent pool of practical understandings’ of catalogue searching, note scribbling, understanding the reference numbers, navigating the shelf stacks, and removing books from shelves. Because these shared understandings of how to go about a practice are largely tacit, it is possible for participants to disagree on their understanding of a practice but still understand each other and proceed with the practice at hand.

Practical understanding only ‘executes the actions that practical intelligibility singles out’ (Schatzki 2002:79). Consequently, Schatzki views ‘practising as a form of emergent coping guided by intelligibility, [that] explains how particular, situated and “free” action is possible’ (Nicolini 2013:166). Intelligibility is not rationality, nor does it accept action as norm-driven. Human actors do what it makes sense for them to do at the time of doing it. That action may or may not be, or seem to be, rational. Similarly, what makes sense for people to do may or may not be, or seem to be, what is appropriate or what they ought to do. In this way, practical understanding and intelligibility are the properties of individuals, and it is those characteristics of people - their ability for self-conscious action - that determine what makes sense for them to do (Schatzki 2002:75).

Rules are ‘explicit formulations, principles, precepts, and instructions that enjoin, direct, or remonstrate people to perform specific actions’ (Schatzki 2002:79). Rules are understood to play a part in practice because people, in their performances of doings and sayings, follow, acknowledge, or challenge rules. Rules describe what to do, or are contributors to determining or orienting future action. It is also in this sense that
formally-articulated rules and laws - that have been instituted in society by people in positions of power - are understood (Nicolini 2013).

Teleoaffective structures describe ‘a range of normativized and hierarchically ordered ends, projects, and tasks, to varying degrees allied with normativized emotions and even moods’ (Schatzki 2002:80). Practices always, for Schatzki, evince ends that people ought or could pursue, and these are teleologically connected to tasks and projects. Ends may be understood as internal questions individuals reflect on as they engage in practices. In this way, a doctoral researcher may associate gaining a PhD with ends, (e.g.) gaining authority to speak on a certain topic, earning a salary, or gaining a badge of entry to a profession (e.g., academia). There may be a range of projects associated with achieving these ends (e.g., writing journal articles, learning to teach, networking, and delivering presentations), and each of these projects is in turn associated with a choice of tasks that may or ought be performed for the benefit of the project. Affective aspects of a practice are coordinated with these teleological aspects. Ends, projects and tasks are allied with emotions and moods (Schatzki 2002:80). These affective aspects describe the feelings and dispositions of achieving (or not) a goal, which of course can be easily understood as the feeling of delight when a journal article is accepted, or of despondency on receipt of a rejection.

Ends, and normativized structures, may be controversial. Schatzki’s (2002) own illustrative cameo describes how pursuit of profit (an ‘end’) in a Shaker religious community organization provoked controversy among many of the organization’s practitioners. This point helps to emphasize that Schatzki’s account is agnostic to the contents of teleoaffective structure: ‘which ends, projects, tasks, and emotions are obligatory in a practice is open-ended’ (Schatzki 2002:83). Practices are open-ended for two reasons. First, teleoaffective structures are ‘indefinity complex’ (Schatzki

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46 In chapters 2 and 4, I use normative in the political theoretical sense, to describe a prescriptive theory that outlines how society should be. Schatzki uses the term (and also by extension normativized/ normativity) somewhat similarly, to describe ‘oughtness and, beyond this, acceptability’ (Schatzki 2002:80). Schatzki’s normativity may be understood as broadly in line with the social scientific concept of norms that may be more or less explicit, and that influence human activities (Calhoun 2002). However, it is important to note that normativity, in the Wittgenstenian/ Heideggerian tradition followed by Schatzki, flows from people’s participation in practices, rather than being an abstract or mysterious force descending from normative structures (Nicolini 2009a, 2013).
Second, acceptability and obligation are often subject to debate and contestation, and possibly also to edicts from authority.

Teleoaffactive structures, in contrast to intelligibility and practical understandings, are not individuals’ properties, but are properties of the practice. The doings and sayings that comprise a practice express ‘a set of ends, projects, and afeetivities’ which in turn are irregularly distributed among participants minds and actions (Schatzki 2002:80). The individually internalized aspects of afeet and telos may have a strong normative component. We learn the goal-orientation and emotional characteristics of a practice as we are socialized into it, and the affective elements may be reinforced through ‘repetition, sanctions, or peer pressure’ (Nicolini 2013:166). Consequently, it may appear possible to understand the teleoaffactive structure of a practice as guiding practitioners’ action. This is not the case, however. Practical intelligibility, for Schatzki, always guides action and teleoaffactive structures contribute only through shaping what it makes sense to do (Nicolini 2013).

General understandings are the final organizing principle of practices. These describe people’s ‘reflexive understandings’ of the greater project in which their lives are enmeshed (Nicolini 2013:167). For Schatzki, general understandings would include those that help to organize practices more widely than merely those of a project or task, but perhaps organize the practices of an organization. In this way, publishing in the highest-ranking journals, securing research funding, and doing well on a variety of performance metrics may be understood as a general understanding informing one particular (highly instrumentalized) version of what a successful academic does. Changing illustrative scale and focus, general understandings helping to organize practices across British society more widely may be understood to include profit maximization and the pursuit of economic growth as good for society.
In summary, a practice - as illustrated in Figure 3.1 - is an open-ended set of doings and sayings, evolving over time and space, and linked by practical understandings, rules, teleoafffective structures, and general understandings. It may be hierarchically conceived as a task or project. However, despite the order and regularity suggested by these hierarchical and organizing concepts, the doings and sayings of practice need not be regular: a ‘practice is not a set of regular actions, but an evolving domain of varied activities linked by’ the common and orchestrating concepts of understandings, rules, and normative teleologies (Schatzki 2010:129). Practices can overlap with one another. A doing or saying is part of a particular practice ‘if it expresses components of that practice’s organization’ (Schatzki 2002:87). Hence, writing can be part of practices of essay writing, report writing, and shopping list writing. Finally, practices are social phenomena, for two reasons (Nicolini 2013; Schatzki 2002). First, a participant in a practice is co-existentially enmeshed with varying sets of other participants. Second, practices are social, and not individual; their organization is expressed not in the doings and sayings of individuals involved in the practice, but in the nexuses of sayings and doings that compose the practice.

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3.2.2 Materiality and practices

Materiality is an important concern of practice theories (Nicolini 2013; Reckwitz 2002a, 2002b; Schatzki 2002, 2010), not least in response to earlier social theoretical neglect of materiality (Barry 2007a; Reckwitz 2002b; Schatzki 2002, 2010). The attention to bodily doings and materiality is a significant distinguishing feature between practice theories and other social theoretical traditions, including the post-structural and hermeneutic traditions that privilege language - sayings - over embodied and material doings (Nicolini 2013; Reckwitz 2002a). From this perspective, it is not trivial to acknowledge that pens, paper, computers, desks, and books are all important resources for practices of learning, teaching, or researching.  

Practices are understood as human doings and sayings. Doings and sayings are both activities that require a body, and often other material resources too. Material means a ‘physical, biological, or natural’ entity (Schatzki 2010:133). Natural entities or processes are those that occur or alter on their own, ‘perhaps subject to principles or laws not of human making’ (Schatzki 2010:133). Materiality includes physical, chemical and biological matter forming ‘physical and biological entities’ that have a ‘physical-chemical composition’ (Schatzki 2010:129). In this way people are clearly viewed as material, along with (e.g.) rocks, gravel, soil, water, barley, whisky, trees, timber, wooden furniture, beavers and their dams, viruses, sheep, or snow.

Table 3.1 Material entities (summarized from Schatzki 2002:174-178).

| People | Entities capable of actions, mental conditions, self-consciousness, gender, & identity (self-understanding). |
| Artefacts/technology | Entities produced by human activity from natural entities |
| Organisms | Of nature |
| Things | Living things other than people |
| | Nonliving things |

Materials, for Schatzki, are most appropriately classified as people, artefacts, and organisms and things of nature; these are the four categories from which entities can become interconnected as material arrangements (Schatzki 2002, 2010). Schatzki

48 Schatzki’s practice theory overlaps in some ways with the Actor-Network Theory of Latour, Callon, and Law and others (e.g., Latour 1993). However, their projects are differentiated, notably around the attribution of agency to nonhumans (or not). Schatzki’s humanist perspective runs counter to Latour’s notion of nonhuman agency. They key distinctions are explicated in Schatzki (2002).
emphasizes that this classification is experientially derived, and an important intent and effect of it is to blur, rather than remove, the analytic distinction between the social and the natural. Table 3.1 summarizes the four categories of material entity delineated by Schatzki, while figure 3.2 illustrates material arrangements.

People, members of the species *homo sapiens*, are ascribed ‘actions, mental conditions, self-consciousness, gender, and identity (self-understanding)’ (Schatzki 2002:174). Artefacts are the ‘products of human activity’ (Schatzki 2002:174). However, the category of artefact is somewhat complicated by Schatzki’s later (2010:138) interest in technology, which he defines as those objects, modified or created by humans, ‘that are either alterations of natural things, transformations of natural things into artifacts [sic], or reworkings of artifacts [sic] already derived from nature’. Technology, in this view, is an advanced kind of artefact that gives people additional possibilities to intervene in the world. I consider these similar categories together. Thus, examples of artefacts-technology (henceforth artefacts) might include wooden carvings, bicycles, axes, chainsaws, carefully-bred pedigree animals, genetically-modified wheat or animals (and laboratories, computers, and equipment needed for modification), water catchments modified for improved drainage, irrigation, or energy generation. Large-scale climatic

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49 In this way, Schatzki resists Latour’s proposal that all earthly entities be considered *hybrids* (Latour 1993). Rather, Schatzki argues that because his interest is in social life and the entangled process of social life and material things and organisms, it is better to maintain an analytical distinction than dissolve everything into one (Schatzki 2002).
or oceanic circulatory systems, if their processes human activity is proven to have affected their activity, would therefore be artefacts. However, sophisticated phenomena produced by nonhumans (e.g., beaver dams) are things of nature, rather than artefacts. Organisms are ‘living things other than people’ (Schatzki 2002:174). Organisms and the ‘nonliving’ things of nature are both are described as ‘natural’, in that both categories include ‘those organisms and things whose form, inner structure, and existence have been relatively little, if at all, affected by human beings’ (Schatzki 2002:178).

With this classification, Schatzki has drawn attention to the porous boundaries between what is social or influenced by humans, and what is natural, or (perceived to be) untouched by humans. On these terms, it is not possible to match up the society/ nature distinction with that of human/ nonhuman (Schatzki 2002). By blurring rather than entirely removing a traditionally-perceived boundary between social and natural entities, Schatzki leaves scope for analysis of human/ environment relations. Following this path, there remains an analytical distinction between these two entangled and enmeshed dimensions.  

Materiality is part of social life, and ‘all social phenomena evince an entanglement of practices, technology, and materiality’ (Schatzki 2010:139). This claim can be illustrated in two ways. First, material arrangements are connected to practices through (at least) causality, prefiguration, constitution, and intelligibility. Second, materiality, technology, and practices are interconnected through facilitation, mediation, and organization. Through these combinations, material arrangements and practices come together into practice-arrangement nexuses. Figure 3.3 illustrates these ties between practices and material arrangements, which I discuss below.

*Causality* includes human intervention in the world through practices, and perhaps using artefacts or technology, with outcomes of ‘altering, creating, or rearranging material entities in the world’ (Schatzki 2010:139). Activities may be prompted by events befalling entities, as people respond to such events. However, this is not an

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50 However, Schatzki’s fourfold classification is problematic in other ways, not least because he fails to acknowledge that humans, at various stages of their lives, may not be capable of actions, mental conditions, self-consciousness, gender or identity. He does acknowledge that nonhuman organisms *may* be capable of these things, in a way that currently escapes human knowledge.
attempt to give nonhuman entities significant agency: nonhuman causality is ‘not of the bringing about sort, but instead of the leads to variety’ (Schatzki 2010:139).

Figure 3.3 A practice-arrangement nexus (author's artwork and interpretation of Schatzki [2002])

**Prefiguration** is the ‘social present shaping, influencing, or affecting the social future’ (Schatzki 2010:140). Material arrangements can prefigure practices by influencing which actions people do. In this way, the well-paved path to the library may make it sensible to avoid a shortcut over potentially wet muddy grass. Similarly, a formal lecture theatre with fixed, raked seating and front lectern is not conducive to holding a small group tutorial: in this example, a tutor might be influenced by the room’s arrangement of artefacts (inflexible rows of seats and desks) to switch venues, or get students to sit in a circle on the floor at the front. However, material arrangements do not inevitably shape practices, and the social present does not necessarily shape the social future: the well-paved but indirect path may be shunned in favour of the shortcut, as a muddy track makes evident.

Prefiguration is a particularly crucial point of Schatzki’s work given my concern for social change. For sustainability transitions to transpire, there must be scope for change rather than path dependency from the present to the future. Social phenomena, in Schatzki’s (2010: 142) view, ‘embrace changing configurations of materiality […] that are linked to changes in practices, technology, and nature (e.g. weather, climate)’, as is illustrated by agricultural or energy production histories. Far from being an account of
path-dependent and limited change, it is clear that Schatzki understands people to have
the creative potential to modify practices as well as perpetuate them, albeit in ways
influenced by power dynamics.

Material arrangements can constitute practices in two ways. First, by being essential to
the practice. Second by being pervasive to them (Schatzki 2010). A paper or electronic
text is essential for reading. Desks, although pervasive in libraries and offices, are not
essential for reading. Constitution, like causality, works in both directions; material
arrangements would likely not exist or take different forms were it not for the practices
that draw on them or are performed within them. In this way, practices and material
arrangements can be seen to be co-constitutive.

Material entities and arrangements are ‘intelligible (in some ways or other) to the
humans who carry on practices amid them’ (Schatzki 2010:141), and this intelligibility
is activated in the practices they perform. In other words, entities become intelligible in
the context of the practice at hand, and meaning and identity flow from and through
practices. To illustrate this, I depart from my series of illustrative cameos of academic
life and draw instead from Nicolini’s (2013) striking Heideggerian example. Within the
practice of carpentry, a hammer may be intelligible as a tool for hammering nails, or
within the practice of automobile body repair as a tool for beating dents from a sheet of
metal. However, within political practices, a hammer is understood very differently as a
symbol of people power, and differently again within judicial practices where a hammer
is understood as a symbol of a judge’s authority.

Finally, social life is inextricably entangled with materiality, through artefacts and
technology. There are at least three ways in which this entanglement can be understood.
First, practices, technology, and relations between them are made possible by
materiality. Second, materiality and technology are organized by practices. Third,
practices and materiality are mediated by technology (Schatzki 2010). This claim can be
illustrated through an example of the often windy and high-rainfall temperate coastal
regions of Western Scotland, where practices of everyday life, and the natural
phenomenon of precipitation, are mediated by technologies including weather-resistant
and warm clothing, robust housing, and good drainage. Those technologies are
organized by practices of fabric and garment design and manufacture, and architecture,
engineering and construction, while the rainfall, once it has touched earth, is organized by practices of river management, irrigation, and dam engineering. The runoff thus managed irrigates organized crops for human consumption and ovine grazing, fuelling the growth of wool which is, through practices of shearing, spinning and weaving, used to make clothes and housing insulation; irrigates forests which provide firewood, construction timber, leisure space, and carbon sequestration; and also fills the hydro-electric dams which power clothing factories and designers’ computers, and lights and warms homes.

Summarizing, materiality is ‘among the items in which coexistence and social phenomena consist’ (Schatzki 2010:132). Material entities (people, artefacts and technology, and organisms and things of nature) are from this perspective understood to be interconnected with practices in a variety of ways (including causally, prefiguratively, constitutively, and intelligibly). In this view, nature is not separate from society; material entities and social life proceed in mutual entanglement. Schatzki resists binary conceptions of the social and the natural. Furthermore, he also eschews dialectic accounts of society-nature interactions, because practice-arrangement nexuses suggest a more complex entanglement between humans and nonhumans. Finally, he argues against hybrid conceptions (of all worldly entities, whether social or natural as hybrids), because the resultant loss of analytic distinction precludes consideration of human/nonhuman interactions. Because human coexistence and social phenomena consist partly in materiality and nature, materiality-nature (henceforth materiality) is seen as having ‘compositional significance in social life’ (Schatzki 2010:129). From this perspective, materiality is understood as a dimension of social life (Schatzki 2010).

3.2.3 Practice theory: theoretical implications

Practice theory, in Schatzki’s account, is distinctive on at least three counts. First, a focus on practices has helped Schatzki negotiate and potentially dissolve the long-standing social theoretical dualisms of mind/body, and agency/structure. Second, accepting this perspective requires accepting practices as the unit of analysis. Third, and relatedly, this also requires accepting a practice ontology: the social world consists in practices and materials. I discuss these points below.
Schatzki’s (2005:469) theoretical focus on practices allows him to ‘forge a path between individualism and societism’, and consequently offers a fresh perspective on a number of long-standing issues in social science philosophy. In understanding social life as the ‘hanging together of human lives’ (2012:21), he resists both atomistic and norm-following views of human activity. Through his concept of action intelligibility, Schatzki resists over-emphasis on human rationality. People are understood to do what it makes sense for them to do: they interpret the practice at hand and invariably perform what is ‘‘signified’’ to them as the action to perform’ (Schatzki 1996:118). This is not rationality; nor is it norm-following. The specifications of actions in line with explicit rules, norms, or beliefs, as understood by functionalist social theorists to govern human action, are not the same as what makes sense for people to do. Although there are constraints to action intelligibility, these do not descend from norms, nor people's decisions prior to action. Rather, many of our actions are ‘unreflective reactions’, ungoverned by conscious thoughts, and flowing from what is signified by the practice at hand (Nicolini 2013:164).

By acknowledging the combined role of bodily action, mental activity and other material things, Schatzki's work dissolves the problems associated with the traditional Cartesian mind/ body separation (Nicolini 2013). Schatzki also understands that social contexts would not exist without individuals, yet simultaneously those individuals’ properties are inseparable from their social contexts. By accepting that people live within a powerfully constraining social system that is recursively formed by their actions, and who yet can also enjoy initiative and creativity to change that system, the structure/ agency binary is dissolved and replaced by a more nuanced relationship along the lines described by Ortner’s (1984:159) observation ‘that society is a system; that the system is powerfully constraining, and yet that the system can be made and unmade through human action and interaction’.

Practices, in this view, must become the unit of analysis for empirical work. There are at least three reasons for this. First, intelligibility of a practice and its associated material entities is instituted by the practice. Second, social phenomena are constituted by practices-arrangement nexuses. Third, and relatedly, the whole social world is constituted by a vast web of practice-arrangement nexuses (Nicolini 2013). I discuss each of these below.
Practices create the ‘spaces of intelligibility’ within which they are performed (Nicolini 2013:172). We are only able to interpret something as a particular phenomenon if we know something of the background, or context, of the situation. As previously discussed, a hammer is only understood as a tool against the background of practices of hammering (in a panelbeater’s or carpentry workshop). Similarly, someone who (self)identifies as an orchestral musician may be unintelligible as such to people where Western orchestras do not exist (Beech et al. 2016). Schatzki (2002a) uses the concept of a ‘site’ to describe the conceptual space within which human activity and social phenomena transpire. As a (physical) site has a visible horizon, so too does intelligibility, beyond which phenomena may not be intelligible, or may be differently intelligible. However, because sites and horizons are social, and constituted by practices and materiality, they are situated, emergent, and subject to power and contestation, and can change. Finally, sites and horizons are not causal (as structuralists saw culture or ideology as causal of action); rather, the site for action and intelligibility is provided by the practice (Nicolini 2013).

Practice-arrangement nexuses constitute social phenomena. Practices are social; they bring people together to perform particular projects or tasks and within coordinated intelligibility horizons. Social interaction and human coexistence are part of performing a practice. Through routinized performances of practices, social order becomes established and materials are arranged. For Schatzki, practices constitute more than tasks and projects, because these combine into bundles and constellations of practices forming organizations such as offices, farms, universities, factories, or hospitals (Nicolini 2013; Schatzki 2005).

However, more than simply constituting organizations, constellations of practices and materials are connected into a vast mesh that is the whole social world. From this perspective, the social world is formed of bundles of practice-arrangement nexuses, linked into constellations that spatially and temporally larger than the component bundles. In other words, Schatzki presents a social ontology. The social world consists in practice-material nexuses, constellations that in turn connect to form bigger and

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51 Schatzki’s ‘site’ concept is drawn from the Heideggerian notion of clearings, in the sense of a clearing among trees in a forest, in which things may become clear as surrounding landmarks, or even the sun, become visible following obscuration (Schatzki 2002).
bigger webs that compose organizations, universities, governments, and all other social phenomena, making up one ‘immense transmogrifying web’ of practices and arrangements; social phenomena are ‘slices or aspects of this web’ (Schatzki 2010:130). For this reason, practices (and their material arrangements) are the analytical unit.

Schatzki’s practice ontology is a significant intervention in social theory (Nicolini 2013). Accepting such an ontology has at least two implications for this thesis. First, conceptions of identity and meaning must be revised; I discuss these below [3.2.4]. Second, this is a ‘flat ontology’ (Schatzki 2011:14). Because the social consists in practice-arrangement nexuses, and all social phenomena are slices of the totality of social life, there can be no levels between which ‘relations of causality, constitution, or supervenience exist’ (Schatzki 2011:14). In this way, discussion of micro, meso, or macro level phenomena would be mistaken.

Schatzki's classification of practices and materials, and the connections between them, may be used to sensitize empirical research, as Davide Nicolini (2013) and others have shown. Accepting a practice ontology - that the social world consists in and through social-material practices - leads to the acceptance of practices as the unit of analysis. Practices and their corresponding material arrangements may be approached, empirically, in line with the conceptual framework illustrated in figure 3.3. Such a focus invites a variety of questions, such as: what practices exist (and when/where do they exist)? How do practices unfold? How can practices be created or altered? How are (or could) people be prepared to enter practices?

However, as Nicolini notes, this is a philosopher's account of the social world. Schatzki's theoretical project (2002a, 2010), although fleshed out with illustrative cameos drawn from archival material, has been derived to some extent abstractly from lived human experience, rather than through empirical research. Moreover, it is an outline of how the social world may be understood, and aspects of his outline may more appropriately be considered questions to be resolved or explored through empirical research (e.g., the connections between practices and material arrangements). In short, Schatzki's practice theory should be considered a construction site (Nicolini 2013).
Notwithstanding Nicolini’s caution, Schatzki’s project is an account of social life that, as I will argue, is consistent with the ontological desiderata of green republicanism, and offers a promising framework around which to reorient cultural politics into a mode appropriate to investigate prefigurations of sustainability transitions. While acknowledging the limitations Nicolini identifies, I will proceed using Schatzki's framework to sensitize my conceptual framework, while remaining vigilant to empirical tensions that may challenge and perhaps help to clarify the theory.

3.2.4 Critical synthesis: practice theory, green republicanism, and cultural politics

Practice theory offers a distinctive viewpoint of the social and material world. In summary, practices are organized human doings and sayings through which social life transpires. Practices are organized by understandings (both practical and general), teleaffective structures, and rules. Practices are multiply connected (through causality, prefiguration, constitution, and intelligibility) to material arrangements of entities including people, their artefacts and technology, and organisms and things of nature. This perspective suggests that society consists in a vast mesh of practices and materials. Social phenomena can be understood as slices or aspects of this mesh. Practices are social: they involve multiple people. Practices are entangled with materiality: they involve bodily and other physical, chemical, and biological matter. Practice-arrangement nexuses are the source of intelligibility: meaning, identity, and subjectivity flow from and through practices and materials. Finally, practices become coherent through their intrinsic teleological attributes. From this perspective, materiality (*qua* bodies, nature, the environment, and material artefacts) and the social world are dimensions of one another.

However, accepting this distinctive practice perspective prompts three questions. First, is Schatzki’s approach intellectually compatible with the green republican ontology established in chapter 2? Second, is the distinctive practice perspective on meaning, subjectivity, and identity coherent with the Foucauldian perspective informing Barry’s articulation of green republican virtues, and also informing Nash’s conception of cultural politics? Third, how is the concept of cultural politics understood in practice?
terms? Below, I argue that green republicanism and practice theory are coherent, and propose an account of cultural politics recalibrated in line with Schatzki’s insights.

**Green republicanism**

Two distinct ontological commitments have now been articulated as important for this investigation. First, the green republican insight that humans are biologically embodied, and ecologically and socially embedded (Barry 2012). Second, the practice theoretical perception that the social world consists in practices, and nonhuman nature and materiality is understood as a dimension of the social (Schatzki 2002, 2010). From the first perspective, people are understood as human animals, enmeshed not only in complex ecosystemic webs but also complex social webs. Green republican philosophy is critical of methodological individualism, atomized views of the human, over-emphasis of human rationality, and conceptual separation of society from environment. Practice theory seeks to make visible, through a focus on human doings and sayings, the entangled, contingent, and emergent relationships, within human society and between society and artefacts, organisms, and things: these are the relationships in which social life consists and proceeds. Humans coexist with other humans, and also with nonhuman entities and things, and meaning and identity of all these entities, human and nonhuman, emerge from and through the activities jointly pursued by people. Moreover, because people are understood to do what it makes sense for them to do, practice theory resists rationality as the driving force in decision-making and action. In summary, the ontologies of practice theory and green republicanism are mutually coherent, at least in the terms I identify.

Identity and subjectivity, understood in broadly (but not explicitly defined) Foucauldian terms, are conceptually important for Barry’s articulation of green republican virtues. Yet, Schatzki’s work offers a distinctive perspective on meaning, identity, and subjectivity. Schatzki understands meaning and identity as flowing from and through practices, but somewhat resembling Foucauldian notions of subject positions. From this perspective, meaning describes ‘what something is’, whereas identity describes ‘who someone is’ (Nicolini 2013:177). For an entity to mean something is to say it is intelligible as something. In this way, meaning can be linked to the intelligibility of
material arrangements and to the action intelligibility of general understandings of practice. In short, an entity’s meaning emerges from its practical context.

Identity is a type of meaning: entities with identity are entities with self-understanding (and are thus people, under Schatzki’s material classification). However, a person’s identity is open to dispute, because it takes two potentially divergent forms: a person's meaning (as they are intelligible to others) and a person’s own understanding of their meaning (Schatzki 2002). In this way, a doctoral student leading an undergraduate tutorial session is likely to understand their own meaning as a doctoral research student with some pedagogical responsibilities. Whereas, an undergraduate student in the tutorial group may understand and address the doctoral researcher as Doctor or Professor.

From a practice perspective, as from poststructuralist and Foucauldian perspectives, meaning and identity are not fixed or singular, but are fluid and multiple. Moreover, the intelligibility of some practices may become more durable than others, and so some practices become more dominant than others. Some identities may become more fixed than others, and so a person may be understood as a professor or lecturer in many contexts but a runner, Tolkien enthusiast, mother, greenwood maker, or surfer in others. What is important in all these cases is that the practice comes before the identity, and because the practice involves doings and sayings (and may implicate artefacts, organisms and things), identity and meaning are more than merely discursive or linguistic phenomena. From a practice perspective, meanings and identities are practice phenomena, and are multiple, relational, and provisional.

Although Barry does not explicitly outline an account of subjectivity or identity, his articulation of these concepts is in Foucauldian terms. There are no apparent intellectual issues with synthesizing Schatzki’s descriptive social theoretical account of subjectivity, meaning and identity alongside Barry’s prescriptive social theoretical account of sustainability virtues, expressed as subjectivities and identities.

However, to simply state that Barry and Schatzki are largely coherent, on the terms I interrogate, neglects the potential benefits of using a practice lens to explore issues of interest to green politics. There are at least two points of useful synergy to note here.
First, green political theorists are concerned with, *inter alia*, relationships between humans and nonhumans [2.1, 2.2]. Through his classification of earthly matter as people, artefacts, organisms, and things, Schatzki’s work bolsters exploration of such relationships more effectively than can other social theories that reduce all entities to a hybrid status. Moreover, his perspective is capable of alignment with a broadly anthropocentric perspective, rather than an ecocentric one.\(^2\) People can produce artefacts from organisms and things of nature; because the distinctions between these material categories are visible, humans’ particular status as an animal species with power over other species is made visible, and the power relationship open to analysis. Thus Schatzki’s practice theory promises to support analysis of empirical manifestations of the enlightened anthropocentrism sought by John Barry [2.2].

Second, practice theory appears capable of supporting empirical research exploring green republican prefigurations. The green republican polity is understood to be fragile and contingent, vulnerable within complex and changing ecosystems, and requiring constant maintenance by citizens who enjoy both responsibilities and rights. Practice theory, by viewing social life as a recursively created socialmaterial process, includes many issues of interest to green republican theory visible in the analytical frame.

There is, however, at least one important implication of Schatzki’s flat ontology for research concerned with collective action and community organizations. Schatzki insists that society should not be conceived in terms of levels. The acceptance of a flat ontology creates a distinction between the approach I develop in this thesis to study sustainability transitions, and the multi-level systems perspective (Geels 2010, 2011) adopted by some other sustainability transitions researchers. In particular, there are similarities between my approach and Gill Seyfang’s and Adrian Smith’s (2007:585) work on ‘grassroots innovations’, that also focuses empirically on communities and civil society as contexts for sustainability transitions. However, the term ‘grassroots’ is in tension with a flat ontology, in as much as the term signals hierarchical and level-related metaphors - top-down, bottom-up - of social organization (Castell 1983; Parker *et al.* 2007).

\(^2\) See 2.2 for discussion of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism.
The potential of Schatzki’s practice theory as a conceptual foundation to interrogate sustainability prefigurations in green republican terms appears unrecognized in the green political theoretical and sustainability transitions literature. This neglect notwithstanding, Schatzki’s account of the social is coherent with a green republican ontology that understands humans as biologically embodied, and ecologically and socially embedded. A Schatzkian perspective also promises a nuanced analysis not only of how social life proceeds and changes, but also to support an interpretive-analytical approach that may contribute to recent calls for broader and richer knowledge around the human dimensions of sustainability transitions (Castree et al. 2014; Lövbrand et al. 2015). Moreover, by helping to describe the embodied and embedded nature of human life, Schatzki’s practice theory may be well placed to perform a role towards Barry’s call for the ‘development of a non-anthropocentric, or at least for much more self-reflexive and critical anthropocentric social theorising’ (Barry & Quilley 2009:99).

Cultural politics

Cultural politics was provisionally defined [3.1] as the ‘contestation of normalized identities and social relations’ (Nash 2001:85). However, that definition is underpinned by problematic assumptions (from a green republican perspective), notably around the issues of individualism and materiality. Cultural politics draws on concepts of power, culture, and identity. In particular, cultural politics requires acceptance of two key notions. First, politics is understood as power present in all aspects of social life. Second, culture is understood as symbolic knowledge structures through which social agents are constrained and enabled to interpret the world in different ways and consequently to act in corresponding ways. If, as I propose, cultural politics is to be refracted through a practice theoretical lens, then the implications of practice theory for these key concepts ought to be made clear.

Nash draws on Foucault’s notions of power, partly in order to note that politics (qua power) is pervasive in social life. Similarly, Schatzki follows a number of Foucauldian insights, evident not least in his understanding of society as contingent and multifaceted. Power, for Schatzki (2001), is a social phenomenon and is consequently an aspect of the practice field. He agrees with the Foucauldian notion of power as pervasive, recognizing its extension ‘into the capillaries of social life’ (Schatzki
However, from a practice perspective, a more nuanced account of power emerges. Actions are not the only factor allowing people to enable or constrain others’ actions. Material arrangements, rules, and prefiguration are all factors in people’s choice of what makes sense for them to do, although clearly material arrangements or rules may express earlier actions. In this way, Foucault’s insight remains accurate that power is not confined to the formal realm of state politics, but is everywhere in society.

Culture is notoriously variable (Bennett et al. 2013; Williams 1983). Nash and Schatzki apparently conceive of culture somewhat differently. Nash (2010) understands culture not as an entity or thing, but as threads, running through society. Following Raymond Williams (Williams 1983), she accepts culture as the ‘signifying system through which […] a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored’ (Nash 2010:31). In contrast, Schatzki (2001) understands culture to consist in constellations of practice-arrangement nexuses. In this view, culture consists in practice and materials: nexuses of practices and materials are constitutive of culture, as they are of the social. Following this logic, Schatzki (2001a:347) argues that it is a ‘mistake to segregate the cultural and social realms’, because ‘the cultural presupposes the social’. These different perspectives prompt two questions. First, despite the semantic differences between Nash and Schatzki, are their understandings cogent? Second, if the social and the cultural are the same, as Schatzki argues, are there implications stemming from a potential loss of analytic distinction?

First, Nash’s Williams-inflected understanding of culture is cogent with Schatzki’s. For Schatzki, social order is the effect and outcome of people’s sayings and doings (and the materials connected to these). Practice-arrangement nexuses are the means through which society is reproduced, experienced, and communicated (through the meanings emerging from practices’ intelligibility). Similarly, practice-arrangement nexuses may be understood in terms of Nash’s notion of threads running through society.

Second, can culture still be said to exist? Williams’ (1983) definition, deployed by Nash, could be interpreted as already tacitly conflating society and culture. Williams has elsewhere noted that the complexity of the term culture lies not in the meaning, but in the variation in its use, and in this way there was little analytic distinction between culture and society even before Schatzki explicitly conflated them. Some have argued
(e.g., Kuper 1999), recognising the complexity of use and variability of meanings attached to the term, that culture would be best discussed in more specific terms, by being explicit about the component meanings. Nash defines cultural politics as the contestation of normalized identities and social relations. Her concern is with identity, and meaning, and relations between people. Practice theory is consistent with an interest in meaning, identity, and social relations: practices are social relations, and meaning and identity flow from and through practices. Cultural politics recalibrated into Schatzkian terms is no more or less specific about culture than before.

In summary, cultural politics can be viewed through a practice theoretical lens that is consistent with a green republican ontology. Cultural politics, in Nash’s terms, is understood as the contestation of normalized identities and social relations. Drawing on Schatzki’s insights, I propose that cultural politics can be understood as contestations of normalized practices. By understanding practices as people’s doings and sayings, nexuses of practices and material arrangements, it is possible to take a fresh perspective on the role of materials in performances of cultural politics, as part of the stream of action through which social life is (re)produced and transformed. It is from practices that meaning, identity, and subjectivity flow. Nash’s Foucauldian understanding of discursively-created subjectivity has been reconceptualized as a Schatzkian understanding of socio-materially constituted subjectivity. Hence, practices - conceptualized as illustrated in figure 3.3 - form the (descriptive) social theoretical foundation of this thesis and of the conceptual framework I develop to investigate cultural politics of sustainability transitions. In this way, I have answered the first part of RQ1b: how can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be appropriately articulated (in the context of post-growth political economy)?

3.3 ART AND CULTURAL POLITICS

In the preceding sections of this chapter I have argued that cultural politics is an auspicious approach to explore prefigurations of sustainability transition, and that

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53 In Chapter 4 I address the second part of RQ1b, discussing how best can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be interpreted?
cultural politics is appropriately (from a green republican perspective) understood in practice theoretical terms. Although that discussion has responded to RQ1b, the work of this chapter is not yet complete; I have not yet discussed the possible role that artistic and creative activities might play in cultural politics. Such activities are a significant aspect of Scottish community woodland organizing. Art is a contested concept, and its ontological relations with society are subject to debate. Defining art and establishing its ontological status are therefore important steps in conceptualizing a cultural politics that might embrace art as a mode of contestation.

This final section is concerned with art and politics. I discuss aesthetic theory in order to locate artistic activity and artefacts in relation to the social, and to define the understanding of art and creativity used in this thesis [3.3.1]. Finally, I turn to the relationship between art and politics, and offer a short discussion of art’s role in performances of cultural politics [3.3.2].

3.3.1 Defining art

Key debates around the definition of art include what art is and is not, its role in society, its conceptual location in relation to the social and, significantly, whether or not it can even be defined (Adajian 2012; Stecker 2005; Williams 1983). Over centuries of Western thought, understandings of art have developed through a number of theories. These include mimesis, or representation (of the social and natural worlds); art-for-art’s-sake; expression (of the artist’s feelings and emotions); formalism (form is more important than representation or expression); and aesthetic theories (Bunnin & Yu 2004; Stecker 2005). Within aesthetic theory, two main positions have emerged since the 1960s: functionalism, and proceduralism. Functional definitions assume that art serves a purpose. However, this turns out to be a circular and - at least for the purposes of my investigation - not helpful approach. An object is an artistic artefact only ‘if it achieves the objectives and purposes of art (which can be diverse and change over time)’ (Belfiore & Bennett 2008:17). Functionalist aesthetic perspectives are concerned with

54 The social and natural worlds are described as separate entities here, reflecting the apparently limited inroads made to aesthetic theory by alternative perspectives embracing socialmaterial entanglement (Castree 2013; e.g., Schatzki 2010). Although some aesthetic theorists have begun to take note of these issues (e.g., Morton 2007, 2010, 2013), this does not appear to be a widespread interest.
the intrinsic properties of an artwork, hence marginalising the societal, institutional, and material contexts of the artefact.

Within proceduralist aesthetic theory, institutional theories of art are an important approach, and are more consistent with a cultural political perspective. The ‘artworld’ is a key concept of institutional theories (Becker 2008). The artworld consists in the web of people, activities, ideas, and institutions that comprise the art establishment, whose members enjoy the privilege to bestow the status of arthood on an object (Becker 2008; Belfiore & Bennett 2008; Stecker 2005). Recently, Schatzki has intervened in these debates, extending Howard Becker’s earlier work. For Schatzki, Becker’s approach is overly individualistic and neglects the materiality of the artworld. Rather, Schatzki (2014) argues the artworld is better understood as the ‘art bundles’ formed by socialmaterial practice nexuses.

The most important point to draw from this theoretical plurality is that aesthetics has an ontological dimension. Along that dimension are located theories understanding differing relationships between art and socio-material worldly phenomena. At one extreme lies the Kantian notion of an autonomous aesthetic sphere, separate from the social (Blau 2001; Bunnin & Yu 2004; Wolff 1987). Importantly, this notion forms one side of the debates around the theoretical possibility of political art and cultural politics. Conversely, the idea of the artworld central to institutional theories (Becker 2008) is essentially a social constructionist perspective (Berger & Luckmann 1966) that denies the possibility of aesthetic autonomy. Constructionist critiques of aesthetic autonomy suggest that art is located within economic and social structures (Alperson 2005; Knight 2005).

Aesthetic autonomy describes the idea that art occupies its own sphere, separate from all other human activities. From this perspective, art’s rules and principles are determined, and art is valued, within an aesthetic sphere (Bunnin & Yu 2004). Thus the autonomous position is related to intrinsic - not instrumental - valuations and understandings of art (Belfiore & Bennett 2008). The concept of aesthetic autonomy emerged from a desire to guard art from absorption into scientific, capitalist, industrial, moral, and religious values (Blau 2001; Bunnin & Yu 2004). It may be argued that this ambition has failed, given art’s contemporary entanglement with capital, consumerist
Two tensions lie here. First, aesthetic autonomists and sustainability advocates share concerns over rationalist and cognitivist attitudes. Support for aesthetic autonomy grew during the twentieth century, in response to concerns that policy-makers’ instrumental values and economic rationalities were subsuming the arts (Bunnin & Yu 2004; Hewison 2014). Sustainability advocates critique rational and cognitive theories for their human/nonhuman separation (Dobson 2007b; Ferraro & Reid 2013; Plumwood 1993). Although the autonomists’ case is attractive, it is difficult to accept their position in the face of powerful arguments supporting socially-constructed artworlds (Becker 2008; Bourdieu 1984; Schatzki 2014; Stecker 2005). Second, if aesthetic autonomy has failed, and artistic producers are indeed inextricably committed to capital and a consumerist system, then scope for artistic interventions in politics may be constrained (Mouffe 2012). Although this second point may be a compelling argument for some, the existence of artists’ work critiquing aspects of contemporary societies suggests that not all artists are so constrained (e.g., Greer n.d.; Pinkham 2014; Tolokonnikova & Zizek 2014). Hence, I reject claims of aesthetic autonomy and proceed with a constructionist conception of art.

Having clarified the ontological assumptions regarding art and society which underpin this thesis, it is possible to begin defining art. An understanding of art as situated and emergent encapsulates the idea that the production, classification, and consumption of artistic artefacts are processes requiring many people and institutions working mostly, although not inevitably, in cooperation. This idea has at least three implications for this investigation. First, an inclusive definition of art is possible, because classification is a social distinction, and narrow or elite definitions are exposed as socially constructed (Bourdieu 1984). Second, and relatedly, everyday creativity by ordinary people becomes worthy of study, equal to the worth of highly-regarded professionally-produced art (Gauntlett 2011). Third, by accepting the situated and embodied character of artistic practices and artefacts, the political dimensions of art are made

55 I use the term ‘professionally-produced art’ to describe artistic artefacts created by people whose income relies on that production.
visible, allowing analysis of art as a medium for cultural politics (Mouffe 2007). Below, I discuss these first two points, before turning [3.3.2] to the question of art and politics.

A relational model of artistic practice and artistic artefacts rejects earlier aesthetic notions of art grounded in creative genius (Becker 2008; Bourdieu 1984; Stecker 2005). Rather, there is an artworld that consists in people (for Becker (2008)), or practices (for Schatzki (2014)); value, status, and classification are bestowed upon artists and their artefacts through either people or practices (depending on your perspective). Consequently, because the definition and classification of art into (e.g.) high art, craft, or popular culture is based on social distinctions (Bourdieu 1984), it becomes possible to accept, at least for the purposes of this thesis, a broad definition of art encompassing the narrative, performing, plastic, and visual arts. Adopting this inclusive definition negotiates the commonly-drawn craft/ art separation (Dormer 1997). Thus, practices and artefacts from both sides of the craft/ art divide can be included in the analytic frame.

The UK Government’s Department for Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) also offers a broad definition of the arts, notably setting craft alongside music, the performing arts, advertising, architecture, designer fashion, film, television and radio, publishing, and interactive leisure software (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2001, 2008). However, that definition lies uncomfortably with the idea of critical art and also with sustainability transitions. The DCMS definition is a key policy document promoting the idea of the creative industries. At the ‘irreducible core’ of the concept of the creative industries lies an explicit ethos of financialization of intellectual property (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2001; Lash & Urry 1994:117). While the idea of monetary reward for creative activity is not necessarily problematic for sustainability (Ferraro et al. 2011), continued exponential economic growth is problematic (Jackson 2009). Therefore policy-makers’ expectations of the creative industries’ contribution to economic growth troubles many understandings of sustainability, particularly those concerned with ecological limits. Accordingly, the DCMS definition of art is rejected.

Although the exact terms are contested, the cultural industries and creative industries are broadly synonymous and for the purposes of this investigation can certainly be treated as such (Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2001; Hesmondhalgh 2002; Howkins 2002).
Alternatively, a more processual understanding of art can be gained from David Gauntlett’s work (2011:13), which is centred upon an egalitarian concept of ‘everyday creativity’. This is distinct from more commercial modes of artistic production, in which creative professionals produce art for consumers to buy. Rather, creativity is an everyday activity, which may be practiced by anyone making something which is novel in that context, for use, pleasure, or joy, and not necessarily for financial gain. Gauntlett (2011) stresses the three ways in which everyday creativity is a process of social and material connections. Making is connecting because it comprises the creativity of making (bringing ideas and materials together to make something new), the sociality of making (bringing people together in acts of creativity), and the materiality of making (acknowledging that human lives are embedded in social and physical environments).

Everyday creativity introduces five important points into the discussion. First, making (and the related skill of repairing) are strongly linked with sustainability issues including waste reduction, frugal resource use, and living within ecological limits. Reusing old but repairable objects and materials, rather than discarding them, can reduce waste and resource exploitation. Making, as a craft practice, has a role to play in sustainability transition (Ferraro et al. 2011). Second, amid calls for a 'great reskilling', the bodily and mental know-how involved in making (and repairing) are valorized by some movements for sustainability transition (Hopkins 2008, 2010, 2011; Spratt et al. 2009:67). Third, the egalitarian ethos of Gauntlett’s account is cogent with the similar ethos of green republicanism. Fourth, making can be a mode of cultural politics. Making (or repairing) things, rather than buying them, is a political act that resists dominant discourses promoting consumption-driven-growth. Finally, making may be conceived in practice terms. Gauntlett emphasizes the essentially social aspects of making, as well as the bodily competence and other materials required.57

Summarizing, this sub-section has established a broad, inclusive and egalitarian concept of artistic and creative activities, drawing (first) upon relational perspectives of the social that resist established art/craft binaries - hence embracing both as artistic - and (second) upon the notion of everyday creativity. Hence, artistic and creative activities

57 Others, including Anna Brown and colleagues (2016), have noted the potential for a practice lens to explore making.
are those that can be practiced by anyone making something which is novel in that context, for pleasure, use, joy, and not necessarily for financial gain. Such a notion is consistent with cultural politics and sustainability transitions, and also with a processual account of the social.

**3.3.2 Politics and art**

Art, understood in constructivist terms, is widely seen as able to create an impression on society in a variety of ways, negative and positive. These include: improving personal wellbeing; contributing to education and self-development; moral improvement; as a civilizing influence; both sedimenting and eroding social strata; identity construction; and as a political instrument (Belfiore & Bennett 2008). Although there are dissenting voices from both aesthetic theorists and practising artists (Goehr 2005), the potential political power of art has been long established. Plato, noting concern for the corrupting potential inherent in theatre and poetry, called for their ban from the ideal polity (Leith 1954, in Belfiore & Bennett 2008:146). More recently, cultural policy in neoliberal states has become a key arena for social management and engineering, as a technique of governmentality (Bennett 1992, 2008). Other facets of the arts’ engagement with the political include propaganda art (Adams 1992; Groys 2011; Hewison 2014; Orwell & Gessen 2009), uses of images in mass media (Goehr 2005), construction of national identity through art (Smith 2013), and collective action (Adams 2001, 2002; Eyerman & Jamison 1998; Futrell et al. 2006; Hollands & Vail 2012; McCaughan 2007, 2012; Reed 2005). In short, art and politics have been embroiled in debates for millennia.

Chantal Mouffe presents a strongly conceptualized relationship between art and politics (Mouffe 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013a; Mouffe et al. 2001). This relationship must be understood as part of her more extensive project calling for an agonistic turn in political philosophy (Mouffe 1992, 1997, 2005a, 2013a). Mouffe’s work is informed substantively by her recognition of the paradox of liberal democracy, in which (liberal) freedom is in tension with (democratic) equality (Mouffe 2000). A processual and relational understanding of democracy and politics is key to Mouffe’s work; she, like Schatzki, is influenced by the Heideggerian/Wittgenstenian tradition. Mouffe (with Ernesto Laclau) challenges earlier understandings of politics and democracy as static.
and monolithic entities (Laclau & Mouffe 2001). By recognizing the fluidity and contingency of political institutions, Mouffe creates conceptual space for activism and political change. Because, for Mouffe (2007:4), ‘every form of art has a political dimension’, one means of activism is ‘artistic activism [that] makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate’. In this way, Mouffe’s work is consistent with cultural politics.

In order to fully apprehend Mouffe’s concept, it is necessary briefly to explore her theory of hegemony, politics and the political. Politics and the political are, in common with culture and art, complex concepts subject to diverse interpretations. Mouffe, a post-Marxian liberal political philosopher, draws on Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Foucault, and Gramsci, amongst others. In her view, politics is inseparable from the political. The political, for Mouffe (2000:101), is the ‘dimension of antagonism that is inherent in human relations’, whereas politics is ‘the ensemble of practices, discourses, and institutions which seek to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictual because they are affected by the dimension of “the political”’.

Hegemony is a central concept in Mouffe’s work, and is crucial to notions of ‘artistic activism’ set within an agonistically conceived political dimension (Laclau & Mouffe 2001; Mouffe 2007, 2013a). In this view, society is contingent, and social order is the result of hegemonic practices. Hegemony - the dominant consensus - consists in a ‘manifold of practices, discourses, and language games’ that have become particularly widespread and durable (Mouffe 2013a:89). Critical artistic practices are one way to perform hegemonic confrontation; they can make visible alternatives to, and critiques of, the dominant consensus.

Hegemonic practices are a clear connection with earlier discussions. The chapter began with discussion of cultural politics defined in Kate Nash’s terms as contestations of normalized identities [3.1.1]. Nash’s ‘normalized’ resonates with Mouffe’s ‘hegemonic’. Similarly, Schatzki’s concept of ‘general understandings’ echoes Mouffe’s notion of hegemonic practices [3.2.1]. In this way, Mouffe’s work is cognate

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58 General understandings and practically-constituted hegemony are not directly equivalent, because the former is part of the organization of practices whereas the latter consists in practices. However, these ideas
with Nash’s concept of cultural politics, and helps to strengthen cultural politics as an exercise in hegemonic confrontation.

Civil society is the conceptual space within which hegemony is constructed, performed, and contested. Mouffe draws on Gramsci’s idea of civil society, which she also refers to as public space. Civil society, for Mouffe (2007:3) is a plurality of ‘striated and hegemonically structured’ spaces where antagonism and conflict take place and power is evident. Mouffe argues that her agonistic model of politics and public space differs from others’, including Habermas’ and Arendt’s visions of (respectively) rational consensus and freedom (Mouffe 2007, 2013a; Mouffe et al. 2001). Rather, she emphasizes that consensus and reconciliation are not ultimately possible and that all that can happen is the construction of a new hegemony. Civil society, within this agonistic model, is where particular conceptions of the world are established, and specific understandings of reality defined. Within those worldviews specific forms of subjectivity are constructed (Mouffe 2013a).

Artistic activism (Mouffe 2007:4) is art making ‘visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate’. The concept of artistic activism is centred upon the notion that ‘one cannot make a distinction between political art and non-political art’ (Mouffe et al. 2001:101). The political contains an aesthetic dimension, and art a political one (2013a). Mouffe’s is a constructionist view of art, and clearly at odds with autonomist theorists. Her concept sees hegemony constituted and maintained by a given order, made durable and visible through discursive practices. Because artistic practices have a role in (re)producing that symbolic order, the arts necessarily have a political dimension. On this account, Mouffe argues that there can be no distinction between political and non-political art.

Mouffe’s work is useful for my investigation in at least four ways. First, the social and political context is strongly conceptualized. There is a clear role for cultural political activism in a democratic society conceived not as static, but fluid, emergent and contingent. Second, because society and social order, in this view, consist in practices share the sense that certain human activities and meanings become more durable and hence semi-fixed in society than others.
and discourse, there is a compelling case for a practice lens to investigate cultural politics. Third, her concept of agonism is supportive of the unresolvable and ‘wicked’ problems to which sustainability transitions (Frame 2008) - and green republicanism in particular - attempts to respond (Barry & Farrell 2013). Finally, her conceptualisation of artistic activism is clearly articulated. Understood as a practice, artistic activism is part of the ensemble of practices in which politics consists.

Notwithstanding Mouffe’s strong conceptualization of artistic activism within a hegemonically-ordered and practically-constituted society, her work presents three problems. First, her concept of artistic activism is focused implicitly on trained or professional artists, and neglects the possibility that artistic activism may be prosecuted by non-professional artists. This problem can be resolved by synthesising Gauntlett’s work with Mouffe’s, creating the concept of everyday artistic activism: critical everyday art that challenges hegemonic practices and discourses.

Second, Mouffe’s concept of artistic activism is the work of a political philosopher: strongly conceptualized at a high level of abstraction, it leaves scope for researchers to operationalize. She is clear that politics and society consist in discursive practices, from which it can be inferred that artistic activism should be understood in practice terms. Although Mouffe is, like Schatzki, also within the Wittgenstenian/ Heideggerian tradition, they differ ontologically. Practices, for Mouffe, are discursive (but non-material), whereas Schatzki understands discourse to be a practice phenomenon entangled with materiality (Schatzki 2002); consequently there is a tension between them. Mouffe neglects materiality, whereas it is important for Schatzki. On the other hand, Schatzki neglects politics. To proceed, I note the conceptual tensions between Mouffe and Schatzki but adopt Schatzki’s perspective to operationalize research into artistic activism. The ability to bring materiality into the analytical frame, as offered by Schatzki, is vital for this investigation into cultural politics of sustainability transitions.

59 Schatzki rarely mentions politics, but he does define it as ‘the collective intentional management of (some sector of) the social site. Because agency is the motor of the becoming and change that pervade that site, politics can also be understood as the collective intentional management of the directions and flows of agency. Politics is collective because it is an activity that people carry out together (regardless of how much contention and conflict are involved). Politics [is] specific practices that are both contingently linked to particular orders (eg government buildings) and tied in various ways to non-political practices and complexes’ (2002:251). There is nothing within Schatzki’s work as drawn upon in this investigation to suggest his work would be difficult to reconcile with investigating cultural politics.
Thus, *practices of everyday artistic activism* can finally be defined as: practices performed by ordinary people as they collectively participate in everyday creativity, and, using diverse material resources, creating artistic artefacts and performances that trouble hegemonic practices. Hence, practices of everyday artistic activism are part of the broader concept of *cultural politics as contestations of normalized, or hegemonic, practices*.

### 3.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has responded to the first part of RQ1b. I have argued for a synthesis of cultural politics and practice theory, forming a promising conceptual approach to explore prefigurations of sustainability transitions. Cultural politics may be understood as *contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices*, and in these terms is consistent with the green republican ontology established in chapter 2. *Practices of everyday artistic activism* are one way that cultural politics may be enacted. Cultural political performances may make visible alternative conceptions of (*inter alia*) nature, woman, economy, citizenship, democracy, organization, and land relations.

This chapter has presented two elements of original theoretical synthesis, of practice theory and cultural politics, and has also outlined a practice approach to understand everyday artistic activism. Although in this thesis I am concerned to explore Scottish community woodlands understood as alternative organizations, and take a substantive focus upon artistic and creative woodland projects, the concepts articulated in this chapter may be relevant for wider application, to explore other prefigurative contexts of sustainability transitions. Therefore, critical reflection on the success and wider relevance of the concepts is an explicit research question (RQ3), and I will address this in the final chapter of the thesis.
This chapter aims to complete the response to RQ1b: *how can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be appropriately articulated and interpreted (in the context of post-growth political economy)*? Chapter 3 responded to the first half of that question, proposing that a cultural politics of sustainability transitions is appropriately articulated in practice theoretical terms. In this chapter I propose an *interpretive* framework derived from green republican philosophy to support analysis of cultural political performances and artefacts. Green republicanism describes a less unsustainable mode of societal organization [2.2]. Hence, interpreting woodland practices against a green republican framework helps to make visible prefigurative aspects of those practices.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, previous approaches to analyse or interpret cultural politics are discussed; green republican theory is established as the basis from which an interpretive framework may be derived [4.1]. The key points of green republican theory are recapitulated, to contextualize subsequent discussion and identify domains of an interpretive framework [4.2]. The theoretical underpinnings of those domains are discussed [4.3, 4.4]. Concluding, the framework is drawn together [4.5].

**4.1 INTERPRETING A CULTURAL POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY TRANSITIONS**

Enactments of cultural politics are typically understood in contrast to prevailing political practices and institutions. Kate Nash (2001:85, 2010) understands cultural politics as ‘contestation of normalized identities and social relations’. Nash’s formulation suggests that interpreting these contestations requires an idea of what ‘normal’ identities or social relations are. Similarly, Sonia Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino,
and Arturo Escobar suggest that an understanding of current political institutions is required to understand cultural politics. For the Alvarez team (1998:1), cultural political performances involve ‘challenges to the disputed parameters of democracy - participants, institutions, processes, [and] scope’. In this way, enactments of cultural politics unsettle the current political culture or - in Chantal Mouffe’s (2013a) terms - the current hegemony.

The current hegemony may be understood, from a vantage point informed by Schatzki and Mouffe, to consist in practices that are organized at least in part around general understandings derived from normative political theories. Normative theorizing is a practice of political philosophers who are concerned with articulating prescriptions of how society ought to be organized (Barry 2007a). While these theories may be relatively abstract high-level philosophy, they can also play an important role in society (Pettit 2006). Normative theories are one way in which values, political ideas, and modes of societal organization are articulated. As Laclau and Mouffe (2001) have argued, the values and ideas embraced by powerful social groups inform the hegemonic constitution of society.60

In this chapter, I derive an interpretive framework from green republican theory, in order to support empirical research into cultural political prefigurations of sustainability transitions. Green republicanism is a normative theory, although it does not currently exert a significant influence upon the constitution of hegemony. Rather, green republican theory is both an immanent critique of, and an alternative to, the current hegemony (Barry 2012). Offering an outline of what a less unsustainable society might looks like, green republicanism is one way to conceptualize sustainability transitions. By deriving an interpretive framework from green republican philosophy, I can analyse empirical cultural political performances against a clearly articulated theoretical challenge to the current hegemony.

60 Normative theories have influenced society not least through policy-makers’ engagement with John Rawls’ work (Bauböck 2008); the embrace of Friedrich Hayek’s and Milton Friedman’s neoliberal theories by the Thatcher and Regan administrations in, respectively, the UK and US (Davies 2014; Harvey 2007); or the contribution of Anthony Giddens’ (1998) third way concept to the (UK) Blair and (US) Clinton administrations (Davies 2014). While such normative theories are not the only influence on governance, they play a significant role in shaping values, institutions, policy, and - in Schatzki’s (2002) terms - the general understandings that influence everyday doings and sayings.
Green republican theory, in John Barry’s account, is articulated partly in terms of virtues. Barry also outlines some subjectivities and identities that are likely to emerge from valorization of these virtues. In chapter 3, I articulated a notion of cultural politics as contestations of normalized (or hegemonic) practices. I noted Schatzki’s insight that meanings, identities, and subjectivities flow from and through practice(s). Thus, empirical practice data may be analysed against a framework outlining green republican virtues and potential sustainability subjectivities and identities. This approach promises to support rich interpretive insights from empirical data emerging from woodland encounters.

In proposing this interpretive strategy, I follow in spirit (but not in detail) a small number of other sustainability scholars in drawing upon green political theories for empirical research. There are three points to note here. First, operationalization for empirical research is an application of normative theory not necessarily anticipated by normative theorists (Dobson 2012). Some intervention may be required to operationalize green republican theory for my purpose. Second, although I acknowledge a debt to those few researchers who have mobilized green political theories as evaluative tools, I do not draw on their analytical frameworks. Johanna Wolf (2009), Gill Seyfang (2004, 2006a, 2006b), Emily Huddart Kennedy (2011), and Sverker Jagers (2009; Jagers et al. 2013) have all pursued qualitative or quantitative empirical investigations of pro-environmental behaviour or sustainable consumption, analysed against Andrew Dobson’s (2003, 2006a, 2012; Dobson & Bell 2006) evolving account of ecological citizenship. As I noted in chapter 2, Barry’s work is more appropriate than Dobson’s not least because of Barry’s concern (first) for political economy and land relations, and (second) his articulation of these concerns in virtue terms that interface with the cultural political focus on meanings, subjectivities, and identities.

Third - as befits a post-liberal political philosophy - Barry argues that subjectivities and identities cannot be ‘authoritatively prescribed’ but ought to be ‘actively, consciously, and most importantly, freely chosen, albeit within a finite range of possibilities (Barry 2012:114). The importance of leaving space for people to develop their own identities is in line with the republican commitment to an egalitarian democratic society that valorizes actively engaged citizens rather than elite rule. At first sight, this avoidance of prescribed subjectivities and identities may seem to make my derivation of an
interpretive framework harder. However, the opposite is true. By proposing the foundational principles for (a particular vision of) a less unsustainable society, fleshed out with only a few exemplar subjectivities and identities, Barry leaves space for people’s own creativity to innovate new identities and subjectivities. In this way, empirical research around the cultural politics of sustainability transitions - such as reported in this thesis - may not only contribute to knowledge about those transitions, but also add empirical richness to the normative theory of green republicanism.

Finally, a note about why the framework is described as interpretive. Meanings, identities and subjectivities (from a practice perspective) are multiple, relational, provisional, and fluid [3.2.4]. Knowledge is situated and vision embodied (Haraway 1988). From this perspective the research reported in this thesis cannot provide the truth, only a truth. For these reasons, and others, the approach I take in this thesis is interpretive (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Lincoln et al. 2011; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006). In chapter 5 I discuss more fully interpretivist social research, and the assumptions underpinning it.

4.2 REPRISING GREEN REPUBLICANISM: OUTLINING AN INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

Green republicanism is John Barry’s synthesis of insights from green political theory with sympathetic elements of civic republicanism, articulated in virtue terms that relate to a putative green political economy (Barry 2012). Barry’s project flows from problematized ‘actually existing unsustainability’, understood as the socially and ecologically deleterious union of neoliberal politics and neoclassical economics, and their combined pursuit of exponential economic growth (Barry 2012). Actually existing unsustainability is the current hegemony. The problems emerging under this system require, in Barry’s view, significant societal transitions to less unsustainable ways of being, doing, having, and thinking. In chapter 2 I outlined the key points of green republicanism. Below, I reprise them in order to provide context for the interpretive framework.
The scientifically- and philosophically-informed starting point of green republicanism is the conception of humans as biologically embodied and ecologically and socially embedded [2.3.1]. This notion is the core ontological assumption of this thesis. Such an understanding has at least two implications that shape Barry’s prescriptions for relationships both within human societies, and between those societies and the nonhuman world. First, humans, as animals enmeshed in social and ecological webs, are vulnerable and dependent. Encouraging resilience within the population is, according to Barry, the most appropriate response to vulnerability. Resilience (a contested concept, that I discuss in 4.3.2) is here understood as an ability to cope with - but not eliminate - contingency and vulnerability. Second, relationships within and between human/ nonhuman entanglements should proceed from an ‘enlightened anthropocentric’ perspective (2012:7). Enlightened anthropocentrism treads a path between more extreme ecocentric and anthropocentric/ technocentric positions. Ecocentrism, for Barry, is an anti-humanist view that does not distinguish humans from nature; in contrast, ‘arrogant anthropocentrism’ (or technocentrism) falsely separates humans from nature, and assumes their mastery over nature (Barry 1999:9). Barry’s project is to develop an account of green republicanism and a related political economy, the principles of which would inform a less unsustainable society.

Green republican theory and related political economy (Barry 2012) is an extensive normative project, synthesizing diverse strands of political philosophy with insight from the natural and social sciences to form an evidentially-based normative political theory. There are six significant points to note. First, freedom is better understood (in republican terms) as non-domination, rather than (in liberal terms) as non-interference. Second, economic decisions are political; the economy is not a ‘natural’ phenomenon and does not proceed according to its own inner logic in a realm abstract from society. Third, green political economy valorizes the 4 S principles of (economic) security, sufficiency, sharing, and solidarity, in contrast to the problematized hegemonic encouragement of economic growth, accumulation, maximization, and competition. Fourth, and relatedly, land relations are broadened from individual ownership to encourage alternative models of ownership and use, guided by principles of usufruct, commons thinking, and stewardship. Fifth, governance informed by freedom-as-non-domination is legitimately able to legislate against socially and ecologically deleterious practices (e.g., marketing to drive growth through consumption), and in favour of the 4
Ss. Sixth, green republicanism valorizes civic virtues that include citizens actively engaged in the life, decision-making, and persistence over time of the community and polity, as well as maintaining a concern for future generations.

In this thesis, my empirical concern is to better understand the practices in which community woodland organizations exist, and in particular those practices of everyday woodland artistic activism, through a cultural political and practice theoretical lens. While Barry presents a compelling case for his project, elements of it are conceived with issues of governance and regulation in mind, and as such are less relevant for my cultural political and prefigurative exploratory concerns. Accordingly, I do not engage in detail with topics more relevant for green governmentality research, such as the republican conception of freedom as non-domination. Rather, I focus on the notions of vulnerability, resilience, and the principles of green political economy and land relations. Discussion of virtues associated with these domains - illustrated in figure 4.1 - will incorporate the civic virtues that are also a concern of both green and civic republicanism. Focus on the virtues associated with these notions promises to support rich interpretive insights from woodland encounters. I justify this focus as follows. Vulnerability and resilience are included because these describe the human condition (as greens understand it). Economic security, sufficiency, sharing, and solidarity (the ‘4 Ss’ of green political economy) and, relatedly, land relations, are included because these are directly relevant to my study of community-owned woodlands.
Below, I elaborate the theoretical underpinnings of each domain, and identify the corresponding virtues, subjectivities, and identities. First, vulnerability and resilience [4.3]. Second, the 4Ss of green political economy and related land relations [4.4]. The chapter concludes with a summary drawing together the fleshed-out interpretive framework [4.5].

4.3 FROM VULNERABILITY AND DEPENDENCE TO RESILIENCE

Humans are understood, from a green republican perspective, to be biologically embodied and ecologically and socially embedded. From this viewpoint, humans are another species of animal, enmeshed in complex social and ecological webs. As animals, we rely on others to fulfil biological, social, and cultural needs. We are vulnerable to changing social and ecological circumstances, and dependent not only upon other people, but also upon other animals and ecosystems for our survival. However, our vulnerability and dependence has been occluded in liberal thought and governance, and confronting it is unsettling. Resilience, although a contested concept, may offer an appropriate response to freshly revealed vulnerability (Barry 2012). This section proceeds in three stages. First, I reprise discussion of vulnerability and
dependence and their historical occlusion [4.3.1]. Second, I critically review Barry's engagement with resilience [4.3.2]. Finally, the section concludes with a discussion of the virtues, identities and subjectivities associated with vulnerability, dependence, and resilience [4.3.3].

4.3.1 Vulnerable and dependent humans

Vulnerability and dependence are ‘ineliminable’ aspects of the human condition, made visible by the green republican view of humans as biologically embodied and ecologically and socially embedded animals (Barry 2012:37). Although vulnerability - and its sequestration by liberal philosophy and practice - was discussed earlier [2.2.1], I recapitulate here the key points of that review in order to contextualize subsequent sections of this chapter, and because the concept of vulnerability is at the heart of green republican thought. Accepting vulnerability has significant implications for how we (should) act in the face of a climate- and resource-challenged world.

The idea of vulnerability stems from the scientifically-informed insight that humans are embodied animals, embedded in an ecosystemic mesh (Barry 2012), and correspondingly from the ecofeminist perspective that as animals, we are dependent on others at times through our lives (MacGregor 2006). People rely on other people for biological, social, and cultural needs. However, the vulnerable and dependent aspects of the human condition have been sequestered, or occluded, in much post-Enlightenment Western thought, and particularly within the liberal tradition. Vulnerability challenges the liberal idea that humans are autonomous and self-sufficient masters of nature (Barry 2012; Plumwood 1993).

Sequestered vulnerability is critiqued by Barry on at least two counts. First, it is problematic particularly in the face of climate change and resource challenges. When people are ultimately forced to face the power of global natural phenomena that cannot be humanly-controlled, such as storms, floods, or drought, it troubles their ontological security - the human ability to ignore, or avoid thinking about, troubling phenomena that disturb our sense of normality (Barry 2012, Giddens 1991). In this way, extreme weather-related disasters have affected communities and cultures differently, depending on how aware people within the community or culture were, before the weather event,
of the possibility of natural shocks and hazards. Barry (2012) notes the 2005 example of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, where the impact of the storm was very great, at least in part because many people affected by it had not expected to be so affected.

The second reason sequestered vulnerability is problematic from a green perspective is because of its relationship with deleterious unsustainable practices. A society that ignores or disguises its vulnerable condition is able to encourage practices and identities that are damaging to human flourishing, such as consumption-driven growth (Barry 2012). However, vulnerability and dependence are only able to be sequestered - and autonomy, self-sufficiency, and independence valorized - through social relations. If biological and ecological science are correct that humans are animals within ecosystems, then vulnerability should be accepted as an ‘ineliminable’ aspect of the human condition (Barry 2012:37). Liberal notions of autonomy and self-sufficiency, on the other hand, must be created and protected through practice. In this way, invulnerability (and relatedly, autonomy and self-sufficiency) may be understood in Schatzki’s terms as a general understanding, or Mouffe’s terms as part of the current hegemony.

In response to these problems, an important aspect of green republicanism is the de-sequestration of human vulnerability and dependence. Barry argues that it is better to acknowledge and respond to our vulnerable status as humans, than to continue hiding it. Conceptions of the human condition are important elements of any political philosophy. Accepting vulnerability as an ineliminable, basic, and universal aspect of what it means to be human has implications for how we conceive of the good life, of human flourishing, and consequently of how governance might proceed. Resilience, although contested, is Barry’s proposed conceptual and governance response to help (cope with) a de-sequestered vulnerability.

4.3.2 Resilient people and communities

Resilience - a contested concept - is here understood as an ability to cope with, but not eliminate, contingency and vulnerability (Barry 2012). Barry argues that encouraging resilience, understood in this way, is the most promising way to help people and
communities cope with vulnerability and the problems that we are likely to face as resources dwindle and climatic conditions change (Barry 2012).

Resilience is a concept that has gained traction across a variety of disciplines and policy arenas in recent years and consequently is understood in a number of different ways (Brown 2014; Cretney & Bond 2014; Davidson 2010; Joseph 2013; MacKinnon & Derickson 2013; Nelson 2014). In this thesis, I note the contested nature of resilience discourses, and accept (with caution) Barry's perspective, which is drawn partly from a psychological conception of resilience, and partly from an understanding prevalent within the Transition social movement (Barry 2012).

In mobilizing his Transition/ psychological resilience synthesis, Barry identifies and reviews four main intellectual fields concerned, in different ways, with resilience (Cutter 2006; Folke 2006; Masten et al. 1990, in Barry 2012). These are engineering, ecological science, disaster studies, and psychology. These are discussed below, and summarized in table 4.1.

Resilience in engineering describes the capacity of an object or entity to return to its original state, following a shock or change (Gunderson et al. 2002). In ecological science, resilience refers to the ability of an ecosystem to endure external shock, including (for example) forest fire or avalanche (Gunderson 2000; Holling 1973). Thus, engineering and ecological resilience are different. Engineers are concerned to design resilient entities able to return to their original form following shock. Ecologists, on the other hand, understand that resilient ecosystems are unstable and consequently may change while enduring shock (Gunderson 2000; Joseph 2013). Scholars concerned with disaster studies understand resilient human communities or societies as those with the capacity to cope with human-generated or natural hazards (Cutter 2006, in Barry 2012). Resilience in psychology refers to individuals’ ability to cope with adversity; psychological research demonstrates that exposure to adversity, and learning or bouncing back from adversity, is normally good for people (Masten et al. 1990, in Barry 2012). In summary, resilience can be understood as a conservative desire to maintain a steady state, or a flexible capacity to respond to shock or adversity. For some scholars, resilience is a property of individuals while for others it is a capacity of communities or groups (Joseph 2013).

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Table 4.1 Four modes of resilience thinking (summarized from Barry 2012:78-116)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Capacity of an entity to return to original shape following shock or change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological</td>
<td>Capacity of an ecosystem to endure external shock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disaster</td>
<td>Capacity of human communities to cope with human or natural hazards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Individuals’ ability to cope with adversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beyond academia, however, resilience has also become salient within the Transition movement (Hopkins 2010). Transition is a social movement web that seeks to address two core concerns (Cato & Hillier 2010; Hopkins 2008, 2010; North 2010). First, how communities can cope with Peak Oil, and the expected subsequent loss of cheap and readily available fossil fuel-based energy. Second, and relatedly, how communities can cope with the challenges of climate change. Transition is based upon permaculture thought: ‘not a set of rules, but a process of design based around principles […] of cooperation and mutually beneficial relationships, and translating these principles to action’ (Cato 2011:176; Holmgren 2002). The Transition project is to help communities develop resilience, understood as adaptive capacities to cope with the shocks that are anticipated from dwindling resources (including fossil fuels) and changing climates (Barry 2012; Hopkins 2008, 2010).

Barry’s engagement with resilience concepts draws partly from Transition thinking, and partly from the psychological resilience literature. Synthesizing insights from these perspectives, resilience is understood by Barry to mean - at the most basic level - the ability to live and continue living despite ‘often negative changes in circumstances and those inevitable and often unpredictable challenges all human beings and all human societies face’ (Barry 2012:80). In this way, resilience is defined - in Barry's terms - as ‘a way to cope with, rather than eliminate, vulnerability and contingency’ (Barry 2012:96). Resilience is the ‘capacity to withstand and recover from wounding and forms of harm that we cannot eliminate’ (Barry 2012:80). Consequently, the capacity of resilience is a ‘necessary part of what it means to be a healthy human, and a healthy human community’ (Barry 2012:80).

Resilience, from this perspective, is about ‘what happens before a crisis or shock, in terms of [communities’] institutional capacity and cultivating appropriate dispositions, habits, and virtues’ (Barry 2012:97). These dispositions and virtues include the creation
of built-in systemic redundancy, slack, or spare capacity, are adaptable and diverse, and accept uncertainty. Uncertainty and the idea of coping with rather than solving suggest that resilient processes, potentially involving diverse community members, are likely to be messy and clumsy responses to problems, rather than neat solutions (Frame 2008; Frame & Brown 2008). From this perspective, resilience is about flexibility and adaptability in the face of change and shock, and is consequently related to notions of contingency and instability rather than ability to return to a former steady state.

Resilience, in the sense accepted by Barry, can be seen to have two meanings. In one sense, resilience describes the capacity of communities, organizations, or individuals to deal with external shocks (e.g., ecological or resource shocks including extreme weather events relating to climate change, or peak oil). However, there is a second, cultural, dimension - ‘resilient individuals or communities are those that demonstrate certain virtues or characteristics, such as flexibility, adaptability, and adeptness in responding, willingness to change (especially values or beliefs), and foresight.’ (Barry 2012:98). In this way, resilience is not only a capacity but also a virtue: it can be understood in terms of identities and meanings, and can be a concern of cultural political analysis.

Although Barry’s discussion of resilience is based thoroughly on existing research, his review of resilience is somewhat uncritical. The concept of resilience is complex, and it is adopted in different ways by different disciplines (e.g., Brown 2014; Cretney & Bond 2014; Davidson 2010; Joseph 2013; MacKinnon & Derickson 2013; Nelson 2014). Notably, Barry overlooks the significant tension between activists’ understandings and pursuit of resilience, and resilience as a form of neoliberal governmentality (Chandler 2014; Joseph 2013). Although resilience has been embraced by some pro-sustainability activists and scholars (Barry 2012; Cretney & Bond 2014; Hopkins 2010), resilience is also salient in neoliberal discourse within both corporate (Dryzek et al. 2013) and state contexts (Brown 2014; Chandler 2014; Joseph 2013; MacKinnon & Derickson 2013).

61 There may appear to be a tension between the notions of slack and systemic redundancy, and the green political economic principles of sufficiency and stewardship. Slack relates to spare capacity and excess production, which would appear to lead to a wastefulness that is troubled by notions of sufficiency and stewardship. However, as will become clear below [4.4.2], this is not necessarily the case.
Market-oriented resilience discourses are in tension with the aims of resilience-embracing Transition activists. Resilience has become a ‘form of [neoliberal] governmentality’, in which individuals are expected to become resilient in order to cope with economic and terrorist crises (Joseph 2013:38), and resilient communities are sought in order to offer flexibility to the changing demands of global capital (MacKinnon & Derickson 2013). Some of these crises may be concerns that activists share: notably an ability to deal with changing economic circumstances driven by instabilities within the neoliberal system. However, Transition (and Barry's broader project) challenges and seeks to replace neoliberal practices that are seen as unsustainable. Yet, neoliberal resilience discourses privilege and seek to perpetuate neoliberal practices (MacKinnon & Derickson 2013). Moreover, neoliberal resilience discourses involve externally- and expert-defined notions that are imposed upon communities (MacKinnon & Derickson 2013), whereas green republicanism centralized and elite control of decision-making. For some, this tension suggests that activists should eschew resilience thinking (e.g., MacKinnon & Derickson 2013); for others, the challenge posed by the conflicting understandings of the concept are (cultural political) acts of resistance to the neoliberal hegemony (e.g., Cretney & Bond 2014; Ganesh & Zoller 2014; Nelson 2014).

Barry is not alone within the academic community in identifying resilience as an important concept for sustainability transitions (see, e.g., Beecher et al. 2012; Cato 2009, 2014; Cullen-Unsworth & Wallace 2015; Franklin et al. 2011a; Gerhardinger et al. 2015; Quilley 2015). For this reason, and also because my concern in this thesis is to develop an understanding of a cultural politics for sustainability transitions, rather than to contribute to theoretical debates around the concept of resilience, I accept (with some caution) Barry’s understanding of resilience as a capacity of communities and individuals to cope with, but not eliminate, contingency and vulnerability. By focusing on virtues associated with Barry’s green republican reading of resilience, rather than debates around the concept of resilience itself, some of the tension may be avoided.62

62 MacKinnon and Driscoll (2013) argue that community activists and organizers should focus on resourcefulness, rather than resilience. Resourcefulness, in their terms, is a process not a (measurable) entity, and is attentive to materials, resources, knowledge (both formal skills and folk or indigenous ways of knowing), and justice. There is scope for future research exploring the compatibility of this concept with green republicanism.
4.3.3 Virtues of vulnerability and resilience

Vulnerability and dependence are ineliminable aspects of what it means to be human. As such it is better to acknowledge that we are vulnerable and dependent human animals, rather than delude ourselves that we enjoy the unrestricted mastery of nature. Resilience - in Barry’s terms - suggests potential support for people to cope with rather than obscure that vulnerability. Vulnerability, dependence, and resilience are suggestive of a range of virtues, including humility, earthiness, fortitude, courage, foresight, hope, creativity, compassion, care, sensuality, prudence, temperance, and materiality (Barry 2012). This section concludes with a discussion of these virtues, and identification of the associated potential subjectivities and identities sketched by Barry around vulnerability and resilience.

Corresponding to vulnerability and dependence are humility, earthiness, compassion and care, and sensuality. Humility relates to the necessary acknowledgment that we as humans cannot master nature, and also to our dependence on other humans at various stages through our lives. Humility represents a ‘cautious and considered approach’ to decision-making that is consistent with vulnerable humans aware they cannot master nature (Barry 2012:114). Earthiness, drawn from Louke van Wensveen’s work, is the ideal ecological virtue. Earthiness relates to ‘feeling at home with the earth, and being grounded’ (Van Wensveen 2000:34, in Barry 2012). Cultivation of earthiness helps people to cope with contingency, and the messiness and imperfection of life as a vulnerable human. Compassion and care are sourced from the ecofeminist intellectual origins of Barry’s commitment to vulnerability (see, e.g., MacGregor 2006). Because humans are vulnerable and dependent, they experience compassion and care at times throughout their lives, and this should be more visible. Relatedly, sensuality is in marked contrast to the subjectivities prevalent in current society of workers and consumers, marginalising other identities such as parent, carer, or lover (Barry 2012).

Resilience is suggestive of a capacity to withstand, adapt, and recover from shock, hurt, and wounding, and an ability to accept slack, or systemic redundancy, diversity, and uncertainty and messiness. Associated with these are virtues including fortitude and courage, foresight, hope and creativity, compassion and care, prudence, and materiality (Barry 2012). Forethought and foresight, and hope, creativity, and imagination are all
important virtues not only for imagining and working towards alternative (less unsustainable) futures, but also to anticipate and prepare for the threats and problems facing humanity as resources dwindle and climatic conditions change (Barry 2012). Compassion and care are virtues required to help deal with the physical and emotional hurt or shock that may be impacts of these threats and problems (Barry 2012).

Resilience, for Barry, is a ‘modern idiom’ for what in classical thought was understood as a virtue (Barry 2012:96). At an individual level, resilience is closely related to the historical virtues of fortitude or courage, understood as a ‘capacity to overcome adversity, not in the sense of destroying or eliminating adversity, but “coping” or coming through successfully’ (Barry 2012:96). Fortitude and courage are important virtues for at least three reasons. First, these virtues help people cope with shock. Second, fortitude and courage are understood to be important to face an uncertain and potentially worrying future. Third, these virtues can bolster, emotionally, the work of those green thinkers and activists pursuing sustainability transitions that explicitly challenge the core assumption of modern society - economic growth. These people, Barry argues, can be understood as performing a dissident role within society, troubling the hegemony and making visible critiques of, and alternatives to, economic growth. A dissident role in society may be lonely, uncomfortable, and risks sanctions from the state; thus, fortitude and courage are important virtues for such dissidents (Barry 2012).

Corresponding to these virtues of vulnerability and resilience are subjectivities and identities including a renewed competence with practical skills and a re-established emphasis on social and ecological relations within the local area. Lapsed skills may be renewed, helping people learn to provision for themselves, or create and repair artefacts. In this way, relocalization and reskilling help to reduce reliance on distant producers and global supply chains, and waste may be diminished because people are able to maintain, repair, and salvage broken and worn goods rather than discard them (Barry 2012; Böhm et al. 2015; Cato 2014; Hopkins 2008; Quilley 2009; Spratt et al. 2009).
### 4.4 GREEN REPUBLICAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

The economy is a core concern for green politics (Barry 2007a). The economy is understood as the primary interface between human society and the nonhuman world, from which are obtained materials and resources for human activities (Barry 2012; Cato 2009). However, the current orthodoxy of neoclassical economics within a neoliberal political system - and the logic, fundamental to both, of economic growth - is problematic for people and planet, and presents a barrier to human flourishing within ecological limits (Barry 2012, Cato 2011; Hamilton 2003; Jackson 2009). Orthodox economics has become depoliticised, despite the unavoidably value-laden character of economic decision-making (Barry 2012). Rather, economic debate should be made visible as political economy, and space should be created for conflictual debate and heterodox voices.

A green republican account of political economy is based around four basic principles: economic security, sufficiency, solidarity, and sharing. Within such a political economy,
human-land relations may be organized by principles drawn from the notions of usufruct, commons thinking, and stewardship. In this way, green republican political economy represents a contribution to heterodox economic debates.

Below, I review Barry’s critique of the current economic system and outline of green republican political economy [4.4.1]. This discussion contextualizes subsequent discussion of the 4 S principles and outline of green republican land relations [4.4.2], and their associated virtues [4.4.3].

4.4.1 From depoliticized economic orthodoxy to green political economy

Green political economy, in Barry’s terms, flows from a problematization of the current economic system; this is an immanent critique of the practices and institutions of the contemporary neoliberal market economy. Those institutions, and the practices in which they consist - including ‘the market, private property, competition, and efficiency’ - are commonly presented as both ‘natural (beyond the capacity of [non-expert] humans to alter), and also good (if we want economic growth and material wellbeing)’ (Barry 2012:121). In this way, the economy has been naturalized, creating at least three consequences. First, economic discourse has become depoliticized. Practitioners of neoclassical economics - the orthodoxy - claim value neutrality, objective analysis, and scientific status; consequently, they are able to present an illusion of ‘economic truth’ through reliance on numerical and quantitative methods (Foucault 2010:51, in Barry 2012:121). Claims to objectivity are false, Barry argues: practices of economic theorizing and decision-making are unavoidably value-laden (Barry 2012). Yet, these practices have become detached from political and ethical debate. In this way, the economy is depoliticized, and presented as a realm separate from the social, proceeding according to a natural internal logic that can only be guided by experts.

Second, the monopoly of orthodox economists in economic decision-making, and the depoliticization of economic discussion, have marginalized and delegitimized other voices offering alternative perspectives. Heterodox and green economists are among these marginalized voices, and thus critiques of economic growth, and debates around post- or de-growth (see, e.g., Cato 2009; D’Alisa et al. 2015; Jackson 2009) are not heard widely within society. Third, as economic debate is depoliticized, subjectivities
and identities shaped by the current system are normalized. From this perspective, consuming is a normalized practice; consequently, practices that eschew consuming are performance of cultural politics. This is one justification for my approach in this thesis: cultural politics allows focus on contestations of normalized practices and therefore identities, meanings, and subjectivities.

Responding to depoliticized economic discourse, Barry argues for a return to the historical concern for political economy. In this way, the value-laden and political character of any economic perspective may be acknowledged and articulated through debate. Political economy is already a concern of civic republican thought (Barry 2012). Below, I review the key points of the synthesis between civic republicanism and green economic thought that creates green republican political economy (henceforth, GRPE).

Republican political economy is significantly different to the critiqued current system (Barry 2012). There are at least three points to note. First, republicans understand the economy as a social and political creation, not a self-regulating entity beyond democratic control. Second, the economy, like the republican polity, is a fragile and contingent accomplishment requiring constant care and maintenance. Third, the economy consists in formal markets as well as the public sector. There is no marked emphasis on one or other of these spheres. Republican interest in political economy is marked by a concern for the ‘political and democratic citizenship skills, characters, competencies, habits and modes of thinking and acting that are fostered or not within the workplace’ (Barry 2012:140). Maximizing economic growth and fulfilling consumer desires are not a central republican priority. Rather, they must be debated in order to ensure their consistency with the polity’s other, non-economic objectives.

Republican political economy is, in this way, sympathetic to green concerns with limits to growth (Meadows et al. 1972; Rockström et al. 2009b), and with undifferentiated economic growth (Barry 2012; Jackson 2009). The critique of economic growth as incompatible with an ecologically-finite world is a well-established trope within green theory and sustainability discourse (Beddoe et al. 2009; Blewitt 2008; Cato 2011; Daly
Additionally, there is increasing evidence suggesting that not only is the continued pursuit of growth ecologically deleterious, but it contributes to social problems too. Growth and material consumption are critiqued for their role in creating social inequality that has implications for wellbeing (including mental and physical health) and participation in society (Cato 2009; Dorling 2014; Hamilton 2003; Jackson 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). In this last point, greens are sympathetic to republican concerns (Barry 2012).

Despite these green critiques of growth, the stance that Barry adopts on growth is a nuanced compromise rather than complete disavowal. He argues that although alternatives should be sought to orthodox and undifferentiated economic growth, there should be no outright rejection or abandonment of growth. Rather than assuming growth to be a ‘permanent feature of an economy’, it should merely be understood as a useful stage in societal development (Barry 2012:141). In this way, the economy should be actively and politically managed in order to encourage growth in some sectors, while discouraged in others. For example, healthcare or education expenditure can make a different contribution to human flourishing or ecological impact than does nuclear weapons expenditure.

GRPE would broaden understanding of ‘the economy’ from formal market and public sector economies to include the social economy as a third ‘sphere of provisioning’ (Barry 2012:180). Participation in that third provisioning sphere would be promoted, amid a move away from the current emphasis on formal markets. Such regulation is possible under a green republican regime because of the republican understanding of freedom as non-domination (rather than liberal freedom-as-non-interference), allowing what would otherwise be critiqued by liberal and free-market adherents as interference. Participation in particular spheres of provisioning and economic practices may be encouraged or discouraged according to the political priorities of the polity (Barry

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A paradox exists between critiques of economic growth and support for its continuation. Although compelling arguments have accumulated against growth from (inter alia) ethical, healthcare, environmental, and political perspectives, and apparently growing traction around alternative economic models, the growth model maintains its hegemony (Barry 2012). Drawing on insights from development studies, deliberative democracy, orthodox economics, and Karl Marx, Barry argues that growth is (at least partly) an ideological project of global elites. In this way, growth can be understood as a ‘political strategy [exercised] on behalf of a minority to control and dominate society’ (Barry 2012:159). It is for this reason of elite interest, Barry argues, that the paradox persists between compelling critiques of growth, against continued support for it.
2012). The principal economic regulatory focus of a putative green republican state would be to ensure the fair distribution of types of work, prevent that distribution from compromising citizens’ freedom and equality, and to ensure that economic activity did not ‘fatally destabilise solidarity and community’ (Barry 2012:240).

Policies informed by GRPE would focus on encouraging civic virtues and participation, as well as flexibility and adaptability in response to the contingent character of social life and the polity. Wealth accumulation is seen as a potential threat to the republic, because inequality has a corrupting effect on equality and democratic participation (Barry 2012; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). Finally, green republicans would support the protection, through subsidy or otherwise, of local economic enterprise against external competition, because such enterprise is valued for more than economic reasons. Local economic enterprises contribute not least to relocalization and community resilience, and may form part of the social economy that is discussed below.

Summarizing, GRPE responds to the depoliticized current economic system. Growth is not a core concern of GRPE. Rather, primary concerns of this heterodox account of economic organization include the encouragement of participation in democratic decision-making and of capacity to so participate, a widening of the economy into three provisioning spheres (social, state, market), and attentiveness to the fragile and contingent character of the economy (and its ecological material and resource base). In contrast to the current valorization of economic growth, maximization, competition, and accumulation, GRPE emphasizes different priorities. These are the alternative 4 S political economic principles: (economic) security, sufficiency, solidarity, and sharing. Below, I review Barry’s conception of (and evidence-base for) each of these principles, and also the corresponding notions of usufruct, commons, and stewardship that Barry suggests to guide land relations in a less unsustainable society [4.4.2]. The section concludes with a discussion of the virtues corresponding to these principles, and their associated potential subjectivities and identities [4.4.3].
4.4.2 The principles of green republican political economy

Economic security

Economic security is a potential replacement for economic growth that is consistent with human flourishing within ecological limits, and also with active participation in an egalitarian democratic society (Barry 2012). To justify this claim, Barry deploys a wide range of empirical research, extending beyond the idea of security to inequality and democratic participation. The idea of economic security, drawn from an International Labour Organization (ILO) report (2004), challenges earlier notions of insecurity as a beneficial and essential feature of the capitalist economy, essential for innovation and to maintain dynamism in the economic system (see, e.g., Schumpeter 1976). A green political economy, organised around the principle of economic security, promises to lead to a more egalitarian society (Barry 2012). Reductions in socio-economic inequality, transformed wealth distribution, and increased wellbeing - together contributing to a more equal society - have been associated with democratic participation, which is important not only for resilience but also for a green republican society (Barry 2012; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010).

Economic security is defined as a combination of basic social security (access to basic needs, health infrastructure, education, accommodation, information, and social protection), and work-related security (that consists in seven elements, two of which are essential for basic security: security of income, and of voice representation). Basic security requires limiting the consequences of risks and uncertainties faced on a daily basis by people, while also delivering social conditions that allow people to belong to diverse communities, enjoy a ‘fair opportunity to pursue a chosen occupation and develop their capacities via what the ILO calls decent work’ (International Labour Organization 2004:1, in Barry 2012:166).

The ILO report identified that ‘people in countries that provide citizens with a high level of economic security have a higher level of happiness on average […] and that the most important determinant of national happiness is not income level […]. The key factor is the extent of income security, measured in terms of income protection and a low degree of income inequality’ (ILO 2004:1, in Barry 2012:166). As Barry notes, the
findings of the ILO report are supported by other research, including Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett’s (2010) identification of the physical and psychological health impacts of inequality. More recently, Danny Dorling (2014) has shown how inequality affects life expectancy, educational and employment opportunities, and mental health.

In addition, other connections have been identified between economic growth, (in)security, and wellbeing. Psychologists have shown how consumption (encouraged by government policy to promote economic growth) is used by individuals to compensate for personal feelings of insecurity, anxiety, or simply to maintain their identities or status (Kasser 2002). Inequality has also been shown to be socially deleterious in three further ways, all relevant to human flourishing and a healthy, democratic, society. First, less equal societies have increased status competition leading to decreased wellbeing (Jackson 2009; Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). Second, less equal societies usually fare less well on various policy issues including childhood mortality, teenage pregnancy, literacy, obesity, drug use, trust, social mobility, and mental illness (Wilkinson & Pickett 2010). Third, and relatedly, inequality has a negative effect on social trust, social solidarity, and sense of community (Lane 2000, in Barry 2012).

The knowledge that socio-economic inequality can reduce trust has a number of implications for sustainability transitions. First, stronger, more cohesive communities are better able to develop capacities for resilience in the face of vulnerability (Barry 2012). Second, inequality can ‘compromise democracy’ (Barry 2012:174), where democracy is understood as more than simply a political system, but also a type of society. There is growing evidence that greater income inequality leads to asymmetries in democratic participation, as less affluent citizens withdraw from politics (Goodin & Dryzek 1980, in Barry 2012). Increased inequality leads to wealthy elites becoming well positioned to ‘shape the scope and nature of politics, and determine the grammar of politics and economics, including promoting the ideology of economic growth’ (Barry 2014:175). In this (republican) way, ‘the egalitarian norms of society [should] be diffused throughout society and not confined to the formal political sphere’ (Barry 2012:175).

Summarizing, a policy emphasis on economic security, as understood by the ILO, promises to contribute to a more egalitarian society in which citizens are more likely to
develop capacities for democratic participation and for resilience. Economic security is the foundation upon which the other principles of GRPE are based.

**Sufficiency**

As economic security replaces economic growth, discourses of maximization and efficiency are transposed into sufficiency. Here, Barry draws on Thomas Princen’s work. For Princen (2005, in Barry 2012), sufficiency is a principle that should guide decisions about the use of finite resources. Princen identifies a threshold beyond which sufficiency concerns should be foregrounded in decision making, ‘when material gains now preclude material gains in the future; when consumer gratification or investor reward threatens economic security; when benefits internalised depend on costs externalised’ (Princen 2005:18, in Barry 2012:176).

The concept of sufficiency is related to other concepts, notably slack and unproductivity, that are salient in green discourse. Slack is related to resilience and derived from the permaculture foundations of Transition thinking (Barry 2012; Hopkins 2008). The ideas of unproductivity and slack challenge the current valorization of efficiency and maximized productivity. Not maximizing productivity leaves slack, or spare capacity, in a system. Sufficiency, slack, and unproductiveness can help increase communities’ and organizations’ resilience by leaving spare capacity available to withstand or recover from disturbance. Slack and unproductivity also relate to the green distinction between work and employment, and meaningful work, that has emerged from ecofeminist debates about production and reproduction (MacGregor 2006). Meaningful work can contribute to social wellbeing, yet is not necessarily paid. Hence, this form of work doesn’t contribute to economic growth and so is delegitimized and marginalized in contemporary society (Barry 2012).

Tim Jackson’s (2009) work on a sustainability macroeconomics of investment, illustrates Barry’s argument for sufficiency as a political economic principle. As Jackson has noted, ‘[I]nvestments in ecosystem maintenance contribute to aggregate demand, but [not to] aggregate supply - at least under the assumptions of a conventional production function. They may be vital in protecting ecosystem integrity [which is] vital for sustaining production at all over the long term. But in the short term, they appear to
soak up income without increasing economic output’ (Jackson 2009:140, in Barry 2012:209). In other words, an encouragement of sufficiency may appear to be unproductive, yet is conducive to an enhanced quality of human life and the protection of ecosystems vital for human and nonhuman life.

An emphasis on sufficiency does not equate to austere and parsimonious lives (Barry 2012). Thrift and frugality are consistent with sufficiency. However, these are - as Sharon Astyk has noted - not generosity’s opposite, but ‘the enabler of generosity. A frugal life that does not waste, and cares for what you have, is what enables you to give away, to share, to open your hands and pour forth what you have preserved’ (Astyk 2008:208, in Barry 2012:177). In this way, thrift and frugality may be understood as a challenge to debt-fuelled individual consumption, rather than the notion of individualistic hoarding commonly associated with thrift (Barry 2012).

**Solidarity**

The principle of solidarity in GRPE is a counterpoint to the valorization of competition - particularly individualist competition - by the current system (Barry 2012). However, Barry doesn’t explicitly define solidarity. Rather, he proposes the social economy as a domain within which solidarity is fostered. In turn, he understands the social economy to consist in a variety of organizing practices consistent with human flourishing within ecological limits, including, *inter alia*, cooperatives, mutuals, and community-owned organizations. He identifies the social - also known as the ‘core, gift, informal, or convivial’ - economy as the original sphere of provisioning for human needs (Barry 2012:180). That is to say, the social economy sits alongside, but predates, both the state and the formal market/ capitalist systems, as a conceptual space where human provisioning is institutionalized and organized (Barry 2012). It is important here to note that economic activity should be understood - following the green critique of GDP as an inadequate and flawed measure of economic activity and social progress - as including ‘all forms of production, consumption, distribution, trading, and exchange, and not just that recorded in the formal cash economy’ (Barry 2012:184). In this way, the green economy is considerably more expansive than the orthodox economy.
The social economy can be distinguished from the formal market economy, and from the public sector economy, by two institutional attributes: ethos, and organizational form (Barry & Smith 2005). The ethos is to satisfy social needs, rather than generate profit. Social economy organizations are motivated by a variety of norms and values, including beneficence, reciprocity, and solidarity. They tend to be democratically run, and include inter alia mutual, communal, and cooperative models of employee participation in decision-making or ownership (Barry 2012; Barry & Smith 2005). Examples of these organizations are community-based projects including social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals, local energy and food initiatives, or local trading and exchange schemes (Barry 2012; Barry & Smith 2005; Cato 2009, 2012a; Jackson 2009). Provisioning in the social economy includes practices that both support and constitute community and solidarity.

However, Barry does not propose wholesale replacement of the existing spheres of provisioning. Rather, a ‘mixed economy’ is required for a post-growth economy to succeed in enhancing human flourishing (Barry 2012:181). Such an economy would comprise the ‘existing (but reformed) market economy, and the existing (but reformed) public sector economy’, where the reformation of these other sectors is designed to cultivate the development and enlargement of the social economy (Barry 2012:184). Reformation does not mean complete abandonment, because some products or services will be more appropriately provisioned by the state or private sector; this point will be illustrated in the following discussion of sharing.

The social economy is an important conceptual site for greens for two reasons, both related to the idea of ‘co-production’ (Barry 2012:185). Co-production is about self-organization, and is in contrast to currently-dominant practices of reliance on the state or market for products and services. Here, Barry draws from a variety of existing work, including Ivan Illich's (1973, 1980) notion of the convivial economy, Vandana Shiva's (1988) work on sustainable livelihoods and subsistence economies, Tim Jackson's (2009) articulation of prosperity without growth, and Molly Scott Cato's (2009, 2012a, 2012b) development of green and bioregional economic thinking (Barry 2012:180-183). Co-production is relevant, firstly because it helps people participate more actively in society, and secondly because it connects to green calls for relocalization.
Participation in the organizations in which the social economy consists helps people to cultivate useful skills for citizenship (Barry 2012; Barry & Smith 2005). Here, it is worth noting that Barry is critical not only of the corrosion of citizenship by the market economy (in which citizens are seen to become passive consumers), but also of the erosion of responsibility and agency by the public sector (in which citizens are seen to become passive recipients of welfare from the paternalistic state) (Barry 2012; Barry & Doherty 2001; Barry & Smith 2005). However, the ethos and structure of organizations within the social economy are seen to promote ‘co-production’ that can ‘foster a sense of the individual qua economic [or] productive agent as an active citizen, rather than passive consumer (market economy) or welfare recipient (public sector economy)’ (Barry 2012:185). In particular, social economy organizations are seen to contribute to a ‘disposition of cooperation’ that helps to generate virtues of reciprocity and trust and orient citizens away from narrow self-interest (Barry & Smith 2005:258).

Co-production in the social economy is also important because of the contribution it makes to relocalization. The social economy helps to reconnect production and consumption, and consequently reduce the conceptual or spatial separation of these practices (Barry 2012). This point connects back to the relocalization agenda. In this way, goods and services are produced near to where they are consumed, supporting resilience and minimizing unnecessary and potentially polluting supply chains. There is also a consequence for social justice, because consumers are less likely to remain ignorant of the working conditions of those producing goods and services for them.

64 There are clear connections between Barry’s GRPE work - in particular this section on solidarity and the social economy - and the recent focus within critical management and organization studies, upon the idea of ‘alternative organization’ (Parker et al. 2014a, 2014b). The idea of solidarity is shared by both Barry and the Parker team, as is an agreement on the broadly post-structural perspective that the economy, and organizing are both political and should be the subject of contestation. As noted above [1.5.3], tension exists between these perspectives. Parker et al. draw on anarchist theory to develop three principles for alternative organization: solidarity, autonomy, responsibility, and seek to ‘respect personal autonomy […] within a framework of cooperation’ (Parker et al. 2014a:32). This approach appears to have points of both contact and tension with Barry’s civic republican framing. Barry’s project is to promote solidarity, along with sharing and cooperation, while acknowledging the central republican concern with ‘the problem of freedom among human beings who are necessarily interdependent’ (Honohan 2002:1). Further exploration of this question lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Although the tension may simply reflect irconcilable debate between anarchist and civic republican perspectives, future discussion may prove a useful contribution to both alternative organization and GRPE, particularly given the apparently fecund intersection between these fields.
The final key aspect of Barry’s argument around solidarity and the social economy concerns the green distinction between work and employment. This distinction is informed by the feminist and ecofeminist insight that much labour takes place outside the formal monetized economy. From this perspective, the valorization of formally-paid employment in contemporary society is deeply problematic, because it sees employment as worthwhile only in terms of profit maximization (Mellor 2010, in Barry 2012:187). However, unpaid work can be meaningful work - a perspective consistent with practices of the social economy - despite being marginalized by contemporary valorization of paid employment.

**Sharing**

Sharing is the green contrast to the currently dominant practices of accumulation and acquisition (Barry 2012). Sharing challenges the emphasis on ‘individualism, privacy, and not sharing things’ that is encouraged by the growth economy (Astyk 2008:123, in Barry 2012:201). Not sharing means we consume more resources to produce more goods, and social life consequently has a greater material impact on the planet (e.g., Wackernagel & Rees 1996). Where needs can be met by collective and shared models of consumption and ownership, then resource and energy use is reduced (Barry 2012). There are three implications suggested by an emphasis on sharing (Barry 2012). First, a move from consuming goods to consuming services. Second, the emergence of organizations to facilitate sharing. Third, the cultivation of individuals’ capacities for sharing.

The starting point for Barry’s discussion of sharing is his call for a shift from consuming goods to consuming services. However, this comes with a green twist. Bill McDonough, a designer and green entrepreneur, has proposed a ‘product of service’ concept, where a durable good (e.g., washing machine, carpet) is designed by the manufacturer to be reused. Thus, the customer enjoys the service (of a product) from the manufacturer who continues to own the product. After a defined period, the product is returned to the manufacturer and its materials reused in new products (McDonough & Braungart 2002, in Barry 2012:201). Clearly, this is a business model firmly located within the formal market economy, and sharing is not particularly important in
McDonough’s concept. However, Barry extends the principle in ways that may be more consistent with social or public sector economic spheres.

‘Libraries, light rail, and laundromats’ are three examples that Barry develops to illustrate how ownership can be separated from use in ways consistent with sharing (Barry 2012:197). Libraries, typically associated with the public sector economy, allow enjoyment and use of cultural artefacts to be separated from ownership. Libraries need not be restricted to lending books, but can also offer recordings of music or films, or paintings, sculptures or tapestries (and so on). Light rail is one example of public transportation systems that allow separation of our need for mobility from ‘auto-mobility’ (2006): by encouraging people to travel by light rail, car ownership may be reduced, with consequences for fuel dependency, pollution, and waste. Public transport is, for Barry, typically associated with both the state economy and market economy, challenging current assumptions that public transport is most appropriately privately-owned. Finally, laundromats, typically part of the market economy, satisfy our need for clean clothes without requiring wasteful private ownership of a washing machine or tumble-dryer, that is seldom-used in comparison to more intensive laundromat operations.

All three of these examples show how collective, socialised, or shared modes of consumption or provisioning can be met by modes of production in all three provisioning spheres, while also reducing energy and resource use. However, the benefits Barry identifies go further than material intensity. He argues that they also have the advantage of ‘potentially enhancing social solidarity and strengthening community’ (Barry 2012:203). This is because a sharing society would be more egalitarian, partly because service users would come into contact with other citizens. But sharing also promises to reduce inequality, because people would likely own fewer material possessions (Barry 2012).

**Land relations**

Flowing from these 4 S principles of green political economy, the green republican view on property and land ownership is distinctively different from current liberal practices and institutions of ownership that defend private individual property rights. In
a full world, operating close to ecological limits, the liberal idea of private property ownership is ‘inappropriate’ (Barry 2012:244). Contemporary civic republicans are keen to ensure that property ownership is spread very widely throughout society, in order to minimize the risk of inequality and consequent corrosion of democratic participation. However, the green republican stance is in some tension with such a prescription (Barry 2012).

The green republican stance on property and land ownership is based upon the insight that property can be neither natural nor pre-political, but is a ‘relational entity, deeply embedded in social and ecological relations’ (Meyer 2009:116-121, in Barry 2012:244). Property ownership consists in a nexus of socialmaterial practices and institutions (that may be changed through people’s actions). Land and its use are reliant on ecological processes, including (e.g.) water for irrigation, insects for pollination that are part of the ‘ecological infrastructure’ and consequently ‘inherently public property’ (Varner 1994:158, in Barry 2012:243). In this way, current practices and institutions of ownership may be changed.

Green political economy views private property and land ownership pragmatically and instrumentally, understanding land as ‘the basis for a free, equal, and sustainable, democratic polity’ (Barry 2012:242). Property, in these terms, can play an instrumental role in creating a healthily democratic society. An important point is access to - and use of - land. For this reason, Barry argues that the bundle of rights associated with ownership - to own, to use, to enjoy, and to destroy - should be separated. People should be able to use land without owning it. Barry proposes - but does not discuss in depth - the concepts of usufruct and commons as organizing or regulatory principles to inform land use, and these both overlap with the notion of stewardship, which may be considered a virtue.

Usufruct is an historic concept that separates property use from ownership. Usufruct describes the ‘legal right to use and derive profit, enjoyment, or benefit from property

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65 Varner’s ecological infrastructure would be described by others as ecosystem services. The questions of whether (and if so, how) these services may be owned, shared, or valued are controversial. In this thesis, I am concerned to explore a cultural politics of sustainability transitions, understood against green republican theory, and do not engage in these debates. However, Büscher, Dressler, & Fletcher (2014) offer a useful discussion of these questions.
that belongs to another person, as long as the property is not damaged, and ideally is “improved” in some manner’ (Barry 2012:245). The distinctively green republican stance on usufruct outlined by Barry understands the earth, land, and ecosystemic processes as belonging not to anyone, but to everyone. This view is informed by a variety of eco-feminist and eco-socialist insights, including those of scholars and activists such as Vandana Shiva (2006) and Derek Wall (2010). From this perspective, land should not be appropriated as private property, nor can the state or another collective own land. In short, this is a radically different concept of property from the current system.

Relatedly, the notion of the commons describes resources ‘accessible to and managed by and in the interests of a roughly defined community’ (Barry 2012:247). Usufruct is integrated into the heart of commons thinking, because of the ecological principle that users’ continued access to the commons is granted only if the resource is left ‘in as good a form as it was when first found’ (Wall 2010:16, in Barry 2012:247). Green republicanism favours the commons, which are viewed as an important component of the social economy (Barry 2012). A state following green republican principles would be able to regulate the rolling out of commons regimes and rolling back of historical enclosure regimes that have favoured private property ownership. Such action reflects the green republican emphasis of the social economy over state and private or market-oriented ownership.

Both usufruct and the commons overlap with the concept of stewardship. These concepts all share a concern for future generations. They seek to preserve elements of the present (e.g., property, land, democratic institutions, wealth, the earth) in order to hand them down for futurity. In this way, usufruct, commons, and stewardship are all related to the political economic principles of sharing, sufficiency, solidarity, and security.

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66 It is important to note here that the commons as here understood are not the same as discussed in Garret Hardin’s infamous ‘Tragedy of the Commons’(1968). Despite his argument’s title, Hardin described an open access regime; this could be understood as a ‘free for all’ approach to resource management, rather than the user-regulated approach of the true commons (Barry 2007a; Wall 2014). Much of Elinor Ostrom’s work is a response to Hardin (e.g., Ostrom 1990; Ostrom et al. 2012).
The green republican perspective on property and land ownership will benefit from further development; this is one aspect of Barry’s project that betrays its recently emerged status. For example, although there are in his writing hints of various ownership models, including commons ownership of varying scales, it is not clear exactly who will own land, what sizes commons regimes might be (in terms of area and number of participants), nor how the transition to such a radically different system may come about. Equally, although Barry does touch briefly upon the concept of investment, he offers little discussion of this important mechanism.\(^{67}\)

Notwithstanding the lack of specifics around property and land ownership in Barry’s account, there are useful key points to draw from the green republican vision of property. First, the notion of usufruct points towards people using and enjoying land without causing deleterious effects, and calls for users to improve the land they use. Second, commons thinking calls for resource use that leaves the resource in as good a form as when it was found. Third, both usufruct and the commons intersect with a notion of stewardship that is concerned with leaving something for future generations, rather than the present generation exploiting or benefiting at the expense of the future. These principles, which would be organizing or regulatory principles of a green republican regime, can be understood in virtue terms, as discussed below [4.4.3].

Green perspectives on land ownership are particularly relevant for this thesis, for at least two reasons. First, the practices and institutions that are involved in human-land relations - how we control and use land - are directly related to how we conceive of our relationship with nature (Wall 2014). Second, the empirical context explored in this thesis - community-controlled woodlands in Scotland - is a facet of a wider movement for land reform in that country, seeking to change historically (and currently) exceptionally concentrated land ownership patterns. As researchers including Andy Wightman and Jim Hunter have shown, much of Scotland is in private hands, and of that much is held by only a few individuals (Hunter et al. 2013; Wightman 2010b, 2012). Part of the concern driving the research reported in this thesis is to explore the

\(^{67}\) These points are all worthy of future research, as is the intersection between green republicanism, commons thinking, and the increasing number of community organizations in Scotland. In this thesis, I have been concerned empirically with artistic and creative activities within community woodlands, hence opportunities have been restricted to address that promising intersection.
practices of land relations that are performed by community woodland organizations that have gained control of their local forest from absent or distant private landowners or the state forestry commission. By interrogating the human-woodland relationships exposed through community woodlands’ artistic activities, it may be possible to identify alternative conceptions of nature that prefigure a less unsustainable society.

4.4.3 Virtues of green republican political economy

GRPE is organized around four principles, of (economic) security, sufficiency, solidarity, and sharing. Flowing from these 4 Ss, land and property relations can be understood in terms of usufruct, the commons, and stewardship. These principles seek to support a society that lives lightly on the earth, balancing current and future needs for resources, and aspiring to a healthily democratic society that minimizes inequalities. Throughout his account of green republicanism, John Barry is concerned to articulate virtues, and sketch cognate subjectivities and identities, that would be valorized by a green republican state.

Eleven distinct virtues are related to green republican political economy: active participation (in social provisioning, community organizing, and civic democratic processes), restraint, precaution, thrift, frugality, moderation, sufficiency, reciprocity, mutuality, stewardship, and trust (Barry 2012). Civic participation is related to economic security, solidarity, and sharing. Although participation may be seen as more of a spillover from security than a virtue for it, there is presumably a virtuous circle in which participation in democratic processes, by citizens from all aspects of society, must begin to engage with the formal political sphere in order to change it. Relatedly, solidarity - as understood here - requires participation in the community organizations that constitute the social economy. Finally, clearly sharing involves active participation.

Restraint, precaution, thrift, frugality, and moderation are virtues related to sufficiency, which is itself a virtue representing ‘a balance between the extremes of privation and excess’ (Barry 2012:208). These are all in contrast to the currently dominant discourse of maximization and efficiency. Yet, frugality and moderation are not necessarily austere or parsimonious, but associated with generosity, while acknowledging the finite resources available to humans practicing stewardship with future generations in mind
Solidarity and sharing are suggestive of reciprocity, mutuality, and trust. These are required for successful operation of the social economy, and in particular for communal modes of organizing and provisioning.

Informing green land relations are the ideas of usufruct, the commons, and stewardship. These relate to virtues of care, restraint, participation, precaution, moderation, and trust. Commons regimes require active participants (rather than passive consumers) who trust each other. The concern of commons thinking and usufructuary land use for improvement, or at least non-depletion of resources, require care, restraint, precaution and moderation, and these all contribute also to the concern for the future, of leaving something for the next generation(s).

A number of sustainability subjectivities and identities may be associated with these virtues, including those of volunteer, repairer/recycler, and giver. Volunteers are important in social economy or democratic governance organizations. People who recycle or repair old objects are leading materially frugal lives to reduce waste and minimize consumption. Generosity suggests someone who shares, whether their time (and this relates to volunteering), or materials (for making or sustenance), or even money. In this way, a non-accumulative identity would be consistent with sharing. Table 4.3 summarizes the virtues, and potential subjectivities and identities, associated with green republican political economy and land relations.

Table 4.3 Virtues of green republican political economy (summarized from Barry 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtues</th>
<th>Potential subjectivities &amp; identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>sufficiency, restraint, precaution, thrift, frugality, moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>participation, reciprocity, mutuality, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>participation, reciprocity, mutuality, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land relations</td>
<td>care, restraint, participation, precaution, moderation, trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has reviewed John Barry’s (2012) holistic account of green republicanism and related political economy. Drawing from the civic republican tradition, Barry is concerned to identify virtues associated with the principles of green republicanism and political economy. In turn, he sketches out some of the potential new sustainability subjectivities and identities of a sustainable society prioritising human flourishing within ecological limits. Importantly, and in line with the egalitarian democratic principles of republicanism, the new subjectivities and identities ‘cannot be imposed’ but rather should be freely chosen by citizens (Barry 2012:114). The review has discussed these virtues, and associated sustainability subjectivities and identities. Table 4.4 conglomerates tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, drawing together the virtues, subjectivities, and identities of green republicanism into an interpretive framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtues</th>
<th>Potential subjectivities &amp; identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>humility, earthiness, compassion, care, sensuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>fortitude, courage, foresight, hope, creativity, compassion, care, prudence, materiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>sufficiency, restraint, precaution, thrift, frugality, moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>participation, reciprocity, mutuality, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>participation, reciprocity, mutuality, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land relations</td>
<td>care, restraint, participation, precaution, moderation, trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is at least one caveat to note about this interpretive framework. The approach I propose could be critiqued for an overly strong commitment to existing frameworks before going into the field - it may echo a positivist a priori approach (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Yanow 2014). It is possible that woodland activists are performing practices that do not match with this framework. Barry is himself reluctant to prescribe subjectivities and identities, which he argues should be freely and actively chosen by citizens within a less unsustainable society. I will strive to be prepared for ‘empirical surprises’ (Luque 2005:212; O'Reilly 2005), and remain sensitive to green practices and identities left invisible by this green republican framework. In this way, empirical work
may identify subjectivities and identities not enumerated by Barry, thus enriching the account of green republicanism.

In this chapter, in response to the second part of RQ1b, I have argued that green republican virtues, subjectivities, and identities may be operationalized into an interpretive framework. Combined, chapters 3 and 4 form my response to RQ1b: how can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be appropriately articulated and interpreted (in the context of post-growth political economy)? Cultural politics may be understood (in terms coherent with the green republican ontology) as the contestation of normalized or hegemonic practices; practices of everyday artistic activism are one way that cultural politics may be enacted. By deriving an interpretive framework from green republican theory, cultural political performances may be evaluated in terms of their prefiguration (or not) of a less unsustainable society understood in green republican terms.
CHAPTER 5

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter critically reviews the methodology and methods used to gather and analyse data for the thesis. Methodology describes the ‘broad theoretical and philosophical framework’ (Brewer 2000:2) on which social scientific investigation relies as the basis for claims of authoritative, reliable and credible knowledge. However, there are multiple perspectives on social phenomena and diverse methods for gathering and analysing data. This chapter will discuss the relational ontology, interactional epistemology and ethnographically-informed methodology informing the thesis, and will locate that approach within the broad terrain of the philosophy of social science.

Methodology is informed by ontological and epistemological assumptions (about the nature of reality, what can be known about it, and how one adjudicates claims to know about it), and discussion must acknowledge these. However, methodology should not simply be considered the final move in a social philosophical three-step. Rather, a conception of methodology as a ‘space where six different issues interact’ (Dunne et al. 2005:164; Pryor 2010) acknowledges that at least six issues are at play in methodological discussion. Those issues are ontological, epistemological, ethical, macropolitical, micropolitical, and practical. Figure 5.1 illustrates this conceptual space of methodology, and identifies the relationships between these issues.
The model proposes that the researcher's assumptions about reality and truth, choice of methods within a socially constrained context, and moral, ethical and ideological beliefs and motivations are all inherent in the methodological posture. The model is a useful framing of the six methodological issues, supporting researchers’ descriptions and explanations of their approaches, and also illustrates the dynamism inherent in a methodological stance. The ‘shape’ of the methodology is influenced by ‘pulls’ from each of the dimensions throughout the entire process of research, not merely during the formulation of research questions (Pryor 2010:164). However, the philosophy of social science is a broad and complex terrain (see, e.g., Baert 2005; Benton & Craib 2011; Burrell & Morgan 1979; White et al. 2016). There are many perspectives on each of the issues noted in figure 5.1; each perspective offers its own insights to, and supports qualitative and quantitative investigations around, different aspects of society.

Although these issues are somewhat abstruse, they are important for at least two reasons. First, social science is - despite the abstraction - concerned with people’s lives
(Mason 2002). Second, and relatedly, if social scientific knowledge production is to claim authority and reliability, research done in its name should be thorough. Thoroughness includes intellectual coherence between theories used, the adoption of ontological, epistemological, and methodological postures that are mutually compatible, and the choice of appropriate methods - used to access, generate and analysis data - that are consistent with these postures and to the research questions (Nicolini 2009b; O'Reilly 2005; Schatzki 1988). A paradigmatic view of social science philosophy offers one way to gain analytical traction upon that broad field, and can aid selection of consistent ontological, epistemological, and methodological postures (Lincoln et al. 2011).

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I locate the approach taken by this thesis within the broad field of social science philosophy, and discuss the specific worldviews and assumptions that have informed my research [5.1]. Next, I discuss research design, methods, and provide an audit trail for my engagement with the data [5.2]. Closing, I return to identify the remaining issues shaping the methodological space [5.3].

5.1 FROM PARADIGMS TO INTERPRETIVISM

The intellectual field of social science philosophy is complex, but can be apprehended through the analytic construct of paradigms. Paradigms are concerned with fundamental principles, and broadly locate the worldview informing a particular research posture (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Currently, five paradigms structure contemporary social science (Lincoln et al. 2011). One of these, interpretivism, is concerned with understanding the meaning-making of human activities within specific contexts. Interpretivist research is abductive, and follows an iterative and recursive model of sense-making. Interpretivism, I will argue, is an appropriate paradigm within which to pursue practice-focused research that is sensitive to the meanings, subjectivities, and identities of green republicanism. Below, I summarize the five paradigms and their core issues [5.1.1]. Next, I discuss the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions of my interpretivist approach [5.1.2]. In this way, I contextualize the approach taken in the thesis, and lay the foundations for subsequent discussion of research design.
5.1.1 Paradigms

A paradigm is a ‘basic set of beliefs that guide action’ in social research; a paradigm helps to locate a worldview (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:91). Perspectives, in contrast, are less codified and unified than paradigms, although a perspective may share commonalities with a paradigm. A paradigm consists in three concepts - ontology, epistemology, and methodology - and must address a number of fundamental issues (Lincoln et al. 2011). Ontology refers to the fundamental questions about the ‘nature of reality’, and basic characteristics of the humans that populate the world (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:91). Epistemology is concerned with what can be known and said about the world. Methodology is concerned with the most appropriate approach to gain knowledge about the world, within a particular epistemological and ontological framing (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Finally, the fundamental issues on which a paradigm must articulate a view, according to Denzin and Lincoln, include the nature of knowledge and its accumulation, the criteria by which quality and validity are set, the axiological issues of values and ethics, the posture adopted by inquirers within the paradigm, and the training inquirers require (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:91; Lincoln et al. 2011).

Five major paradigms may be identified that ‘structure and organize’ the field of qualitative social research: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, constructivism (also known as interpretivism), and participatory action frameworks (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:91; Lincoln et al. 2011). Prominent perspectives include feminism in various forms, critical pedagogy, post-colonialism, and cultural studies (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Although these fields have developed particular ‘criteria, assumptions, and methodological practices’, these are not sufficiently distinct to justify consideration as a paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln 2011:92). Table 5.1 provides an overview of those 5 major paradigms.

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68 For some scholars of social theory and its research paradigms, human nature is a distinct category from ontology (e.g., Burrell & Morgan 1979). For Denzin and Lincoln (2011), ontology encompasses questions about the nature of reality and human nature. From the green republican and practice theoretical perspectives I hold in this thesis [2.3, 3.3, 4.3], it is difficult to conceive of ontology and human nature as distinct, and thus - following Denzin and Lincoln - I include consideration of human nature within ontological discussion.

69 Denzin and Lincoln (2011) do not acknowledge, as neither paradigm nor perspective, the growing concern for ecological, material, and ontological issues in social theory (e.g., White et al. 2016), nor the similarly emergent epistemological concern for sustainability knowledge production (e.g. Kates et al. 2001a). In recent years, these discursive fields have grown rapidly; it will be interesting to see if the next edition of Denzin and Lincoln’s ‘handbook’ responds to this ecological challenge.
paradigms in contemporary qualitative social research, summarizing the core concepts as viewed from each paradigm, as well as the positions taken by each paradigm in relation to key issues.

Table 5.1 Social research paradigms: core issues (author's emphasis, to show paradigm influencing this thesis. Adapted from Lincoln [2011:100-101])

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Postpositivism</th>
<th>Critical theories</th>
<th>Constructivism (interpretivism)</th>
<th>Participatory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Naïve realism - 'real' reality but apprehendable</td>
<td>Critical realism - 'real' reality but only imperfectly &amp; probabilistically apprehendable</td>
<td>Historical realism - virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, &amp; gender values; crystallized over time</td>
<td>Relativism - local &amp; specific co-constructed realities</td>
<td>Participative (or) subjective-objective reality, co-created by mind &amp; given cosmos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Dualist/ objectivist; findings true</td>
<td>Modified dualist/ objectivist; critical tradition/ community; findings probably true</td>
<td>Transactional/ subjectivist; value-mediated findings</td>
<td>Transactional/ subjectivist; co-created findings</td>
<td>Critical subjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos; extended epistemology of experiential, propositional, &amp; practical knowing; co-created findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods</td>
<td>Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods</td>
<td>Dialogic/ dialectical</td>
<td>Hermeneutical/ dialectical</td>
<td>Political participation in collaborative action inquiry; primacy of the practical; use of language grounded in shared experiential context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Positivism is the longest-established paradigm, brought into the social sciences from natural science disciplines, and often the foil against which newer, alternative paradigms are developed or described (Benton & Craib 2011; Denzin & Lincoln 2011).
Positivism, and post-positivism, are based on deductive logic and seek to measure, predict or control generalizable phenomena that are understood to be ‘real’ and exist in a separate world ‘out there’ and separate from humans (Lincoln et al. 2011; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012). These approaches tend to follow an a priori approach (established at the outset of the research project), and seek to test the truth or falsity of a hypothesis. The researcher is positioned as a neutral external expert who can objectively describe phenomena informed by data gathered from research subjects or informants (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012). Positivism has proven useful for natural scientific enquiry; positivist research identified many of the sustainability problems (e.g., Rockström et al. 2009a; TEEB 2010) to which this thesis responds. However, the positivist notion that ‘reality’ exists separately from humans is problematic from both the green republican and practice theoretical perspectives (Barry 2012; Schatzki 2002), and there are other paradigms that challenge the notion of no ‘external’ world ‘out there’ from which humans are separate (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012).

Social scientists with other views of reality critique (post-)positivism. As table 5.1 suggests, there are a number of alternative paradigms that respond in different ways to perceived drawbacks and controversies within positivism. There are advantages and compromises with each; different paradigms allow focus on different aspects of the world, and permit different questions to be asked of the phenomena under consideration. Although the table is a useful heuristic tool, the boundaries between these non-positivist paradigms are not as clear as the table might suggest (e.g., there are epistemological and methodological overlaps between critical theories and constructivism/ interpretivism). This thesis is underpinned by interpretivist assumptions. Hence, I do not engage in detailed discussion of the other paradigms. The chapter is therefore concerned with a critical discussion related to the constructivist/ interpretivist paradigm.

70 Note that natural science, on the occasions that natural scientists acknowledge the constructed character of their scientific method, does not understand the term positivism. Rather, the (natural) scientific method is typically understood as empiricism (O'Reilly 2005).
5.1.2 Interpretivism: relational ontology, transactional epistemology, ethnographically-informed methodology

Interpretivist research is concerned with understanding the meaning-making of human activities within specific contexts. Research is abductive, and follows an iterative and recursive model of sense-making. However, the mode of interpretivism I take is not exactly in line with table 5.1, which overlooks debates within the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm around relational accounts of reality. These ontologies have emerged in response to critiqued relativist ontologies and strongly constructivist accounts of social reality. Below, I discuss that point in the context of reality and social material practices (ontology). I also discuss how practices might be known (epistemology), and approached and analysed (methodology). I justify the interpretivist approach that I have taken as the most appropriate approach to investigate practices, and suggest that interpretivism - rather than its sometime synonym constructivism - is the appropriate term for this approach.

Ontology and paradigm clarification

Ontology is the study of reality (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Schatzki 1988). Important ontological questions include those concerned with whether reality exists, and - assuming it does exist - the character of reality, and the nature of humans.71 Earlier chapters established two ontological positions, describing the world as I understand it in this research project. Green republicanism [2.2, 4] and practice theory [3.2] both adopt distinct ontological perspectives that are mutually compatible [3.2.4]. However, there is a tension between these perspectives and the constructivist paradigm - specifically the relativist ontology - outlined in table 5.1.

71 Many discussions of research methodology consider ontological issues before epistemological, suggesting, implicitly or explicitly, that the nature of reality must be explicated before we can consider how that reality may or should be known (see, e.g., Burrell & Morgan 1979; Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Dunne et al. 2005). However, ontology and epistemology may be understood as a circular relationship, because as Schatzki (1991: 650-651) argues, 'any ontology presupposes an epistemology, [and] so too every epistemology presupposes an ontology. Neither ontology nor epistemology is systematically more fundamental.' While I acknowledge the circular relationship between these concepts, I chose here to discuss ontology first, not least because the ontological assumptions underpinning this thesis have already been articulated.
The ontological foundation of John Barry’s (2012) account of green republicanism is of humans who are biologically embodied, and ecologically and socially embedded [2.2, 4.2]. From this perspective, there is an environment of complex ecological and climatological systems within which human animals are enmeshed through ecosystemic and social relationships. It is clear that the social exists within a physical, ecological, and climatic reality. Humans are entangled within an environment over which we enjoy some control, but to which we are also vulnerable. We are animals, capable of practical reasoning, and dependent on one another to support our emotional, physical, cultural, and intellectual needs.

Practice theory, in Schatzki’s (2002a) terms, describes a site ontology [3.2]. Practices are not an attribute of reality. Rather, reality is enacted through practices; practices bring reality into existence. Importantly, practices are not only social, but are also material. From Schatzki’s (2010:124) perspective,

There is no well-defined realm, domain, or level of reality that can be labeled [sic] ‘society’, ‘social entities’, or ‘the objects studied by social science’, and cleanly demarcated from other alleged large-scale realms or levels (e.g., materiality, biology, physicality, nature).

The social and the material are not separate sides of a binary or dialectical relationship. Rather, the social and the material are dimensions of one another (Schatzki 2010): socialmateriality is therefore an inextricable entanglement, an imbrogl.io. From this perspective, practices are performed at a site, produce the site, and are also shaped by the site.

Practices are the source of society’s durability; society changes through the creation of new practices, and remains the same because of repetitions of unaltered practices. As society can be understood to consist in practices, so too can discrete contexts within society; organizations - including community woodland organizations - can be understood to consist in practices (Nicolini 2013; Schatzki 2005). Practices are also the source of meaning, subjectivity, and identity, which flow from and through practices. Humans carry, and carry out, practices; it is through by performing - carrying out - practices that our identities are established (Schatzki 2002; Shove et al. 2012). We humans are capable of rational thoughts and actions, but these cannot explain all human
action. Rather, we are partly rational, and do what makes sense to us in the socialmaterial context of doing it.

These green republican and practice theoretical ontological perspectives are in broad agreement that humans exist within an environment. Both are concerned, in their different ways, with the socialmateriality of life. Schatzki (partly in support of social research) proposes a descriptive account of how the social does operate, from his perspective (Schatzki 2002). Barry outlines a prescriptive account of how the social should operate in acknowledgement of our biological and ecological vulnerability. Both agree that there is a material/ ecological dimension to human existence, that humans are able to influence, but to which humans are vulnerable.

From either of these points of view, the possibility of an external reality - a ‘real world’ that exists ‘out there’ - is problematic. These ontologies are not realist. A realist ontology is associated with the positivist paradigm. While positivism is suited to generating knowledge oriented towards the prediction or control of (inter alia) biological, ecological or physical aspects of the natural environment (Denzin & Lincoln 2011), it is less suited to generating insights into relationships between humans and the natural environment (Cudworth 2003; Escobar 2010). Not only are human-nature relationships an important focus of this research, but also green republican and practice theoretical perspectives do not assume humans to be distinct or separate from the biological-ecological dimension in which they are embodied and embedded. Rather, these perspectives resist the idea that nature is a single reality separate from and external to human society. These are relational ontologies.

Relational ontologies are concerned not with static substances or structures, but with dynamic processes and relationships within human societies and between humans and nonhumans (Castree 2003; Emirbayer 1997; Escobar 2010). The notion of a relational ontology is absent from Denzin’s and Lincoln’s discussions of ontologies and paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Lincoln et al. 2011). Relational ontologies include theories concerned with relations, practices, hybridity, assemblages, networks and actor-networks (Castree 2003; Escobar 2010; Nicolini 2013; White et al. 2016). Although this is a diverse field of theories, it can be characterized by at least three commonalities. First, an interest in non-dualist thought. Relational ontologies challenge commonly-held
ontological binaries including those of culture/ nature, subject/ object, and mind/ body. Second, they recognize materiality, and its various roles in social life. These perspectives acknowledge (in different and contested ways) the complex interplay between materiality and the social (Escobar 2010; White et al. 2016). Third, a shared interest in ontological flatness, described in varying terms including flat (not hierarchical), horizontal (not vertical), and rhizomatic (not arboreal) (Castree 2003; Emirbayer 1997; Escobar 2010; White et al. 2016). Green republicanism and practice theory can be understood in these terms as relational ontologies.

I noted above that my approach follows, but is in tension with, the constructivist/ interpretivist paradigm summarized (and emboldened) in table 5.1. The tension lies in the ontological realm; typically (according to table 5.1), constructivism is associated with relativist ontologies, which are distinct from relational ontologies. A relativist ontology assumes the world is seen as consisting in multiple realities that are subjectively finite (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Guba 1990; Lincoln et al. 2011). Egon Guba defines a relativist ontology as describing ‘realities [that] exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them’ (Guba 1990:27).

Constructivist perspectives can offer useful insights, suggesting in diverse ways and from subtly different perspectives how understandings of particular phenomena may be socially contingent. There are many modes of constructivist thought (Avenier 2010; Berger & Luckmann 1966; Hacking 1999). Notably, some scholars have been concerned with nature; specifically, whether and how nature might be socially constructed (Cudworth 2003; Demeritt 2002; Escobar 2010). The notion of a socially-constructed nature is useful, from the perspective of my research, because it opens up consideration of political contestation around meanings of nature (Alvarez et al. 1998; Escobar 2010). However, many of these constructivist insights are necessarily limited by relativist ontologies that understand worldly entities to acquire their character and meaning mentally and discursively, through social constructions (Cudworth 2003).

72 There is, however, considerable debate concerning the question of agency or causal power attributed to nonhuman entities. Because this is not directly relevant to my argument here, I do not discuss these debates. See, for example, interventions by Schatzki (2010), Latour (1993, 2004), Castree (2013), or White, Rudy and Gareau (2016).
Relativism, in Guba’s terms, is cognitive and neglects the material - and is inconsistent with a socialmaterial practice perspective that eschews cognitive insights [3.2]. Thus, I do not follow exactly Lincoln’s (2011) understanding of the constructivist paradigm.

A relativist ontology, in Guba’s (1990:27) terms, understands that ‘realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them’. In contrast, a relational ontology consistent with green republicanism and practice theory understands that realities exist as multiple embodied and material performances, socially and experientially based, local and specific, and dependent for their form and content on the persons who carry them and the environment from which they emerged.

Beyond this ontological tension, constructivism in Lincoln’s (2011) terms is appropriate for this research. Although Denzin and Lincoln refer to the paradigm as constructivism, they do acknowledge that interpretivism is a broadly synonymous term (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Lincoln et al. 2011). Similarly, other scholars also accept these terms as synonymous (see, e.g., Brewer 2000; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea 2006; Ybema et al. 2009). Henceforth, I use the term interpretivist rather than constructivist when discussing the paradigmatic location of the thesis. My research is concerned with an exploration of the meanings and socialmateriality of human life, which I seek to understand better; using ‘interpretivism’ negotiates confusion or controversy arising from the materialist critique of constructivism and the relativist ontology.

**Epistemology**

Epistemology is the study of knowledge (Burrell & Morgan 1979; Denzin & Lincoln 2011), and is concerned with exploring questions including how a given reality may be knowable, the relationship between knower and known, and the truth-claims that might be appropriately made about reality. From a Schatzkian perspective, reality arises from performances of practices that are both social and material. For Barry, reality consists in humans who are biologically embodied and embedded in a complex web of social and material/ ecological relationships. What can be known and said about these relational, socialmaterial realities? There are no explicit epistemological statements in Barry’s
(2012) account of green republicanism. Schatzki’s attention is focused mainly upon ontological issues. However, he does acknowledge that his site ontology is associated with specific epistemological perspectives (Schatzki 2002). A practice perspective offers a distinctive viewpoint on knowledge - the notion of ‘knowing in practice’ (Nicolini 2011). Below, I discuss that notion and its compatibility with Lincoln’s (2011) definition of subjectivist and transactional epistemologies.

Despite Schatzki’s ontological emphasis, the assumptions of a practice epistemology are implicit in his work and explicit within other contributions to ‘knowing in practice’ debates in organization studies (e.g., Gherardi 2000, 2001, 2006; Nicolini 2011; Nicolini et al. 2003). For Schatzki, reality arises from performances of practices that are both social and material. Knowing, from this perspective, is also a practice. Knowing is a social, collaborative, and situated accomplishment, inherent in the multitude of practices. Knowing is revealed through ‘sayings and doings, the tempo and rhythm of the practice, the objects used in the course of the activity’ (Nicolini 2011:609).

Assuming knowing to be a socially- and materially-situated phenomenon has implications for the notion of objective knowledge. That which is proposed as objective knowledge or truth is merely the product of a particular perspective (Charreire-Petit & Huault 2008). Rather, situated knowing as practice is dynamic and interdependent upon knower, known, and context (Gherardi 2000). If we cannot separate the knower from the known, then it is problematic to understand knowledge as objective. Researcher and researched are inextricably linked within the texture of practices that is the socialmaterial world.

Previously, I established an interest in identities and subjectivities; these are the interface between the practice theoretical conception of cultural politics [3.2-3.4] and the interpretive framework of green republicanism [4.3-4.4]. An important epistemological question, then, is how I as a researcher can identify - and know - meaning, identity, and subjectivity in empirical contexts. Meanings, identities, and subjectivities flow from and through practices [3.3]. All entities have meanings; those

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73 Although Barry does elsewhere (2007a) discuss the ‘greening of social theory’ in partly epistemological terms that are cognate with sustainability science [1.3].
with self-understanding (people) are entities with identities and subjectivities. Identities, subjectivities, and meanings possess two analytically distinct components (Schatzki 2002). First, people understand their own identities, subjectivities, and meanings. Second, and potentially divergently, people have identities, subjectivities, or meanings that are attributed to them by other people. These phenomena - subjectivities, identities, and meanings - are ‘revealed in actions and in the language people use to talk about their lives’ (Schatzki 2002:50). As a fellow human, resident in the same country and speaking the same language as the people in my empirical contexts, I am thus implicated in a similar texture of practices as participants in my research (Schatzki 2002). Given access to observe, talk with, and listen to people’s saying and doings, I, as researcher, experience similar challenges in understanding practices that are new to me as a new member joining a woodland group or artistic event.

Transactional and subjectivist epistemologies are typical of the interpretivist paradigm (Lincoln et al. 2011). Such epistemologies understand knowledge is co-created by people. Knowledge, from this perspective, is understood as ‘individual and collective reconstructions sometimes coalescing around consensus’ (2011:101). From this perspective, knowledge is a social accomplishment. People ‘construct their own understanding of reality; we construct meaning based on our interactions with our surroundings’ (Lincoln et al. 2011:103). Social reality ‘is a construction based upon the actor’s frame of reference within the setting’ (Lincoln et al. 2011:103). Thus, knowledge is situated and contingent, and because researchers are human they are shaped by their lived experiences, which will influence ‘the knowledge we generate as researchers and in the data generated by our subjects’ (Lincoln et al. 2011:104). Although Denzin and Lincoln neglect the concept of relational ontologies, their definitions of transactional and subjectivist epistemologies are coherent with the practice-based epistemology discussed above. A transactional epistemology, understanding that plural and possibly incongruous meanings emerge from different communities, is an appropriate match for a practice ontology.

In summary, following a relational, practice ontology, I understand reality as emerging through situated and multiple socialmaterial performances. I understand knowing as a socially and materially contingent, processual phenomenon. Realities are knowable because I am implicated in a similar texture or web of practices as the research
participants. The knowledge I present in this thesis is subjective knowledge, situated in (and potentially informed by) a particular socialmaterial context [1.2, 5.2]. By acknowledging my positionality as a researcher, I seek to contribute to subjective, but trustworthy, knowledge of socialmaterial life.

**Methodology**

What strategies are appropriate to research a world of realities emerging through multiple, contingent, and emergent socialmaterial performances, in which knowing is understood as a collaborative and performative process? Ethnography is a commonly mobilized approach to investigate aspects of people’s lives including their experiences, perceptions, meanings, and thoughts (Brewer 2000; O’Reilly 2005), and the practices they perform (Contu 2014; Miettinen et al. 2009; Nicolini 2009b). Indeed, Schatzki (2012:24) suggests that an investigator of practices ‘has no choice but to do ethnography, that is, to practice interaction-observation’.

Ethnography has various meanings. Although understood by some to mean a suite of methods, ethnography is more generally understood to mean a theoretical and philosophical framework of methodological guidelines, embracing a family of methods that facilitate researchers’ observation of people’s identities, activities, and the meanings of their everyday lives (Brewer 2000; O’Reilly 2005; Ybema et al. 2009). It is in this latter sense that I understand ethnography. Ethnographic research may be pursued in ways consistent with diverse ontological and epistemological perspectives (Ybema et al. 2009). Here, I follow an interpretivist approach embracing a relational ontology, and interactionist/subjectivist epistemology.

Ethnographers seek to access people’s own accounts of the realities in which they live. Intellectually, the approach flows from the insight that the social world cannot adequately be investigated through distant, external observation, because ‘knowledge of the social world […] is something created or recreated, perceived and interpreted by people themselves’ (Brewer 2000:34). Moreover, ethnography accepts that people’s lives are locally situated and specific, and thus seeks to investigate people within that context. A ‘critical minimum definition’ of ethnography, from Karen O’Reilly’s perspective (2005:3), includes five points. First, ethnographic investigation should
follow an ‘iterative-inductive’ approach, evolving in design throughout the investigation in response to constant reflection on literature, theory, and empirical encounters (O'Reilly 2005:3). Second, fieldwork should embrace a suite of methods that allow sustained and direct contact with human agents, in the context of their cultures and quotidian lives. Third, the goal of data-gathering should be to create a thickly-described account that is attentive to the ‘irreducibility of human experience’ (O'Reilly 2005:3). Fourth, the role of theory in the investigation should be acknowledged, as should the researcher’s own role. Fifth, the people who are research participants, or respondents, should be understood as part object, part subject.

The question of theory in ethnography is a vexed one, and germane to this investigation. Should the researcher should engage with theory before entering the field, and if so to what extent? For some scholars, including O'Reilly (2005) and Kees van der Waal (2009), theory is important, as - relatedly - is the researcher’s explicit reflection on the influence(s) that theory may have on data gathering or analysis. In contrast, Davide Nicolini (2009b:136) is concerned that prior theoretical engagement can form a ‘static background’ to the action, in which theory becomes ‘over-determining’ and subsumes ethnographic data whereas, in Nicolini’s view, it is the data that need explanation. Without theory, however, there is a risk that ethnographic investigation become merely a taxonomic account of the ‘who’, ‘what’, or ‘how’ of organizational life. With explicit theoretical engagement, ethnography can facilitate critical analysis and open up the ‘why’ questions of organizing (van der Waal 2009). Explicit reflection on theoretical and other influences can help to negotiate this tension, and is an important element of O’Reilly’s (2005:3) ‘iterative-inductive’ approach that I discuss below.

I am interested in woodland organizations as sites of prefigurative politics - organizations that may make aspects of green politics ‘durable’ (Parker et al. 2014a:39). I draw explicitly upon normative political theory to help me understand whether, how, and to what extent community woodlands prefigure sustainability transitions. In this case, there are two justifications for theoretical engagement. First, I am explicit about (and will reflect upon) my use of theory. Second, and more importantly, green republicanism offers an alternative account of organizing society: green republican political economy challenges hegemonic valorizations of economic growth. Yet,
economic growth, accumulation, competition, and maximization have become naturalized and accepted as common sense.

Assumptions related to growth may be made almost without realizing, because they are the ‘myth’ at the heart of our society (Jackson 2009:15). Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow note that interpretive researchers often return to contexts familiar from previous experience, ‘in which they draw on previously acquired cultural knowledge’ (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012:26). Reflexivity is important to minimize uncritical reliance on ‘previously acquired cultural knowledge’. However, economic growth and the related principles have become naturalized and implicit within so many aspects of our society. Without green republican theory as an analytical framework, I risk drawing on cultural knowledge acquired from my earlier life as a good neoliberal consumer, before becoming a critical green citizen. With theory, I can engage in critical analysis of sustainability prefigurations, although neoliberal subjectivities inevitably remain submerged and capable of emerging at times. With an open mind and reflexivity, I can remain open to empirical ‘surprises’ (O'Reilly 2005:27), that might include sayings, doings, and artefacts occluded by green republicanism but cognate with other notions of sustainability.

An hermeneutic or dialectic methodology is associated with the interpretive paradigm by Lincoln et al. (2011). Such a stance assumes that ‘individual constructions are elicited and refined hermeneutically and compared and contrasted dialectically, with the aim of generating one or a few constructions on which there is substantial consensus’ (Lincoln et al. 2011:104). A hermeneutic approach is concerned with interpretations, and in this way the stance described by Lincoln et al. is consistent with the ethnographic approach outlined by Brewer (2000) and O’Reilly (2005).

An ethnographic approach promises to support interpretation of people in woodlands, their doings and sayings, meanings, identities, and subjectivities, as well as the trees, logs, paths, installations, and shelters that are implicated in woodland activity. An ethnographic approach permits observation of and insight to socialmaterial practices that would be difficult to access otherwise. Ethnography encourages the intimacy of observation that is essential to encounter the doings and sayings of woodland activists, and to describe thickly those doings and sayings. All of this a practice theoretical
investigation must accomplish. However, as will become clear, although I entered the field seeking to undertake an ethnography, access challenges prohibited this and prompted me to adopt a case-study approach that drew on ethnographic methods.

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis has followed a research design informed by insights from two literatures, ethnography and sustainability science. Key points of these literatures are noted below, setting a context for subsequent discussion of research design.

An ethnographic framework can facilitate fieldwork to investigate the doings, sayings, and artefacts of community woodland activists. One account of ethnographic research design is proposed by John Brewer (2000). Table 5.2 lists Brewer’s design considerations, and notes the sections in the thesis that address each point.
Table 5.2 Considerations of ethnographic research design (Brewer 2000:57)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consideration</th>
<th>Addressed in thesis [section]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The outline &amp; features of the topic(s) addressed in the work, including the aims &amp; objectives of the work.</td>
<td>1.2, 1.4; 5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The choice of research context or field site &amp; the forms of sampling employed to select those sites &amp; the participants.</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The resources available for the research, including money &amp; time, &amp; the effects resources are likely to have on the research.</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The methods of data collection, including prior commitments to the use of multiple methods.</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negotiating access to research contexts, including 'gatekeepers', &amp; the negotiation of trust when in the field.</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nature of the fieldworker role(s) that will be adopted when in the field &amp; when interacting with informants.</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The form of analysis to be used, particularly whether qualitative computer packages are to be used.</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal from the field &amp; the form(s) of dissemination that will be used to report the results.</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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These considerations inform my research design as the table suggests. However, a list may suggest that ethnography proceeds in a linear and unproblematic way. In contrast, O’Reilly emphasises the emergent, messy, and processual character of ethnographic research. From this perspective, fluidity and flexibility are virtues of good ethnographic researchers, and these can be encouraged through an ‘iterative-inductive’ approach (O'Reilly 2005:26).

An inductive approach is contrasted to a deductive approach (that is typically associated with positivist research). Deductive research (briefly explained) proceeds from hypothesis generation to testing against empirical data, seeking to test the truth or falsity of the hypothesis. Inductive research is proposed to begin with a researcher in an open-minded state, without preconceptions, seeking to identify theories that may emerge from empirical engagement with the world. As discussed, the possibility of open-mindedness is a vexed question within ethnography. Rather than seeking to escape preconceptions, a reflexive approach allows the researcher makes explicit their preconceptions and assumptions about the world (O'Reilly 2005).

Reflexivity can be supported by an iterative-inductive approach that ‘moves steadily forward yet forward and back at the same time’ (O'Reilly 2005:27). An iterative approach is suggestive of ‘a spiral and a straight line, a loop and a tail’, an image that
captures the frequent revisiting of both literature and empirical data as the research project proceeds (O'Reilly 2005:27). Combined with the inductivist desire to let ‘the data speak for themselves’ (O'Reilly 2005:27), iterative-inductive ethnography seeks to maintain fluidity, flexibility, and reflexivity throughout the project, from literature review to writing the conclusion, in a way that ‘is informed but open to surprises’ (O'Reilly 2005:27). Notably, reflexive engagement with theory and revisions of the conceptual framing are anticipated to continue while fieldwork proceeds.

The framework of ‘sustainability science’ [reviewed 1.3] proposes a distinctive mode of knowledge production in response to the complex character of sustainability problems (Kates et al. 2001a:641). Sustainability science seeks to support sustainability transitions (Komiyama & Takeuchi 2006). Sustainability science discourse can be distilled into four motifs that inform the empirical focus and intellectual framing of the thesis. Sustainability science seeks (first) to draw researchers’ attention to human-nature interactions through interdisciplinary approaches, (second) a problem-focused and applied approach, (third) collaborative and participatory approaches to knowledge production, and (fourth) to acknowledge the inherent normativity of the problems it studies (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014). Complexity and normativity are inherent characteristics of sustainability problems, so research knowledge can never be perfect; in consequence there are unlikely to be solutions to these problems, rather ‘messy’ and ‘clumsy’ responses (Barry 2012; Frame 2008).74

Combined, principles from these frameworks of sustainability science and ethnography have informed the research project and its design in at least three ways. First, this thesis is the end product of a messy iterative-inductive process involving reading, thinking, writing, data-gathering and analysing (not necessarily in that order). Second, the sustainability science notion of problem-oriented research supporting sustainability transitions is axiomatic: the value and worth of this thesis lies in its possible

74 There are inevitably implications of adopting a sustainability science approach, some of which are not germane to this thesis. Significantly, interdisciplinary research that spans paradigms is likely to encounter challenges relating to knowledge commensurability, stemming from divergent ontological and epistemological assumptions (Lincoln et al. 2011; Spangenberg 2011). Similarly, different paradigms understand validity and trustworthiness of findings differently (Lincoln et al. 2011; Ybema et al. 2009). Although I have embraced literature from a number of disciplines, these have all been within the social sciences and philosophy. The interdisciplinary approach I pursue is confined within the interpretivist paradigm, and thus avoids knowledge commensurability conflicts.
contribution to knowledge that may be useful for those transitions. Third, the four motifs of sustainability science have served as a sense-making tool and critical filter. Below, I show how those motifs have structured my iterative and reflective analysis of literature and fieldwork data. Moreover (as I will illustrate), my posture relating to each of the four motifs has changed through the iterative-inductive process. Together, these frameworks have driven the research design towards the research questions that inform and are answered by this thesis.

Below, I discuss the research design and questions, showing how empirical and theoretical reflexivity led iteratively-inductively to the final, data-driven approach [5.2.1]. I review the methods used [5.2.2] and, finally, audit the issues of access, data gathering, coding, and analysis [5.2.3].

5.2.1 Reflective discussion on research design

The thesis is a snapshot of a research project that evolved through iterative-inductive reflection on theoretical and empirical encounters. The project was originally motivated by two commitments. First, an axiological commitment to knowledge for sustainability transitions. Second, an empirical commitment to artistic and creative activities in Scottish community woodlands. These commitments led to challenge and also opportunity. The main challenge was how community woodlands might be conceptualized and approached as an empirical phenomenon within the context of sustainability science.

Interdisciplinarity is valorized by sustainability science. Early in my doctoral research, I experienced interdisciplinarity as a problem; I was a novice researcher, pursuing an interdisciplinary approach. In an ‘interdisciplinary no man’s land’ (Barry & Farrell 2013:133), my original musicological discipline offered no useful perspectives beyond the insight that artistic and creative expression is an important aspect of what it means to be human. It was not clear to me how to conceptualize community woodlands, and beyond forestry policy research there were no precedents to follow. Yet, this challenge was also an opportunity to explore diverse literatures with few pre-conceptions about community woodlands might be understood.
Following at least the first half of Philip Pullman’s (2000:549) motto - ‘read like a butterfly, write like a bee’ - I read widely, in time organized by notions of panoramic gaze, zooming, and agility. I sought theoretical agility that responded to data (Hopwood 2016), balanced with a panoramic gaze across literatures, zooming in to explore specific issues relevant to sustainability, and zooming out to identify cross-cutting interdisciplinary connections.75 These reading practices were reflexive, taking an iterative-inductive approach (O'Reilly 2005), structured by the sustainability science motifs (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014), and focussed upon the problem of how best to conceptualize community woodlands. My understandings, both of community woodlands and sustainability science, transformed in response to particular empirical or theoretical encounters. In pedagogical terms, these encounters represent ‘threshold concepts’ (Meyer & Land 2006:3) that have in a variety of ways influenced the shape and direction of the research project.76

As the project evolved, I reviewed the literatures relating to three analytical constructs of community woodlands, forming conceptual lenses to explore woodland activities. Not only did these constructs evolve but so did my assumptions about sustainability science issues. Below, I trace these transforming perspectives on community woodlands (CW1, endogenous community development; CW2, social movement; CW3, alternative organization), and sustainability science motifs (SS1, human/nature interaction and interdisciplinary; SS2, applied and problem-focussed; SS3, co-produced or participatory; SS4, normative).

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75 Here, I draw on Davide Nicolini’s (2009a, 2009b) notion of ‘zooming in and out’, which is elaborated with empirical practice-focused research in mind. However, it works nicely as a metaphor for theoretical reading, too.

76 A threshold concept is a ‘portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting […] an] internal view of subject matter, subject, or worldview. This transformation may be sudden or it may be protracted over a considerable period […]’ (Meyer & Land 2006:3). The notion of thresholds emerged from a concern to understand how teachers might provoke and support students’ negotiation of difficult or troubling concepts (and is highly relevant for teaching sustainability (Brooks & Ryan 2008)). However, it is a notion also relevant for ethnographic researchers for whom flexibility and openness to empirical surprise are virtues (O'Reilly 2005; Ybema et al. 2009).
Conceptualizing community woodlands

Initially, I understood community woodlands as vehicles for endogenous community and rural economic development (see, e.g., Ambrose-Oji 2010; Cochrane 2008; Franklin & Evans 2008; Ledwith 2011; Shucksmith 2000, 2009, 2012). From this (CW1) perspective I explored bodies of literature concerned with social capital (e.g., Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 2001), social entrepreneurship and enterprise (e.g., Haugh 2005; Mair & Marti 2006; Nicholls 2006), social accounting and social return on investment (e.g., Gibbon & Dey 2011; Nicholls et al. 2012; Rotheroe & Richards 2007), and wellbeing (e.g., Dolan et al. 2011; Jackson 2008; Layard 2006). These are all established fields that have garnered useful insights across many empirical contexts. However, these approaches are unable to make adequately visible the human-nature interactions suggested by the name ‘community woodlands’; nor do these approaches offer original insight into woodland artistic activities or their potential relationship with sustainability transitions.

Two textual catalysts stimulated the first transformative threshold. First, a textual encounter with community woodland people through a report, commissioned from woodland activist Amanda Calvert by Forest Research. Calvert (2009:4) led me to realize that community woodlands could be understood as a social movement, because of their challenge to ‘existing patterns of land tenure, legislation, and power relations within forestry’. Second, the theoretical debates on sustainability citizenship (e.g., Bell 2005; Dobson 2003, 2006a; Dobson & Bell 2006; Hayward 2012; MacGregor 2006; Scerri 2012). In particular, Barry’s (2006) work on activism and resistance to hegemony as modes of citizenship showed that notions of green citizens could inform investigation of woodland activists, when community woodlands are understood as a social

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77 Before my doctoral research commenced, I approached the Community Woodland Association [CWA] with a proposal to establish a collaborative research project. The proposal was framed in the terms of CW1, and would - if successful - have lead me to pursue a co-produced, or participatory, approach to research (Kindon et al. 2009; Sykes & Treleaven 2009). The CWA board declined the opportunity, but the Association’s chief executive expressed interest in my research. Although the opportunity for participatory action research was thus precluded, I enjoyed instead the freedom to select research questions myself rather than collaboratively.

78 It is likely that my musical training, which was informed by the now-critiqued notion of aesthetic autonomy [3.4], instilled in me a resistance to narrowly economic or instrumental, rather than intrinsic, evaluations of the arts. This resistance may have contributed to my rejection of these relatively instrumental conceptual lenses.
movement. Moreover, these citizenship debates also led me to the broader field of green political philosophy (e.g., Barry & Dobson 2004; Dobson 2007b).

Thus, the notion of community woodlands as a social movement became my second conceptual framing (CW2). Associated literatures included social movement theories (e.g., Crossley 2002; della Porta & Diani 2006; Eyerman & Jamison 1991; Goodwin & Jasper 2009; Johnston & Klandermans 1995; Melucci 1996; Snow et al. 2004), the role of art in social movements (Adams 2000, 2001, 2002; McCaughan 2007, 2012), notions of everyday creativity (Gauntlett 2011), and artistic activism (Mouffe 2007). However, green political philosophy shaped my critique of social movement theories. Much of the social movement literature assumes rational actors, or has sought to respond to critiques of those assumptions in problematic ways (Crossley 2002). Social movement studies is a literature often (theoretically) silent on the separation of humans from nature (despite some empirical interest in environmentalist movements). Although the social movement literature promised useful insights, I sought a social theoretical foundation that was consistent with green theory.

Practice theories catalysed the second threshold. Practice theories challenge dualisms, including those of mind/ body, agent/ structure and, particularly in Schatzki’s work, do not accept human/ nature separation [3.3]. Thus, a practice approach became the descriptive social theoretical foundation for my research. I came to Schatzki from two starting points. First, from the sustainable consumption and energy-use literature (e.g., Ellsworth-Krebs et al. 2015; Shove 2005, 2010, 2012). Second, from organization studies (e.g., Bain & Mueller 2016; Carlile et al. 2013; Gherardi 2012; Miettinen et al. 2009; Nicolini 2013).

The third threshold was sparked by fieldwork and theory. First, Ann noted during our interview that the woodland movement sought to ‘regain some of the forest culture that we have lost’.79 Combining this ‘cultural’ insight with the ‘political’ challenge presented by community woodlands as a social movement (Calvert 2009), I discovered

79 Ann is a woodland activist and maker. Interviewees’ (anonymized) names and backgrounds is summarized in section 5.2.3. While the inclusion of an interview quotation may be perceived as odd at this point in the thesis, I felt it important to acknowledge the role that Ann’s interview played in the conceptual evolution of the research.
a literature on cultural politics (Alvarez et al. 1998; Jordan & Weedon 1995; McCaughan 2012; Nash 2001), that gradually informed a conceptual re-orientation around that concept. Continuing engagement with green political philosophy clarified that sustainability transitions is both a cultural and a political project (Barry 2012). Cultural politics is a lens relevant to social movement activism, and also society. Cultural politics began to connect my normative and empirical concerns.

Geographical and critical management studies literature catalysed the fourth threshold. Geographer, Fiona Mackenzie has a long-running interest in Scottish communities implicated in land reform. She describes land-owning communities as ‘places of possibility’ that trouble norms, at the heart of liberal practice, of clearance, enclosure, and private property ownership (Mackenzie 2013). That insight, to the critique of liberalism animated by community ownership, prompted me to reflect upon empirical applications of otherwise abstract post-liberal green political philosophy, and led to green republicanism as an interpretive framework by virtue of its attention to land relations and cultural politics (Barry 2012). Critical management studies debates have sparked notions of ‘alternative organization’, advanced by Martin Parker and colleagues (Parker et al. 2014a, 2014b). Organization, from their perspective, is best understood processually (not statically or structurally), and politically. Not only does this allow critiques to be made of hegemonic market managerialist organization, but space is created to consider organizational alternatives to the hegemony. This is compatible with the green challenge to unsustainability and more importantly is open to the propositions of post-liberal political economies. Combined, these insights offer the third perspective on community woodlands as alternative organizations (CW3). If these organizations are ‘politics made durable’ (Parker et al. 2014a:367), then green republican political economy may be one way to understand them.

The fifth and final threshold was also catalysed partly empirically and partly theoretically. However, the empirical prompt in this case was negative, in contrast to the previous positive moments. Access for truly immersive ethnographic data-gathering proved problematic; interviews made clear that there were fewer artistic or creative woodland events than in previous years.80 Intersecting with that frustration, the

80 Issues of access, the extent and sources of data sets are summarized in section 5.2.3.
originality of the theoretical synthesis I develop slowly became apparent. I realised a theoretical contribution to sustainability transitions debates was possible. However, theoretical reification risks marginalizing empirical insights and is potentially in tension with the applied, problem-focused approach sought by sustainability science. Not wanting to waste the (limited) access, data, and opportunity to investigate community woodlands, the thesis has therefore evolved into a work claiming a theoretical contribution and seeking to validate the new framework in the context of community woodland organizations. In chapter 8, I explore scope for future applications of the framework across other empirical contexts.

Summarizing, an iterative-inductive approach has supported my reflections on empirical and theoretical encounters, leading through five transformative thresholds and three distinct conceptualizations of community woodlands. Although these analytical constructs may not be recognised by woodland activists, they have (partly) emerged from fieldwork involving activists. Ultimately, these reflections have influenced the research questions, design, and thesis. The reflections also shaped, and were shaped by, my perspectives on the four sustainability science motifs.

**Evolving sustainability science assumptions**

While influencing the overall shape of the thesis through iterative-inductive reflection, my assumptions about sustainability science motifs have not remained static. The first motif of sustainability science (SS1) draws attention towards human-nature interactions; initially, my perspective on this was unsophisticated and inchoate. I accepted that community woodlands, as their name suggested, are part of the human-nature interface and consequently interesting to investigate. Val Plumwood (1993) and others note the problematic dualism inherent in some perspectives on human-nature relationships (Barry & Quilley 2009; Dobson 2007b; Ferraro & Reid 2013). Practice theory (especially Schatzki 2010) presents a distinctive alternative view of those relationships; in time, I came to realise Schatzki offers a sophisticated alternative to critiqued naïve views of socially-constructed nature (Demeritt 1998, 2002), and makes visible materiality for cultural political analysis. I now acknowledge that human-nature relations are inherently normative, and the enlightened anthropocentric core of green republicanism (Barry 2012) the foundation for one way to interpret them. SS1 also
requires interdisciplinary approaches to understand human-nature complexity. Is it possible or appropriate for one solitary doctoral researcher to pursue interdisciplinary research? That is a question beyond the scope of this thesis, and I do not answer it here. Rather, I offer an approach that draws on multiple disciplines to understand socialmaterial practices; the approach is confined within the interpretivist paradigm, and thus avoids potential inter-paradigmatic tensions.

SS2 suggests that investigation should be problem-focused and applied, rather than abstract or theoretical. I sought, unsuccessfully, collaboration with community woodland organizations in the co-production of research questions. Hence this research may not address the woodland movement’s concerns, or support its future development. Rather, I have addressed a broad problem: how can we live less unsustainably?

SS3 valorizes collaborative and participatory approaches to knowledge production. There may be institutional limits to the scope of collaboration in a doctoral research project, as the candidate is required to demonstrate independent work. That challenge notwithstanding, I was open to a participatory approach both at the outset of the project (when I sought CWA collaboration) and later, while seeking to recruit research participants. However, neither opportunity arose. Thus, the entire project has been non-participatory.

SS4 addresses the normative basis of sustainability. Initially I was drawn to Tim Jackson’s (2009:15) argument that ‘we need to question growth’. That view has not changed despite further reading and reflection, but instead has deepened and broadened as I encounter more empirical and theoretical alternatives to growth society. Green political philosophy shows that critiques of growth are associated with critiques of liberalism and individualism, and hence with critiques of social theory that relies upon methodological individualism (Barry 2007a). In short, I have a considerably more sophisticated understanding of what is meant by change to ‘the structures and

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81 The experience of pursuing a sustainability science-informed doctorate is the topic of a planned, co-authored paper with my student colleagues and our supervisors.
82 Consequently, I remain alert to my authorial power in reporting the activities of woodland activists in my own terms, and acknowledge that the perspectives I describe as CW1 - CW3 are analytical constructs and may not be recognised by community woodland activists.
institutions that shape the social world’ (Jackson 2009:203). Not only is sustainability normative, but the changes required to live less unsustainably are far-reaching.

Summarizing, the project was from the outset motivated by two commitments; first (axiological) to knowledge for sustainability transitions, and second (empirical) to artistic and creative activities in Scottish community woodlands. The research design emerged through an iterative-inductive process in which reflections on evolving empirical and theoretical knowledge were interrogated against consolidating postures on sustainability science motifs. Accounting for the process foregrounds the messiness of such an approach, in which the research focus does not necessarily sharpen until near the project’s end (Moeran 2009; O'Reilly 2005). Reflection, iteration, and induction have nuanced these motivating commitments, particularly the first.

Thus, in the end the thesis is primarily (axiologically) motivated by my intellectual desire to articulate an approach to understand sustainability transitions in cultural political terms that are consistent with green political insights into the human condition. The secondary (empirical) motivation is to validate the interpretive framework and in doing so understand better the artistic and creative aspects of Scottish community woodlands. These motivations shape the research questions (RQ), reiterated in table 5.3. Together, these questions seek to support a notion of sustainability transitions as a cultural political project, and further support empirical research into social phenomena that may be prefigurations, or blueprints, of transitions to a less unsustainable society.

Table 5.3 Research questions

| RQ1a: How can sustainability be conceptualized (in the context of post-growth political economy)? |
| RQ1b: How can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be appropriately articulated & interpreted (in the context of post-growth political economy)? |
| RQ2a: How may Scottish community woodlands, & the artistic activities undertaken within them, be conceptualized? |
| RQ2b: What artistic & creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, & how do these intersect with the wider woodland movement & with sustainability transitions? |
| RQ3: Critically evaluate the success & future potential of the conceptual & interpretive framework to understand a cultural politics of sustainability transitions. |
5.2.2 Methods

Ethnography assumes human experience to be complex, and that meaning-making is involved in everyday human lives (Brewer 2000; O'Reilly 2005). Responding to those assumptions, ethnographic methods facilitate ‘close and sustained observation’ of humans’ activities (O'Reilly 2005:i) in ‘naturally occurring settings’ (Brewer 2000:189). Ethnographic methods include observation, interview, and critical textual and visual analysis. Although ethnography seeks a natural approach ‘close to daily sense-making’ (O'Reilly 2005:1), any apparent simplicity is superficial. Sophisticated protocols for ethnographic research support reliable, authoritative, and credible knowledge claims. Below, I discuss the methods used, noting prescriptions for their use, and also the benefits and limitations of each. I also acknowledge that although I entered the field aiming to undertake an ethnography, my investigation suffered access limitations and ultimately turned out to be an ethnographically-informed case study.

The methods I used were observation, semi-structured interviews, walking interviews, and textual and visual methods (including photo elicitation). I chose methods opportunistically and strategically, seeking to maintain ‘flexibility’ to adapt as circumstances dictated (Moeran 2009:151). I was also pragmatic about the data sources available to me, and hence opportunistic in adopting methods appropriate to sources and access. I was neither fixed nor prescriptive; participants determined a method during one interview, which unexpectedly (for me) became a photo elicitation session with images supplied by the interviewees. Fortunately, I was able to ‘improvis[e]’ in the face of this turn (Ybema et al. 2009:15); although it felt a ‘messy’ situation at the time (Moeran 2009:151) the moment has contributed interesting data.

Multiple methods were used because I drew upon multiple data sources including textual resources and social situations in which I was variably implicated. Multiple sources and methods allow data triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). Triangulating on the phenomenon under investigation using multiple sources and methods allows findings to be cross-referenced and intersections explored between insights from different methods or sources (Plummer 2011). A suite of methods, each relevant for different sources and situations, supported my strategic concern to generate robust data-sets.
Participant observation describes purposeful watching of the doings and sayings of people under investigation (Brewer 2000). This is a broad category that can be subdivided into at least two distinct approaches. First, observer-as-participant, in which the researcher’s role is primarily observation but also involves some participation in a social situation with research subjects. Second, participant-as-observer, in which the researcher is primarily a participant in a social situation but is able to keep a critical distance and observe people’s sayings and doings (Brewer 2000). I used the first approach for most of my fieldwork, and occasionally used the second depending on context. I sought to observe doings and sayings, and remain attentive to the materials at play in any given practice.

Note-taking during observation can be problematic; extensive notes may be preferable for subsequent analysis, but the presence of a researcher with a notepad can influence what the people being observed may do or say (Hay 2010). Mobile phones may offer an unobtrusive means of note-taking; fiddling with one is commonplace in many contexts (O'Reilly 2005). Since O’Reilly wrote, technology has developed and there are now powerful qualitative research smartphone applications that geo-locate notes, voice memos, and images, even allowing preliminary coding before transfer to a desktop computer for further coding and analysis. However, many of my fieldwork sites did not have a mobile phone signal; a smartphone neither felt part of the woodland aesthetic, nor appropriate for discreet note-taking. Thus I reverted to an older practice, scribbling short summaries in a small notepad to trigger longer reflections written down later in the day.

Interviews may be structured, un-structured, or semi-structured (May 2011). The first type asks predetermined questions and is similar to a formal survey; there can be no flexibility to accommodate emerging topics or questions. The second is conversational, albeit the interviewee is initially asked to respond on a particular topic. I used the third type, a merger of both first and second types with the aspiration of achieving a relatively free-flowing conversation based around a small number of fixed criteria (May 2011; O'Reilly 2005). A semi-structured approach aspires to focus, balanced with improvisatory scope in the field, yet sensitive to unanticipated empirical moments (Ybema et al. 2009).
Although semi-structured interviews are pragmatic, attempting to combine the relaxed character of a normal conversation with the instrumental impulse of research-oriented questioning, they are a compromise. Typically, interviews are recorded for subsequent transcription, coding, and analysis; the interviewee may be more or less diffident confronted by microphone (O'Reilly 2005). Moreover, semi-structured interviewing demands a talented, flexible and reflexive researcher capable of ‘theoretical imagination’ and ‘improvisation’ to adapt the structure as the interview proceeds (Ybema et al. 2009:15). Notwithstanding the aspiration to a conversational ambience, it is possible that neither interviewer nor interviewee are as relaxed as in a normal conversation. Nevertheless, semi-structured interviews remain useful, because they help bring to light the interviewees’ own perspectives on their practices and meaning-making.

Walking interviews can maximize opportunities afforded by a practice lens that foregrounds the materiality of social life (Clark & Emmel 2010; Evans & Jones 2011; Jones et al. 2008). Conducted on the move, walking interviews aim to ‘observe, experience, and make sense of’ interviewees’ practices within their specific material and spatial contexts (Clark & Emmel 2010:1). This method assumes that the ‘spatial is an expression of the social’ (van der Waal 2009:31). I chose a walking method in order to understand how activists think about and articulate their wood, and to get a sense of the practices they perform there. Notably, the interviewee enjoys considerable control over the situation, because they are able to decide where to walk and what to show the researcher. One potential stumbling block of walking interviews is that ambient noise is uncontrollable (Clark & Emmel 2010). Conditions may interfere with intelligible recording of dialogue, a risk ameliorated by prompt note-writing after the walk.

Visual methods also afford insights to socialmaterial practices, because they go beyond sayings, illustrate doings, and can elicit meaning and emotion different from those uncovered by conventional methods (Gauntlett & Holzwarth 2006; Harper 2012). Image-based research flows from the notion that cumulatively, ‘images are signifiers of a culture; taken individually, they are artefacts that provide us with very particular information about our existence’ (Prosser 1998:1). Photographs of woodland activities offer a useful data-source, because - as I discuss below - my fieldwork period did not
coincide with numerous artistic and creative woodland events. Images archived by individual woodland organizations or by the CWA can illustrate earlier events and projects, but their interpretation is not unproblematic.

Significant visual methods concerns include the source and ontological status of images used in research, and relatedly the epistemological and methodological implications of these concerns. A realist ontology assumes images represent or mirror the reality of something that previously transpired. In contrast, interpretivist perspectives understand images are themselves interpretations of reality that have been shaped by the photographer (Yanow 2014). A realist researcher may observe and analyse images objectively, because the images capture an external reality. An interpretivist researcher understands that images are socially-situated, and can only be known in that context. Thus, although anyone can interpret images’ meanings, the ‘primary meanings’ of an image or visual artefact can only discerned through engagement with the creator(s) of the image (Yanow 2014:169). Moreover, one may seek interpretations from either the photographer or the photographed.

I used three visual methods. First, my interpretations of images created ‘independently of the research project’ (Yanow 2014:167). Second, my interpretations of my own images taken during fieldwork. Third, photo elicitation (Harper 2002): interpretations by research participants of images created independently of the research that may be selected for discussion by either participants or researcher. Photo elicitation, from an interpretivist perspective, is an appropriate method because it allows participants to voice their interpretations of images relevant to the research. Although I hadn’t anticipated a photo elicitation session I was pleased to experience one initiated by the participants, who also chose the images.

‘Textual ethnography’ (Jackson 2006a:272) describes data-gathering through close and careful reading and analysis of documents, including websites, annual reports, minutes of meetings, correspondence, and reports and other grey literature (van der Waal 2009). Jackson (2006a:272) suggests that ‘written traces of social practices’ may be found in such documents, assuming that textual artefacts may record human doings and sayings for subsequent interpretation for a practice-focused scholar. This assumption is supported by Schatzki (2002a), who illustrates theoretical discussion of socialmaterial
practices with examples drawn from archival textual materials not written by practice-focused ethnographers.

There are limitations to this approach, however; the full richness and complexity of practices may partly be obscured by the author, for whom ‘thick description’ of human activity in writing may not have been the objective (Geertz 1973:3). Relatedly, the researcher is obliged to make sense of an earlier writer’s sense-making - the challenge of the ‘double hermeneutic’ (Jackson 2006a:266), in which the researcher must interpret ‘what is said by historical actors while keeping firmly in mind the fact that what they are interpreting are interpretations of situations that those actors themselves have made’. Thus, the ‘active character of both streams of interpretation’ must be incorporated in interpretation simultaneously, without reifying ‘one for the purpose of the other’ (Jackson 2006a:266). Although textual analysis can be critiqued as inconsistent with ethnographic objectives (of close access to real, everyday lives), it can add depth and perspective to an investigation (Fairclough 2003).

All of these methods require access, whether to a social situation or an archive. Access is dependent upon ‘gatekeepers’, individuals who control access to the field (Brewer 2000:189). Typically, gatekeepers may be formal (e.g., heads or senior managers of organizations) or informal (e.g., within positions of less responsibility within an organization). Negotiating access in ethnographic fieldwork is an ongoing process (Ybema et al. 2009). This is particularly the case in a multi-site study like this one (van der Waal 2009:29). Although I was unable to secure the CWA’s active participation for knowledge co-production, I enjoyed some support from the Association’s chief executive and administrative team. Their support did not translate directly into a research community, but I was able to develop contacts across the movement, partly through attendance at CWA annual conferences in 2012 and 2013. Having a network of contacts, as well as my (limited) prior experience working for a woodland organization and (extensive) prior experience working in the arts, helped to establish common ground, interest and trust with participants (Moeran 2009; O'Reilly 2005).

Summarizing, I employed a variety of ethnographic methods to access practices in community woodland contexts. All the methods made practices and meanings visible (to varying degrees), were compatible with the data sources available to me during
fieldwork, and combined to help triangulate robust and credible findings. I discuss the specifics of access below, in a broader audit trail of the datasets I generated, coded, and analysed.

5.2.3 Access and data audit: generation, coding, analysis

Informed by the research design, questions, and methods discussed above, fieldwork and analysis progressed in two phases. In this section, I discuss access to data sources, and account for my actions in the generation, coding, and analysis of data during both fieldwork phases. I acknowledge the main limitation of this thesis’ empirical contribution: modest opportunities for observation and interview in the field, hence constraining scope for interpretations largely to my own (rather to than participants’).

Both phases of fieldwork were designed in response to RQ2b, that asks what artistic and creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, and how do these intersect with the wider woodland movement and with sustainability transitions discourses?

Key points of both phases, including aims, dates, locations, methods, and access, are summarized in table 5.4. Across both phases, I generated seven data-sets, allowing multi-source and multi-method data triangulation to strengthen the results (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Plummer 2011). Table 5.5 details the sources, data, and access issues of each set.

Access for phase 1 was entirely unproblematic. I developed three robust data-sets that supported a clear response to the phase one aim and objectives. Access for phase two was mixed. I approached nine woodland organizations and three individual woodland artists and activists. I received positive responses from five organizations and one individual, leaving four organizations and two individuals that did not respond to three emails over three months. From those positive responses, I undertook six interviews with seven people, all currently or previously volunteer directors or paid employees of community woodland organizations, and all involved to some extent with artistic and creative woodland activities. Table 5.6 lists interviewees, their woodland organization roles, the methods I used, and the place and time of the interview. The interviews are
numbered 1-6. I anonymize names of community woodland organizations and interviewees. Moreover, I describe simply as ‘makers’ those interviewees who work as artists in various genres in order to anonymize them while seeking to acknowledge their creativity and craft; in some cases, stating a particular specialism would clearly identify them.

83 Most of the organizations I engaged with are in parts of Scotland where Gaelic was traditionally spoken; one group is not. I have used the names of colours in Gaelic as codenames for each woodland organization; but acknowledge that this move may be culturally insensitive, particularly in the case of the group located away from the Gaelic-speaking regions.
Table 5.4 Fieldwork phases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims &amp; objectives</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Establish:</td>
<td>Feb-Apr</td>
<td>Desk-based, except 1-day archive visit (Fife, Scotland)</td>
<td>Textual &amp; visual analysis</td>
<td>Good access to publicly available internet sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the dimensions of Scottish community woodland organizations.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>which groups engage in creative activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a clearer understanding of:</td>
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<tr>
<td>the practices in which woodland organizations consist.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>the artistic &amp; creative practices in which some woodland organizations consist.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify participant community for phase 2.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Gather data in order to:</td>
<td>May-Dec</td>
<td>Various. (rural Scotland, outwith central belt)</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Mixed access to organizations, people, &amp; events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>richly describe the artistic &amp; creative practices of selected woodland organizations, &amp;</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>Good access to publicly available sources for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support subsequent analysis against a green republican interpretive framework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Walking interview</td>
<td>textual &amp; visual analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>while remaining open to empirical surprise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Photo elicitation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Textual &amp; visual analysis</td>
<td></td>
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### Table 5.5 Data-sets generated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data-set</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.1 CWA member websites | Internet, via CWA website & Google search.  
www.communitywoods.org  
www.google.co.uk | 90 websites  
(152 members in March 2013; of which 130 had internet presence; 90 of these were community groups controlling woodland [henceforth CWO])  
Search term, if no direct link from CWA: [CWO name], as listed on CWA website. | Publicly available websites. |
| 1.2 Reforesting Scotland Journal | Reforesting Scotland Journal archive  
1992-2013  
(Also 'Tree-planter's guide to the galaxy' 1989-1992)  
www.reforestingscotland.org | 78 journal articles  
Selected by manual search for articles that mention community woodlands or artistic & creative activities within community woodlands. | Access agreed with Reforesting Scotland administrator. |
| 1.3 Grey literature | Internet (some via Google search)  
www.communitywoods.org  
www.reforestingscotland.org  
www.google.co.uk | 48 documents  
Grey literature & media about CWA & member CWOs.  
Search term: [CWO name], as listed on CWA website. | Publicly available websites, documents freely downloadable. |
| 2.1 Interviews | 6 semi-structured interviews with 7 respondents.  
(interviews numbered 1-6)  
Includes 1 photo-elicitation session & 1 walking interview. | Transcribed to 234 A4 pages (Helvetica 12pt, double line spacing, double-sided). | Negotiated via CWO gatekeeper or direct with individual.  
4 organizational, & 2 individual approaches met no response. |
| 2.2 Images | Images taken by woodland activists, via CWO websites & social media, & CWA Flickr site  
Images taken by me during research | 55 digital colour images  
(55 from activists, 180 researcher’s) | Negotiated with individuals at interview. Images publically available on CWO website. |
<p>| 2.3 | 5 events (including 3 historical events, | 16 pages of notes | Access to 4 events facilitated |
| Observation notes/fieldwork diary | described as 1). (events lettered A-E). Researcher’s observations during participant-as-observer, &amp; observer-as-participant sessions. Notes mostly made after session. (Helvetica 12pt, double line spacing, double-sided). | by interviewees (B-E). Access to 1 event negotiated through woodland organization (A). As interviews: 4 organizational, &amp; 2 individual approaches met no response. Additionally: 1 event was cancelled (low numbers) 1 event organizer declined access 1 event I couldn’t reach (bad weather) |
| 2.4 Grey literature | Internet (via <a href="http://www.google.co.uk">www.google.co.uk</a>) <a href="http://www.communitywoods.org">www.communitywoods.org</a> <a href="http://www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk">www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk</a> 11 documents Grey literature, including management plan, about Geal CWO | Publicly available websites |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee Names</th>
<th>Interviewee Roles</th>
<th>Methods Used</th>
<th>Location/ Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donald</td>
<td>Self-employed woodlander/ maker</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Location: Dubh; Large canvas shelter on log cabin construction site; evening-night, mid-July, early October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Self-employed maker</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Location: Edinburgh; Royal Botanic Gardens; midday, mid-July, early August; wooden shelter, walking around woodland, &amp; within wooden shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary &amp; Michael</td>
<td>Volunteer directors of Geal</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview, with walking interview &amp; photo elicitation</td>
<td>Location: Geal; Walking around woodland, &amp; within wooden shelter; c60' interview midday, late July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Self-employed maker</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Location: Garden café, near Ruadh; midday, mid-July, early August; wooden shelter, walking around woodland, &amp; within wooden shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamish</td>
<td>Self-employed maker</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Location: Hamish’s garden, near Ruadh; midday, early December, c60' interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Salaried employee of Gorm with responsibility for artistic creative projects</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Location: Gorm; Portacabin office; morning, early December, c60' interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.6: Interviews
The interviews were semi-structured, based loosely around the theme of artistic and creative events in woodlands. I sought to understand the motivations, challenges, outcomes and drawbacks of those events, and also to understand the practices that were involved in them. However, I was open to other topics that interviewees thought important and wanted to discuss. None of the interviews were curtailed other than by interviewees’ existing commitments. Interviews were recorded. Following each interview I also wrote up contextual notes and reflections in a field diary.

I observed or participated in five events. Access was facilitated by interviewees for four events. For the fifth, I bought a ticket; the woodland organization knew of my research intention. Table 5.7 lists the events I attended, along with details of the community woodland organization, my role as researcher, a short description, and the spatial and temporal details of the event. These events are lettered A-E. Woodland drama event C describes a summary of three historical performances in years prior my visit; I include these as a single event because of the extent and scope of data emerging from the (walking) interview and photo-elicitation session. Moreover, because I participated in another similar woodland dramatic production A, there is scope for data triangulation between the interviewees’ historical data for event C and my own participant-as-observer notes from event A. Three further latent event opportunities that did not come to fruition.

In observation sessions at events, as well as during the walking interview and photo elicitation session, I sought to remain attentive to the practices that were being performed (and, in the case of archival analysis, those practices that had been performed). Substantively, I was concerned to note what people did and said, the materials they used, and how they used them. While I sought to remain open to empirical surprise, my focus was sensitized by prior theoretical engagement with practice theory and green republicanism. None of the observation sessions were curtailed. After each observation session, I wrote up notes in a field diary.

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84 Appendix 2 presents the interview schedule.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Event description</th>
<th>Location/Date</th>
<th>Event role</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Woodland drama</td>
<td>Gorm, various sites, mid-June, early August</td>
<td>Participant as observer</td>
<td>Location: Gorm, mid-June, c90' performance, mid-evening, mid-June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Poetry, music, tree planting</td>
<td>Dubh, afternoon, mid-October</td>
<td>Observer as participant</td>
<td>Location: Dubh, afternoon, mid-October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Festival with woodland music and greenwood working</td>
<td>Geal, Highland, Scotland, 2x c60' observations</td>
<td>Observer as participant</td>
<td>Location: Geal, Highland, Scotland, various sites, mid-June, early August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Festival with woodland drama</td>
<td>n/a, Highland, Scotland, 2x c60' observations</td>
<td>Observer as participant</td>
<td>Location: n/a, Highland, Scotland, various sites, early August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Poetry, music, tree planting</td>
<td>Dubh, mid-October</td>
<td>Participant as observer</td>
<td>Location: Dubh, mid-October</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7 Events
What tables 5.4-5.7 occlude are the disparate connections between interviewees, events, and woodland sites. Not all the interviewees are associated with events, nor are all the events associated with particular woodlands. Addressing that deficiency, the matrix in table 5.8 illustrates links between events, interviews, and woodland sites.

Table 5.8 Matrix illustrates connections between organizations, interviewees, & events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woodland organization (anonymized)</th>
<th>Events (from table 5.6)</th>
<th>Interviewees (anonymized)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. log cabin building</td>
<td>D. festival with woodland music/greenwood working</td>
<td>1. Donald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. festival with woodland music/greenwood working</td>
<td>E. poetry, music, tree planting</td>
<td>2. Ann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubh</td>
<td>B. cabin building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E. poetry, music, tree planting</td>
<td>3. Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Michael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geal</td>
<td>C. woodland drama (3 historical productions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Tracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruadh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buidhe</td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Hamish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorm</td>
<td>A. woodland drama (live production)</td>
<td>7. Lucy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I sought to ‘follow events’ through multi-site fieldwork (van der Waal 2009:31), and to a certain extent was successful. However, it emerged that an earlier period - of many artistic and creative woodland events (Calvert 2008) - may have passed; certainly there seemed to be fewer events during my fieldwork period. Flexibility was designed into the research and my approach evolved in the face of this challenge. Improvising, I realised that photographic and textual archives of past events, along with photo elicitation and walking interview, could support investigation. More prolonged immersion in a small number of woodland organizations would have allowed more opportunities for photo elicitation and walking interviews with event participants, whether during current events or reflecting on those past. Unfortunately, the pressures on woodland activists’ time was evident when arranging interviews and chatting during events; hence, prolonged immersion did not transpire. Visual and textual archive sources can support investigation, but if their interpretation is done wholly by the researcher then findings are more limited than if ‘primary meanings’ are discerned from those directly involved in the action (Yanow 2014:169).

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85 I return to discuss this point in later chapters.
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(anonymized)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B. log cabin building</td>
<td>1. Donald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D. festival with woodland music/ greenwood working</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubh</td>
<td>B. cabin building</td>
<td>2. Ann</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruadh</td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Tracy</td>
</tr>
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85 I return to discuss this point in later chapters.
It was not clear why four woodland organizations and two individuals did not respond to my requests for access. However, gatekeepers and fatigue may be factors here. There is no reason to think that community woodland organizations or activists are reluctant to face researchers, although it is possible that my emails seeking access for interview or observation were received by someone with little interest in artistic and creative activities, which are for some woodland activists a marginal concern.\(^{86}\) There is evidence in other studies of community organizations of ‘research fatigue’ (Franklin et al. 2011a:772), where organizations popular with researchers and students cannot respond to all the access requests they receive. Moreover, there is a related problem known within community woodlands (and other community organizations) in Scotland of ‘community fatigue’ (Calvert 2009:27), where a ‘limited pool of people’ is available to volunteer for unpaid administrative, managerial, or board responsibilities.\(^{87}\) Similarly, as I know from personal experience some woodland organizations rely on a very small number of paid staff, who may therefore be short of time or forced to prioritise their workload. There can be no certain answers to these questions, but it seems reasonable to conclude that an unknown balance of gatekeepers, time pressures, and fatigue affected my access requests.

Given these access considerations, and the multi-site encounters, immersion was inevitably ‘fragmented’ as van der Waal (2009:34) notes is often the case. Fragmented immersion is not reticent toe-dipping; from these varied encounters and archives has emerged a broad, multi-site and multi-method data-set that at the very least supports my purpose of testing the conceptual and interpretive framework developed in chapters 2-4. However, access to people and their everyday woodland activities was limited. For this reason, although I designed an ethnographic research project (and entered the field accordingly), the study as it transpired is not an ethnography. Rather, the study is more accurately described as a multiple-site case-study using ethnographic methods to explore several CWOs in order to gain rich and deep knowledge of what transpires within them and how they evolve over time (Flyvbjerg 2011).

\(^{86}\) This assertion is based on conversations (and silences) with various woodland activists at Community Woodland Association conferences in 2012 and 2013.

\(^{87}\) Calvert’s assertion was reinforced by a number of conversations I had during the fieldwork period.
Case study is ‘not a methodological choice, but a choice of what is to be studied’ (Stake 2003: 134). A case study can use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods, and is compatible with hermeneutic or interpretivist social enquiry (Flyvbjerg 2011). Robert Stake (2003: 155) identifies six key responsibilities for the qualitative case-study researcher, that are (first) defining the object of study, (second) selecting the phenomenon of interest, (third) seeking patterns within the data, (fourth) triangulating observations and interpretations, (fifth) remaining alert to alternative interpretations, and (sixth) articulating assertions or generalizations about the case. In this study, the CWOs listed in table 5.8 are the objects of concern, while the artistic and creative activities and events (table 5.6) - and their connection to sustainability transitions - the phenomena of interest. The ethnographic research design is consistent with case-study requirements for triangulation. 88 In the remaining chapters, I address the remaining points of Stake’s desiderata.

When I left the field, I transcribed the interviews into a time-stamped text document (Audiotranskription.de 2016), typed up any outstanding handwritten fieldwork notes, and downloaded images onto my computer. All these data generated (table 5.4) were then added to a qualitative analysis software package (MAXQDA 2016). Using the software, I coded the data in two ways. First, in practice theoretical terms (figure 3.3). Second, in green republican terms (figure 4.4). 89 I sought, again, to remain vigilant for data troubling these a priori categories, and aware of my own biases. Thus, coding and analysis proceeded iteratively-inductively, and gradually order and findings began to emerge. In chapters 6 and 7, I discuss the findings of this empirical investigation, and in chapter 8 evaluate the now-tested conceptual and interpretive framework. I plan to disseminate the findings in social scientific journal articles, and also to discuss with the CWA how the findings might benefit the woodland movement, and the best form in which to communicate these findings.

88 Although (as already noted) practice theory investigations tend towards ethnographies, the use of less-wholly immersive data-gathering approaches is not without precedent (e.g., Gram-Hansen 2010; Schatzki 2002).

89 See Appendix 3 for a sample of coding system.
Summarizing, the research design emerged from an iterative-inductive process informed by frameworks of ethnography and sustainability science. Data was gathered through two phases of fieldwork, drawing on a variety of ethnographic methods. Although access opportunities were more limited than had been hoped for, flexibility was designed into the research approach and this enabled adaptations sympathetic to participants’ circumstances. Textual and visual archives combined with data from embodied fieldwork encounters form multiple data-sets that offer a rich and robust basis for triangulated interpretation. However, limited access and use of archival sources mean the study is not an ethnography, but an ethnographically-informed multiple-site case-study.

5.3 OCCUPYING THE METHODOLOGICAL SPACE

This chapter began with a model of methodology as a conceptual space (figure 5.1), in which methodology is dynamically connected to ontological, epistemological, ethical, macro-political, micro-political, and practical issues (Dunne et al. 2005; Pryor 2010). The postures I adopt on the first three of those issues were reviewed in section 5.1.2, but I have not explicitly addressed the remaining three issues. Section 5.2 established the research design, questions, and method, creating the foundation from which these outstanding issues may contextually be discussed. However, there is one important issue neglected by the model. Axiological issues - concerning the purpose of the research - are not explicitly included, although researchers are exhorted to reflect upon ‘what is worth asking and why’ (Pryor 2010:164). Acknowledging a project’s axiology is an important aspect of reflexivity, because an investigation’s shape and direction can be influenced by purpose (Lincoln et al. 2011; Mason 2002). Below, I conclude the chapter by discussing the outstanding methodological issues, including my axiological posture.

Ethical issues

Ethics clearance was sought and received from the University ethics committee.90 Participant information sheets were available for all interviewees prior to meeting, and

90 See Appendix 1 for ethics paperwork.
all granted permission for the recording, transcription, anonymized use, and storage of their data under the terms given. Observation sessions took place in events open to the public; therefore permission was not sought from other attendees. My field notes include short conversations held with other participants at events; they knew I was attending as a researcher and were happy to proceed with conversation but because of the cursory and transient nature of the encounter seeking their signed agreement was inappropriate. I was careful not to photograph or speak to any children because I did not have ethics clearance to engage with them.

Ethics in social research should be about more than a simple concern with a paper trail of clearance and permissions. Instead, ethical concerns ‘emerge throughout the project, “re-embedded in the practices, politics, and presentation of the research results”’ (Lincoln & Denzin 2003:5, in Schwartz-Shea & Yanow 2012:22). In the contexts I was researching, there appears little scope for emotional harm. There can be tensions between land reform activists and land owners (or their representatives) in small and remote rural settlements, but given that interviewees were all publicly involved in their woodland organizations and are anonymized in this research, there is little risk of problematic exposure.

Perhaps the most significant ethical concern related to this project relates to the essentially ‘extractive’ character of the research (Franklin et al. 2011a:772). This is particularly the case in a project, such as this one, that has not proceeded along participatory lines in which community members and activists contribute to the development of research questions that can benefit the future development of the community organization. Although I sought such an approach, the thesis ultimately describes an extractive project of academic research that benefits me, the researcher, far more than the research participants. However, there is scope for dissemination of some findings in a form useful to woodland organizations.

Disclosure: I formerly worked (in 2010) with one of the community woodland organizations involved in the research. Moreover, when the interview and observed event took place a family member was performing a senior voluntary role for the organization. However, the interviewee’s role, and the event, were both unconnected with the position I had occupied, and the interviewee was recruited to the organization
since my time working there. While conversations with my relation may have influenced some of my reflective field diary entries, I do not believe that there was a conflict of interests or significant influence over the interview, and I remained alert to bias during coding and analysis.

Finally, there are no financial incentives influencing the research. I was supported, as a doctoral researcher, by a stipend from the School of Management, University of St Andrews. There were no obligations to particular findings. I paid all fieldwork travel costs from this allowance. There were no accommodation costs because I camped, or stayed with family, when overnight accommodation was required during the fieldwork period.

**Macro-political issues**

Sustainability, the essentially political character of sustainability problems and responses to them, are the salient macro-political issues influencing this research. Axiologically, I seek in this project to contribute to sustainability transitions knowledge. Sustainability is a contested concept (Blewitt 2008; Dresner 2009), and its debates can be critiqued as largely elite discourses, flowing from the academy, and intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations. Indeed one of the reasons to explore community contexts of organizing for sustainability transitions should be to better understand how ‘local communities are “doing sustainability for themselves” on the basis of their own localized understandings of what “sustainability” means’ (Barry & Quilley 2009:3). However, it is important to acknowledge the tension here: activists may not respond favourably to the use of terms including ‘sustainability’.  

Moreover, it is possible that activists do not share the green republican perspective to which I am drawn and which informs this project (Barry 2012). While that perspective has emerged from academic sustainability debates - and is written by an academic - it is worth reiterating that John Barry is also deeply involved in green political activism and is an elected Green councillor in Northern Ireland. In this way, his green republican

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91 I base this assertion on interview material, where I observed a marked reticence by some interviewees to use terms (e.g., resilience, ecosystems, sustainability) that are commonplace in academic sustainability debates.
project may be read not wholly an abstract, elite intervention from an ivory tower, but partly also as an activist's intervention that reflects conversations in diverse social contexts.

The prevailing political and economic situation of the country (UK and Scotland) have influenced the research. During fieldwork, it became apparent that although there had in previous years been many more artistic and creative woodland events (Calvert 2008), there seems more recently to be fewer of these projects. Interviewees indicated that constrained funding was a challenge affecting this situation. The political and economic situation also influences the very existence of community-owned organizations, and the challenges that face those volunteers and paid staff running them. This situation evidently affected research access, because interviewees had busy lives with many commitments; some clearly struggled to find time for a research interview.

**Micro-political issues**

There is a risk that ethnographic researchers become embedded in the ‘micropolitics of power within the organization’ (Sykes & Treleaven 2009:225), in ways that can shape research questions, methods, and findings even though the power relations may remain obscured. This problem was not an issue given the access and engagement I had with community woodland organizations.

The ‘politics of the academy’ can be another factor that shapes a research project and its methodology (Dunne et al. 2005:168). Interdisciplinary research and the applied, problem-focused and openly normative approach encouraged by sustainability science are not accepted without critique by some academics. Indeed sustainability science may be understood in cultural political terms as a contestation of normalized academic practices. Contestation is rare without tension and thus it is possible as an early-career researcher to experience tension in some interactions with staff who are uncomfortable with a sustainability science approach; in this project, such interactions caused doubt and anxiety but did not influence a changed approach.92

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92 Anxiety and doubt appear to be common across many if not most doctoral projects (Kamler & Thomson 2006; Thomson & Walker 2010), so I am not claiming that the sustainability science approach is unique in this regard.
Practical issues

The most significant practical issue was gaining access [5.2.3].

5.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has outlined the broad field of social science philosophy in paradigmatic terms, locating the thesis within the interpretivist paradigm. Conceiving methodology as a space shaped by and shared with six other issues, I have established the internal coherence of the assumptions - relational ontology, transactional/subjectivist epistemology, and ethnographically-informed methodology - and noted the ethical, political and practical issues, that inform the research. In line with O'Reilly’s (2005:3) ‘critical minimum definition’ of ethnography, I have shown how my research design evolved through iterative-inductive reflection on theoretical and empirical encounters, draws upon a suite of appropriate methods, morphed from ethnography to ethnographically-informed case-study (dictated by limited access to human lives in their quotidian contexts), and acknowledged the useful but hopefully not overly determining role of theory in my approach. In the next chapter I will - again following O'Reilly - present a thickly-described account of woodland practices.
CHAPTER 6

HETEROGENOUS WOODLAND PRACTICES: ZOOMING FROM PANORAMA TO ARTISTIC SPECIFICS

This chapter, and the next, combine to respond to research question (RQ) 2b: what artistic and creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, and how do these intersect with the wider woodland movement and with sustainability transitions? These chapters also allow empirical validation of the conceptual and evaluative framework I have developed in chapters 2-5.

In this chapter I narratively present (and begin to interpret) data from Scottish community woodland organizations in practice theoretical terms. The practice lens [3.3] invites us to understand people’s sayings and doings, and their entangled relations with nature and human artefacts, as socialmaterial practices. From this perspective, society and (on a smaller scale) organizations, consist in webs of practices involving people, things, and nature.

The following account of community woodland organization (CWO) activities draws upon the key terms describing organizing and material components of practice illustrated in figure 3.3. While recognizing the value of theory in supporting a practice-based approach to understand the socialmaterial world, I attempt to minimize theoretical interruptions to the narrative data flow by italicizing those key terms in the following data presentation. Direct quotations are from interviews, attributed to (anonymized) interviewees; text from (anonymized) CWO documents is paraphrased, because direct quotations could be traced through internet search, risking identification of the woodland group in question and troubling participant anonymity.

Beginning from a panoramic perspective, the chapter provides an overview of the scene, establishing (first) the diversity of practices in which Scottish CWOs consist, and (second) the motivations of people engaged with artistic and creative woodland
practices [6.1]. Following, a close focus is taken upon one particular CWO - Geal - exploring in thickly-described detail the practices performed there, and relationships between artistic and creative practices and more general woodland activities [6.2]. In this way, the chapter begins to answer RQ2b: what artistic and creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands [...]? and establishes a foundation for critical discussion of the data in chapter 7 (which completes the answer to RQ2b).

6.1 FROM WOODLAND PANORAMA TO ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE PRACTICES

This section establishes the heterogenous diversity of woodland practices, and the motivations of some woodland activists. The section provides (first) an overview of woodland practices from a panoramic perspective, before zooming in slightly to identify woodland artistic and creative practices. Creative and artistic woodland activities are noted as significant phenomena within the broader swathe of woodland sayings and doings [6.1.1]. Second, activists’ motivations are explored, probing why these people are committed to community woodlands in general, and to artistic and creative practices in particular [6.1.2].

6.1.1 Practices of community woodland organizations

A community woodland is ‘one partly or completely controlled by the local community, through a community woodland group. The woodland may be owned or leased by the group, or managed in partnership with another organisation, such as Forestry Commission Scotland’ (CWA n.d.)[1.5]. In March 2013, 152 member organizations were listed on the CWA website.93 However, not all members are community groups controlling local woods. The list includes community groups seeking control of woodland, and community groups and social enterprises engaged in woodland activities but not controlling woodland.94 Also holding CWA membership were local authorities; non-governmental organizations; other representative organizations; and consultancy

93 www.communitywoods.org
94 Demonstrating the fluidity and dynamism of the woodland movement, at least one of the groups aspiring to control local woodland has subsequently gained that control.
and training organizations. Within the total 152 CWA members listed, 130 were community groups controlling local woodland; henceforth, these are described as community woodland organizations (CWO).

A broad palette of practices is performed across the Scottish community woodland scene, illustrated in figure 6.1. Not all CWOs have websites or documents publicly available, hence the figure is a snapshot of practices performed by those 90 CWOs about whose activities information is available. The woodland scene is broad and diverse; CWOs pursue a range of socio-economic objectives [1.5]. Analysis shows CWOs consist in a wide range of socialmaterial practices involving people, natural organisms including land, trees, grasses, things of nature including stones and water, and human artefacts including fences, tools, buildings, and fire. Figure 6.1 illustrates a

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95 CWA membership is also available to individuals. Individual members are excluded from the discussion, as the focus of the thesis lies upon community woodland organizations.

96 Appendix 4 lists and classifies the 152 members (in March 2013) from whose activities this data has emerged.
diverse scene. Although not every CWO performs every practice, the data are clear that CWOs consist in more than silvicultural management.

Practices were identified during the first empirical phase and confirmed in the second empirical phase of fieldwork [5.2]. I classified these practices in a three-fold typology, through iterative-inductive analysis. According to this typology, ‘woodland management’ describes core forestry practices, ‘heritage’ describes practices concerned with the past, and ‘wellbeing’ describes practices that in contemporary society are largely (but not necessarily) associated with leisure, recreation, and health. Analysis suggests that clear distinctions between these classifications are inappropriate. Rather, some practices overlap between classifications. Figure 6.1 illustrates the blurred distinctions between categories.

Artistic and creative activities are those that anyone can practice, making something that is novel in that context, for pleasure, use, joy, and not necessarily for financial gain [3.3]. In figure 6.1, I include artistic and creative activities within the wellbeing category. Zooming in slightly, the diversity of woodland artistic and creative practices is illustrated by figure 6.2.

Analysis identified 34 CWOs that have engaged with artistic and creative activities. The data cannot clarify when or for what duration these activities were took place, nor whether these CWOs are still engaged in such activities. Information is not consistently available about CWOs. Not all CWOs have websites; there may be more CWOs engaged in artistic or creative activities than have been identified by this research. Moreover, the woodland scene is dynamic, and CWA membership is not static. Hence, the data cannot support meaningful quantitative discussion of these practices (nor was it intended to). These limitations notwithstanding, assuming 34 CWOs were performing artistic and creative activities while there were 130 CWOs in total, then approximately one quarter of woodland organizations are or have been engaged in these practices. Thus, it is possible to say that artistic and creative practices form a significant phenomenon within the Scottish community woodland scene.
Woodland artistic and creative activities were classified in another tripartite typology of making, performing, and narrating; again, I derived these through iterative-inductive analysis. ‘Making’ describes practices that produce tangible artefacts, using woodland and other natural material resources. ‘Performing’ practices involve people, using woodland material resources as artefacts in creative entertainment. ‘Narrating’ practices include oral and written activities that draw upon the woodland as inspirational resource or performance space. Again, distinctions between these categories are blurred. Figure 6.3 illustrates the categorized practices and blurred boundaries between them.

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97 Here, performing is used in the common-sense way to mean artistic performance, rather than the more specialized social theoretical sense of performance and performativity.
In summary, CWOs consist in a heterogenous palette of practices, in which artistic and creative activities are significant. Although not all CWOs perform all practices, it is clear that CWOs are about more than just trees. Artistry and creativity appear to be embedded within broader woodland activities.

### 6.1.2 Motivations for woodland activism, artistry, and creativity

This subsection draws upon interview data to focus on people organizing woodland artistic and creative activities, exploring their motivations for community woodland organizing in general and for artistic and creative activities in particular. Although a focus on motivations may appear in tension with practice-oriented analysis (risking inappropriate emphasis on individuals and their agency, perhaps), this is not the case. People are understood as carriers (out) of practices that they can creatively change as they perform them, doing what it makes sense for them to do at the time. What makes
sense at the time is shaped (in practice terms) not least by ends within a broader context of general understandings.

Every practice has a purpose that people ought to or could pursue. Ends describe people’s reflections about why they are (or should/ could be) performing a particular practice. Ordinarily, these are part of our inner dialogues, but ends can emerge through interviews probing motivations. Part of teleaffective structures, ends are associated with projects and tasks, and are allied with emotions and moods (affective aspects of practices associated with achieving [or not] one’s goals). General understandings describe people’s reflexive perceptions of the broader (societal) projects in which their activities or lives are enmeshed. General understandings shape ends, and help people make sense of ends they pursue. Exploring general understandings and ends of woodland activism and artistic practices helps to illuminate the phenomenon of community woodland organizing.

Seven people were interviewed in six interviews; all were involved in performing and/or organizing woodland creative and artistic activities. Lucy was a paid employee of her local CWO; the others were (or had been) volunteer directors of their local CWO. Broadly, all were motivated by shared concerns to re-establish a woodland culture in Scotland, manifest in desires to get more people into the woods, and to spread through society a better understanding of woodland material and spatial resources for wellbeing, leisure, recreation, or employment. Within that broad shared concern, there were varied motivations and aspirations for their local CWO or the wider woodland movement. The subsection discusses (first) motivations for community woodland activism, and (second) motivations for artistic and creative woodland activities.

**Motivations for woodland activism**

‘Regaining a woodland culture that existed in Scotland’ was Hamish’s main end, shaping his identities as activist, woodsman, and woodcraft trainer. Similarly, Ann wanted to ‘regain some of the forest culture that we have lost’, an end shaping her identities as maker, activist, and environmental campaigner. These perspectives, echoed by Donald, Mary, Michael, and Tracy, are shaped by general understandings about deforestation and reforestation. They agreed that forest culture had been eroded because
of Scotland’s deforestation over centuries, leaving the country - in Donald’s terms - ‘like a wet desert’.

Although general understandings about environmentalism (including biodiversity and the important roles of trees and forests in ecosystem services) were less prominent than might be imagined with woodland activists, there were implied nods to these issues. Speculating, environmental general understandings may be so obvious as to be tacitly assumed, and the managerial/academic language of ecosystem services and biodiversity may sit uncomfortably with activists. These speculations notwithstanding, Ann, Donald, Mary, Michael, and Tracy agreed that reforestation was good from ecological and social perspectives, and also offered economic opportunities.

Renewed people-woodland connections were prominent ends in all the interviews, and community control of woodland was seen to be important to facilitate those connections. However, general understandings differed around these connections, with two main perspectives evident about the woodland’s purpose, first (wood)land as spatial resource for recreation, and second (wood)land as source of material resources.

From the first perspective, access to woodland allowed recreational space and freedom. Tracy perceived a need for a place where people could freely do their own thing in nature. Ruadh, Tracy’s CWO site, was one of ‘very few [local] places that people can come and feel that they can walk about in a bit of’. Nearby FCS land was too ‘signposted’ and felt ‘a bit sort of directed’, and Tracy critiqued it as being ‘mostly [just] wood’ with few spaces among densely-planted conifers to sit, relax, or do things. Conversely, Ruadh was an undirected space where people could freely potter around, a place ‘where you can sit, … grub about, camp, and know no-one is going to say “ere, what’re you doing”’. For Tracy, helping, encouraging, and facilitating people comfortably and freely pottering about in nature was very important.

Hamish criticized perceived limitations of leisure and recreation as woodland management objectives (which he saw as too often prioritized over what, to him, were more essential activities of tending the trees, ideally through coppicing and similar

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98 A concern for biodiversity is evident in Geal CWO’s woodland management plan.
traditional practices). However, he held that perspective alone. Lucy, Ann, Michael, and Mary agreed on the importance of encouraging people ‘into the woods to do things’, as Michael said, including playing, learning, and walking.

Summarizing this first perspective, five interviewees shared *general understandings* that natural recreational spaces were important, and that community control of woodlands helped remove barriers to access those spaces.

From the second perspective, taken by Ann, Hamish, Donald, and Michael, woodland access facilitated access to material resources. Resource access was important to them because these are local resources that, as Hamish noted, should be used by local people to make things with, avoiding reliance on ‘imported’ things made ‘of plastic’. Ann noted that woodland management was more than a ‘scientific enterprise’ concerned only with efficient commercial timber production, or managing for biodiversity, but should involve smaller, local-scale activities including making ‘real practical use’ of our woodland resources. For Donald, a ‘sustainable society’ required people having ‘access to resources… [woodlands should] be there to use in a respectful way’. Hamish understood woodlands as ‘extant resources’ languishing unused without appropriate management, needing people to tend them and use the resources to make goods with, creating local employment opportunities.

What wasn’t made explicit in any of the interviews was the barrier to resources access that exists when the wood is owned or controlled by other actors (e.g., FCS, or private landowner), but this did emerge in other conversations I had during fieldwork, with people noting that there are *rules* prohibiting felling trees, collecting materials, or building, on land you don’t control.

Summarizing this second perspective, there were *general understandings* that woodlands offer material resources that can be used for practical and potentially economic projects, and are therefore more than merely spaces for leisure or recreation.
Motivations for artistic and creative practices

Artistic and creative woodland *projects* was seen as a way to encourage people into the woods, and to embrace woodland culture; this view was shared - to varying degrees - by all the interviewees.\(^99\)

Ann shared a sophisticated argument for woodland arts as an integral part of a diverse yet holistic woodland culture. Combining ‘arts and the woods’ was an important *end* because of her *general understanding* that ‘we can’t sustainably manage our forests unless we can regain some of the forest culture that we have lost’. Ann was ‘really interested in the folklore that surrounds each of our native species’. Ann identified as a maker and activist, and her own creative practice and woodland activism was inspired by traditional knowledge about trees - suggesting a *general understanding* that resisted scientific knowledge as the only way of knowing the world. Illustrating her point, she described ancient Celtic folk knowledge about trees, how ‘myths… have wisdom about… the role of native woodland species, what their role is, what their significance is, and what they might mean to us’. For Ann, traditional sources thus help us remember that (e.g.) hazel boughs are flexible, suitable for making and crafting practical and artistic *artefacts* including hurdles (for, e.g., fencing and barriers).

Ann’s *general understanding* about traditional knowledge and artistic practices extended beyond her making practice, to woodland management. Folklore can communicate and draw attention to multiple and diverse ways of knowing trees, and accepting that knowledge was important to Ann ‘because otherwise we end up with woodland management being an entirely scientific enterprise and that’s not how it’s ever been’. Ann’s example of traditional knowledge about hazel and its material characteristics helps to illustrate this. To use hazel creatively in these ways, hazel trees are ideally managed to produce the quantity and flexibility of boughs suitable for (e.g.)

\(^99\) I recognized that my construct of ‘artistic and creative activities’ [3.3] was somewhat unusual, troubling distinctions held by many people about art and craft. I tried to keep analytical constructs out of the interviews, preferring naturally flowing conversation without too obvious an academic presence. With one exception, the interviewees apparently accepted my broad and inclusive construct. However, Hamish seemed to resist it. He had a firmly utilitarian perspective on woodland crafts and management, apparently preferring that craft (and woodland management for craft) had a practical purpose lacking in art. His resistance notwithstanding, such a utilitarian perspective of craft can sit comfortably within my construct.
hurdle-making, while also ensuring the hazel tree survives to produce more useful boughs.\(^{100}\)

Moreover, CWOs that embraced and encouraged a diverse woodland culture would connect with more people, Ann believed, because different facets of woodland management would appeal to different people. ‘There are some people who are interested in the land politics, who get involved in the actual buyout process. There are some people who are interested in the kind of environmental management side of things, who want to kind of get involved because of those things, and you get, you reach a completely different group of people in the community if you do creative things’. Connecting with more people is important, not least if your end is to regenerate a woodland culture, but also if your CWO relies on volunteers’ energies to organize and carry out projects.

Hamish, despite apparent unease with my ‘artistic and creative’ construct, was broadly in agreement with Ann’s perspective, notwithstanding his more utilitarian stance on craft making. Substantively, he sought woodlands managed for material production suitable for making artefacts (e.g., spoons, bowls, furniture) and charcoal, on a small-scale but widely-spread craft production basis. In particular, he saw traditional woodcraft and management skills (and training people in these) as essential for appropriate care of woodlands, and was critical that contemporary concerns with managing for ‘biodiversity, education, arts and crafts’ weren’t particularly useful in terms of ‘regaining a woodland culture’. However, he did share Ann’s general understanding of woodland management as a holistic project in which woodlands and making were inseparable.

Michael, Mary, Tracy, Lucy, and Donald broadly agreed with Ann’s well-considered thoughts on woodland arts. They understood that artistic and creative projects in woodlands were a promising way to engage with people, representing invitations for people to enter the woods and reconnect with the land, and its materials. Their CWOs each offered opportunities to local people to make those reconnections in different

\(^{100}\) Ann’s insight of the interconnections between traditional knowledge and artistic and creative activities troubles (and evidences the blurred boundaries between) my earlier categorization of woodland practices, in which I assign artistic and creative activities to ‘wellbeing’ not ‘heritage’ [6.1.1].
ways, through practices of making, performing, or participating as audience in a performance. I zoom in, below, focusing closely on Geal - Michael and Mary’s CWO - considering in detail the arts projects organized there [6.2].

Although broad agreement emerged through the interviews about why artistic and creative activities were important, there was notable divergence around what and how these activities were performed. Some CWOs brought people in from outside the organization, to organize, run, or perform arts events; some of these were paid guests, whereas others had their expenses covered. Other projects were organized and run by people within the community, on a voluntary basis. It was evident that CWO members’ practical understandings were a significant determining factor in what artistic and creative projects were pursued, and how they were pursued. For example, Gorm (Lucy’s CWO) lacked people with artistic skills and was reliant on bringing in specialists. Conversely, Ruadh (Tracy’s CWO) enjoyed among the membership a number of skilled makers willing to share their practical understandings, although Tracy did note that visitors were invited from time to time, in order to share different skills with the group.

Thus, woodland materials (organisms and things of nature) were not the only important resources for artistic and creative activities; other materials, including people and money (an artefact) were important, too. Many projects relied upon CWOs’ members’ practical understandings and bodily material resources. In other projects, particularly where external specialists were invited, money became an issue, with visitors’ associated costs needing to be met through event subscriptions or from a funding source. The interviewees were clear that financial support from funding bodies was increasingly difficult to obtain.

In summary, the interviewees shared a broad consensus that regenerating a woodland culture was a key end. Community control of woodlands was seen as important to reconnect people with land, trees, and nature, with woodlands understood variously as spatial or material resources useful for recreation, or practical or small-scale commercial use. Artistic and creative activities were seen as more than merely embedded in

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101 Although passionate about doing arts projects in the woods, Lucy felt herself insufficiently skilled in creative activities, hence she was content to organize visiting practitioners.
woodland activities, but as part of a holistically conceived woodland culture, relevant to woodland management by shaping objectives, attracting members, and as a way to encourage people into the woods, to engage with woodland materiality. CWOs’ members’ skills and knowledge determined what and how arts projects were organized, and many either relied on volunteers or required money to pay visitors.

Six interviews with seven people may be considered a small sample. However, themes emerging from the interviews are broadly consistent with those from many of the informal conversations I enjoyed with other woodland activists at CWA conferences, around woodland sites, and identifiable in CWA documents. The views of this small sample cannot be considered a comprehensive overview; not least (although not by design) the interview sample privileges activists from rural, mainly Highland, CWOs at the expense of rural, urban, and periurban CWOs in the central and southern regions of Scotland. Given the consensus broadly shared by the interviewees, and the rough consistency of that consensus with other sources, the interviews provide a useful foundation of insights from which to proceed.

6.1.3 Summary

This section has illustrated the diversity of CWOs viewed through a practice lens. CWOs consist in a heterogenous palette of socialmaterial practices, classified as woodland management, heritage, and wellbeing. Artistic and creative practices were identified as forming a significant phenomenon within the wider gamut of woodland practices, and were categorized within wellbeing. Artistic and creative practices were identified as making, narrating, and performing.

All of these practices are pursued towards ends of regenerating woodland culture, and (relatedly) of reconnecting people with land and woodlands. Against that backdrop, artistic and creative woodland practices were seen to have at least three potential roles, (first) enmeshed in a holistically-conceived model of woodland management, (second) informing uses of woodland spatial and material resources, and (third) serving to

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102 Yet, as Ann’s insights showed, artistic and creative activities overlap with heritage; hence the categories are perhaps better understood as characterizations of woodland activities, than firmly defined typology.
encourage people into the woods. However, other material resources, notably people and money (artefact), were also required for these roles to be successful. In the next section, I focus closely on Geal CWO to examine the slice of practices performed there.

6.2 ZOOMED IN: GEAL

Geal CWO controls 8ha of land, including 6.5ha mixed woodland and 1.5ha beach, located on an isolated and sparsely populated area of rugged mountainous and coastal terrain on the western mainland coast of Scotland. Community involvement with the 8ha woodland has developed since 2002, initially into a partnership management agreement with FCS in 2005, and more recently to a community buy-out of the site from FCS in 2015. In this section I zoom in on Geal CWO because artistic and creative projects became an important aspect of the organization’s activism and contributed significantly to its success. Moreover, a close focus allows the complex data to be richly described, allowing not only exploration of the CWO’s practice-changing interventions, but also critical analysis of the meanings flowing through their activities.

The data were gathered in 2013 using semi-structured and walking interview, photo elicitation, and textual and visual archival methods. The walking interview was with Mary and Michael (both volunteer directors of Geal). They chose the route to show me different aspects of their diverse woodland, and specifically to show me locations of particular scenes in their woodland plays. The weather during the walk, which took place in August, was characteristic of the region: blustery, cool, and showery. We walked through some of the rain, and also sat in the shelter. A photo elicitation session transpired, discussing their selection of images illustrating the plays and other projects. Although no artistic projects took place during my fieldwork period, I gained insight into the earlier projects through these multiple data-gathering methods.

103 I was given a copy of the Geal management plan 2013-2018, and obtained other documents relating to the CWO’s activities from the internet (searching via www.google.co.uk for the CWO’s name). These additional documents were retrieved from the CWA (www.communitywoods.org) and FCS (www.scotland.forestry.gov.uk) websites.
Michael joined the group around 2004 and in 2013 was the group’s chair (and de facto treasurer, the former role-holder having resigned because of time pressures). A professional forester, Michael was committed to community woodlands. Mary joined the group around 2008. With earlier work experience in environmental theatre, Mary was encouraged by Michael to join the CWO in order to bring more ‘cultural input’ to the organization. Although Geal’s two original instigators remained as directors at the time of my 2013 visit, they were less active by that time and I did not meet them.

The section narrates, chronologically, three phases of the CWO’s projects. The context framing and shaping Geal’s emergence is noted [6.2.1]. The early moves that brought the woodland under community control are discussed. Initial projects included tree thinning and eradicating invasive species, followed by interlinked projects of felling trees, building a shelter, and path-laying. These represent the CWO’s first (unsuccessful) attempt to encourage local people into the woodland [6.2.2]. The turn to arts events is discussed, exploring the outdoor plays that represent the CWO’s second - more successful - attempt at community engagement [6.2.3].

6.2.1 Geal CWO: Contexts and emergence

The area is sparsely populated and very isolated (Highland Council 2013; Scottish Government 2016). The area’s most recent statistics are from the 2011 census (Highland Council 2013), when 315 people lived within approximately 330 km2 (at 1 person/ km2, a particularly low density for mainland Scotland). The population is biased towards older people. The area is among the most isolated settlements in Scotland, and remote from many services including secondary education, specialized health care, and many retail and commercial facilities. Travel to the closest mainland town involves a 90-minute drive along predominantly single-track roads and a short ferry crossing; another town is 120-150 minutes away via an island, two ferry crossings, and a short bus journey or drive. Typically, younger people leave the area for post-secondary education and employment. The interviewees noted the community is not only geographically peripheral but also often marginalized in government initiatives.

16.9% of local residents are under 16 (compared to 17.3% across Scotland), whereas 21.3% are over 65 (compared to 16.8%). Notably, only 10.4% are aged 16-29 (compared to 18.5%), and 16.5% aged 30-44 (compared to 20%).
Local residents live either in small settlements, or scattered along 24km of coastline and valley floor. Dwellings are mainly within 50m altitude of the sea. The main settlement (population 200) hosts the primary school and post office; a smaller settlement (pop. 60) is 18km along the coast. The woodland site lies between these settlements, 3.5km from the larger village along single-track road (which is the only road connecting the scattered settlements and homes around the coast).

The community is largely surrounded by forest. Plantations, mainly monoculture coniferous species, cover 5,550ha of the land immediately around and uphill from most of the housing. Hillsides are afforested from 0-50m altitude to around 300m, leaving only the highest summits (c.350m) exposed. This forest is State owned, and FCS managed (Forestry Commission Scotland a). Immediately surrounding the CWO site is unforested land, grazed by livestock. Uses of higher unforested land in the area are not explicit in the data, but likely include ovine rough grazing and deer stalking, with tracks suitable for walking and mountain biking, and fishing and hydro-electric generation in the rivers. Local employment is dominated by forestry, agriculture, and aquaculture. However, there is also some employment in mining, tourism and the service sector, as well as crofts and small-holdings.

Geal CWO began to coalesce in 2002, when two individuals (with prior knowledge of trees and woodlands) began discussions about taking woodland into community control. Their discussions, Michael recalled, were influenced by land reform debates that at the time were gaining increasing traction across Scotland (and particularly the western highlands and islands). Thus, Geal CWO’s emergence was influenced by general understandings flowing from early community land buy-outs (Hunter 2012) that encouraged rural people to believe that land and woodland, and their associated resources, could be controlled and owned by local communities rather than by individuals or organizations potentially distant or absent from the resource.

The Geal activists also recognized that despite their community being ‘surrounded by woodland, there was very little connection between the community and the forest’. Transforming the relationship between local people and surrounding forest became an important end of the project. Their project was to ‘take over an area of woodland for management’. Initially, aspirations were grand, with notions of gaining control over
‘some quite substantial areas of forest, some local estate, some Forestry Commission’. These ambitions gradually scaled down. In 2004 the CWO was incorporated, forming a Company Limited by Guarantee. In 2005 the directors agreed a 25-year management partnership with FCS, instituting CWO control of the 8ha site. In 2015, following ten years of successful community control the CWO directors secured Scottish Land Fund support to buy the site, which was sold by FCS under the National Forest Land Scheme. The aims and objectives of Geal CWO - the organization’s formally-articulated ends - are described in the woodland management plan. Paraphrasing them (to preserve anonymity), the organization’s objective is to pursue benefits for the local population and seeks to improve local people’s quality of life using the plentiful local woodland resources. Supporting that objective are aims to (first) embrace and communicate the importance of sustainable woodland management and the social and economic benefits flowing from it, (second) create woodland recreation and education opportunities and ensure access to the woodland site for these, (third) encourage community involvement in woodland management and use and create economic opportunities in these activities for local people, and (fourth) facilitate woodland-related skills enhancement.

Geal’s ends are shaped by the socialmaterial context within which the community is enmeshed, while aspiring to reshape that context in response to the challenges flowing

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105 The Scottish Land Fund is funded by the Scottish Government to support ‘communities buy and develop land and/or buildings for the benefit of their local area’, and to support rural and urban communities to become ‘more resilient and sustainable’ (Highlands and Islands Enterprise n.d.). The National Forest Land Scheme ‘gives community organisations, recognised non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and/or appropriate housing bodies the chance to buy or lease National Forest Land where they can provide increased public benefits.’ National Forest Land is forest, woodland, and other land and property owned by Scottish ministers on the nation’s behalf, and managed by Forestry Commission Scotland (Forestry Commission Scotland b).

106 Although I was given the 2013-2018 plan, I lacked the 2005-2012 version. Hence, it is unclear whether these aims have evolved or remained static from earlier iteration(s). Analysis of other documents, and the tasks and projects performed, suggests that the CWO’s aims and objectives have likely remained broadly similar (although artistic activities have become more important and are mentioned in the management plan, they are not explicitly listed in the aims and objectives).

107 Although ‘sustainable woodland management’ is mobilized as a management objective, it is not defined in the management plan. In literature, sustainable woodland management is a contested topic - similarly to sustainability and sustainable development [1.2, 2.1]. However, it can be characterized as seeking to balance ecological, social, and economic priorities, in which biodiversity, habitats, and conservation are pursued equally with jobs and prosperity, and recreation, community regeneration and social inclusion projects (see, e.g., Warren 2009b: 83-87).
from it. Thus the CWO seeks to compensate for isolation from many services and leisure and employment opportunities (hence pursuing improved leisure and recreation opportunities in the area and, to a lesser extent, employment and training), and to address people’s lack of connection with woodlands in an area girdled by yet disconnected from forestry plantations (hence facilitating woodland access and aspiring to transform people-woodland relationships). More broadly, these ends are also shaped by general understandings about environmentalism, the revival of woodland culture, related notions about social and ecological benefits of woodlands, and land reform.

Since gaining control of the wood, the CWO has pursued a range of tasks and projects, in line with the above ends and involving not only basic woodland management but also demonstrating a growing commitment to artistic practices. At the heart of their activities is an end to reconnect ‘people with the woods’. Although no explicit reason is evident in the data, that end is in line with general understandings about reconnecting with nature, and the health and wellbeing benefits that are understood to accrue from pursuing outdoor leisure and recreation activities.

6.2.2 First phase: Felling, clearing, building

With the woodland site under community control, Michael described the CWO’s early priorities as ‘[stimulating] woodland skills, to work with woodland skills, how to manage woodlands’, all contributing to ‘reconnecting people with the woods’. Initially, the woodland was used as spatial and material resource for training courses. These addressed woodland skills development, including training in tree surgery, and using chainsaws and forest tractors. Some of these are clearly employment-related, and indeed Michael noted that he had benefited from onsite professional training. However, another course was in basket making, early evidence of an interest in artistic and creative practices using the woodland resource (in a way that could be employment-related).

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108 Geal CWO is not the only community organization in the area and, while distinct, the CWO operates with other organizations under a broad aegis of the local Community Development Trust. Thus the CWO’s activities are part of a suite of community organizational responses to the socialmaterial challenges facing this isolated and sparsely populated district. These organizations prioritise different things, with varying emphases on facilitating local enterprise and economic development, or housing, as well as the woodland.
Beyond these courses, the CWO directors faced a material challenge in achieving their end to get people into their woodland. An earlier management regime’s legacy included two ecological issues requiring action by the CWO. First, the woodland was partially overgrown by *Rhododendron ponticum*, an invasive species problematic for indigenous biodiversity. Second, without earlier active management, areas of younger trees had grown very dense; continued abandonment had implications for the trees’ future healthy growth. Moreover, these two ecological issues restricted people’s movement in the woods, creating a social issue. Combined, these issues shaped the first phase of projects pursued by the CWO, which involved practices of (inter alia) fencing, eradicating *ponticum*, thinning trees, tree felling, timber milling, shelter building, path building, and dealing with windblown timber; these are discussed below.

Fencing the woodland perimeter and *ponticum* eradication are not unusual woodland management projects. The fencing was to keep livestock in the adjacent fields and out of the woodland. *Ponticum* had spread aggressively, covering around 40% of the woodland.109 *Ponticum* bushes are dense with thick waxy leaves, blocking light and nutrients from other species with consequent deleterious impact on biodiversity, reducing numbers of earthworms, birds, and plants on a site (Edwards & Taylor 2008). Moreover, the bushes became so impenetrable that, as Michael observed, ‘you couldn’t walk through here’. Eradicating *ponticum* has facilitated biodiversity regeneration while also easing access for people to ‘walk through here’.

Eradication was a project, involving tasks of killing many individual bushes by chopping branches and stems with small hand-saws, bashing roots with hammers, and arranging waste branches and leaves to cover root remains (preventing sunlight from affecting them), and separating stems from roots and inverting them (so they desiccate). *People*, *ponticum* (a natural organism), and *artefacts* including saws, hammers, adzes, face vizors, and robust, safe footwear were among the material arrangements involved in these tasks; creating conditions for other natural organisms to flourish was an important end of the project. Practical understandings included the safe wielding of

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109 In Scotland, *Rhododendron ponticum* is an invasive species that thrives on the typically acidic soils and humid climate found along the west coast. It has spread vigorously through the region (Forest Research n.d.). Although initially introduced intentionally, by human intervention (thus suggesting it may be an artefact), *ponticum* has dominated many sites without human intervention, hence it is more appropriately considered a natural organism.
these tools and the safe handling of poisonous *ponticum* debris. The eradication project was informed by *general understandings* that biodiversity and indigenous species are good things to be protected, that invasive species troubling indigenous biodiversity should be controlled, and that access to woodland can be beneficial to people’s wellbeing. These understandings contributed toward *ends* that sought (first) to increase biodiversity, and (second) to facilitate local people’s use of the woodland site.\footnote{110}{Human intervention in the woodland, through management practices of eradicating *ponticum*, thinning trees (to encourage stronger and straighter growth in the remaining stock), and attempting to promote biodiversity, may call into question whether the resultant biodiverse ecosystem, and straight and strong trees are most appropriately considered *natural organisms* or *artefacts*. Natural organisms and things of nature are ‘those organisms whose form, inner structure, and existence have been relatively little, if at all, affected by humans’ (Schatzki 2002:178). Although (given its management history) the existence of all the woodland’s trees has been affected by people’s practices performed for biodiversity regeneration, I propose that *natural organisms* is a more appropriate analytical construct to describe the trees and indeed all the species in which the biodiverse woodland consists, because to do other conflates all materiality and risks the loss of analytical traction. Rather, by maintaining a boundary (but acknowledging it is blurred), it is possible to articulate the entangled complexity of human-nature relations.}

Felling a number of Norway spruce trees and using their timber to build a shelter were interrelated *projects*, again pursued towards the *end* of encouraging people into the wood. These projects were impelled by *general understandings* that a building would make the woodland more attractive to visitors, because shelter from wet and windy weather (*things of nature*) is sought by many people. The shelter was intended to function as ‘a focus, in the wood… it creates quite a good focal point’. Michael noted that ‘even if you stand outside the building, we tend to have bonfires just outside there. It’s just quite a good space’. The project evinces *practical understandings* that a shelter would require space and *materials* for construction.

Felling the trees was a *project* involving *material arrangements* including trees (*natural organisms*), weather (*things of nature*), *people* volunteering and working together, and *artefacts* including saws, axes, chainsaws, a timber mill, tractor, protective clothing, footwear, helmets, and goggles, and fuel for chainsaws and tractor. *Practical understandings* and health and safety *rules* of how to use these tools to fell trees were involved, as *tasks* of sawing, chopping, stacking, milling, and cooperating to deal with the tools and handle fallen timber were carried out. Figure 6.4a illustrates some of these tasks and materials.
This timber shelter evidences a general understanding that wood can be an appropriate construction material. The Norway spruce trees (natural organisms) were felled by people, becoming timber (an artefact), and the place they formerly grew in became a clearing (another artefact) providing space initially for milling of the tree trunks into planks of wood suitable for construction use. Milling involved a woodmill and fuel to power it (artefacts), and practical understandings of the act of safe milling. Eventually, enough trees were felled and milled to create sufficient space and timber to build a shelter, using artefacts including metal saws, hammers, chisels, ladders, nails, and a plastic roofing membrane, as well as the milled spruce. Building involved practical understandings including how to hammer a nail, stand on ladders, move heavy wooden planks, and how to season wood before building with it. Figure 6.4b illustrates the material transformations from timber, to milled wood, to partly-completed shelter.

Figure 6.4 Milling Norway Spruce in the newly-felled clearing (6.4a, left); From trees to timber to shelter (6.4b, right) (images courtesy Geal CWO)

Benches and tables, also made from the milled spruce, are arranged inside and outside the shelter. The benches (artefacts) are intended to make people more comfortable when using the shelter. By making benches, the makers were not only drawing on woodworking practical understandings, but also a general understanding that the ability to sit, rather than stand, in a space is more likely to encourage people to stay in it and use it. Figure 6.5 shows the shelter several years after completion, in a trimmed-grass clearing, with steps and boardwalk ramp to access and benches outside.
Another project was to build a path network through the woodland. The project’s end was, again, to encourage people into the woodland, informed by general understandings that a path eases progress through complex terrain of natural organisms and things of nature including trees, bushes, rocks, roots, stream, and mud, and that easier progress through the woodland may attract people into visiting and using the site. The path (an artefact) was enhanced by other artefacts including boardwalks (elevated timber walkway sections to keep people’s feet dry by bridging bogs and mud [things of nature]) and stiles (timber steps, to negotiate fences and walls). Thinning and felling were required to clear a route for the path, replicating the practical understandings and material arrangements involved in these tasks discussed above.

This discussion has neglected emotional (teleoffective) aspects of these projects. However, although emotion was absent from the data, it is likely that considerable satisfaction was enjoyed by the volunteer woodsmen and makers as they brought the woodland site under control, eradicating ponticum, enabling native species to flourish,
and building a sturdy and durable shelter. Certainly, there is a notable symbolism in the projects of felling trees and using them to make a building in a woodland you have recently been empowered to control. Using woodland materials in this way is a privilege denied communities without woodland control.

In terms of the scale and visibility of human interventions, eradicating, thinning, felling, milling, and building projects were the most significant acts during the CWO’s initial years of woodland control. However, there were other projects, including producing firewood for pensioners, and installing an artistic artefact in the trees; these deserve discussion.

The firewood project was an annual activity, involving trees (natural organisms) that had been blown down by strong winds creating windblown timber (things of nature), chainsaws, saws, axes, log splitters used to turn the timber into firewood, and trailers and cars to transport it (artefacts), and people (first) those volunteering their skills, time, and energies to prepare and distribute the firewood, and (second) the local pensioners who receive it. Practical understandings are involved, including safe sawing of windblown trees, handling saws and axes, knowing appropriate sizes of log for firewood, storing firewood to season it, and safely driving a firewood-laden trailer.

General understandings inform the firewood project, such as that some local community members who may be unable otherwise to participate in woodland activities may benefit from a gift of heat energy, and that among the diversity of woodland resources some can be used to heat a house. More instrumental practical understandings may have influenced the project; distributing local resources in this way presumably creates a positive impression of the CWO among the wider community, although it is equally possible that the project is not done for instrumental reasons but simply to share material benefits of the woodland. Other general understandings suggest windblown timber be left rotting in situ, returning nutrients to the soil and offering habitats for a variety of species (and thus contributing to woodland management for biodiversity). However, by choosing to gift at least some of the windblown timber to local pensioners, the CWO demonstrates a concern for people as well as biodiversity.
Around the time the path network was built, one of the original CWO directors created an artistic artefact. This installation, representing a giant spider and fly on a web, is suspended between two trees above and beside a path (figure 6.6). It is an artefact of everyday creativity, made by a person from natural organisms and things of nature. The installation suggests a general understanding of biodiversity’s importance, and can be interpreted in at least four ways. First, the creatures represented are members of the woodland’s biodiverse ecological community. Second, the creatures are represented many times larger-than-life, making naturally tiny creatures visible. Third, the installation also makes visible a predator-prey relationship, drawing attention to hidden complexities of the ecological community the woodland is managed to support. Fourth, the artist is concerned with the continued flourishing of other (non-human) species, evident (although not from the photograph) because the installation is made of natural materials, found in the woodland, that are ‘starting to rot away’, and also because both the spider and fly are designed as habitats, and are perforated with nooks and crannies for animals to nest in.

As a human intervention in the world, it is ecologically sensitive; made of things of nature, offering habitats for natural organisms, and designed to return nutrients (things of nature) to the ecosystem as it biodegrades over time. Yet, it is at the same time an artistic artefact, and prompted an emotional response. As a visitor to the site, I was pleasantly startled and amused when I spotted it, experiencing at the very least fun, amusement, and gentle surprise - through the unexpected use of the space - suggesting that these emotions were part of the artefact’s teleoaffectivity. I also enjoyed the artefact again, as I reflected on its possible interpretations. The data do not describe any intention by the maker, nor responses provoked by the artefact from local people; arachnophobes, or those unexpectedly encountering a giant spider in the dark, may experience different reactions from mine. Mary welcomed the artefact’s contribution to creating a woodland ‘space which is loved’.
In summary, this subsection has described the first phase of projects organized in Geal after the CWO gained woodland control. Thickly-described narrative data has made visible the CWO’s socialmaterial entanglements. Projects involved eradicating, thinning, felling, clearing, milling, and shelter and path building. Projects, performed by people to change material arrangements in the natural and artefactual woodland, were pursued for particular ends, including managing for biodiversity, habitat restoration and generation, and to encourage local people into the woodlands. The first phase of projects sought to ‘create a space’ in the woodland where local people ‘could go and do things’; the Geal directors hoped that by easing access to and progress through the wood, and by building a gathering place facilitating sitting, sheltering, and being sociable, people would be encouraged to use their local woodland.

Despite these efforts, ‘there really wasn’t great interest’ shown by local people in using their newly accessible woodland space. Although there were new, well-built ‘paths and so on’, Michael noted, ‘still, the use levels were quite low… I was disappointed,
actually, that you only occasionally saw a car in the car park. I was bothered by that’. Clearly, a core group of volunteers had been eradicating, thinning, felling, clearing, milling and building. Outwith that group, however, Michael saw that other local people were relatively unaffected by the transformed materiality of the woodland. Although successful in terms of bringing the woodland under control and modifying it for community use, the first phase of projects was unsuccessful in terms of encouraging community use, at least in the eyes of the CWO directors.

Assertions about why the first phase projects failed to engage local people are not supported by the data. Speculating, it is possible that latent rules (discouraging access to commercial silvicultural plantations) informed the lack of widespread use of the community woodland site. Similarly, local residents may have lacked practical understandings that the woodland was open for them to access. However, it is also possible that the wider local population had no practical understandings of using the woodland as a ‘space’ where they ‘could go and do things’ for recreation, not least because they had not experienced the new material arrangements of paths and shelters among the trees.

6.2.3 Second phase: Performing and making

After the lacklustre impact of the first series of projects, Geal CWO took an explicit turn to creative and artistic activities. A series of arts projects - woodland plays involving performing and making practices - successfully encouraged people into the woods. ‘Since we’ve been doing events’, Mary affirmed, ‘the woods have been used more’. This section narrates trajectories leading to the arts events and describes important moments and artefacts of the performances.

Towards the arts events

The initial impetus for the arts events at Geal is complex, involving people and their general and practical understandings gained through at least three strands of lived experience. First, one of the founding directors was the artist and woodworker who

111 I return to this point, reflecting on limitations [8.2] and future research opportunities [8.4].
created the spider and fly installation. From an early stage there was the possibility of decision-making being influenced by general understandings around the arts and creative expression as an important element of human existence. However, that individual had ‘stepped back’ from regular involvement in the CWO over time; I did not meet him, and his involvement in the turn to woodland plays was unclear. In withdrawing from with CWO activities, he is one example of a recurrent theme across all the interviews of the challenges facing volunteer-led organizations.

Second, Michael ‘was inspired’ in 2007 having experienced a performance (at another woodland site) by a professional outdoor theatre group undertaking a Scotland-wide CWA-organized tour around several community woodland. The actors inspired him with their ‘visual use of the forest’, skilled use of ropes, clubs, fire (artefacts), juggling and musical competences (practical understandings), and the fun and surprises these brought to the evening (teleoaffective emotions). Combined, these tasks entertained the audience who, along with the performers, were ‘having a lot of fun’. The possibilities of woodland arts ‘struck’ Michael, prompting his conversations with Mary about similar projects.

Third, Mary had a passion for outdoor theatre, having previously worked a short spell with an outdoor theatre festival in another country. She believed that ‘you look at your

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112 In withdrawing from CWO activities, the former director exemplifies an issue common to all the interviews. Many CWOs are reliant on volunteers to organize their activities, and certainly this was true of most artistic and creative projects I heard about during fieldwork. However, people have limited amounts of time and energy to give, and in many rural Scottish communities there are multiple community organizations seeking volunteer directors from a potentially small and inevitably limited population, so demand for volunteers invariably exceeds supply. I developed a sense that community organizations activities can ebb and flood as volunteers’ enthusiasms wane before perhaps building again, or shifting to a different community organization. Various theoretical lenses promise traction on the issue, including social movement studies (Resource Mobilization Theory views activists as resources required for activism (a lens weakened by assumptions of rational actors)), emerging notions of ‘organizational ghosts’ from earlier projects and decisions influencing current thinking (Orr 2014); from a practice perspective, volunteers may be understood as offering not least their bodily materials and practical understandings as resources, without these resources (particularly the bodily one) organizations struggle.

113 The tour was a CWA contribution to Scotland’s Year of Highland Culture 2007 (SYHC). SYHC took place between January and December 2007, and aimed to celebrate the distinct and diverse cultures that thrive across the Highlands and Islands. A complex project, SYHC involved multiple agencies and people, and was enacted through a heterogenous mix of arts, cultural, heritage, sporting, and scientific events, installations, and exhibitions (Hamilton et al. 2008). Community woodlands organizations, supported by a CWA-appointed coordinator, were involved in a number of these events and activities (Calvert 2008). During fieldwork for this thesis, it emerged that SYHC marked a high-water mark for woodland artistic and creative events, with apparently fewer events taking place in subsequent years. The interview evidence suggests that the decline in community woodland arts events is related to a diminution of funding opportunities.
surroundings different, if you do something different with it’; arts projects were, for Mary, the ‘something different’. From her earlier experiences she gained general understandings that drama and the arts can be transformative for people, and that outdoor drama in particular can help change people’s relationships with a material place. Mary’s festival work had lasted three months, confirming her teleoaffective passion for outdoor theatre as a potentially transformative, fun and emotionally fulfilling project, but insufficient for her to acquire practical understandings to direct woodland theatre herself.

Michael encouraged Mary to become a member of the CWO board. He was keen for her cultural perspectives and ‘creative input’ to decision-making and woodland projects, and energy to ‘organize events’. Collaborating, they developed ambitions for woodland art projects. Their engagement with artistic and creative woodland activities has apparently transformed the relationship between the wider local community and the woodland. The change took place gradually, across a number of years.

In 2009, the theatre company previously seen by Michael were able to visit Geal, developing and performing a ‘community play, here in the woods, based on local stories’. Although led by professional actors, many local people were involved, children and adults, as actors and making props. In 2010, Geal CWO hosted a workshop in woodland theatre skills, delivered by actors from the same theatre company.114 The skills development workshop focussed on the practices involved in creating outdoor theatre. Mary described how she had learnt ‘how to use your space, how to use local materials’. The workshop was a ‘real eye-opener’ for Mary, and she noted that the participants gained ‘confidence to do it ourselves, the next year’. The workshop helped them to explore and think about the material character of the wood, and its trees and spaces, to consider how these could be used directorially, and how to use materials, found around the wood and beach, in props and the set. Subsequently, led by Mary, they have performed their own productions of two Shakespeare plays; in 2011, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and in 2012, As You Like It, chosen because of their woodland settings.

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114 The workshop was also open for any CWA members to attend.
Summarizing, the CWO’s turn to woodland plays was influenced by the lived experiences of several people, which led the directors to identify plays as potentially transformative and able to encourage people to engage with the woodland. Below, I explore how Mary, Michael, and their collaborators used the woodland and its material resources artistically, performing directorial and actorish artistic practices in tasks of sets, stunts, and props.

**Entangled artistic practices and woodland materiality**

The contrasting materiality of different species of trees (*natural organisms*) was an important element of the artistic direction of the plays. Demonstrating artistic vision and understanding characteristics flowing from woodland biodiversity, Mary - who directed the plays - noted in one corner of the wood that ‘here, we've all these spindly trees that are quite thin, there's this magical quality that really fitted well with *A Midsummer Nights Dream*’. Whereas ‘another part of the forest, which is much more robust’ was ideal for scenes in *As You Like It*, because of the ‘bigger trees, much more down to earth, a different quality’. Although the plot and narrative flow of the plays was already shaped by Shakespeare, the progress of the particular Geal production drifted around the woodland, influenced by the ‘different qualities of the woods’. Mary combined practical understandings of directing dramatic movement as part of the play, with affect and emotional teleoffectivity characterized by material setting. Figure 6.7a illustrates the ethereal quality of woodland ideal for Mary’s vision of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, while figure 6.7b shows the more substantial trees that set the for *As You Like It*.

Relatedly, stunts were tasks that combined practical understandings involving roped access skills, working at height and actorish ability, materials including trees (*natural organisms*), people, and ropes and harnesses (*artefacts*). Stunts were used not only to prompt emotions (teleoffectivity) including surprise, shock, and fun as part of the artistic narrative trajectory of the play, but also to emphasise the biodiverse materiality of the woodland space.
In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, one of the characters (Puck) appeared, suddenly, high in the trees, and slid across a clearing on a wire. Puck is illustrated, frozen mid-slide across the clearing, in figure 6.8. ‘We had a zip-wire, up in the oak tree, and it disappeared down off that way… the audience were here… there was this scene with Oberon calling out for Puck…[Oberon] shouted that way, “Puck! Puck!”’, so everybody looked that way, and then Puck kind of popped out a few metres [above their heads], and the reaction was “oh my god!”’. The zip-wire stunt was included in the action because (first) Michael was ‘inspired’ by the professional theatre company’s ‘aerial work’, (second) one of the actors had appropriate skills, and (third) both Mary and Michael ‘just thought it would be a laugh’.

More than just ‘a laugh’, this was an important moment in the play from Mary’s artistic perspective. Not only was it fun for the cast, it also surprised the audience, created amusement, and focused their attention on a particular part of the action. However, Mary emphasized that ‘you might not have noticed that something was a big tree, unless you put somebody in the tree’. Hence, the stunt was designed to contribute to the CWO’s broader aims of reconnecting people with the woodland. Through the relatively simple but startling expedient of putting a person up a tree, the stunt was part of a wider end that sought to encourage people to ‘look at your surroundings differently’, by doing ‘something different with it’.
The props for all the plays were made using ‘temporary materials’ said Mary, ‘just things we could find in the woods’ and on the beach. The prop-making project included various tasks such as foraging, beach-combing, and scavenging to gather the basic materials. In addition to people, materials included things of nature and artefacts including windblown branches strewn around the woodland, driftwood washed up on the beach, and unwanted scraps of wood and cardboard from homes and workshops. Practical understandings involved knowing what props might contribute which meaning or affect to a particular dramatic moment, how props can combine artistic and practical purposes (like lanterns and burning ships giving light as night-falls in an open-air theatre with no electric lighting), diverse craft and making skills to construct props including lanterns and bird-representations made of pliable branches, glue and paper, or build a scale replica of a ship, wrecked on the beach. Imaginative flexibility, too, is an important practical understanding for makers using wood in these ways, because all pieces of wood are distinctive, and have variable form and characteristics that shape (literally) the final artefact produced.

Using the ship as a prop demonstrated practical understandings of fire-setting, the time of the setting sun, and skills to manipulate emotions through drama (contributing to teleoaffectivity) as the play’s concluding scene involved the ship, burning spectacularly at sunset. Figure 6.9 illustrates the lantern (a) and bird-representation (b), and figure
6.10 the ship under construction (a) and being burnt (b); these images exemplify the materials used and craft ingenuity involved in making the props. Importantly, all the materials were all found, natural organisms, things of nature, or other biodegradable artefacts; all temporary so the props were left scattered around the wood to decay over time, returning nutrients to the woodland ecosystem or offering a rotten twig for insects to nest in or fungal growths to colonize. In 2013, only one or two years after some of the props had been made, there was scant evidence left (beyond Mary’s photographs) of these ‘theatrical props with natural things’, because they were ‘all gone now’.

![A lantern (6.9a, left) and bird-representation (6.9b, right)](Images courtesy Geal CWO)

Figure 6.9 A lantern (6.9a, left) and bird-representation (6.9b, right)
(Images courtesy Geal CWO)

Clearly, the woodland’s diverse material resources were enthusiastically and creatively used in the production of these plays. Nevertheless, members of the woodland ecological community were not necessarily passive participants; the cast faced challenges, posed by the outdoor venue and by natural organisms thriving within it, including thorny bushes and insects. Notably, midges were a problem as people were ‘eaten alive’ by these biting insects during the performance. For the actors, this was particularly problematic if they had to remain still for a period, preventing them swatting the midges away. A creative solution to cope with the midges was found in at least one of these situations, as they ‘used mosquito net’ for the veil on Queen Titania’s bed in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, ‘which was actually quite handy, as she had to lay

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115 There are 37 species of Culicoides midges in Scotland, of which 5 pursue human blood. C. impunctatus is the most numerous, responsible for 70-95% of midge attacks on humans. These are very small biting insects (with c1.4mm wingspan) that are an indigenous and - for many people - irritating part of outdoor summer life in Scotland, particularly on the west coast where they thrive on the humid climate and acidic soil (Blackwell et al. 2003).
there quite a while and it was really midgie’. Hence, nature and creative responses to and with it were distinctive features of the plays.

![Figure 6.10](image)

Figure 6.10 The ship, an artistic artefact and theatrical prop, in construction (6.10a, left) and creative destruction (6.10b, right). Post-fire residue was left to be absorbed back into the ecosystem (Images courtesy Geal CWO)

The data are clear that the actors (people) were entangled with organisms and things of nature, and woodland artefacts in the performance of the plays. However, the plays also enmeshed the audience people in woodland materiality. Instead of a physical theatre building with distinct stage, seating, backstage and scene dock areas, woodland spaces were shared by performers and audience alike. Woodland glades of differing characters replaced changing sets on a fixed stage. Rather than sitting to observe the action, as indoor theatrical practices typically involve, the audience were obliged not only to watch standing but also to walk, following the actors around the woodland in pursuit of the unfolding action. Thus everyone - actors and audience alike - were required to negotiate things of nature including wind, rain, or sun as it happened, encroaching darkness as the sun set, natural organisms including midges, thorny bushes just off the path, and trees with low branches, and woodland artefacts including a path with boardwalk sections and stiles, to help them cope with the variable woodland terrain.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ During the fieldwork period, I attended a play as an audience member, in another CWO site. In that play, audience-members were expected not only to follow the actors around the wood, but to contribute some of the bit parts in the production (we were given slips of paper with our lines on). Doing so broke the ice between people, leading to conversations between audience-members that may not otherwise have occurred. In that play, however, the actors’ engagement with woodland space and resources was limited; the distinctness of the setting was barely acknowledged. In contrast, the plays at Geal appear to have made sophisticated use of the woodland, both spatially and materially, but appear not to have sought audience participation.
In summary, narrative presentation of the arts events data has illustrated the
socialmaterial entanglements constituting the woodland plays; the plays were complex
nexuses of socialmaterial practices, starring people and their affective doings and
sayings, entangled on a double-bill with woodland materiality. The plays involved (inter
alia) practical understandings, rules, general understandings, teleoaffectivities, tasks
and projects framed within ends, enmeshed with materials in the form of people,
natural organisms, things of nature, and artefacts. Practical understandings included
knowing how to act, build props, choose biodegradable materials, perform stunts, and
use zip-wires. Some of these were influenced by rules of (e.g.) safe working at height
and fire-setting. General understandings included managing for biodiversity, and the
importance and benefits of people having access to woodlands and their resources.
Among the performances’ teleoaffectivities were emotions including surprise, fun, and
amusement; likely other emotions were involved too, but not apparent in the data.

The performances combined tasks and projects of choreographing scenes in glades of
spindly or robust trees, setting up a stunt, timing a joke, lighting a lantern or fire, and all
the other tasks carried out by actors and production crew that integrate to create a
theatrical performance, all within a wider project of managing the woodland for
biodiversity and community engagement. Material arrangements involving people (as
actors, makers of props and set, and audience), natural organisms (trees, grass, soil,
midges), things of nature (driftwood, windblown timber, weather, sunset), and artistic
artefacts (props and set that contribute to the emotional affect of the performance) using
these local natural materials were all essential parts of the action. Props and set, made in
situ from locally found natural materials, were intended to decay back into the
woodland ecosystem. In this way, the plays and props evidence everyday creativity;
they were products of people making something which is novel in that context, for
pleasure, use, joy, and not necessarily for financial gain.

Although I have alluded to an audience, these people have not been prominent in the
foregoing discussion. However, the presence of an audience may be a success of the
woodland plays. The CWO sought to reconnect local people with the woodland, but the
first phase of projects [6.2.2] had failed in that regard. The plays, however, enjoyed
good audiences. Mary and Michael suggested that around half of the local population
attended the first play, apparently marking many local residents’ initial woodland foray.
6.2.4 Summary

This section has narrated the emergence and subsequent activities of Geal CWO. Emerging from understandings that rural communities can control local land and woodlands, and recognizing that the settlements local to Geal were largely surrounded by forest yet lacking connections between local people and the forest, Geal CWO sought (inter alia) to reconnect people with the woods, and has pursued that aim in a variety of ways. Following the CWO gaining control of the woodland site in 2005, the directors organized a series of projects; I analyse these as two distinct phases.

In the first phase, projects included eradicating an invasive species, thinning dense glades, felling trees, building a shelter, and laying a network of paths through the woods. These were pursued to encourage local residents to use the woodland. However, despite the transformation of woodland materiality by CWO volunteers, other local residents were barely engaged with the arboreal space newly available for their use. A second phase of projects describe a turn towards locally-organized woodland arts events. Woodland plays incorporated a variety of tasks and projects, including directing the action, interpreting characteristics of woodland species, safely organizing stunts, and creating props, and evinced particular relationships between the plays’ organizers and woodland materiality. Notably the plays appeared to encourage local people into the woodland, thus supporting the CWO’s aims and objectives.

Through these two phases of projects, Geal CWO has organized community control of the woodland site and made progress towards the organization’s objectives. Not least, the Geal people have succeeded in encouraging other local residents to use the woodland more, in attracting new members to join the CWO board, and in securing funding (first) to support projects such as those described, and (second) on a considerably larger scale, to purchase the woodland site from the FCS in 2015. Since my (2013) visit, other projects have been organized in Geal, although not (to my knowledge) community-led woodland theatre.

The data illustrate the complexity of socialmaterial entanglements involved in all these projects (as was likely given the practice theoretical lens). It seems that the first phase of projects - significant interventions in woodland material arrangements - was
insufficient to engage people with the woodland, whereas the plays did, apparently, draw people into the woods. Yet, the plays were facilitated in part by general woodland management practices, including those leaving windblown branches around the wood (providing materials for prop-making), and path- and shelter-building (creating spaces for dramatic performances). Thus the plays were not only reliant on general woodland management practices, but also supported the objectives of the woodland management plan (to encourage people into the woods). In this way, the data presented above illuminate the earlier insight [6.1.2] that artistic and creative activities can (or should) be closely integrated with general woodland management practices in a holistic notion of woodland culture.

There are several implications to be drawn from the preceding presentation of Geal CWO’s activities. Key topics for discussion include (first) the presence in the woodland of local people, forming an audience for the plays, (second) other outcomes of the plays, both for Geal CWO and for other CWOs across the country, and (third) meanings that can be interpreted from the practices performed by woodland folk; I discuss these interpretations and implications in chapter 7.

6.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In presenting the data, this chapter has illustrated the diversity of the woodland scene, viewed through a practice lens. CWOs were shown to consist in a heterogenous palette of socialmaterial practices. The slice of artistic and creative practices was established as distinct and significant phenomenon of the woodland scene [6.1.1]. In this way, the chapter answers the first part of RQ2b: what artistic and creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands [...]? However, artistic and creative activities were shown to be more than simply phenomena taking place in woodlands; the data illustrate how artistic and creative practices can (and - for some - should) be an important and integral aspect of woodland organizing. Ends of regenerating woodland culture, and of reconnecting people with land and woodlands, form the backdrop for all woodland practices. Against that context, artistic and creative woodland practices were identified as having at least three potential roles: (first) enmeshed in a holistically conceived model of woodland management, (second) informing uses of woodland
spatial and material resources, and (third) serving to encourage people into the woods [6.1.2].

A thickly-described narrative illustrated the socialmaterial entanglements of Geal CWO [6.2]. The data emerging from Geal CWO show a series of projects connecting general woodland management practices with artistic and creative practices, apparently confirming the insight that arts projects can be tightly integrated with woodland management and can help reconnect people with the woods. In this way, an answer begins to emerge to the second part of RW2b (...and how do these activities intersect with the wider woodland movement...?). However, concluding the benefits of tight integration between artistic practices and the wider woodland movement can only be tentative without critical discussion of the implications and limitations arising from the Geal data. Hence, the data presented in this sixth chapter forms the starting point for fuller analysis and interpretation in chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7

INTERPRETING WOODLAND PRACTICES: PREFIGURING GREEN REPUBLICANISM

The previous chapter presented the data through a practice theory lens, as socialmaterial woodland doings and sayings. This chapter discusses that data. In this way, chapters 6 and 7 combine in response to RQ2b: what artistic and creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, and how do these intersect with the wider woodland movement and with sustainability transitions? Moreover, these data-focused chapters allow evaluation (in chapter 8) of the conceptual and interpretive framework’s successes and weaknesses. This chapter proceeds as follows. The data are discussed (first) in practice theoretical terms [7.1], and (second) by interpreting woodland practices against the evaluative framework of green republicanism [7.2].

7.1 REGENERATING WOODLAND CULTURE: A ROLE FOR PRACTICES?

This section discusses the data from a practice theoretical perspective. Although the data was presented through a practice lens, it can also be further analysed in practice terms. The woodland plays were projects, undertaken not only in pursuit of artistic and creative ends - entertainment, amusement, affect, joy - but also as part of a larger project pursuing increased community engagement as an end. Geal CWO sought to encourage local people into the woods, to reconnect them with (wood)land, and with the material and spatial resources therein. From a practice theoretical perspective, the CWO sought to change people’s practices; these projects were prefigurative interventions, of the socialmaterial present seeking to shape the socialmaterial future. In consideration of this, we must ask: to what extent have the plays contributed to that larger project?

[117] Seeking to encourage people into woodlands can also be understood in cultural political terms. Normalized practices in the community did not involve engagement with woodlands, whereas the CWO sought to encourage practices troubling those norms. Section 7.2 will analyse Geal’s activities in cultural political terms.
Most obviously, the plays brought people into the woodland, many apparently for the first time. As Mary recalled, people said, after the 2009 performance, ‘“Do you know, I’ve never been down here before”’, and you think Ooh! Just two miles down the road and you’ve never been!’. Mary was quite clear that the 2009 theatre project was ‘probably our biggest success when it comes to numbers, we had 120 people’ attend, which, as Michael noted, ‘is a lot, the whole [area] only has 250 people’. However, two caveats should be noted about these claims, relating (first) to total attendance figures, and (second) why people may have attended.

First, the attendance figure, and its proportion to the local population, may not be wholly accurate. Michael reported a population of 250 in the context of the 2009 event, whereas the national census figures suggest 315 population in 2011 (Highland Council 2013). The reliability of estimated crowd sizes may be questioned, not least because counting that number of people in an unconfined outdoor space is not easy (Watson & Yip 2011). Moreover, estimating numbers attending unticketed gatherings can be infused with commercial, political, and emotional significance. On the other hand, the directors were local residents; rather than simply counting heads, they would have been able to account (in many cases) for the names of those who were there. Thus, it is reasonable to accept that a locally-significant number of people, of around half the population, attended the 2009 play.

The data suggest two reasons why people attended the plays. First, the plays were an outcome of Mary’s ‘revitalizing’ of theatre in the community, which had (as Michael noted) until 2009 been dormant for a ‘couple of decades’. Second, Michael also recalled ‘excitement’ within the community about the distinctive woodland setting for a theatrical performance. Data limitations prevent evaluation of the balance between these influences.

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118 There are at least three possible reasons for these divergent numbers. First, Michael was discussing the 2009 play, and the census data is from 2011; it is possible (though perhaps not likely) that the local population has changed to that extent in two years. Second, as a local resident and director of a community organization, Michael may have had more up-to-date knowledge of the comings and goings of the local population than the local authorities statistics are able to offer. Third, there may be differing understandings of the community’s boundaries; the local authority (political) boundary for the Community Council doesn’t consistently follow geographical features, whereas these features may be perceived as a natural boundary by local residents. Finally, Michael may simply be reporting a mis-remembered figure.

119 A third influence on attendance may be the artistic content of the plays, which varied between local historical themes and Shakespeare. However, the data cannot support analysis of that influence.
reasons for attendance. However, to the crudely-evaluated extent that a locally-significant number of people attended, the plays may be considered an immediate success.

Beyond immediate success, did legacy impacts flow from the plays? The data suggest at least two clear outcomes, one affecting the CWO board, and the other relating more generally to woodland use. Two new directors were recruited, having had their interest piqued by the organization’s evident commitment to woodland arts projects. Attracting new volunteers to direct the organization is important, because ‘it keeps interest’ going. New directors bring fresh ideas and energy to the group, and are able to support new and different projects. As Michael noted, volunteer directors often ‘burn out’ after four or five years, which is good neither for the volunteers nor the organization. Notably, by establishing a connection between staging the plays and recruiting new directors, it is possible to confirm Ann’s insight [6.1.2], that a CWO engaged in diverse activities is likely to attract diverse people.¹²⁰

Second, ‘the woods have been used more, since we have been doing events’, Mary observed. Michael thought that it had ‘taken the art stuff for people to take ownership’ of the woodland, because ‘there’s definitely been a significant increase’ in use levels. Although unlikely ever to be ‘a major destination’, Michael noted the wood is at the very least ‘a stopping point for people… which it certainly wasn’t when we put the paths in and built the shelter’. Thus, although the initial path and shelter building projects made scant impression on local people, the plays apparently made more impact.

¹²⁰ The time and energy required for to be a CWO director or volunteer was a trope recurring through several of the interviews. Volunteer fatigue is an established problem in Scottish community organizations (Calvert 2009) and elsewhere, too (Franklin et al. 2011a), and this is particularly problematic in small communities. In Scotland many settlements have increasing numbers of community organizations; in order to flourish and accomplish their aims, these organizations all require volunteers. However an additional issue is around the barrier to participation posed to younger people, who often have to work to earn a living, thus restricting their volunteering participation. In this way, decision-making for volunteer-dependent community organizations may be dominated by retired people, who often have more spare time and also perhaps a desire to share - for community benefit - their life’s skills and experiences. Related to these issues was the question of funding for CWO arts projects. As already noted [5.2.3, 6.2.3], there was a noticeable diminution of CWO arts projects after the Highland Year of Culture ended in 2007. Several interviewees noted that funding was very difficult to obtain for woodland arts projects, and that when it was granted, rarely came from Creative Scotland, the country’s arts funding agency, but more usually from Scottish Natural Heritage or the Forestry Commission. Empirical investigation of these questions are beyond the scope of this thesis, but are touched on theoretically in chapter 7. They form one direction for future research.
There is clear evidence that following the plays the woodland has been well used. My visit to Geal demonstrated a woodland that was not only occupied by people, but cherished by them. Indeed, there was an activity for local children during my visit and many people were around. Well-trodden paths were particularly clear evidence of frequently-carried-out practices of woodland walking. My visit took place in late summer, when bushes are bushiest. Despite the obvious vigorous summer growth around the woodland, the clearing round the shelter was not overgrown (as figure 6.5 illustrated), and the shelter was obviously in regular use; although clearly a space shared with natural organisms, it was not dominated by (e.g.) spider’s webs or other things of nature. Finally, artistic and creative artefacts had been installed around the woodland, in addition to the original spider and fly. Figure 7.1 illustrates not only a well-trodden path but also one of these newer installations, the fresh-looking moss suggesting it had not been there for long.

Figure 7.1 A recently-made artistic artefact arching over a well-trodden path (author's image)

There is, therefore, evidence supporting the claim that increased woodland use was a positive outcome flowing from the plays. However, there are at least three points for
further reflection. First, (how) can the outcome of increased woodland use be understood in practice terms? Second, are there generalizable insights to support future interventions by other CWOs? Third, what cultural political interpretations can be made from the data?

First, an important end for some community woodland activists is to regenerate a long-lost woodland culture [6.1.2]. That end appears to inform a number of CWO practices and projects. Hence, these can be understood as practice-changing interventions. The two phases of projects at Geal CWO exemplify this: encouraging people’s increased woodland use was an attempt to change people’s practices. At Geal, the woodland theatrical performances appear to have played a role in preparing the audience to carry out new practices of (at least) entering and walking around the woodland. It seems that the plays served to introduce people to woodland practices. Audience members were exposed to - and required to perform - practices of woodland use through attendance at the plays. Given their rural residency, it would be absurd to suggest that local people were unacquainted with rough and unsurfaced paths, mud, and close encounters with natural organisms and things of nature. However, the plays brought people into the wood, and required them to negotiate the woodland terrain in daylight, dusk, and darkness as the drama unfolded, arguably prompting them to begin learning about and responding to the materiality of the wood.

The fieldwork engaged only with directors of the Geal CWO and documents produced by the CWO, neglecting local residents who had attended the plays or otherwise used the Geal woodland. That neglect was caused by limited access, partly because there was no woodland play performed during my time in the field, and partly because of the temporal constraints of doctoral research. Hence, the following thoughts are interpretive reflections, not data-supported certainties, although they do point towards further data-gathering.

It seems likely that attending the plays helped people to begin developing a general understanding that the woodland was an open and welcoming space for their recreation, practical understandings that there were artefacts including good paths, boardwalks, stiles, and benches on which adults could sit and relax on while children and dogs could roam and frolic freely and safely in the (artefactual) partially-cleared undergrowth, and
emotional teleoaffec
tivities that the views, dens, smells, and touches were pleasing, among the trees (natural organisms) and clearings (artefacts).

Thus, emerging from analysis of the Geal data is a suggestion that future CWO interventions may garner greater successes by explicitly introducing people to practices of woodland use, rather than simply creating material arrangements appropriate for practices of woodland use. Geal CWO’s first series of interventions was not successful in encouraging people into the woods despite modifying the woodland with paths and a shelter to make access easier. The successful second series of interventions - the woodland plays - not only offered a clear reason for people to enter the woods, but showed visitors some of the things that could be done in the wood. More than simply creating the conditions for people to engage in new practices, the plays appear to have facilitated people’s learning of those practices.

A speculative conclusion, then, is that arts events may not simply attract people into woodlands, but more specifically present an opportunity to introduce people to new woodland practices. To reduce the speculative element of that conclusion, further research is required. Engaging with the people living near Geal may illuminate how their practices of woodland use did (and did not) change following the community gaining control of the woodland, and the roles the plays had in those transformations.

Second, how generalizable is that conclusion? The plays became an important project for Geal CWO because some of the directors were passionate about the possibilities presented by woodland plays. Moreover, the directors benefited from a workshop that gave them an opportunity to learn practical and general understandings relevant to organizing woodland plays. Not all CWOs may have a drama enthusiast available to them. However, there are many other artistic and creative practices performed in woodlands (illustrated by figures 6.2 and 6.3); the interviews with Hamish, Donald, Ann, Lucy, and Tracy confirm that these activities are all organized by people similarly committed to their diverse creative passions. In this thesis, I have privileged theoretical discussion - developing an original conceptual and interpretive framework - over wider empirical investigation. That emphasis has precluded not only zoomed-in consideration of other woodland artistic and creative activities, but also comparative discussion. Further research is required to establish whether some artistic and creative activities are
more successful than others for encouraging new people into the woods, or introducing them to new woodland practices.\footnote{A further issue for future research relates to the location of different woodlands. For example, did the rural location of Geal influence the speed with which local residents began to use the woodland? Would urban, suburban, or peri-urban residents respond differently to a gentle introduction to woodland use?}

The third point for reflection relates to my cultural political interest in CWOs as contexts that may prefigure less unsustainable ways of living. To what extent (and how) does woodland organizing prefigure sustainability transitions? My substantive concern in this thesis has been to articulate and evaluate a conceptual lens allowing analysis of sustainability transitions in cultural political terms; chapter 3 developed that lens, defining cultural politics as contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices. Chapter 6 identified woodland activities as practices involving people’s engagements with woodland materiality.

The activities at Geal \([6.2]\) can be understood in cultural political terms not least because they challenge normalized practices of forest ownership and use. Geal is one example of a local woodland successfully taken under community control. An important end of the Geal CWO directors was to transform locally-normalized practices of not using forests, because residents had no connection to the surrounding silvicultural plantations. However, the nuanced cultural-political depths of meanings flowing from woodland practices at Geal remain unsounded. Practices in both phases of Geal CWO’s projects demonstrated distinctive ways of organizing human activity, particularly in relation to the local ecological community as well as the local people. Seeking to show (how) these can be understood as cultural-political prefigurations of sustainability transitions, I turn in the next section \([7.2]\) to evaluate the practices and projects at Geal against the green republican interpretive framework.

Summarizing this practice theoretical discussion of the data, I have articulated one (speculative) conclusion, and noted two avenues for further research. The data suggest that simply modifying woodland material arrangements to facilitate increased woodland use did not encourage such increased use. Rather, explicit introductions were required, showing people how to perform new practices of using the woodland. Analysis suggests that arts events - complex nexuses of socialmaterial practices - may represent
opportunities to make those explicit introductions. In this way (and partly answering RQ2b), woodland artistic and creative activities can be understood to intersect with the wider woodland movement not merely as a complement to more typical practices of woodland management, nor even as part of a holistic notion of woodland management, but as a potentially important aspect of woodland management pursuing a regenerated woodland culture. However, for these insights to be generalizable to other CWOs, further research is required, engaging more widely with people using (and not using) woodlands, in addition to artists and CWO directors, while also exploring different artistic and creative practices performed in woodlands.

7.2 WOODLAND SUBJECTIVITIES AND GREEN REPUBLICAN VIRTUES

This section evaluates the data from Geal CWO [6.2], showing how elements of a less unsustainable society (understood in green republican terms) are prefigured by the practices Geal people perform. Subjectivities, identities, and meanings were established as the interface between the descriptive conceptual lens of practice theory and cultural politics [3.1, 3.2], and the prescriptive interpretive framework of green republicanism [4.1]. Practice theory invites us to understand meanings, subjectivities, and identities not only as multiple and fluid, but as flowing from and through practices and hence as socialmaterial phenomena [3.2]. Green republicanism is articulated in virtue terms that correspond to a series of potential new sustainability subjectivities and identities appropriate for continued human flourishing in an ecologically-finite and resource-constrained world [4]. The analysis rests on my interpretations of the practices observed at Geal, and specifically upon the subjectivities, identities, and meanings that were either explicitly articulated by interviewees or attributed to woodland people by me, the researcher, having observed their sayings and doings in person, image, or text [5.1.2, 5.2].

The following interpretation of CWO sayings and doings draws upon the sustainability virtues, subjectivities and identities drawn from John Barry’s work (2012). Once again recognizing the value of theory in supporting analysis of the socialmaterial world, I attempt to minimize theoretical interruptions to the narrative flow by underlining green republican subjectivities, identities, and virtues illustrated in figure 4.4, and italicizing
(where relevant) practice theoretical terms illustrated in figure 3.3. As I will show, new subjectivities - not articulated by Barry - emerge from the data that are consistent with green republican lens; I embolden these. Following the same (chronological) order as the data [6.2], the discussion addresses in turn Geal’s emergence [7.2.1], the first phase of projects [7.2.2], and the second phase of projects [7.2.3], before drawing the findings together in a critical summary [7.2.4].

7.2.1 Emergence and aims

Geal’s emergence came about because the original directors understood that communities (rather than individuals or distant organizations) could control their local (wood)land resources [6.2.1]. Subjectivities relating to that general understanding include local, imaginative, creative, pioneer, and foresight. The people involved in Geal were concerned about their local area (specifically about perceived lack of local recreation, education, and economic opportunities) and, in response, they imaginatively took control of their woodland in order to create opportunities. They were pioneers, to a certain extent; although Geal was certainly not the first CWO, it was the first in that area and in this way the founders of Geal CWO were challenging norms. Relatedly, foresight is also evidenced in the Geal founders’ vision that not only could community control of the wood be achieved, but also that such control could help create new opportunities for a community otherwise restricted.

Geal CWO sought (inter alia) to improve local people’s quality of life using the plentiful local woodland resources. This end is in line with general understandings about (first) reconnecting with nature, and the health and wellbeing benefits that are understood to accrue from pursuing outdoor leisure and recreation activities, and (second) the possibilities facilitated by woodland material resources for economic and educational opportunities. These aims were described in the management plan, suggesting that the plan’s authors cared for and were compassionately concerned about their fellow humans’ wellbeing.

Finally, Geal CWO would not have emerged at all were it not for people volunteering. The CWO relied on people giving their practical understandings, time, and energy to organize the woodland, administratively (negotiating long-term management
partnerships with FCS, completing complicated applications for funding and purchase, and developing a management plan), technically (felling trees, eradicating ponticum, keeping the paths clear, and the fences in good condition), and artistically (creating installations around the wood, directing plays, making props, acting in plays). These subjectivities of volunteer and giver (of knowledge, time, skill) were present throughout all of the projects undertaken at Geal.

Table 7.1 summarizes the subjectivities and identities observed in the emergence phase of Geal CWO's activities, listed against the green republican principles and virtues established by John Barry (and reviewed in chapter 4). Emergence phase subjectivities connect with vulnerability and resilience virtues, and with security, sharing and solidarity, three of the four green republican political economy (GRPE) virtues.

Table 7.1 Subjectivities and identities observed in Geal CWO's emergence phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtues</th>
<th>Identified subjectivities &amp; identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>humility, earthiness, compassion, care, sensuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>fortitude, courage, foresight, hope, creativity, compassion, care, prudence, materiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>sufficiency, restraint, precaution, thrift, frugality, moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>participation, reciprocity, mutuality, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>participation, reciprocity, mutuality, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land relations</td>
<td>care, restraint, participation, precaution, moderation, trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.2 Phase one

The first phase of projects undertaken at Geal describe the initial activities organized once the CWO had gained control of the woodland [6.2.2]. The projects included fencing, ponticum eradication, thinning trees, felling a stand of Norway Spruce trees to create a clearing, milling the felled timber to make a shelter with benches and tables, building a network of paths with stiles and boardwalks, chopping and distributing
firewood to pensioners, and making an artistic installation representing a giant spider and fly.

*Ponticum* eradication evidenced **creativity**, **adaptation**, and environmental **care** and **stewardship**. Eradicating the *ponticum* was pursued by an innovative method (developed by *people* at Geal and since adopted elsewhere), demonstrating **creativity**. The method was developed to avoid use of chemical herbicides, instead taking advantage of *people* and their labour, as well as **adaptively** using *ponticum*’s own material characteristics (thick waxy leaves) to prevent light and nutrients reviving the destroyed root remnants. Eradication was pursued in order to allow indigenous species to flourish; by eschewing herbicide use (because of the damage herbicides can cause to other species) the project suggests a **cautious** approach to environmental **care** and **stewardship**. Herbicides were also avoided for cost-saving reasons; although the **creativity** shown may have been in response to limited budgets, it also suggests a **thrifty** approach that acknowledges humans’ labour can sufficiently replace more financially-reliant solutions.

Although *ponticum* eradication may suggest humans attempting to control nature, a more nuanced interpretation is also possible. *Ponticum* is not indigenous to Scotland, but was introduced by humans; hence, although it has spread naturally, its presence is not natural. Thus, the eradication project can be understood as an attempt to respond to problems caused by earlier human actions, not an attempt to control nature. Moreover, the **cautious** eschewal of herbicides, and directly human-labour-intensive approach (avoiding chemical-technological interventions) suggests a **down-to-earth** subjectivity that acknowledges humans’ vulnerable, yet powerful and privileged place in nature, and an associated **care** for flourishing *local* ecosystems. Finally, that **care** for biodiversity also suggests anticipatory concern for future generations of people and other species. Felling the Norway Spruce trees, milling them and building a shelter evidenced local, **creative**, **skilful**, **moderate**, **trusting**, and **caring** subjectivities. **Locally** grown and processed timber **materials** were used **creatively** to build an **artefact** benefitting **local** **people**. The interconnected felling and building projects required **skilfulness** and **competence** in using tools and dealing with large trees, and **trusting** approaches to working collaboratively in potentially dangerous situations. However, the projects also suggest **care**, (first) because the instigators of the building project knew that people were vulnerable to weather and would be more likely to use the woodland if they could
shelter from the weather, and (second) their concern was evident for health and safety issues while felling and milling the trees, and building the shelter. However, the shelter and its furnishings also evidence restraint and a down-to-earth acceptance of nature, because they are not luxurious (e.g., the benches are uncushioned and have no backs, and the shelter has no windows or heating, but is partially open-walled and thus open to incursions by birds, spiders, midges, and draughts), but adequate to provide basic comforts.

The path-building project demonstrated subjectivities included caring, frugality, adaptive, and a down-to-earth relationship with nature. Caring, because the paths (and boardwalks and stiles) allowed easier access through the woodland for people, helping them avoid tripping on roots or getting their feet wet in a bog. Yet, the paths were also down-to-earth because they were unsurfaced, rudimentary routes (and thus potentially muddy or slippery after rain) and relatively narrow, weaving their way adaptively between trees that frugally had not been felled simply to create a broader or more gentle path. Some (though not all) paths appeared suitable for mobility-impaired people, and there was a ramp leading into the shelter suggesting that care and compassion for people was not limited to the fully-mobile.

Preparing and distributing firewood to local pensioners was an annually-organized project demonstrating not only care for potentially vulnerable local people’s warmth and wellbeing, but relatedly compassion, and generous giving subjectivities, as well as a locally-oriented material concern. Geal CWO sought to improve local people’s quality of life using the plentiful local woodland resources. The firewood project was a compassionate acknowledgement that pensioners may benefit from a gift of heat energy (sharing local resources), while also recognising that not everyone can visit the woodland themselves, hence delivering firewood to their homes takes at least one benefit of the woodland to them.

The spider and fly artistic artefact evidences creativity, artistic and practical skills, as well as care for and stewardship of the local environment. The artist’s concern to use biodegradable natural materials, found in the woodland, echoes the widespread interest in the potential uses of natural woodland materials that I encountered during fieldwork. Although these concerns relate to John Barry’s (2012) reuser and recycler subjectivities
- in their concern for creatively or skilfully repurposing materials - these terms are more synonymous with artefactual materials and do not wholly describe the awareness, evident in woodland practices, of potential uses of natural materials. Hence I propose woodlander as another sustainability subjectivity that suggests knowledge of and skill with locally-sourced natural woodland materials, care for the ecological community that provides them, and a commensurate down-to-earth ease with nature. In this way woodlander is related to local.

The spider and fly installation also suggested the artists’ humbleness, because his installation was inevitably temporary. The installation was designed not with potentially arrogant aspiration for an ever-lasting artwork. Rather, it was designed with a humility that acknowledged other species’ occupancy of the woodland, and accepting those species’ needs for habitats and nutrients as equally important to creating affect for human benefit. Finally, the installation was a gift, an artefact of the artist’s skill, time, and energies given generously to the people using the woodland. Yet, the humility, and care for the environment evident in the work may also suggest the artist’s awareness that the materials were themselves a gift from the woodland.

The tree-felling, shelter-building, path-laying, and art installation projects all suggest another subjectivity, of community ownership - or at least of control - because such infrastructural and ornamental projects would not be undertaken without control of the land and its resource. However, it is a particular kind of ownership blended with humility and stewardship, because caution and restraint are apparent in the material interventions made in the wood: the paths are few, and are unsurfaced footpaths not metalled roads, and the shelter is a simple building with no luxuries. Moreover, it is an ownership that welcomes everybody into the property, acknowledging shared rights to use it.

Further evidence of woodlander subjectivity can be discerned in Ian Edwards’ (2010) eponymous book, the title of which may have influenced my naming of the subjectivity. The data suggest no tensions at Geal relating to shared use of the woodland site, perhaps because the interview with Michael and Mary focussed on artistic and creative activities. However, Donald recognized the problems that can arise when several people have un- or loosely-regulated access to a material resource. I note this as an area for further research.
In summary, table 7.2 lists the subjectivities and identities observed in the first phase of Geal CWO’s projects, against Barry’s green republican principles and virtues. First phase subjectivities sustain the connection with vulnerability and resilience virtues (established in the emergence phase, above), and develop stronger relations with the GRPE virtues of sufficiency, solidarity, sharing, and land relations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtues</th>
<th>Identified subjectivities &amp; identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>compassionsate, carer, humble, down-to-earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>local, creative, imaginave, forward-thinker, adaptive, skilful, woodlander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>frugal, moderate, recycler, thrifty,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>volunteer, trusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>giver, trusting, community ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land relations</td>
<td>cautious, care, moderate, steward,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.3 Phase two

The second phase of projects at Geal describes the turn towards arts events [6.2.3]. Included in this phase are projects of directing and choreographing dramatic action, devising and performing safe but exciting stunts, and creating meaningful props; these combined through planning and rehearsing into finally performing plays in the woods. The plays took place over four years (2009-2012), and included productions of local historical tales, and also canonic Shakespearean drama.

The direction of the plays relied on an artistic vision and understanding of contrasting characteristics of different species of trees. Mary - the director - clearly had a creative subjectivity that influenced her relationship with the forest, evident not least in her description of trees as ‘spindly’ and ‘thin’ with a ‘magical quality’ ideal for Midsummer Night’s Dream, or the ‘bigger’, ‘more robust’ trees that were an apt setting for As You Like It (illustrated in figure 6.7). In knowing trees artistically (rather than using their
scientific or even popular names), Mary was demonstrating a creative subjectivity and confirming Ann’s insight that in a holistically-managed woodland, there can be spaces on the committee for people with a broad range of interests. More, Mary’s approach to directing the plays and making use of woodland glades of differing characters suggested an adaptive capacity to respond to an existing situation and make good use of it.

The stunts were skilful, using zip-wires that allowed characters to slide dramatically between trees, high above glades, paths, and the audience. The zip-wire stunts were organized with care, acknowledging that humans working at height are vulnerable to falling (and spectators beneath are vulnerable to falling humans). They also involved a flexible and adaptive approach, as zip-wires could only be established between trees of sufficient strength, and hence the trees dictated the location for stunts. However, the role of the zip-wire stunt involving Puck (figure 6.7) was not only to prompt laughter and surprise, but also to emphasize the biodiverse materiality of the woodland. In this way, connections exist between the zip-wire stunt and a forward-thinking approach that understood the value of encouraging local people to engage more with their woodland and its biodiversity, and with a down-to-earth subjectivity related people feeling comfortable in the woodland. Moreover, motivating the zip-wire stunt was a desire that people ‘look at their surroundings differently’ to see different things, the stunt can also be understood as an attempt to encourage adaptive subjectivities in the audience.

The props and their making suggested frugality, humbleness, skilfulness, a concern for local ecosystems, creativity and adaptivity. Skill was required to make them, as well as an artistic and creative sense of how to make artefacts able to convey meanings appropriate to the drama. The prop-makers’ use of ‘temporary materials’ found in the woods suggests frugality and thriftiness; rather than buying-in materials (with associated financial and environmental costs of purchase and transport, as well as potential waste) they were pleased to make use of what materials were available locally, lying around the woodland. Again, using such materials relates to environmental care and stewardship, because the props have all rotted away and are ‘all gone now’, thus returning nutrients to the local ecosystem. The imaginative flexibility and skill involved in making meaningful artefacts from found natural materials wood suggest adaptiveness and creativity, because all pieces of unprocessed wood are distinctive, with variable form and characteristics that inevitably shapes artefacts made from them - no
two wooden artefacts are identical. In this way, the prop-making is also related to the woodlander subjectivity introduced above.

The sympathetic use of woodland natural organisms and things of nature is clearly established, as backdrop to the action, framework for a zip-wire, and material resources from which props including lanterns, bird-representations, and ships may be made (figures 6.9 and 6.10). However, other members of the ecological community at Geal were also entangled in the plays. Biting midge insects were a problem, especially for dramatically immobile actors. A creative response to the midges in at least one situation was to drape Queen Titania in a midge-net veil, as she lay on her bed. Responding to the midge problem in that way, rather than using chemical insecticides, suggests a down-to-earth relationship with nature, and a caring attitude that acknowledges midges, although irritating, are part of the ecological community. However, the data do not clarify whether other actors used chemical deterrents, nets, or tolerated the insects and their bites.

Using the woodland as a venue for theatre was distinctive, and suggests humility and restraint. In contrast to many theatres in urban settings, the woodland was utterly lacking in architectural grandeur, although not lacking in ecological richness. The organizers of the plays were restrained in their facilitation of woodland drama, using only those materials necessary (and taking care to use biodegradable materials) to add meaning to the action. However, the lack of a physical venue prompted them creatively and skilfully to improvise and adapt some props as lanterns that could also help to illuminate not only the scene, but also the terrain the actors and audience were negotiating.

Producing the plays required participation by many local people, giving their time, skills, and energies to work collaboratively towards the performances: acting, directing, making props, organizing stunts and so on. In this way, the performances were a gift to the local community. The plays were intensely local. The organizers of the plays took care to use local resources, in order to entertain local people, and with a broader aim to encourage them to use their local woodland, newly under local control. Yet, they also took care to use those resources in a way that was sensitive for the local ecological community.
Summarizing, the subjectivities and identities observed in Geal’s second phase are tabulated (in table 7.3) against green republican principles and virtues. Correspondences between Geal subjectivities and all the green republican virtues are sustained from the previous phase, albeit security virtues remain neglected.

Table 7.3 Subjectivities and identities observed during Geal CWO’s second phase of projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtues</th>
<th>Identified subjectivities &amp; identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>humility, earthiness, compassion, care, sensuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>fortitude, courage, foresight, hope, creativity, compassion, care, prudence, materiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>sufficiency, restraint, precaution, thrift, frugality, moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>participation, reciprocity, mutuality, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>participation, reciprocity, mutuality, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land relations</td>
<td>care, restraint, participation, precaution, moderation, trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.4 Prefiguring green republicanism

Preceding subsections [7.2.1, 7.2.2, and 7.2.3] have noted the subjectivities flowing from and through the practices and projects undertaken within Geal CWO, articulated by activists or observed (by me), that are consistent with the green republican virtues outlined in chapter 4. This subsection brings those subjectivities together to critically discuss their relations with the normative green republican philosophy in order to establish whether and how Geal CWO prefigures less unsustainable green republican ways of being in the world.

An understanding of humans’ condition as biologically embodied, and ecological and socially embedded, lies at the heart of John Barry’s (2012) account of a less unsustainable green republican society. Upon that foundation rests (first) a normative vision of enlightened anthropocentric human-nature interactions, informing principles and virtues that (second) acknowledge humans’ vulnerability, and hence valorize (third) resilience, and (fourth) a commensurate post-growth, green republican political
economy (GRPE) articulated as the 4 S principles of economic security, sufficiency, solidarity, sharing and, relatedly, land relations. Connected to these virtues and principles are sustainability subjectivities. Many of the subjectivities observed at Geal echo those Barry (2012) proposes (table 4.4). However, two new subjectivities emerged - woodlander, and community owner. Below, I discuss how the subjectivities flowing from and through practices at Geal intersect with green republican virtues.

Vulnerability virtues respond to an insight that humans are interdependent on one another, not least because we are vulnerable to nature and to shocks caused by natural systems or other humans. Such a view of the human condition troubles normalized notions of independent and autonomous human individuals. Practices at Geal evidenced care and compassion for other humans, and an earthy ease with nature, coupled with humility (acknowledging our embeddedness in and vulnerability to nature); those are virtues that can be understood as contributing towards a woodlander subjectivity. These four vulnerability-subjectivities suggest that people at Geal understood humans as interdependent, not independent.

Resilience virtues acknowledge human vulnerabilities, and aim to help us adapt to and cope with external shocks, whether natural or caused by other humans. Activities at Geal evidenced nine resilience-related subjectivities. An explicit and strong commitment to local people, their resources, and their environment permeated all of the projects. Further, relating to resilience virtues, there was very clear evidence of people with adaptive, creative, skilful, pioneering, and imaginative subjectivities, visible not only through the artistry involved in producing, directing, and performing the plays but also in the CWO’s initial emergence and forward-thinking management plans. The woodlander subjectivity included elements of adaptiveness and creativity (e.g., allowing the material characteristics of a piece of wood to determine the use to which it is put), along with a prudent approach to material use (acknowledging that woodlands require care and restrained use to continue producing the sought raw natural materials and biodiversity).

Combined, these resilience-subjectivities suggest that the Geal area would cope well if confronted with shock or change. Mary and Michael described their sense that the area benefitted from a strong community spirit, of people being willing and concerned to
help each other, which they attributed to their very remote, isolated location and the small resident population.\textsuperscript{124} Although resilience is a contested concept, mobilized not least in mutually-exclusive neoliberal and radical sustainability discourses, Barry’s articulation of it in green republican virtue terms makes explicit the underlying assumptions. By viewing resilience through that virtue lens, this research has shed some light on the role that community arts projects can play in cultivating resilience subjectivities.

Economic security is the GRPE response to unsustainable undifferentiated economic growth. Participation is a key virtue of economic security. Increased participation by ordinary people in democratic processes and organizing society is understood to contribute to reducing socio-economic inequalities and hence contribute to greater security, not least by giving voice to ordinary people. I did not necessarily expect economic security subjectivities to be salient in the data, given (first) my investigative focus on artistic and creative activities, and (second) Geal’s emphasis on woodland use for recreation and education over economic opportunities. However, a participation subjectivity was evident in the volunteering that the CWO relied on. People volunteering to organize opportunities for the local community resonates with the notions of active citizenship and democratic participation that are valorized by green republicanism.

The principle of sufficiency acknowledges finite biodiversity and natural resources and, from a green republican perspective, is understood as an important factor in decision-making about less unsustainable resource use. At least seven sufficiency-subjectivities were evident at Geal. The shelter and path-network demonstrated moderation and frugality, rather than potentially wasteful luxury. The use of found natural materials for artistic installations and dramatically meaningful props demonstrated a concern to recycle and reuse those materials in a restrained, ecologically sensitive way. The woodlander subjectivity connects to these ideas, through the evident awareness of Geal people that woodland resources were there to be used, but in moderation.

\textsuperscript{124}This is one reason why further research, comparing Geal with other CWOs in different locations and with different circumstances, will be important if the findings of this research are to be generalized.
The social economy is an important provisioning sphere for GRPE, not least as a key conceptual site where solidarity should be fostered. As the antithesis of individualist competition, solidarity relates to humans understood as vulnerable and interdependent. Theoretically, CWOs can be understood as part of the social economy. Although volunteer and trusting were the only two subjectivities relating to solidarity virtues identified at Geal, these subjectivities were prevalent in every aspect of the projects described. The CWO would not have coalesced nor would it have become durable were it not for the *people* volunteering their time, skills, and energies. Trust was manifest between people working together in physically and emotionally hazardous situations (e.g., felling trees, working at height, dramatically portraying their feelings to an audience). However, although not overt in the data, trust should also be assumed to exist within the administrative functions of the CWO, because voluntary organizations rely on trust; people involved in such organizations assume that their colleagues will contribute to projects as they have said they will (in this way, trust replaces the normalized remunerative and overt disciplinary coercion upon which employment-based organizations rely). The prevalence of trust and volunteering within Geal projects lends empirical credence to the assertion that CWOs are part of the social economy. Although not necessarily economically active, Geal was a context where solidarity was performed.

Sharing is the final principle valorized by GRPE, and is intended to challenge unsustainable notions of accumulation and acquisition. At least four sharing-subjectivities were manifest at Geal, including giver, trusting, and community owner. As already noted, Geal is a voluntary organization that relies on people giving their time, skills, and energies to the CWO for the benefit of the community, and on trust between those people. Mutuality was evident in the annual sharing of firewood with local pensioners. Community ownership was also observed to include a sharing ethos, not least of seeking to welcome everyone into the wood.

Finally, six land-relations-subjectivities were identified: cautious, carer, moderate, steward, local and woodlander. The people seeking to eradicate ponticum were cautious (eschewing herbicides). The CWO’s emergence and management plan rested upon care for the land and local communities (both human and nonhuman). Woodland natural resources were used, but in moderation and with a care for the future, hence
notions of stewardship infused woodland management. The woodlander subjectivity embraced these existing subjectivities.

Summarizing, subjectivities observed at Geal resonate, to varying degrees, with all of the virtues of green republicanism. Table 7.4 conglomerates Barry’s principles and virtues (table 4.4) with the subjectivities observed at Geal CWO (and tabulated in preceding subsections). It is clear that practices performed at Geal CWO prefigure a number of elements of a less unsustainable green republican society.

Table 7.4 Summary table of subjectivities and identities observed at Geal CWO; new subjectivities are emboldened

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtues</th>
<th>Identified subjectivities &amp; identities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>Compassionate, carer, down-to-earth, humble, woodlander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>Local, imaginative, creative, pioneer, forward-thinker, adaptive, skilful, local, woodlander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficiency</td>
<td>Frugal, moderate, recycler, reuser, thrifty, woodlander, restrained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>Volunteer, trusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>Giver, trusting, community owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land relations</td>
<td>Cautious, carer, moderate, steward, local, woodlander</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, analysis of the Geal data also suggests that the organization can be understood, culturally-politically, as contesting normalized practices (and not least through practices of everyday artistic activism). Three cultural political contestations were identified at Geal, challenging hegemonic notions of (first) human-nature relations, (second) the human condition, and (third) organizing for profit.

First, the people at Geal performed distinctive human-nature relationships. Complex artefacts and technologies (including tractor, chainsaws, and a mechanical, diesel-engined timber mill) were visible in the CWO’s projects. Yet strongly technocentric human-nature relationships were scarcely evident; human labour was used in preference to chemical herbicides and timber-harvesting machinery, and there were many signs of humans enjoying a down-to-earth ease with natural organisms. However, neither were these relationships ecocentric; natural organisms and things of nature were clearly
understood as natural resources to be integrated in human artefacts for use, pleasure, and joy. Human-nonhuman interactions at Geal were suffused with humility and care for nonhumans, resisting arrogant anthropocentric notions of human mastery over nature. In this way, human-nonhuman relationships at Geal can be understood in John Barry’s (2012:7) terms as ‘enlightened anthropocentric’. Human interactions with nonhumans of this sort are distinctive, troubling hegemonic notions of humans’ control of nature. Hence, Geal CWO people were performing human-nonhuman relationships that challenged normalized practices; the organization consisted in practices, including those of everyday artistic activism, that made visible an alternative mode of human-nature relations.

Second, and relatedly, care for nonhuman species is balanced with compassion for humans, too. Geal CWO exists not least to improve local residents’ quality of life, by encouraging them into the woodland and to make use of woodland resources. Care and compassion lay at the heart of the Geal woodland management plan, evident not least in the annual sharing of firewood to local pensioners, and in the tacit assumption that being in woodlands has positive outcomes for people’s wellbeing. These careful, compassionate, and sharing subjectivities evidence understandings of people as vulnerable and interdependent. Moreover, the Geal directors were citizens, volunteering, giving their time, and actively participating in local organizing within and for their community; they were contributing to making their local community more resilient (in green republican terms). In this way, Geal people performed alternative conceptions of the human condition troubling hegemonic notions of independent individuals and consumers.

Third, Geal CWO pursued its objectives through practices that correspond to green republican political economic principles. The CWO eschewed profit-seeking as an objective (hence making no direct contribution to economic growth). Relatedly, subjectivities commensurate with maximization, competition, and accumulation are not salient in the data, whereas those of sufficiency, solidarity, and sharing are. Hence, Geal CWO can be understood as an alternative organization that has made an alternative - less unsustainable - way of organizing durable and visible (Parker et al. 2014b). Geal CWO consisted in practices contesting hegemonic notions of organizing for profit maximization.
Discussion of the Geal data has shown how the CWO prefigured a green republican mode of living less unsustainably. However, the data has also shown that frugal, restrained, and humble subjectivities need not be austere. The CWO’s socialmaterial interventions in the woodland, of the shelter and paths, are not luxurious, yet they have facilitated (according to the data) considerable joy and pleasure through dramatic performances, working together, and other gatherings throughout the year. In this way, the data seem to confirm Barry’s (2012) conviction that by moving away from the unsustainable goods life (in which people are constrained to relatively few subjectivities dominated by consuming, and working [to earn to consume]) towards green republican good lives, we are not facing an austere future, but one in which people are likely to be freer to hold a wider range of subjectivities.

In conclusion, this section has shown how socialmaterial practices carried out by Geal people, and the subjectivities flowing from and through those practices, connect to green republican virtues. Specifically, the people at Geal performed alternative conceptions of human-nature relations, the human condition, and organization that align with green republican subjectivities and virtues. In this way, Geal CWO consisted in practices challenging unsustainable hegemonic practices. These practices prefigure elements of green republicanism, and are performances of a cultural politics for sustainability transitions.

7.3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

RQ2b asked what artistic and creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, and how do these intersect with the wider woodland movement and with sustainability transitions? The answer to that multifaceted question has spanned two chapters. Chapter 6 established the diversity of the woodland scene and the broad palette of practices performed within it, including artistic and creative practices [6.1]. At least three potential intersections between artistic and creative activities and the wider woodland movement were identified, including (first) enmeshments of woodland artistry and creativity within an holistically-conceived model of woodland management, (second) offering one way to inform use of woodland spatial and material resources and, relatedly, shape woodland management for those uses, and (third) the role of arts
events serving as attractions to encourage new people into the woods to do woodland things. Zoomed-in, thickly-described data from one particular CWO - Geal - illustrated one way that art can be integral to woodland organizing and contribute to the broader aims of a movement seeking to regenerating a woodland culture.

Chapter 7 has further developed the answer to RQ2b. In section 7.1, I drew upon the Geal CWO data to argue that regeneration of a woodland culture involves woodland activists’ interventions to change the practices of people in their local area. Some interventions have been more successful than others. Analysis suggests that simply modifying woodland material arrangements did not, at Geal, precede local people changing their practices of woodland use. However, explicitly introducing local people into using the woodland - through arts events - did appear to change their practices. Woodland use at Geal has significantly increased since the first woodland play was performed there. For these insights to be generalizable to other CWOs, further research is required; the provisional findings will benefit from engagement with local people around Geal, including those who both use and do not use the woodland, as well as other people volunteering at Geal in addition to the directors. The findings will also be strengthened by similar investigations of other CWOs engaged in different artistic and creative activities.

In section 7.2 I argued that practices at Geal prefigured elements of green republicanism, articulated as virtues and subjectivities relating to human vulnerability, resilience, economic security, sharing, sufficiency, solidarity, and land relations. Sustainability subjectivities can be identified flowing from and through the practices carried out by Geal people. Hence, woodland artistic and creative activities intersect with the cultural political project of sustainability transitions by communicating sustainability subjectivities and making visible less unsustainable ways of humans being in the world.

However, this finding is constrained by limitations similar to those affecting the findings of section 7.1. Although I, the researcher, could observe practices performed at Geal and interpret them as communicating sustainability subjectivities, I do not know whether people involved in organizing Geal, or those otherwise performing in or attending the plays, understood those communications, nor what subjectivities and
identities they themselves ascribed to their experiences in the woodlands. Hence, further research is required to investigate whether, how, and to what extent people volunteering at Geal, or those attending arts events there, understand (and perhaps eventually perform) the practices of woodland activism and artistic activism that I understand analytically as sustainability subjectivities. Relatedly, although Geal has been shown to prefigure a less unsustainable future, comparative research is needed to investigate other CWOs, in order to establish whether (and how) they prefigure sustainability. Anecdotally, based on observing (albeit in less detail) other CWOs and artistic and creative woodland activities [5.2.3], I would speculate that Geal is not unique in its prefigurative potential.

Finally, although analysis has shown how practices at Geal CWO can be interpreted as anticipating elements of sustainability, the organization’s prefigurative potential is likely constrained by its embeddedness in actually existing unsustainability. Two tropes emerged across all the interviews, of (first) funding, and (second, and relatedly) questions of work, employment, and volunteering, that limit the extent of woodland organizing. Although funding and volunteering issues have been touched upon in chapters 6 and 7, they are partly occluded by the conceptual lens. Hence, these themes have not been salient in the data presentation or discussion. However, because barriers to woodland organizing are also constraints to sustainability prefigurations, these themes should be noted.

First, it was clear from the interviews that funding was a challenge, not only for woodland organizing in general but for artistic and creative woodland activities in particular. Despite the artistry and creativity involved in their work, Ann and Tracy noted the difficulties they had experienced in obtaining funding from Creative Scotland; Mary and Michael agreed that they had not had funding from that source. It seems likely that woodland creativity may be neglected by national arts funders because there

125 Creative Scotland is the Scottish ‘National development agency for the arts, screen, and creative industries’ and distributes funds from the Scottish Government and UK National Lottery (Creative Scotland n.d.).
126 Geal CWO was able to benefit from a community benefit fund relating to a local industrial facility which, given the low population density and few settlements in the area, may have been relatively straightforward for the CWO to access. Access to funding opportunities for woodland organizing and woodland arts projects is another element worthy of inclusion in a future comparative investigation of CWOs and their prefigurative potential.
is little contribution to economic growth (the *general understanding* informing the idea of ‘creative industries’ [3.3.1]). That point of speculation would require further research to confirm or deny. However, with limited funding opportunities the prefigurative potential of woodland arts events may be restricted.

Second, there were clear tensions for several of the interviewees between volunteering, paid employment, and their family lives and other responsibilities. Notably, Ann, Donald, and Tracy aspired to be paid for their woodland organizing work, and noted that sometimes they were subsidizing costs (for, e.g., fuel, travel, and stationery) out of their own pockets. Interview data and anecdotal evidence suggests that many CWOs struggle to find funding or revenue streams capable of supporting employed staff in secure employment beyond (at best) short-term project-specific posts. Relatedly, those CWOs that rely on volunteer managers and directors rather than paid employees face challenges around the recruitment, retention, and succession-planning of volunteers. Ann described the waxing and waning activities of one of her local CWOs as people volunteered, grew tired, and resigned; Michael was working hard because Geal’s treasurer had resigned, leaving him to cover that role while also chairing Geal at a time of administrative pressure. The interviews also illustrated how people of working- and family-raising-ages may struggle to find time to volunteer, leaving many voluntary posts filled by retirees.

This is a complex arena. Divisions are evident between community woodland activists, who disagree about grant- and subsidy-reliant woodland organizing; some activists believe a greater number of CWOs could be independent of funding by relying instead on income generated from timber and non-timber forest products (including, e.g., wooden furniture, cutlery and tableware, carvings, firewood, drinks and preserves made from berries and tree sap). Both of these perspectives are informed by current and earlier *general understandings* about organizing, and whether some projects should be supported by the state or a non-state philanthropic agency, or whether organizations and individuals are independent competitors within a marketplace for income and investment.

Accordingly, these debates promise fruitful material for future research. One avenue could be to investigate how, and to what extent neoliberal subjectivities (of, e.g.,
entrepreneurship and competition) may influence activists’ thinking. Relatedly, there may also be questions to ask about the balance between prefigurative and hegemonic subjectivities in organizations led by younger activists or retirees. On the other hand, these debates also resonate with notions (including those proposed by green republicanism and GRPE) about reduced working hours (which could free up people’s time to do voluntary work), ‘compulsory sustainability service’ that may be expected of citizens in a green republican state (Barry 2012:257), and ecofeminist thinking about unpaid work being equally valued to paid employment (MacGregor 2006). Finally, important questions about support for the arts and for community organizing have to date been neglected in emerging debates around post-growth and green republican political economy, and these deserve attention.

In short, although Geal CWO can be understood to prefigure elements of a less unsustainable society, and although future research may show that other CWOs are similarly prefigurative, these organizations are at the same time constrained by general understandings, practices, and subjectivities of actually existing unsustainability. Hence, a key challenge for the larger project of sustainability transitions is to gradually encourage people’s critique of unsustainability and awareness of alternatives.

Summarizing this chapter, and the answer to RQ2b, it is possible to say that there are a great range of artistic and creative practices performed in Scottish community woodland organizations. These practices intersect multiply with the wider woodland movement in Scotland not least through their potential contribution to regenerating a long-lost woodland culture, by attracting new people into using and doing things in the woods, and shaping woodland management plans. Some woodland practices, including woodland artistic and creative practices, were shown to intersect with sustainability transitions by prefiguring elements of green republicanism and making visible alternative (and less unsustainable) ways of humans being in the world, relating to nature, understanding each other, and organizing.

Although these findings were limited by restricted engagement with people in and around the woods, the thesis was intended as an exploratory study of woodland organizing; these exploratory findings present opportunities for future research. This thesis points towards subsequent investigation that should (first) develop opportunities
for comparative research by exploring different CWOs doing different artistic activities, (second) engage more widely with people in the areas local to the researched CWOs (not just key CWO actors), in order (third) to explore whether and how they understand or adopt the woodland practices and/or sustainability subjectivities that are performed within woodlands.
CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND REFLECTIONS

In this thesis I have sought to contribute an applied response to the problem of less unsustainable living (and relatedly to the problem of researching less unsustainable living). The thesis narrates an account of theoretical and empirical originality, adding to sustainability transitions and alternative organization debates and also pointing toward future support for community woodland organizers.

This final chapter presents a four-fold reflection on the thesis. First, summarizing the route followed by the thesis [8.1]. Next, the limitations and learning points [8.2] and original contributions [8.3] are noted. Finally, future research opportunities are outlined [8.4]. Through these stages, the final research question - RQ3: critically evaluate the success and future potential of the conceptual and interpretive framework to understand a cultural politics of sustainability transitions - is addressed.

8.1 REVIEWING THE THESIS: FOLLOWING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis has responded to a general understanding most succinctly couched as a question - how can we live less unsustainably? - and pursued two ends. First was my intellectual aspiration to articulate an approach to investigate sustainability transitions in cultural political terms, coherent with green political insights into the human condition. Second was my desire to understand better whether and how the practices of community woodland organizations (and particularly their artistic and creative activities) might anticipate ways of living less unsustainably. The overarching problem and related ends shaped five research questions, originally developed in chapter 1 and reiterated in table 8.1.
Table 8.1 Research questions

| RQ1a: How can sustainability be conceptualized (in the context of post-growth political economy)? |
| RQ1b: How can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be appropriately articulated & interpreted (in the context of post-growth political economy)? |
| RQ2a: How may Scottish community woodlands, & the artistic activities undertaken within them, be conceptualized? |
| RQ2b: What artistic & creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, & how do these intersect with the wider woodland movement & with sustainability transitions? |
| RQ3: Critically evaluate the success & future potential of the conceptual & interpretive framework to understand a cultural politics of sustainability transitions. |

The research questions were addressed explicitly across chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 (and tacitly in chapter 5); in several cases, answers were split across more than one chapter. Hence, rather than presenting this final review of the thesis’ route as a chapter-by-chapter summary, I follow research questions 1a to 2b, bringing their answers together. Answering RQ3 has been reserved until this final chapter, hence I do not consider it in this section, but throughout the chapter.

8.1.1 RQ1a: How best can sustainability be conceptualized?

This question recognized sustainability as a contested concept, responding to a complex problem-set spanning the human and natural worlds. My tripartite response conceptualized sustainability (first) as responding to unsustainability, (second) broadly as the cultural and political project of sustainability transitions, and (third) more narrowly in green republican terms.

First, I accepted John Barry’s (2012) insight that the practices of contemporary global North societies are among the causes of ‘actually existing unsustainability’, defined as the complex biophysical, moral, and political sustainability problems that confront humanity [1.1]. These problems include (inter alia) climate change, biodiversity loss, resource depletion, and social inequality and injustice.

Second, I identified sustainability as a project (not a goal), responding to (but not necessarily solving) those complex problems. Responses (in global North societies) are seen to require significant changes to move away from currently unsustainable practices.
Seeking to emphasize this project’s processual and transformative character, I described it as *sustainability transitions* [1.2].

Continued human flourishing in an ecologically- and resource-constrained world requires political and economic change (Jackson 2009). Yet, sustainability transitions entail more than merely changing policies, or ‘greening’ business as usual (Barry & Quilley 2009; Cato 2009), but also need transformations involving all societal contexts. We need to find new ways of being, having, doing, and thinking, not least about humans’ roles in our social-ecological world, and our relationships with each other and the material, vital, aesthetic, and spiritual resource that is nature (Barry 2012; Castree 2013; Jackson 2009; Korten 2006; McIntosh 2008). Thus, sustainability transitions is *(inter alia)* a *cultural* project. However, it is also a *political* project, because these changes require a reshaping of societal organization within ecological limits, and decisions to be made about what is to be sustained, why, and how. Sustainability cannot be ‘post-political’, a technical exercise about which consensus is putatively possible (Mouffe 2013a; Swyngedouw 2010), but is an inherently normative arena about which debate is essential (Barry 2012; Dobson 2007b).

Sustainability transitions were also established as a complex undertaking seen to necessitate a particular research approach. Sustainability science [1.3], a framework intended to support these transitions, was discussed. This framework seeks (first) to draw research attention towards human-nature interactions through interdisciplinary approaches, (second) a problem-focused and applied approach, (third) collaborative and participatory approaches to knowledge production, and (fourth) to acknowledge the inherent normativity of the problems it studies (Bebbington & Larrinaga 2014). These principles informed the approach and focus of the thesis.

Third, sustainability was conceptualized more narrowly in green republican terms [2.3]. Green republicanism is John Barry’s (2012) normative political philosophy describing how we might live and organize society less unsustainably, and emerges from green political debates synthesized with sympathetic elements of the civic republican tradition. Green republicanism was articulated as a post-liberal (but not anti-liberal) project that addressed some of the issues troubling liberalism’s continued relevance in a
resource-constrained and materially-finite world, and also as a response to undifferentiated-growth-oriented neoliberal and neoclassical political economy.

Nine points of green republicanism were noted. First, green republicanism is predicated on an understanding of humans as biologically embodied, and ecologically and socially embedded (challenging Cartesian and liberal norms of human separation from and mastery over nature). Second, that distinctive ontological premise informs a view of humans as ineliminably vulnerable (to nature and other people), and inevitably dependent on one another to satisfy social, cultural, emotional, and biological needs. Third, human-nature relations should proceed on an enlightened anthropocentric basis (that is neither ecocentric nor strongly anthropocentric/technocentric). Fourth, green republican citizens are interdependent, and active in the social and political life of the polity (troubling (neo)liberal notions of atomized independent individuals or consumers).

Fifth, freedom is conceived as non-domination (challenging liberal freedom-as-non-interference), opening a distinctive terrain for policy interventions and law-making. Sixth, green republicanism valorizes virtues consistent with living within ecological limits; these virtues relate to new sustainability subjectivities and identities. Seventh, the economy is understood as a product of social relations, hence conceived as political economy. Eighth, green republican political economy seeks differentiated growth (in appropriate sectors) within a broadly post-growth society, and to that end valorizes the (4 S) principles of economic security, sufficiency, solidarity, and sharing (challenging the neoliberal principles of economic growth, maximization, competition, and accumulation, currently shaping unsustainability). Finally, these 4 S principles also inform land relations appropriate for less unsustainable living.

Thus sustainability was conceptualized as a cultural and political project of sustainability transitions (away from unsustainability) in green republican terms, and principles informing research for sustainability transitions were established. By accepting green republican insights, not least to the human condition and relationship to nature, I engendered an ontological commitment that - in pursuit of intellectual coherence - influenced all subsequent theoretical discussion.
8.1.2 RQ1b: How can a cultural politics of sustainability transitions be appropriately articulated and interpreted (in the context of post-growth political economy)?

This question recognized the importance of cultural and political aspects to sustainability transitions, yet also the theoretical problems (from a green perspective) and empirical neglect of this field. My bipartite response forms the substantive original theoretical contribution of the thesis, (first) moving from critique of existing conceptualizations of cultural politics to recasting the concept in practice theoretical terms, and (second) developing the green republican interpretive framework, against which cultural political performances may be evaluated.

First, cultural politics was introduced [3.1] as a conceptual lens inviting attention to people’s subjectivities and identities, and to the role these cultural concepts can play in social and political change (Alvarez et al. 1998; Jordan & Weedon 1995; Nash 2001). Enactments of cultural politics involve people performing alternatives to commonly-held conceptions of (e.g.) woman, race, or citizen, that can prefigure changes to new ways of thinking about those concepts. My discussion began from Kate Nash’s (2001:85) strongly theorized account of cultural politics, defined as ‘contestation[s] of normalized identities and social relations’. However, I argued that her account was incompatible with the green republican ontology on at least two points, individualism, and materiality. Nash draws upon elements of Anthony Giddens’ work that are individualist and thus in tension with green republican notions of socially-embedded interdependent humans. On materiality, Nash is not wholly clear, drawing ambiguously on divergent perspectives from Giddens and also Michel Foucault, of which perspectives two are inconsistent with the green ontological commitment to biologically embodied and ecologically embedded people.

Attempting to resolve these tensions, I proposed a synthesis of cultural politics with practice theory [3.2], arguing for cultural politics as contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices, drawing on work by Theodore Schatzki (2002a, 2010) and - to a lesser extent - Chantal Mouffe (Laclau & Mouffe 2001; Mouffe 2013a). Schatzki’s account of socialmaterial practices draws attention to human doings and sayings, and to our discursive entanglements with bodily and environmental materiality. From
practices, identities, subjectivities, and meanings flow. His is a post-Cartesian perspective challenging existing binaries including mind/ body, agency/ structure, individual/ society, and - not least - human/ nature. Notably, although troubling the human/ nature binary Schatzki eschews moves toward human-nature hybridity, arguing instead for blurred human-nature distinctions and thus retaining analytical traction around humans’ interactions with nature. Schatzki’s perspective incorporates an ontological stance: practices bring reality into existence, making the social durable. Thus the second ontological commitment of the thesis was engendered: reality consists in socialmaterial practices. As I argued in chapter 3, Schatzki’s (descriptive) practice theory is consistent with Barry’s (prescriptive) green republicanism on at least all the points I identified, and importantly they agree on humans’ embodiedness and entanglements with nature. Mouffe’s work (with Ernesto Laclau) highlights society’s ordering through hegemonic practices and thus supports the notion that contestative practices can make visible alternatives to the dominant consensus.

Summarizing this first point, I proposed a practice theoretical recasting of cultural politics, drawing attention to practices (including their constituent materialities, and subjectivities and identities flowing from them) and their role in social change. By granting ontological status to human and nonhuman materiality, practice theory supports views of embodied humans who are embedded within societies and ecosystems, and is thus ontologically consistent with green republicanism. Hence, cultural politics recast through a practice-theoretical lens allows an appropriate approach to investigate activities that may prefigure less unsustainable ways of living.

The second point was concerned with evaluating such prefigurative performances, specifically in terms of sustainability transitions. How do we know whether or what they are prefiguring? Enactments of cultural politics are typically understood in contrast to the prevailing system. In chapter 4 I proposed, instead, that empirical data be evaluated against green republicanism - a normative political philosophy outlining modes of societal organization for living less unsustainably. Notably, green republicanism is articulated in virtue terms, with corresponding sustainability subjectivities and identities. Thus subjectivities and identities, an existing concern of cultural politics and understood (from a practice perspective) to flow from and through
socialmaterial practices, became the interface through which cultural political enactments can be interpreted against green republicanism.

Chapter 5 established that green republicanism and practice theory assume relational ontological postures that are consistent with a transactional-subjectivist epistemology and ethnographically-informed case-study methodology. The thesis (and hence the conceptual and interpretive framework) were located within an interpretivist paradigm in the broad terrain of social science.

Summarizing my response to RQ1b: in pursuit of ontological coherence with sustainability transitions understood in green republican terms, I argued (first) for a re-conceptualized cultural politics as *contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices*, and (second) that practice-oriented empirical data should be analysed against an *interpretive framework of green republican virtues, subjectivities, and identities*. In this way, cultural political performances may be evaluated in terms of their prefiguration (or not) of a less unsustainable society. These responses mark the substantive contribution of the thesis, and I reflect on them further, below.

### 8.1.3 RQ2a: How may Scottish community woodlands, and the artistic activities undertaken within them, be conceptualized?

This question recognized the diversity of the Scottish woodland scene and its under-researched status as problems (yet also opportunities). Together, these issues meant there were no appropriate existing conceptualizations to guide initial approach to the community woodland phenomenon. RQ2a was answered in chapters 1 and 3; below, I discuss the conceptualization of (first) community woodlands and (second) artistic and creative activities.

Scottish community woodlands were identified as emerging from complex international and national contexts of environmentalism, changing forestry policy, and land tenure reform, the latter making community woodlands in Scotland distinct from those elsewhere [1.5.1]. The outcome is a diverse scene of communities controlling woodlands across Scotland, pursuing a variety of ends and taking different organizational forms. Although Scottish community woodlands have received research
attention, this has focussed upon the scene’s emergence, early challenges, and characteristics, or policy-driven governance and management concerns [1.5.2]. The prefigurative potential of community woodlands in sustainability transitions has been neglected by the academy.

The diversity of the community woodland scene suggested that a number of approaches were possible to support investigation. I argued that community woodlands were appropriately conceptualized as alternative organizations [1.5.3], having earlier in the research project [5.2.1] rejected two other possible framings (vehicles for endogenous community development, and social movement). These earlier framings were inappropriate because of their inability to make visible nature and woodland materiality, offer insight into woodland artistic activities, or support my concern with prefigurations of sustainability transitions.

Alternative organization emerged from critical management studies debates, and responds to critiques of dominant market-managerial, shareholder-owned, and capitalcentric organizing practices (to which no alternatives exist, from some perspectives). On the contrary, Martin Parker et al. (2014a) argue that alternatives do exist, and include community organizations along with (e.g.) cooperatives and employee-owned organizations. Their concept assumes that organization is a process (not a static structure), performed by people. Hence, it is neither natural nor inevitable, is open to change, and relatedly, is also political (because political assumptions - general understandings - shape organizational practices). Alternative organization, for Parker and colleagues, should be guided by three principles drawn from anarchist thinking: autonomy, solidarity, and responsibility.

Community woodlands were defined as alternative organizations not least because they trouble norms of forestry management (by people local to the resource, not distant technocratic managers) and land ownership (by communities not individuals, thus directly challenging liberal notions of property ownership). This framing was shown to be coherent with the thesis’ intellectual commitments to practice theory (agreement on organizations and society as processually constituted), cultural politics (agreement on organizations and society having a political dimension, hence prefigurative alternatives are possible), and partly with green republicanism (sharing critical perspectives on
neoliberalism and current modes of capitalism, but at odds over anarchist autonomy against green republican interdependence). Acknowledging yet sidelining that possible anarchist/ republican tension, I conceptualized Scottish community woodlands as community woodland organizations [1.5.3].

Artistic woodland activities were conceptualized (first) by defining an inclusive vision of artistic and creative activities, and (second) by an original synthesis of everyday artistic activism, both intellectually coherent with practice theory and green republicanism.

Artistic and creative activities were defined broadly and inclusively, supported (first) by constructivist and practice theoretical notions of art and its practitioners, institutions, artefacts, and values (Becker 2008; Bourdieu 1984; Schatzki 2014), and (second) by David Gauntlett’s (2011) egalitarian concept of everyday creativity. Constructivist accounts resist a long-standing art/ craft binary. Everyday creativity can be undertaken by anybody and eschews elite or professional artists. Combined, these ideas make a broad range of creative activities visible in the analytic frame. Artistic and creative activities were defined as those practices which can be practised by anyone making something for use, pleasure, joy, and not necessarily for financial gain [3.3.1].

Artistic activism is Chantal Mouffe’s (2013a) framing of art in cultural political terms. From a broadly constructivist perspective, Mouffe argues that art has a political dimension and politics an aesthetic dimension, hence challenging Kantian notions of aesthetic autonomy from the social. In this way, activist art can make visible hegemonic alternatives that would otherwise be obscured. Despite her vision of artistic resistance to the dominant consensus, Mouffe overlooks the possibility of non-professional artists prosecuting such resistance, and also neglects materiality as a dimension of the social. Hence, I argued for a tripartite synthesis of Mouffe’s artistic activism with Gauntlett’s everyday creativity and Schatzki’s socialmaterial practices, conceptualizing practices of everyday artistic activism as those making visible, through artistic and creative activities and the artefacts they produce, alternatives to the current hegemony [3.3.2]. This synthesis concept marks the third, and final, original theoretical contribution of the thesis.
Summarizing, my response to RQ2a drew on alternative organization theory to conceptualize Scottish community woodlands as community woodland organizations, and developed a synthesis concept of practices of everyday artistic activism to understand the artistic and creative activities performed within the woodlands. These framings were both consistent with the green and practice theoretical ontological commitments, and also with the prefigurative and cultural political concern of the thesis.

8.1.4 RQ2b: What artistic and creative activities are undertaken in community woodlands, and how do these intersect with the wider woodland movement and with sustainability transitions?

This question recognized the scholarly neglect of the Scottish community woodland scene, particularly from a sustainability transitions perspective. It also provided an opportunity for empirical validation of the conceptual and interpretive framework articulated in chapters 2, 3 and 4, allowing the thesis to make an applied theoretical contribution to debates around researching sustainability transitions. The question was answered across chapters 6 and 7.

The diversity of the woodland scene was illustrated by chapter 6, which demonstrated CWOs to consist in a broad palette of practices, including a broad range of artistic and creative practices. Although not every CWO performs every practice, at least 34 CWOs were identified as engaged in artistic and creative woodland activities, suggesting that these activities form a significant phenomenon within the Scottish woodland scene [6.1]. Drawing from ethnographic data, chapter 6 also began to discuss intersections between artistic and creative activities and the broader woodland scene. Three potential roles for artistic woodland activities were identified, all of which were seen to contribute to regeneration of a long-lost woodland culture [6.1]. First, they could be part of a holistically-conceived model of woodland management. Second, they could inform uses of woodland material and spatial resources, and (hence) shape more general woodland management objectives in order to facilitate those uses. Third, they could help to encourage people into woodlands. Zoomed-in and thickly-described data (from Geal CWO [6.2]) confirmed that artistic and creative activities can be tightly integrated
with woodland management, and can support CWO objectives to encourage increased woodland use by local people.

Subsequent discussion of the data, in chapter 7, showed the relevance of a practice lens to support future CWO interventions. Seeking to encourage people into the woods, and regenerate a lost woodland culture - Geal CWO objectives, and activists’ motivations, respectively - should be understood as interventions, by woodland organizers, that aim to change non-woodland-users’ practices. Discussion of the data through a practice-theoretical lens suggests that mere modifications of woodland material arrangements were insufficient to change the practices of people living near Geal, whereas explicitly introducing those people into using the woodland, through organized arts events - plays - did seem to change peoples’ practices of woodland use [7.1].

Further discussion of the zoomed-in Geal CWO data, interpreted against the green republican framework, showed how Geal CWO prefigured elements of a less unsustainable society. Subjectivities, flowing from and through the practices of woodland management and artistic activism performed by Geal people, were shown to connect with green republican virtues relating to human vulnerability, resilience, economic security, sufficiency, solidarity, sharing, and land relations. These practices - including, not least, the practices of everyday artistic activism involved in performing woodland plays - made visible alternative, counter-hegemonic notions of human-nature relations, the human condition (and intrahuman relations), and organization. In this way, doings and sayings within Geal CWO were shown to be performances of cultural politics that prefigured elements of a less unsustainable society understood in green republican terms [7.2.]

However, these findings from the Geal context are limited by the data, and cannot (yet) be generalized. It is not possible to assert that other CWO art projects served to increase woodland use, or other CWOs (and their art projects) prefigure elements of a less unsustainable society. This research aimed to undertake an exploratory study of CWOs; it has achieved that aim and has generated a number of pointers toward future investigations that promise contribution toward academic debates and support community woodland organizing. I return to discuss opportunities for future research in 8.3 below.
In summary, my answer to RQ2b argues that Scottish CWOs are socialmaterial contexts wherein diverse artistic and creative practices are performed. Artistry and creativity contribute to regeneration of a former woodland culture through their intersection with the wider woodland movement in Scotland by (first) attracting new people into using and doing things in the woods, and (second) potentially also shaping woodland management plans. CWOs and their artistic activities also intersect with the cultural political sustainability transitions project by prefiguring elements of green republicanism and making visible alternative (less unsustainable) ways of humans’ relations with nature, each other, and organizing.

8.1.5 Summary

In summary, in answering the research questions, the thesis articulated three original theoretical syntheses, three empirical findings, and (relatedly), pointers toward future research. Theoretically, the thesis argues (first) for a reconceptualized notion of cultural politics as *contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices*, that (second) might involve *practices of everyday artistic activism*, performances of which practices (third) may be evaluated against a green republican interpretive framework, to identify sustainability subjectivities flowing from and through socialmaterial practices. Empirically, the thesis undertook an exploratory investigation of CWOs, finding that woodland artistic and creative activities (broadly defined) can (first) be seen as enmeshed within a holistically-conceived model of woodland management, (second) contribute to the broader aims of the woodland movement (to regenerate an atrophied woodland culture), and (third) make visible - along with more general woodland practices - sustainability subjectivities that resonate with green republicanism. Flowing from those exploratory findings is an agenda for future research around this scene.

8.2 REFLECTING ON LIMITATIONS AND LEARNING POINTS

Although the thesis contributes, theoretically and empirically, to debates around sustainability transitions and cognate arenas, it is also a product of doctoral research that is essentially a training process. It is therefore appropriate to reflect not only upon limitations of the data (which reflection is good practice whether as training or not), but
also upon learning points emerging from the process. Below I review the limitations [8.2.1], before turning to note the points that I have learnt [8.2.2].

### 8.2.1 Limitations of the findings

Five limitations should be noted, three empirical and two theoretical. Empirically, this investigation of the Scottish community woodland scene suggests that woodland artistic and creative activities (broadly defined) can be seen as enmeshed within a holistically-conceived model of woodland management, able to contribute to the broader aims of the woodland movement (to regenerate an atrophied woodland culture), and making visible - along with more general woodland practices - sustainability subjectivities that resonate with green republicanism. Additionally, I noted scope for practice-theoretical insights to support future CWO interventions in changing non-woodland users’ practices of woodland use. However, these empirical findings are limited, not least because the data are insufficient to allow (first) comparative analysis between CWOs, and (second) analysis of how people at Geal (beyond the CWO directors) experienced the woodland plays. Three reasons account for these limitations.

First, although a lively scene of woodland artistic and creative activities was evidenced at the outset of this doctoral research project, it emerged that fewer events and projects were taking place by the time I entered the field. The data suggest this was because of dwindling funding for such events, following an earlier period of more abundant funding (and hence events) around 2009. It is also possible that volunteers who had earlier been committed to organizing woodland arts events stopped volunteering, leaving their local CWO to pursue other projects. This scenario can also explain why some of my emails seeking access and research participants were unanswered [5.2]. Relatedly, the interviews made visible the barriers to volunteering facing people with otherwise busy lives, responsibilities and a need to earn a living; it is thus possible that some activists simply had no time to respond to my contact. Combined, these factors contribute to the findings’ limited comparative analysis.

Second, although rich data emerged from Geal CWO (garnered through multiple ethnographic data-gathering methods), I did not engage with people at Geal beyond the CWO directors. Two factors influence that lack of engagement. First, no artistic projects
were organized at Geal close to my fieldwork period; the most recent concluded 13 months previously. Although it is likely that deeper analyses were possible had I engaged with participants or attendees of that most recent project, it is possible that 13 months after the event people’s memories may have become hazy, giving questionable results. Second, and relatedly, it is a consequence of the temporal limitations inevitably placed on a research project. Combined, these factors contributes to the findings’ limited analysis of how people experienced the woodland, plays, and the practices and subjectivities flowing from them.

Third, although more data was generated than earlier chapters present and interpret, the thesis privileges theory over empirics; developing original theoretical syntheses reduces the scope for extensive empirical reflection. The data used, from Geal, offered the richest detail and scope for deepest analysis, hence its selection. The unused data does not contradict the findings, but was triangulated with insights emerging from the Geal analysis, contributing to preliminary scene-setting [6.1] and reflective conclusions [7.3].

Finally, there are two limitations to the conceptual and interpretive framework articulated across chapters 2-5. First, any conceptual or evaluative lens inevitably sharpens phenomena of interest while blurring other phenomena. Hence, the research cannot pretend to capture every aspect of woodland organizing (nor did it claim to). This was exemplified by the issues of funding, employment, and volunteering that were not salient (although not wholly obscured) in the data presentation and discussion. Although practice theory and green republicanism can offer insight to these issues, they are less obviously of concern to cultural politics. Second, practice theory and ethnographic methodology aspire to describe the full richness of everyday social lives, ideally in thickly-described detail as I have pursued in chapters 6 and 7. Although there are undeniable benefits to this approach (not least making visible phenomena of interest in apparently mundane activities), it can be very wordy, potentially causing problems for larger comparative projects.

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The directors had decided to have a break from annual woodland theatre productions, because (first) they required considerable energy to organize and Mary and Michael both wanted a break, (second) Mary sought a new, non-Shakespearean play that was relevant to the woodland setting, but had at the time not identified such a play, and (third) both Mary and Michael sensed that enthusiasm within the community would be greater following a fallow year.
Summarizing, the findings are limited, impeding generalizability. It is only possible to claim insights about Geal CWO, not the woodland movement more widely. However, these limitations were not wholly unexpected. The investigation was from the outset intended an exploration of a complex and multifaceted social phenomenon, from which perspective the study has proven successful in pointing towards opportunities for future research. Moreover, the substantive focus of the thesis was theoretical, and the data are sufficient to validate the newly-articulated conceptual and interpretive framework. Two limitations of the framework were noted, although these do not pose significant problems for future research.

8.2.2 Learning points

There are at least three notable learning points emerging from my doctoral project, relating to participant recruitment, empirical data-management, and writing as a stage of qualitative analysis.

It is difficult to separate one’s own moves in participant recruitment from unknown factors influencing responses (or silences) from the people approached to participate. Certainly, it is easy as an early-career social researcher to feel wanting, whether socially (in terms making initially engaging approaches to people) or intellectually (in terms of articulating compelling research questions that promise to address issues of interest to activists hence encouraging their participation), when participants seem uninterested in one’s project or prove difficult to recruit. It is clear that taking as many opportunities to engage with potential participants as possible is important, in order to develop networks at an early stage in the research project (indeed, ideally before the project commences). Of course, once a practitioner-researcher network is established, then future projects may develop around ideas circulating within that network, a process in marked contrast to this doctoral project which developed somewhat in isolation from practitioners. However, I intend to apply these insights in future research (and, I as discuss below, hope to continue collaboration with contacts made during this project).

This project has been a significant learning experience for my practices of managing literature, notes, and qualitative data. The multiple stages of literature review, research design, fieldwork, and relatedly experiments with different systems of managing
theoretical and empirical materials led in the end to a messier than ideal collection of data-sets. Theoretical literature and related notes were contained within a reference management database that was entirely successful, rendering searches and connection-making relatively easy between a complex set of multidisciplinary texts. For the first empirical stage I used a generic database application; although adequate for data storage I found this database less satisfactory for analysis, for which I relied on pen and paper. However, this also proved less than ideal, as links were more difficult to explore. Finally, I moved to an CAQDAS application specifically designed for qualitative data management, coding, and analysis. Although wholly successful and easy to use, my earlier material and notes were in the other database and on paper leading to a messy (and ultimately avoidable) process of migrating everything (although this may have functioned as a useful round of iterative-inductive analysis). In the future, I anticipate using the CAQDAS package exclusively from the outset of a research project; the benefits seem clear for managing empirical material, tracking ideas, developing research questions, and analysis.

Finally, and also relating to practices of qualitative research, I would in future aspire to an intermediate stage of writing as analysis, between coding and writing research outputs including conference papers and this thesis. With hindsight, I can see that writing interpretive-analytical summaries of each interview, in a way that brought together all the really useful quotations in a categorised narrative, would make the final writing easier than (as I did) working straight from stark coding reports exported from a database and scribbled notes. This intermediate stage of writing may help negotiate the problem (for larger projects) of condensing thickly-described data into more manageable sections for comparative analysis.

8.2 CONTRIBUTIONS

This thesis has narrated a theoretically and empirically original investigation of sustainability transitions in cultural political terms. My substantive concern has been theoretical, to articulate a conceptual lens of cultural politics that is ontologically coherent with green political visions of sustainability transitions, hence allowing appropriately-focused investigation of cultural political prefigurations of those
transitions. The theoretical originality is three-fold, lying (first) in the recasting of
cultural politics as contestations of normalized or hegemonic practices, through which
counter-hegemonic subjectivities are made visible [3.2], (second) in the subsidiary
notion of practices of everyday artistic activism [3.3], and (third) in the interpretive
framework of green republican subjectivities and identities, against which cultural
political performances may be evaluated [4].

Seeking to validate the new conceptual lens and interpretive framework, I applied it to
empirical investigation of an under-researched human-nature context: Scottish CWOs,
and the woodland artistic and creative activities that are a distinctive facet of woodland
organizing. Three findings emerged from that exploratory investigation. First, artistic
activities can be an integral aspect of woodland management, supporting aims to
recreate a long-lost woodland culture in Scotland and encouraging people into
woodlands [6.1, 6.2]. Second, practice theory may help to inform CWO interventions
that seek to encourage more people into the woodlands [7.1]. Third, at least one CWO -
Geal - has prefigured elements of a less unsustainable society, as understood in green
republican terms, and made visible alternative conceptions of human-nature relations,
the human condition and intrahuman relations, and organization [7.2].

Flowing from these original theoretical and empirical insights are four contributions to
academic debates; three theoretical (but empirically enlivened) and one empirically
oriented. There is also potential opportunity to support activist practices. The research
has followed a multidisciplinary approach, shaped by sustainability science principles
[1.3]. Hence, the promised contributions are somewhat eclectic, connecting to
multidisciplinary sustainability transitions debates and also standalone disciplines.

First, the thesis’ substantive contribution is the reconceptualization of cultural politics to
be consistent with a green republican (relational) ontology. This synthesis extends
existing anthropological, cultural studies, and sociological debates around cultural
to existing conversations (that have to date neglected the notion of cultural politics)
concerned with community organizing for sustainability transitions (e.g., Feola &
Nunes 2014; Franklin et al. 2011b; Heiskanen et al. 2010; Kirwan et al. 2013;
Middlemiss & Parrish 2010; Moloney et al. 2010; North & Longhurst 2013; Seyfang &
Smith 2007; Stevenson 2011; White & Stirling 2013). The practice-theoretical recasting of cultural politics suggests the synthesis may be of interest to other scholars interested in prefigurative politics and relational ontologies, anthropocenic socialmateriality, and other cognate post-Cartesian, non-dualist, and 'neo-realist' ontologies (Escobar 2010:97; Castree 2003; Nicolini 2013; White 2016).

Second, and relatedly, the second contribution lies in the synthesis concept of practices of everyday artistic activism. While extending notions of artistic activism, the Schatzkian framing again orients the synthesis towards relational conceptions of the arts, as well as to debates around roles of the arts in sustainability transitions and in the Anthropocene. Relatedly, there may also be scope for this second synthesis to contribute to debates around non-dualist, post-Cartesian, and post-Kantian notions of art.

Third, the combination of a practice-theoretical cultural politics with green republican sustainability subjectivities responds to recent calls for interpretive social scientists to ‘open up multiple interpretations of the Anthropocene’ and extend sustainability debates previously dominated by positivist knowledge and the natural sciences interventions in sustainability research (Lövbrand et al. 2015:211; Castree et al. 2014). Relatedly, this combination also contributes to existing conversations within green political sociology about how to research sustainability transitions (Cato & Hillier 2010). All three of these theoretical contributions can be enlivened and validated by empirical data.

Fourth, the empirical contribution will add to debates around the notion of alternative organization (e.g., Parker et al. 2014b). Investigation of Geal CWO has illuminated a hitherto unregarded alternative organization, particularly by showing ways in which (one particular) alternative organization communicates non-capitalist subjectivities.

There is also potential for one future contribution to activist practice. Discussion of the data pointed towards further research (summarized below [8.4]). Most promising of the avenues for further investigation is the potential for practice-theoretical insights to support future practice-changing interventions by CWOs, assuming future research successfully confirms the provisional insights noted previously [7.3].
Additionally, woodland artistic activists may be heartened to have their insights confirmed (albeit provisionally) about the roles that artistic and creative activities can play in woodland organizing and in regenerating a former woodland culture. Finally, analysis of the woodland data adds a little empirical richness to green republican philosophy, in the form of the two new sustainability subjectivities of woodlander, and community owner.

### 8.3 Future Research

The thesis points towards four broad avenues for future research, each with a number of potential strands. First, there is considerable scope for further applications of the conceptual and interpretive framework. Not least, the framework can be applied to further engagements with CWOs, exploring, as proposed in chapter 7 (first) how practice-theoretical insights might support CWO practice-changing interventions, (second) whether and how other CWO artistic projects prefigure sustainability transitions as Geal did, and (third) whether and how participants at woodland artistic projects experienced those projects, in terms of learning new practices and understanding and potentially performing new subjectivities.

Second, the framework also promises relevance for investigations of other contexts of Scottish community landownership. Notwithstanding that promise, the green republican position on property and land ownership will benefit from further development, as one aspect of John Barry’s evolving project that betrays its recently emergent status. For example, although there are in his writing hints of various ownership models, including commons ownership of varying scales, it is not clear exactly who will own land, what sizes commons regimes might be (in terms of area and number of participants), nor how the transition to such a radically different system may come about. Equally, although Barry does touch briefly upon the concept of investment, he offers little discussion of this important mechanism. These points are all worthy of future research, as is the intersection between green republicanism, commons thinking, and the increasing number of community-owned organizations in Scotland.
Third, further investigations are required of sustainability subjectivities, substantively around their performance, communication, legitimation, and diffusal. Alternative organization debates can be extended by explorations of the roles of sustainability subjectivities in alternative organizations (not just CWOs), and the roles of alternative organizations in sustainability transitions: investigating, for example, (how) do these organizations contribute to the spread of such subjectivities? In collaboration with cultural studies scholars, there are important questions to be asked including (first) whether and how sustainability subjectivities are communicated through cultural texts including (e.g.) books, films, and advertising, (second, and more normatively) whether contemporary hegemonic media are capable or appropriate for communicating - and, importantly - legitimating sustainability subjectivities, and (third) what other cultural texts might appropriately and successfully be implicated in fostering and diffusing sustainability subjectivities.

Fourth, there is scope for work relating to the arts in post-growth political economy debates. Contributions could include (first) to what extent growth-oriented notions of the creative industries are likely to become inappropriate in a post-growth society, (second) how the arts may be understood and valued in such a society, and (third) whether and how the arts may be supported in post-growth society. These questions may draw on and contribute to green republicanism, although the arena of post-growth political economy is rapidly evolving and alternative normative visions may emerge.

8.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This final chapter has summarized the route followed by the thesis, noting learning points, limitations, original contributions and avenues for future research. However, one final task remaining for this chapter is to reflect on RQ3: critically evaluate the success and future potential of the conceptual and interpretive framework to understand a cultural politics of sustainability transitions.

The framework has helped to make visible the socialmaterial entanglements of CWOs, showing how they anticipate elements of a less unsustainable society through performances of alternative conceptions of human-nature interactions, intrahuman
relations, and organization. In this way, the framework is a success, because it has allowed investigation of a prefigurative politics within civil society in a way that is ontologically consistent with green political visions of biologically embodied humans, embedded not only ecologically but socially within a less unsustainable society. The framework inevitably highlights some phenomena while leaving others in the shadows. This problem is shared with all conceptual or evaluative lenses, and explicit acknowledgement of the lens’ focus can resolve that problem. Although the framework may face challenges in large comparative research projects, by virtue of its association with thickly-described data, those challenges have not proven unduly limiting in this thesis. Finally, this chapter has noted the contributions to literature offered by the framework, and also outlined four promising avenues for future research.

In summary, through an account of theoretical and empirical originality, that extends sustainability transitions and alternative organization debates and also points toward future support for community woodland organizers, this thesis contributes an applied response to the problem of less unsustainable living (and relatedly to the problem of researching less unsustainable living).
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APPENDIX 1

ETHICS IN FIELDWORK AND DATA-HANDLING

This appendix is included in support of the discussion of methodology and research design, and in particular the ethical issues involved in ethnographically-informed research [5.2, 5.3]. Ethical approval for the research was sought and gained, from the University of St Andrews School of Management Ethics Committee. Interviewees were given full information about the project, including details of the planned use and storage of their data; their consent for anonymized use of their data was sought, and granted. Below are listed the Ethics Committee approval letter, participant information sheet, consent form, and debriefing.
25th April 2013
Rod Bain
School of Management

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ethics Reference No:</th>
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<td>Researchers Name(s):</td>
<td>Rod Bain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor(s):</td>
<td>Professor Jan Bebbington and Dr Shona Russell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Thank you for submitting your application which was considered by the School of Management’s Ethics Committee. The following documents were reviewed:

1. Ethical Application Form
2. Participant Consent Form
3. Participant Information Sheet
4. Debriefing Form

10th April 2013

The University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee (UTREC) approves this study from an ethical point of view. Please note that where approval is given by a School Ethics Committee that committee is part of UTREC and is delegated to act for UTREC.

Approval is given for three years. Projects, which have not commenced within two years of original approval, must be re-submitted to your School Ethics Committee.

You must inform your School Ethics Committee when the research has been completed. If you are unable to complete your research within the 3 three year validation period, you will be required to write to your School Ethics Committee and to UTREC (where approval was given by UTREC) to request an extension or you will need to re-apply.

Any serious adverse events or significant change which occurs in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration, must be reported immediately to the School Ethics Committee, and an Ethical Amendment Form submitted where appropriate.

Approval is given on the understanding that the ‘Guidelines for Ethical Research Practice’ (http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/media/UTREC/guidelines%20Feb%202008.pdf) are adhered to.

Yours sincerely

Dr Philip Roscoe
Convenor of the School Ethics Committee

cc Shona Deigman

UTREC Convenor, Mansfield, 3 St Mary’s Place, St Andrews, KY16 9UY
Email: utrec@st-andrews.ac.uk Tel: 01334 462666
The University of St Andrews is a charity registered in Scotland: No SC013532
Project Title: Creative activities and sustainability in community woodlands.

What is the study about?
I invite you to participate in a research project about the role which community woodlands, and specifically creative activities in woodlands, can play in helping communities live less unsustainably.

This study is being conducted as part of my PhD Thesis in the School of Management.

Do I have to take Part?
This information sheet has been written to help you decide if you would like to take part. It is up to you and you alone whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be free to withdraw at any time without providing a reason.

What would I be required to do?
You are invited to take part in an interview about your participation in community woodland activities. The duration varies, but it is anticipated it will take less than 60 minutes to complete.

Will my participation be Anonymous and Confidential?
Your participation will be anonymous and confidential. Only me, and my supervisors, will have access to the data which will be kept strictly confidential. Your permission will be sought in the Participant Consent form for the data you provide, which will be anonymised, to be used for future scholarly purposes.

Storage of Data Collected
The data I collect will be accessible by me and my supervisors, and it will also be kept for future scholarly research by me. Your data will be stored, in an anonymised format on an encrypted computer system.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results will be finalised by 2014 and written up as part of my PhD Thesis. They are likely to be presented to the Community Woodlands Conference in 2014 or 2015, and are also likely to be published in an academic journal.

Are there any potential risks to taking part?
There are no risks to taking part.

Questions
You will have the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to this project before giving completing a Consent Form.

Consent and Approval
This research proposal has been scrutinised and been granted Ethical Approval through the University ethical approval process.

What should I do if I have concerns about this study?
A full outline of the procedures governed by the University Teaching and Research Ethical Committee is available at http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/ut/reo/Guidelines/complaints/
Participant Consent Form
Coded Data

Project Title: Creative activities and sustainability in community woodlands.

Researcher
Rod Bain
E: rb55@st-andrews.ac.uk

Supervisors
Prof. Jan Bebbington
Dr. Shona Russell

The University of St Andrews attaches high priority to the ethical conduct of research. We therefore ask you to consider the following points before signing this form. Your signature confirms that you are happy to participate in the study.

What is Coded Data?
From our interview, I will gather information (data) from which I will subsequently remove your name, replacing it with a code. Only me, and my supervisors, will have access to the code. This means that you, as a participant, cannot be identified by anyone other than me, and my supervisors.

Consent
The purpose of this form is to ensure that you are willing to take part in this study and to let you understand what it entails. Signing this form does not commit you to anything you do not wish to do and you are free to withdraw at any stage.

Material gathered during this research will be coded and kept confidentially by the researcher with only the researcher and supervisor having access. It will be securely stored in an encrypted hard-drive, and kept for future research.

Please answer each statement concerning the collection and use of the research data.

I have read and understood the information sheet. Yes No
I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study. Yes No
I have had my questions answered satisfactorily. Yes No
I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give an explanation. Yes No
I understand that my data will be confidential and that it will contain identifiable personal data but that will be stored with personal identifiers removed by the researcher and that only the researcher/supervisor will be able to decode this information as and when necessary. Yes No
I agree to my data (in line with conditions outlined above) being kept by the researcher and being archived and used for further research projects undertaken by the researcher. Yes No
I have been made fully aware of the potential risks associated with this research and am satisfied with the information provided. Yes No
I agree to take part in the study Yes No

Part of my research involves taking photographic images/ tape recordings. These images/ recordings will be kept secure and stored with no identifying factors i.e. consent forms and questionnaires.
Photographs and recorded data can be valuable resources for future studies therefore we ask for your additional consent to maintain data and images for this purpose.

I agree to have my photo taken / to be tape recorded Yes No
I agree for my photo, tape recorded material to be published as part of this research Yes No
I agree for my photos, tape recorded material to be used in future studies Yes No

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Participation in this research is completely voluntary and your consent is required before you can participate in this research. If you decide at a later date that data should be destroyed we will honour your request in writing.

Name in Block Capitals

Signature

Date
Participant Debriefing Form

Project Title: Creative activities and sustainability in community woodlands.

Researcher
Rod Bain
E: rb55@st-andrews.ac.uk

Supervisors
Prof. Jan Bebbington
Dr. Shona Russell

Nature of Project
This postgraduate research project was conducted to investigate how community woodlands, and specifically the creative activities undertaken by woodland groups, can help communities live less unsustainably.

Storage of Data
As outlined in the Participant Information Sheet your data will now be retained, and will remain accessible to only the researchers and supervisors. Your data may be used for future scholarly purposes without further contact or permission if you have given permission on the Consent Form. If you no longer wish for your data to be used in this manner you are free to withdraw your consent by contacting the researcher and or supervisor.

What should I do if I have concerns about this study?
A full outline of the procedures governed by the University Teaching and Research Ethical Committee are outline on their website http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/utrec/Guidelines/complaints/

Contact Details

Researcher: Rod Bain
Contact Details: rb55@st-andrews.ac.uk

Supervisors: Prof. Jan Bebbington
Dr. Shona Russell
Contact Details: kjb10@st-andrews.ac.uk
srf55@st-andrews.ac.uk
APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interviews were an important method of data-gathering for the research reported in this thesis. This appendix, outlining the questions with which I approached interviews, is included in support of the discussion of research methods [5.2.2], and also to provide transparency around the data that is presented [6.1, 6.2] and interpreted [7.1, 7.2]. The interviews were semi-structured, and were designed with an aspiration to balance focus (on my investigative needs as a researcher), sensitivity (to participants humanity and desire to talk about their passions), and improvisation (to allow more natural free-flowing conversation, and respond to empirical surprise). Below, I list the questions that informed my fieldwork and interviews. The questions are presented here as concise, interrogative, bullet-points. However, in the interests of attaining a relatively normal conversation they were not always couched in these short terms, but often as interjections in discussion.

- What is the history of your CWO?
- What are the details of the CWO? (size, species, ownership, aims/ objectives)
- How did you get involved? Why?
- Creativity and artistic projects appear to be an important part of your woodland group’s (or your personal) activities.
- Why do you do these activities? (Why) are they important?
- Tell me about some of the projects you’ve organized or participated in previously. What did you do, what did you use, how did you do it, what happened afterwards?
- What successes and problems have you faced with the woodland in general, and the artistic activities in particular?
- Who are the audiences, visitors, and users of your woodland?
- What creativity and artistry do you have planned (or anticipate planning) in the future?
This appendix illustrates the code system developed, using the Maxqda software and through iterative-inductive analysis of the data. The code system is included to provide transparency and to support discussion of methodology [5] and presentation and interpretation of the data [6, 7].

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<td>impact</td>
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<td>aspirations</td>
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<td>projects</td>
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<td>spoon-making</td>
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<td>charcoal-making</td>
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<td>event</td>
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<td>forest school/ school in forest</td>
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<td>management</td>
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<td>creativity</td>
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<tr>
<td>management plan</td>
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<td>story-telling</td>
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<td>training/ teaching</td>
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<td>cultural politics</td>
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<td>hurdle-making</td>
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<td>basket-making</td>
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<td>celebration</td>
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<td>chopping</td>
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signing
movement through woods
practical understandings
foraging
class of trees
general understandings
enterprise
funding
heritage
land reform
motivation
employment
rules
surprise
materials
non-timber forest products
people
identity
active citizens
artist
creative
activist
visitors
director
woodlander
retiree
volunteer
leaders/followers
trainer/educator
forester
actor
maker
building
charcoal-maker
artefacts
shelter
chainsaw
ladder
measuring tape
saw
machinery
hammer
axe
spoon
charcoal
table
skin
charcoal
table
bench
warm clothing
fire
zipwire
midge/ mosquito protection
rope
fire extinguisher
carabiners, safety equipment
eardefenders
hazard tape
boots
helmet
gloves
hi-vis
visor
harness
bucket
chisel
sawmill
cars, vehicles
clearing
felling/ clearing
fuel?
cardboard
sack
document
nets
bolts
paper?
access ramp
shelter
path
scrap timber
logs
tent
felled trees
firewood
milled timber
pen
plastic roof liner
greenwood
artistic artefact
drum
make-up
xylophone
digeridoo
lantern
ship
lantern
installation
costume
set
organisms
beeswax
oak
birch
ash
fern
mosses
coniferous
deciduous
willow?
leaves
things
deadwood
driftwood

ebb & flow
unsustainable
enlightened anthropocentrism
resilience
woodlander
pioneer
imaginative
forward-thinker
skilful
adaptive
creative
relocalization
local
vulnerability
woodlander
compassionate
humble
down-to-earth
carer
weather
security
volunteer
renewal of energies
individual responsibility
sharing
trusting
giver
freedom
community ownership
solidarity
volunteer
sufficiency
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<th>thrifty</th>
<th>frugal</th>
<th>land relations</th>
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<td>moderate</td>
<td>carer</td>
<td>cautious</td>
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<td>usufruct</td>
<td>temporary</td>
<td>biodegradable</td>
<td>life history</td>
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<td>jargon</td>
<td>communication/ media</td>
<td>space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4

COMMUNITY WOODLAND ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

This appendix is included to provide context for the discussion of community woodland organizations [1.5] and the data emerging from those CWOs and woodland activists involved in the research [6.1, 6.2]. A list of member groups was extracted from the Community Woodlands Association (CWA) website in March 2013, at which time there were 152 members listed. CWA membership was used to define the sample, because the Association is the de facto (but not statutory) representative organization of the Scottish community woodland movement in Scotland.\(^{128}\) The CWA website provides links to many member group’s websites. However, some of these linked to sites that were no longer active. An online search, using the Google search engine, was undertaken to check for updated or unlisted group websites; the search terms were for the group name as listed on the CWA page. Ultimately, I concluded that not all groups maintain an internet presence; this is not unrealistic given the isolated sites, far from broadband networks existing at that time, in which some groups are located.

The CWA defines a community woodland as ‘one partly or completely controlled by the local community, through a community woodland group. The woodland may be owned or leased by the group, or managed in partnership with another organisation, such as Forestry Commission Scotland.’ (Calvert 2009). However, not all CWA members are community groups controlling woodland. CWA member groups may be classified into seven categories (A-D).\(^{129}\) Table A4.1 defines the seven categories, and table A4.2 lists the members (at March 2013) within each category. Bold lettering in A4.2 category A groups illustrates those groups that had an internet presence in March 2013.

The research reported in this thesis is based on data generated about category A groups, defined as community woodland organizations (CWOs).

\(^{128}\) However, CWA membership is not geographically restricted to Scottish community woodlands.

\(^{129}\) Note that CWA also offer individual membership.
Table A4.1 Categories of organizations holding CWA membership in March 2013 (author’s analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Community group controlling woodland 'Community woodland organization' (CWO)</td>
<td>Groups with some level of control (through lease, management partnership, or ownership) over activities undertaken in woodlands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Community group seeking control of woodland</td>
<td>New groups at some stage of negotiating or fundraising to achieve woodland control (potentially through lease, management partnership, or ownership).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Community groups or social enterprises engaged in woodland activities that are not A or B.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Local authorities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Charities &amp; non-governmental organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Trusts &amp; representative organizations</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Consultancy &amp; training organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A4.2. Organizations holding CWA membership in March 2013, by category (author’s analysis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat.</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Group name</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>130 (90/40)</td>
<td>Aberchirder &amp; District (bold denotes internet presence)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aberlady</td>
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<td>Abriachan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Achnacarry, Bunarkaig &amp; Clunes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Altna Sgitheach</td>
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<td>Alva Glen</td>
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<td>Alyth Hill</td>
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<td>Argyll green woodworkers</td>
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<td>Arran</td>
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<td>Assynt Foundation</td>
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<td>Badluarach &amp; Dumamuck</td>
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<td>Ballater Royal Deeside</td>
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<td>Borders Forest Trust</td>
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<td>Broadford &amp; Strath</td>
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<td>Burn O’ Fochabers</td>
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| B   | 3   | Aigas  
|     |     | Common Ground  
|     |     | Transition Stirling  |
| C   | 7   | Applecross  
|     |     | Beechcroft & Wheatcroft  
|     |     | Eadha  
|     |     | GalGael  
|     |     | Action for Change  
|     |     | Ross of Mull  
|     |     | Ullapool  |
| D   | 5   | Aberdeenshire Council  
|     |     | Angus Council  
|     |     | Clackmannanshire Council  
|     |     | Highland Council  
|     |     | Stirling Council  |
| E   | 3   | John Muir Trust  
|     |     | Paths for All  
|     |     | The Woodland Trust  |
| F   | 2   | Development Trusts Association Scotland  
|     |     | Community Land Scotland  |
| G   | 2   | Bushcraft Scotland  
|     |     | Green Aspirations  |