Mainstreaming the Alternative: The Lammas Eco-Village and the Governance of Sustainable Development in Wales

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By

Katherine Jones

Department of Geography and Earth Sciences
Aberystwyth University

2015
ABSTRACT

In August 2009 for the first time in Wales and indeed the UK, advance planning permission was granted for the development of an eco-village on 70 acres of wet, windy, former sheep field near the Preseli Hills in Pembrokeshire, West Wales, under a pioneering new policy called ‘Low Impact Development: Making a Positive Contribution’. Eco-villages and similar settlements can be found around the world, and Wales is no exception. Indeed, the area of Pembrokeshire in which the first Lammas eco-village, Tir-y-Gafel is now located, has a long history of attracting self-sufficiency efforts, ‘down-shifters’ and ‘ecological communities’. However, the emergence of Lammas as an organization, and its engagement with the planning process in the founding of the Tir-y-Gafel eco-village represents something new: a convergence of discourses, a jumping of scale, and the production of an in-between space, positioned on the cusp of ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’.

Following Meadowcroft (2007) the thesis looks at Lammas and the Low Impact Development (LID) movement as a process of governance for sustainable development in which the planning system and other state actors are involved but not the central forces. The research contributes to the academic literature on governance by overcoming the common treatment of the social as a backdrop to government-led processes (Newman 2005). An interpretive policy analysis approach, using Lammas as a case study, enables an exploration of strategies of engagement with formal government, and the roles played by knowledge, power and rationality within these processes (Flyvbjerg 1998). This provides a detailed analysis of the governance of sustainable development from a novel perspective.

The thesis breaks down the case study into themes to examine the complex processes, identities, and production of space (Lefebvre 1991) resulting from these interactions between LIDers and the state. Sustainable development as a discourse is seen as opening up a space of possibility, and the idea that rational argument is one of the ‘powers of the weak’ is explored in relation to engagement with the politics of sustainability. The thesis concludes by arguing that the engagement of the LID movement with the state challenges deep-seated assumptions about ways of knowing. This is highly significant, if sustainable development, as a particularly utopian way of thinking (Hedrén & Linnér 2009) is to penetrate the planning system.
Acknowledgements

As always with any piece of work of this magnitude, this was only possible, and is only meaningful, because of the involvement of others. This thesis would not exist if it had not been for everyone who agreed to be interviewed, sent me information via email, and welcomed me at meetings and events. There are too many names to list here, but to everyone involved I am so very grateful. I would particularly like to thank the residents of Tir-y-Gafel / Lammas who were so generous with their time, space, and thoughts, and from whom I learned so much.

There have been many academic influences on this work, starting with Prof. Martin Jones and all the lecturers on my MA course who provided a huge amount of inspiration and intellectual stimulation. I should especially acknowledge Chris Yeomans for introducing me to the concept of governance. At Cardiff University, besides the great friends I made, the wonderful staff including Huw Thomas, Neil Harris, and Peter Feindt and Jon Anderson, all in various ways influenced my thinking and provided invaluable insights into the UK planning system and planning theory.

The development of the thesis owes much to my supervisors Mark Whitehead and Rhys Jones who carefully read very messy draft chapters and gave thoughtful and insightful comments on them. Mark in particular who took me on half-way through the PhD has been incredibly supportive and positive throughout and helped me to find real joy in the process. The final version of this thesis has benefited greatly from the comments of my examiners Jenny Pickerill and Kevin Grove.

The intellectual atmosphere during my PhD was much enhanced by the reading groups I became part of and I owe much to the great people who were part of these. Hannah Hughes who got me involved in the Environmental Politics group and fostered many fascinating and cross-disciplinary discussions and events. And the Transitions reading group, Kelvin Mason, Carl Death, Sophie Wynne-Jones, Sam Saville, Yoann, Lotte and everyone else who came along and contributed to highly stimulating and thought-provoking discussions not only about concepts and theories, but about real life political and ethical concerns. Truly this is a group of ‘schole’.

Friends and colleagues in Aberystwyth, especially Aoileann Ní Mhurchú, Laura Jones, Sophie Wynne-Jones, and Justa Hopma helped keep me sane with games of badminton, pool, walks, cups of coffee, great conversations and huge amounts of inspiration. I am also grateful to my current colleagues at the University of the West of England and on the Towards Hydrocitizenship project for the lively and engaged academic and social atmosphere.

Last but by no means least, I would like to thank my mother and my husband Martin for immense support throughout.
Dedicated to the memory of my father John Phillips, who instilled in me a love of exploration and learning, and empathy and love for the human and natural world in all its wonderful diversity.
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Common Agricultural Policy</td>
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<td>CCW</td>
<td>Countryside Council for Wales</td>
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<td>DECC</td>
<td>Department for Energy and Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEFRA</td>
<td>Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESDP</td>
<td>European Spatial Development Plan</td>
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<td>JUDP</td>
<td>Joint Unitary Development Plan</td>
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<td>LCCC</td>
<td>Low Carbon Communities Challenge</td>
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<td>LDP</td>
<td>Local Development Plan</td>
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<td>LI</td>
<td>Low Impact</td>
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<td>LID</td>
<td>Low Impact Development</td>
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<td>LILI</td>
<td>Low Impact Living Initiatives</td>
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<td>LUC</td>
<td>Land Use Consultants</td>
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<td>OPD</td>
<td>One Planet Development</td>
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<td>PCC</td>
<td>Pembrokeshire County Council</td>
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<td>PCNPA</td>
<td>Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority</td>
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<td>PDT</td>
<td>Positive Development Trust</td>
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<td>PPW</td>
<td>Planning Policy Wales</td>
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<td>RAC</td>
<td>Reading Agricultural Consultants</td>
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<td>TAN</td>
<td>Technical Advice Note</td>
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<td>TLIO</td>
<td>The Land Is Ours</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDP</td>
<td>Unitary Development Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>WG</td>
<td>Welsh Government (formerly WAG – Welsh Assembly Government)</td>
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**PROLOGUE**

It is with some trepidation that I approach Lammas for the first time. I am driving a slightly rusted 1996 forest green Rover (does its age make it more acceptable?) up a dirt track that leads up a hill in a smooth S curve. The first sign of habitation comes in the form of a small, rectangular, lumpy, white building with grass growing on the roof. It looks like something out of a fairy tale; incredibly quaint and bearing little resemblance to any other home or indeed building I have yet encountered in person. My trepidation arises from not knowing what to expect. What will these people be like? Will they frown upon my having driven here? Should I have arrived in true eco-warrior style, gasping for air after some gruelling, hilly, long, bike ride up and down winding country lanes? Will my conventional clothing mark me out as not belonging and make people suspicious? I have been comforted by the extensive information online about the group, and the friendly faces shown in the series of videos about the project, but this is still very unfamiliar territory.

It’s a Saturday in the summertime, an open visiting day at Lammas and as I wait in the small car park I am gradually joined by nearly thirty others, all eager to hear about the project in detail, keenly asking questions as we visit the various households on the site. Subsequent open day visits are equally well attended, and the enthusiasm and positivity of guests and hosts is palpable. So many people eager to modify their lifestyles, to capture some of what the folks at Lammas are aiming for and achieving. For something so seemingly niche, there is a sense that a lot of people are ready to jump on board. The people I meet come from all walks of life: city-dwellers, business-owners, engineers and educators, retirees and young families. Many are young professionals working in the renewable energy industry, media, research, academia, engineering... There are also many who have been living ‘alternative’ lifestyles already, spending most of their time off-grid in vans or caravans, huts or benders, or boats, tucked away off the beaten track. It is surprising to discover how many people live this way.

In fact, tucked away in the hills and woodlands of Wales are numerous tiny dwellings, little cottages seemingly out of fairy tales, built of cob or straw bale, cordwood and mud daub. Some of these have been there for decades, harking back to times when
such styles of building and living were more common. Others are newer, and while drawing from those buildings of the past, have new elements and aspects – solar panels, micro-hydro, as well as their own websites! Pictures of weird and wonderful buildings and gatherings proliferate throughout the Internet reaching people far and wide.

For my part I have learned about Lammas via an academic email list, and Lammas’ own website. I’m coming from an academic world in which I’ve been immersed in thinking and talking about state theory, governance, sustainable development as a concept, and the planning system. For me, this alternative world is new, intriguing and strange. Yet, through my reading about policy and planning I have felt something missing, a real sense of what the alternatives might look and feel like – what they might smell and taste and sound like. The rhetoric of sustainable development permeates policy documents, and yet seems so far removed from these kinds of practices. I am curious about this potential meeting point between the mainstream planning system - now more than ever apparently concerned with sustainable development - and an ‘alternative’ world more often known for is counter-cultural characteristics, and environmentalist ethos based on lived experience, for decades.

Driving away from Lammas after my first visit I am filled with a sense of hope and possibility. In a world where we are constantly bombarded with news of environmental destruction, social injustice, violence, fear, greed and hate, the message being put out by Lammas is one of pragmatic hopefulness, possibility, and positivity. Not only had I escaped admonishment for driving, there was an enormous sense of welcome, of understanding of everyone’s limitations and embracing difference and diversity. The people I met were full of humour; they had an awareness of their own struggles and those of others, and a continual thoughtfulness and questioning about other ways of doing and being. It was not all sunshine. I was told of the conflicts, dark days, illness, armies of slugs, wet and windy fields that needed to be cultivated, struggles with planning, and all the social ‘messiness’ of trying to live with others and come to agreements collectively. In spite of all of this, indeed because of all of this, the project was the most human, honest, thing I had encountered in a long time.

I began my research into Lammas and the low impact development (LID) movement in late 2010. Much had gone before and much has come afterwards. I can, as always,
offer only a snapshot in a continuum of time and space and flows. Bringing my prior research into governance and planning, along with an open mind and a willingness to learn, what I have elected to focus on in this research is a meeting point – between ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’. In the thesis that follows I trace moments in time within this movement, embedding them in the theoretical, academic literature in an attempt to explore not only what can be learned about alternative living, but what can be learned about the processes by which we are aiming to move towards sustainable living as a collective society.
INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE LAMMAS ECO-VILLAGE

In August 2009 the Lammas eco-village became the first eco-village in the UK to gain prior planning permission for new development in an open countryside location. Permission was granted on appeal by a planning inspector employed at the Welsh Government level to decide on cases in which there is a dispute between applicants and the local planning authority. In the years leading up to the decision the Lammas group had submitted multiple applications to Pembrokeshire County Council for the Tir-y-Gafel eco-village, comprising over a thousand pages of documentation, including reports on geology, ecology, soil quality, water quality, local economy, and detailed plot management plans. The application had been modelled closely on a planning policy within the Pembrokeshire County Council’s Joint Unitary Development Plan (JUDP). Indeed, the policy in question, known as Policy 52: Low Impact Development Making a Positive Contribution (PCNPA & PCC 2006), had been the catalyst for the formation of the group called Lammas, whose founders had decided to design an eco-village and put through a planning application based closely around it.

That the application was so closely modelled on an existing policy, and that ultimately the planning inspector had decided in favour, raised questions about why the planning department of Pembrokeshire County Council was so resistant to grant permission\(^2\). Nevertheless, the fact that this policy came into being, and that Lammas applied and eventually won permission under it, was a big triumph for what might be termed an alternative movement or ‘sub-culture’ of low impact living. It represented a success to a movement which through a deliberate and sustained engagement had sought to make ‘mainstream’ what had hitherto been considered ‘alternative’.

Pembrokeshire, and West Wales more generally, has long contained pockets of people with strong interests in finding more ecologically-sensitive and socially egalitarian ways of living. Although their styles of living vary widely, they hold in common a

\(^1\) For the full text of Policy 52 see Appendix 1
\(^2\) The story of the interactions with the PCC planning department are chronicled by Paul Wimbush and available along with other low impact planning cases on the Lammas website (Wimbush 2009).
quest for something alternative. The geography of this phenomena is well-
documented; the Rough Guide to Wales notes that:

“Possibly more than any other part of Britain, Wales – the mid and west in
particular – has become something of a haven for those searching for
alternative lifestyles. Permanent testimonials to this include the Centre for
Alternative Technology (CAT), near Machynlleth, now one of the area’s most
visited attractions, and Tipi Valley, near Talley, a permanent community
living in Native American tepees who run a regular public sweat lodge. Both
institutions were founded in the idealistic mid-1970s and have prospered
through less happy times. For the most part, it’s been a fairly smooth process,
although antagonism between New Agers and local, established families does
break out on occasion, usually stoked by the sometimes liberal smugness of
some incomers.” (Parker & Whitfield 2000)

Besides the publicised tourism aspect of ‘alternative Wales’, much activity occurs
somewhat below the radar, as in the case for example, of the Brithdir Mawr ecological
community in Pembrokeshire National Park, which only received popular public
attention when its planning battles caused a flurry of media attention in the late 1990s.
Brithdir Mawr’s planning battle is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 as this
presents an important precursor to the Lammas project.

The history of self-sufficiency in Wales is a long and rather illustrious one. John
Seymour, author of the Fat of the Land (Seymour 1962) and several books on self-
sufficiency including self-sufficiency on a small acreage (5 acres), made his home in
Pembrokeshire not far from the current Lammas village and Brithdir Mawr. He lived
in the area until his death in 2004, and gave talks and tours to those interested in self-
sufficiency and downshifting. Seymour’s writings were based on his own idealistic
and practical experiences in self-sufficiency and keeping a smallholding, and such
ideas have continued to inspire generations since. In fact, the smallholding dream has
deep roots in the British psyche, representing for many a welcome escape from the
rat-race of the city, and a return to, or movement towards a new and more wholesome
lifestyle, a notion that is visible in a diverse range of popular cultural products which
includes the 1980s TV comedy The Good Life, and later, a number of episodes of
Grand Designs.

West Wales has arguably long had woven into its social and cultural fabric elements
of an alternative way of living and being, and it was from this cultural corner that the
battle for the recognition of low impact development and low impact living as a
legitimate concern emerged. While this sub-cultural phenomenon is interesting in and of itself, it is rather the interactions between this group and the mainstream context, and in particular the institutions in which it is embedded and with which it has chosen to engage, that is the point of departure for this research. This is an engagement that invokes the politics of governance and sustainable development. The deliberate attempts by Lammas to present the alternative to the mainstream, and to gain recognition in the mainstream, are the therefore the main focus of this research. This interesting convergence between mainstream discourses of sustainable development and governance, and the activities of groups and individuals previously looked at as ‘countercultural’, subversive or unwilling to engage with the mainstream provides a fruitful avenue for analysis (Halfacree 2006).

As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, the development of low impact development (LID) as a concept specifically related to the planning system. As will be argued later in Chapter 5, the development of this concept was at least in part responsible for the development of Policy 52 in Pembrokeshire in July 2006 as it provided a name for a phenomena that had long been difficult to deal with in ‘representations of space’ (Lefebvre 1991). The full text of Policy 52: Low Impact Development: Making a Positive Contribution is reproduced in Appendix 1 and makes for fascinating reading. The main points are included below:

“Low impact development that makes a positive contribution will only be permitted where:

i) the proposal will make a positive environmental, social and/or economic contribution with public benefit; and
ii) all activities and structures on site have low impact in terms of the environment and use of resources; and
iii) opportunities to reuse buildings which are available in the proposal’s area of operation have been investigated and shown to be impracticable; and
iv) the development is well integrated into the landscape and does not have adverse visual effects; and
v) the proposal requires a countryside location and is tied directly to the land on which it is located, and involves agriculture, forestry or horticulture; and
vi) the proposal will provide sufficient livelihood for and substantially meet the needs of residents on the site; and
vii) the number of adult residents should be directly related to the functional requirements of the enterprise; and

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viii) in the event of the development involving members of more than one family, the proposal will be managed and controlled by a trust, co-operative or other similar mechanism in which the occupiers have an interest.” (PCNPA & PCC 2006, p.66)

This new policy on LID was accompanied by a dedicated document of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). Among other things, the SPG set out, quite casually, that applications should include a comprehensive management plan that would include, among other things: “A calculation of the percentage of household needs that will be met through land based activities. This must be at least 75%.” (PCNPA 2006). How 75% of basic household needs came to be decided as the measurement or threshold of LID is a bit of a mystery. However the reasoning was around justification of an exception to the usual ways of handling development in the open countryside.

The guidance also included requirements for detailed plans, maps, scale drawings, a management plan, and all manner of other information. In addition, it came with conditions that effectively tied the dwelling to the land-based activity, and a requirement for ongoing monitoring. These aspects of the plan will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

The prospect of navigating such onerous requirements to put through an application on the basis of this policy may not be an inviting one to most people. However, for a small group of individuals, this was a lucky break they had been waiting for.

The legend of Lammas is thus: at a small festival in Wales known as Dance Camp Wales, a small group of people with experience of living in low impact and ecological communities discussed the fact that a policy for low impact development in the countryside was emerging in Pembrokeshire County Council planning policy, and came up with the idea of an eco-village, the goal being to bring alternative living into the wider world, to open up the alternative to the mainstream. In his book, *The Birth of an Ecovillage: Adventures in an Alternative World*, Paul Wimbush, one of the founding members recounts the moment:

“I had discussed the prospect of a new ecovillage project with friends both at Tipi Valley and at Brithdir Mawr3, wondering if there was a way in which the

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3 Tipi Valley and Brithdir Mawr are both alternative communities in Wales that date back to the countercultural movements of the 1970s. The former is a nomadic, anarchist community located on a 200 acre farm, continually moving in order to evade planning. The latter is mainly contained within
concept might be opened up to the mainstream and legitimately explored. For many years these ideas lay dormant. Then on August 1st, 2005, whilst working as a circle-dance musician at Dance Camp Wales, a small group of us gathered around a fire to talk once again about the possibility of creating a new ecovillage. We talked long into the night and there was an edge of excitement and anticipation to that gathering which hinted at what was to come. It was there and then, under the summer stars, that the seed of Lammas was planted. Three of us in particular felt a new passion rise. Tone was inspired by news of an emerging new low-impact policy in Pembrokeshire. Larch, a lean young academic whom I knew from his visits to Brithdir Mawr, was keen to be an active part of a groundbreaking sustainability initiative, and in that moment I had found my path. A spark took hold that evening and blossomed into flame.

The project’s name refers to that initial August 1st meeting. This date is the calendar equivalent of the Celtic harvest festival, Lughnasad or Lammas, which was an ancient celebration of the Sun God Lugh and the first grain harvest. Lammas translates literally from old English as first loaf.” (Wimbush 2012, p.87)

It took another year for the policy to be published, but when it was, a small group of people were ready for it. Tony Wrench and Larch Maxey had by this point reduced their involvement. Tony was exhausted from fighting a battle with the National Park over his roundhouse (discussed in Chapter 4), and Larch had other projects underway. With Paul leading the effort, a diverse group formed and coalesced around the idea of Lammas, and things started to take shape. A web-savvy friend was also on board early on in the project, and helped to set up the Lammas website. Lammas quickly became a brand, with a logo, an ethos and an accessible and informative website. A campaign of spreading the word started, shareholders were involved, and advertisements in papers sought suitable land. Su, owner of the Pont-y-Gafel farm described to me how she saw in the newspaper an ad seeking 200 acres for the development of an eco-village. She had 200 acres of land that she wanted to sell, and the serendipity of the coincidence led her to feel it was a gift from God.

Figure 1 shows the location of Pont-y-Gafel farm and Lammas on a map (indicated by the black dot). The area indicated in green is Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The eco-village is located outside of its boundary, within the planning jurisdiction of Pembrokeshire County Council. Figure 2 is a satellite image of the area. It shows how this is, for the most part, a rural landscape comprised mainly of farmland. The eco-

existing farm buildings, although has involved some new building which will be discussed in more detail in the empirical chapters as this has had a significant impact upon planning.
village (indicated by the white dot in Figure 2) is however within a short walking distance of the village of Glandwr, which recently saw the closure of its school, post office and only shop. The injection of new people into the area could diversify the population and result in a re-introduction of some social and service activities.

Figure 1: Location of Lammas Eco-village (Source: Bing Maps)

Figure 2: Satellite image of area around Lammas (Source: Bing Maps)
Lammas purchased substantially less land than had been intended, for a variety of reasons. The seventy acres of land purchased on a freehold basis was subsequently parcelled off and sold as leasehold to the nine households who would come to live at Tir-y-Gafel, with Lammas the organization retaining the freehold.

This process, summarised here in a short paragraph, was in fact one of immense effort and skill on the part of those involved. Reams of documents were produced, incorporating the views of multitudes of expert witnesses. Public engagement events were held in which Glandwr residents could voice their concerns to the Lammas group, academics conducted research into the likely impacts of the project on the surrounding area, experts were consulted on the legal and financial arrangements, more experts were brought in to assess the land and help in the decision-making of how to parcel it off, and individual households involved in the planning application process each produced detailed business plans of how they would earn a living from their land-based activities.

To begin the story of Lammas here, however, is to do some injustice to its history. To Paul Wimbush, as noted in his book *The Birth of an Ecovillage* (Wimbush 2012), all of his life experiences up to the inception of Lammas had led to this moment. As a student in Cardiff, Paul studied architecture, but soon abandoned life in the city to live in a very radical and anarchistic community known as Tipi Valley, in Carmarthenshire. From there, learning new skills and contemplating aspects of communal life, Paul found himself experiencing life in several other communities. At Brithdir Mawr in Pembrokeshire, an ecological community based in a number of farm buildings, Paul experienced communal working and decision-making and learned many new skills of living off the land. In Holtsfield in the Gower, he made a home with his wife Hoppi, gutting a run-down shack and turning it into a functioning house with a composting toilet. He also learned here about the clashes between landlords and residents in one of the few remnants of a wider movement described by Hardy and Ward (2004).

Tony Wrench, another of the founders, whose battle with PCNPA planning department over his roundhouse was a catalyst for the development of Policy 52, among other things, describes his lifestyle as ‘a lifelong experiment in learning to live sustainably in the Welsh countryside’. To that end, his participation in Brithdir Mawr,
and his battle with the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park planning authority for permission to be able to live in his low-impact roundhouse on the Brithdir Mawr farm were matters of principle. In his book *Building a Low Impact Roundhouse* (2007) Wrench describes how as a young man working for the council, he had been tasked with reviewing performance. In a philosophical turn that could be likened to the struggles of Robert Pirsig in *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (Pirsig 1999) when confronted with the problem of assessing ‘quality’, Wrench decided that his occupation made little sense, and he embarked on a journey in learning how to live a good life according to his own principles. To this end, his travels took him to many different communities, in the UK and in other parts of Europe. His experiences with communal living, living lightly, and making a living from the land make him something of a sage or an elder in the alternative network. Besides roundhouses, he is renowned for his beautiful hand-turned wood bowls, and his exquisite wines made from the fruits and flowers grown or harvested by himself and his partner Jane Faith. The pair are also keen musicians, together providing the music and instruction for Ceilidhs and playing in bands together and separately. Music, wine and beautiful things are by no means incidental to creating a sense of community, a point which has been picked up in another recent PhD thesis with some focus on Lammas (Lee 2013).

Larch Maxey, at the time an academic at Swansea University, was also heavily involved at the start. In describing how he first became interested in alternative communities however, he traced this back to the influence of his Masters dissertation supervisor and his participation in a road protest, which involved the long-term occupation of a proposed road site. Places and spaces emerge as significant in numerous ways throughout this story, from the free-thinking space of Dance Camp for Wimbush, to the remnants of a peoples’ land movement at Holtsfield, incidentally a place where Jane Davidson, a Welsh Government Assembly member also spent time with her family on holidays. Davidson’s appreciation of the simple lifestyle at Holtsfield, and her interactions with Larch Maxey and others, contributed to her championing of the Low Impact Development movement at the Welsh Government level.

The Lammas project would never have happened had it not been for the willingness of a small number of people to take a leap of faith and to go forward in spite of many challenges along the way. The strength to go on was no doubt aided by strong support
network. Within this network, the presence of people who were engaged, in their careers and expertise, with characteristic mainstream aspects of life was clearly an asset.

A second key point about the inception and ultimate success of the Lammas project is about the ability of its proponents to successfully harness and engage with processes of knowledge production. Having researchers and academics on board from an early stage allowed the production of knowledge that was relevant and focused on the project and its aims. This is a key point as it draws attention to the way in which knowledge is produced in certain settings. Within the planning system for example, the normal practice is to call upon consultancies to provide the ‘evidence’ required to back up policies. In this instance, where an imaginative understanding of ‘low impact development’ policy was required, consultancies and local planning authorities were not particularly well-equipped to deal with the challenge of producing appropriate knowledge. Moreover, the knowledge that they were capable of producing was restricted by the framing of that knowledge, excluding other information and understanding from the process by virtue of the parameters laid out. It is these issues that form the main concern of this thesis, which begins with Lammas as a case study and broadens out to explore the role and expression of politics, power, knowledge and ideology in the wider movement and the interface with a planning system and the wider mainstream context.

1.2 POSITIONING LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT

Low impact living has been a practice amongst segments of the population for as long as people have been alive on the planet, and continues to be a way of life for many people around the world – whether by necessity or by choice. For many, living a low impact lifestyle is necessary due to limited access to resources, and it is this limitation which ensures that consumption remains low or confined to the meeting of basic needs by default. In its more recent incarnation as a practice and discourse in affluent societies where resources are abundant, it can be compared to the ‘voluntary simplicity’ movement (Elgin 2010) in being about a way of life that is ‘outwardly simple, inwardly rich’. In more academic terms, it can be called ‘post-materialism’ (Cotgrove & Duff 1981; Seyfang & Smith 2007). Essentially it entails people
consuming less and living more simply than they need to, based on the idea that it is better for the planet, better for other people and better for the self to live this way.

Low impact development (LID) is a concept that was coined by Simon Fairlie (Fairlie 2009b; Pickerill & Maxey 2009b) in 1996 with the aim of integrating an understanding of low impact living into the British planning system. This intervention was motivated by Fairlie’s own experiences of trying to live in a low impact, ecological community called Tinker’s Bubble in Somerset, and deal with a planning system that had no place in it for understanding what the community’s inhabitants were trying to do. In the first edition of his book he defined LID as ‘development that through its low negative environmental impact either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality.’ In the subsequent edition, published in 2009, he refined this definition: ‘LID is development which, by virtue of its low or benign environmental impact, may be allowed in locations where conventional development is not permitted’ (Fairlie 2009b). This amendment refined the definition so that it was more in line with the possibilities of the planning system. There is nothing in the planning system for example that would prevent the development of a LID on a ‘brownfield’ site in an urban location. However, such land is likely to be expensive, or unavailable due to its ownership by property developers. People living low impact lifestyles in urban areas are more likely to live in existing buildings, and in co-housing arrangements (Marckmann et al. 2012).

The concept of LID was therefore necessitated by a specific expression of low impact living of which it is but one. This was the type of LI that appealed to those who wanted to live in a rural area due to its affordability, or more often, a combination of affordability and desire for a smallholding in a rural setting. Additionally, this particular expression of low impact living often involved or necessitated the building of new structures in some shape or form. If there were no new buildings, this would not be a planning issue at all.

In his book, in which he set out the original definition of LID4, Fairlie muses on the peculiar situation that has resulted in a disconnection between the waves of

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4 It is worth noting that low impact development in a North American concept means something different and is specifically about developments with engineering solutions to handle stormwater runoff. In the UK context, it was Fairlie’s book, originally published in
environmental movements and the planning system, which he considers to be at least in part due to the impenetrability of the planning system. As part of this impenetrability he observes the following about planners. Planners, he states:

“sense that they are regarded as a race apart by more normal mortals: a queer grey-suited clique, living in its own world, something of a cross between policemen and trainspotters” (Fairlie 2009b, p.ix).

This perception of planners, perhaps as part of a system that is shrouded in a certain degree of mystery brought about by jargon-laden language and intricate systems of operating (which may or may not be comprehensible to outsiders), may, according to Fairlie be part of the reason why the environmental movement in Britain has tended to pay little attention to the planning system. Although the current rhetoric of planning is rife with the term ‘sustainability’ which is placed at the core of policy documents at the UK level, the planning system seems to have been slow in adopting explicitly environmental aims.

Fairlie’s concerns, that planning and planners are both central to environmental goals, and simultaneously both ill-equipped and lacking the impetus to take such concerns forward in practice, is one which is echoed by leading academics in the field of planning (Healey & Shaw 1993). In theory as well as in practice, sustainable development seems to be being taken up in broad terms at strategic ‘regional’ levels, including Wales as a region (Haughton et al. 2008; Haughton & Counsell 2004; Dühr 2005). Meanwhile, local authority planning seems to be, as Healey warned in 1993, becoming increasingly irrelevant in relation to the environmental agenda and sustainable development due to a failure to meet the challenge of adapting to the environmental agenda. With relation to this, Healey warned that:-

“failure [of the planning system to rise to the challenge of the environmental agenda] would [not only be a cost to the environmental agenda itself, but would also] “reduce the opportunity for democratic leverage on environmental policy agendas, given the importance of the planning system as an arena for public involvement in policy formulation and implementation” (Healey & Shaw 1993, p.769)

Two decades later the planning system as a whole is hardly leading the way in terms of sustainable development and concern with the environment. Yet there is a degree to which particular forms of democratic engagement in the case of LID are challenging

1996, and the associated movement around it that gave rise to the particular understanding of low impact development that is being discussed here.
the planning system to engage with sustainable development as a concept in a political way.

LID has therefore opened up a space politically for discussion. Since the publication of Fairlie’s book, as well as the ongoing activities of Chapter 7, The Land is Ours, the publication of Land Magazine and various engagements with the planning system, LID has begun to find its way into both policy and academic discourse. Pickerill and Maxey have led the way in terms of academic writings specifically about LID in geography (Pickerill & Maxey 2009a; Pickerill & Maxey 2009b), however Fairlie’s conceptualisation has also emerged in work that looks more broadly at alternative models of sustainable housing (Barton 1998), and the alternative rural (Halfacree 2007; Halfacree 2011; Scott 2001).

It is fair to say that since the publication of *Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside* (Fairlie & TLIO 1996), LID has begun to take on a life of its own and find its way both into academic and policy lexicon – a fact which is central to this research. The book, the associated movement, and importantly the term, brought into being a new way of discussing activities which were already taking place. Low impact development as a concept gave these activities a sense of identity and focused in particular on questions of sustainability and governance, particularly in the form of the planning system. With the exception of Scott (2001), the academic work in this area has not engaged in any depth with the particular issues around planning that are pertinent to low impact development. In the context of Wales where sustainability is enshrined in legislation by the devolved Welsh Government (Government of Wales 2006), the interactions between advocates of low impact development and institutions of the state are potentially highly significant in terms of governance for sustainable development, yet are not being studied in any detail.

Low impact development as an activity, or related concepts and practices such as eco-villages (Dawson 2006), community building and housing (Seyfang 2010) or community energy (Hargreaves et al. 2013) are talked about in relation to sustainability and sustainability transitions, often under the heading of ‘grassroots innovations’ (Seyfang & Haxeltine 2012; Seyfang & Smith 2007). In these literatures, the LID or aspect of LID in question is seen as a ‘niche’ innovation which could potentially be transmitted or translated into ‘regime’ change (Kemp et al. 1998; Grin
et al. 2010; Geels 2010; Geels 2014). However, as Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012) point out, the transitions literature has paid a great deal of attention to the technological aspects of transformation but less attention to the social aspects.

Seyfang and Smith’s work begins to address this gap through focusing on grassroots innovations and the translation of green niche ideas (‘innovations’) into the mainstream (Seyfang & Smith 2007; Smith 2007). Yet it could be argued that in spite of having reached the conclusion that there is something very different about the way that the ‘niches’ operate in comparison to the mainstream, this work does not necessarily consider the possibility that there are many complexities to that context that possibly preclude even the kind of transition they suggest. The strategic niche management literature understands ‘niches’ in a particular way. Unlike the idea of a niche in ecology, i.e. as spaces into which a particular species fits, or in the business sense of having a specialist market and product for that market, the way ‘niches’ are used by Seyfang et al. implies that they need to be protected from market forces in order to thrive. A second assumption is that if protected, the ideas from these niches can be somehow translated into the mainstream through some process of managerialism.

If these two assumptions are considered together, we find that the mainstream is initially considered as a force that would destroy niches if they were left to their own devices, i.e. niches are in need of protection from the regime. Simultaneously however, the mainstream regime is seen as a forum into which the niche ideas could be translated and used. Lacking from these conceptualisations is a strong critique of the mainstream political and economic system. For example, while there is recognition that small-scale eco-building is very different from green building as it is expressed in the mainstream building industry (Seyfang 2010, p.7625), this hasn’t spurred the authors to critique the systematic issues that lead to and perpetuate this difference, and this lack of critical engagement with the context results in an over-simplified model of transitions.

Even at a technological level, the translation of ideas from green niches into wider society and politics is not nearly as clear-cut as might be assumed. Lovell (2007) finds that in spite of efforts to increase the transfer of ideas from niches into government policy, the uptake of government-led eco-housing initiatives in the UK since the
1990s has been very poor. Likewise, Williams & Dair (2007) find a lack of willingness among private sector developers to take up eco-building methods. Rydin, in a book on governing sustainable development suggests that regulation is one means of overcoming this reluctance (Rydin 2010). However, these studies suggest that there is more to transitioning to sustainable development than the simple transmission of technological solutions or ideas.

At a building and housing level, the sustainability of even ‘green’ developments such as the Beddington Zero project (Chance 2009) are influenced by the lifestyles of their occupants (Broer 2012; Hendrickson & Roseland 2010). Such findings suggest the importance of considering the potential for sustainable living and housing to emerge from the lifestyles of individuals, rather than necessarily through a top-down approach or through managing niches.

A more deep-rooted critique of the strategic niche management literature comes from Shove and Walker (Shove & Walker 2007). These authors point to the lack of consideration of the everyday politics in the literature with this kind of managerialist slant. They argue that:

“There is a politics to the very processes of abstraction involved in defining something to manage (the ‘it’, or system) and to the implication that there are managers of the ‘it’ who sit outside ‘its’ boundaries and who can apply management tools including levers, niche-building machinery, and engineering devices from a privileged, knowledgeable and above all, external position. The process of abstracting the ‘it’ in question – the policy, the goal, the system – from its historical and contemporary environment is not just a technical matter of analysis but a political, constructed and potentially contested exercise in problem formulation.” (Shove & Walker 2007, p.765)

Simply defining low impact development as a kind of niche activity from which translation into the mainstream can be done without a detailed exploration of the context suggests a technocratic way of looking at the issue. The authors instead call for careful consideration of the politics around such abstraction as well as the visions of transition being drawn on and used.

Shove and Walker’s critique is significant in drawing out the technical way in which the concept of sustainability is dealt with in the transition management literatures:

“Sustainability is tacitly defined as a matter of resource management, efficiency and ecological modernisation and, again by implication, transitions in that direction require the transformation of current systems of provision.
There are three points to notice about this orientation. First, and for all the talk of socio-technical co-evolution, there is almost no reference to the ways of living or to the patterns of demand implied in what remain largely technological templates for the future. Second, and because large-scale technological examples command so much attention, commentators take it for granted that policy and corporate actors are the key players – even if the involvement of other groups and interests is vital... Third, the transition management literature consequently draws upon a narrow (perhaps necessarily narrow) slice of what is in fact a much wider debate about social systemic change.” (Shove & Walker 2007, p.768)

This critique draws attention to the enormous importance of context, politics, power and knowledge. Implicit in the strategic management literature is the idea that there is a way to firstly define a niche and then to translate it from one context to another, something that as Shove has argued previously (1998) is already a highly problematic notion. The second point about scale and technological examples is indicative of the limited and selective attention being paid to practices such as low impact development. Given that LID is a holistic concept involving particular ways of living, and that this is something that has been brought into the sustainability discussion from people outside of the policy and corporate institutions, suggests that it is a different possibility for looking at sustainability transitions. One which, with a couple of notable exceptions (Pickerill & Maxey 2009a) is not being looked at in any depth in geography.

The importance of context mentioned by Shove & Walker (2007) extends into all scales of life. At the most intimate scale, there are implications for the lived experience of the home and body (Shove & Walker 2010; Shove 2003). At the scales of political activity, there are implications in terms of the broad position of the state, sometimes described as the ‘neoliberal state’ (Brenner & Theodore 2002; Jessop 2002) as well as the significance of a situation of multi-level governance with institutions at multiple scales – supra-national as well as sub-national – involved in governance (Bache 2004). As Cowell and Owens have pointed out in reference to the urban scale there is also the issue of a politics embedded within institutions which is often itself counter to sustainability objectives (Cowell & Owens 2006), just as other theorists have pointed out how urban planning can enact policies that are counter to social justice (Harvey 2000). In short, in considering the politics of sustainability arising from ‘radical’, ‘alternative’ or ‘grassroots’, it is necessary to be aware of the
complexities of the governance environments in which such activities and arguments are taking place. Moreover, a consideration of scale should not assume a linearity from small-scale or niche into mainstream but rather should examine how the various scales and networks of governance interact with each other.

The above considerations around scale draw attention to the fact that the ‘state’, whether it is being conceived as neoliberal or otherwise, is not uniform and monolithic. At every scale of politics there are multiple types of institution with different cultures, and indeed many different people and positions. Amidst this, there are also democratic possibilities – beyond voting – contained within the complex governing environment of the state (Cowell & Owens 2006). Looking at the state as an assemblage of people and cultures (Bevir & Rhodes 2010) helps in understanding how even ostensibly politically-supported decisions may play out differently in actual practice. Moreover, in spite of the overall neoliberal agenda of modern capitalist states, there are sometimes conditions and individuals within state institutions that provide the space and possibility for doing things differently. In such an environment, there is a possibility that ‘niche’ innovations and initiatives could see political support, if only through the pressure on the state coming from enhanced democratic participation and involvement. Such political support could potentially entail something of a transition or regime change. As Shove and Walker (2007) point out however, rather than assuming that socio-technical transformations could be managed by expert technical managers in a kind of apolitical fashion, there is a necessity to look in detail at the historical and contemporary contexts and politics of any such potential transition.

However, the potential uptake of green niche ideas by institutions of the state comes with another problem. As Swyngedouw has argued with relation to climate change discourse (Swyngedouw 2010), the actions taken by the state in order to reduce people’s carbon emissions for example can be seen as controlling and manipulative, and be perceived as shutting down the possibility for dissent. Given this possibility, the issue of translation of green ideas from a niche into a mainstream context becomes more problematic.

Behaviour is an integral part of the sustainability of green niche developments, and the translation of these into a mainstream context requires the willingness of
participants. The issue therefore is not simply one of finding a way to get volume builders to use straw bale insulation, but also one of discovering what inspires people socially to change. Importantly, the source of the initiative for change, and the manner in which that initiative is delivered is highly significant. If it is presented to the public as inevitable and being imposed on them by the state, people are likely to feel both patronized and disempowered, and therefore be reluctant to comply (Newman 2005, p.13). This calls into question how and whether green niche activities and behaviour could and should be translated into a mainstream context, or at least whether such a transition would be most effectively initiated from the powerful position of the state.

It follows that there is a possibility that the very alternative spaces such as newly forming eco-villages, may in fact represent a different sort of opportunity for the spreading of pro-environmental behaviours at least in part due to the fact that they are not government initiatives. In this sense, rather than the slow uptake of eco-building policies within government or to volume housebuilders, the societal transformation could emerge and spread outside of the formal system of governing and change government policy through societal pressure on the political system. This represents something of an alteration of the kind of strategic niche management suggested by Seyfang\(^5\), suggesting instead that if any intervention is to be taken, it should be in the form of removing systematic barriers to alternative or niche projects and allowing them to take hold naturally, rather than attempting to harness their power via mainstream politics or business. This is a different suggestion to the protection of conditions that allow niches to flourish, though related. In this case, the change implies systemic change – a challenge to the system – rather than the temporary maintenance of conditions.

In taking up Maxey and Pickerill’s invitation to look at actually existing sustainabilities, consider radial solutions, and be more explicitly political, this review sets the basis for a political analysis of LID in a specific context that does not draw solely on social movements literatures but rather looks at the case study in the context of the literatures on governance, sustainable development, and planning. The reviewed literature straddles the disciplines of geography and planning and draws

\(^5\) Although note most recent work with Tom Hargreaves, Sabine Hieschler and Adrian Smith (Hargreaves et al. 2013) which recognises that the transitions management literature fails to recognise the importance of the complex influences of context on transitions from niche to regime.
from these as well as related disciplines (including sociology and political theory) to explore how low impact development can be considered as part of a transition towards sustainable development and importantly, considered through the lens of ‘governance’. This project therefore aims to address a gap in the literature pertaining to the governance of sustainable development, particularly in the context of planning, as it is applied to small-scale activities and also rural activities. The neglect of these issues both academically and in policy contexts is part of an on-going suppression or omission of such activities from more mainstream acceptance and support. Therefore by examining in detail the interactions and context in which such an activity is placed, the research aims to address such a gap, bringing together somewhat diverse literatures in the process, and opening up avenues for further exploration into this important topic.

1.3 Research Framing and Questions

In the process of convergence between the mainstream and the alternative, many norms and ideas are challenged, ideas of class, wealth and relation to the labour market, ideas of rural and urban space, of modes of resistance to exploitative corporate and governmental aims, of democratic participation, of independence, community and belonging, to name but a few. A single case study therefore provides a microcosmic window through which to view a whole variety of societal processes. It is only by questioning and challenging norms that those norms become contentious and in need of articulation. Here, the production of new spaces represents a gentle but firm pressure upon a system resistant to change. The academic project here is to unfurl the many layers of process and meaning contained within a single site and to read the implications of the interactions that take place within it to discover what can be learned and what can be transferred, translated, into other spaces and times.

Located as it is at a point of convergence between mainstream and radical lifestyles, Lammas provides an example of a way of living that aims to entice more people to take the step in this direction, based on the understanding that people will be attracted to something appealing and be motivated by the benefits, rather than respond to change imposed from above, or alter behaviour based on feelings of guilt and self-punishment. Engaging with Lammas is seen or presented as an exploration into the ‘conditions of possibility’ (Ranciere 2003). Engaging with Lammas also brings to the
fore questions of personal response in relation to a move towards more sustainable living, an issue which has been grappled with in studies of ‘environmentalists’ (Anderson 2011; Anderson 2010; Pickerill & Chatterton 2006; Chatterton 2006). Accordingly, the case study has potential implications in the arguments surrounding behaviour change towards ‘pro-environmental’ behaviours, a topic which will be returned to in the conclusion, as suggestions for further research.

My examination of Lammas seeks to explore the role of such initiatives in the creation of a space for sub-political action with potential wider- (and/or higher-) reaching consequences. As the interaction between governmental actors and bodies, and the ‘radical alternative’ evolves, questions of governance and democracy are brought to the fore. Ultimately, if we wish to move to more sustainable patterns of living, such initiatives need to be supported, so that their status can move from niche (Seyfang 2010) to regime.

But how and in what form should support come? Certainly the change in planning policy in Pembrokeshire which resulted in a policy called Low Impact Development: Making a Positive Contribution was beneficial, yet could also be seen as a form of state control and a kind of co-optation of a critical political element into the folds of regulation by the state. Whose paradigm was actually being shifted? In the thesis that follows I attempt to engage with some of these questions, using the case study as a means of examining a moment in the governance of sustainable development, and also as a moment of interaction between the alternative and the mainstream.

The thesis follows a process of ‘interpretive policy analysis’ detailed further in the methodology chapter. As such it is inductive, interpretative and focused on hermeneutic or meaning-making processes. The research process began not with a theoretical framework but with quite open questions, in order to allow the important aspects of the case to emerge from the investigations. The research questions below however gave shape to the investigations.

**Research questions:**

1. What does Lammas represent in terms of the transition to more sustainable living?
   
   a. What is it about Lammas that is positive in this regard?
b. What are the barriers faced by people interested in enacting similar projects?

c. Is there a possibility that more, similar projects would emerge if barriers were removed?

d. What would be the implications of this, if so?

e. Are there other possible implications of the Lammas project, even if it does not result in more eco-villages?

2. How could policy, policy-makers and planners be equipped to be able to make space for such projects?

   a. What kind of rethinking – of current policy, of current institutional organization, of historical and conceptual and economic evaluations of space and the human relation to it – is required in order for this to take place?

   b. How could such a rethinking be enabled? Assuming that this would be a positive and beneficial move towards sustainability?

3. What can be learned from the interactions between advocates of alternative lifestyles and the governmental institutions that administer land use planning?

   a. What do these interactions tell us about communication between people and the state?

   b. What are the implications for democracy?

The original contribution made through this research comes in the form of a detailed, contextual examination of a process of governance for sustainable development. In doing so it engages with a number of academic debates. Theories and understandings of governance are looked at in an unusual way, beginning not with a state-initiated process, but with a grassroots group intent on engaging with the discourses and even rationality of government. Rather than viewing it as a niche project from which ideas can be taken, it sees it and those involved as active agents of change, initiating and engaging in dialogue with the state about how to govern for sustainable development.

Similar countercultural movements have been viewed in previous works as having either an antagonistic or ambivalent relationship with the state. This project is interesting because it opened up the possibility of a different kind of relationship, one that suggested an engagement with governance. The space provided by the vague discourse of sustainable development is used in a productive way by engaging in a
process of rational argument, in essence, learning the language of the state in order to enhance the possibilities of participation. In the process of doing so, new ways of knowing and of being are introduced to state actors in bureaucratic settings. The analysis of this interaction leads to conclusions relating to the lack of possibilities for thinking of sustainable development through the planning system, due to constraints on ways of knowing and being in the bureaucratic system.
1.4 Structure of the Thesis

While the essential geographical literatures in which this project are embedded have already been introduced, Chapter 2 expands upon these and takes up the theoretical underpinnings in which the research is embedded. The idea of ‘governance for sustainable development’ is explored through a wide-ranging consideration of materials from geography, politics, sociology and planning. The focus here is on how the governance of sustainable development impacts upon and is interpreted and enacted through planning. The aim is to question whether, within that context, governance for sustainable development is demonstrative of a postpolitical state (Swyngedouw 2009a; Swyngedouw 2005) or whether the politics of governance for sustainable development can be regarded as a contentious politics that opens up space for dissensus and disagreement.

The chapter begins with theories of governance, then approaches the relationship between governance and sustainable development, before taking these ideas into planning. Yvonne Rydin’s book on the governance of sustainable development through planning (Rydin 2010) is instrumental in drawing attention to the role of knowledge – a concept which is key in this thesis and will form much of the basis for analytical discussion in Chapters 5 and 6. The chapter also considers, both in relation knowledge and more generally, how the idea of ‘power’ has been conceptualised in geography and how this impacts upon the case study research. The notion that power may be coercive or facilitative, hierarchical and institutional, or associational is explored here, forming the basis for empirically-informed arguments made in the analytical chapters.

Chapter 3 introduces the analytical framework used to challenge the ways in which the role of small-scale, grassroots projects in the governance of sustainable development have heretofore been considered in the academic literature. The analytical framework is built upon Henri Lefebvre’s Production of Space (Lefebvre 1991) model and an understanding of dialectics from David Harvey (Harvey 1996a). Through this lens consideration is given to the dialectical processes through which space is produced through representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practice. Having explored Keith Halfacree’s use of this model in understanding
the ‘radical rural’ (Halfacree 2007) this research attempts to pick up this challenge from a different angle, incorporating as much as possible, the politics of contestation found in the various dialogues, relationships practices involved in this case study. Having introduced the analytical framework, the chapter then goes on to expand on the means by which information and knowledge of the case study was gathered and how it was analysed.

Three analytical chapters based on the empirical information follow, each focused on a particular aspect or understanding of the case study. The first of these, Chapter 4, focuses on the ‘politics, policies, governance’. This chapter takes challenges the notion of the postpolitical introduced in Chapter 2 by unpicking the dynamic, varied and often fluid ways in which the political and the ‘police’ order, or policy world, overlap and intersect. Using specific examples of moments, interactions, conflict and dissensus, the chapter makes the argument that ‘sustainable development’ as a discourse, far from providing a hegemonic approach, opens up the possibility for political action. The chapter also however draws attention to tensions inevitably involved in governance situations – suggesting that in fact the ‘consensual’ populism suggested by Swyngedouw is a fiction, or evident only in particular governance situations. This is particularly the case in projects initiated and led by powerful state actors, and in which governance is enacted in the shadow of hierarchy (Jessop 2003; Whitehead 2003). The chapter also considers in detail matters of scale as they relate to governance. It explores the notion of self-governance and processes of ‘consensus’ governance within small community settings, finding that even on very small scales, there is a politics rife with dissensus, or in Swyngedouw and Ranciere’s words perhaps, a ‘real’ politics occurring. The chapter suggests the possibilities for learning from tensions in governance at the small-scale – lessons which are applicable at other scales.

Chapter 5 picks up on another aspect of governance, concerning knowledge and rationality. This chapter again uses moments or interactions – dialectical processes – to dissect the ways in which knowledge is framed and utilised, particularly in the context of planning, but also of related building regulations. The different moments as a collection indicate that the story of how knowledge is used and framed within planning is by no means a simple one. Multiple types of knowledge come into play in different scenarios and there is no clear distinction between the type of knowledge
demanded by technocratic state institutions or processes, and the type of knowledge considered valid, or accessible by people belonging to an ‘alternative’ movement. Conflicts can arise due to differences in the acknowledgement of various types of knowledge as valid (and in line for example with James Scott’s arguments relating to episteme, techne and métis (Scott 1998)), but the politics of knowledge in this context are not neatly reducible to different ways of knowing (a finding also indicated by Anderson (2008) in a different but related context). Recognition of the complicated ways in which knowledge is validated is part of a process of empowerment for those wishing to engage with planning processes or to engage in the governance of sustainable development. This chapter is broadly about representations of space, and the possibilities for democratic engagement in the production of alternative representations of space.

The final analytical chapter, Chapter 6, focuses on ‘political aesthetics’. This chapter focuses on the material, embodied, and lived experiences associated with the ‘alternative’ spaces and practices of the Lammas eco-village, and their political significance. Here, the alteration of the landscape, the alternative use of rural space, and the visceral, visual, sensual aspects of the project emerge as significant both within the practical project of transition to sustainable development, and in a wider political sense. This chapter takes literally Swyngedouw’s suggestion that politics is “about the production of spaces, the making of environments” (Swyngedouw 2009a, p.607). Here, the literal production of spaces is explored, considering both the representative nature of such spaces (spaces of representation) and how these serve to carry a message (including via the World Wide Web), as well as how they function in producing different social space (through embeddedness in networks of Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms [WWOOF] for instance). In this chapter, the concept of ‘aesthetics’ is drawn primarily from the work of Terry Eagleton (Eagleton 1990), as well as Jacques Ranciere (Ranciere 2003). From Eagleton comes the notion that aesthetics, far from being simply an appreciation of the visual or even of ‘the arts’ is a term which allows the encompassing of a way of knowing which is about the lived experience of being in the world, and attends to ‘the way the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces’. This broader definition allows for a rethinking of the politics of a distribution of sensibilities. There are other theoretical perspectives that have more or less attempted this idea as well, from phenomenology, to Bourdieu’s notion
of ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977). With reference to these ideas the chapter explores the significance of ‘ecological’ aesthetics in the context of the case study. This is part of what could be a much more extensive discussion and debate around a habitus of modernity through lived experience. It therefore draws attention not only to issues of structure and agency, power and expression, but also to an embodiment of critique of everyday life in the modern world – an ideological critique centered on changing the perception of the human from something apart from nature to something itself natural and embedded.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 7, draws together the arguments made throughout the thesis and considers the value of this approach in understanding the role of small-scale, grassroots, and rural initiatives within a wider framework of transition towards sustainable development and societal transformation. By examining the case study from a perspective of governance for sustainable development, the thesis is itself a part of a politics of transformation, through the recognition of voices that may have otherwise been excluded or marginalised within a politics of the governance of sustainable development.

Politics proper, according to Swyngedouw (also Ranciere), is politics that recognises dissensus as an integral part, and which challenges ways of knowing and ways of being in space:

“In the end everything in politics turns on the distribution of spaces. What are these places? How do they function? Why are they there? Who can occupy them? For me, political action always acts upon the social as the litigious distribution of places and roles. It is always a matter of knowing who is qualified to say what a particular place is and what is done to it (Ranciere 2003, p.201).

The final chapter of this research explores this claim in relation to the empirical work and analysis, and considers whether the case study can be considered part of a politics of sustainability, or indeed, whether such a thing exists or can be meaningfully called politics if embedded within governance theory. Whilst moving away from ‘strategic niche management’ and other managerialist approaches, which belie the importance of politics and of context, the research does argue for an engagement with mainstream politics and the policy world, and makes the case that this need not be seen as antithetical to politics proper but rather a manifestation of possibility.
2 THE POLITICS OF GOVERNING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced and positioned Low Impact Development within literatures in geography that have specifically focused on this phenomenon (Pickerill & Maxey 2009a; Pickerill & Maxey 2009b; Fairlie 2009b; Dale 2009). LID, and associated activities and movements have also been the focus of transitions management literatures (Seyfang & Haxeltine 2012; Seyfang & Smith 2007; Seyfang 2010; Grin et al. 2010). The transitions literatures have been critiqued for failing to recognise the politics of transition (Shove & Walker 2007; Shove & Walker 2010; Shove 1998), while the work on LID has specifically called for greater attention to be paid to matters of scale and politics.

Taking up these critiques, this thesis takes the detailed contextual account of the relations between the LID movement centred on the planned eco-village Lammas, and relates this account to the more theoretical and conceptual notions of sustainable development and governance. The research takes the matter of planning (urban and rural) as a launching point for exploring the socio-spatial relations between the mainstream and the alternative. While ‘alternative’ worlds or ways of being have been explored in studies focusing on their internal composition, definition and operation (Hardy & Ward 2004; Hardy 2000; Kanter 1972; Dawson 2006; Hetherington 2000), this study differs in its focus on the interface between the mainstream and the alternative, particularly in the moments and processes of interaction between dominant mainstream discourses of sustainable development and governance. This chapter opens up the space of governance and sustainable development on a conceptual level, providing the academic context in which the study is embedded.

By taking the governance of sustainable development as a starting point, the thesis draws attention to important articulations of power, knowledge and politics and explores the idea of the post-political as discussed in recent geographical literatures (Swyngedouw 2009a). In considering how the politics of governing sustainable
development are articulated in the case study, the review turns its attention to planning theory and practice, considering the invocation by Cowell and Owens that the planning system is an arena through which such politics are often played out in ways that are not given a great deal of attention in geographical literatures (Cowell & Owens 2006). The review considers the ways in which the governance of sustainable development is being looked at in geography and planning theory (Haughton et al. 2008; Haughton et al. 2008; Dühr 2005; Haughton & Counsell 2004; Whitehead 2007). The review also considers the scalar and urban predispositions of these engagements and presents the possibility for an incorporation of rural spaces and small-scale activities in considerations of the planning articulations of governing for sustainable development.

As Jordan (2008) notes, the past decade has seen an enormous proliferation of books and articles focused on governance for/of sustainable development. In spite of this, ‘governance’ and ‘sustainable development’ continue to be “two of the most essentially contested terms in the entire social sciences” (Jordan 2008, p.18). One reason for this boom in writing on governance for sustainable development is that the latter is “a political concept, replete with governance questions” (Farrell et al. 2005, p.143). Meanwhile, the concept of governance also began an upward trajectory in the social sciences in the nineties (Jessop 1998) and has continued to rise along with the concept of sustainable development in often intertwined ways (Jordan 2008). Significantly for this study, governance of and for sustainable development has also become the focus of planning theory and literature (R. Cowell & Owens 2006; Owens & Cowell 2011; Rydin et al. 2007; Rydin 2010). As already mentioned, the concept of governance for/of sustainable development has a politics, and through investigating a meeting place between the planning system and low impact developers this thesis examines that particular set of socio-spatial relations and articulations.

An important aspect arising out of the latter discussion is the significance of multiple ways of knowing and being, and the epistemic differences and similarities that emerge in alternative and mainstream spaces and articulations of knowledge. The role and definition of knowledge, including the involvement of ‘non-experts’ in knowledge production activities has been the topic of much debate in geography, planning and related spheres (e.g. Eden & Tunstall 2006; Guy 2006; Lewis 2006; Owens et al. 2006; Davoudi; Davoudi 2006). This review draws on these discussions to consider
what ‘ways of knowing’ and indeed ways of being, are being excluded from the debates and to what effect. As a result, the review touches upon types of knowledge including the embodied and practical, or what Bourdieu might call habitus (1977), or what Scott might term phronesis or praxis (Scott 1998).

2.2 THEORIES OF GOVERNANCE AND THE STATE

The literature on governance is considerable, and has increased exponentially over the last two decades, following work by Rhodes and others in the 1990s (Rhodes 1996; Rhodes 1997). In a seminal paper on the ‘rise of governance’ Bob Jessop points discusses the emergence and utility of this concept within the academic and political world. The rise of governance, according to Jessop, can be traced to a number of trajectories in the academic and policy world. Among these, the impact of global capitalism and the consequent shifts of traditional ‘state’ power to higher, as well as lower levels of government. Rhodes and others’ notions of governance suggest a different spatiality of governing – one based more on networks of interactions than on hierarchical scales. Attempts to bring together this new spatiality of governance with the more traditional conception of government has led to engagements with multi-level governance (Bache 2004; Jessop 2004). Recognition of an increasingly complicated governance environment has also resulted in much material focused on integration and coordination among various scales and networks (Buchs 2009).

Jessop differentiates two main ways in which the term governance is used. Firstly, to refer to “any mode of co-ordination of inter-dependent activities” (Jessop 1998). He identifies three ideal-typical models of coordination as “the anarchy of exchange, organizational hierarchy, and self-organizing ‘heterarchy’” (1998, p.29). He then goes on to define a more specific usage of the term governance as follows:

“The second, more restricted meaning [of governance] is heterarchy (or self-organization)... Its forms include self-organizing interpersonal networks, negotitated inter-organizational co-ordination, and de-centred, context-mediated inter-systemic steering. The latter two cases involve self-organized steering of multiple agencies, institutions, and systems which are operationally autonomous from one another yet structurally coupled due to their mutual interdependence.” (Jessop 1998, p.29)
Jessop’s definition is organised by scale, with ‘self-organizing interpersonal networks’ occurring at the level of individuals, ‘negotiated inter-organizational coordination’ occurring at the level of organisations, and ‘de-centred, context-mediated inter-systemic steering’ occurring at the level of institutions (seen in a way as assemblages). Although it is clear from this explication that governance in the sense of heterarchy can occur not only at multiple scales but in diverse contexts, much of the governance literature has essentially focused on governance as a mode of governing initiated by various levels of formal government, and differentiated from previous modes of governmental behaviour by its greater involvement of non-state actors into the process, increasing ‘horizontal coordination’ (an existing issue for governments everywhere in any case) and reduced hierarchical features (Newman 2005).

Jessop’s 1998 account of governance is somewhat abstract, and useful. With its implicit focus on the apparatus of the state, particularly at the national level, it is possible to imagine, based on this abstracted account, governance processes which are not initiated and controlled by the state, or indeed, in which the state is not an actor at all. However, the second part of Jessop’s thesis suggests a role for ‘metagovernance’ or the governance of governance, in which individuals, organisations and/or institutions may become involved for all kinds of reasons and initiated by a variety of sources. While they may indeed have mutually beneficial reasons for doing so, ‘steering’ is often seen as being necessary due to the risks of failure of governance processes. Jessop’s analysis suggests in this scenario a strong role for metagovernance, that is, governance of governance, or the organization of self-organization. Although this may seem to imply a continued strong role for national level government, he notes that:

“[Metagovernance]… involves… the design of institutions and generation of visions which can facilitate not only self-organization in different fields but also the relative coherence of the diverse objectives, spatial and temporal horizons, actions, and out-comes of various self-organizing arrangements.” (Jessop 1998, p.42)

Jessop’s conceptualization of meta-governance involves institutional and strategic dimensions. The former entails providing mechanisms for ‘collective learning about the functional linkages and material interdependencies among different sites and spheres of action’ while the latter entails promoting the ‘development of shared
visions which might encourage new institutional arrangements and/or new activities to be pursued which supplement and/or complement existing patterns of governance’ (ibid, p. 42).

In his later work, there is significant suggestion by Jessop that the role of metagovernance is one which should be taken on by the state, and indeed much of the subsequent literature regards the role of the state to shifting from one of controller to one of enabler, implying that the governance turn is actually all about the changing role of the state and state actors, and issues of integration and coordination between different scales and networks contained or adopted into governance processes initiated by formal government of scale (Sorensen 2006; Buchs 2009).

In the case of multi-level governance this entails looking at work between and among multiple states, as well as the non-state participants in these processes. However, non-state actors are sometimes only considered in terms of ‘private partners’ in public private partnerships (Koch & Buser 2006), but it is notable that although non-state actors are included, they are seemingly additions to a process that is governed by formal state institutions, organizations and actors.

In Remaking Governance (Newman 2005) Janet Newman argues that the governance literature has placed an excessive emphasis on the ‘hollowing out’ of the state thesis, to the extent that it sometimes ignores the continued role that the state plays in using coercive force, as well as the role of the state in metagovernance (ibid., p.8). Furthermore, she critiques the governance literatures for using the ‘social’ as merely a backdrop in which governance is set as the analytical category, downplaying the complexity and significance of the social translation of governance processes, aims and outcomes (ibid.). Nevertheless, much of the remainder of the book focuses on governing practices initiated by and controlled by the state, broadly defined. In essence, the issue is a tautological one. If governance processes are seen as something that the state does or initiates, then the literature is bound to place the state as central in its examination of these processes, and as a result the social and participation of others becomes backdrop and background for essentially state activities.

In the general theoretical sense, metagovernance can be seen as a form of management of the governance process which enables transfer of knowledge and learning amongst participants, and helps the shared visions of participants to emerge,
leading to new arrangements and activities. Critics of metagovernance theory have however pointed out that in scenarios in which the state is involved, the role of metagoverner falls to the state, by virtue of the inherent power differentials, including uneven access to legitimate knowledge. To some this suggests that governance cannot ever be the ‘flat’ or networked notion it is sometimes understood as, as it will always take place in the ‘shadow of hierarchy’ (Jessop 2003; Whitehead 2003). However, the theory of metagovernance possibly opens a door to critiquing the role of the state in governance processes. If a process can be critiqued for a failure of good ‘metagovernance’, i.e. a lack of sharing of knowledge and resources, and a lack of encouragement of shared visions, then this can be seen as not only a failure of governance, but a failure of metagovernance (Bell & Park 2006). If we treat the ‘social subject’ as capable of sophisticated engagement with the processes of governance, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which the power of the state could be made more transparent in such processes, through an obligation to ‘good metagovernance’.

The issue of the social subject, the non-state individual or organisation that becomes involved in processes of governance, there is much contention. Are such participants afforded the power, knowledge and agency to effectively participate in such processes? Is not the process itself so selective that only certain people are given voice, and even then, only when they do not radically challenge the status quo, or objectives of the political and powerful? These questions plague governance theorists and those concerned with democracy. One aspect of this question has to do with the possibility that state-initiated processes of governance in themselves erode the possibilities for dissent – an argument made most forcefully perhaps by Erik Swyngedouw. Governance, argues Swyngedouw, is a janus-faced concept. On one side it presents, ostensibly, new spaces and opportunities for engagement with the processes of decision-making that affect us all. On the other hand however, it comes to act as a process of governmentality, shifting the responsibility for governing down to the lowest scales, those of the individual, and creating the conditions in which people enact self-government, acting out the will of the powerful, without being able to question or dissent.

A key element of this critique has to do with the definition of what is to be governed, or in other words the introduction of hegemonic discourses which leave no room for
dissent or disagreement. Swyngedouw carries this idea forward in his discussion of the hegemony of climate change discourse and its resultant creation of a ‘postpolitical’ space.

“The consolidation of an urban postpolitical arrangement runs… parallel to the rise of a neoliberal governmentality that has replaced debate, disagreement and dissensus with a series of technologies of governing that fuse around consensus, agreement, accountancy metrics and technocratic environmental management. …I maintain that this postpolitical consensual police order revolves decidedly around embracing a populist gesture, one that annuls democracy and must, of necessity, lead to an ultra-politics of violent disavowal, radical closure and, ultimately, to the tyrannies of violence and of foreclosure of any real spaces of engagement.” (Swyngedouw 2009a, p.604)

Swyngedouw’s concerns with governance have to do partially with the hegemony of a discourse, which then is used to justify all ends, assuming the consensus of the populous with its actions as the consensus is demanded of the seriousness of the environmental problem (Swyngedouw 2010). What concerns Swyngedouw is that through this hegemony of discourse, dissent and disagreement are neutralised through co-optation of voices of dissent into the supposedly democratic and inclusive processes of governance, and thus the police order of the state.

Although Swyngedouw’s latter argument is based on the hegemony of environmental discourses, similar arguments have been made in relation to governance processes more generally. Newman, whose work is focused on public services notes that governance processes are often aimed at changing how the subjects view themselves in order to change how they self-govern. However, she comments that these attempts overlook the complexity of the social in doing so:

“It is one thing for policies to set out new conceptions of citizenship and community, responsibilities and relationships. It is another for these to be realised in social action. One way of accomplishing this is through the steering or ‘meta-governance’ role of the state as it attempts to coordinate a dispersed array of network and partnerships arrangements or deploy its power to shape new governance practices. … However, steering or coercive strategies may fail to bring about the cultural shifts that governments desire: that is, the shifts between who people think they are, how they should relate to each other, what they can legitimately expect from the state and what the state can legitimately expect from them in return. The fostering of new identities, relationships, expectations and aspirations is accomplished – with more or less success – through new technologies of power.” (Newman 2005, p.13)
Newman too seems to be describing a kind of ‘governmentality’ in which through manipulating or ‘fostering new identities, relationships, expectations and aspirations’, people’s behaviour is changed via a process of internalisation of the desired subject positions. However, in this case we get the sense that Newman sees this as a potentially positive method of governance, albeit one that requires a better understanding of the social.

2.3 THE DISCOURSE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development as a discourse emerged out of a desire to reconcile what had hitherto been the competing interests of economic growth, and the environment. There are clear parallels here with the discourse of governance. Whereas the former to some accounts was a means of incorporating or co-opting the voices of dissent into a ‘postpolitical consensual police order’ (Swyngedouw 2009), the latter has been seen as a way of absorbing the voices speaking up about environmental damage and destruction into the formal system of (neoliberal) government, at the time at a multinational/global scale. The relation of the two discourses or ideologies, governance and sustainable development, seem far from coincidental. Indeed, they appear part of the same overriding ideology that so worries Swyngedouw and others who recognize the value of dissent.

Jordan (2008) attempts to chart the combined academic trajectories of the two concepts, sustainable development and governance, and finds them related in another way, in that the biggest issue surrounding sustainable development has seemed to be how to govern such a transition, leading to separate trajectories in the literatures with some looking at the governance of sustainable development and others the sustainability of governance processes. In spite of the very solid and defensible rhetorical power of the idea of sustainable development, by all accounts the decades following the Brundtland report have resulted in a worsening of conditions in many respects. In demonstration of this Jordan refers to the Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (United Nations 2002), the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005) and the GEO 4 report (UNEP 2007). Some years on the volume of documents charting the disastrous trajectory of
human impacts on the environment is immense and growing. Thus far it seems that we have not managed to initiate significant and sufficient movement in the direction of sustainable development, however defined.

The discourse of sustainable development has been resoundingly critiqued for attempting to gloss over the fundamental contradictions that are sometimes, if not always, contained in the goals and direction of travel suggested by economic growth, and those suggested by an increased focus on environmental issues and social justice. As a result, the idea of sustainable development is often considered to be an oxymoron in itself, and increasingly ‘Degrowth movements’ (Demaria et al. 2013; Baykan 2007) and organisations such as the New Economics Foundation are suggesting more fundamental changes are needed in order to achieve any kind of environmental and social justice gains (Simms et al. 2010).

For some, the discourse of sustainable development represents a means for the institutional framework, itself so reliant on particular modes of ‘economic growth’ and international trade, to co-opt concerns with the environment that had emerged within counter-cultural or critical movements and in doing so to squash the more radical critiques. Writing in the late nineties for example, Hajer and Fischer point out that although ‘sustainable development as a project evolved out of a progressive discourse inside the UN’ (Hajer & Fischer 1999, p.2), this discourse has failed to produce ‘the sort of institutional restructuring that appear to be necessary’ (ibid., p.3) instead producing forms of ‘eco-managerialism’ and at best ‘ecological modernization’:

“In both cases important critical messages contained in much of environmental discourse before Brundtland and Rio are lost. Missing is the critique of industrial progress, in particular the question about the viability of endless material growth and consumption. … [S]ustainable development remains caught in what the British novelist John Berger has called the ‘culture of progress’. Basic to this culture is an insistent reliance on the idea that problems, once recognized and publicly acknowledged, can be handled by the institutions of science, technology, and management. Lost to this approach is the deeper cultural critique of modern society itself.” (Hajer & Fischer 1999, p.3)

The problem, as argued by some is that although sustainable development in principle seems a good idea, it remains vague, undefined and contextually dependent (including particularly by scale). Additionally, though often conflated, sustainability and
sustainable development have taken two quite distinct discursive trajectories. It is for example, common to here ‘sustainability’ used in the context of simple economics, such as in considering whether a sports stadium built for Olympic games will have sufficient usage to justify keeping it in use as a stadium after the games have ended. In this respect, the term ‘sustainability’ can be and is used frequently with no reference at all to environmental considerations or even social justice. This is even more removed from environmental concerns than the ‘eco-managerialism’ or ‘ecological modernization’ types of sustainable development, which at least include some kind of consideration of the environment, though they differ from deep ecology or more critical views on the relations between humans and external nature in finding the solutions in governing mechanisms and/or advancing technology, rather than more fundamental changes.

On the other hand, as already mentioned, the inclusion of the term ‘development’ and the understanding that accompany that mean that sustainability can be used in a more explicitly environmental way. Sustainable development as a concept, is meant to balance economic, social and environmental goals. However, as Cowell and Owens point out, while there has been very widespread acknowledgement and acceptance of the concept of sustainability, there has simultaneously been little agreement about the conception of sustainability (Owens & Cowell 2011, p.21). One issue perhaps is that ‘society, economy and environment’ are all very abstract concepts, and moreover there is a normativity implied in this balancing act that is not necessarily universal and given. As with governance, different actors, organisations and institutions will have different ideas and ideologies and will bring these to their understandings of sustainability and sustainable development.

Yet in spite of this, some scholars have argued that it is just this ambiguity and context-dependence that makes the discourse of sustainable development particularly strong (While et al. 2010). As a deliberately vague concept it allows a process of engagement that takes into account the details of the context. Essentially, due to its vague nature it opens up spaces of possibility for governance processes to take place. Meadowcroft certainly sees this discourse as containing an opportunity, indeed an imperative for a form of governance that entails a sophisticated, continuous process of democratic engagement:
“In a fundamental sense, governance for sustainable development implies a process of ‘societal self-steering’: society as a whole is to be involved in the critical interrogation of existing practices, and to take up the conscious effort to bring about change. Thus it involves not only actions and policies to orient development along certain lines, but also the collective discussion and decision required to define those lines. Value choices – about the kind of society in which we want to live, about the kind of world we want to leave to posterity – lie at the heart of governance for sustainable development. At base, it is not a technical project, although technical expertise is essential, but a political project. For, while the concept indicates issues that should be of concern, its practical bearing cannot be established independent of the concrete life circumstances of a particular society and the needs, interests, values and aspirations of its members. Thus governance for sustainable development is ‘interactive’, not just in the instrumental sense that societal inputs can facilitate progress towards known objectives, but also in the deeper sense that the objectives themselves must be collectively defined, refined and re-defined.” (Meadowcroft 2007, p.302)

Meadowcroft’s conceptualisation of how the process of governance for sustainable development should work, in principle, is a highly laudable one. However it belies perhaps, the great difficulty in instituting a method of governance that allows for the incorporation of the ‘needs, interests, values and aspirations of its members’ in a way that does not suffer from the usual ailments, i.e. dominant powers making ultimate decisions.

A second important point that can be gleaned from this quote, is the suggestion of a move away from technocratic thinking (or at least the need for such). An argument can be made that it is neither possible nor desirable to be able to objectively define ‘sustainable development’, rather that it is the negotiation over this idea, the interpretation and reinterpretation of it within different contexts which is the important aspect of the concept itself and its usability. In this sense, the debate around how to define sustainable development within the planning system in the UK, and the emergence of alternative narratives to the dominant approaches, is a significant moment in the process of governance for sustainable development as a discourse and political project.

Sustainable development as a discourse has also been described as a utopian idea (Hedrén & Linnér 2009; Hedrén 2009; Harlow et al. 2013). Hedren and Linner
suggest that utopian thinking is often a part of the planning process yet tends to suffer from particular characteristics of modernist thought:

“[T]hree fundamental aspects of modernity are particularly important in light of utopian thought on sustainable development: ‘blueprints’ or the notion of fixed final goals for politics, scientification or the notion of fixed truth, and nationalism or the notion of fixed territoriality. Breaking with these three categories of modernity is what distinguishes utopian thought on sustainable development as a transformative politics, from the conventional modern utopia as a blueprint for totalitarianism.” (Hedrén & Linnér 2009, p.211)

They conclude after analysing the concept of sustainable development as developed by the UN that it is utopian but does not necessarily suffer from these aspects of modernist thinking. Instead they suggest that sustainable development as a project can be (and in UN materials is) conceived as a project that does not necessitate thinking about either time or space in a fixed sense. Rather, it requires no certainty of fixed territoriality, no fixed end goals but rather a ‘never-ending story’ and ‘prismatic blueprints’. This notion of sustainable development as a utopian concept is bound to be challenging for planning departments and planners whose job it is to set representations of space down on paper yet it is an idea that is potentially emancipatory and indeed revolutionary in terms of the way planning operates.

2.4 PLANNING (AND) SPACES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Owens and Cowell consider that as regards sustainable development, the planning system in the UK can be seen as:

“a series of apertures for deliberation and assessment… highly germane to wider debates about reflexive governance… - reflexive in the sense that modern societies can confront, criticise and potentially transform those institutions, values and systems of production that are implicated in environmental crisis.” (Owens & Cowell 2011, p.8)

The question that arises in relation to this case study is whether within the system of planning, and the move towards governance and sustainable development with that system, whether there are indeed possibilities of ‘real spaces of engagement’ (Swyngedouw 2009b, p.604) for low impact developers, and if so, how might these be seen in terms of their material and discursive qualities.
Within planning theory and geographies of planning, sustainable development and governance have coincided and become intertwined with a shift towards ‘spatial planning’ – a form of planning intended to be more integrative, strategic, and holistic than previous forms of planning (Harris et al. 2002; Allmendinger & Haughton 2007; Allmendinger & Haughton 2009). In particular, theorists such as Haughton and Counsell have brought together ideas of governance, metagovernance and sustainable development with the trend towards spatial planning to consider how the former concepts are handled in a conceptual environment of ‘soft spaces’ and ‘fuzzy boundaries’ (Haughton & Counsell 2004; Haughton et al. 2008).

The studies by Haughton et al are focused for the most part on regional and national documents on sustainable development. One thing that is immediately obvious in reading this work is that at this level and with relation to the concept of sustainable development in particular, the policies are extremely general, broad, strategic and aspirational. For example, DEFRA’s principles for sustainability, indicated in Figure 2, are all highly open to interpretation. On top of this, the fact that sustainability documents sit alongside a whole host of other documents – for example those on developing the economy – it is easy to see how such documents may have little or no impact in terms of actual policy outcomes on the ground. Nevertheless, Haughton et al’s studies indicate that there is something interesting happening in terms of the political fragmentation of the UK, the multiple scales of governance, and the role that spatial planning could potentially play in the delivery of sustainable development, however defined.
In attempting to understand the uptake of sustainable development in planning, many studies have focused on regional differences in taking on board aspects of sustainable development, variously defined, at the planning policy level. Some of these rely on definitions of sustainable development gleaned from the documents themselves, others from ideas of sustainable development based on academic interpretations (e.g. Bruff & Wood 2000; Counsell 1999; Dühr 2005). Analyses might include looking at whether policies existed at all on various levels, how strong they appeared to be, and/or whether they indicated an ‘ecological modernization’ view towards sustainable development, - indicated for example by the assumption that that environmental limits were knowable via scientific analysis – or a different conception of sustainable development, perhaps in a more ‘deep ecology’ vein.

Both the academic literature and the policy literature related to planning for sustainable development however, tend towards a distinct urban bias. There are several reasons for this. One is related to the historical development of planning as an occupation in the UK, a history related to post-war food shortages and the need for agricultural production. Land in the UK is essentially categorized into two types: potential development land (urban) and a category which could be called ‘other’ on which agricultural activity is generally always possible, however (other forms of)
development is restricted and resisted very strongly. The rural-urban divide results in the rural and the urban being treated as distinct categories, and planning is not seen as the department that deals with anything rural (other than preventing non-agriculture-related development).

A second reason that planning literature on sustainable development holds an urban bias is an academic one to do with understanding sustainable development. At a statistical level, urban living appears to be more ‘sustainable’, using various indicators, than rural living. Essentially due to the density of urban living, public transportation is more economical and therefore more available, and people are not as reliant on using cars, thus one of the big energy consuming activities is reduced by living in an urban area. Secondly, denser housing means that less energy is lost between buildings. Finally, because urban areas have a higher density of people, the assumption is that they are a more efficient way of using space from a land economy perspective leaving more land available for agriculture.

These assumptions about sustainable living in an urban or a rural setting no doubt have solid bases, most likely in statistical analyses. However, this is of course a highly simplified view, and numerous factors will affect whether or not ‘urban’ or ‘rural’ living is ‘sustainable’ or not. Nevertheless, this strong bias in the understanding of sustainability in a planning sense has a great deal of influence on how sustainable development policies at higher or more strategic levels are interpreted, particularly in the context of a planning department in a largely rural county.

**Planning Paradigms… Persistent Binaries: rural-urban/ Human-Nature**

Another possible reason for the urban bias in planning for sustainable development has to do with long-standing assumptions about rural and urban space. Although conceptions of the rural are multiple and contested, particularly in what some have called a post-productivist era (Halfacree 2009; Halfacree 2007), both in academic writing and in planning practice, urban and rural space are treated as though they are fundamentally different.

Arguably some of this conception within the planning profession at least has to do with paradigms handed down through planning education. One of the most famous
and significant of these for the development of British planning has been Ebenezer Howard’s Garden City idea (Howard 1965). Every planner in the country will have heard of Howard and the Garden City movement, since as Fanstein and Campbell point out (2012) it is a core element of planning education, and the almost mythological status of this and similar stories have an impact upon the profession to this day, not only in the sense of how planner’s construct their identities, but also in legacies of spatial form, most notably the green belts that surround Britain’s major cities. Howard’s ideas are illustrated in a model he called the ‘three magnets model’ (Figure 1). We can see here a quite interesting divide between city and country. The city is associated with culture, society, people, while the country is associated with ‘nature’. The aim of Howard’s garden city idea was to bring together the positive cultural and economic aspects of the city, with the amenity afforded by the countryside.

![Figure 4: Ebenezer Howard's Three Magnet Model (Howard 1965, p.46)](image-url)

Howard’s model of the Garden City was based on ideas of the city and ideas of the country that in some ways mapped quite crudely a division between human (social,
cultural and economic) and natural (understood largely in an aesthetic sense, based on vegetation). This dichotomy however has remained as quite a simple division within planning practice as well as theory. When Underwood wrote in 1991 that planners should consider the environment as their client, she anticipated the comment that they already do, but pointed out that the only way in which the environment is considered is in an amenity-related sense.

The way in which the environment is understood in planning is indeed changing (Healey & Shaw 1994), not least due to the increasing legislation that covers such things as endangered species and habitats, the need for green corridors in urban spaces, issues of flooding and the need for sustainable urban drainage systems and so forth. Indeed, a different notion of LID is employed in a North American context to refer to urban design that takes the pathways of storm-water into account. Nevertheless, the crude binary between the urban and rural, mapped onto human and natural, means that while the planning system has a significant impact upon what can and cannot be done in urban areas, it simultaneously declares the rural outside of its sphere of influence. The same divide is evident in planning literature as well, with a significant paucity of engagements with the rural as an area of significance for planning.

Many of the planning responses to the challenges of the concept of sustainable development have had an urban focus, or at least an urban slant. In some cases this has been overt, seeing targeting urban space as a more relevant and cost-effective way in which to handle this challenge. Consequently, many policies have focused on increasing the density of urban settlements, based on the idea that the more dense the settlement, the less travel is required to get from home to work and to services and shops, as well as the benefits of having buildings closer together for heat conservation leading to decreased energy use for heating. The logic of these policies is understandable, policy-makers will always attempt to select the approach likely to have the greatest impact, and by their very nature, urban areas will have a greater density of population and therefore impact. However, in focusing on urban areas in policies for sustainable development, to the degree that sustainable development becomes defined by characteristics that are associated with urban settlements (high
density), both the concept of sustainability itself, and the position of rural spaces (however defined) with relation to it, has often been overlooked.

Even where academics and policy makers have attempted to bring the sustainability agenda to bear upon rural space, the legacies of countryside protection for its landscape values, and a history of equating the protection of the countryside with the protection of a particular notion of the rural idyll has meant that more recent interventions are often met by incomprehension and suspicion. Fairlie (2009) traces the idea of countryside protection in the planning system to the early days of car ownership, and the consequences of the proliferation of cars. Indeed, he notes that in the 1920s and 1930s an increasing number of articles and policies began to emerge regarding the position of the rural and the need to plan against urban sprawl and development into rural areas. According to Fairlie:

“the unlimited access provided by the motor car meant that building in the countryside had to be restricted to certain areas. Rural planning had arrived and its primary aim was to keep the town out of the country. British society had entered into a Faustian pact: the right to build anywhere was to be sacrificed for the right to drive anywhere.” (Fairlie 2009b, p.7)

It was this process, of opening up the countryside to increased travel, and making possible the idea of living in the countryside while working in a more urban area that initiated or at least exaggerated the movement to protect the countryside. The idea from the start has been very much tied to aesthetic ambitions and a notion of ordered, quaintly nostalgic and largely decorative landscape. Such notions continue to have resonance in planning policies and decisions today.

In addition, the protection of the countryside has had a class-based dimension. As agriculture has been increasingly industrialised and the number of workers employed in agriculture dramatically decreased, the countryside, including greenbelt areas, has become and is preserved as space for the recreational, as well as a retirement or second home market for those wealthy enough to afford it. For those without such means, living in rural areas has become progressively less affordable. Even policies devised by governments to initiate a greater class mix in rural areas have been criticized for lacking political will (Hoggart & Henderson 2005) to the potential detriment of the environment.
The distinction between urban and rural space to begin with tends towards homogenizing both in certain ways. However, all spaces are not only highly heterogeneous, but are also understood differently by different people. By labelling certain spaces as ‘rural’, this only provides a platform from which people can frame their understandings of space. This phenomenon is considered by Woods in his discussion of the debate around windfarms in rural areas. Woods notes that:

“[U]nderstanding the differing representations of nature and landscape … cannot be separated from an understanding of the conflicting approaches to rurality that they also embody. On the one side is the discourse of the rural as a productive space…. On the other side is the discourse of the rural as a space of consumption. As agriculture declines, so it is argued, the future of the rural economy depends on the commodification of the rural and the exploitation of its visual and spiritual consumption through tourism. For opponents of [various developments in the countryside], by disrupting the visual landscape, the [development] undermines the consumptive experience and threatens to destroy the attraction for tourists.” (Woods 2003, p.284)

These perspectives on what the rural is and who it is for apply also to Low Impact Development in the countryside and affect planning and other responses. While for some, LID represents an opportunity to live in a more sustainable way, not only environmentally, but also socially and economically, freeing individuals from the high levels of debt, risk and mobility associated with the contemporary economy; for others, eco-villages in the countryside represent an aberration to an image of the rural idyll bought into by retirement home buyers and others seeking a quaint, tranquil rurality of a particular aesthetic.

The result of this divide in terms of how planning operates in practice is that planner’s have a rather simplified view of the rural. Agricultural and forestry activities are not subject to planning, but any form of ‘development’ in the planning sense, not immediately related to these activities, is indeed subject to planning. Therefore planners are in charge of adjudicating over ‘rural’ activity insofar as they are put in the position of making judgements about the necessity of development of any kind, and in particular the validity of someone building a home in a rural location. Building a home in the countryside is subject to much more stringent restrictions in most places than equivalent building in towns. In most parts of the UK that have rural areas, the local authority plan will include some form of ‘agricultural worker’s dwelling’ provision. This means that if someone who owns land for agriculture or forestry
deems it necessary to have a home for someone else on site, such as a family member or full-time worker, they can apply for permission to build such a home.

However, because rural land is far lower in cost than land within the development boundaries of a plan, and house prices in rural locations are usually high, building a new house on a piece of farm land, and selling this on is a highly lucrative move for a farmer. Therefore, there is much incentive for owners of agricultural land to build houses, which may eventually be sold for a very significant profit. In order to discourage this practice which may result in a large number of homes being built in rural locations, planning departments aim to restrict such building to cases in which the need for a dwelling for someone who will be involved in the agricultural business can be proven. The result is that the planning system is in fact involved in making decisions involving what activities do and not form legitimate reasons to stay on rural land. They are also highly involved in deciding upon what is considered an appropriate aesthetic for buildings in rural areas.

On an academic level, the divide between urban and rural in terms of discipline has meant that considerations about the role of architecture and aesthetics, neoliberalisation and its effect on space, and how sustainable development should be interpreted have been the foci of urban but not rural studies for the most part. The rural as a category is reified and viewed as different from urban space. In sustainability terms, the rural is looked upon in a simple way as a site for production of food and other resources, and in terms of human interaction with it, in terms of the unsustainability of rural living due to the reliance on a car to get around. Planning theory is therefore impoverished in its accounts of the rural and the planning system continues to operate on the simplified assumption that development in rural areas should be restricted, a policy not based on sustainability, but on a simplified separation of urban and rural in theory.

**Planners: Everything to everyone? The arbiters of space and society**

Planning is a curious profession. It is poised on the edge of research and technical administration, torn between demands of powerful private sector interests, politicians, and the public, however expressed. How planners view themselves therefore takes on
a great deal of importance in terms of the way that our social and environmental worlds are shaped. Writing in 1991, on the basis of a symposium aimed at bringing together perspectives from planning theory with those from planning practice, Patsy Healey, Huw Thomas and the rest of the symposium participants took the time to attempt to bring together some ideas about who and what planners were, and how they negotiated the difficult questions of ethics, legitimacy (in terms of decision-making – a discretionary process in the UK) and the validity of knowledge (Thomas & Healey 1991). Over two decades on these same debates hold equal validity. Who are planners and what is their role? Are they social reformers, agents of a state engaged in processes of redistribution and the struggle for justice? Or are they agents of a neoliberal state, interfering in processes with the interests of capital expansion and ‘economic growth’ at all costs in mind? Indeed, do planners in practice today have time to wrestle with such ideas at all? Or do they see themselves simply as technocrats and administrators, following the commands of politicians, and assuming that their processes reflect democracy in allowing members of the public to voice their concerns? Is it even possible to answer such questions for a group called planners? Do individual planners have so much in common with each other that they may be thought of collectively?

Although such questions may not be possible to answer at a theoretical level, the roles, positions, and professional and institutional cultures in which planners find themselves are indicative of how their roles are framed, and what is expected of them. This forms, in other words, the kind of cultural sociological context which Shove talks about in relation to technology transfer (Shove 1998). How planners will behave and react depends very much on the contexts in which they find themselves, as illustrated by the evocative stories collected by Thomas and Healey (1991) of planners who found it difficult to reconcile their own ideologies and to enact the kind of positive change they wished to enact, when faced with the realities of planning departments. Similar stories are recounted by Forester (1993). It is clear that the institutional but also the discursive environments in which planners find themselves are core components of how they end up behaving, somewhat regardless of their own views of the world. Looking at other contemporary writing about this can help to understand the dilemmas faced by planners in Britain today, and how these may be
influenced by academic and political trajectories towards ‘governance processes’ and ‘sustainable development’.

At an extremely simplified level, the job of planning is to focus on development of any kind, which means, technically ‘the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land’ (Cullingworth & Nadin 2006), and to ensure that development only occurs in the designated areas. Areas for development are determined by planning policy documents produced at a county scale, but influenced by policies at several other scales, particularly the national. Administering the plans also occurs at the county level, though by a different group of planners than those who have pulled together the planning policy document. The group that administers the plan are called ‘development controllers’, although recently in an effort to rebrand this position and perhaps change its function as well as connotations, many development control officers have found their titles changed to development management officers.

Another significant aspect about planning is that on the whole in the UK, this process is one in which the public are at least in theory, allowed to participate. The planning system is required by law to consult on planning policy documents as well as planning decisions (Cullingworth & Nadin 2006). The consultation is extended to people living in the local area affected. This mandatory duty to make public planning policies and decisions has been the case for some time in the UK. However, the effectiveness with which the planning system communicates with the public has been subject to much contention.

An examination of the planning system reveals that this is a complex governance system involving many potential actors, organisations and institutions, demonstrating the kind of complexity noted by Painter (Painter 2003). Moreover, the planning system is one that very much reflects the prosaic geographies of the state (Painter 2006) in terms of its operation, documents, representations and so on, and of course the peopling of the state (Jones et al. 2004; Jones 2007). Given that the process of enacting policy is a complex one as described above, the meaningfulness of analysing the documents alone is limited in terms of understanding the meaning and practical implications of policies. If the policies are not being read, used or engaged with by the
multiple governance actors involved in the process, they have little impact on the ground and serve only as words on a page. Haughton et al, in their studies of the strategic documents related to sustainability found that it was difficult to measure the impact of these documents due to the complexity of processes occurring at the scales and in the localities affected by these strategic documents. Accordingly, these more theoretical works were tested in real-world empirical contexts often via detailed case studies (e.g. Allmendinger & Haughton 2009).

Policy relevant to planning decisions in Wales now comes from multiple scales of government: the local, the regional (here used to indicate Wales – which might also be thought of as a nation, or perhaps a national region), the national, the supranational (i.e. the EU), and even the International (via various agreements for example). Planners themselves are caught in an intricate web of policies and regulations against which they must justify every decision. Instead, all kinds of competing interests are somehow or another assimilated into a process and acted upon in highly contingent ways by individuals.

Writers on planning and sustainability note the multiple scales of planning, and the many actors involved as well as the multiple issues (Wheeler & Beatley 2004) yet many remain hopeful that sustainable development has brought on a new era for planning in which big visionary ideas, alongside the need to collaborate and cooperate to make them happen has arrived (Berke 2002). Although it seems ideal that this would be the case, and certainly it is something planning academics should continue to aim to instil in their practicing colleagues, it is worth perhaps dwelling on the position of planners amidst all these levels and networks of governing and how they see their own decision-making or vision-producing or enabling capacities within their profession. Embedded ideas about the role of planning continue to have an effect, and such aspects impact upon the otherwise technically possible role that planning could play in creating a much more sustainable living environment. What emerges is perhaps an issue of the effect of institutional culture on the behaviour of individuals, such that, as Shove (1998) points out, the same individual in different contexts will behave differently. In terms of planning for sustainable development therefore, it is worth carefully considering the culture and role that planners identify with.
Writers on planning theory chart a trajectory over history to put into historical context the development of the planning profession. The story tends to begin with the intersection of several separate movements at the turn of the twentieth century, namely the Garden Cities movement, the City Beautiful movement in the United States, and public health reforms (Campbell 2012; Hall 1996). Campbell and Fanstein chart four main eras that have characterised the history of planning: These are:

“(1) The formative years during which the pioneers (Ebenezer Howard, Patrick Geddes, Daniel Burnham, etc.) did not yet identify themselves as planners (late 1800s to ca. 1915); (2) the period of institutionalization, professionalization and self-recognition of planning, together with the rise of regional and national planning efforts (ca, 1920-1945); (3) the postwar era of standardization, crisis, and diversification of planning (1945-1975); (4) the redefinition of planning in relation to the private sector, with emphasis on public-private partnerships and the planner as mediator, strategist and advocate.” (Campbell & Fanstein 2012, p.6)

The history of planning tends to be part of the basic education of planners, however as Fainstein and Campbell point out, elements of this history tend to be simplified, sometimes putting forward ‘a view of planning history told as heroic stories of the great men’. As an antidote to this simplification the authors suggest more critical readings of planning’s history, including those who have critiqued the role of capitalism and modernity, (e.g. Harvey 2003; Foglesong 1986). Considering the overlap between the practice of planning, and the way in which planning histories taught in planning education, the authors note that including more critical perspectives on the stories, such as those put forth by Harvey and others ‘helps the contemporary planner shape his or her complex professional identity (Campbell & Fanstein 2012, p.7).

There are several interconnected and important aspects of contemporary planning practice that are addressed by most planning theory. These all essentially have to do with what role the planner should play, a normative question, as well as what role planners can and do play. Such questions are intimately connected to the role of knowledge in planning, and aspects of power. For instance, Campbell and Fanstein rightly point out that:

“Planners do not have a monopoly on power or expertise over their object of work. They operate within the constraints of the capitalist political economy, and their urban visions compete with those of developers, consumers, politicians, and other more powerful groups. When they call for a type of
development to occur, they do not command the resources to make it happen. Instead, they must rely on either private investment or a commitment from political leaders. They also work within the constraints of democracy and bureaucratic procedures. Moreover their concerns may have low priority within the overall political agenda. Thus, despite the planning ideal of a holistic, proactive vision, planners are often restricted to playing frustratingly reactive, regulatory roles.” (Campbell & Fanstein 2012, p.3)

Given these multiple constraints, the perception of the planner as a powerful actor is much diminished. Indeed, as Booher and Innes note, power is not something that is typically associated with planners (Booher & Innes 2002), as they are considered to be subjected to power rather than embodying or expressing power.

Besides the constraints of politics, of the increasing recognition of the need to take the interests and views of ‘the public’ into account (whilst recognizing that the public is by no means in consensus, and also that those who speak up are likely to be the empowered whilst the disempowered are not able to express their desires), planners are also subject to the changes that come with the theoretical and political engagements with discourses. Planning as a profession has therefore been impacted upon heavily by three trajectories of modern policy/political and theoretical discourse that relate to the relationship between the state, the environment and people. That is to say that the discourses of ‘governance’, of ‘sustainable development’ and engagements with the role of knowledge and evidence have all impacted heavily on the planning profession recently.

Some, such as Campbell (2012) argue that the idea of sustainable development as it might be enacted by planners is a laudable one, although he compares it with the kind of utopian ideals of the wave of ‘comprehensive planning’, now regarded to have failed. He suggests that there is a possibility that this is an impossible task, and that the lack of definition of the concept of sustainable development, coupled with the fact that all elements of society, from state actors of all kinds and with all kinds of interests, to commercial interests, to environmentalists, all speak in the same terms, indicates that these terms are in fact so vague as to be meaningless and hollow. Certainly this is a view held by others both within and outside of planning. However, he also notes that it potentially has the strength to bring people together to have discussions, debates and indeed conflicts, and it is in producing those conflicts that he sees the potential transformative capacity of this discourse playing out in the planning sphere.
Governance theory too has impacted on the planning profession in interesting ways, or perhaps it could be argued that a parallel but similar movement was happening in planning theory at the same time. Healey describes this movement as the ‘communicative turn in planning’ (Healey 1999). It has also been labelled the argumentative turn, or interpretive planning theory. As Healey puts it, this movement:

“is part of a broad wave of reflection on identity (ways of being – ontology) and the bases of knowledge (ways of knowing – epistemology) which is influencing western thought in general these days. This intellectual wave has been building up in the planning theory field since the 1970s.” (Healey 2012, p.230)

However, although communicative planning has been working its way through planning theory for quite some time, whether it has made a significant impact on planning in practice is another matter, one which will be delved into to some extent in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

It is worth noting two other seemingly distinct but in fact highly related movements in planning in Britain over the last decade. The first of these is the emergence of the term ‘spatial planning’ (Haughton et al. 2010) and an associated set of practices and ideas. Spatial planning is related both to governance (as a discourse and as a set of practices influencing policy and decision-making), and to the notion of sustainable development. It is also related to a desire for information or knowledge about territory, as well as the desire to have ways of understanding and representing territory at different scales of governance (actually government, but I include the EU/EC here and so term it a scale of governance). Spatial planning exercises are typically conducted at scales and in assemblages of people, representatives and interests that are not typically planners. The documents produced, for example the Wales Spatial Plan, the National Planning Framework for Scotland, as well as European plans, such as the European Spatial Development Plan (ESDP), present quite different ways of looking at and understanding territories.

It is no coincidence in my mind that such plans are being produced at new scales of government, as they represent a way of knowing and indeed creating (through representations of space) new territorial understandings (Allmendinger 2006; Tewdwr-Jones 2006). Importantly, because spatial planning is not done by planners but generally by teams of GIS experts, graphic designers and others working in collaboration with politicians, there is a certain freedom from process and the
sedimented ideas of planning practice. Arguments for it have included that it allows a greater overview of areas, linking up what might otherwise become parochial interests, into one big document; and that it is a collaborative effort, bringing together people and groups that might otherwise not collaborate, and in doing so altering the process of plan production. Spatial planning, governance, and sustainable development all as discourses have one thing in common, that is complexity. There is an assumption of bringing together different groups, interests, people, values, and inevitably, conflicting ideas.

The trajectories of spatial planning, governance and sustainable development have added new challenges to the planning profession – not least of which is the issue of knowledge and evidence in the planning process (Rydin 2010). Simultaneously with the pressure towards more holistic knowledge and understanding (via sustainable development) and increasingly sophisticated means of involving publics (via governance or collaborative/communicative planning), there is the pressure for increasingly ‘evidence-based’ planning (Davoudi 2006).

**Power and Knowledge in Planning**

Even as planning is being increasingly required to take a broad view through sustainable development rhetoric that means all aspects of a development need to be considered, the demand for evidence-based planning, relying on highly specialised knowledge and research is increasing (Davoudi 2006). According to Davoudi, the planning system in the UK is increasingly under pressure to produce ‘evidence-based’ documents and decisions. This pressure is underpinned, she argues, by three misconceptions: ‘1) That policy-making is a rational process; 2) That evidence can only be generated through positive science and 3) that experts are apolitical and value-free – and they know best’ (Davoudi 2006). If this argument is also to be accepted, then it is clear that the planning system is in an increasingly difficult position. On one hand it is expected to rely on the technocratic expertise of specialists and scientists, on the other it is to become more open, collaborative and participatory. Democratic engagement with planning continually draws conflicts within society to the attention of planners, who are put in the position of having to decide on courses of action which are, or at least seem, neutral, and not in favour of any particular section of society. How do planners reconcile the competing demands of members of society, the political and the technocratic?
When Underwood argued in 1991 that planners should consider their ‘client’ to be planet earth, she suggested that one advantage of doing so (besides the fact that this would benefit all, and not just those powerful interests who are more able to weigh into planning processes) was that it was measurable. Certainly, to some extent there are measurable aspects to earth’s systems. The number of different kinds of species present in an area for example, can be surveyed and counted, a process leading to assessments of ‘biodiversity’. However, the way in which that biodiversity is then valued is a far more contentious matter.

Biodiversity and other concepts and measurements are fluid and contestable, as, would argue the interpretive policy analysts and planners, is all ‘knowledge’. So who decides what knowledge is considered important and pertinent and how much weight is given to it? How is such knowledge made legitimate and used as the basis of decision-making? Finally, even in the circumstances that clear knowledge about some aspect of the environment is available, how are decisions then made on the course of action required by such knowledge?

2.5 SPACES OF ENGAGEMENT: THE POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY

As Fischer and Hajer (1999) have noted, the politics of sustainability, though emerging out of a progressive discourse within the UN, can be credited to the actions of environmentalists and pressure groups. Big environmental Non-governamental organisations (ENGOs) were actively involved in UN discussions and in making a strong case for environmental protection. Following the widespread acceptance of the concept of sustainable development and governance, authors have argued that the radical and critical potential of ENGOs has been lost, as everyone appears to be speaking the same language, and with its lack of definition this means that no progress is made. As already mentioned, one way in which critical scholars have approached this problem is through differentiating types of sustainability. Eric Neumayer for example talks about ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ sustainability (Neumayer 2010). Others make distinctions between ‘ecological modernization’ and ‘deep ecology’ or ‘deep green’ approaches (e.g. Hajer & Fischer 1999). Whitehead notes the varied roots of ideas of sustainability in Spaces of Sustainability, and here too attention is drawn to the diverse perspectives on how people should interact with
external nature (the ‘environment’), and society. This approach allows those critical of the (lack of) action being taken to critique and engage on the basis of discursive interpretation.

Although some argue that the discourses of sustainability and governance have resulted in the co-option or neutering of critical voices such as those of the ENGOs (Newell 2001) it is equally possible to find examples of strong direct action movements today, of which anti-fracking protests, and protest movements against the keystone oil pipeline to the tar sands in Alberta, Canada. It seems clear that in fact, in contrast to the idea that we have entered a postpolitical era, engagement with the state remains strong and is being acted out in new and changing spaces of engagement (Anderson 2004). Peaceful occupation of contentious sites has long been a strategy of protest groups, disputes over tree-felling, nuclear weapons (such as the famous Clapham Common protest), and road-building forming the most common examples. This activity has not been changed by rhetoric on sustainable development being adopted by governments, since on contentious issues like this, it is easy to see point to the meaninglessness of words compared to action. Whether or not such actions have become more or less successful over time, and whether there has been any difference made to them by the rhetoric of sustainability and governance is a question for other research to answer. For the purposes of this research it is enough to note that such political contestation remains alive and well, and is increasing in sophistication, and seems to complicate at least the idea of an era of the ‘postpolitical’ so feared by Swyngedouw.

There are two ways in which the spatialities of ‘environmental direct action’ (Anderson 2004) impact upon this study. The first is in the sense that people involved in such actions may find these spaces inspiring as well as network-building opportunities for future endeavours, which may take similar or different forms. In this way, networks of activism are enhanced and continued. Secondly, and related to the first implication is that other alternative movements and actions are likely to have overlaps with and relations to EDA, and may see themselves as positioned and identified in particular ways in relation to EDA as a strategy. These relationships and understandings have implications for the identity of people involved in Low Impact Development, and will be discussed in the empirical chapters. EDA also of course has implications for how LIDers are viewed by the established authorities, depending on
whether or not they are seen as being part of the same thing, and what the reaction of the authorities is to that thing.

However, spaces of engagement, like politics, are not limited to that which is visible and dramatic. One potential space of engagement with the planning system has to do with the possibility for more extensive discursive engagement, potentially a subversive activity itself. In this respect, sustainable development as a discourse not only does not flatten stronger environmental critiques, but provides the space in which those with ‘stronger’ sustainability ideas can be brought in, with some degree of skill, through a process of rational argument (Flyvbjerg 1998). As such, the discursive space of sustainable development can also seen as a space of engagement and contestation which can have material results.

A final and related point is that beyond the visible politics of direct action, and even the slightly more obscure politics of influencing policy through rational argument, there are arguments to the effect that political action is evident through myriad ways in ‘subpolitics’ (Beck 1994; Holzer & Sørensen 2003). Zamwel et al have suggested for instance that subpolitics are evident in the actions of people who consider themselves to be part of the ‘voluntary simplicity’ movement (Zamwel et al. 2014) – something which as mentioned is similar and related to the idea of low impact development. The extent to which action is considered political is related to what is considered to be power. The following section explores some of the ways in which power has been conceptualised in geography and puts these in relation to governance of sustainable development via the planning system.

2.6 Power in the Governance of Sustainable Development

Power is a much-contested concept within human geography and associated disciplines such as political science and sociology. Within political geography, as Allen points out, the ‘instrumental’ conception of power – that is, power held ‘over’ others or the power to bend the will of others (also sometimes called coercive power) has predominated over a conception of power as facilitative or collaborative (Allen 2003). These two notions of power are very different:
[Instrumental power] considers power to be an instrument of domination and constraint, [whereas facilitative power] stresses its potential for empowerment. Where one starts from the position is all about shaping the will of others, the other thinks of it as a means of enablement.” (Allen 2003, p.96)

Allen goes on to note however that in practice both senses of power are blurred. Certainly in the case of governance as a theoretical and practical proposition, it is difficult to clearly identify which types of power may be at play in all cases as there will be a multitude of desirable outcomes for different parties and in most cases all parties are likely to have to compromise. Unravelling expressions of power within such contexts is a complicated process.

Geographers have made valiant attempts to spatialise power. These have often focused on the power that is expressed through ‘scale’, in particular for example scales of government and their role in governing economic development (Smith 1984). If the idea of scale is taken as an abstraction, implicit within it is the notion that power increases with size (i.e. size and level correspond). This is evident in the fact that much of the talk surrounding ‘scale-bending’ or ‘scale-jumping’ involves various conceptualizations of power (for example see Smith 2004). However, due to the lack of clarity and simple correspondence between scale and power in this abstract sense, others have suggested that the concept should be abandoned in favour of a ‘flat ontology’ of networks and nodes (Marston et al. 2005).

The idea that there are, to some extent at least, hierarchical relationships between scales of government still has purchase within the practice of planning and to an extent in more theoretical writings on planning (Allmendinger & Haughton 2007). Though by no means simple, scale as a concept may still allow some insight into particular relationships and socio-spatial articulations of power in a planning context.

In what is still a compelling argument, Swyngedouw noted in 1997, in a chapter entitled Place Matters, But Scale Decides, that: “[s]cale becomes the arena and the moment, both discursively and materially, where sociospatial power relations are contested and compromises are negotiated and regulated.” (Swyngedouw 1997, p.140). In the same chapter, he also states that

“social power… refers to the scale capabilities of individuals and social groups. As power shifts, scale configurations change both in terms of their
nesting and interrelations and in terms of their spatial extent” (Swyngedouw 1997, p.141)

In Swyngedouw’s statements it is clear that the notion of power and control are central to concepts of scale, in fact, in the second quote it would appear that it is power that determines scale rather than the other way around. Scales themselves, insofar as they consist of a spatial extent (size) and relation can be reconfigured based on shifting power. In terms of geographical concepts for understanding the expression of power, scale seems partial and insufficient in its explanatory powers. Consequently, other theorists have posited that looking at a combination of different spatial concepts in conjunction allows a clearer picture of expressions of power. In an effort to grapple for instance, with power as expressed within contentious politics, Leitner et al employ a multitude of spatial concepts, scale, networks, positionality, etc. in order to unpick the varied expressions of power in such interactions (Leitner, Helga et al. 2008).

In his article on the nature of political power, Allen suggests that it takes two main forms: ‘instrumental’ power representing ‘power over’ others, and ‘facilitative’ power referring to the ‘power to’ act (Allen, 2003). This is a crucial difference in the field of human geography in light of the fragmentation in theoretical and empirical approaches within the field. Allen further embellishes the argument by noting that instrumental power is generally perceived as some sort of ‘possession,’ to quote “it can be held, delegated or distributed. Moreover it is held as a capacity, insofar as it may be latent or potential in its effects” (p. 97) Furthermore, it is seen in its simplest form to be centralized and its distribution to follow clear lines of authority “down through an organizational hierarchy.” (p. 97 emphasis added). In its complex form, power is seen to move “upwards and downwards through the different scales of political activity, both transnational and subnational” (p.98). It is clear at least in this conception that scale is of central importance to the geography of power. We might surmise from this definition however that this type of power will generally take on the form of policing as theorized by Foucault. Power over people may be expressed through force, the system of law and so on.

The second form of power that Allen discusses is the facilitative kind, or power conceived as ability to do something. Unlike the instrumental kind of power,
facilitative power is not ‘contained’ within any given scale insofar as scale is conceptualized as a political level corresponding with a territorial area. According to Allen, facilitative power may be shifted and mobilized through networks as well as scales. The facilitative conceptualization of power may denote the ability to control resources in order to obtain desired outcomes. This of course begs the question of what kind of ‘resources.’ To elaborate on this, Allen draws from the theories of Michael Mann to define four types of resource – economic, ideological, political and military (Allen 2003, p.100).

To delve slightly deeper, it is worth taking note of the two types of power that Mann notes are generally the domain of the state namely, despotic power and infrastructural power. Despotnic power refers to what we might associate with the monopoly over ‘legitimate use of force’ – or in other words access to the army and other means of violence. Infrastructural power relates to the level of bureaucratization of the state, essentially the ability of the state to access, collect, store and analyze detailed information about citizens and their activities. More simply, it means “the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm.” (Mann 2003, p.54). Mann also notes that this centralization increases the power of the state to act quickly and flexibly. This infrastructural power can be conceptualized as centrally controlled and administered veins of power and knowledge that extend outwards from the center into every corner of the territory.

Steven Lukes’ conceptualisation of power is also instructive. In Power: A Radical View (Lukes 1974) he suggests that there are three types of power. His discussion allows a more complex understanding of power relations within and between the state and other actors in that it breaks down power into ‘decision-making’, ‘non-decision-making’ and ‘ideological’. In the first case, power is simply ascribed to those in the most obvious situations who appear on the surface of things to be making decisions including vetoing the decisions of others and proposing new courses of action. In the second case, power is expressed through the ability to control what items are put on the agenda for political debate. In the third ‘face’ of power, that is, ideological power is contained the idea of a form of control through influencing people’s thoughts and ideas. This notion corresponds with the idea of governmentality proposed by Foucault
(Foucault 1991) and the suggestion that people will self-govern on the basis of accepted ideologies, rendering the job of government easier.

For the most part, these discussions of power are very state-centric. Certainly Mann’s conception, based on the ‘autonomous power of the state’ is designed to understand the particular forms of power and indeed technologies of power (Rose & Miller 1992) as enacted by governmental institutions. These conceptions also raise questions about the agency of humans in the face of structures such as the state. However, the understanding of power as facilitative and associational presents the opportunity to consider human agents as potentially active and powerful actors in their own rights.

As Allen (2008, p.1615) notes, Anthony Giddens first characterized power as

‘an element of action, [referring] to the range of interventions of which an agent is capable. Power in this broad sense is equivalent to the transformative capacity of human action: the capability of human beings to intervene in a series of events so as to alter their course’ (Anthony Giddens 1977, p.348).

This concept of power accords with Hannah Arendt’s ideas of associational power:

“[T]he power to act or intervene to change the way things are is a key aspect of Hannah Arendt’s thought. Although conceived less as an instrumental tool, power for Arendt… is a more tenuous production, something that springs up between people when they come together in mutual action to further a common purpose… [T]he thrust of power for her is associational, empowering in and of its own right, and designed to make a difference that enriches public life.” (Allen 2008, p.1615)

Through the work of Benhabib, 1992 and Benhabib, 1996, and others, Arendt’s views have been used to construct a more collaborative, enabling dimension to power that, within a feminist political framework, is positive in terms of the gains made, rather than zero-sum. The formation of a common will which transcends particular interests by mobilizing around issues that are faced collectively may bring benefits for all involved, not least through the empowerment of people relating to one another in the pursuit of political ends. As such, it is the power to act together that, for Arendt, is capable of making a difference in the world of public affairs.

This overview of concepts of power and theorists of power as they have impacted on human geography is by necessity limited. Much further discussion could be had about the intricacies of expressions of power within different contexts. However the purpose has been to give an overview of geographical ways of conceptualising power and in
particular to draw attention to questions of structure and agency. In order to avoid tautological issues of finding power in the form that it is sought – an issue noted by Lukes in his discussion of the first ‘face’ of power – this research begins without taking a position on what power is but sets out rather to explore through the contextual material apparent expressions of power. The concepts are instructive in this sense in terms of providing potential understandings of power, power resources, and rationalities and technologies of government as they have been considered in other contexts.

2.7 Politics of Knowledge

A significant aspect of the governance of sustainable development in the planning context is the issue of knowledge (Rydin 2010) and so the review considers the role of knowledge in the planning system and its relationship with power (e.g. Anderson 2008). In addition, Shove and Walker have suggested that social scientists should be engaged in examining ‘cultural and political assumptions’, and the ‘careful scrutiny of the historical evolution of guiding images and ideals, of their circulation across different social and spatial scales, and of resistances to them’ (Shove & Walker 2007, p.765). As such the review looks at relevant geographical (and planning) studies that have engaged in this way with sustainable development as a concept.

Alongside the potential for governmentality and the co-option of dissenting voices through a process of governance is the power of technocracy. This is the access to and control over ‘knowledge’, ‘science’ or ‘evidence’, that is often associated with formal government, and which results in the uneven power relations between non-state actors (and indeed amongst different state actors) as experts are called upon to provide the evidence needed for a particular decision to be made. The relationship between science, knowledge, or evidence and decision-making processes is a very interesting one, and by no means as clear-cut as it might seem. This has been the subject of much work in the social sciences, science and technology studies, and interpretive policy analysis (e.g. Irwin 1995; Fischer 2000; Solesbury 2002).

A good empirical example illustrating this point is provided by Bell and Park (2006). In relation to water management in New South Wales, the authors illustrate how following a lengthy and involved process in which participants gave up their time and
energy to come to novel agreements about how to manage the water resources in an area, the government department responsible decided to ignore the results of this process and instead make decisions based on scientific evidence, which had not been provided to the participants (Bell & Park 2006). Bell and Park refer to this as a failure of meta-governance rather than a failure of governance. As mentioned earlier, simply being able to conceive of this as a failure of metagovernance potentially opens up spaces for critique of governance processes. It clearly demonstrates the differential power that is connected to access to legitimate knowledge. In the case in question, the process could have been criticized for failing to provide and to explain all the relevant scientific data at the start of the process. However, the issue brings up a wider significant issue, also implied in Swyngedouw’s critique, that is a false consensus fused around ‘accountancy metrics and technocratic environmental management.’

This problematic notion of how to reconcile the social with the technical, or the technocratic and scientific with the democratic is a major political concern (Fischer 2000; Fischer 2009; Jasanoff 2011). For example, Gottweis notes that:

“[G]overnment ... is typically intrinsically linked to knowledge: to scientific theories, technological practices, experiments or economic forecasts. This ‘knowledge dependence’ of government has important implication for policymaking. As the legitimacy of policymaking relies often on technical and scientific arguments, power becomes intertwined with knowledge: the exercise of power is predicated upon the deployment of knowledge. At the same time knowledge is always underdetermined – i.e. that, faced with choices, policymakers tend to adopt interpretations, theories, lines of research or arguments that enable them to monopolize areas of problem definition, dismiss interpretations of competitors or answer to the social demands of a particular class, the state, a political party, or a church. This underdetermination is overcome by non-scientific power interests which relate power internally and essentially to scientific knowledge, a phenomenon described by Foucault as the power-knowledge nexus. ... Not only actors and institutions matter, but discourses, ideas, technologies, scientific theories, representations and, in general, knowledge. (Gottweis 2003, p.256).

In other words, perhaps the most important way in which the state retains power over processes of governance is through the production (social construction) of the subjects or objects of governance, a process enacted through the definition of subjects through the use of legitimised knowledge: discourses, ideas, technologies and scientific theories, presumed neutral (a favourite fiction of modernist thinking), are presented in a way that results in particular conclusions, shaping the processes of governance, no matter how many other actors might be involved in the processes.
From this we can deduce the politics of contestation may be expressed also through this arena (Carmel 2005, p.41). As Carmel notes:

“Processes of contestation are partly symbolic struggles about defining what might be contested.... “The production of knowledge and the terms in which such knowledge is couched is crucial to identifying the limits of political contestation. Political struggle is a struggle for the ‘recognition which gives the authority to impose the legitimate knowledge of the sense of the social world, its present meaning and the direction in which it is going and should go’ (Bourdieu 2000, p.185)” (Carmel 2005, p.42 emphasis added)

Two significant points arise out of the above. Firstly, the extent to which participants in governance processes are active and self-aware agents with the ability to question, dissent and participate on their own terms. Of course, it would be foolish to try and generalise, however this is a question that should be asked of any governance process, rather than assumed one way or another in a theoretical way. Secondly, the role of knowledge becomes paramount. Who defines what counts as legitimate knowledge and indeed ways of knowing, and how much credence is afforded to different knowledges and ways of knowing within any governance process becomes highly significant. These questions will be returned to in Chapters 5 and 6.

The conceptualisations of governance raise a number of questions and possibilities. Firstly, if we presume the possibility of active and aware social actors, and that governance is becoming a more common form of governing, then new and real spaces of engagement are likely to be springing up. However, as Swyngedouw warns, the hegemony and in some cases the monopoly over legitimate (self-legitimised) discourses and knowledges means that governance processes have the potential of simply co-opting voices of dissent, because participants in the process do not have control over the legitimate forms of knowledge and discourse.

One way in which ‘other’ knowledges have been looked at is through the lens of ‘local knowledge’(Fischer 2000; Nygren 1999). However both academically and in the context of governance this is easily seen to be a disempowering concept, suggesting that there is something different, and perhaps irrational or unscientific about local knowledge (Nygren 1999). An alternate yet similar conception is that of ‘tacit’ knowledge (Dickens 1996). Scott makes important interventions into the idea of knowledge as it relates to governing, suggesting that government/states have a preference for particular epistemologies – ones reliant on technical, simplified,
limited, statistical and quantitative measures based on modernist thinking (Scott 1998). His notion of ‘metis’ is very similar to what Dickens calls ‘tacit’ knowledge. Both overcome the particularisation or peculiarisation of calling knowledge simply ‘local’, or of referring to ‘indigenous technical knowledge’ (Agrawal 1995). Not only within governance processes but also within science more generally, differentiating some knowledge as local or indigenous has the effect of devaluing it, as Agrawal noted in 1995. Raffles suggests considering ‘intimate’ knowledge instead as a category (Raffles 2002).

Knowledge is also the focus of a field of studies known as, science and technology studies (STS), and scholars in this area have suggested the concept of ‘citizen science’ (Irwin 1995). These works and others go some way towards the process of legitimising knowledge produced outside of the institutions – or produced in conjunction with people outside institutions. However, perhaps what is left out is an engagement with the rationalities that legitimise knowledges of different kinds in different contexts. This is no small point in light of Bourdieu suggestion that knowledge is part of a social construction of the world as it is, as well as how it should be. In other words, contestations over what is to be considered legitimate knowledge are contestations not only of ways of seeing, but of ways of being, now and in the future.

2.8 Reflections

This chapter has sought to place the research within the context of governance for sustainable development with particular focus on the planning system. In doing so it has explored the concepts of knowledge, power and politics within the associated literatures. In doing so, it has found that governance literature tends to focus on processes of governance initiated by some form or scale of formal government, rather than focusing on grassroots-initiated governance processes; This has the effect of making it seem as though governance processes are dominated by government and formal politics, leaving a gap in the literatures in terms of understanding the diverse and dynamic roles that citizens can play. Likewise the governance of sustainable development literatures, particularly in relation to planning, struggle to truly incorporate or grapple with the politics of sustainable development, leaning instead
towards criterion-based studies, and holding a strong urban bias as well as a bias towards macro (urban, administrative unit/county, regional) scales.

Governance studies are generally focused on very deliberate, state-initiated processes in which particular actors are invited to participate. In other words, governance tends to be seen a new technology of statecraft, initiated by the state, but increased in sophistication from a simple, hierarchical model of government. However, this concept of governance suffers from the tautological issue of being found to be state-centric (even though this is how it is being defined), and it is guilty of ignoring the more complex politics that exist which are not necessarily always initiated by the state. The ‘empowering of citizens’ (Newman 2005, p.1), may not always be something that happens because the state is looking for a different way of governing.

Enlightening here is Beck’s conceptualisation of reflexive modernisation. Here he states that:

"[A] double world is coming into existence, one part of which cannot be depicted in the other: a chaotic world of conflicts, power games, instruments and arenas which belong to two different epochs, that of 'unambiguous' and that of 'ambivalent' modernity. On the one hand, a political vacuity of the institutions is evolving and, on the other hand, a non-institutional renaissance of the political. The individual subject returns to the institutions of society."

(Beck 1994, p.17)

Beck’s idea here of politics, rather than having disappeared as Swyngedouw argues, is that of a politics changed in form. Albeit writing in 1994, he conceptualises a different relationship between citizen and state, a different kind of politics occurring, much of which is not happening in the arenas of government generally looked at to discover processes of governing. In short:

"Anyone who stares at politics from above and waits for results is overlooking the self-organization of the political, which, - potentially at least - can set many or even all fields of society into motion 'sub-politically'" (Beck 1994, p.17)

What Beck is suggesting, is essentially the mode of governance, or heterarchy that Jessop (1998) describes. However, unlike much of the governance literatures since, Beck’s focus is not only the state-initiated and controlled processes of governing called governance, but on what is happening ‘sub-politically’ (or sub-governmental to make the distinction more clear perhaps), through ‘self-organization’. Such sub-political self-organization suggests networks, groups, organisations, etc., engaged in
political processes of governance and change, based on their own discourses and knowledges.

In the respect of the latter types of processes of governance, the state is no longer necessarily assumed to be taking on the role of metagovernor. State actors or organisations may participate in the process of governing however, and then a shared discourse would be needed, as well as mutually-beneficial outcomes of the process. There is a possibility then, of the discourse itself, as well as the outcomes acting to produce in a way, a process of metagovernance. Or in other words, I mean to suggest that in such scenarios, the discourse of ‘sustainable development’ might itself become a meta-governance tool, deployed not necessarily in one direction, but forming the basis under which multiple actors with divergent interests and worldviews, may come together to debate, discuss, and attempt to move towards actions which relate to the discourse and goal of sustainable development.

Power, knowledge and ideology come into play in the engagement with ‘the state’, a category which is not treated in this study as uniform, homogenous, and monolithic, but both peopled and comprised of multiple cultures and institutions. The majority of the engagement with the state looked at in this thesis has to do with the engagement with the planning system. It is therefore essential to engage with who and what the planning system is comprised of. The literature therefore looks at the development of planning as a profession, including the types of identity that practicing planners have constructed for themselves in the past, and some consideration for what the various identities might mean for the way planning is enacted. Of particular concern is how planners view the role of knowledge and evidence in planning, and indeed what is considered valid knowledge and evidence. This is a key question for how people might be able to engage with the planning system.

With relation to this, several knowledges of planning are explored in more detail. How planners view themselves relates to the ideology of planning. There are also cultural aspects to the ideology of planning, such as the desire to protect the ‘green and pleasant land’ from the ravages of industrialisation and urbanisation. This pervasive notion has carried on from the time of the industrial revolution, has found fodder in Ebenezer Howard’s Garden Cities movement, and remains to this day possibly the most pervasive idea behind planning. Howard’s three-magnet model
divided city and country, what we might now call urban and rural, along lines which suggested that the urban was social, cultural, and human, and the rural was natural. This binary has seen much attention in the academic literature, particularly recently, however the notion seems to be still crudely applied in planning practice.

A final section of the review looks briefly at spaces of engagement between citizens and the state. This is an important area given the overlap between low impact development and developers, and the spaces and processes of ‘environmental direct action’. The literature on direct actions is thus briefly reviewed in order to consider how the case study might relate to the ideas, goals, and set of social relations that are contained in, built-up and enhanced through the time-spaces of environmental direct action. Another space of engagement is also considered here – the space of rational argument. This is considered as a potentially different, but nevertheless related method in which people engage with the state. It involves learning the language of the state as well as finding ways to communicate different interpretations. These multiple spaces of engagement will be considered in detail in the thesis with relation to the case study.

In the following chapter, an analytical framework is introduced based on ideas of dialectical thinking and Henri Lefebvre’s Production of Space model. The intention of using these theories to examine the case study is to open up spaces of possibility intellectually in which to explore the ways in which citizens are engaging not only with the state through governance processes but also in the process of understanding what sustainable development might mean in practice, through the incorporation of ways of being into ways of knowing and in the production of new spaces.
3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter set out some of the ways in which governance, sustainable development and the politics thereof – particularly in the planning system – have been written about and understood. A strong focus of these literatures is on what can be considered political and how this is expressed, i.e. power and knowledge. In a different way, this chapter is also about power and knowledge, though here the focus is on the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of this research itself – the knowledge and power of the researcher. The chapter begins with the basic theoretical or analytical position and develops into the more specific details of the research process, including what information was sought and gathered and from whom, and how this was interpreted.

In connecting ways of knowing and being with the low impact development movement, the analytical approach draws on Henri Lefebvre’s Production of Space (Lefebvre 1991) and considers alternative ways of knowing and being as part of the production of alternative spaces. In breaking apart this model to conceived, perceived and lived spaces, the chapter examines how a study would go about exploring an alternative production of space, drawing on similar attempts (Halfacree 2007) but with a greater focus on the politics involved in the interface of mainstream and alternative.

To provide the initial basis for understanding the Production of Space model, and the crucial idea of dialectics contained within it, David Harvey’s reading of Marxian dialectics is explored in detail. From this position the chapter goes on to consider the pragmatics of conducting research fitting to the analytical framework. The approach of a single case study is defended and details of the sources of information are provided. In the final part of the chapter I reflect upon my positonality including my political stance with relation to the project, matters of ethics and obligation, aspects of participation, and the potential to make the research more ‘action’ oriented.
3.2 The Production of Space

The ontological underpinnings of this research are broadly based on David Harvey’s interpretation of Marxist dialectics as explicated in *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (1996). This perspective is further backed up through drawing in particular on Henri Lefebvre’s *Production of Space* (1991) and *Critique of Everyday Life* (Lefebvre 2002). Some elements of this ontological or analytical framework will be explored here, along with how Lefebvre’s work has been used in similar research and how its usage differs here.

Dialectics

In *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Harvey sets out to explicate what a Marxist dialectics looks like and how it should inform a research programme. Harvey sets out eleven propositions that pertain to Marxist dialectics as he understands them.

The first four propositions that Harvey makes all pertain to the nature of ‘things’, and in particular the nature of things as temporary permanences that are in existence only due to the flows, processes, fluxes and relations that sustain them (pp. 48-51). As such, all things are contingent, processual and in continual flux and transformation. Things are also heterogeneous and internally contradictory. The task of research then is to look not to things for a kind of reality, but to examine the processes and flows which contribute to the constitution of things.

The fifth proposition is concerned with the notion of time. Namely that ‘space and time are neither absolute nor external to processes but are contingent and contained with them.’ P. 53. Citing Lefebvre, Harvey notes that

“There are multiple spaces and times (and space-times) implicated in different physical, biological, and social processes. The latter all produce… their own forms of space and time. Processes do not operate in but actively construct space and time and in so doing define distinctive scales for their development.”(p. 53)

Harvey’s sixth principle is that ‘parts and wholes are mutually constitutive of each other’. He notes that this is a fundamental principle which operates across all of Marx’s work and also overlaps with Giddens’ structuration theory: agency constitutes structure, and structure constitutes agency (Giddens 1984). In a fundamental way, this
thinking leads to a research programme that recognises the significance of the researcher in the process. Or as Harvey puts it:

“In the process of capturing the powers that reside in those ecological and economic systems which are relevant to me, I actively reconstitute or transform them within myself even before I project them back to reconstitute or transform the system from which those powers were initially derived.” (ibid.)

Following from the idea that whole constitutes part and vice versa, Harvey outlines a seventh principle; one which again has profound implications for a program of research. Since wholes constitute parts, and parts constitute wholes in a *mutually constitutive* fashion, one cannot be said to come from, or before the other. This important point renders a quest for causal linearity an erroneous project. Drawing on Whitehead (1920) he notes that:

“There can be ‘no explanation’ of ‘nature as process’ or the passing of time. ‘All that can be done is to use language which may speculatively demonstrate them.” (Harvey 1996, p.54)

The eighth principle relates to how transformative behaviour – “creativity” – arises out of the contradictions within and between things and systems. Related to this is the ninth principle, which argues that the natural state of things is one of change. Here Harvey quotes Ollman in saying:

“given that change is always part of what things are, [our] research problem [can] only be *how, when, and into what* [things or systems] change and why they sometimes appear not to change.” (Ollman 1990, p.34 in Harvey 1996, p.54)

This is a fundamental point in relation to this research project, which seeks to understand how, when and into what change can be observed in the case of the low impact development movement and its process and progress in Wales. It is worth quoting at length on this particular principle as it sheds further light on the research aims.

“Since transformative action… arises out of contradiction, it follows that it can in principle be found anywhere and everywhere in the physical, biological and social world… To put it this way does not imply, however, that all moments within some continuous process are equally significant as creative points of transformative activity. The *theoretical and empirical research task is to identify those characteristic “moments” and “forms” (i.e., “things”) embedded within continuous flows which can produce radical transformations or where, conversely, “gatekeeping” or other mechanisms might be
constructed so as to give a “thing” or a system... qualities of identity, integrity, and relative stability.” (Harvey 1996, p. 55, emphasis added)

The concerns emphasised in this quote are very much the concerns of this project—though expressed as a question throughout. Can Lammas and the associated Low Impact Development movement in which it is embedded be seen as a ‘moment’, a ‘form’ that may produce radical transformation? To what extent are the current systems of planning acting as gatekeeping mechanisms in a positive or negative way towards this and what aspects of this gatekeeping mechanism could be improved?

The two final principles set out by Harvey are equally important to this research endeavour. In principle ten, Harvey notes that the process of research itself is a process in which temporary permanences are created in the form of ‘concepts, abstractions, theories, and institutionalised structures of knowledge which stand to be supported or undermined by continuing processes of enquiry’. Significantly, this implies a relationship between researcher and researched not as one observing an object from outside, but as two active subjects ‘each of which necessarily internalizes something from the other by virtue of the processes that connect them.’ In a more detailed sense:

“Marx... insists that only by transforming the world can we transform ourselves; that it is impossible to understand the world without simultaneously changing it as well as ourselves. Formal dialectical logic cannot, therefore, be presupposed as an ontological quality of nature: to do so would be to superimpose a particular mental logic on the world as an act of mind over matter. The dialectical unity of mental and material activities... can never be broken, only attenuated or temporarily alienated.” (p.56)

The final principle explicated by Harvey is that the exploration of ‘possible worlds’ is integral to dialectical thinking (p.56). As he puts it:

“The exploration of potentialities for change, for self-realization, for the construction of new collective identities and social orders, new totalities (e.g., social ecosystems) and the like is a fundamental motif in Marxian dialectical thinking.”

And further that:

“Bookchin likewise argues that education (the exploration of possibilities) rather than deduction (spinning out the implications of known truths) or induction (discovering the general laws regulating what already exists) is the
central motif of dialectical praxis as well as the primary purpose of knowledge construction.”

The implications for the research process then are multiple and profound. Again it is worth quoting at length:

“Dialectical inquiry necessarily incorporates… the building of ethical, moral, and political choices (values) into its own process and sees the constructed knowledges that result as discourses situated in a play of power directed towards some goal or other. Values and goals (what we might call the ‘teleological’ as well as the ‘Utopian’ moment of reflective thought) are not imposed as universal abstractions from outside but arrived at through a living process (including intellectual enquiry) embedded in forms of praxis and plays of power attaching to the exploration of this or that potentiality (in ourselves as well as in the world we inhabit).” (ibid)

Adopting a Marxian dialectical approach in the context of this research then involves an exploration of personal sets of values, beliefs, political choices, morals and ethics, as inherent parts of a research objective. Adopting a dialectical research process has meant a continual questioning of the ethical, moral and political choices and preconceptions I as a researcher was bringing to the research and examining these throughout the research, revisiting, questioning, and reflecting upon these, seeing research as a living process and the production of a written piece of work as a part of that process as well, also one imbued with ethical, moral and political choices, one of which is the selection of a dialectical approach to begin with!

The last principle of dialectics encourages - indeed requires - a self-consciousness about positionality, a recognition of one’s own power in relation to other sources of power, but beyond that, a conscious positioning of self in relation to ‘plays of power’. Power is not however an easy concept to either define or locate, in processes or in “things” (people, systems, structures, etc.). Indeed the process of attempting to define and locate power within the processes and things involved in this research has itself been an exploration of researcher positionality within these processes – or in other words there has been a dialectical relationship between attempts to understand power as a concept and researcher positionality.

In more dogmatic understandings of Marxism, it might be assumed that dialectical materialism would necessarily need to pertain to class relations. However, in the context of this research, the principles above are applied to a contemporary, globalized, fragmentary, capitalist system (Harvey 2012), and are open to an anarchist
re-interpretation of ‘revolution’. In such a context, though class relations and revolution may look different, it still makes sense, from a research point of view to draw on Harvey’s Marxism-inspired dialectics with the aim of: “identify[ing] those characteristic “moments” and “forms” (i.e., “things”) embedded within continuous flows which can produce radical transformations or where, conversely, “gatekeeping” or other mechanisms might be constructed so as to give a “thing” or a system… qualities of identity, integrity, and relative stability.” (Harvey 1996a, p.54).

The conception of transformation might look different, but the ‘moments’ and ‘forms’ that harbour the space for radical transformation are as important as they ever were.

As such, with a focus on the potential of a governance for sustainability in which active, radical ideas are potentially transformative moments, the research aims to explore these possible worlds and to identify to some respect the processes and flows in which these are embedded and how these processes either support or challenge the potential of radical transformation.

**Dialectics and Trialectics: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space**

Dialectical thinking has been given an important geographical focus by Henri Lefebvre through the *Production of Space* (Lefebvre 1991). Lefebvre’s triad model of ‘representational space’ ‘representations of space’ and ‘spatial practice’ takes the an understanding of dialectics into space, at the same time disrupting the binary thinking that can be associated with a dialectical model. Lefebvre’s model provides a means to hold onto the processual in an understanding of the production of space and to consider in detail the interactions between the mental, the physical and the social, without succumbing to mind/body dichotomous thinking. Lefebvre’s work gained prominence in the Anglophone geography world in the 1990s following the translation of *The Production of Space* into English, and has since been written about extensively in geography and political philosophy (e.g. Brenner 2009; Elden 2001; Elden 2010; Merrifield 1993; Merrifield, Andy 2000; Shields 1999). Edward Soja took on the model and used it as a basis for a ‘trialectical’ understanding of urban space using Los Angeles as an example (Soja 1996).

As Soja has pointed out, one of the most important contributions made by Lefebvre is a continued refusal to operate in binary thinking. He maintained ‘a deep critique not
just of [the] oppositional dichotomy of power but of all forms of categorical or binary logic.’ (Soja 1996, p. 7). As Soja goes on to note:

“[Lefebvre] always insisted, two terms (and the oppositions and antinomies built around them) are never enough. Il y a toujours l’Autre, there is always an-Other term, with Autre/Other capitalized to emphasize its critical importance. When faced with a choice confined to either/or, Lefebvre creatively resisted by choosing instead an-Other alternative, marked by the openness of the both/and also…, with the “also” reverberating back to disrupt the categorical closures implicit in the either/or logic.” (Soja 1996, p. 7)

In the context of this research an important binary, set up from the start in the title of the thesis, and unsettled throughout the thesis is one of the ‘mainstream’ and the ‘alternative’. This ‘unsettling’ is a vital concern in this thesis for the reasons outlined above; because to take these categories too rigidly would be to contribute to the problem, and to restrict thought and possibility. The aim of this research then is not to define these things but to strive towards a sense of what these ideas might mean to others and as a result, what the alternative is thought of and practiced as, and what it is an alternative to. Doing so involves incorporating an expanded notion of time since the motivations of many people adopting low impact lifestyles relate to an understanding of time and trajectory, i.e. the destructive and self-destructive long-term impacts of current mainstream lifestyles and behaviours.

Lefebvre’s model for the Production of Space is based on thinking about three, dialectically intertwined elements of space: spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces:

Spatial practice refers to the processual, the continuity via daily routines (later perhaps conceptualised as rhythms (Lefebvre 2004)) of everyday life, social production and reproduction and the aspects that comprise this, movement, mobility, processes and flows.

Representational spaces are closely linked to spatial practice. These are, for Lefebvre the embodiment of ‘complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not’ and space as directly lived through these symbolisms (Lefebvre 1991, p. 33 &39).

“This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said… to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs.” (p.39)
Representations of space are: ‘conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers’ (p.38). Moreover ‘conceptions of space tend, with certain exceptions…towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs’ (ibid.).

There is a great deal more that could be said about this model and conceptualisation, however for the moment this is sufficient as a framework for understanding. The research did not follow dogmatically an attempt to define these aspects of the production of space within the case study, however this conceptualisation provided a backdrop for understanding the production of space.

On Marxism, anarchism, and structured coherence

Critical geography has for some time drawn inspiration from Marxist analytical theory, as well as feminist theory, post-colonial theory and post-structuralism. More recently however, anarchist theory is making a resurgence in human geography (Springer 2013; Springer et al. 2012). I see this research as being positioned in the cusp of these two related theoretical traditions. At the heart of discussions of transformation is the question of whether small and disparate actions are cumulatively sufficient to address the social and environmental injustices and destruction wrought by unchecked capitalism and neoliberal governmental regimes. This research does not begin with an assumption about this but instead is focused on exploring this question. Theoretically and analytically therefore, it begins from a relatively agnostic position, while taking inspiration from prominent Marxist theorists, who, as it turns out, have struggled with the same question:

“Are you an anarchist?” He responded politely, “No. Not now.” “Well then,” I said, “what are you now?” He smiled. “A Marxist, of course… so that we can all be anarchists some time in the future.” (Soja 1996, p.33 describing his first meeting with Lefebvre in 1978)

Has the time come when we can all be anarchists? Certainly it seems that in an age where fragmentary, global capitalism is such at the mobilising workers and understanding the world through a lens of class relations is beginning to seem nearly impossible, that it would make sense for the critical left to also be a global, fragmentary movement, broadly aligned in terms of principles of social and environmental justice. And indeed, it would seem that this is in fact the case and
perhaps has always been. Marxism has and does however, continue to offer one of the most programmatic and insightful bodies of analysis into the destructive effects of capitalism and so is worth, as Lefebvre did, maintaining as a home base, as Soja puts it

“[Lefebvre’s] insistence [on the problematic interplay between social production and reproduction] was never more (or less) than a point of departure, an explicitly Marxian home base from which to begin a longer, more meandering and endless journey to still unexplored Other spaces (while never forgetting that there was always a place to return home when necessary, for nourishment, identity, insight, and political choice.)” P.33

Similarly, this work takes Marxist thought as an underlying ontology, while retaining the freedom to explore beyond dogmatic understandings both of Marxist thought, and of potential critical actions in the face of capitalist hegemony. Indeed, a question posed is whether low impact development as a movement is a strong incarnation of anarchism in practice that can be most usefully analysed through such a lens in terms of considering its potential impact in a transition towards more sustainable (in a sense of socially and environmentally equitable) living.

A particular concern of Lefebvre’s, in spatializing Marxism and in disrupting binary thinking, was the incorporation of the corporeal, an introduction or re-introduction of the body, as well as the environment: in nature, soil, and how they, and the bodily and everyday aspects of existence, are profoundly and intimately connected to the conditions of social production and reproduction (Soja 1996, p. 48-51). In essence, he replaced labour with the everyday in order to draw attention to the myriad of interconnected and bodily relations and inter-relations that are fundamental to the social as well as the economic. It is this melding together of theoretical and philosophical, with corporeal, physical and spatial that renders Lefebvre’s theories such an appropriate basis from which to consider low impact development as an alternative to the mainstream.

**Lefebvre and the rural**

In an example very close to this research both geographically and in terms of approach, Keith Halfacree utilises Lefebvre’s model in order to conduct a ‘*Trial by space for the radical rural*’ (Halfacree 2007). Halfacree aims here to fill a gap in terms of an absence of studies on various alternative lifestyles and movements within geography, in particular ones that focus on the socio-spatial (Halfacree 2006).
Halfacree’s analysis is premised however on a theoretical approach to rural space, that
is, that rural space may be characterized into ‘species’ of rural space, and moreover
that the relative coherence and unity of said species of rural space is significant in
terms of harmony and the possibilities for social reproduction. This is of course a
valid view, and indeed, structured coherence is a notion that is used by Lefebvre as
well as Harvey. However, this premise begs the question of who determines how
coherent a space is. Does not this analysis potentially silence quiet voices of dissent as
well as lack consideration of the voices that have been so effectively silenced as to not
be present? In short, there are normative questions behind the decision to judge
typologies of rural space as coherent or not, which are not made explicit in
Halfacree’s analysis.

Nevertheless, Halfacree’s analysis is instrumental in allowing for a re-
conceptualisation of rural space through drawing attention to an absence of serious
academic analysis (representations of space?) of the radical rural. Having detailed
productivist and post-productivist understandings of rural space, Halfacree introduces
the radical rural as the only post-productivist species of rural space

“The previous three species of post-productivism, although seemingly
contradictory at first sight, nevertheless may be unified at the meta level
through their basis in capitalist spatial involution. In contrast, what I’m calling
‘radical visions’ strive for the production of a truly different form of rural
space. Consideration of such visions not only extends the scope of rural
possibilities but also raises key issues concerning the ideological
underpinnings of the other species of rural space ‘on the table’ today. Radical
visions imagine produced rather than induced difference: they seek to ‘shatter’
the ‘system’ … and take rural development in a fundamentally different
direction to that which dominates today. Specifically, a radical rural is not
‘internally acceptable’ to the spatial ‘logic’ of capitalism in its rural setting.”
(Halfacree 2007, p. 131)

Whether or not the radical rural in the end does or will provide a significant and
serious challenge to the mainstream capitalist involution into rural space is an open
question, and for Halfacree this suggests that:

“[N]ot least because ‘radical politics has to begin and end in everyday life’
(Merrifield 2002, p.79), what we now need is engaged research reporting on
the trial as it evolves; acknowledging space as always embodied and
dynamic.” (Halfacree 2007, p. 138)

To a certain degree, this research can be considered part of such a programme of
inquiry, however the explicit aim here is framed somewhat differently. Rather than
considering this a trial by space for the radical rural, this research, which seeks to explore the embodied and dynamic aspects of the radical rural, is concerned more explicitly with the ways in which politics, power and knowledge interact and come into play in space. It can be seen as another Lefebvrian analysis of rural space, however the framing here, relating to governance and sustainable development, suggests that the significant factor is perhaps not necessarily the rurality, yet that rural space and particularly its dynamism is often overlooked in sustainable development discourses, to the detriment of these discourses and the radical movement.

Low impact development then is seen as a rural expression of a wider radical movement that has an urban as well as a rural face. This rural expression of the potential for subversion, disruption, transition and change seems under-researched in the literatures on governance, sustainable development and even transition. Unlike some urban expressions of potential transformation which are by necessity temporally limited, the rural expression of this is potentially longer-term and in many ways self-sustaining. As such, the everyday realities of this particular expression of an ‘alternative’ are highly significant in an understanding of the potential for disruption and transformation. Adopting a Lefebvrian-inspired approach allows a continual re-focusing between the concrete and abstract, the embodied and lived, and the removed and representative. As such it allows a consideration of both the detailed and the broad, in relation to the concept of governance for sustainable development.

Lefebvrian socio-spatial analysis highlights the importance of an understanding of how people conceive of, perceive and act or live within space; of keeping an open mind as to the nature of space from the start, and abandoning preconceptions about what types of space exist and how these can be defined and typologized. This is a form of hermeneutic analysis which acknowledges that the human agent involved in the production of space is not necessarily ‘coherent’; and that the spaces produced by them are multiplicitous. In allowing an account of the multiplicity of space to emerge, it is possible to understand more fully the dialectics that exist for people, not only in terms of their own conceived, perceived and lived spaces, but also in the relationships between the conceived spaces of inhabitants as compared to those of planners and professionals, whose relationship with these spaces is arguably governed by different rules and logics. The representations of space that emerge, and are allowed to emerge,
are outcomes of multiple complex and contested interactions between conceived, perceived and lived spaces in situ.

### 3.3 From Ontology to Epistemology

Adopting an analytical approach on the basis of Harvey’s Marxian dialectics, and Lefebvre’s production of space model suggested that the research process should involve an exploration of perceived, conceived and lived spaces through some form of interpretive analysis. Moreover, following Halfacree it was clear at least that the way in which space was conceived, perceived and lived would depend on who was doing the conceiving, perceiving and living. Initial thoughts about how to explore this involved considering a multi-scalar analysis, in particular looking at how a particular geographic space was understood at different policy levels. However, even initial explorations revealed that at any level of policy there existed an enormous diversity of conceptions of space in part due to the number of agencies and departments that exist at every scale.

Perceived and lived space on the other hand were more immediate, grounded in a physicality of space, produced dialectically through embodied interactions, as well as through conceptions, thoughts, dialogues, and written words. However even in these cases it was clear that even at the very immediate level, actions and interactions were informed through connections with wider networks, facilitated through numerous means. Nevertheless, the analytical framework suggested that at very least, some grounding in physical space was called for.

**Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity**

Human geography has a rich history of thinking about researcher positionality and the need for reflexivity. Feminist geography in particular has contributed to understandings of knowledge as partial and situated (Haraway 1988; Haraway 2003; Rose 1997). Recognising this to be the case, I involved a process of reflexivity in my research from the beginning. This entailed keeping a research diary of observations relating to researcher position in relation to research subjects. As Rose (1997) points out, the results of such a process are themselves by no means straightforward. I could
only guess for example at how I was perceived and piece together my knowledge of this through interactions over time.

Positionality in human geography has come from a lineage of feminist geography that initially started with a focus on gender, but quickly moved on to considering the multiple, overlapping categories of identity that may influence research, particularly in terms of uneven power relations.

My identity as a researcher seemed perhaps the most important and dominant category of identity that influenced my interactions. However, I was also coming to this research as mixed-race, Anglophone (and non-Welsh speaking), female, educated, and arguably relatively conventional/mainstream individual. Most of these features meant that I blended in (almost too well) with a stream of other female researchers in their twenties and thirties who had or were focusing on Lammas. A list of research publications available on the Lammas website for example, as well as the five or six other researchers I met in the course of my own research indicates that so far at least, it seems to be mainly women who are interested in this material. This may simply be coincidence, or there may be more complex reasons. In any case, there seems to be a gendered dimension to the researchers. The impact of this on my research was that I fit into this category that people were already familiar with. Since the research participants were a diverse rather than a homogenous group, assessing the impacts of gender in relation to the research would be difficult.

Race, age, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness and other dimensions of identity also played some role in the research though it is very hard to try to sum up what impacts precisely these things had. As already mentioned, most the researchers coming through were female and most were around my age. This led occasionally to us being mistaken for each other and at one point someone commented that we all seemed similarly youthful. Being both younger and less experienced in the matters of concern than all of my research subjects did have an influence upon the ways in which we interacted. Conscious both that I had much to learn from my research participants and comparatively little to offer, as well as of being part of a stream of researchers taking up valuable time (some of whom paid people to be interviewed, something I was unable to do), there was a great deal of awareness on my part of a kind of indebtedness or at very least gratitude towards my research participants.
The legacy of other researchers also played a significant role in terms of positionality. Past research had been instrumental in the emergence of the policy for Low Impact Development and one of the original founders of Lammas, Dr. Larch Maxey, was also an academic. In addition the work, freelance and sometimes funded, of academics had been useful in terms of building Lammas’ case, and ongoing research on the website was bolstering the profile and legitimacy of the Lammas project, a topic returned to in Chapter 5. As such, there was a degree of openness towards researchers, though there was also a sense that researchers could and should potentially be useful to the project. This legacy also led me to question my own objectives with the research. I had a vague sense that I wanted to provide a thorough but even-handed critique of the processes that were preventing or making difficult low impact development. However, I also wanted to maintain an openness to the possibility that I might find things that would change my mind or perspective about low impact development. In short, I was eager to listen to multiple perspectives in as much depth as possible and to draw my own conclusions while keeping something of a critical distance. This desire to remain open to all possibilities affected my decisions about choice of research method. For example, in order to be able to consider this Participatory Action Research, I would have had to define from the start the research participants, a process that I felt would have limited what I was able to do.

Normative Position

The above section sets out an analytical framework that deals with questions of ontology as well as to a degree, epistemology. One of the important factors that the dialectical approach raises is that the researcher is not an empty vessel, unaffected by the research process. As such, it seems important to recognise the conceptual/practical suppositions I held even before beginning this particular research project. These ideas had been developed through previous research projects, reading, and the myriad other interactions that impact upon thought and belief. In Doing Ethnographies Crang and Cook reflect on how during the course of a research project such myriad influences come into play that affect the thinking of the researcher (Crang & Cook 2007). It seems appropriate to outline the direction of my thinking at the outset of the project as these normative propositions influenced the framing of the research as well.
The position that I started from included the following ideas or ontological beliefs: 1) That sustainable development as a concept is open to interpretation rather than having a fixed definition; 2) That agents involved in the production of space, including those within state institutions, are individuals with their own rational and ‘more than rational’ (Whitehead et al. 2011) ways of looking at things, (as well as enactors of agendas and predefined processes), and that this has implications for their processes of decision-making; 3) That governance as a process is not limited to the formal institutions of government and the formal documents produced through governmental processes; and finally 4) That moving towards ‘sustainable development’ in the sense of development that ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations’ and that balanced development in the planning sense with social and environmental concerns, is fundamentally a good idea and one which is potentially broad enough to unite people towards a common goal.

These propositions are in part underpinned by a variety of academic literatures consulted early on in the research: on multi-level governance (Bache 2004), metagovernance (Sorensen 2006; Koch & Buser 2006), ‘horizontal and vertical integration’ (Buchs 2009), ‘communicative’ and ‘collaborative’ planning (Booher & Innes 2002; Healey 2006a) and the argumentative turn in policy analysis (Fischer & Forester 1993), and the relationship between non-state actors and processes of governance. In particular, the provocative works of Erik Swyngedouw both in the sense of governance as a method of governmentality (Swyngedouw 2005), and in the critique of the discourse of climate change as a method of incorporating dissent into the dominant discourse, leading to a post-political condition (Swyngedouw 2009a; Swyngedouw 2010) were instrumental to the formation of initial thoughts around the research strategy. Attuned to these critiques both of governance processes and of dominant environmental discourses, I nevertheless set out to explore the potentially more positive side of both governance (perhaps I should say governing here to be more broad), and environmental discourses.

Through recognizing my own assumptions or leaning from the outset, I aimed to retain an open mind throughout the research process including an openness to changing my mind on all matters, should the research present compelling reasons. This critical self-awareness of my assumptions and biases – and how these inevitably influence which data is collected, and how this data is analysed and written about – is
part of a programme of reflexivity and recognition of positionality that is talked about further in this chapter.

The positions or ideas that I started with, in relation to people and processes of governance suggested that the research should involve an in-depth study of the processes. It also did not strike me as adequate to look solely at either the processes of policy creation or implementation, since neither on its own would tell the whole story. Initial considerations here involved attempting to find formalised processes in which members of the public and of various interest groups were invited to feed into policy-making. However, this would not overcome the issue of whether words in policy documents actually meant anything in practice.

As mentioned in the literature review, various other studies I had looked at had focused on different interpretations of the notion of sustainable development and its implementation in planning, either using a framework derived from academic writings on the subject, or gleaned from policy documents themselves. It occurred to me that what I wanted to look at were extreme ends of a spectrum of the interpretation of sustainable development. In other words, I wanted to focus on notions of sustainable development which challenged the mainstream or status quo, which challenged the ‘ecological modernization’ idea – that advanced and improved technology would in itself allow people to continue living sustainably without challenging the dominant social-economic model (Fischer 1999). In contrast, more radical views on sustainability from an environmental (and often social) perspective critiqued the paradigm of development and ‘progress’ as we know it altogether, suggesting more radical solutions were required. What I wanted to look at was a meeting point between the mainstream interpretation of sustainable development, and a more radical one, in order to explore the limits of sustainable development policy in practice, in a planning context.

When I began this project I was aware of the Lammas project in Pembrokeshire, however it had not yet occurred to me that this could be central to my research. I had initially not grasped the significance of the fact that the project had been granted

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6 In terms of geography’s engagement with policy analysis, this has been subject to much debate. Peck (1999) suggests that this has to do with an uncritical involvement in policy analysis, among other things, with geographer’s simply performing analyses of policies already put in place and often influenced by economists. Interpretive policy analysis takes a different view.
planning permission *in advance* rather than retrospectively, and on the basis of a pioneering planning policy. I only discovered these facts later. However, it did strike me that ‘low impact’ development, as it had been termed, presented just the kind of interface I was looking for: between mainstream and alternative conceptions of sustainable development as they were being understood in practice. Online research led me to ‘Low Impact Living Initiatives’, and from there, to a weekend workshop on ‘Low impact development and planning’ at a farm near Bath, led by Simon Fairlie in February 2011. Although the workshop focused largely on English planning policy, there was much discussion about the ways in which planning policy in Wales was different, leading me to realise that the Welsh experience was worth focusing on in depth as a case study.

**Case Study as Method**

In discussing scenarios in which a case study provides a suitable method of approaching an issue, Yin (2012) notes that such an approach is suitable when the research question being posed involves asking either a descriptive question, i.e. what is happening or has happened? Or an explanatory question, i.e. how or why a particular phenomenon came about (Yin 2012, p.5). Among the features of case study is the assumption that ‘examining the context and other complex conditions related to the case(s) being studied is integral to understanding the case’ (Yin 2012, p.4). He goes on to note that:

“Our in-depth focus on the case(s), as well as the desire to cover a broader range of contextual and other complex conditions, produce a wide range of topics to be covered in any given case study. In this sense, case study research goes beyond the study of isolated variables. As a by-product, and as a final feature in appreciating case study research, the relevant case study data are likely to come from multiple and not singular sources of evidence.” (Yin 2012, p.4)

Given the significance of the context - i.e. a Welsh planning environment in which ‘Low Impact Development’ had just entered into planning policy and via which the first eco-village with prior planning permission had begun – a case study was the most suitable method.

Having explored the utility of a case study approach, there still remained numerous options and decisions, including whether to do multiple case studies or to focus on a
single one. In other words, should the case study take on a comparative structure? Questions such as this were difficult to answer without being quite prescriptive in some way about what the phenomena was that was being looked at. Early project ideas had included comparing the Lammas eco-village project to other, similar eco-villages elsewhere (or indeed other hubs of alternative activity, such as Totnes in Devon). There were a number of issues with this however. As already noted, the planning policy that allowed for the Lammas eco-village was the first of its kind in Wales, and Lammas was the first eco-village to (eventually) gain approval on the basis of it. Similar planning policies did not exist in other counties in Wales, the Pembrokeshire policy being the first of its kind in Wales.

Similar communities did and do exist in Wales, however these either did not need planning permission due to being located in existing buildings, or had been granted retrospective planning permission on the basis of policies not explicitly designed to a sustainable development remit (such as rural enterprise dwellings). Similar developments existed in England, where there was at least one case of a similar planning policy. However, the English context was very different on a number of levels (for example through having a different set of regulations and national level policies that impacted local planning policies) and so the contextual material would have been very extensive, particularly considering how quickly policy was moving on both sides of the border. This would have potentially confused the already fraught question of where the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context lay (Yin 2009), and may have led to the obscuring of any meaningful results or conclusions in the volume of contextual detail for each case.

On the other hand, a very carefully selected comparative study may have enabled the extraction of the phenomena more easily from the different contexts. Although it is debateable to what extent this would have been either possible or meaningful with only two case studies. It may have ended up reading only as a catalogue of similarities and differences, without leading to any more solid a conclusion than a single case study might. Yin (Yin 2011, p.9) notes that some researchers aim to do multiple case studies in the hopes of obtaining more certainty of a particular phenomenon, however that the inevitably small number of case studies possible precludes obtaining any very great level of certainty. Additionally, a comparative analysis would inevitably require a certain categorisation of ‘things’ that were to be compared across the multiple case
studies. This would involve a process of pre-supposition and categorisation that I was seeking to avoid.

A number of previous studies on similar topics to this one had been based on multiple case studies, for example Rosabeth Kanter looked at counter-cultural/‘utopian’ communities in North America in the late sixties and seventies (Kanter 1972); Hardy’s historical study of ‘utopian communities’ in the first half of the Twentieth Century (Hardy 2000); and Dawson’s more contemporary study of ‘eco-villages’ around the world (Dawson 2006). Indeed, the influential research document that resulted in the first Low Impact Development Policy in Wales was also based on a number of case studies (LUC 2002). In these examples, the multiple case study approach was effective in an extensive sense. What they are much less effective at doing is providing an intensive account which remains sensitive to the heterogeneity of phenomena (and agents).

Choosing a multiple case study approach has the effect, inevitably, of drawing boundaries around what is and is not a particular kind of phenomenon, early in the research, leading to a continued grouping of diverse projects under a particular heading (e.g. defining individual case studies as being ‘eco-villages’, ‘low impact developments’ ‘back-to-the-land experiments’ etc.). In some cases this is useful, for instance in the case of the LUC research, being able to point to other examples of similar and successful projects, the researchers were able to present a strong case for the allowing of further similar projects along those lines. On the other hand, the limited number of case studies has the result of creating or beginning to solidify a definition of what a certain project should look like, and this has had effects on the policy directions (for better or for worse). In an attempt to avoid pre-defining and comparing multiple case studies then, this research elected to focus on one but to allow a more interpretive and reflexive expansion of this through what emerged out of the research. In that vein, a previously existing low impact/eco-community, Brithdir Mawr, and in particular the battle for planning permission for one of the roundhouses there became central to the analysis and this is described in Chapter 4.

Addressing some misconceptions about case study research, Flyvbjerg (2011) points out the ways in which case studies can be rigorous and contribute to knowledge effectively. The five misunderstandings that Flyvbjerg addresses are that: 1) General,
theoretical knowledge is more valuable than case knowledge; 2) One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development; 3) the case study is more useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building. 4) The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions; and 5) It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies.

Flyvbjerg notes that it is only through understanding detailed concrete, empirically rich cases that one can move from a novice to an expert. Moreover that in the social sciences, ‘predictive theory, universals, and scientism’ in social science have so far failed to deliver (p.303), whilst concrete case knowledge provides much of the basis for knowledge about human behaviour.

The second misunderstanding according to Flyvbjerg has to do with generalizability. Flyvbjerg notes that case studies can be used to generalize on the basis of a single case, usually by means of falsification of a stated theory. This requires of course that a theory be clearly stated at the outset and the case study used to test this. For example, had there been a theory that “all planners dislike hippies”, I could have set about proving this wrong through the process of falsification by finding a planner who did not confirm this theory. However, as Flyvbjerg notes, even if social science had produced solid theories that could be tested in this fashion, the value of this type of generalizability tends to be overstated. In contrast, “the force of example’ and transferability are underestimated” (p. 305).

Flyvbjerg notes the importance of the selection of cases depending on what the researcher’s goal is in relation to theory building and hypothesis testing. Depending on the goal, Flyvbjerg notes that are two main ways in which cases may be selected: random selection or information-oriented selection. Leaving aside the former strategy, as clearly in this research the case was selected on the basis of information, Flyvbjerg notes that such a case might be selected on the basis that it could be either 1) an extreme/deviant case, 2) a set of maximum variation cases, 3) a critical case, or 4) a paradigmatic case. Each type of case (and a case could be multiple types or change type throughout the research) has its own value in terms of the relationship with
theory. The selection of the Lammas case study and the associated planning processes falls somewhere between the ‘extreme’ and ‘paradigmatic’ based on what I hoped to gain in knowledge from this study. As an extreme case, the process that resulted in the planning policy and the eventual approval of the Lammas ecovillage seemed to be really testing the limits of what the planning system was able to comprehend and deal with. As such it challenged embedded cultures and assumptions and through doing so brought attention to these. In this sense, it can also be considered to be a paradigmatic case, as it involved an in-depth analysis of a phenomena with potential wider implications in terms of ‘highlight[ing] more general characteristics of the societies in question’ (Flyvbjerg 2011, p.308).

A fourth misunderstanding or risk (depending on your perspective) related to case study research is that of a ‘bias toward verification’, i.e. a tendency to confirm the researcher’s pre-conceived notions (ibid, p.309). Flyvbjerg notes that this is the case for all forms of research not just case studies, and that case studies allow more opportunity for the researcher’s assumptions to be challenged and overturned than do other, more rigid methods of research (e.g. surveys). Certainly my own experience has been that my preconceived notions were continually challenged throughout the process of research, and my ideas and hypotheses, were often refuted as soon as they were vocalised. In practice, the research process was one of continual learning and changing of views.

A final point about case studies made by Flyvbjerg is the difficulty of summarizing the findings into some form of coherent narrative. He notes that:

“The human propensity for narrative involves a danger... of what has been called the narrative fallacy. The fallacy consists of a human inclination to simplify data and information through overinterpretation and through preference for compact stories over complex data sets. It is easier to remember and make decisions on the basis of ‘meaningful’ stories than to remember strings of ‘meaningless’ data. Thus we read meaning into data and make up stories, even where this is unwarranted.” (p.311)

This latter is a difficulty that I do recognize, although I also recognize – as I imagine will most research students who have undertaken case study research – its converse, i.e. the difficulty of forming a coherent, clear, and honest narrative out of the vast amounts of detailed data. Flyvbjerg points out that
“dense narratives based on thick description will provide some protection against the narrative fallacy. Such narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life. Accordingly, they may be difficult or impossible to summarize into neat formulas, general propositions, and theories... This tends to be seen by critics of the case study as a drawback. To the case study researcher, however, a particularly ‘thick’ and hard-to-summarize narrative is not a problem. Rather, it is often a sign that the study has uncovered a particularly rich problematic.” (ibid.)

Following on from this he poses the question of whether in fact the kind of summarizing and generalization that the critics demand is indeed desirable, or that in fact, following Nietzsche’s advice, we “should not wish to divest existence of all its rich ambiguity”. (ibid). However, as someone who has attempted the approach of representing life in all its rich ambiguity to supervisors via draft thesis chapters, or at conferences in the form of papers, one soon realizes the necessity of a clear narrative and the inevitable selectivity involved in the process of presenting data, a topic which will be returned to later in this chapter.

Sources of Data

These considerations on methodology and interpretation suggest tools and techniques of data collection that are iterative and sensitive to the dynamic and changeable nature of context. As such my primary research began in my attendance of events, such as a ‘Planning for Low Impact Development’ workshop run by Simon Fairlie, a key figure in the UK low impact movement. The workshop allowed insight not only into Fairlie’s own meaning-making processes based on his engagement with the planning system, but also into those of the other participants, giving a sense of the movement. Themes emerged from these early conversations, based both on the researcher’s meaning-making processes and those that were apparent in the events and discussions, from which interview schedules started to develop. The events also helped to identify particular people who had had an influence on my case study area, and these people were approached in order to begin to build up a picture based on their multiple stories.

On the basis of these more informal events, interactions and conversations (which may be termed by Yin ‘open-ended interviews’), I then conducted a further thirty more structured and recorded interviews. A list of the individuals interviewed is provided in Appendix 2. The recorded interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner using the themes that had emerged from events, conversations and casual

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discussions as a basis for more direct lines of questioning. No two interview schedules were exactly alike, as this would have been highly unsuitable given the wide range of people and positions that were looked at. Additionally, a rigid set of questions was deemed to be too constraining in terms of encouraging people to talk about their own meaning-making processes. However, the interviewees were asked about the same set of events and artefacts (policy documents, policy actions and implementation, as well as buildings, activities, and spaces). This allowed me to re-interpret the same events, objects and actions through the perspectives of different actors, as well as to identify through triangulation (Yin 2011, p.13) key events and items of significance. At the same time, following Yin (ibid.) there was a recognition that the correlating statements did not necessarily always represent the underlying facts of the matter, but may represent instead the ‘party line’ being towed by an institution, organization, group, or individual practiced in telling a particular story to researchers and members of the public.

This approach is similar to that taken by Flyvbjerg in his analysis of the Aalborg masterplan (Flyvbjerg 1998). Taking a cue from Wittengerstein and using an approach of narratology, Flyvbjerg explores a development process through interviews, documents, news items and observations, weaving in theories of rationality and power into his analysis. Further parallels are drawn on both a theoretical and methodological level with this work in Chapter 5.

**Interview settings**

Another important aspect of the process was the degree to which interviews and discussions variously took place in informal or formal settings. There remained a relatively stark contrast here between the very informal, lived experience feel of interviewing the eco-village residents (and a former Welsh Assembly Government Minister in her home), and interviews with planners and building regulations professionals. The former occasions often involved cups of tea, sometimes food, children and animals running around, pauses for phone calls or other visitors and so on, whereas the latter, more formal meetings, generally took place in the grey, de-personalised meeting rooms of the Council building. In one instance a persistence thumping noise along with harsh fluorescent lights contributed to the exhausted
expression on a planner’s face. I recorded such observations alongside my notes from interviews and in some cases they have been worked into empirical chapters.

Early plans for the research had considered spending more in the planning department in order to gather the kinds of practice stories that Forester writes about (Forester 1993). Such activity would have no doubt revealed much more about the meaning-making processes of planners, and it is with some lament that I was not able to do this in my research. However, given the highly contentious nature of the case in question, wherein the Council itself was very reluctant to grant planning permission to Lammas and this decision was eventually made not at the Council level but at the Welsh Government level, it is somewhat understandable that there would be some recalcitrance and suspicion on behalf of the Council to allowing researchers into their midst. Instead, long interviews were conducted with the planners in person, which was in itself revealing, particularly in the sense that planners tended to bring along large planning documents and to gesture to these frequently as though they were active participants in meaning and decision-making.

Interviews with consultants and the planning inspector took a different form again. Because of the geographic dispersal of these actors and the fact that most of them worked from home, these interviews were conducted by phone. Obviously in these cases physical gestures were missed, though interestingly a very human component of these interviews meant that usually at some point in the conversation both the interviewee and the interviewer would end up describing to some extent their surroundings and physical location. Sometimes this was a part of the interview, since the geographic location and level of interaction of the interviewees with other people was considered significant to the research, noting for example Gidden’s contention about geographically removed knowledge (Giddens 1994) or Perkin’s ‘de-localization’ of the professional (Perkin 1990). An interesting aspect perhaps of this style of interviewing was the release of the imagination. Because there was less shared physical stimuli, there was perhaps more freedom for the interviewee to close their eyes and imagine other places, times, and events, and the phone interviews actually resulted, somewhat to the researcher’s surprise, in quite rich narratives that suggested deep meaning-making and sense-making processes.
The visual separation of phone interviews also allowed me to take notes and focus on my lines of questioning more so than had I been in the room, where note-taking inevitably draws the attention of the interview subject and may influence their responses. In some cases interviewees requested a list of questions in advance, and this too had effects on the interviews, sometimes positive in the sense of having allowed the subject to think about the questions more deeply beforehand, and also negatively in the sense of constraining to an extent the free-flow of thoughts, feelings and ideas that might come about in less structured settings.

**Overt observation**

A rich source of data came through attendance at events. A number of events and open days were attended over the course of the research. Each of these events provided the opportunity to observe the emergence of issues and concerns among people already living or wishing to live low impact lifestyles. Numerous conversations at these events helped to build a picture of the context and to begin to develop relationships and get a sense of the movement more broadly. The events attended are detailed in the Appendix 2.

**Other sources**

A series of short films produced by *Living in the Future* were available through the Lammas website. In the early stages of the my research I watched and made notes on about 50 of these short films, many of which were focused explicitly on Lammas, as well as others which covered different eco-villages and related matters. These were highly informative, beautiful, pieces of work. In addition, several other websites and Facebook groups contain sets of images and sometimes film clips and interviews which also helped to build up a picture.

News items provided a relatively rich source of story material. Although no structured media content analysis was performed on these, the headlines, perspectives, images and tone of voice (sympathetic, outraged etc.) were noted. The reaction of the people featured in the stories was also looked at, in terms of how they perceived the notions suggested in the papers, and in some cases the streams of comments after news reports was noted, however for various reasons the decision was made not to afford
much weight to these in analysis. Analysing online behaviour is an extensive and emerging field, and there are reasons to believe that people’s online behaviour is not necessarily reflective of their behaviour or attitudes in the ‘real world’ (Suler 2004). For this reason, whilst Internet comments and interactions were observed and these helped to build up a picture, the extent to which these are used in the research and write-up is limited.

Other Internet sources also proved a rich source of material. In addition to Lammas’ own very informative and rich website and monthly electronic newsletter, other internet research led to a variety of webpages and blogs, image collections, narratives about direct action protests, and the mailing list of the group The Land is Ours (TLIO) which had been and continues to be influential in promoting Low Impact Development among other things. The publications of various groups, including Chapter 7’s regular magazine The Land read not only by people involved in Low Impact Development, but also by some planners and planning inspectors, was another source of stories and discussion. The researcher also ‘friended’ a number of people from Lammas on a social networking site (Facebook), through which other avenues of discussion and debate were opened. This also provided insight into some of the methods used by people with an interest in low impact development to connect with other like-minded people and to gather supportive voices in cases of planning hearings and meetings.

The use of the internet for the environmental movement has been well-documented within geography (Pickerill 2001). The observations from this research were used to build up a picture of the wider movement, though the focus here was on the interface between the planning system and the low impact movement and so this aspect formed only part of the picture. Related to this, the proposed planning documents are currently also provided online and comments can be made either through online forms or via post (someone then transcribes them into the computer system) and these are viewable online. This is another medium through which people are able to vocalise their interactions with the planning system and these are publicly available documents. Looking through the comments on proposed plans helped to identify people and interest groups who were actively engaging with their local plans. These included people within the low impact movement.
Interview transcripts, online media items, policy documents and most other documents were entered into the qualitative analysis and coding software package NVIVO. Following streams of stories and interactions on sites such as Facebook was somewhat trickier to analyse however. Although these could be downloaded using the NCapture tool in NVIVO, it was not possible to do this selectively for particular discussions, hence this tended to produce very large and unwieldy tables. Nevertheless, these materials were a useful and informative addition, and added to a sense of a wider community of networked movements (Pickerill 2001).

3.4 Analytical Tools and Interpretation

Interpretive Policy Analysis meets Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Once the decision had been made to focus on a single case study, there still remained the matter of what to focus on and how to focus on it. A few points are pertinent to mention here. Firstly that, following on from the analytical framework informed by dialectics and the production of space model, it should be noted that geographers utilising these analytical tools are not always clear and explicit about the types of methods that they entail or suggest. Lefebvre always intended for the production of space model to be ‘be embodied with actual flesh and blood and culture, with real life relationships and events’ (Merrifield 2000, p.175); following Lefebvre, it would be inappropriate therefore to adopt any research method that did not acknowledge the placement of the researcher in the spaces in question. As such, the development of my research strategy was from the start concerned with being present in spaces, as well as conducting research through more removed means such as policy analysis, internet research, and telephone and internet-based conversations. A second point is that I tried to retain a concern in my research of the relationship between policies for sustainable development in the planning sphere and the actual on-the-ground interpretations and outcomes of such policies. A final point then to explain the types of methodological approaches adopted is to reiterate that the research is born out of an inherent inter-disciplinarity and indeed a transdisciplinarity following Lefebvre. My concern was with a production of space, through representations of space, representational spaces, and spatial practices. In order to analyze these, I adopted a
number of interpretive approaches.

Policy analysis within human geography has been something of a contentious area. Problems with policy analysis, as stated by critics often centre on the charges that policy analysis is simplistic, led too strongly by the desires of policy-makers rather than intellectual or academic inquiry, or that is it shallow, adding little to academic debates (e.g. Peck 1999). While the debates rage on amongst some sections of Geography, particularly in Economic Geography, others from within and outside of the discipline seem to be getting on with the business of fine-tuning their engagement with policy and policy processes.

In the quest for a mode of analysis, I came to recognise that what policy documents say is not necessarily what policy documents do. As noted already, the variety of different interpretations of sustainable development invoked in policy documents is an interesting topic in and of itself, however my concern was that even if policy documents were to indicate, as they quite often do, a strong concern for sustainability, their implementation on the ground does not necessarily reflect this concern. Analysing the documents alone was therefore not enough. An analytical inroad was needed in order to look at policy in terms of its development, interpretation and implementation. A suitable method was however available, in ‘interpretive policy analysis’.

In the words of Dvora Yanow, a proponent of this process:

“Interpretive policy analysis shifts the discussion from values as a set of costs, benefits, and choice points to a focus on values, beliefs, and feelings as a set of meanings, and from a view of human behaviour as, ideally, instrumentally and technically rational to human action as expressive (of meaning).” (Yanow 2000, p.ix)

Yanow goes on to note that:

“[The approach] assumes... that it is not possible for an analyst to stand outside of the policy issue being studied, free of its values and meanings and of the analyst’s own values, beliefs and feelings. The argument assumes that knowledge is acquired through interpretation, which necessarily is ‘subjective’: it reflects the education, experience and training, as well as the individual, familiar, and communal background, of the ‘subject’ making the analysis. Not only analysts, but all actors in a policy situation (as with other aspects of the social world), interpret issue data as they seek to make sense of policy. Furthermore, human artefacts and actions, including policy documents, legislation, and implementation, are understood here to be not only
instrumentally rational but also expressive—of meaning(s), including at times individual and collective identity.” (Yanow 2000, p.6)

What is most significant about this approach is that policies, policy makers, policy implementers and policy analysts are acknowledged to be rational and subjective, to draw on data and interpretation and expressions of meaning, including senses of individual and collective identity.

There are significant parallels to be drawn between interpretive policy analysis, which takes as its starting point existing, proposed or emergent policy spheres, and the more open, interpretive phenomenological analysis, which focuses on the meaning-making activities of individuals, based on events in their lives. Interpretive phenomenological analysis starts from the premise that people make sense of their lives through engaging with experiences which are for them significant. The idea is that “when people are engaged with ‘an experience’ of something major in their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening and [this method of] research aims to engage with these reflections” (Smith et al. 2009, p.3). It is pointed out that in exploring the meaning of the experiences of others, there is a double hermeneutic at play, that is, the researcher attempts to explore meaning in the already meaning-producing descriptions of experiences by the researched.

Interpretive phenomenological analysis is a method which embraces the premises of phenomenology as set out by Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau Ponty, and then involves hermeneutics, and the double hermeneutic as mentioned above. This takes the form of an idiographic exercise, in which individual cases are looked at in detail, and the understanding of meaning occurs in a hermeneutic circle, with the particular obtaining meaning from the whole, just as the whole obtains meaning only through the analysis of the particular or component parts. The method is therefore well-suited to detailed case studies using semi-structured interviews and observation, alongside policy document analysis. It does not assume that generalization will necessarily be possible from such case studies, but in the instance that it is possible to generalise, this will arise out of analysis of the detail, rather than through a nomothetic or overview seeking method which disaggregates information from individuals and seeks to draw out commonalities among groups, resulting, as Kastenbaum puts it in ‘indeterministic statistical zones that construct people who never were and never could be’ (quoted in Smith et al. 2009, p.30).
Conducting interpretive phenomenological and interpretive policy analysis involves recognizing, and to a certain extent suspending, one’s own meaning-making processes with relation to events and human artefacts such as policy documents. It also involves sharing the meaning-making processes of the researcher with those being researched in order that they may consider this way of making sense of things, agree or disagree with it, or fail to recognize it as valid. These methodological ideas suggest a mode of conducting research that allows for interactive interviews where the interviewee is given space to discuss and bring to the fore the experiences and issues they find significant, as well as observation of events, meetings, and other social interactions, in which the researcher is no longer leading the discussion at all and is allowing people to express in their own terms the issues which are important to them.

Analysing the human artefacts and actions, including policy documents, legislation and implementation takes a similar tack. Besides long and wide ranging interviews with policy makers and implementers, the analysis also focuses on the artefacts, looking carefully at the language used in policy documents, at the records of discussions over the language, public representations and inspectors’ reports.

**NVIVO Software and Coding**

As mentioned above, NVIVO software was used to a certain extent to aid with analysis of the data that was collected. Transcribed interviews in particular were analysed by coding sections of interview in accordance with themes that emerged. The themes formed ‘nodes’ in the software, which could be connected to other nodes, or rearranged in different ways. Ultimately, this is much like going through a similar process using word processing and copying and pasting selected sections of text, but with added flexibility. Essentially NVIVO operated as a data management and organizational tool.

Interview transcripts and other documents were coded using three types of code, descriptive, thematic or analytical concepts that emerged from the interviews or documents (Bazeley 2007). An example of a descriptive code would be ‘policy’, a thematic code might be ‘evidence-based policy’ and an analytic category might be ‘knowledge’. Multiple codes could be applied to the analysis of a single item of text. For example, if an interviewee mentioned the importance of evidence in the writing of a particular policy document, the section of interview would be coded to relate to that
particular policy document, as well as to the themes of evidence, knowledge and policy. This allowed the retrieval of the quote on several different bases, in relation to a particular document or in relation to a theme.

Although NVIVO allowed more efficient coding and retrieval of data, given that the basis of the research was in interpretive policy analysis, and this method suggested that it was not only documents and language that were important, but other symbolic artifacts, including clothing, embodied actions and interactions, buildings and spaces, the documentary analysis in NVIVO was supplemented with reading through research diaries and looking through images. The purpose was not necessarily to emerge from the totality of the analysis having developed a grounded theory, or generalizable data. Therefore this level of analysis did not involve coding but rather interpretation and re-interpretation in light of new data.

As Yanow points out, the purpose of interpretive policy analysis is not to get to the heart of “brute data”, rather that:

“Interpretive methods are based on the presupposition that we live in a social world characterized by the possibilities of multiple interpretations. In this world there are no “brute data” whose meaning is beyond dispute. Dispassionate, rigorous science is possible—but not the neutral, objective science stipulated by traditional analytic methods… As living requires sensemaking, and sensemaking entails interpretation, so too does policy analysis” (Yanow 2000, p.5)

Given this basis for analysis, the coding process was rather to determine various interpretive processes emerging from the interviews, observations and artefacts in order to build up a picture of different actors’ sense-making and meaning-making processes, and not to arrive at some underlying ‘facts’ of the matter.

3.5 Research Ethics

There were a number of potential issues that were considered as part of the research, and efforts were made to minimize potential risks to research participants. These needs were balanced with the needs of the research.

The research ethics form required by the University makes specific reference to working with children, and ‘vulnerable’ people. Although it would have been interesting to hear the perspectives of children, it was not considered essential to the
research and so, no such interviews were conducted (for work on children in ‘intentional communities’ see Maxey (2004b)). On the other hand, I had to assess whether I thought any of my research subjects were likely to be considered vulnerable. This was somewhat trickier, since some of the people I had contact with at the beginning of the research were living in various places without permission to do so, and revealing details of their whereabouts to others might have been problematic for them. Vulnerability in the context of the research however was situational and had to do with framing rather than being somehow inherent. Nevertheless, this was considered and affected the research in the respect that I was aware of this and attempted not to cause problems for people as a result of my research.

Ultimately my guide to conducting research, interpreting results, and perhaps most importantly communicating those results was guided by my own careful assessment, sometimes in discussion with supervisors, over what would be ethical under changeable circumstances. Ethical considerations were balanced with research considerations. One example is around the issue of ‘illegal’ activity. My stance on this was to do with levels of risk and potential harm. Due to the nature of the research, the interface between the ‘alternative’ or ‘countercultural’ subculture, and the mainstream, there were instances in which I would hear about activities that were technically against the law, for example, planning or building regulations infractions. Writing about these was in some cases essential to the research. In such cases, the material was written about only if and when this could be done without putting into jeopardy the individuals or families involved. If writing about it would reveal the identities of individuals in association with various activities whilst the individuals concerned did not wish to have these activities made public, I would not write about these. The types of illegal activity that I became aware of were not matters that would put anyone in the way of danger or harm, and therefore I did not feel it necessary to bring these to anyone’s attention.

With all interview subjects I noted at the start of the interview that if there was anything that they either did not want to appear in the research writing, or that they would not want attributed to them, they should simply say so and I would respect their requests. Some interviewees requested that certain items not be attributed to them, or that they not be wholly identified. I did also make the offer of total anonymity although I did so with the caveat that it would be difficult to use any material they
gave me if it was totally anonymous, since the role and positions of individuals was significant and since there were only a limited number of people involved in the specific case, a knowledgeable person reading the material would be able to identify participants quite readily. Fortunately no one requested full anonymity. Research participants on the policy end tended to note that they would not say anything controversial (unfortunately) or that could not be attributed to them. Other participants were happy to be associated with their words, controversial or not.

For the most part, interview quotes used in my empirical chapters are not anonymous (and research participants were informed about this in advance). The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, as mentioned, the roles of the participants were important and there were only a limited number of people in each role – so removing names would not really be sufficient in creating anonymity. Someone familiar with the case would easily be able to identify the participants.

A second reason had to do with the ability of participants to re-engage with the research once written. I told research participants that they could have a copy of the research, and I wanted participants to be able to identify themselves, and if they desired, to be able to talk back to the research and question my interpretations. This would not be possible if quotes were made anonymous. In effect, making the quotes anonymous would be disempowering to the research participants, wresting control of their words into the hands of the researcher. As a related effect, and something I discussed with eco-village residents in relation to other pieces of research, if quotes were anonymized the residents reading the research were often left wondering which one of their neighbours had said a particular thing, the de-contextualised quote potentially becoming the source of speculation and tension.

The approach taken to research was one that indicated a belief in the dialectic of the researcher and researched, and a desire to develop a position of trust and openness with the participants. Throughout the research I was aware that simply by being there I was involved in the project, and that my position was related to the actions and interactions that the group and individuals had had from the early days with other researchers and academics. One of the three founding members of Lammas, who later moved on from the project, was at the time of its founding an academic at Swansea University. His involvement was very extensive at the beginning, including helping
develop the academic case for the project, aiding in the legal battles with planning and assessing the applications of potential residents to see whether they would be likely to be able to meet the requirements of the project. Other researchers, particularly a group from the University of the West of England had been involved in writing research reports for the Countryside Council of Wales, and the Pembrokeshire National Park Authority on Low Impact Development and its potential contribution to the countryside. These research documents were highly influential in the development of the planning policy. The relationship therefore with academics has been a positive one from the beginning. As a result, Paul Wimbush, the only remaining founder out of the three who started it, is keen to maintain an open and welcoming stance to researchers as part of the Lammas approach.

The stance towards researchers and academics is very much related to how Dawson defines eco-villages, with one of their key characteristics being that they “act as centres of research, demonstration and (in most cases) training” (Dawson 2006, p.36). From the point of view of Lammas, researchers of all kinds are welcome to come and study and learn from the project. There is also a sense that some of the residents at least are thinking of further ways in which the influx of researchers could be of use to the residents. For example, ideas were batted around about how it would be helpful to have people doing research on some of the issues that have been problematic, such as the building regulations demands, including the difficulty of accumulating all the necessary data to meet these. Another idea being the potential for collaboration with university departments in attracting research investment which may aid with figuring out various aspects of the community as well as supporting it financially in some way. Given these hopes, I had to walk a careful line of not promising too much, while still being open and receptive to people’s ideas of how research and researchers could contribute to the project.

Recent work in geography has taken the concept of researcher positionality further, suggesting that as individuals in relatively privileged positions within academia, that our work should take explicitly political stances and more active roles within our research with aims to foster change. Such approaches are often termed ‘participatory action research’ or PAR approaches (Kindon et al. 2008; Kindon et al. 2007; Pain 2004). Additionally, within human geography there is an explicit movement towards blending activism and academia (Maxey 2004a; Chatterton & Pickerill 2010; Pickerill
& Chatterton 2006; Castree et al. 2013). I looked to these works with great respect and admiration. However, in this particular research project, I did not start out with the intent of conducting PAR research for a number of reasons. Firstly, I did not begin my research with the assumption that either Lammas or low impact development were necessarily definitely something I wanted to support (though I suspected they might be). I wanted to remain open to the possibility of changing my mind over time concerning what I thought and whether I felt that low impact development and Lammas were actually sustainable alternative ways of living. Had I set out with an agenda that involved embedding myself within some form of activism on the behalf of Lammas or the low impact development movement, this would have, I felt, compromised my ability to retain some degree of detachedness or critical distance that I felt was necessary in order to be able to draw my own conclusions.

A second issue that I saw with adopting a PAR approach was in the definition of ‘participants’. Would I have chosen to engage only with people in the alternative movement? Or were planners also potential participants? Could the research have in fact tried to bring such people together into a collaborative process? Since PAR suggests co-designed research and outcomes, the selection of participants would have been of paramount importance, and I was interested in the multiple groups and individuals involved and their different perspectives. Bringing them all together in a collaborative sense would have been challenging and - though this potentially rewarding possibility may be something to consider for future research - it did not seem feasible for me at the time.

In spite of not conducting PAR in this case, there are elements upon which I drew. I was and am committed for example to making the result of my research available to all participants. The completed thesis will be made available on the Lammas website and accessible to anyone who would like to read it as well as being sent to all other participants, including planners and consultants. An earlier draft was also sent to the eco-village residents for comment. Throughout the research I discussed with the participants (to whom I had access – this was more difficult with planners and people who I struggled to get interview time with let alone have informal conversations), the themes I found emerging and what I was thinking about them. I remained open to a certain extent to changes in direction on the basis of what people were concerned with. One outcome of this was the shift of attention to a certain degree away from
planning issues and towards building regulations and the significance of low impact architecture. In this sense, to a certain degree the writing here is ‘co-produced’ (Jasanoff 2004), though this I would say this is only very partial and not really more so than in any seriously qualitative and iterative research project.

A third reason for not adopting an explicit and vocal activist-style stance throughout the research was that I was keen to also hear the planners’ sides of the story, as well as those of consultants providing evidence at hearings, planning inspectors, building regulations people, neighbours of Lammas and so on, even if these were in opposition. I felt that had I taken a position early in the research that put me clearly ‘on the side’ of Lammas, it would have limited in many respects both who would speak to me and what they would say. I therefore tried to maintain throughout the research a kind of position of openness.

Nevertheless, I did develop over the course of the research clearer ideas, as well as sympathies and indeed biases, or political leanings. This led me to question what I might usefully do in terms of taking or fostering action. Feeling relatively disempowered in many respects myself, the contribution I feel able to make at this stage is one of sharing my writings on the subject, at some stage in multiple and more accessible forms with a variety of audiences including planners. I began this to an extent through presenting my work at events and conferences that involved planners, one of which I was involved in organising. I have attempted through these means to place it as an addition to the conversation not only academically, but in the spheres of the research participants also. The goal is to make this a thoughtful and hopefully even-handed intervention or contribution to knowledge which adds to the debate in a meaningful way and opens up a space for others to engage with the issues involved and to interpret or re-interpret them in the light of this contribution.
4 SCALES AND RELATIONS: POLITICS, POLICIES AND GOVERNANCE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, explicit attention is given to responses from the state towards the radical alternatives proposed by Lammas through considering how such alternatives represent a challenge to the institutions that seek to regulate and control them. Attention is paid to policy documents and the language contained within them, as well as how this language is interpreted by practitioners, allowing an exploration into the relationship between documents and institutions, both in the sense of formal organizations and in the sense of accepted ways of thinking about matters. In relation to these ideas, the concepts of power, empowerment and agency are explored in relation to the role of planners and the influence of these on the potential for innovation, creativity and openness to new ideas.

The relationship between individuals and groups, within and outside of the ‘state’ provides the focus for the next section of the chapter. These are explored in the context of internal relations as well as external ones focusing on the issue of building regulations and how this matter and others have played out within the internal governance system of the eco-village.

In the final section of the chapter, a different angle of governance is explored, that of actual and potential self-governance, including through deliberate construction and adoption of particular ‘choice architectures’. Here, the wider effects of the eco-village are considered in light of the influence and extension of the eco-village into the consciousness of people outside of the eco-village, through visiting days and courses, and the impacts that these interactions have upon the behaviour of the visitors and course-goers. This final aspect is explored through looking closely at the lived spaces and lived interactions during the visits and courses, including how accepted norms are often dissected and reconsidered, or simply replaced with new cultural norms through the ‘naturalization’ of new norms within the social spaces of the courses and the eco-village.
The chapter concludes with reflections on how the eco-village represents a site that can be fruitfully analysed through a lens of governance and provide insights that may be applied in thinking about governance for sustainable development in other arenas.

This chapter takes challenges the notion of the postpolitical introduced in Chapter 2 by unpicking the dynamic, varied and often fluid ways in which the political and the ‘police’ order or policy world overlap and intersect. Using specific examples of moments, interactions, conflict and dissensus, the chapter makes the argument that ‘sustainable development’ as a discourse, far from providing a hegemonic approach, opens up the possibility for political action. The chapter also however draws attention to tensions inevitably involved in governance situations – suggesting that in fact the ‘consensual’ populism suggested by Swyngedouw is a fiction, or evident perhaps only in particular governance situations in which governance is truly in the shadow of hierarchy (Jessop 2003; Whitehead 2003). The chapter also considers in detail matters of scale as they relate to governance, exploring the notion of self-governance and processes of ‘consensus’ governance within small community settings, finding that even on very small scales, there is a politics rife with dissensus, or in Swyngedouw and Ranciere’s words perhaps, a ‘real’ politics occurring.

The chapter suggests the possibilities for learning from tensions in governance at the small-scale lessons which are applicable at other scales. These include a fluidity of decision-making mechanisms, embeddedness in wider networks of support, a commitment to enhancing communication and learning, and an acceptance of conflict as a normal part of governance processes.

The chapter begins with a focus on direct actions taken in support of a low impact roundhouse built in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park in the late 1990s on land owned by and part of the ecological community Brithdir Mawr. The protest action took place in 2002, and in many ways the conflict was a catalyst for other processes behind the scenes. It also provides a window into looking at
4.2 **Tony Wrench’s Roundhouse**

Brithdir Mawr is an off-grid, ecological community that has been in existence in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park since the 1970s. The community members live low impact lifestyles to varying degrees, using ecological, low impact, labour-intensive farming techniques, experimenting with various forms of alternative energy sources and ways of living in low impact, ecological ways, as well as in a community. Most of the community members also engage in work, volunteering and other activities in the wider local area. Community members were housed in existing buildings on the farm. These old stone farm buildings were heated by wood harvested from the woodland on site, and chopped without the use of chainsaws or other petrol-powered equipment. Heating these buildings was challenging and a lot of time was spent preparing wood for this purpose. At the same time, the alternative network/community was full of examples of low impact building techniques, and Tony Wrench, living at Brithdir Mawr at the time, was eager to try and build a very low impact home.

In the late 1990s, Tony Wrench and his partner Jane Faith, with the aid of other community members and volunteers, built a small, very environmentally low-impact roundhouse tucked away in the corner of a field. ‘That Roundhouse’ features a reciprocal roof of logs covered with grass and wildflowers and was, and still is, largely invisible, unless you know just where to look and follow the narrow footpaths to it. It was spotted however, by a plane flying over, which noticed the glint of its solar panels.

A history of the interaction with planning is detailed on Tony Wrench’s website, thatroundhouse.info. A slightly truncated version of his account of the interaction with planning is included below. Although this is a long quote it serves to illustrate several points and is worth including in full. It illustrates the responses not only by the planning authority but also the media and the local community, which as noted in the introduction to this thesis, has a long history of and a strong contingent of alternative lifestylers. The quote also illustrates the thoughtful engagement with planning and policy, a key feature of the LID movement. Wrench is familiar with the Welsh Government’s Sustainability Scheme and has read the planning response in critical
detail. The write-up, illustrative of Wrench’s wider writings is a rational, intellectual and politically-engaged response but also replete with humour, or ‘requisite irony’ as Jessop might say (Jessop 2003):

“In essence the story is that a year or so after being built the roundhouse was either spotted by a spotter plane, or reported to the planning authority. The press loved the first interpretation, and descended on us here at the community in droves, calling us the ’Lost Tribe’ etc. The Daily Mail gave their reporting team a £3,000 budget to photograph us from the air! … The planning authority, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park drew up a list of fourteen infringements of the planning regulations, including the lake, the cycle shed, the Dome, the roundhouse and many more. These have all been solved or resolved in one way or another except this roundhouse.

I applied for planning permission and it was turned down without a site visit by the committee. Only one member has ever visited this house. (And he was the one who abstained). I appealed and there was a public inquiry in Newport, Pembs which lasted two days. Many people spoke in our favour and one against. We had over 200 letters in our support. The inspector, in his report in Feb 2001, concluded that this house must be demolished by July 2002. You can view all or part of the report here [a link is provided]. Pages 10-16 give you the inspector's summary. At no point does he say what damage to the surroundings this house actually causes, and no evidence was given about it at the inquiry either. It is, as I discuss in 'Where and Why', merely an assumption of planners that people spoil nature. This landscape is actually the result of people working with, and in, nature. Must we always assume that we are wreckers? I refuse to believe it, and require more proof that Jane and I are actually doing damage than one person’s prejudice.

Similarly, note the statement in para 9.9: "With regard to the claimed sustainable nature of the appeal dwelling, bearing in mind that all new development should be sustainable, this is not of substantial weight." This would be laughable, given the Welsh Assembly's stated commitment to make sustainability a cornerstone of all its policies, if this was not typical of the whole planning system's inability thus far to make any changes on the ground to match its high flying rhetoric. 'Learning to Live Differently’?- yes, but if anybody is already living differently, pull his house down!” (Wrench, 2002; emphasis and breaks added)

Tony and Faith were thrust into an engagement with the planning department by the spotter plane / report incident. Naturally, they would have known that building in the National Park would require planning permission so from the perspective of the planning department and Council this was a subversive act.

7 Learning to Live Differently was the title of the Welsh Assembly Government’s Sustainability Scheme at the time.
Figure 5: Tony Wrench is interviewed by a journalist (Source: ThatRoundHouse.Info)

Figure 6: News item on protest to keep Tony Wrench’s Roundhouse (Source: ThatRoundhouse.info)
Figure 7: Protesters occupy the Iron-Age Roundhouses as Castell Henlys. The banner reads: Roundhouses are not history (Source: TLIO)

Figure 8: Protesters decamp outside PCNPA offices requesting to speak with planning officers. (Source: TLIO)
The TLIO-organised protest to keep Tony Wrench’s roundhouse standing is significant in its use of language ‘planners and eco-builders unite’ and ‘sustainable affordable homes’ suggesting that the eco-builders and planners are actually pursuing the same goals and should be working together. It is also significant in its use of and subversion of representational spaces (Lefebvre 1991). The roundhouse itself was and is an icon of the alternative movement. Tony Wrench in some respects pioneered that method of low impact building in this part of the world (in this era). He now teaches the building of these houses and has written a book detailing the build of this particular one (Wrench 2007). Additionally, and as will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6, the building of the house and the culture of roundhouse building is very much a shared endeavour with symbolic elements for the alternative community. Erecting the structure of a roundhouse is a collective effort. The reciprocal roof a symbol of mutual support – one often replicated at events in which people are arranged into a circle in some shape so that at some point everyone is supported by the collective bodies resting on each other.
The other spaces occupied by the TLIO protesters also held significance. Castell Henlys, a tourist attraction not far from Brithdir Mawr was occupied with the banner ‘Roundhouses not history’ being displayed. This had the effect not only of disrupting tourism and associated revenue from it, but of symbolically incorporating cultural heritage and history into the argument around the roundhouse – making a link to the much longer history of that kind of building in the area.

Finally, the peaceful protest decamped into a seated circle outside the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority building and requested to speak to the planning officer involved in the decision about Tony Wrench’s house. The officer in question refused to come out even with a police escort due to feeling threatened. By the time I commenced my research the individual in question had left the authority and I was unable to locate her, so I can only speculate on how she might have felt when faced with this situation. I imagine that she felt bewildered, overwhelmed and quite unsure of how to respond. After all, as a planner there is pressure in different ways from a multitude of directions and for a planning officer at the development control/management level there is not much of an over-riding narrative or ideology to guide how to respond.

Leitner et al argue that within geography there has been a tendency to focus on one or another various spatial concept as an explanatory mechanism (Leitner, Helga et al. 2008). In their analysis of ‘contentious politics’ they draw instead on a number of concepts together: place, scale, networks, mobility and socio-spatiality. I agree with their approach since in an empirical sense, looking at examples such as LID it is clear that all of these concepts are relevant – as are others. Even as the place-based protests were occurring (through the ability to mobilise networks!), discourses coming from the UN level were being drawn upon. Indeed, the LID conception of sustainable development accords broadly with a utopian idea freed from modernist thinking of a fixed end goal and territoriality (Hedrén & Linnér 2009). Additionally, behind the scenes, rational argument was also making its way to another scale, that of the Welsh Government, via Assembly Members with an interest. The results of this were a bringing about of a research document talked about further in Chapter 5 – a precursor for the eventual Policy 52, and eventually the One Planet Development policy that made its way into Welsh Government policy.
In the analysis of this situation, while recognising Leitner et al’s arguments to incorporate multiple spatial concepts into understandings of contentious politics, I would make two modifications or additions. Firstly, my analysis frames ‘contentious politics’ as governance, using multiple aspects of this for analysis, centred on people within the low impact movement. And secondly, I would add to the list of concepts Lefebvre’s understandings of representational spaces, representations of space and spatial practice. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, using the concept of governance allows for a recognition that the relationship between the LIDers and various state actors is not one that is entirely or necessarily always antagonistic. In fact, looking at the approach – banners that read ‘planners and eco-builders unite’ and ‘sustainable affordable homes’ – there is a concerted effort to find common ground and to work towards common goals (affordable housing being a key issue in planning policy in rural areas – alongside ‘sustainable development’).

4.3 Multi-Level Governance and the Power to Define the Rural

In Chapter 2, the difficulties associated with considering sustainable development in rural spaces via the planning system was discussed. Indeed, as Cullingworth and Nadin point out, planning in general struggles to deal with notions of the rural and with spaces defined as rural (Cullingworth & Nadin 2006, p.315). Planning policy as it relates to the rural is still suffering hangovers from the post WWII years. In this formative period it was considered that ‘a prosperous agriculture not only would be of strategic economic value but would also provide the best means of preserving the countryside’ (ibid.). In the half a century since a lot has changed. Agricultural subsidies and technological change have led to an increasing industrialisation of the countryside as well as problems of surplus product, decreased employment, aging rural populations, and lack of service provision in rural areas as services are increasingly centralised. As Cullingworth and Nadin note in a phrase that is incredibly similar to Tony Wrench’s argument:

“the ‘natural’ scenery which is now the concern of conservationists is the human-made result of earlier economic change.” (Cullingworth & Nadin 2006, p.315)
A conundrum facing the governance of rural spaces from various levels of government below the EU scale is the reliance on Common Agricultural Payment (CAP) subsidies for agriculture, even though these are now widely recognised to have had some severely damaging effects. Pembrokeshire’s own planning policy for instance states the following:

“Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): CAP was primarily designed sector by sector to improve the productivity of agriculture. The County is highly reliant - amongst other forms of business subsidy - on CAP funding. CAP has determined the development of rural areas in Pembrokeshire with benefits for income generation. The ability to sustain these subsidies in the long term has obvious spatial implications for the future development of agriculture with attempts going on for nearly two decades to integrate agricultural policy with the broader economic, social and environmental context of rural areas (diversification). The intensification of agriculture, which has been a consequence of CAP, has damaged the environment resulting, for example, in monotonous landscapes, abandonment of traditional management methods and loss of species, habitat diversity etc. The 1992 reforms of CAP have attempted to address the environmental aspects of farming but such initiatives only account for 3% of CAP budget. Land use planning policy can have little influence on the way in which farming is carried out.” (PCNPA and PCC, 2006, p.10)

Planning departments in this case are seemingly forced into supporting policies with clearly acknowledged negative environmental and social effects for economic reasons. Combined with a history of general neglect, theoretically, into how planning and rural spaces intersect, there is a sense of powerlessness on behalf of planning authorities, even planning policy in terms of how to deal with, indeed how to imagine, sustainable futures in a rural context. Reform of CAP is a long and difficult process. As Cullingworth and Nadin point out:

“The issues [with CAP reform] are complex both in economic terms (reform of the CAP may have a major impact on agricultural land values) and politically (the problems and political muscle of farmers vary across the EU). UK policies are severely constrained and the scale and speed of change is highly uncertain.” (Cullingworth & Nadin 2006, p.315)

The authors note the extensive attempts to deal with the changing situation through White Papers (UK government level) and the re-jigging and re-naming of various government departments – notably the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). With each organisational and institutional shuffle there is a period of
adjustment and sometimes this results in the breaking up of sedimented ways of doing things, though in the case of powerful agricultural lobbies it sometimes simply means a new name.

Meanwhile, though with the urban bias continuing, sustainable development and sustainability more generally have entered the lexicon at all levels of policy-making in the UK. At the UK level, successive planning policy documents have emphasised the importance of ‘sustainable development’ within the planning process. To the complicated volume of documents relating to planning, a supposedly over-riding document: *Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development* (DCLG 2005) was supplemented by an additional document entitled *Planning and Climate Change* (DCLG 2007). For a while it looked as though the importance of making sustainable development and climate change core issues to be considered in the planning system was being taken seriously.

However, in March 2012, in an effort to simplify, the entire collection of 25 Planning Policy Statements was replaced by the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012). This vastly shorter and simplified policy document does contain the statement that there should be a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’. However, sustainable development in this context seems to mean development in general, and particularly anything that leads to economic growth. Some of the language of the document illustrates this bent, as does the fact that environmental considerations appear only at the end of the document.

“Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well-designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities. Therefore, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.” (DCLG 2012, p.3)

Another telling statement is this one:

“The presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14) does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.” (DCLG 2012, p.28)

I think it's fair to say that this is not a document that takes sustainable development forward in any meaningful sense. To the extent that there are any environmental
considerations these are things covered in other legislation and the response to them in this document is very weak. Essentially the message is that all development should be approved unless it's basically illegal to approve it because of other legislation or directives. Even then it seems like there is leeway – for instance, compensation in cases where various environments are damaged. Using ‘sustainable development’ interchangeably with ‘economic growth’ is not an advantage in terms of low impact development since this is about sustainability in an environmental and social sense first and foremost. The policies in this document are very conventional ones with the words sustainable development incorporated without changing anything much.

I should note that in 2011 the consultation for this document was open and as part of the aim of the Planning and LID workshop held near Bath that year in February, as small groups we worked on putting together representations for the document. In particular the focus was on providing a definition of sustainable development that held environment as important. Unfortunately in this case they seem to have had little effect.

4.4 Sustainable Wales?

As Fairlie notes however (Fairlie 2009a) hope for low impact development and sustainable development in the countryside comes from the ‘Celtic fringes’. Wales in particular is viewed as progressive in this regard, and indeed, since the publication of Low Impact Development: Our Future in Our Hands the Welsh Government has adopted on a national scale a low impact development policy known as One Planet Development (see Figure 10). Notably, the wording of this policy is almost exactly the phrasing used by Simon Fairlie in his description of LID (2009). This is not coincidence, as at the Welsh Government level there has been recognition, not least due to the interventions of Jane Davidson, of the logic of allowing LID in the open countryside.

In Wales, sustainable development, sustainability, climate change, a concern with the environment, as well as society and the economy are more clearly defined and still very much central to policy. Policy documents, including not only Planning Policy Wales, but also several of the TANs, and other policy documents such as the Sustainability Scheme, One Wales: One Planet (Welsh Assembly Government 2009), as well as various other documents (e.g. PwC 2011) and media releases certainly
seem to indicate that this is high on the agenda. Jane Davidson, formerly an Assembly Member notes how sustainability was made a cornerstone of Welsh policy, finding cross-party support and agreement. Early on in the formation of the Welsh Government after devolution in 1997, there was an eagerness to show distinctiveness in policy, and making sustainability a statutory duty was part of that:

“The reason it was first there was back in 1997 when the devolution vote was won, by a tiny tiny percentage, a commission was set up to look at what a new body should be constituted like. And that commission made a proposal, which I think was absolutely brilliant, that sustainable development should be at the cornerstone of the new body. It would make it distinctive, it would be something distinctively Welsh, and it might change how people viewed government responsibilities. And I just thought it was fantastic. It's one of the things that made me decide to stand for this new body.” (Jane Davidson, author’s interview)

In a way, the environment or rather sustainable development with a stronger focus on environmental and social aspects has become a political site which alongside language, heritage, health and labour rights, is an area where Wales tries to be, and is, distinctive from England. In this respect it is about forming a new territorial identity – something which to an extent has been enabled by the process of spatial planning (Harris & Hooper 2006). Indeed, Wales’ first spatial plan, People, Places, Futures (Welsh Assembly Government 2004) contained a strong sense of sustainability as well as governance both in terms of the processes through which it was produced (with heavy involvement at a regional/local level, particularly in the case of the updated version in 2008) but also in terms of its stated commitment to sustainability. It also set out a sense of identity for the nation/region of Wales that was built on care for the environment as well as people and the economy.

In spite of this commitment to sustainable development however, there were still (and are still) issues around how to actually demonstrate and implement this through policy. As Jane Davidson notes:

“What we found was that there was this duty to have a scheme about sustainable development, but actually there wasn't even the duty to have a good scheme [laughing]. There was just a duty to have a scheme. So each different administration interpreted it in a slightly different way. So by the time I became Minister we'd already had 2.5 schemes, and essentially what would happen is we have 4 year terms here in Wales, and it would take 2 years to create. So the duty runs like this: the government has a duty to make a scheme. The incoming government has to review the effectiveness of the scheme. So after the first
scheme was done, incoming government reviews the effectiveness, but of course it doesn't get around to it for ages, because it's very low on the agenda. So it get's 'round to it about 18 months in, it reviews the effectiveness of the existing scheme. And then it has to decide whether to accept that scheme, or make a new one. So it always wants to make a new one! And then, it makes a new one and that gets it to about 2.5 or 3 years into the administration, and that new one only has a year to run, and then the same thing happens again! So actually, we had the bizarre situation whereby that very set of arrangements: the idea of making a scheme, testing the effectiveness of it, making a new scheme and the timetables involved, meant that actually our sustainable development scheme was about the least sustainable thing we were doing!” (Davidson, author’s interview)

Davidson goes on to say that how she approached this situation was to get cross-party support (Wales at the time had a coalition government) to make sustainable development a central organizing principle, in legislation.

“And that's what's happening at the moment. So now in Wales, we will be the first country to legislate to have sustainable development as a central organizing principle. And that does have all parties support! ... It's been a 12-year journey, for how, in Wales, we would like this duty to demonstrate we're doing something different. And it can only demonstrate we're doing something different if the duty is recognized as important enough to override other duties!” (Davidson, author’s interview)

Not only was Jane Davidson willing to push for difference in government with regards to the approach to sustainable development, but she was also open to new and radical ideas when it came to translating sustainability into policy. For instance, in reference to the eventual policy in Welsh Government level planning in support of low impact development she notes that:

“I like the idea of taking ideas and saying, well, if we want to do something about the lack of affordability of rural housing, if we want to do something about encouraging more people to work on the land, if we want to do something about low carbon buildings, if we want to do something about land that is not otherwise going to be used, let's put it all together in one policy.” (Jane Davidson, author’s interview)

It is arguable that Jane Davidson’s position within the government allowed her the possibility to be imaginative about policy – something potentially less possible at different scales – particularly perhaps local Councils with a Conservative political majority. In such a case, scale-jumping seems to have been an effective strategy and having a champion for low impact development has clearly been an advantage.
This is not to say that imaginative sustainable development policies could not emerge from a local planning authority, as indeed Policy 52 did – but even that was influenced in some respects by the Welsh Government level, particularly in the sense of the commissioning of a research document (LUC 2002) which ultimately formed the basis of the policy. More will be said about this in Chapter 5.

4.15 One Planet Development

4.15.1 The Sustainable Development Scheme, “One Wales: One Planet” includes an objective that within the lifetime of a generation, Wales should use only its fair share of the earth’s resources, and our ecological footprint be reduced to the global average availability of resources - 1.88 global hectares per person in 2003. One Planet Developments take forward Low Impact Development (LID) principles in the Welsh context. One Planet Development is development that through its low impact either enhances or does not significantly diminish environmental quality. One Planet Development is potentially an exemplar type of sustainable development. One Planet Developments should initially achieve an ecological footprint of 2.4 global hectares per person or less in terms of consumption and demonstrate clear potential to move towards 1.88 global hectare target over time. They should also be zero carbon in both construction and use.

4.15.2 One Planet Developments may take a number of forms. They can either be single homes, co-operative communities or larger settlements. They may be located within or adjacent to existing settlements, or be situated in the open countryside. Where One Planet Developments involve members of more than one family, the proposal should be managed and controlled by a trust, co-operative or other similar mechanism in which the occupiers have an interest. Land based One Planet Developments located in the open countryside should, over a reasonable length of time (no more than 5 years), provide for the minimum needs of the inhabitants’ in terms of income, food, energy and waste assimilation. Where this cannot be demonstrated, they should be considered against policies which seek to control development in the open countryside.

4.5 PLANNING PARADIGMS, SD AND ALTERNATIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE

Though it’s true that Policy 52 did emerge at the local level and this does to an extent indicate the possibility that this scale too can be the source of innovative policies,
there are significant barriers to this happening. Consider for instance that the process of creating a local development plan (formerly a Unitary Development Plan) involves years of work, the consideration of every applicable policy from the EU down (as well as to an extent consideration of UN policies such as Agenda 21), the collation of multiple ‘evidence base’ documents, and also local consultation. The results of this process in the case of the Joint Unitary Development Plan in Pembrokeshire were a document of The Joint Unitary Development Plan is a document of no less than 177 pages, containing 133 individual policies relating to various aspects of development. Additionally, even if local planning authorities were to accept the idea of sustainable development as an organizing principle, as the Welsh Government has done, they would be in the position of struggling to define sustainable development in light of EU policy (very much focused on economic development) as well as WG policy (and to an extent UK-wide policy as well – particularly on matters such as energy and transport). It is a bewildering time to be a planner.

In the midst of this complexity, planners look to existing paradigms for guidance. The existing paradigm relating to rural spaces is that development should be prevented unless it has to do with agriculture (generally large-scale industrialised agriculture that can draw down subsidies and therefore be economically viable). This paradigm, stemming from post-war ideas about promoting agriculture continues to be carried on in an increasingly diverse environment, and one in which diversity is actually recognized as a positive goal:

“Rural Development: The key to sustainable development in rural areas lies in the need to foster indigenous development in rural areas (including diversification).” (PCNPA and PCC, 2006, p.9)

An irony contained within the policy is that although in words the policies seek to promote diversification and to mitigate the negative effects of CAP-subsidized farming, in practice the planning department remains very strongly opposed to any new building in the ‘open countryside’ and has a tendency to reject applications for small-scale farming requiring dwellings on the land on the basis that the farms are too small to be profitable, even though they are able to operate without subsidy whereas the larger intensive farms remain reliant on subsidy.

There is, in short, no new paradigm of rural sustainability that planners can draw upon when making decisions. Decisions are also still very much influenced by the massive
economic effects that allowing building in countryside locations has. In comparison to land in urban areas, land in agricultural areas is very cheap – partly because it is difficult to gain planning permission to build anything on it. However, once planning is granted on agricultural land, and a house is built, the value increase is tremendous. This has of course led many people to try to gain planning permission in countryside locations, in some cases purely in order to sell the houses or land with planning permission at a huge profit. The fear of planners with regards to this is that by being loose with their decisions on building they will encourage a wave of building for profit in the countryside thereby blighting it with houses. This is a concern that is actually shared by Simon Fairlie and many other low impact developers who see what they are doing as a justifiable exception to an acceptable general rule.

Low impact developers are in essence presenting a slightly modified new paradigm – a new representation of space – for planners and others to draw upon. It is a paradigm that is based on the idea of sustainable development as proposed by the Bruntland Report and Agenda 21, and one based on an understanding of the existing paradigms of planning as they relate to rural spaces. While the JUDP says: ‘Land use planning policy can have little influence on the way in which farming is carried out’, the suggestion carried by LID is that in fact the planning system has an incredibly strong role to play in either encouraging and enabling, or squashing and disabling possibilities for small-scale, bio-diverse, non-intensive agriculture, which generally involves more labour hours and usually requires living on the land. This involves unsettling existing, entrenched and simplified paradigms.

On ‘representations of space’ Lefebvre writes that it is:

“the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived. … This is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production). Conceptions of space tend, with certain exceptions…towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs.” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.38)

Yet, the ability to produce representations of space, in a planning system which is open to ‘representations’ from the public is open to alternative representations, even ones which, as Halfacree points out are radically different from, even opposed to the dominant paradigms (Halfacree 2007).
The discourse of sustainable development as it emerged from the UN significantly opened a space for these alternative representations. Agenda 21 contained a section directed explicitly at local authorities, encouraging the incorporation of just such representations:

“Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objectives. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations, and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development.” (UNCED 1992, Section 28.1)

The Agenda also proposed specific objectives with relation to this:

“By 1996, most local authorities in each country should have undertaken a consultative process with their populations and achieved a consensus on "a local Agenda 21" for the community” (UNCED 1992, Section 28.2.a)

Pembrokeshire County Council did in fact take up this call, and the low impact developers were ready to represent. Paul Wimbush describes the situation:

“So, at some point, in the mid to late nineties, Pembrokeshire County Council had Agenda 21 land on their desk. Not that they really knew what to do with it. But they had some kind of commitment towards sustainability and so they ran two workshops in the County, one in the South of the County, one in the North of the County, talking to the people and saying, ok, what do you want in terms of sustainability? Now, as far as I'm aware... the workshop in the South of the County came to nothing, but a, a team of people got together and prepared for the gathering in the North of the County. This coincided with Simon Fairlie publishing his book on Low Impact Development, and so, the workshop in the North of the County was attended strongly by a lobby group asking for a low impact development policy.” (Wimbush, author’s interview)

This was of course one of many factors and interactions, including the interactions around Tony Wrench’s roundhouse mentioned earlier in this chapter and the impact of research documents which will be talked about more in Chapter 5. However, while a direct causal link cannot and should not be drawn between this one factor and the ultimate writing of LID policy, it certainly provided a space of possibility. In short, sustainable development discourse provided an opportunity to engage politically that
would not have otherwise existed, and this was helpful in the ultimate development of LID policy at the local and later national (Wales-wide) levels.

Promoting and implementing sustainable development via local authorities is a very laudable goal. As pointed out in the Agenda 21 section, it is at the local authority level that a lot of decision-making and intervention is enacted that can have a great effect upon sustainable development. However, as we’ve briefly discussed, the local level is in many ways, particularly in terms of planning, subject to powerful forces from many other levels, leaving the planning profession largely in a position of being reactive and regulatory largely because the actual outcomes of decisions are depended on individuals and organisations in possession of the land and capital to actually enact development. Interesting discussions about power are provided by Forester, and Booher and Innes, both in an American context (Forester 1982; Booher & Innes 2002). Studies focusing on power in planning, and particularly on the potential sense of empowerment or agency among planners are limited. As Booher & Innes note:

“Nowhere has dealing with the concept of power been more challenging than in the field of planning. It is a commonplace assumption that whatever power is, planners do not have it. Planning as a professional activity… is typically thought to be subject to power and not part of it. Though a few planning theorists argue otherwise, saying that what planners do is part and parcel of what constitutes power in a society …. overall as a field we have not systematically made this case. The predominant view in many circles is still that planning is either the handmaiden of power … or the dupe, or even the victim of power…. Most often, those who write about planning ignore power all together, as if it did not matter, or, more ominously, as if it mattered so much that they dared not even raise the question.” (Booher and Innes, 2002, p.221)

There is much more that could be said on this but I would like here only to point to this issue in terms of providing a greater understanding of the position that planners are in, and the reasons why local authority planning departments and planners can seem awkward and resistant to change. A more nuanced understanding would perhaps suggest the limited sense of agency afforded in such spaces. Though planners are clearly part of a peopled state (Jones et al. 2004; Jones 2007), and one which is increasingly aiming to be ‘collaborative’ (Healey 2006a) it is worth recognising some of the difficulties of this in practice (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones 2002). Such critiques have implications for the governance of sustainable development via the planning system. There are clear similarities between the discourse of sustainable
development, the related discourse of governance, and the notion of collaborative planning. Though change is difficult and slow these trajectories do, in my view, hold promise provided that the people and groups with the capabilities to think differently and act differently continue to engage and aim to change the system.

4.6 Governing Sustainable ‘Community’: Scalar and Networked Relations

In the next part of this chapter I want to move on to exploring the governance of sustainable development via through the concept of ‘community’. I explore here three iterations of community. The first is community as understood by the Department for Energy and Climate change through a particular grant-funding scheme called the Low Carbon Communities Challenge from which Lammas received a grant for building a ‘community hub’. The second sense is the degree to which feeling a sense of belonging or identification with the geographically-defined community of Lammas’ first eco-village – later named Tir-y-Gafel – affected governance relationships within the geographic community and with outside influences (such as planning and building regulations). The final sense in which I consider community governance is in the sense of ‘self-governance’ via cultural identification. This draws upon the idea of a wider, disparate but networked culture of eco-villages, LID projects, permaculturists, agro-ecologists and so on.

These iterations of ‘community’ and community governance emerged from an iterative approach to the research – in other words, I did not begin my research looking for or at ‘community’ in an academic sense, although many have done so and there are multiple academic as well as policy narratives around various simplified or more complex notions of community. I will weave a few of these into the discussion here however the point is not to come up with or to critique any particular concept or formulation of community – as with other concepts the meaningfulness of ‘community’ is seen as something emergent out of context, and in this case specifically out of the usage of that term by people involved. The various iterations of community within this context draw attention to the complex ways in which this idea
is materialised through various socio-spatial practices and how it impacts upon governance in different ways.

**Community 1: Harnessing community for low carbon transitions**

On December 21st 2009, Lammas became one of 22 community projects to win a Local Carbon Communities Challenge (LCCC) grant. The grant of £350,000 was to be used for the community hub building, or community education centre, at the heart of the Tir-y-Gafel eco-village providing a base for events, site tours, courses and so on could take place. The LCCC funding, as can be seen from the summary in Figure 12, was intended for projects with an element of ‘local engagement and behavioural change activities’. These were also to be geographically targeted, with the goal of ‘community-wide’ changes. This initiative sought to capitalize on a new political and policy focus on ‘community’ or ‘communities’ as a kind of entity which could potentially be manipulated to affect the behaviour of people (Hauxwell-Baldwin 2013).

Far more extensive works have been written about the LCCC programme, its definition of communities and the impacts that an approach based on reducing carbon has on people in terms of behaviour change (Hauxwell-Baldwin 2013; Taylor Aiken 2014). Significant for this research is the fact that this was another scale of government, the UK-national scale that was supporting the Lammas project. The successful bid represented in a way, another successful attempt at gaining the support of a different level and different part of the state apparatus. It is demonstrative in some respects of the approach of LID actors in engaging with and harnessing as much as possible the support of different governmental institutions, organisations and individuals. In doing so, an exchange was taking place.

The goal of the LCCC program was to learn from ‘community test bed’ sites. DECC produced, via the inputs of independent researchers, two reports on the LCCC program. These assessed multiple aspects of each project and the program as a whole. Behavioural change was considered in both reports. In the interim report, ‘Lammas’ is quoted as saying that:
“People will make radical changes to their lifestyles if they are empowered and supported to do so. The optimum driver in such transformation is not carbon emissions, nor the threat of climate change; it is the prospect of a more holistic lifestyle” (Lammas quoted in DECC 2011)

This is potentially a very significant learning point for DECC, particularly given critiques of methods based on accounting (Gerald Taylor-Aiken 2013).

The Low Carbon Communities Challenge (LCC) was a £10 million, two year programme to provide financial and advisory support to 22 test bed communities. Its aim was to fund, and learn from, community-scale approaches to the delivery of low carbon technologies and engagement activities. It was funded and supported by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) in Northern Ireland, the Welsh Government and Sciencewise-ERC.

Background
The LCC aimed to build on established organisations with a track record of taking action on energy and low carbon issues on a community scale. It offered capital infrastructure funding for carbon emissions reduction and free advice and support through a partner consortium (the "Specialist Support Team", or SST). Alongside the funding of infrastructure, and to ensure integrated approaches, projects were also required to deliver local engagement and behavioural change activities. The average LCC award was £450,000, of which a minimum of 90 per cent was allocated for expenditure on capital measures.

The projects
The projects were diverse, representing a range of communities, delivery models and technologies. However, three characteristics were intended to be common to all projects:

- They would be geographically targeted, area-based initiatives;
- They would involve integrated packages of measures;
- They would draw upon sociological models of behaviour that emphasise the potential for social norms to nudge and trigger community-wide change.

They also represented two main ‘types’ of community-scale delivery: projects led by community groups (‘community-led’) and projects led by existing agencies (e.g. local authorities, Third Sector organisations) and targeted at communities (‘community focused’).

Figure 11: Excerpt from Executive Summary of LCCC Evaluation Report (DECC 2012)

The final evaluative report by DECC assessing the results of the project within the various communities after the two year period used measurements of behavioural change including surveys of people’s attitudes before and after the project on questions such as how important they felt climate change was and whether they felt it was ‘normal’ for people to try to reduce their carbon consumption (DECC, July 2012). While these measures are clearly important, more pertinent questions in light of the suggestion by Lammas would have to do with whether people felt empowered and supported to make the kinds of lifestyle changes that a low-carbon lifestyle would entail, and also how they felt about doing such things, whether they saw it as
drudgery, duty, and hardship, or whether they came to it with positivity seeing it as a lifestyle improvement. This is a significant point in respect to the behaviour change angle.

Many studies have pointed to problematic aspects of community governance initiatives led by government agencies (e.g. Somerville 2005; Taylor 2007; Gardner 2011). Critiques of such initiatives include that 1) they are based on simplistic understandings of community, e.g. assuming that a local area will have something called community, though there may be a diverse population living there that does not interact; 2) assuming that power relations within a ‘community’ are even and unproblematic; 3) initiatives require so much monitoring that the work time of people involved in the ‘community-facing’ or ‘community-engagement’ project spend most of their time on accounting and monitoring; 4) funding streams alter existing relationships by for example, paying one person within a voluntary organisation making others acutely aware that someone is getting paid to do a job and they are not; 5) short-term funding schemes come with limitations of what can be accomplished within that short period and sustainability or legacy issues once the funding is gone, and 6) community governance initiatives often suffer from lack of power in terms of economic or other resources and as a result are always in a power imbalance with the funders, including the inability to fundamentally change paradigms or address big issues (Taylor gives the example for instance of affordable housing and its dependence on land markets).

In the case of the LCCC funding to Lammas, some of these issues were also apparent, and the results of the project were mixed. The community hub building, though now happily used by Tir-y-Gafel residents, volunteers, visitors, and people on courses, has been and continues to be an incredible site of contention amongst residents of the community. The grant funding and associated strings and reporting requirements meant that there were serious time restrictions on getting things done. The style of building in a low impact fashion, as was the norm for the residents, did not necessarily suit this model. For instance LI building is often a cumulative process involving salvaged or collected materials. Since this was to be a public-access building, building regulations stipulated that it should have an accessible toilet attached to the building and various other requirements for the food preparation area.
The regulations also necessitated the use of concrete in the foundations – something generally avoided in low impact building due to the very high embodied-energy of that material. Numerous compromises of build had to be made, and there was much agonising over these, after all this building was a representative space and therefore significant in terms of the project.

Another significant aspect – which resonates with other literatures about community-based initiatives funded by grants – was the changing of relationships in the building process. The norm for low impact builds, given that these are usually also very low income projects is that the build is a collective activity involving not only the ultimate occupiers or users of the building, but also friends, relatives, and volunteers. In the case of Lammas, perhaps in part due to its high profile, a large number of volunteers were attracted who were keen to help on the build. This group formed a community of its own outside the build, a lively space of communal eating, living, sharing and working. Meanwhile many of the eco-village residents were busy on their own plots and unable to ‘host’ very effectively as would be the norm with most LI builds. As a result of not being able to provide food for the volunteers, but having funding, a decision was made to give the volunteers a daily food stipend of £20 each.

Although under the circumstances the food stipend seemed the most appropriate thing to do, it did cause some tensions. Some residents expressed the feeling that the fact that volunteers were being paid drastically changed the relationship and their motivations for being there – in some senses harming the building of a collective sense of community. Whereas others were concerned that the stipend to cover food was well below national minimum pay for a job and questioned the ethics of having volunteers working on a project that was funded. In short, the funding and the time limits on the building in conjunction with the time limits imposed on the plotholders in terms of getting their own homes built and getting their land-based enterprises into swing, altered the relationships between volunteers and residents, and of the residents with each other.

A second aspect involved in the community hub build was the schedule. As mentioned this was quite tight, and paperwork had to be completed along the way to provide markers of the progress. The funding was (or was at least seen to be)
contingent on this process being done according to schedule. As a result, there was pressure to get things done more quickly than they might have otherwise happened, and along the way more artistic and creative approaches were sometimes abandoned as a result in favour of the fastest possible way of doing things. This too caused tension, as in some cases it was one person’s artistic vision which was being abandoned, perhaps precluding the ability of that person to feel connected to the project, and again altering the feeling that the project was one in which the community was involved, that the community hub was something that would bring people together.

Unlike many other community projects that have attained short-term funding however, the limitations of the LCCC funding in this case may have been something of a blessing. Though it has meant that several years later the community hub is still not finished, and process is now very incremental and slow, with only one volunteer remaining on site to work on this and additional work being done by residents as and when they manage to, nevertheless some of the tensions seem to be abating. Although it is true that in many respects the way in which the build occurred and the possible resulting damage to relationships that ensued was traumatic along the development trajectory of the eco-village, in the end some kind of compromise was reached and although the building remains uncompleted, work does appear to be going on and the building is usable and used frequently, if not necessarily cosy due to its lack of doors.

The LCCC funding could be seen in some ways as a kind of ‘strategic niche management’ (Smith, 2007) approach, in that it sought to harness the energy of an existing project or niche and then to mould or shape this, or at least to learn from it and the possible influence that could be had through it. Although perhaps more accurate than management would be monitoring since the main requirement of the funding seems to have been the production of reports on progress and one of the aims of the funders was to learn from the niches, rather than necessarily to manage them. Nevertheless, it is clear that the approach, involving funding and requiring in return monitoring, reporting and research, had an influence on the outcomes of a project simply by its being there. This means that the results of the monitoring will always be dependent on the funding itself, rendering this as a research exercise quite skewed, given that it altered significantly the communities it was attempting to study.
Figure 12: The community hub building, still lacking doors in early 2012 (author’s photo)

Community 2: Who or what defines us? Questions for geographically-bounded LiDers

The LCCC understanding of community was a geographically-bounded one, and as a group of people coming together as what most people familiar with the project would still term an ‘intentional community’, Tir-y-Gafel as an eco-village perhaps comes closer than most geographically-bounded groups in contemporary British society to meeting such an understanding of what a community is. However, this is by no means unproblematic. In fact, considering that the people living ‘low impact lifestyles’ are in many ways different to the norm in society, they could actually be considered part of a sub-culture, and this is not one which is geographically-bounded. Moreover, the people who came together to become part of Tir-y-Gafel for the most part did not know each other well before the commencement of the project, but connected through a shared ethos and networks of similar interests (such as at various festivals and events, significantly in this case, the Green Gathering). The place-boundedness of the eco-village itself of course creates relationships and interdependencies that would not be there in more conventional settlements. Yet, such interdependencies are a feature
of many rural communities and neighbourhoods and tend to develop over time and in response to needs (Moles and Radcliffe, 2011).

In terms of a locality, one aspect sometimes used to define a community is its difference or opposition to other groups in the area. There was, to an extent, a certain impetus for this provided by the ‘Dim Lammas’ movement that greeted the would-be eco-villagers as they began the process of attempting to gain planning permission. In my informal conversations about Lammas with numerous people, many assume that the opposition came from Welsh-speaking farmers in the area. In fact, the most vociferous opposition was actually led by English retirees in the village of Glandwr. Over time, even the relationship with the most adamant of these has softened and as residents of Tir-y-Gafel have numerous reasons as well as motivations to do so, they have developed relationships with people living locally as well as further afield. There is still to an extent a sense of different populations or groups co-existing in the space, but the lines are blurred.

There is a degree of recognition amongst residents of Tir-y-Gafel that in a sense, what they are aiming to create is in some ways an artificial community, instead of one that has occurred naturally due to the coincidence of proximity and resulting interrelationships and crossed paths. Therefore, although there is a certain dislike for the label of ‘intentional community’ amongst most Tir-y-Gafel residents (mainly due to prior experiences in other intentional communities which had much more intense codes of interaction and sharing than does Tir-y-Gafel), there is also a recognition that regardless of definition, this is an unusual form of community, one that is to a degree, forced into being.

The pressure created by the expectations and assumptions of what a community is, or should be, bear heavily on people within the eco-village. Lammas as an organization was set up with the aim of promoting a network of eco-villages, of which Tir-y-Gafel is the first. As a result, the residents and the eco-village as a whole are under a great deal of scrutiny not only from the planning side of things in terms of monitoring and so on, but from the perspective of all the people who are questing for alternative styles of living. From late Spring to Autumn, every Saturday at Tir-y-Gafel brings a barrage of visitors, generally between ten to thirty people interested in the lifestyle and often considering such a change for themselves. The eco-village is as a consequence under
relatively constant surveillance from interested people, who often also bring with them assumptions about intentional communities and communities in general, who are often seeking some kind of utopian community. This adds to the pressure on residents to demonstrate what community is like.

In reality, communities, even utopian ones, will never be free from conflict. The only way a group of human beings could co-exist with each other and never come into conflict is if everyone was permanently asleep, or drugged, and even then it would not be guaranteed. The interesting thing about different communities therefore is not how well they get along, but how they deal with decision-making, difference and conflict. How such things are dealt with are of course cornerstones of any intentional community and are issues which have been considered and confronted more intensely in intentional communities perhaps than in any other organizational form. People who are drawn into communities look forward to having people around them, to the help and support and company, but sometimes do not foresee or look forward to the vast amount of interpersonal negotiation that must take place. Dealing with this occurs at an individual level as well as a community level, as everyone will be familiar with from living with a family. Compromises are made, battles are fought, truces agreed, peace restored, perhaps changes made in order to prevent future conflicts and so on.

Governance within the alternative communities is a process of negotiation and response complicated due to the particular history of the project, the legal situations and requirements, finances, and the particular combination of people and their goals. As a result, governance models are rarely reducible to various characteristics that can then be transferred across the board to other communities. Contextual details make all the difference, and therefore it is very hard to even begin to compare different communities, let alone come up with a model that would work for all such communities. Kanter’s study of alternative communities in America revealed that governance varied widely, although it often relied on either a charismatic leader or a religious or other doctrine-based type of manifesto that would keep the community in line on major decisions. Much has been learned from community experiments of the past, and these learnings are taken forward in contemporary communities.

Learning also occurs via spatial networks, as well as through accounts of historical similar projects. In meetings, members often draw from what they have either
experienced or heard about from other communities in terms of conflict resolution. This takes place as narrative or story-telling. It could be seen to resemble what Forester calls ‘practice stories’ in the context of planners (1993). Communication within groups is taken as something requiring skills, practice, and a wide variety of tools. Unlike within the planning system, values and emotional responses to things are considered valid points of discussion. Agreement and disagreement with a point being made can also be expressed using hand signals, for instance, shaking hands downwards to disagree and upright to agree. The difficulty of coming to consensus in decision-making means that everyone has to work hard on communication, and the high level of communication skill is evident in meetings. Efforts are made by facilitators to get everyone to speak, drawing in even those who might naturally retreat into silence at the back of the room.

Beyond this, members also attend training sessions such as conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence, and continually seek to improve their engagement and communication, and reflect heavily upon decision-making processes and their involvement in them. This is not to say that all this learning and practice makes new communities such as Tir-y-Gafel either immune to conflict or somehow protected from its potential negative effects, such as people falling out with each other for long stretches of time, retreating into their own spaces to nurse emotional wounds. In fact, although people talked a lot about the conflicts they experienced at the eco-village, in practice there was clearly a great deal of respect evident for each other and a continued civility and cooperation, even when conflicts had occurred and people were still nursing hurt feelings over them.

In spite of the hard work involved in these processes, and how emotionally draining and frustrating they can be, the continued practice of working at this is evident in the high level of communication skill, empathy and awareness demonstrated in meetings. An interpretation of this is that in fact, in spite of, or perhaps in part because of the conflicts that occur, and the lack of hierarchical tools of decision-making, communication and governance processes and tools are far more advanced than in many other settings. Kanter may have come to similar conclusions in her study of intentional communities as she now writes on and supplies advice to businesses on how to manage organisational culture.
As mentioned earlier, in spite of geographical proximity and indeed, cultural or network-based commonalities, the concept of community still fit awkwardly on the Tir-y-Gafel residents. People would talk instead about their visitors, family members, friends, other groups they were involved with such as the Permaculture Association, or gatherings at which they felt part of a community such as Climate Camp Cymru. At least one resident actually lamented the lack of a sense of community at Tir-y-Gafel, longing for a greater degree of co-dependency, mutual work and help, and interaction. In terms of identifying as a group or community, at one meeting one resident emphasised that the fight for planning permission and for acceptance from the existing residents of Glandwr, some of whom had started an aggressive ‘Dim Lammas’ or ‘No Lammas’ campaign, had given the group a sense of shared identity, as being united against a common enemy, and that this had dissipated once these conflicts were over. Another resident responded that it need not be a common enemy that held the group together, it could also be simply a common goal.

In terms of common goals it would seem clear that the residents of Tir-y-Gafel came together with similar ideas and goals which had led to their decision to attempt living in this way. This is certainly true, however, the process of gaining planning permission, while solidifying these goals, changed them in important ways by both quantifying them, and reducing them to measurable numbers (as discussed in Chapter 5). The result is that something quite cultural, or as some writers on eco-villages have put it ‘spiritual’ have been altered into a kind of scientific, removed, objective, and obligatory set of outcomes. In some senses this is helpful, because it both removes the need for agreement on a manifesto of sorts and reduces the need to agree on what exactly the focus should be. The focus is, as a result of the planning conditions, quite clear. It is possibly unrealistic, but at least it is clear. Obviously, removing the need to come up with a manifesto is both a blessing and a bane. The downside to it is that people are prone to feeling as though they are independent agents fighting their own individual (generally as a family) battles in the face of the planning permissions, and often in the fact of the organization that is ‘Lammas’ which they often see as something beyond themselves.
This shift of identity from belonging to or being part of Lammas, to belonging to and being part of Tir-y-Gafel alone is very interesting. Lammas at present is comprised entirely of people from Tir-y-Gafel, although the idea is that it will expand to involve other eco-villages once they have emerged. When talking about Lammas however, residents tend to refer to it as something that is outside of themselves, that they do not necessarily belong to or that does not necessarily belong to them. There is some fear and anxiety associated with the goals and aims of Lammas, and how these will impact upon Tir-y-Gafel residents. It might be assumed that Lammas’ agenda is one designed by Paul Wimbush, and that the distrust felt has to do with a distrust of the aims and goals of this man. Yet, this is a very oversimplified view and does not seem to correspond well with what is being said and done. Instead, the anxieties seem to stem simultaneously from a desire to be more a part of something, more enmeshed in it and its goals, and from a desire to not have to participate in so many meetings and get involved in quite so much paperwork and research. Perhaps the fear stems partly from knowledge gaps as well and the feeling that there is something worth knowing which

Figure 13: Signage at entry to Tir y Gafel / Lammas (Photo credit: Lammas)
remains unknown and that through not having this knowledge, people are putting themselves in a precarious position, a position of reduced safety and security.

The internal politics of the eco-village are in fact very similar to internal politics at all sorts of other organizations, including many businesses. There is a similar dislike for endless and frequent meetings, a simultaneous desire for and commitment to consensus decision-making, alongside the frustrations of the resulting impasse when one or two people don’t agree with the decision being proposed. Perhaps slightly differently in this case, since the residents of the eco-village all have their individual plots and business management plans and the pressure to meet the planning conditions within five years, there is an added pressure to just get on with what they are doing and spend less time on governance activities and on trying to promote more eco-villages. This is expressed in the tension between Tir-y-Gafel and Lammas as well, where one person in a meeting suggested that their purpose was not to ‘engage in politicking’ but rather to work on cultivating the land and meeting the planning conditions. That doing the work, digging the earth, growing things and building things, was the most radical and useful thing they could do and where the focus should be. Yet the demands of decision-making keep knocking on the door, and the diverse goals of individuals as well as their self-perception of their relationship with other organizations and networks has a profound influence on the entire eco-village and indeed the Lammas project as a whole. This was demonstrated through the interactions with buildings regulations discussed in the previous chapter.

The difference in approaches to the building regulations may have caused some internal tensions among residents who might have felt a united front would have given them more strength, however it seems the fragmented approach did in fact lend more resilience overall to the project. Although the divided views were a source of stress, no one tried to force anyone else to take a particular direction on the issue. While this may have reduced the feeling of solidarity against a common enemy, given the differences in opinion of either complying or trying to change the system through argumentation, or not engaging with it at all, everyone doing what they thought most suitable under the circumstances seems to have been the best way to proceed.

In terms of governance, the building regulations saga illustrates some key points. One is that the eco-village becomes distinguished here from many of the kinds of
alternative communities talked about by Kanter in her US-based study in that in this case there is not necessarily a single charismatic leader and a single voice for the community. Paul Wimbush as mentioned before is the only original founder of Lammas to be a resident at Tir-y-Gafel and Lammas has very much been a project of passion for him. When conflicts arise in the group between Tir-y-Gafel and Lammas it is tempting to mentally reduce this to conflicts between Paul and other residents. Paul is largely single-handedly involved in helping to promote other similar projects and spends some of his time looking carefully through policy documents and guidance, other planning applications and helping to form representations for other groups wishing to try similar things, and therefore he is perhaps more than anyone else ‘Lammas’. At the same time as people feel left out of the thing called Lammas and not a part of it, they also do not particularly want to get involved in such things and would rather get on with what they are doing. However, when conflicts with outside regulations arise, there is perhaps a sense that they do want someone with the knowledge to step in and fight the battle on their behalf. This is not to be unkind to the other residents, it is quite a natural response to the sequence of events. Yet, in an avoidance of the role of leader, and particularly I think, in a desire to step away from any kind of internal hierarchy, Paul very much left everyone to make their own decisions about what to do about the building regulations. As a result some people felt a bit abandoned, and even suspicious at how Paul’s house was approved.

Telling people what to do however is not part of the governance structure that Paul envisions for the eco-village, nor is being or having a charismatic leader, and Paul himself very much downplays his own role in every respect. Allowing people to make their own decisions and deal on their own with building regulations may have caused or contributed to rifts in the eco-village, but at the same time it may have served to enhance mutual respect and the sense of independence that is coupled with the desire for community. Given that the people attracted by the Lammas project are all thoughtful, independent people who were able to question the status quo of society, it seems natural that they should also continue to do so even whilst living in a geographically-bonded group. It is difficult to see how an individual could be, or should be the kind of leader appropriate for such a group. Instead, the various independent but communicative voices are able to articulate different views and
approaches, which may temporarily destabilize group relations but lead to a more resilient community on the whole.

That said, the building regulations situation did flag up a weakness common amongst organizations of all sorts. That is that in spite of the great potential for communication, it seems that in the case of the building regulations once different positions and approaches were decided, possibly causing some tension at the time, the ongoing ways of dealing then seem to have occurred in a rather isolated fashion, with little ongoing discussion about exactly what was being done. So interestingly, while Paul and Hoppi were busy getting each individual item checked off their list, other residents seem to have been unaware of this. In retrospect it looks as though more openness about this process would have helped ease some of the tension in the group.

Community 3: The Networked Community and Self-Governance through Identity

The previous section considered briefly the approach of the Department for Energy and Climate change in recognizing the potential of community-based projects to influence the behaviour of individuals. There are plenty of theories to suggest that this does in fact occur, although there are always questions around the degree of influence that such initiatives may have, given that the people who are attracted to them are likely to be thinking about and making changes in their lives in any case. Theorists such as Seyfang and Smith have used the analytical framework of strategic niche management to explore the wider effects of community initiatives such as the Transition Towns movement, green building, and community housing projects. Strategic niche management (SNM) focuses on several aspects of projects to assess their effectiveness. These are, the management of expectations amongst both insiders and outsiders to the project, networking, and learning. Based on this analysis, the Lammas project could be considered to be achieving highly. The project, and the people involved in it and prior to its inception, in making representations to local planning policy makers, have managed to effect change on a variety of levels via successful networking, harnessing of knowledge and learning both amongst and outside of the group of individuals interested in this kind of lifestyle, and an ongoing process of networking and learning through visiting days, courses, the website, the email newsletter, attendance at events, and the open doors policy towards researchers. Networking in this case can be seen as highly effective, as can the learning aspect. In
terms of managing expectations, this one is a trickier, given the issues mentioned earlier in this chapter about expectations attached to words such as community. However, on the whole there seems to be a good level of communication on this, and a clarity about what the goals and expectations are of the project(s).

The SNM analysis is helpful in dissecting some of the aspects of projects that seem to make them more successful than others. In any case, it is one possible means of measuring success (although it is always dubious to apply a measure of success to a project which is not defined by the individuals involved in the project themselves). However, although Seyfang and Smith’s particular application of the SNM approach is ostensibly focused on social innovations and mentions repeatedly the importance of feelings of identification and belonging as important factors in motivating people to continue along a path, it perhaps does not delve deeply enough into the emotional reasons that people become and stay involved with a project.

In the case of Lammas, there is a very visceral attractiveness to the project which can be felt on the courses, the visiting days, the meetings, and just when visiting individual households. The power of the project lies very much in its beauty, as well as in its attitude of acceptance. This latter is very important. Jon Anderson has written about ‘coyote environmentalism’ (2010) and the ways in which some environmental movements can become exclusionary through their intensity of demands on people, whereas there is an argument for people within such movements to be more accepting of the partial and incomplete ways in which people are able to or willing to modify their own behaviours. By requiring too extreme a response, or too unified a response, movements can become alienating, depressing, and exclusionary. A striking feature of the Tir-y-Gafel eco-village is the level of acceptance and understanding of the variety of ways of living. In spite of the sheepish feeling many people experience in driving to the site, or bringing their Tesco food with them, there is definitely an attitude, some of it intentional of not judging others for their ways. It’s possible that it is simply a case of actions speaking louder than words, as well as an awareness on the part of residents that outsiders may already view the eco-village as extreme, and therefore the effort on the part of the residents is rather to quell people’s fears and make them feel that it is not really that radical or outrageous or crazy, but rather doable, possible, accessible for average people.
Figure 14: Paul presenting inside the hub building at an eco-village gathering

(author's photo)

Having said the above, for outsiders the eco-village does often represent extremes. This came out in discussions with other researchers for example, who had sat uncomfortably through long interviews due to fears about using compost toilets. However, much of this has to do with familiarity and creating new norms and normality. One resident, who had spent most of his life living in a conventional home in a city, working as an environmental consultant for the steel industry, described how after living at Tir-y-Gafel for some time, he actually found flushing toilets really strange when visiting family or friends. He mentioned two causes of this, one that he had become so accustomed to their composting toilets and arrangements, and two that he had been so involved in thinking about their supply of fresh water. The thought that so much clean water is used to simply flush away human waste then began to seem quite shocking.

For my own part, I noticed that after visiting the site a few times and talking to people about such things, that when I returned home I was far more aware of the
wastefulness and irrationality of some of my own behaviours at home. Although I had perhaps thought about this on an intellectual level before, the impression of it was so much stronger and more immediate upon my return from the eco-village. In this way I think the influence of the Lammas and Tir-y-Gafel carries on in ways that are not necessarily measurable. The visiting days and courses, and even the website and films have wider reaching effects that are difficult to measure. Some preliminary material was gathered with regards to understanding some of these potential effects. This included short questionnaires that were completed by forty visitors to Tir-y-Gafel, and the collection of contact details of these as well as several other visitors. An analysis of these has not been included here, but contacting these individuals to find out about their perspectives on whether they thought Lammas had an effect on their longer term behaviour is a potential avenue for future research.

There are of course also more explicitly learning oriented activities that occur at Tir-y-Gafel in the form of courses and workshops, ranging from practical courses on building, working with willow, composting and so on, as well as family experience weekends, school visits, and the annual weekend eco-village conference which is designed as a way for people to think through the various aspects of setting up an eco-village, including brainstorming exercises about the types of products and occupations, the types of land to look for, practical material considerations, planning policies and all kinds of other things. These events also function as networking events at which groups may start to form with the aim of developing their own community. To date at least one of these has reached a fairly advanced stage of planning and several others are in more embryonic stages. These are quite tangible outcomes of the effect of Lammas more broadly, and perhaps more measureable than the more subtle effects on people’s thinking processes and behaviours after visiting or spending time at the site.
This chapter has explored the idea that governance for sustainable development is something that can be initiated by and conducted by small groups or organisations (preferably as part of a wider network). It takes Lammas as the central actor in a number of governance processes and relationships. This subverts the commonly held assumption that governance is a process initiated by some arm or another of the state. As with Meadowcroft’s suggestion that governance for/of sustainable development is inherently a political process involving multiple actors, so this case study is used to illustrate that idea. Power is evident in multiple ways, and though the argument is not simple, i.e. either that government or various scales, departments, actors within government retain various forms of power – they evidently do – but also that there are powers available to those outside of formal governmental institutions, including some powers that are not available to government.
One of the forms of power mentioned by Lukes is the power to influence the agenda on which decisions are made (Lukes 1974). In the context of low impact development, it has been the LID actors who have set the agenda and through using skills with language and drawing upon networks of support, they have managed to utilise the spaces opened within government and politics through the discourses of sustainability and governance and to use these to open debate about low impact development as a legitimate form of living that should be supported by government.

The analysis of policy indicated that the rhetoric is in place at least to suggest a strong commitment to sustainability and sustainable development. However, the interpretation of this varied depending on both political scale as well as department. Government legislation at the EU level, the UK level (in terms of current planning policy) and the level of local councils appears to have a very strong bias towards economic development and very weak commitment to balanced environmental and social concerns. The National Planning Framework in particular is highly geared towards economic growth, accepting all development unless prevented by other legislation (such as the EU Habitats Directive), and an assumption that this will take care of social and environmental concerns. EU level planning documents such as the ESDP also focus on ‘development’ issues, generally measured in a growth sense. However, at the UN level as well as the Welsh Government level there are significant differences, suggesting a much stronger focus on the environment. In particular, the Welsh Government planning policy is one in which radical sustainability initiatives are now being supported, alongside more conventional measures undertaken through regulation and other means.

The level of local planning in Wales however seems much weaker on commitment to thinking about sustainable development holistically. At least part of the issue here may be that the planning system is set up to work with simplifications, because otherwise decision-making under the circumstances (hundreds of policy items, multiple layers of governance, the pressure to make the ‘right’ decision and to be consistent, the political hierarchy, and the impossibility of introducing sets of values into the decision-making process), would be impossible. Sustainable development is
not a concept that works well with simplifications, requiring instead more visionary, holistic and eutopian thinking (Hedrén & Linnér 2009). The planning system is not equipped with the tools or culture conducive to visionary thinking, acceptance of novel ideas or holistic thinking. However, the planning system is open to democratic representation and where this is strong, change can sometimes be seen, as in the case of Policy 52 in Pembrokeshire.

The story of empowerment is not without its issues of course, and perhaps surprisingly in this case, some of the least empowered actors seem to be the planners. As a result of the pressure to somehow handle and interpret such a vast amount of material coming from so many directions, along with the ambiguity of the aspirational goals of many planning policies and related other policies, planners do not tend to appear empowered, even though they occupy positions of power. Given the pace of change at the political level, and the much slower pace of change at the local planning authority level, it may take a long time before there are many innovative moves towards more sustainable development at the local level. This is not necessarily a problem of scale however, but more a problem of process. The process of creating local planning documents and then implementing them is very slow, certainly slower than the rate of political change. There are also strong and pervasive legacies in the planning system to do with protecting the open countryside and promoting economic development. These legacies are simplified into paradigms that are very dominant and are used to make faster judgements necessitated by the time pressures of the job. However these simplified paradigms preclude more nuanced thinking about the reasons behind such policies.

One simplification used by the planning system is the perpetuation of the urban-rural divide and a conception of sustainability which privileges urban areas and neglects to consider the influence of the relationship between dwelling and being in rural areas. In terms of the planning system, the urban-rural divide creates a conception that planning cannot influence rural spaces, whereas in fact planning has a very dramatic effect on rural spaces, and a planning system which recognized this role and recognized it as a complex role rather than simply one of aiming to prevent as much as possible any development in the countryside would be much more progressive.
The story of the funding for the community hub building suggests various more nuanced and diverse ways in which other departments at different scales of government are looking at how to promote low carbon futures through harnessing the power of community. Although the funding and processes involved in it changed the situation quite dramatically and could possibly have contributed to a weakening of the sense of community in some respects, the creation of a space for courses, meetings, and so on seems to have overall had the positive effects of not just providing the space but creating or at least enhancing the sense of legitimacy of the project. While authors have critiqued the effect of short-term funding of community projects (Gardner 2011), in this particular case it seems to have had its advantages.

The situation with the building regulations also provides an opportunity for learning about governance within a community, including how relations with outside forces and actors are managed. In this particular case, as there were differing views with regards to what the response should be, individual households made their own decisions about how to proceed. This shows a fluidity of the possible governance responses to issues that arise at the eco-village. In terms of other decisions that are made, these are often hashed out through long processes, but in cases like this where the outcome of the actions taken had profound impacts for individuals, households, the eco-village as a whole and the Lammas project as a whole, decision-making was distributed to affected households/individuals who then responded individually to the issue. This allowed a speedier response and the avoidance of drawn-out arguments about how to proceed. However, it may have caused rifts within the eco-village as individuals started to feel more alone and less supported by the group as a whole. However, with the benefit of hindsight, allowing individual responses seems to have aided in building more resilience into the social fabric of the eco-village through allowing people their space to think and respond as they saw fit and not feel that their decisions were being steam-rolled by the group.

The theories behind the strategy of DECC in funding Low Carbon Community Challenges, that is, the idea of creating community environments that foster social change, is something that can be seen at Lammas without relating it to the DECC funding. The experience of visitors, friends, people involved in the alternative network in any way, and people who come on courses at Tir-y-Gafel suggests that there is a strong potential and active effect on people’s thoughts, ideas and behaviours.
as a result of coming into contact with a positive example of alternative living. The project’s strength, well recognized by its founders, is in that it presents a viable, attractive alternative, one whose selling points lie in the benefits to be gained, physically and mentally in terms of health, emotionally, and socially. By seeing an example of how things could be done, more people are inspired to make changes and modifications in their own lives. How these changes play out for different individuals tends to be different, depending on what each individual desires and is inspired by, but the courses and visiting days at Tir-y-Gafel provide a space for people to think about and question their own assumptions about what they need or want in life, and in this way provide a positive, thoughtful, inspiring and inviting incitement to change. Importantly, this is not a strategy that is based on accounting, numbers, targets, and self-deprivation or self-flagellation.

It seems clear from the analysis that there is much to be learned from alternative communities and the Lammas project in particular, beyond the practical notions of how economically viable small scale agricultural activity may be (although this is also a valuable avenue for exploration pursued by Maxey and the Ecological Land Cooperative, as it provides useful examples (Ecological Land Coop 2011)). As a site at which alternative lifestyles are becoming mainstreamed through connecting and engaging with policy discourses on sustainable development and low carbon futures, such projects are able to teach us a great deal about practices of governance towards sustainable development. Governance mechanisms, communication skills, empowerment, finding a balance between independence and community action are all matters which are reflected upon a great deal in the creation of intentional communities in general, issues which demonstrate learning over time and via extensive networks, but that are also highly contextually dependent. The relationships and interfaces of the Lammas project with the formal systems of government and planning are also intriguing as such projects provide serious challenges from which to assess how well planning policy is doing in terms of actually making a difference in terms of promoting low carbon or sustainable lifestyles. It also draws attention to some of the insidious assumptions within planning that prove barriers to alternative ways of doing things.

In short, if we are to take seriously the notion that current ways of living are damaging the environment to the point where we are seriously detracting from the
quality of life of future generations, and if governments are interested in looking at how to promote better governance for sustainable development, projects such as Lammas provide exceptional sites for learning about community, empowerment, governance and self-governance, among other things. In the absence of a serious and sustained engagement on the part of the planning system (which appears unable to do so in any case), the multiple modes of engagement enacted by the alternative movement, including direct actions and using media and communication tools to the best advantage, continue to provide a means of moving towards the governance of sustainable development.
5 RATIONALITY, KNOWLEDGE, POWER

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Much has been written on the subject of the links between knowledge and power. A common critique of the relationship between the state and power has to do with the use of monitoring, auditing and accounting as technologies of government via governmentality – in other words getting people to self-monitor or self-govern via a process of data gathering (Foucault 1991). Certainly in the case of Lammas this is an element of the interaction with the planning department. However, the relationship between knowledge, power, the state, and non-state actors is not reducible to this interaction and to this conceptualisation of the power-knowledge nexus. There are varied and complex interactions at play including multiple types of knowledge both among the LI developers and various state actors including planners.

In this chapter I argue for a more nuanced understanding of the multiple roles that knowledge of different types can play in governance processes for sustainable development. Using several different moments or interactions I look more carefully at how knowledge is conceived, how it is valued, for what purpose and by whom it is collected, and when and how it impacts upon policy and politics. This detailed analysis then opens up the spaces of possibility for examining ways the rationalities of governance need to be altered in order to account for different ways of knowing. This may sound like a well-rehearsed argument, and to an extent it does reiterate various already familiar critiques of the role of knowledge in state power. The difference here is that while acknowledging that knowledge may be used in a governmentality sense by the state to control the population, the other side of the equation is that individuals outside the state can use knowledge to understand the rationalities of governance and to engage with it in ways that meet their ends. In the case of LID and Lammas, an in-depth understanding of the planning system, of politics, and a willingness to learn and engage with the rationalities of the state provided powerful knowledge for the LI developers.
Drawing on James Scott, the chapter also reiterates to an extent another familiar argument related to types of knowledge – in Scott’s terminology *techne* and *mētis*. Scott makes the argument that the state relies on scientific, technical, large-scale, simplified data, whereas in actual operations on the ground what is always needed is experiential, ad-hoc, complex and particular knowledge, without which nothing works. There are certainly resonances with this idea to be seen in the interactions between LID and the state. However, there are also complexities to this situation. It is argued that in fact the knowledge that planners rely upon is also to a large degree *mētis* and they also struggle with translation issues between these types of knowledge.

This suggests the rather obvious point, as made by Jones and others (Jones et al. 2004; e.g. Jones 2007) that ‘the state’ is peopled, and as such the people involved are in fact also subject-citizens, and human beings. Additionally, the ‘evidence-base’ requirement in planning is ambiguous – meaning that it can and does include evidence which in some ways arguably does not fit the mould of technical data.

In the governance of sustainable development, particularly as conceived/initiated by LI developers, appeals are made to the human beings involved in the cases in an attempt to introduce or awaken the possibility of a modified ideology of planning (and other aspects of the state). Harvey has pointed out how planning is essentially subject to a ‘capitalist’ ideology (Harvey 1996b). It could also be argued that an ideology of rationality determines the attitude towards ‘knowledge’ in the planning system. Although the ideology of rationality remains essentially intact in the case, the underlying ideology of capitalism is somewhat disrupted by the idea of low impact development, considered by Halfacree to be the only form of rural space that actually disrupts the status quo (Halfacree 2007).

The conclusion is that although there is evidence of *savoir-pouvoir*, this is not exclusively the remit of the ‘state’. There are possibilities for those very much outside of the state – indeed, low impact developers have previously been considered both countercultural and anti-state – to engage with and in some ways alter policy and the trajectory of governance for sustainable development. The findings complicate rather than simplify the role that knowledge plays in the governance of sustainable development, suggesting multiple overlapping and interconnected roles and narratives of knowledge. After examining a series of different moments in which knowledge of various kinds come into play, I explore what is missing from the knowledge
paradigms being employed, and as a result what limitations are to the ‘knowing’ of sustainable development in practice through the mechanisms required and employed.

5.2 Reflexive Modernization and the Governance of Sustainable Development

Beck (1994) argues that in this period of reflexive modernization, politics is increasingly dispersed, occurring in arenas outside of traditional party politics. Among the arenas in question, the role of experts and expert knowledge has risen in significance. The role of expertise in politics has given rise to questions of the relationship between expert knowledge-drive politics and those that involve the public in deliberation and argumentation (Fischer 1990; Fischer 2009). For Jasanoff (Jasanoff 2003), both science or expertise and democratic engagement are essential parts of modern politics:

We need both strong democracy and good expertise to manage the demands of modernity, and we need them continuously. The question is how to integrate the two in disparate contexts so as to achieve a human and reasoned balance between power and knowledge, between deliberation and analysis. (Jasanoff 2003, p.398)

In an era in which sub-politics are as important – if not more important – than that Weber would have defined as politics (the formal activities of government), understanding the relationships of expertise to both the political and the sub-politics of life becomes increasingly significant and necessary. As Flyvbjerg argues in Rationality and Power (Flyvbjerg 1998), what gets defined as knowledge, who produces this, who it is commissioned by, and what the policy and political outcomes of that knowledge are, are matters of vital importance in determining the outcomes of situations.

Sub-politics is about more than just the role of expertise and knowledge in governing however. It also represents all those activities of small groups and individuals, struggling to make a difference in the world:

Beneath and behind the facades of the old industrial order, which are sometimes still brilliantly polished, radical changes and new departures are taking place, not completely unconsciously, but not fully consciously either. They rather resemble a collective blind person without a cane or a dog but with a nose for what is personally right and important, and if scaled up to the
level of generality, cannot be totally false. This centipede-like non-revolution is under way. It is expressed in the background noise of the quarrelling on every level and in all issues and discussion groups, in the fact, for instance, that nothing 'goes without saying' any longer; everything must be inspected, chopped to bits, discussed and debated to death until finally, with the blessing of general dissatisfaction, it takes this particular 'turn' no one wants, perhaps only because otherwise there is the risk of a general paralysis. Such are the birth pangs of a new action society, a self-creation society, which must 'invent' everything. (Beck 1994, p.21)

Significantly, Beck notes that the concern with the environment, which has now been adopted by all sectors of society, at least in a superficial way, did not originate in the corridors of power of states and parliaments or through economic interests. Rather:

The themes of the future, which are now on everyone's lips, have not originated from the farsightedness of the rulers or from the struggle in parliament - and certainly not from the cathedrals of power in business, science and the state. They have been put on the social agenda against the concentrated resistance of this institutionalized ignorance by entangled, moralizing groups and splinter groups fighting each other over the proper way, split and plagued by doubts. Sub-politics has won a quite improbable thematic victory. (Beck 1994, p.19)

Though there is much that could be said about the failures of the political systems to adequately address the severe environmental problems facing us today, a heartening aspect of this quote is that in sub-politics there can be found a sense of agency, of possibility and of hope. Having said that, Beck notes the difficulties involved, not least of which is engaging with a system previously reliant on the unquestioned connection between expertise and policy/politics.

It is the same everywhere: the demand is for forms and forums of consensus-building co-operation among industry, politics, science and the populace. For that to happen, however, the model of unambiguous instrumental rationality must be abolished… [P]eople must say farewell to the notion that administrations and experts always know exactly, or at least better, what is right and good for everyone: demonopolization of expertise. (Beck 1994, p.29)

This thesis starts from the perspective that governance for sustainable development takes this notion even further than does reflexive modernization – recognizing both the politics and the different types of knowledge and indeed action that are demanded by this idea. As such, the role that knowledge has played in the emergence of low impact development is highly significant.
The discursive and dialogical nature of the policy process, or what has been termed the ‘argumentative’ nature of policy making (Fischer & Forester 1993; Fischer 2003), encompasses the complicated relationships between knowledge and power. Although part of the story is that power dictates what is considered legitimate knowledge – and that story is evident throughout this case, it is also clear that knowledge can operate as power, even when produced outside of what might be thought of as the realm of power. Yet the powerful knowledge of those outside the realms of power is perhaps powerful only in certain forms. In order to engage with the system, it must be expressed in certain ways, under certain conditions. The power arises perhaps, as Flyvbjerg might suggest from rationality:

“[R]ational argument is one of the few forms of power that those without much influence still possess; rationality is part of the power of the weak.” (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p. 37)

Flyvbjerg makes a distinction, following Machiavelli’s distinguishing between formal politics and Realpolitik, between formal rationality and Realrationalität. He argues that making this distinction with regards to rationality is ‘as important to the understanding of modernity and of modern politics, administration, and planning as the distinction between formal politics and Realpolitik’ (Flyvbjerg, 1998, p. 6). For Flyvbjerg:

“[T]he main question is not only the Weberian ‘Who governs?’… It is also the Nietzschean question ‘What “governmental rationalities” are at work when those who govern govern?’” (Ibid.)

Rationality and politics are therefore strongly interlinked. The question of what rationality or rationalities are at play in processes of governance has important implications for those who wish to engage with those systems of governance. I would suggest however that ‘who governs’ is an equally important question, one which this thesis is also focused on and attempts to illustrate by way of unpicking processes of governance and politics. However, the issue of rationality is a significant one. Indeed, tied up in rationality are forms of power. And in the chapter these will be returned to in considering the effects of having engaged with the rationality of the modernist planning system in terms of knowledge.

Significantly in Flyvbjerg’s argument is contained the idea that there can be multiple possible rationalities at play within the governance process and systems. Discovering
what rationalities are dominant is a necessary part of being able to engage and act politically. It is also worth noting that like culture, rationalities tend to be accepted as normal rather than explicitly exposed or discussed. Drawing on Beck’s work, the ability to incisively critique the ‘unambiguous instrumental rationality’ of the state, or indeed the rationality that leads to drawing links between monopolized ‘expert knowledge’ and policy is critical to being able to engage politically.

5.3 Knowledge and Governing Sustainable Development in the Planning System

In the case of planning, authors have suggested that the rationality of knowledge is that there is a possibility of a detached, de-personalized and de-contextualized knowledge, which is upheld by institutional environments and processes. Rydin relates this to the legacy of planning as a modernist project (Rydin, 2007). Additionally, within planning, authors have noted that there has recently been a new surge of interest and pressure on planning to be ‘evidence-based’ (Davoudi 2006; Solesbury 2001; Pawson 2006; Faludi & Waterhout 2006; Faludi 2006). While it may seem that planning has always had this requirement and to an extent that is true, this (re)turn to an emphasis on evidence is both political and has political connotations. In fact the emphasis on evidence bases is in some ways a reaction to deliberative governance and the situation in which, as Beck notes above ‘nothing is taken for granted anymore’ and everything must be debated and deliberated upon. Evidence is used as a form of argumentation as well as a means of producing representations of space for particular aims.

Governance for sustainable development adds complexity to this situation. Sustainable development, as mentioned, is not possible to definitively define. It is therefore continually subject to political, deliberative discussion over its meaning and how it may be implemented. In Governing for sustainable urban development, Rydin argues that learning and knowledge are key elements of the process of governing for sustainability (Rydin 2010, pp.61–72). Given that many governance mechanisms aimed at achieving sustainable development have to do with imposing regulations on various industries, targets and monitoring, as well as knowledge of the impacts of
various activities are of great importance. However, Rydin notes that there should not be the assumption that the requirements for knowledge and learning imply only scientific and technical knowledge. Instead:

““There is a clear need to see learning for sustainability as encompassing social, political and cultural knowledge alongside scientific and technological. Indeed, these forms of knowledge may be more important.” (Rydin 2010, p.61)

Although there has been much discussion within planning theory about different ways of knowing, most radical perhaps, Healey’s notion of ‘relational planning’ (Healey 2006b; Healey 2004), planning practice continues to be critiqued for maintaining a modernist perspective on knowledge and evidence.

The leaning towards technical and scientific knowledge has another potential repercussion in some contexts. Foucault’s idea of governmentality flags knowledge, or more specifically technologies of knowledge/information collection as a technology of government. The monitoring, accounting and auditing that is part and parcel of many ‘community-facing’ government projects mentioned in the previous chapter can be seen as a governmental technology of control through encouraging or requiring people to self-monitor (Rose & Miller 1992). Certainly in this regard Swyngedouw would regard so-called ‘governance’ processes as governmentality (Swyngedouw 2005). Yet the ‘state’ does not have a monopoly on power or knowledge or indeed other actors within the governance process also have the opportunity to use knowledge, even of the technical, numerical kind to more emancipatory ends.

Scott has written extensively about the effects, physical and political, of modernist thinking by the state (generally the nation-state) on practices such as forestry and agriculture. In the case of the latter for example he notes that:

““Insofar as institutional power has permitted, agricultural agencies…have tended to simplify their environments in ways that make them more amenable to their system of knowledge. The forms of agriculture that conformed to their modernist aesthetic and their politico-administrative interests also happened to fit securely within the perimeter of their professional scientific vocation.” (Scott 1998, p.291)

Moreover, when it comes to agriculture, polyculture poses a challenge to the modernist system of thought; according to Scott, this makes it understandable that
agronomists ‘might have scientific as well as aesthetic and institutional grounds for opposing polycropping.’ This is due to the fact that:

“Complex forms of intercropping introduce too many variables into simultaneous play to offer much chance of unambiguous experimental proof of causal relations. We know that certain polycultural techniques, particularly those of combining nitrogen-fixing legumes with grains, are quite productive, but we know little about the precise interactions that bring about these results. And we find problems in teasing out causation even when we confine our attention to the single dependent variable of quantitative yields. If we relax this restriction of focus and begin to consider a wider range of dependent variables (outcomes), such as soil fertility, interactions with livestock (fodder, manuring), compatibility with family labour supply and so on, the difficulties of comparison rapidly become intractable to scientific method.” (p. 290-291)

Scott notes that the result of a modernist approach to state intervention and the associated type and manner of knowledge production that is required is that people begin to fit the characteristics that these models are based on – that is, they are limited in their ability to develop on-the-ground methods and solutions necessary due to the complexity of environments. In the process of attempting to make everything ‘legible’ therefore, the state can have the effect of disabling innovation, creativity and functionality. This is both disempowering for people affected by such schemes and counter-productive as the state struggles to respond to the complex and changing circumstances on the ground. Moreover, although planning policy for rural areas is now full of calls for diversification, there are serious challenges to overcoming barriers created by the legacy of modernist thinking when it comes to innovative policy directions in this regard.

We see therefore that there are serious connotations and considerations related to the ways in which knowledge is produced, harnessed and used. In the remainder of this chapter I explore these ideas through several moments of interaction between LIDers and the state as follows:

1) The initial development of Policy 52, the Pembrokeshire based planning policy for Low Impact Development
2) Lammas’ engagement with the planning process through the development of a planning application based on Policy 52, including the harnessing of multiple sources of knowledge, or ‘experts’
3) The reductionist targets associated with the planning policy, i.e. the requirement for producing 75% of basic needs from land-based activities, and

4) The reflections of planning consultants and a planning inspector on the role of knowledge in relation to a planning hearing for a new LID

5.4 PRODUCING ‘LID’ AND POLICY 52

As has been mentioned several times already in this thesis ‘Low Impact Development’ as used here is a concept that was developed by Simon Fairlie in response to engagements with the planning system in the UK over attempts to live a low impact lifestyle in a rural area. In the edited book Low Impact Development: (Pickerill & Maxey 2009b), Simon Fairlie discusses how and why he defined the concept of Low Impact Development. As he notes, low impact living was already occurring in practice by many people in many places. It was even being called ‘low impact living’. However, his own engagements with the planning system, over the community Tinker’s Bubble had led him to the conclusion that low impact development was something that needed to be recognised as a thing within the planning system. He therefore wrote the book Low Impact Development: Planning and People in a Sustainable Countryside (2009 (1996)).

The book, originally published in 1996 set about understanding the planning system, its components, how it worked, and its history, and then carving a space for something called ‘low impact development’ and defining how it would and should fit into the planning system. Fairlie’s book was not only about understanding the system, its history, and its politics, but also about engaging with the discourse of sustainable development, and applying this notion in a compelling way, to the ideologies and rationalities of planning, including the desire for definition of concepts, and the legacy of the abstracted separation of the urban and the rural. In short, Fairlie’s book was a detailed, thoughtful, considered intervention into planning, which developed a usable concept, suggested ways of defining it and containing it, and set it against the backdrop of the modes of operation and understandings of the existing planning system in socio-historical context. In essence what this did was to understand and
engage with the rationale of planning, and to bring this together with an understanding of sustainable development derived from the UN discourses.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the political engagement of LIDers with the planning department over Tony Wrench’s roundhouse, and in representations on sustainable development. In relation to the latter Paul Wimbush noted that this coincided with the publication of Fairlie’s book. It would be difficult to overstate the significance of this engagement, which, in Flyvbjerg’s terms could be called the power of rational argument. Certainly this was indeed the power of rational argument, both in the specificity of what was being proposed and set out, and also in the sense that it was this kind of itemised specificity that the planning system was familiar with. In other words, it spoke to the rationality of planning.

Fairlie’s writings stem from his own long struggle with the British planning system as he attempted to live a low impact lifestyle such as what was possible in other countries such as France where he had lived before. He remains sympathetic and understanding of the planning system, recognizing the desire to prevent sprawl that might be brought on if everyone were allowed to build in the countryside. In order to create a space for LID within this system, he set out nine criteria in his book as to what could be considered low impact development. The criteria he suggested are as follows. Low impact development should be:

- Temporary
- Small-scale
- Unobtrusive
- Made from predominantly local materials
- Protect wildlife and enhance biodiversity
- Consume a low level of non-renewable resources

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8 Simon Fairlie also runs Chapter 7 – the planning office of The Land is Ours (TLIO). The name Chapter 7 is derived from the chapter of the Agenda 21 concerned with human habitation:

“Chapter 7, the Planning Office of TLIO, campaigns for a planning system which actively encourages sustainable, low impact and affordable homes. We give planning advice to people seeking to/or already embarking upon living on the land, engaged in land-based livelihoods.

Chapter 7 campaigns for "access to land for all households through environmentally sound planning" (from Agenda 21, Chapter 7c, on Human Habitation Settlement).” (TLIO n.d.)
- Generate little traffic
- Used for a low impact or sustainable purpose
- Linked to a recognized positive environmental benefit

He goes on to expand upon each of the criteria in the chapter, noting caveats and the need to balance the criteria against each other. The sections that accompany each bullet point address the need for a not too rigid definition.

Fairlie established himself as an expert on LID in two ways. Firstly by living it, and secondly by giving it a name and a definition. In conjunction with the deliberative action of the consultations and the direct action, this provided the basis for the emergence of LID in policy. However, as mentioned, the planning system is increasingly ‘evidence’ focused, and on its own this did not apparently constitute sufficient evidence. It did however enable a sequence of events. Around the same time as the direct actions around Tony Wrench’s house, in 2002, Planning Policy Wales was being rewritten. The Welsh Government, in conjunction with the Countryside Council for Wales commissioned a report into LID by a consultancy called Land Use Consultants. As Martina Dunne, the planning policy officer at PCNPA who was put in charge of looking into LID describes it:

“The start of it [Policy 52] came from a research study which was finalized in December 2002, done by Land Use Consultants, and the University of the West of England, for the Welsh Government. And we were on the steering group for that study. …That concluded that there was mileage in these kinds of policies, and on the back of that we were also progressing various drafts of the Joint Unitary Development Plan, and, taking that conclusion I commissioned further work by Baker Associates, because there were issues for me around writing a policy that you could use in planning, that would work and be measureable and workable, you know? So, I commissioned that. I had CCW and Welsh Government on board as well with that study. And on the back of that I was in a position to recommend to members that we should include a policy in the Joint Unitary Development Plan... Inspector agreed with it, and on the back of that then, I drafted in partnership with the Council the Supplementary Planning Guidance.” (Martina Dunne, PCNPA Planner, author’s interview)

The research documents were not only instrumental, but seen as necessary in justifying the inclusion of a policy for Low Impact Development in the Unitary Development Plan. While there had been numerous reasons to consider creating such
a policy, not least of which was the ongoing situation with Brithdir Mawr and Tony Wrench’s roundhouse (detailed in Chapter 4), it was the production of the research that seems to have really enabled the planner to make the case for the policy.

The initial research document, produced by Land Use Consultants (LUC) and University of the West of England (UWE) was commissioned, as mentioned in the quote, by the Welsh Government. Advocates of LID, including Dr Larch Maxey had appealed at this time to the Welsh Government level to look into introducing a policy around LID. At the time Planning Policy Wales was being revised, and Jane Davidson, then Welsh Assembly Member with a portfolio including ‘Environment Sustainability and Housing’ had read and been inspired by Fairlie’s work. On being asked about what knowledge sources aided in the production of the LID policy in TAN6 noted that:

“Well, I drew upon…the planning experience, both of Lammas and also of Tinker’s Bubble, because I did read all of Simon Fairlie's work as well, because I was really interested in... and I read a number other bits on the internet about other communities that sometimes had started and failed and just you know, just kind of like the battle with the traditional planning system.” (Jane Davidson, former Assembly Member, author’s interview)

Though the TAN6 policy came after the Pembrokeshire Policy 52, the research document was commissioned with this in mind and the result was a great lending of legitimacy to the issue at the PCNPA and indeed PCC level.

The initial report by LUC and UWE drew on case studies of several existing low impact developments in rural Wales, surveys, and a thorough analysis of policy for sustainable development. It compared the LIDs against sustainability criteria set out in policy and found that they far exceeded in environmental and social aspects. In terms of economy, since the livelihoods were to a large extent self-sufficiency based this was not a very large contribution, nevertheless there were goods and services provided, particularly in terms of food and other land-based products for sale locally and training courses. Interestingly the study also found on the basis of existing LIDs that the social composition was roughly half Welsh and showed a higher degree of speaking or learning Welsh than the general population. This overcame some criticisms that these ‘hippie’ communities or households were English incomers – a source of hostility in some cases. Moreover, the existing LIDs examined tended to have strong links and good relationships with their surrounding communities. The
The report concluded that there was mileage in a policy to allow specifically for LIDs, including allowing the building of new homes and other buildings since the positive impact of them was significant and outweighed any concerns.

The report was instrumental in beginning to set up a space for LID within planning policy. In this regard, it is significant that LUC was selected as the consultancy to handle this research. Had another consultancy been selected the outcome and recommendations may have been different. When research is required by the Welsh Government (as it was in this case), it goes out to tender. Land Use Consultants are an organisation with a strong sustainability ethos, as described on their website:

> Our approach considers sustainability, quality and innovation. Helping to mitigate climate change is a priority running throughout our work. Advising on the bigger picture, LUC has a reputation for going beyond the brief and solves problems based on the most sustainable option. (Land Use Consultants n.d.)

Although to a certain extent, as Beck notes, it is common now for almost everyone to use the terms sustainability and to profess consideration of environmental issues, there is a sense that with LUC this is at least to the extent possible, genuine. Additionally, James Shorten, the lead consultant on the work has twenty years of experience of working on rural sustainability following on from a PhD on this topic. It’s perhaps not surprising that this consultancy was chosen to look into LID although it is significant that this was made possible through the harnessing of the language of sustainability in a rural setting.

Writing about Brithdir Mawr before the LID policy had come above, Alistair Scott suggested that in order for the planning system to be able to find a way of handling radical and unconventional sustainable lifestyles, both the planning system and the initiatives would have to demonstrate their sustainable credentials in a more ‘empirical’ and ‘direct’ way (Scott, 2001). This does indeed seem to have been the approach then taken by the planning department of the National Park at least, through the commissioning of further research into low impact development and through increasingly detailed policy, as well as the associated targets and monitoring requirements which will be touched upon in more detail later in this chapter. Having visited Brithdir Mawr and interviewed people in the LI movement, quite why such an extensive level of empirical knowledge to prove sustainability credentials would be
needed is a bit surprising. It’s very easy to see, looking at the way in which people are living in these communities, that their mode of living is far, far more sustainable and indeed ‘low impact’ than average. So why the obsession with empirical data? And why no consideration of what the production of all that empirical data will entail?

One reason for the desire for more information has to do with embedding the idea of low impact living into the existing planning system. As mentioned in the literature review, price differences in land are driven to a large part by the possibility of planning permission. Land owners in Wales, who may be making a small amount of money through farming, can make an enormous profit through selling off a parcel of land with permission for development, or a house that they have built on receiving permission. The creates a system of vested interest within and supported by the planning system – a politics of planning which is not generally engaged with in great detail by planners, either in practice or in theory. The way that sustainable development discourse has been interpreted in planning has also not focused on this issue, which is one not only of environmental concern but of social justice. As a result of this issue, based on a split in the planning system between urban and rural, but an overall lack of focus on sustainability as a holistic system, a landowner with planning permission can build almost anything in the ‘countryside’ provided that a case is made for the need for an agricultural workers dwelling.

Essentially ‘agricultural worker’s dwelling’ policies, the equivalent of which in Wales is now called ‘rural enterprise dwelling’ to capture the push for ‘farm diversification’ that is emerging in rural policy, is an area of policy that for financial reasons is often exploited or abused (to use the terminology of planners). Because of this, and the suspicion that this type of policy mechanism has engendered amongst planners, in developing a policy for LID a core concern was to write it in such a way that it could not be used in order to make money. In other words, the aim was to prevent people from buying land at agricultural prices, gaining planning permission to build, under a LID policy, and then building something and selling it for a profit. The concern was that if the policy was written in a way that would allow people to do that, it would indeed result in many people doing it, essentially for financial reasons rather than anything else.
This at least in part explains the desire for a highly detailed, specific and empirically backed-up policy as well as applications. As one of the consultants involved in providing evidence and guidance on low impact development policies pointed out:

“The reason for all the detail is because you’re basically granting people a very unusual exception to be able to put new development in open countryside locations. So you know, it's a high bar, it's, necessarily so. '[T]he parallel world ... of agricultural workers dwellings ... is just an arena for massive abuse. You get people going, ‘oh look at me, I'm a crap farmer, nevermind, can I have the ties listed?’ It happens all the time... The parallel work when I was there on occupational dwellings- it's a production line. So... yeah it is, it's a very contested issue, you've got all the Welsh farmers thinking 'well if they can do it, why can't I?' and the answer is 'because you're not prepared to, to live on oats and lentils!'” (James Shorten, LUC, author’s interview)

Flippant though the last comment is, the resulting reality seems to be that planners are now charged, in cases of LID, to ensure that the people living in low impact developments are actually are sustaining themselves on oats and lentils- or rather beans and potatoes that they have grown themselves, in addition to having an enormous amount of other bureaucratic work thrust upon them as a result of the level of detail required by the LID policy.

There are several points to take away from this story. Firstly, the engagement in rational argument by Simon Fairlie and others, particularly in the production and development of a concept, connected to the mainstream discourse of sustainable development and embedded in an understanding of the planning system, created the initial space for a policy on low impact development to come about in Pembrokeshire. However, the serious critiques contained within this work, of the nature of sustainable development and sustainable living, and the structural issues such as the rural-urban divide that cause problems in aiming for this goal, were essentially missed in the process that followed, which focused instead on defining LID as a particular and unusual sub-culture of people, who were to be given an exception to planning policy, but would be subjected to extraordinarily prescriptive policy requirements as a result of this.

Although the Lammas group, and the low impact movement more widely were thrilled to have this policy, and the trajectory into national policy in Wales appears to in some ways be broadening the spaces and possibilities for low impact living within the formal system instead of just outside of it, the process of definition and
bureaucratisation of LID in the policy and planning system comes with issues as well. For one thing, it limits the policy to those with the kind of intellectual skills, time, energy and expertise necessary for engagement with the planning policy, as well as capable of meeting the requirements of the policy. In particular, issues such as the ‘five years to 75% of basic household needs’ have substantial effects on how and whether low impact development is or becomes a feasible option for more people. Notably, this requirement is one made up entirely by the planning system rather than being suggested by Simon Fairlie. In the next section, attention is turned to the outcome of the initial policy, once the initial group of Lammas had heard about it and decided to put in an application.

5.5 Lammas’ Planning Application: Harnessing Networks of Knowledge

In Chapter 4, I quoted Paul Wimbush’s description of how the group of people interested in low impact living had made a representation when invited to consult on sustainable development policy in Pembrokeshire. In terms of what this meant for the low impact movement at the time, Paul Wimbush (Lammas founder) notes that:

“And, then that ended and everybody forgot about it, but lo and behold, um, four, five years later, when the local development plan was being re-drafted, there to everyone’s surprise and astonishment, was a low impact development policy!

And that’s when Lammas, that’s when we heard about it and formed Lammas, to try and highlight, to make the most of it - you know, what this was, to our reasoning it was just too good an opportunity to miss, we had to make the most of it, this was a kind of lucky break that people had wishing for in England, and in Wales, for decades!” (Wimbush, author’s interview)

As implied by the above, the knowledge producing exercise, far from ending with the development of the policies, only begins there. As noted, during the process of researching LID, low impact developers, notably Tony Wrench among others had been interviewed and consulted. They had also been actively involved, along with others from the alternative community in Pembrokeshire in making representations on the planning policy document when it was open to public consultation. Accordingly, when Policy 52 appeared the low impact community was tuned in to its appearance. The arrival of the policy opened the door for Lammas as a group to begin the process
of applying for permission. However, when the core group of Lammas decided to put in their application, they may not have been quite aware of what a knowledge producing exercise this would turn out to be. Since the policy was new, and Lammas’ application was the first to be based upon it, there was a lot to prove. As Paul Wimbush noted about the Lammas application:

“It was very much a project that was designed to make the most of the policy, you know. And, that, in a way, that was why I was just soooo sure that in the end, we would get planning. Because it had been written around the policy; and the policy had been written around the research papers that the Welsh Assembly had commissioned that looked at previous case studies, and that was all quite high calibre research and quite good advice, which is why we were largely happy to run with the policy.”

However, in spite of this, the Lammas planning application was turned down by the local planning authority multiple times, each time requiring more information and evidence about the plans. The ultimate level of information provided has become something of a joke, with the front cover of the Simon Fairlie’s re-issued book featuring Paul and another member of Lammas at the time delivering their planning application to the Council in a wheelbarrow filled with box files (Figure 17). Their second planning application contained 1200 pages of information, including detailed plans and drawings, business management plans for every plot, and numerous research documents on various aspects of the project from the economic to the environmental and the social.

The 20-page Supplementary Planning Guidance document prepared by PCNPA to assist with applications based on Policy 52, detailed the types of information that were to accompany an application as well as the information that would be required in the annual monitoring reports to be submitted if the proposal was granted approval. From the point of view of the planners, and the consultants who had been involved, this level of detail was simply necessary. How it was obtained was irrelevant to them.
The normal process with planning applications, particularly big or complicated ones is that the prospective developer hires a planning consultant to navigate the bureaucracy of gaining planning permission. Yet, a significant aspect of low impact development has always been a low level of financial churn in comparison to most developers. In the case of Lammas, as the first group to attempt going through this planning policy, the possibility of hiring consultants to do the work was limited both by finance and availability. Instead, the group had to draw upon whatever resources it had in terms of the skills and abilities of members, crowd-sourced finance through broadened membership, and people within the network of alternative thinkers who had expertise in particular areas. In doing so, Lammas drew upon the knowledge contained within the networks of which it was a part.

Asked about the power of these networks, Paul Wimbush noted:

“I often think that the alternative movement...because it is active and it is empowered, can appear to kind of have quite a lot of influence. I don't think it has necessarily more power and more influence, it just exercises what power and what influence it can or it has, um, but certainly the network aspect of that is absolutely critical in its ability to operate. And that was very apparent in our planning application, you know, it was the massive support, not just random letters of support, of which we had thousands, but also being able to draw on expertise, ecology expertise or water expertise or engineering expertise, was absolutely kind of crucial for us.” (Wimbush, author’s interview)

Some of the knowledge support for the Lammas project came from academics. The ‘Autonomous Geographies’ project for example, allowed for several reports to be produced for the group by Dr. Jenny Pickerill from Leicester University. These
included assessments of economic activity in the area surrounding Lammas that
functioned both as market analysis for future Lammas businesses and as an indication
of whether there would be competition or synergy with existing businesses (Pickerill,
2006c, Pickerill, 2006b, Pickerill, 2006a, Pickerill, 2007). Soil reports and
biodiversity reports were produced by prospective residents with formal education in
these areas. A geology report was produced by another academic at Swansea
University (where Dr. Larch Maxey, another founding Lammas member was
working). Science Shop Wales, another initiative designed to make research
accessible to the public was also involved. In short, a highly novel process of
information and knowledge gathering was undertaken, based on an ethos of the
alternative movement, with most of the work being done out of goodwill rather than
for a fee.

There are a number of points to make about this process. One point which is brought
up frequently by low impact developers is that harnessing this scale of knowledge-
producing expertise is a serious barrier for most would-be developers. Moreover, for
many in the alternative movement, the requirement for this level of paperushing
seems excessive and unreasonable. As they rightly point out, they are aiming to live a
highly sustainable life, which involves sacrificing many luxuries, including high
incomes, and the system should be supporting them in this if it is serious about
sustainability, rather than requiring massive amounts of paperwork.

In spite of the enormous collective amount of work, information-gathering, and
knowledge producing involved in putting together the Lammas application, it was still
rejected by the County Council, who had kept requesting more information (possibly
hoping that it could reject the plans on the basis of a lack of supporting evidence). The
application then went to a hearing, involving a planning inspector, who after looking
at the material and comparing it to Policy 52 accepted the application straight away.
This result suggested something more than evidence was needed, and that there were
political interests at play. However, this fact did not and does not remove the
requirement for evidence and knowledge from the planning system, since the
application was rejected on the basis of insufficient evidence, and so if the system
were to be taken at face value, that evidence producing exercise was necessary, and
continues to be necessary.
On being questioned about the value of this kind of knowledge or evidence producing exercise and whether it was necessary for the planning system to be able to prevent, for example, excessive building the countryside, Paul Wimbush contemplated the following:

“In terms of looking broadly at the planning system I think what would be beneficial would be a really healthy intelligent long-term debate on what it should prioritise, what it should be there for. I don't think it can do everything, and at the moment it kind of feels a bit like not just a planning system, but there's so much bureaucracy trying to cover everything that it's, it's just out of hand.... In my perfect world there would be some really good debates about what [the planning system is] trying to do here, and what is the best way to do it? Because at the moment it's incredibly encumbering, incredibly bureaucratic, incredibly onerous. And I'm just not sure that it's sustainable in the long term, particularly given the current trajectory of increasing and increasing and increasing bureaucracy.” (Wimbush, author’s interview)

The level of information gathering then can be seen as a part of a process of bureaucracy that has a significant impact not only on the sustainability of the planning system, but the sustainability of the idea of a planning-system-engaged process of low impact development. There is evidence to suggest that many people would like to simply live simply, with planning permission, on a piece of land that they own, but are daunted by the prospect of engaging with the planning system. This is a sentiment that came up frequently at the LID and planning workshop in Bath, as well as eco-village conferences, and these were forums that attracted people ready to have a go at planning. In contrast, alternative meetings were held, one of which was called ‘Plan B’ about how to go about living on your own land without having or going through planning permission. According to some accounts, over 200 people attended a Plan B meeting. And many low impact developers are simply carrying on or proceeding without planning permission for these reasons. I asked Paul Wimbush about this as well:

Int: Do you think..., is this kind of a project feasible for people who don't want to spend that much time on paperwork and planning?

Paul: Well what's happening is that you're getting groups galvanizing who want to do a project like this and who don't want to spend that much time on paperwork and bureaucracy. ... You know, I can't blame them. When I spend, even having got planning, you know, we've got planning permission here, you know I probably spend, at the moment, a day and a half a week, just on keeping the kind of bureaucratic machines happy. So that's planning amendments, building regs, stupid little changes that I need to make to keep buildings regs,
all the building regs paperwork, the environment department... paperwork, and the meetings, and undudundudun... that's a day and a half a week. You know, that's just for me, that's not for the whole project... so I can't blame people for not wanting to engage with it. (Wimbush, author’s interview)

There are two obvious effects of this system on the potential for low impact development to become more widespread. Firstly, many people will not be willing or able to feed the bureaucratic machine in this way, particularly if you consider that the aim of this kind of living is in a large part to simplify life, not complicate it. One interviewee, who expressed the views of many others, noted that:

“Paul is very good at motivating people and portrays everything in a positive light to encourage people. This is brilliant when you are in something and need encouraging. However, it is not necessarily an accurate picture... He has always been convinced planning is the way forward and I don’t entirely agree. I think several routes help. E.g. when people take the law into their own hands, it motivates politicians to change! I think the policy is good in principle and crap in reality. It takes an intelligent (top 3%) person, to learn a lot about planning, be incredibly eco (it’s only the most eco people who have done it, if we wait for everyone to be like that then it will be too late) and be very determined and tenacious. To a very rare person indeed!! One person got quite ill, another said it was a tortuous route. I don’t know how Paul’s view fits in with this.” (Sarah, author’s interview)

The overall feeling, even among the people who were keen to go down the planning route in living this kind of lifestyle is that it is not only incredibly arduous, but often prohibitively difficult. And moreover, that it is not really intended to ensure the sustainability of the project, but rather to test the writing and paperwork capabilities of people trying to get through the process. In spite of the hard work, and in spite of the definite sense that the evidence requested by the Council was not actually for purposes of understanding the project but rather a stalling tactic, and that no quantity or quality of evidence would have convinced the Council because the deciding factor was political, Paul, Simon Fairlie and others do remain convinced that going through the planning process is worthwhile. As Sarah points out however, the level of intellectual engagement, combined with the amount of energy and enthusiasm that Paul and others at Lammas have managed to commit to this project is somewhat incredible, and it is quite hard to imagine how or even why everyone in the alternative movement could or should have to find quite this level of skill in order to be able to live a low impact lifestyle.
Another point about the level of bureaucratic and information producing, box-ticking, argumentation-providing, monitoring and so on kind of work, is that the amount and type of work that is required changes the way people think about what they are doing. Making the various targets the goals, the process changes how people view their position is within a system, what the value is of various things. In essence, the knowledge producing activities required by the state has an influence not only on what people end up doing, but also how they think about what they are doing and what it means. This will be explored further in the next section.

5.6 TARGETS AND MONITORING – GOVERNMENTALITY?

Policy 52, and the One Planet Development policy in TAN6 both have requirements for monitoring reports. As already mentioned, a condition of Policy 52 is that the LID as a whole cover 75% of the basic needs of everyone there through land-based activities. This means that ‘basic needs’ are translated into numerical costs, and the estimated value of the land-based goods and services are also given the same treatment, and the two are then compared against each other. In addition to these calculations, the guidance on LID planning policy involves a requirement of annual reports and continual monitoring, to be undertaken by the developers, covering a wide range of aspects of living, such as energy use and production, food production and consumption, as well as management-plan connected monitoring of on-site enterprises. The process of completing all this paperwork involves weighing every item of produce and measuring many other things besides. When asked about the onerousness of this, including the amount of time it takes, the planner at PCNPA described how it was also a burden on their end, but that it seemed necessary:

“I know it might sound a bit flippant but if people set themselves up to say 'I'm here to achieve' and then you start to apply the rigor of that assessment and then it suddenly dawns that you know, to them, there's a lot more to this. And the mindset that tends to go into this sort of thing is very free-willed and free-living, and you know, relaxed, and all that kind of thing. And the rigor that you need for this [laughing] it's the absolute antithesis of that, you know, it's like, ah project management to infinite detail. Not to make masses of money, but to show you've achieved your sustainability objectives. Which is incredible really, considering the background of most people who come to this kind of thing. But I don't know. If somebody could hand us a sheet of paper that said, you can make the judgment this simply, and you can enforce on it this simply, it'd be fantastic. But none of us have gotten there. Not us, not the
Welsh Government, not the consultants advising. It's not an easy one at all.”
(Martina Dunne, PCNPA, author’s interview)

To the policy-creators such conditions seem only logical and normal, as well as unavoidable given the exceptions being made to the usual conditions of building in the countryside. However, their very existence changes dramatically both the low impact development projects as they proceed day by day, including the amount of time and energy spent by LID dwellers on counting and accounting, but also the necessary attitude and worldview of LID dwellers, whose attention is forcibly focused on numbers and percentages (e.g. 75% of basic needs from land-based activities). In a recent film about the eco-village for example, one resident mentioned the mental obsession with the ‘75%’ and how he couldn’t stop thinking and worrying about this number (Iles 2013). Another resident noted during an interview how hard it was to keep track of everything, such as the berries the children would eat straight from the bushes for example. The targets also came up in meetings, as statements of purpose. And they formed reasons for residents in doing things they way they did, such as focusing on their own buildings and plots rather than the communal areas or activities, due to the pressure to meet the targets.

The integration of the Lammas project with the mainstream by means of the planning permission however, has been built upon this successful engagement with the rational, modernist, data-obsessed culture. Demands from the planning department for more information were responded to by the gathering of large amounts of information and setting out this information in ways that the bureaucratic system would understand or be familiar with. The challenge to prove the value of the project was taken up empirically, and that agreement now holds everyone at Tir-y-Gafel in its grasp.

5.7 EXPERTS, CONSULTANTS, TECHNICAL ADVICE AND VALUES

In this final section, the role and position of consultants is considered with relation to past and future planning applications for LID. A finding of the research, flagged up often by prospective LI developers and other supporters within the movement is the knowledge and expertise of consultants employed by Councils to assess planning applications needs to come from appropriate consultancies. LI developers have
levelled the critique that the consultants employed by County Councils to assess low impact development applications should be knowledgeable about LIDs and not simply agricultural consultants. This issue in a sense is not entirely one of expertise, but of ethos, ideology, or worldview. For instance, one agricultural consultant who was very sceptical of LID in general noted that his own 200-acre farm was not enough to support his lifestyle, and he expressed both disbelief that people would want to or be able to live on less than that. The consultancy he worked for was involved with planning applications for a number of large-scale projects including a mega-dairy. There was a clear leaning towards up-scaling of agricultural and other rural businesses while small-scale self-sufficiency projects were not deemed feasible or desirable.

This issue of having an ideological viewpoint is suggested by the ‘ethos’ stated by consultancies, as well as the organizational cultures within them. I concentrated on three consultancies that had been in some way involved with low impact development and questioned people within these consultancies about issues such as ways of gathering information or developing understandings of things, as well as matters of reconciling personal and organisational beliefs, values and ideologies with the matter of working for a client. It became clear that different consultancies clearly had different organisational patterns, geographical patterns, and ideological standpoints. Obviously this is a small sample size, and the results I would emphasize are not intended to suggest that some consultancies are ‘better’ than others. Far more simply, the idea was to interrogate how people negotiated their positions as providers of knowledge for clients, including how they managed values in these situations.

There is a clear tension to be found among consultants and consultancies that echoes the tension in planning. That is, even while having quite explicit beliefs, aims and ways of understanding, knowing and interpreting, all the consultants I spoke to and consultancy websites I looked at make references to the objectivity and neutrality of research and knowledge. All things are considered somehow possible to measure, perhaps imperfectly, but nonetheless, somehow.

This commitment to objective and scientific method seems to jar somewhat with stated aims and ethos. For example, Land Use Consultants, the consultancy commissioned to produce the research on LID to inform Policy 52, is, according to its website an organisation ‘dedicated to conserving and enhancing the environment and
promoting sustainable development’. The aims stated on the website have an environmental and social ethos to them including ‘a holistic approach to environmental issues’:

“An Ethical Consultancy: LUC is driven by an **objective environmental ethos**, evident throughout our teams of committed, principled environmentalists. Our approach considers sustainability, quality and innovation. Helping to mitigate climate change is a priority running throughout our work. Advising on the bigger picture, LUC has a reputation for going beyond the brief and solves problems based on the most sustainable option. An independent company, LUC is employee owned and managed. Often invited onto steering committees and stakeholder groups, we debate issues in a reasonable and intelligent way, giving a straightforward, unbiased view.” (ref LUC website, emphasis added)

Although words like sustainability and sustainable development are used with abandon on the websites of most consultancies, the LUC website actually suggests more of a commitment to such values. However, it is clear about adding that it is objective and unbiased. This is perhaps to be expected as it is culturally impossible to publicly announce that values are incorporated into producing knowledge. An admission of this would be considered unscientific, since the assumption is still that science is non-ideological and ideology is non-scientific.

Negotiating the difficulty of having values and ideological positions with the requirement for objective knowledge and knowledge production is a difficult terrain. For instance, one consultant tasked with writing on low impact development noted that:

“I was and still am, you know, quite clearly identified as being sympathetic rather than sceptical. I mean that's because, that study showed nicely - the facts actually say that there is nothing wrong with it. But there's plenty of prejudice against [low impact development], as I'm sure if you're doing any work on it you're finding.” (Consultant 1, author’s interview)

Another consultant who asked that this comment be off the record and is therefore not identified here, in discussing a colleague noted that:

“One thing is, I don't think he necessarily finds people that do these things socially acceptable, right? So prejudice comes in. A very difficult thing to get round.” (Consultant 2, author’s interview)
Of course, all those involved in the production of knowledge have their own beliefs and their own set of experiences and leanings that will shape their opinions. However, the process of going through planning is set up such that consultants (and planners) are assumed to be able to leave behind their own prejudices and imaginations and to present only the pertinent information based on their own experiential knowledge. In the case of agricultural consultants for example, the assumption is that because they are familiar with farming practices (albeit conventional ones) that they will be able to accurately assess the feasibility of a particular rural enterprise based on this knowledge and experience, and that their thoughts about what should and should not be allowed in the countryside will not come into play.

On being asked about their role in planning inquiries, one consultant noted that:

“Well what I was taught when I started this and it's something I try to instil in colleagues... is that, when we're in a planning inquiry we're there to assist the inspector in his interpretation of what's in front of him, not to provide evidence to support or detract from an application necessarily. Just how that information should be interpreted and whether it's realistic. And often things aren't realistic. And that's very similar to court... where the duty of the expert... is to assist the court, without air or favour, so it doesn't matter who's paying you, you're there to assist the judge and to give an independent expert opinion.

That's not the way it works a lot of the time though, and there are a lot of people who are hired guns, to use fully emotive language, and who definitely promote development, which is more the role of an agent rather than an expert. So where colleagues act as agents for applicants, it is more difficult to say that you're independent, because you are promoting the applicant's development or proposal.” (Consultant 2, author’s interview)

These quotes suggest a number of things. One is that consultants, just like everyone else have biases and leanings, and these are likely to inform their opinions, but potentially also their assessments of things as ‘realistic’ or not. A second point is that knowledge is not always used in a neutral way. Consultants may act as independent assessors, or they may act as agents for a developer. These changing roles change the way that knowledge is used (by implication I would argue, they alter the way that the logical outcomes of knowledge are presented, since there is always a process of interpretation involved in the presentation of information).
Besides the matter of beliefs held by the ‘independent experts’ there is also the matter of context and client, which will also affect the way in which knowledge is presented. If the consultant is acting formally in support of a client, as an agent, it is their job to try and present evidence that favours their application. However, when they are called in to a planning inquiry they should, at least in principle, attempt to merely provide an interpretation of the information rather than presenting a case as such. Of course, the consultant notes that this is a kind of aspirational stance rather than necessarily the way all consultants act in all circumstances. There is an acknowledgement that planning hearings and inquiries create an adversarial situation and both sides feel compelled to win, which automatically hinders neutrality. However, as one consultant points out, this lack of neutrality could be regarded as positive, in the sense of leading to robust outcomes:

“If you're advocating, you are free, freer, to bend, or look for the limits of policy, or explore the limits, and then it's for the person on the other side, opponent – and they call themselves opponent – to test those limits and whether or not they go too far. So the person testing the limits has to be without colour [take a black or white view]. So, there are two sides, and it's the testing nature, so whereas as a scientist you test a hypothesis as an individual, what you're doing at a planning inquiry is somebody presents you with a hypothesis and somebody else tests it, and then you have the toing and froing. The best scientific experiments are done in groups… where conflict or differences of opinion lead to robust outcomes. And that's what ultimately we’re looking for is a robust outcome.” (Consultant 2, author’s interview)

In a sense, planning hearings do appear to be about ‘robust outcomes’ but what this seems to mean in practice is who can match ‘scientific’ evidence and argumentation most effectively to a policy. This means that whichever side is best able to defend its case in these terms is likely to succeed in the outcome, and here again we see the significance of a consultancy-industry (which is ultimately for profit). It is easy to see how the level of expertise or knowledge that any given party is capable of harnessing has a significant impact on the outcome of a planning application. This issue illustrates the connection between democratic deliberative processes and expertise. In essence, whoever is able to harness or produce the most compelling ‘evidence’ theoretically should stand the best chance. Obviously this presents challenges in the case of LI developers who are generally defending themselves, meaning that again
there is an onus on production of evidence in a form and format and by persons deemed 'expert' that is acceptable to the system.

Another interesting aspect of the consultancy industry is its geography. Consultants are usually from a different locale than the one in question, lending credence to the contention of Giddens that the expert system de-localizes and de-personalises knowledge:

"In its modern guise at least, expertise is in principle devoid of local attachments. In an ideal-typical way, it could be said that all forms of 'local knowledge' under the rule of expertise become local recombinations of knowledge derived from elsewhere. Obviously in practice things are more complicated than this, owing to the continuing importance of local habits, customs or traditions. The decentred nature of expertise derives from the traits to which Weber gives prominence, save that those do not concern only rational-legal procedures. That is to say, expertise is disembedding because it is based on impersonal principles, which can be set out and developed without regard to context." (Giddens, 1994, p.85)

In this understanding, not only the expert but the expertise itself is de-contextualised, or at least this is the ideal type towards which experts and expertise should position itself. Consequently, knowledge produced in this fashion is deliberately de-personalised, a process which is made easier perhaps by the distance, both literal and figurative, between the experts themselves and the matters on which they write.

A final point about the geographies of knowledge relates to the fact that in spite of all this ostensible rationality, de-localisation, de-personalisation, reduction to ‘facts’ and so on, in practice, knowledge in planning is produced both through ‘rational’ practices and through ‘more than rational’ means, which could be called aesthetic or embodied means. Even these aesthetic aspects of the role of planning are subjected to a process of attempted objectification. ‘Visual impact’ and ‘landscape assessments’ are one way of doing this. Even in cases which are now low impact developments, visual impact is often a sticking point. It seems that at least some planning officers are still very intent on protecting the visual character of places in a certain way. Because this is an obvious area where science cannot really be used to give the answer, it is even more difficult to prove than other aspects. Here, a consultant describes a case in which he was acting as an agent for a private client on a development (not a low impact development).

“"I think, within the planning process ...sometimes you will get a particular
planning officer who goes off on one by himself. He has his own opinion and unless what you've written accords with his opinion then he sort of skirts around it. I've got one at the moment ...and the planning officer asked for no end of information, supplementary information which I've given him. We've had an external assessor looking at it and he's said it's ok, and the planning officer wouldn't accept it so he asked for more information. And in the end it was sent through another assessor and he's agreed it as well, and the planning officer's been backed into a corner now and um, he's had to accept what we've said. Um, I think the ultimate test is an appeal situation where an inspector cross-examines people or, he's got wider experience than a planning officer and he'll weigh up the balance of probability I suppose. And it has to be supported by fairly strong evidence.

Int: What kind of extra evidence was he requiring?

“Oh gosh, it was a relatively straightforward application but he wanted a fairly extensive landscape impact assessment done... which was very time consuming and very expensive. We submitted it and he said 'I still believe it's not in the right place and I don't think. I don't believe that it's not harmful to landscape. As it happened, it was, you could only see it from about a mile away from one small section of a footpath. You couldn't even see it from the road alongside, and he was, obsessed by this view from a footpath a mile away, a section of about 50m. And as it happened there was a power station the other side and a massive industrial development to the rear and he still objected to this agricultural development. But that's a planning officer who's known to be particularly, he has his own political viewpoints which he brings into the room, doesn't leave outside.” (Consultant 3, author’s interview).

Obviously even with an extensive, expensive and time-consuming landscape impact assessment, matters such as visual impact essentially remain subjective. As the consultant comments when asked about this: “It's very very subjective, incredibly subjective” (Consultant 3, author’s interview).

Asked whether anything else was difficult to ‘prove’ to planners, the consultant noted the following:

“Hm, anything difficult to prove. Mm, trying to prove a negative. When someone comes along and says 'if this application goes ahead then there will be pollution from, as a result of it'. And trying to prove something when it doesn't exist is very very difficult. You can have various modelling and that type of thing that we can prove anything we want on the modelling, but actually in real life you can't prove it until the thing is there. And that can be quite frustrating. Especially if it's a large development involving a considerable sum of money, it may well pass on everything, but potential impact of say, pollution or odour, especially if it's a novel application, something which hasn't been proven elsewhere, things like recycling plants or
something like that, if it's a new way of recycling which may create odour, but
you don't know whether it's created odour because there's no other similar
application being submitted anywhere in the country. Or say for example
there's some, there's a recycling plant which is in operation in Germany, but
there's nothing in operation in the UK, you can't prove very easily, without
taking everyone over to Germany to see something in operation. And quite a
lot of the recycling operations are in Germany or for example, anaerobic
digesters, there's a lot of them in Germany but very few in the UK. So trying
to convince not only the, um, local authority but the local population that
something is justified, is very very difficult when there's nothing similar
within the locality.

Int: What can you do in that kind of situation? Could you look for other
research papers that had been written on the same thing, so, the impacts, the
odour impacts of a recycling plant or an anaerobic digester...

Consultant: Yeah. The problem is that people are very very skeptical of
research information. They like to see things actually happening on the
ground. You can send them as much research information as you want, but if
they don't want to believe it they won't believe it until they actually see it. So
you can send in loads and loads of research documents and they will not
believe it. And I suppose the only way to prove it is in an appeal situation
where you have expert witnesses. So you can say 'look this has happened in
this country or that country, I've got experience of it' and the inspector would
weigh up the evidence which is being presented by expert witnesses. The
expert witnesses have to be seen, you know, have to be acknowledged as
experts in their field, and acknowledged experts by their contemporaries. And
that's the way the balance then in the eyes of the inspector. It's a lot more
difficult to do that with just local planning authorities where it's just a planning
officer or community councils in Wales, parish councils in England.

Int: So for local planners research documents don't carry much weight, you
think? They want to hear it from a—

Consultant: They would like to see it in real life more than anything. Because
they're quite cynical. They've had the wool pulled over their eyes quite a few
times I suppose. Um, it needs to be fairly robust evidence for a local authority
to accept something which is quite contentious.

This conversation, based not on low impact development but on other potentially
contentious developments suggests that the experience of Lammas was not altogether
unusual, also that in order to get something through the planning system, particularly
if it is new or unusual, it is quite an expensive, time-consuming process. Most
interestingly perhaps is the view that planners would like more than anything to
actually see and visit a development before making a judgement on it. This draws
attention again to the importance of imagination in the planning sphere. The
profession requires being able to imagine possible futures, and at the same time is constrained by a rationality that denies the validity of aesthetic experience, and seeks, hopelessly sometimes, to ‘prove’ that the aesthetic impacts of a development will be ‘appropriate’. This produces a situation in which all experience has to be reduced to ‘rational’ argument. I suggest this limits the possibilities of knowledge in attempting to abstract it from the cultural, social, aesthetic, moral, spiritual, and ideological positions that everyone has. It is not possible within the planning system to even acknowledge the existence of the ‘more than rational’ and this I would suggest is a problem in terms of the possibilities of embracing governance for sustainable development within the system.

5.8 Reflections

The chapter produces interesting findings from each of these moments of state-LI developer interaction in terms of the social construction and role of knowledge and evidence. In the first case, Simon Fairlie’s book, and Simon Fairlie himself promoting the concept of Low Impact Development, along with supporters of the movement, appears to be successful in engaging with the process of rational argumentation, at least in the respect that LID as a concept is put on the table for planners to consider as they put together the Unitary Development Plan. This could be seen as the initiation of a production of knowledge, through the creation and promotion of a discourse. However, before LID policy was included (or allowed perhaps) in the Unitary Development Plan, independent research by a consultancy had to be conducted. The fact that this research was commissioned and ended up being compelling was because of the initial definition of LID and its insertion into sustainable development discourse.

The second interaction provides insight into how networks of association are brought into play in the production of various artefacts of knowledge; soil and geology surveys, biodiversity studies, permaculture reports, economic reports and the like. The documents are assembled to provide ‘evidence’ for the feasibility and sustainability of the proposed project. The interaction between the County Council and Lammas is here played out in a kind of battle of knowledge production and validation (or not) of that knowledge. Both the processes and the experts employed here are unusual for the
planners. The Council requests more and different knowledge and refuses to immediately recognize, legitimate or accord authority to the evidence being provided. Ultimately, with, according to Paul Wimbush, over 1200 pages of evidence provided from all kinds of experts, the Council still rejects the application. Once the application goes to a hearing however, the planning inspector is suitably impressed and accepts the application with no issue.

It is difficult to make definitive conclusions about this second case. Was it the reams of impressively compiled supporting evidence that convinced the planning inspector? Or was it, as Simon Fairlie has suggested, down to the fact that planning inspectors, in their more independent role are more able to look at the big picture, interpret the spirit of policy as well as the detail, and to therefore make more balanced decisions? Or in fact, was the whole situation down to politics behind the scenes, including vehement opposition by Councillors within the County Council, in contrast to support for the LID movement at the Welsh Government level? All of these are possible reasons and there is some evidence to suggest that all of these things played a role.

However, the compilation of the incredible amount of detailed information did have a number of effects – one of which was the continuation of the engagement in ‘rational argument’. This continued ability to understand and speak in the language of planning, including its rationality, afforded legitimacy to the project and movement as a whole. The planning inspector involved recounted to me afterwards how he had great respect for Paul and his work, a statement I heard repeated in fact from the unlikeliest of people on different occasions – including the person who had led up the Dim Lammas movement before the project had received planning permission. In this latter case as well the regularity of Paul’s approach was mentioned. In essence the ability to speak and demonstrate the language of ‘rationality’ has the effect of making the project ‘legible’ to use Scott’s terms and therefore acceptable.

The downside however of this successful engagement with rationality is its persistence and incorporation into daily life. Since on the part of the LID advocates, and on the part of the consultancy involved in the research report, an approach of rationality was taken (which, as noted, was how it was so successful), this has subsequently become a core part of the LID policy. The result is that LiDers are required to self-monitor and collect vast amounts of reducible data about their lives.
This reduction of lifestyle to numbers, and particularly the anxiety that this leads to suggests that in this case rationality has become a means of governmentality. This moment of interaction has resonance with work looking at the results of government ‘support’ of community initiatives that involves financial support but also a requirement for targets, monitoring and ‘number capture’ (Gerald Taylor-Aiken 2013).

The problem with this approach for LID and arguably for the process of governance for sustainable development that recognizes the value and potential of alternative ‘niche’ activities such as this, is that it simultaneously creates a situation in which people are tasked with excessive paperwork and bureaucracy, and also loses the potentially more holistic, complex knowledge that could be gathered otherwise. In other words, by reducing everything to component parts, the far more interesting information of the interactions, processes, and dialectics if you like of the people, plants, animals, conditions and all the complexities of life are lost. This accords with Scott’s critique of state approaches to knowledge, particularly agriculture. Fortunately however, the alternative movement also has access to alternative knowledge. And so, in spite of the reduction of life to numbers for the purposes of reporting, the methods of living and working are influenced rather more by ideas of permaculture which emphasise holistic thinking (Permaculture Association 2012; Mollison & Holmgren 1978; Mollison 1988). More will be said about this in Chapter 6.

In the final section of the chapter, consultants, the main actors in knowledge/evidence production in planning provide insight into the underlying assumptions behind their roles, the politics of knowledge and types of knowledge considered acceptable to planners. Interestingly we see that in planning cases it is not necessarily a ‘techne’ type of knowledge that planners are interested in. They would like more than anything to see the thing for themselves, and failing that, they would like the testimony of an expert witness. It should be noted that for the most part the type of planner being discussed in these situations are ‘development controllers’ or development managers as they are now sometimes called. In the case of the planners writing policy, research documents are interesting, but only ones which are commissioned and targeted at very specific issues. The statements of the consultants draw attention the fact that all personal politics are assumed to be possible to remove in the provision of evidence. This is a belief system – an ideology of rationality – that is upheld by the entire
system of planning. As such, all actors within the process must pretend to be able to remove all personal politics and beliefs from their evidence gathering and evidence assessments. Everything must be couched in the language of rationality.

This determined upholding of the idea of the possibility of objective, neutral knowledge has the effect of formally de-politicizing knowledge within the process, and could be seen as evidence of Fischer’s ‘technocratic state’. In some senses, this has the effect of, at least in appearance, disempowering planners, even at the policy development level, since the assumption/misconception is indeed upheld that as Davoudi suggests (2006), policy stems naturally from evidence. However, the production of evidence, the writing of policy and the deliberation on planning cases remain interpretive processes, even if they are not talked about in this way. The result is that particular types of knowledge and lines of argumentation are excluded – such as any suggestion of an ideology other than rationality. This limits self-expression and also I would suggest, authentic dialogue.

The unacknowledged connection between ideology and the role of knowledge within the planning system also presents a problem. As Halfacree notes with relation to ideas about the use of rural space (2007), the ‘radical’ rural presents challenges to very deeply ingrained late modern capitalist ideals. And following Giddens recognition of the role of abstract systems in the perpetuation of ideas and actions (Giddens, 1994), the deep-seated and long-standing commitment of the planning system, and by (at least segments) of the British public to the preservation of a particular notion of the ‘green and pleasant land’ presents certain barriers to both the institutional and public acceptance of the ‘radical’. Ideology, as Foley pointed out in 1960, does not lend itself to thoughtful and critical self-reflexivity (Foley 1960), an issue which is perhaps just as relevant to British planning today as it was when Foley was writing.

Yet, there are points to take away from this analysis which suggest a more complex picture. While the ‘radical’ in this case has succeeded in large part due to its willingness and ability to engage with the rationality of the planning system, through meeting the demands for information and evidence requested, it has also continually challenged many of the accepted ideologies along the way. Alternative methods of procuring and producing knowledge have been employed extensively, and in spite of various barriers, these methods of knowledge production and dissemination (e.g. via
the Lammas website) have been effective in both drawing upon and strengthening a network of alternative knowledge and support.

This analysis has allowed the employment of the epistemological reflections so ubiquitous within the academic world to the systems of knowledge production in play in governance and planning systems. It is worth considering the extent to which this exploration has suggested a ‘demonopolization of expertise’ (Beck 1994, p.29). In some respects it would appear that even quite radical knowledge has been allowed into and influential on the system. The type, or rather the framing of knowledge is limited however. Yet, Scott’s typology of techne andmetis does not seem to capture the differences accurately for the situation. Indeed, it could be argued that the kind of knowledge most relied upon and trusted by planners is a kind ofmetis – at least in the sense that they rely most on what they have already seen and experienced before or can see in person. Behind the language oftechne all of the actors within the process are human beings with affinities and fears, political beliefs and preferences. In short, they are human beings.

The denial of the humanity of planners and others however and the persistent model of ‘unambiguous instrumental rationality’ that Beck called to be abolished in 1995 (Beck 1994, p.29) continues to present a problem in terms of embedding the concept of governance for sustainable development into the planning system. This rationality precludes the possibility of holistic thinking at the level of operations in the planning system. If we are to view the process of governance for sustainable as holistic and deliberative, a very different approach is required. In the meantime, it can at least be counted as a triumph that through harnessing this mode of expression, low impact development has been successfully mainstreamed. Whether the movement now finds a way to challenge the rationality of the planning system remains to be seen.
What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies? What would remain of a religious ideology – the Judaeo-Christian one, say – if it were not based on places and their names: church, confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle? What would remain of the Church if there were no churches?... What we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by thus taking on body therein. Ideology per se might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space. (Lefebvre 1991, p.44)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The last chapter explored the role of knowledge in the interactions between LI developers and various levels of planning/the state. I concluded that there are limitations placed on ways of knowing because of the belief in a particular kind of knowledge or rationality that is upheld by actors involved with the planning system. This limitation on ways of knowing also to an extent places a limitation on understanding different ways of being. In this chapter I explore some of the connotations of that in terms of governance for sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development requires the ability to imagine possible futures in creative ways, and also I would argue, the ability to examine and explore assumptions about all aspects of modern life. This chapter focuses mainly on architecture and building in the context of low impact development. Although this narrow focus is in itself limiting, it does allow insights into the concept of aesthetics and aesthetic knowledge – drawing attention to the connections between the material spaces that are produced, the dialectical relationship that these have with lived experience, and their representative form. In Lefebvre’s terms this could be seen as a focus on the dialectic between representational spaces and spatial practices.

The aesthetic aspects of life emerged over the course of the research as a key arena in which contrasting ideologies were coming up against each other. Whether it was ‘landscape character assessments’ and the concern of the planning department with preserving particular kinds of aesthetics in rural spaces, or the different aesthetics of
the eco-buildings. The latter in particular were a somewhat divisive arena, with some defending the right to very different styles of building and the associated aesthetics of living in such buildings, and others attempting to present eco-building as something not too different from the conventional.

The chapter takes up the notion of aesthetics and relates this to ideology. As the previous chapter discussed briefly, planning and government operate by ideologies of rationality, reductionism, positivism, and arguably, following Harvey, capitalism (Harvey 1996b). In contrast, eco-builders are often inspired by alternative ideologies. These may include re-conceptualising (attempting to overcome) human-nature dualities and relationships. As Lefebvre notes, ‘what is an ideology without a space with which it refers?’ (Lefebvre 1991, p.44). The chapter therefore takes up the consideration that eco-buildings are representational spaces by which ideologies are communicated.

I begin by introducing the concept of aesthetics as used by Terry Eagleton. This formulation is quite broad and overcomes some of the distinctions in human geography between visuality and materiality (Rose & Tolia-Kelly 2012), the representational, the non-representational (Thrift 2000) and the more-than-representational. Aesthetics is instead taken to mean all that we experience with our senses, but also, importantly, what our experiences with and of our material world represent to us, and the dialectic between these. In particular I look at how ecological building practices carry with them an embodied representational politics of being. Focusing largely on the built environment of the eco-village this chapter explores the politics of aesthetics. From a theoretical perspective the chapter draws on Ranciere’s *Politics of Aesthetics* (Rancière 2004) and considers the ways in which the eco-village can be considered a re-partition of sensibilities. Following Ranciere, the chapter is concerned with ‘aesthetic acts as configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce novel forms of political subjectivity’ (Ranciere 2004, p.3)

This chapter also draws on a term that has fallen out of favour in geography, but which is seen to hold potential for understanding some of the implications of a project like Lammas: ideology. The concept of ideology is introduced in relation to aesthetics as this is framed around Terry Eagleton’s connections between these two spheres
(Eagleton 1990). Ideology is seen loosely as a set of ideas that individuals or groups adhere to – these can be spiritual ideas or ideals, but may just as easily be a belief in ‘rationality’ ‘modernity’ ‘ecological modernisation’ or any number of other sets of ideas or belief systems. Ideology is therefore used as a concept to introduce a means of talking about different worldviews or paradigms. In the context of eco-villages, and indeed countercultural experiments and movements more generally, aesthetics and ideology are both significant, and their inter-relationships are under-researched, particularly within human geography. The danger in this relates back to the transitions literatures reviewed in Chapter 2. If alternatives are thought of as test-bed sites for particular technologies, rather than complex socio-spatial articulations encompassing ideologies, we risk missing the point and the great potential of such experiments.

Work on countercultures has attended to the issues of ideology to some extent (see for example Berger 2004), however the link between ideology and aesthetics is generally overlooked or simply described as though it were incidental. The chapter argues for increased attention to the ways in which spaces are shaped by ideologies and vice versa.

The first section of the chapter positions the work within the field of architectural geographies, drawing out some of the main points of concern flagged up in these literatures and attending to the gaps in which this work is positioned. The rest of the chapter looks at ecological

6.2 ARCHITECTURAL GEOGRAPHIES

In 1988, Jon Goss argued that geographers had failed to grasp the complexity and significance of architecture:

“A building is more than it seems. It is an artifact – an object of material culture produced by a society to fulfil particular functions determined by, and thus embodying or reflecting, the social relations and level of development of the productive forces of that society. . . . A building is invested with ideology, and the space within, around, and between buildings is both produced and producing.” (Goss 1988, p.265)

Recently, architecture has seen a resurgence of interest in geography with calls for developing the analytical tools used to understand the built environment. Loretta Lees in particular has made a considered intervention into architectural geographies arguing for a more critical and complex geography of architecture that engages with
and finds ways to encapsulate the politics of architectural spaces by going beyond simple description and uncritical linkages between form and culture (Lees 2001, p.54). Lees concludes that the relationship between the design, the building itself, and the processes of use, modification, subversion and so on of the built space together comprise an ongoing and complex pattern of meanings. Uncovering the representative value of a public building, is as she notes, no easy task, as there are potentially as many interpretations of the building as there are interpreters. Attending to the uses of the building offers some degree of further insight into its life – however she calls for drawing upon further methodological and critical tools than have traditionally been utilised in architectural geographies.

Lees also has important points to make regarding how power is conceived of in architectural geographies. She notes that Goss’ manifesto called for a blending of Marxist analysis with semiotics and structuration theory – the latter providing a means to conceptualise how ‘practices of power in the spaces of the built environment enabled and constrained the relations between structure and agency’ (Lees 2001, p.54). The suggestion is that spaces are produced not only through their representation and interpretation or hermeneutic understanding, but also through the processual, the embodied, the lived. The built environment therefore has representational qualities as well as what might be called ‘non-representational’ or preferably ‘more than representational’ qualities (Lorimer 2005). Extreme versions of non-representational theory suggest that it should entirely replace looking at the representational aspects of space, however Lees criticizes this approach arguing that though it is difficult and problematic to understand the representative qualities of a building, there are still meaning-making processes at work. She also warns of the potential for losing the emancipatory impulse behind much of the earlier Marxist inspired work on architectural geographies, warning that:

“it is important also that the critical impulses that once made ‘new’ cultural geography so politically vital not be evacuated altogether. The result will be a politically anaemic cultural geography practised purely for its own sake” (Lees 2001, p.54).
The methodological approach taken in this research was one based interpretive analysis, some of which has been phenomenological, and so there are resonances with the recent turn to more-than-representational. The significance of the built spaces emerged in multiple conversations and interactions as well as auto-ethnographic accounts in the form of my research diaries – which charted a process of self-reflection connected quite strongly to my experiences of the built and un-built spaces. These were unusual spaces and in some cases profoundly connected to ideologies that people were aiming to express, as well as to embody and to live. In addition, the fact that the producers of space in this case were also the consumers of it, this overcame some of the tensions that other architectural geography accounts have struggled with in conceptualizing the consumer as a passive or active agent in the production of space.

Lees intervention into architectural geographies has led to a body of new work aiming to bring together insights from the non/more-than representational theories into studies of particular buildings and spaces. This has resulted in attempts to capture the ‘haptic’ nature of interactions with spaces in order to move beyond the visual (Paterson 2011). Paterson critiques phenomenological accounts however as being ‘retrograde’ in failing to take into account a variety of bodies and their associated interactions with spaces. Arguably however, phenomenological approaches could quite easily include the experiences of different kinds of bodies by engaging with a variety of users (as well as non-users) of a space. This could accord with what Llewellynn describes as polyvocalism (Llewellyn 2003). Taking the NRT idea a bit further, Kraftl and Adey have attempted to explore the ‘affective’ nature of spaces through observing the spaces and people’s interactions with the spaces (Kraftl & Adey 2008; Kraftl 2010).

Kraftl & Adey’s (2010) work, and further work by Kraftl has looked at the ways in which people interact with ecological buildings (Kraftl 2006; Kraftl 2009; Kraftl 2010). Looking at the Nant-y-Cwm Steiner school (where many of the Lammas children go to school), Kraftl explores how the intentionally-produced affective environment of the building is designed with a particular idea of childhood and development in mind. He then explores how teachers, parents and former pupils (but not the children themselves presumably due to difficulties of researching this) respond to this environment as well as the set of ideas of childhood learning advocated by
Steiner interact with the environment through their activities. With reference to an apartment block designed by the ecological architect Hundertwasser, Kraftl has also considered the responses of residents to ‘living in an artwork’ (Kraftl 2009).

However, Kraftl’s writings on ecological buildings somewhat skirt over the issue of the ecological ideas behind the buildings and how they are intended as a kind of living, breathing (quite literally some ecological buildings are designed with considerations of airflow like breath through the body) buildings involved in a dialectical relationship with inhabitants and users. This is something written about extensively by the architects themselves of course, Christopher Day, the designer of the Nant-y-Cwm school being an example (Day 2002; Day 2007; Day & Parnell 2003). The philosophies behind these styles of building clearly go beyond the visual aesthetic and demand, perhaps more so than any other style of building, attention to the sensuous, haptic, bodily, affective qualities as well as the visual. They also demand a consideration of the dialectic between the philosophies and the materialities, or, in my terminology here: ideology and aesthetics.

The approach of this chapter to aesthetics adds to this budding body of literature on architectural form, attending to the gap in current writings in architectural geography on the links between ecological philosophies and buildings. The various spatial forms are taken as ‘representational spaces’ (Lefebvre 1991). Lefebvre was adamant however that in looking at space, we should consider not only the representational nature of that space but also the spatial practices involved in making it what it is. As Lees, Kraftl, Adey and others have pointed out, the affective experience of buildings is also political. In this respect buildings and spaces are considered both in terms of their representational forms, but also in the sense of a kind of political affect that is sometimes but not always articulated by the architect-inhabitants.

In terms of the low impact buildings, attention is paid to the shapes and forms of spaces, light and heat, materials, colour, and tactile and olfactory sensations. The intentionality or non-intentionality behind some of these elements is discussed with architects and inhabitants, including the intended symbolic or representational ideas behind the buildings, as well as, obviously the ecological and social ones.

The next section turns its focus to the ideologies and rationalities in place in the planning department of the County Council. This takes the discussion in quite a
different direction, finding that regardless perhaps of the intentionality of the architect of the building (not interviewed), the Council building has both representational and affective properties which are connected (though not necessarily causally) with the attitudes and ideologies of planners. This may be a coincidental connection, and I am not suggesting a kind of environmental determinism, however to the extent that geographers are considering the affective spaces of buildings as significant, it seems significant to look at the spaces that decision-makers inhabit and what they may be directly or indirectly symbolising, as well as engendering in an affective sense.

The findings of this chapter speak back to the transitions literatures, particularly the strategic niche management literatures in specific ways. Firstly, the research contributes to the arguments that ecological or low impact building (although I hesitate to label a style of building so diverse) is about more than component parts to buildings. This difference emerges in conversations with the builder-architects, and in the conflicts over building regulations. In terms of translating ideas from ecological building, it is important to recognise that there is much more going on than new or different materials, or new or different techniques. Instead, the creative expression involved in building contains an ethos connected to the combination of all the elements involved, including the materials and techniques, the people who build and the people who dwell. If something is to be ‘translated’ into regime, it is this ideology, rather than the individual technologies or materials. Attempting to do this suggests a much different process than simply adopting the technologies, materials or styles.

In a representational sense, an ecological ethos is identified, contained in the writings of Christopher Day and others, which Kraftl calls ‘deep green’ (2006), and which contains the idea of holism, interconnected self or wider sense of self. This is juxtaposed with the spatial form of rationality. There is some poetic license in this work, but such license is perhaps necessary if the aesthetic is to be talked about in a way that does not fall victim to reductionist, rationalist thinking.

6.3 BUILDING, DWELLING, THINKING IN ECOLOGICAL BUILDINGS
Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body. In its original formulation... the term refers...to the whole region of human perception and sensation, in contrast to the more rarefied domain of conceptual thought. The distinction which the term ‘aesthetic’ initially enforces... is not one between ‘art’ and ‘life’, but between the material and the immaterial: between things and thoughts, sensations and ideas, that which is bound up with our creaturely life as opposed to that which conducts some shadowy existence in the recesses of the mind. It is as though philosophy suddenly wakes up to the fact that there is a dense, swarming territory beyond its own mental enclave which threatens to fall utterly outside its sway. That territory is nothing less than the whole of our sensate life together – the business of affections and aversions, of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal biological insertion into the world. The aesthetic concerns this most gross and palpable dimension of the human, which post-Cartesian philosophy, in some curious lapse of attention, has somehow managed to overlook. It is thus the first stirrings of a primitive materialism – of the body’s long inarticulate rebellion against the tyranny of the theoretical. (Eagleton 1990, p.13)

Eagleton’s eloquent description of aesthetics reminds us that the aesthetic is not merely the visual, as it is sometimes used. Instead, it is about the full range of material and embodied experience. In Lefebvre’s understanding, the embodied and material comprise the substance of life, and space is produced through the interactions between that which is conceived (the immaterial, thoughts and ideas), and that which is lived (the material, things, sensations). In Lefebvre’s understanding, as well as Eagleton’s then, space and life, living and being, are comprised of the dialectics between thinking and being.

Similarly, in a departure from this previous work on Time and Being, Heidegger wrote in 1971 in an essay entitled ‘Building Dwelling Thinking’ about the connection between space, or place, and the individual. For Heidegger this took the form of becoming in tune with the earth, the skies, the mortal, and the divine. Building, in the broad sense that Heidegger refers to it here was part of the process of dwelling, and dwelling for Heidegger was Being.

“The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is Buan, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell.” (Heidegger 1971, p.145)
An explicit connection is made between being, being a human, and dwelling, which in this understanding is the process of at once accepting and working with ones surroundings, earthly, in terms of the natural rhythms of the skies, light, heat, seasons of growing, and also of building, in a sense that means not only the construction of buildings and other structures but also of cultivation and even of the leaving alone of things. Heidegger’s description of dwelling and of building embody an ethics of understanding and being (Young 2002). This understanding of how a person should ‘be’ in the world is an effective method of drawing attention to the dialectic relationship between living, dwelling, building (in the broad sense), and being, particularly being an ethical human being.

I would like to argue, following Heidegger, that in the process of developing an eco-village, the building of buildings, as well as other structures, as well as the cultivation (or not) of land, in short, every action and interaction with the physical world is a manifestation of not only being, but of identity, a sense of self (including in the ‘wider sense of self’). As such, the buildings and the spaces between them speak volumes about the ethics and identities of the people involved. Space is produced through an interaction of mortals with the earth, the sky, spirit or divinity, and other mortals. There is of course, as has been pointed out by others in relation to phenomenological thinking, some risk of essentialising the experiencing body, the being self, within such thinking. Perhaps, as with other architectural practice, there are still limitations on how the body that will use the space is conceived (Imrie 2003). Yet, I would argue that it is a vital starting point towards understanding the politics and governance of sustainable development in that the dialectics between these buildings, including the process of creating them, is woven into the ecological philosophy that people are aiming to live in accordance with, and an interpretive phenomenological approach still offers great insight into this, though with attention being paid to the risk of generalization.

6.4 Towards an Aesthetic of Sustainability

Pat Borer, an architect who teaches at the Centre for Alternative Technologies, when interviewed by Kelvin Mason for the Green Building Press suggested that though there might be an architectural aesthetic or movement that he would perhaps term

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9 See particularly the chapters on ‘the ethics of dwelling’ and ‘being a guardian’
‘organic’ that he did not feel that this was the only way of doing eco-housing and in fact he was keen to adopt and promote a more modernist architectural style for eco-building, if only to make it appeal more to a mainstream sensibility (Mason 2011). Alternatively, others have argued that the aesthetic of buildings is highly significant, demonstrating the relationship that the building and its inhabitants or users have with other people, society, politics, and the environment (e.g. Day 2002). As such, it would seem that within the movement towards greener buildings, there are in fact multiple schools of thought. One takes a kind of ecological modernization approach, wherein the newest technologies are relied upon and the focus is on the ultimate performance of the buildings against a set of predetermined reductionist criteria. The second approach is more similar to the idea of low impact development.

For Simon Dale, one of the residents at Tir-y-Gafel, aesthetics and their very organicness is in fact extremely important. Dale’s ideas are drawn from other notable architectural designers and thinkers, particularly Christopher Day and Christopher Alexander (1977). In Spirit and Place10, Day begins by noting that:

“Environment affects us. It affects both social and personal health; body soul and spirit. For 90% of our lives, environment means built environment. Buildings, spaces between them, journeys amongst and through them – these are the frame for daily life. Different frames make different lives, influence how we think, feel, behave – how we are.” (Day 2002, p.5)

It is clear that Day believes that we do not live unaffected by our spaces, that our built environments do more than provide shelter from the elements; they shape us deeply, influencing our thoughts and our behaviours. Likewise, the ways in which we construct our buildings reflect our thoughts, our ideas and our ethics. As such, he goes on:

“Easy as it is to view human action as inevitably destructive of nature, we ourselves are inescapably a part of nature; and nature – its elements, levels, processes and cycles a part of us. How can this be aligned with the forces, processes and elemental principles of nature? How can we work with different levels of situations: the emotional, continuum-based, underlying essence as well as the practical and rational? How can we heal our environment – and in the process, heal ourselves?” (ibid. p.5)

10 I was loaned this book by Simon Dale after one of many discussions about buildings. Day is clearly an inspiration (and also lives locally and regularly comments on planning policy consultations). Simon tried hard to convey to me the significance of the underlying philosophies of building, for which I am most grateful.
Day’s position resonates with writings in geography focused on problematizing human-nature dualities and exploring ‘socionatures’ (Latour 2009; Castree 2001). However, because Day is a practicing architect, as are those inspired by similar ideas, there is an opportunity to view these ideas as practiced in the physical environment (the material as well as the immaterial). In short, the experiment that Day describes, of understanding and accepting our own naturalness, our own nature, is embodied in his architectural practices. A key point in this quote is how Day distinguishes between different ‘levels of situations’, noting the emotional, continuum-based and essence as well as the practical and the rational. These notions of situations or levels are not pitted against each other or dichotomized, but instead considered different levels of the same experience or understanding.

This is an important point in an appreciation of what Day and others are attempting to do. The argument is not that there is anything wrong with the rational or practical, but that there is something else that can get lost or be missed when all value is placed on the rational. This can happen simply because we have not found a way to rationalize everything, and this may be because at the end of the day, we are human beings, animals through whose veins pumps blood, who cry tears and feel fatigued, who desire comfort but also become alive through feeling our bodies moving in space, our muscles working, and the fruits of our labours growing. There is a recognition contained here of our alive-ness, and an understanding that our abodes, our lived
spaces, should reflect this alive-ness, and not separate themselves from nature and from humanity itself in the process of attempting to become purely rational.

The ‘more than rational’ nature of being human is an argument also being made in studies of ‘behaviour change’ (Whitehead et al. 2011). If considering the role of individual and collective behaviour and lifestyle choices in the transition to sustainable development, the interactions between our spaces and our actions becomes even more significant.

Simon Dale’s buildings have been pictured and written about widely in press and on the internet and have received and continue to receive delighted comments from people all over the world (Dale 2009). Multiple magazines have featured spreads including several pages of images of the buildings and the family, and the images proliferate through the cybersphere continually drawing people in virtual and physical space to contact the Dales and express great love for the buildings.

In talking about building, Dale talks about the symbolism that each aspect of the building has. For instance, the way that the walls emerge from the ground and are wider close to the base, mimics the shape of trees, whose trunks are naturally wider at their bases. The building itself holds nature at its heart, at its centre, and as Dale says, the idea is to create spaces of nurture and inspiration. Dale is also concerned with the embodied energy of buildings. The fact that the majority of the materials for making the building were gathered locally, including the glass which is all undergoing a second life after having been removed from other structures and recycled, and even the fact that the building of the house was done through the labour of Dale himself, his family, friends and volunteers, is all demonstrative of an ethos, an ethic, and as such the building itself becomes a symbol, a statement, a book of messages to be read and felt and grasped.

Buildings have long been understood as symbols, not only in and of themselves but in terms of their relationship with their surroundings. For instance, the grand cathedrals in the centre of many European cities can be seen to represent the relationship of the church to civil society in the early days of the formation of those cities. The grandiosity of the churches and cathedrals expressing not only dominant architectural forms of the time, but also dominant ideas of the time in terms of the relationship of individuals to the church and/or state, wealth and poverty, and to the non-human as
well as the human. These relationships have been underpinned by philosophies which are expressed in physical form through the placement and design of buildings. Lefebvre regarded iconic buildings as particular ‘representational spaces’, which through their design influenced the behaviour of people who encountered them. To an extent, this idea has been carried on within architectural studies, although more recent architectural geographies look to move beyond the simply representational to understand the architecture of buildings more thoroughly (Kraftl 2010; Lees 2001).

It’s possible that a new era of architecture is emerging, one of sustainable architecture, however as mentioned, this takes a number of different forms. In a book titled *Understanding Sustainable Architecture* the authors note that:

“In societies of European descent, three trademarks, dualism, reductionism and positivism, pervade modern living...[D]ualism expresses a distinction between body and mind, between matter and spirit, and between reason and emotion... [it] effectively sets humans apart from nature, but also an individual self apart from ‘the other’ of everything outside the self....[R]eductionism perceives all entities as consisting of simpler or more basic entities.... [As a result of this way of thinking] the reductionist approach inherent in most design guides, standards and regulations ignores many contextual issues that surround sustainable designing.” (Williamson et al. 2003, pp.7, x)

In architectural and design terms, the arrival of sustainability discourse has meant that green design or eco-building often becomes an exercise in the manufacture and use of new, supposedly eco-friendly materials, for example with high insulative properties. However, this reduces the building to its component parts, ignoring as well the energy used in creating those materials, and the holistic process and outcome of sustainable design. The difference between ‘green building’ and ‘low impact’ building it seems, can at least in part be described or may be evidenced in an aesthetic. As Dale points out:

“One is about reducing consumption through efficiency, and the other is about reducing consumption through modesty. And probably the majority of low impact buildings that have been have been worse insulated, say, than sort of ‘green buildings’ but also they are a lot smaller and they are more likely to heat themselves with firewood available freely next to them, rather than electricity through their ground source heat pump or something like that. Maybe that is one of the defining factors in the difference. Modesty in building materials as well, you know, building with what’s available rather than the state-of-the-art green product if you like…. There is a lot of understanding that improvements in efficiency don’t tend to reduce consumption in general. That’s quite well documented in general terms, for example through Jevon’s paradox. Generally it
frees up resources for people which they then use on consuming resources in a
different way…” (Simon Dale; author’s interview)

Due to the understanding of green building or eco-housing that is beginning to emerge
in the mainstream, one which is based on improving efficiency rather than reducing
consumption through modesty as Dale suggests, the regulatory system is also geared
towards assessing green building styles rather than low impact building styles and
there is generally a fundamental lack of understanding about how or why there should
in fact be a different way of assessing low impact building which takes a much more
holistic view rather than breaking the building down into component parts, figures and
numbers and assessing low impact building and living on the same terms as green
building. For example, Dale continues that:

“The size of the house never gets counted. Whether it’s 98% efficient and ten
times the floor area, or whether it’s 30% efficient but a tiny little hut. The tiny
little hut might consume the same resources or less.” (Simon Dale, author’s
interview)

Moreover, the inclusion of an embodied energy calculation on the two different
building styles would quickly make it apparent that any energy inefficiency in the low
impact style building is quickly outweighed by the low embodied energy involved in
the creation of that building, as opposed to the much higher embodied energy required
for the building of a more conventional green building.

The difference between the kind of building (and dwelling) being promoted by Dale
then from the way that ‘green building’ is practiced, can actually be traced to a
discourse of sustainable building. As Williamson et al note, the introduction of
concepts of ‘green’, ‘ecological’ and ‘environmental’ as labels into the architecture
field, are intended to draw attention to the relationship between people and nature,
however, this relationship is still held in the discourse as a kind of dualism or binary, a
mind-body separation, a self that is connected from the other of nature:

“The formation of these concepts... can, more or less, be traced to the early
1970s. Emerging from the same period, labels such as ‘low energy’, ‘solar’,
and ‘passive’ are used to denote approaches to designing concerned with the
concept of reducing reliance on fossil fuels... in general, the labels refer to a
particular strategy employed to achieve the conceptual outcome, and the
strategies that occur in a discourse must be understood as instances from a
range of theoretical possibilities. The promotion of a restricted range of
strategic options regulates the discourse and the ways of practicing the
discipline.” (Williamson et al. 2003, p.1)
In architecture then, as well as in the mainstream, the possibilities of thinking and talking about green building are limited through the promotion of a restricted range of options contained in the discourse of the discipline. This discourse is promoted and upheld in practice through systems like the building regulations system. The issue for building regulations with the alternative building styles stemmed, in large part, from the inability to comprehend and deal with materials which were unorthodox. Recycled glass, timber in the round, etc., were not components that were part of a list of tested and approved materials, and as a result the rationalist building regulations system had no way of understanding these buildings.

The deconstruction of Dale’s buildings into component parts was demonstrative of two very different ways of understanding, one of which was and is difficult to express in language and discourse precisely because of the limitations of that language and discourse. What does not fit into the rational, reductionist framework is relegated to the ‘irrational’ as rational language and discourse has no way of dealing with it. The aesthetic as a way of knowing or being is difficult or impossible to express in the language of the rational. This does not mean that it is irrational, but rather that it is ‘more than rational’. It is another layer of knowing and being. The aesthetic then, of a roundhouse, an earthship, a low impact building can contain a deliberate message about the relationship of human beings to their environments, but it is not a ‘self-other’ relationship, but a ‘wider sense of self’ relationship. This is not grasped through reductionist thinking.

Another such building is the wooden cruck-framed house built by the woodsman Ben Law and featured on Grand Designs. Time and again, the episode of Grand Designs depicting the building of this house is voted a favourite by viewers. What is it about this house and the people involved in it that is so delightful? I would venture that there is an ethos involved in such buildings that people fundamentally relate to. It is embodied in the aesthetic, a modesty that Dale mentions, a gentleness that comes with locally-sourced wood, a lack of concrete and destructive building practices and materials. Ben Law’s house, and the associated lifestyle he lives, very much appears as a part of the forest in which the humans are creatures taking what they need to survive and nurturing the surroundings for the benefit of themselves, other people, and other creatures, animal or plant. These are virtues which a great many people relate to,
appreciate, and even if they cannot articulate the reasons for it, find pleasure in seeing demonstrated and perhaps find hope for humanity in.

Pat Borer described in the aforementioned interview a feeling or atmosphere that was present in alternative buildings such as Tony Wrench’s roundhouse and other buildings of the ‘organic’ aesthetic. Borer ventures that the feeling one gets when inside such a building could be the result of a lack of VOCs, (Volatile Organic Compounds), such as may be found in paints and other products used in conventional building. This may be a factor, but it is equally possible to consider that it is much more than this, that there is a much deeper feeling (or affect) contained within such buildings, one which goes beyond individual components and is the result of the living ethos contained in the building, including its symbolic and actual relationship with the non-human, light and heat from the sun, air, wood, living plants inside and around the building, animals, organic materials, as well as the size and shape and inter-relatedness of the spaces.

Tony Wrench’s roundhouse is an intriguing space in this regard. My own experience of this space led me to speculate upon the reasons for my reaction in a research diary. I include an excerpt below in which I describe visiting for the first time. My reactions led me to question Tony and Faith about the building, and about living in it in an attempt to understand what it was about the space that gave it the kind of atmosphere it had.

“It takes a while to find Tony Wrench’s house, in spite of directions, and a SatNav. We drive past the entrance to the farm the first time round. Finally after asking a neighbour, the entrance is located, and there is just enough space to park the car by the side of the road, before donning wellies for the trek down the rough (very rough) track down to Brithdir Mawr. The ecological community is mainly set in old farm houses surrounding a courtyard. There is a large woodshed and outside two men are chopping wood. When asked, they direct us down a further path and along the edge of a field through a wooded area to an opening that leads to the roundhouse. The house is invisible, but there is a narrow path, that could be a sheep track but looks somehow more careful. We follow this and when we are about ten feet away from it we finally see the grassy dome of a roof, then following the path down to the right, finally the windowed front of the infamous roundhouse. Inside there is a porch, where muddy boots can be left before entering the living space. It’s a porch area big enough for various activities, such as packaging off bunches of dried herbs, which is what Faith is doing there the next time I visit.

After removing our boots, we enter the central living space. A cat is curled up, purring, by the pot-bellied wood stove. A kettle on top keeps water warm,
ready to be heated for tea. The floor of the central area is raised several inches from the ground on a platform, and is warm and dry, even though it is November and very cold and wet outside. The sofa and chairs are covered in comfortable sheep skins, soft and deep. We keep our woollen jumpers on, but it is cozy and warm, not too hot or cold. Around the central living space, which is clearly the social space, are a small kitchen, which also contains a bathtub, clearly multipurpose, everything from bathing to washing clothes to making wine. Grey water is released down a pipe into a reedbed system. There is a composting toilet outside the house, down a short path. The bed space is up a few steps, a platform along the back edge of the house, the sheltered side. Though it is late afternoon in the winter, it remains light enough from the light coming down the skylight for our purposes. Later in the evening a small low-watt bulb will be used to supplement the lighting. This is powered via solar from panels outside. There is no excess in this home, but it does not feel austere. There are selective luxuries, a huge double bass and several other instruments, a couple of Apple devices, including a phone that Tony checks his email on. The fruit wines and cordials, which you could imagine buying for a premium as some upscale organic shop, and some of the hand-turned gorgeous wooden bowls Tony makes, are stacked for use next to the kitchen area. Wonderful yet simple pleasures, so rare and precious for most.

There is an atmosphere too in the house, which is hard to describe. It is peaceful and calm certainly, but that could just be the tucked away setting, nestled into the corner of a field. But there’s something else as well, a kind of feeling of harmony, of being ‘in-tune’, a kind of soothing energy. In some ways, it makes me aware of my own internal discords, my nervousness about driving at night, the wooden bowls make me think of the way I hate the scraping of a metal knife on a ceramic plate. Something is very appealing about this simpler, gentler life. But, maybe the grass is just always greener on the other side of the fence. It certainly does seem green here!” (Excerpt from author’s research diary)

Although I was not expecting or looking for an ‘affective’ response to the building, my experience led me to wonder about what it was about this space that gave it that sense of harmony. On a later occasion, I pursued several related lines of questioning with Tony and Faith to try to understand this, including the shape and form of the space, materials, and various aspects of living in the space.
Whether intentional or not, the space seemed to contain a calming, welcoming energy, and the arrangement also seemed symbolic. Having the space for socializing at the centre of the building put that symbolically in the centre, representing harmony in relations, while the spaces around allowed for work, rest and individual activity, yet were not so cut off as to preclude interaction along those lines.

I asked Tony and Faith about whether they felt that the roundness of the building was somehow important. They mulled the idea over for a while and we tossed back and forth the idea of roundness and squareness as it related to people as well, how these shapes were associated with attitudes in the common vernacular. Tony said that he
didn’t think the shape mattered as such, it was just the easiest one to build. However, his motto is *sempre et funquet*, which he translates to ‘keep it funky’, something that he kept in mind during the design process, as he talks about in his book *Building a Low Impact Roundhouse* (2007), and which affected some design choices. The roundness then may not be necessarily an intentionally symbolic shape, although perhaps it is an unintentionally symbolic one, or an intentionally or unintentionally affective one. Both the book and discussions with Tony and Faith revealed however, a great deal of thought and intent evident in all aspects of life, and a deep connection with multiple aspects of the space and with beliefs or ideology. One example of this had to do with an attitude towards other creatures sharing their living space. The ceiling for instance, was providing a home to many a spider. Similarly, a plant had grown into the house and they had decided to leave it as long as it did not damage anything. These acts were part of a reconsideration of the self in relation to other beings.

Tony describes himself sometimes as a ‘voluntary peasant’, a long time experimenter with living in a sustainable, close-to-nature, peaceful way. He describes his way of living as living a question, trying to discover the extent to which it is possible and desirable to live in a low impact way in modern society. While he may not isolate the shape of his home as a significant factor, it seems clear to me that everything about the design, including just how integrated the building is with its surroundings, as well as the arrangement of internal space, seems to embody this kind of ethos.

In *Building a Low Impact Roundhouse*, there is an impression too that the processes of design and of making are very much integrated in a low-impact build. Much depends on the availability and skill of labour, so building has to be simple and with materials that can be worked with little machinery. Additionally, it depends largely on the availability of suitable, often reclaimed materials, for which the design may need to be modified to suit what’s available. Therefore, the design evolves with the making, so that once an action is taken, there is some time for observation, consideration of options, experimentation, and then creation before the cycle begins again, in an ongoing continuous loop. This is somewhat in contrast to more conventional architectural practice in which a design can be created, the materials all ordered, the labour employed and the process of making very much a process of putting the
elements together, with only minor modifications. This difference is still evident in the conventional green building sphere as opposed to the low impact building process.

Another point to note in terms of the design-making loop is the fact that many low impact dwellings are constructed using a combination of the ultimate dweller and the friends and relations of the dweller, but also often the labour of volunteers who come together to learn about low impact building and to share in the experience of the build. The volunteers bring varied skill and ability levels to the process. As they are not being paid, it is customary to provide them with food and a place to stay, even if that means a spot to camp in during the build. The involvement of volunteers means that a particular relationship is created, volunteers become involved because of the enjoyable experience of working together and helping build something, while perhaps learning some skills and making friends in the process. There is generally no exchange of money. This also means that the designer or builder has to relinquish or share to a certain extent responsibility for the outcome of the project. This is quite different to a conventional build in which professional builders do the building, usually using their own familiar methods and techniques therefore having control over the making, (as well as liability for issues) and the owner/designer sits back and holds power over the outcome through payment. In other words, there is a different set of power relations evident in conventional and alternative buildings.

Buildings are a form of expression. One way in which expressivism might be understood in buildings it through the ability to express power creatively, as Deutsch suggests human beings have a need to do:

“It seems that all of us need, and therefore oftentimes desperately seek, to be able to effect change, to control others and ourselves, to influence events, to acquire some degree of mastery over our lives; in short, to have power. Power takes many forms – from a crude display of physical force exercised against another, to a spontaneous expression of authoritative competency, such as is exhibited by a master artist…. We need then to distinguish broadly at least between coercive power and creative power. Coercive power demands the obedience of the other (be it person, event, situation) to one’s own will. It is ego-based. It assumes struggle, engagement, victory, or defeat. Creative power, on the other hand, seeks the realization of a harmony that is constituted in and through diverse and oftentimes otherwise conflicting elements. Creative power is an expression of freedom in action. It is exercised in celebration and in joy.” (Deutsch 1991, p.17)
The type of expression that Deutsch is referring to does not necessarily connote or entail any sort of communal involvement and can just as easily be the efforts of a single individual; Yet both the act of designing and the act of putting into effect that design, are expressions of creativity and of self. What could be more expressive of harmony than creative ideas brought to fruition through the voluntary cooperation of people? In this way, low impact building as a process is also a process of community-building, even if the people involved in the build are simply passing through. In fact, an interesting aspect of the engagement is that the volunteers will perhaps not ever call upon the person whose house they have helped build for a return favour. Instead, they can assume that should they wish to engage in such a project of their own, a group of people involved in the same wide network will become available to help. In this sense, the reciprocity of each favour is spread out, and each individual can contribute and reap the benefits of being part of the community without this being a more straight exchange between one person and another. As a whole then, this system of interaction ensures that mutual respect can be felt and that a sense of obligation is somewhat removed from the bargain.

The ideology and aesthetic of Tony Wrench’s building, along with others (there are many examples), inspire others to emulate the form, but also the practices of building. A key aspect of the practice as mentioned however, has to do with the fluidity of process, between idea and ‘praxis’. Materials, people, conditions, soil, water, rock, animal, vegetable, mineral, rain, wind, sun, heat, cold, etc., are not just backdrops but are active agents, and are treated as such. The designing, building, and dwelling processes are part of a web, a continuum, which is continually changing and evolving. Simon Dale for example notes that a building is not finished, it evolves and changes as it is lived in (Dale, author’s interview).

Much of this section has been devoted to a focus on architecture. However it should be noted that the same considerations apply to all of the activities of the Tir-y-Gafel eco-village, particularly the planting and growing, shaping, sign-making, track-building, as well as the activities that support these spatial elements. Without delving into all of these aspects here, it is sufficient at this stage to note that none of these things occur in isolation. The track, the signage, the planting, the mulching, the compost, all of these things are as much a part of the space as each other. The point that this chapter has sought to convey is that looking at the elements in isolation de-contextualises them to
the point of removing their meanings, symbolisms, and overlooking the dialectics between aesthetic and ideology, or representations of space, representational space and spatial practice (Lefebvre 1991).

In the next part of this chapter, some of these ideas are considered in light of a quite different space, that is the ideological and aesthetic spaces of the County Council, in particular as they relate to inhabitants. The intention is not to reduce the actions and activities of Council employees to a kind of environmental determinism. Rather it is to draw attention to the dialectic between the ideology of this institution, which could similarly be described as an institutional culture, and the aesthetic experience of working in that culture. Here again, the ideology and the aesthetic are seen to relate to each other and contribute to the continued production of space.

6.5 Frozen Trust in Abstract Systems: Aesthetics and Ideology in Local Council Buildings

While the architecture, building and unusual spaces of the eco-village are attractive and invite observation and contemplation, there are other spaces too in this case study that are significant, if only because of their stark contrast. I am making the suggestion in this chapter that our ways of thinking and being, and the spaces in which we spend our time are not unrelated. Considering this, the buildings and spaces in which planners work, the neutral corridors and cell-like rooms, also may be considered significant in a dialectical relationship with the activities that occur there.

For example, the Council building in which planners operate consists of numerous small square rooms, boxes if you like, usually decorated in drab, impersonal grayscale, with neutral carpet tiles and walls. It is difficult in some ways not to connect this to a pervasive way of thinking, one that limits the imaginative and innovative capacity of Council workers. It would be too simplistic to suggest a direct connection, however, there is perhaps some mileage in suggesting that this does

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11 Again, not to take this too far or suggest environmental determinism, but it is notable that Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority has an internal public space beautifully decorated with beautiful artwork including pictures from the local area, and a yellow room where meetings with members of the public can be held. Incidentally, it was the PCNPA planning department that was instrumental in the creation of Policy 52.
provide a particular cognitive framework or background. For example, consider the metaphor used by the Council planner in the following quote:

“You can see each policy document as another sort of wall to the cell that you've been hemmed into really, and uh, I guess, as a decision maker rather than sort of a policy maker, I'm sort of inside the box looking at all of these restrictions. I mean, we are allowed to go outside of that box but we haven't got that much freedom to do it, because we have got a plan-led system and the act says, you know, follow the policies that are in the plan, unless you can find something else of sufficient weight, and I guess anything can be a material consideration, but you've got to act rationally in terms of allocating your weight according to that. You know, there's got to be some proper planning purpose you know for that material consideration. You can't just say, 'oh because I felt so' and that's where I'm gonna put my weight.” (Pembrokeshire County Council planner, author’s interview)

Of course, as the interviewee acknowledges, their attitude has much to do with their position within the institutional system. They are seen as a decision maker rather than a policy maker, a distinction which results in the representation of the decision maker as somewhat powerless in the face of documents which make up the walls of a cell. At the same time however, the interviewee acknowledges the technical possibility of going outside of the boxes, although this is done with some trepidation, something that would be a bit daring, and would need to be justified by reference to the gray literature (coincidental terminology?). There is some suggestion within literature from environmental psychology and building research to suggest that the behaviour of building occupants is in fact impacted by the buildings. Most of this work focuses on stress, but several authors in this area have made linkages between various aspects of the work environment and feelings of helplessness and lack of control (Evans & McCoy 1998; Cohen et al. 1986). Other work considers the potential positive effects that buildings might have on the behaviour of workers (Heerwagen 2000).

In terms of conveying an ethos of sustainability as well, the aesthetics of the Council offices are again significant. The Welsh Government has recognized this and in building its three new office buildings (in Aberystwyth, Merthyr Tydfil and Llandudno Junction) they made an effort both to incorporate sustainability into the design through BREEAM certification and so on, but also made sure that the aesthetics also presented a message of sustainability, e.g. by including attractively designed small wind turbines, wooden cladding and careful landscaping (Phillips
2008). In contrast, Jane Davidson notes the lack of take-up of renewable energy opportunities by local councils in terms of their buildings:

“[L]ast year when the UK government released the restriction on local authorities selling renewable energy, I wrote to all the leaders of local authorities, all the cabinet members responsible for environment, copied it to the chief executives and the chief planning officers and the chief officers related to environment. And only one of the 22 local authorities in Wales did anything about it. And yet it was money! You know, because if they'd got in ahead of the change on the FITs [Feed in Tariffs] they would have had an income, off what they're doing. So actually there you had something that was good for the planet, and good for the pocket. In fact part of the reason that the FITs had to change was that it was too good for the pocket, you know? [laughing]... and yet they didn't take up the opportunity! And they've got their own borrowing powers, they could actually have borrowed to actually purchase whichever renewable energy source they might have wanted, whichever was appropriate for their type of buildings, and had time to pay it back. So I think there are constraints on that kind of imagination and innovation, really. And it would be very good to find out what they were. About whether or not it is just about bureaucracy, whether or not they are just pulled, as every decision becomes fought over one way or another. 'Cause they are! And the planning system just about more than anything, really.” (Jane Davidson, former Assembly Member, author’s interview)

Without reading too much into this example, there is certainly something interesting about the fact that only one out of 22 local authorities in Wales opted to go for some form of renewable energy source for their building(s), even though, as Jane Davidson points out, not only would this have not cost them, but it would have actually been more than cost effective. Of course, this research has not investigated the reasons for this lack of enthusiasm, and it would be facile to connect it simplistically to any kind of ideology or institutional culture, without further research. Instead, it is used here as an illustration perhaps of the lack of forward-thinking or enthusiasm for sustainable development that is observable among Welsh local authorities, the reasons for which are unknown, but may be speculated upon. Jane Davidson speculated on whether it was ‘just the bureaucracy’ and this seems in fact to be highly likely given the planner’s description of his work practices. It is conceivable that even in internal processes, the bureaucracy stifles creative forward-thinking.
Having considered briefly the aesthetics of the County Council building, and having briefly touched upon the possibility of an institutional culture or ideology that is not conducive to ‘thinking outside the box’, it is worth taking a step back to look in more detail at how the concept of ideology is applicable.

As used within the human geography lexicon, the concept of ideology can be traced back to French Enlightenment ideas, wherein it was used to “describe and to recommend a new, rigorous ‘science of ideas’ which, ‘by overcoming religious and metaphysical prejudices, may serve as a new basis for public education’” (Gregory 2000, p.369). Yet the common understanding of ideology has in fact changed so that it is not seen as being in opposition to religious and metaphysical prejudices per se, but instead is used as a term to denote any system of ideas that shapes the worldview of an individual, whether these be religious, political, scientific, or anything else. Both political, or policy sets of ideas, and scientific sets of ideas can therefore be seen as ‘ideologies’. In this way scientific rationalism too can be seen as an ideology (Harvey 1974, p.256). Ideology as a concept has seemingly been replaced more recently with the interest in discourse, and its production of social reality through the embedded power relations within it (Eagleton 1991). However, I would argue that this remains a useful concept particularly when considered in a dialectic with aesthetics. Ideology seen in this way is produced not only through discourse and the related power relations, but also through aesthetic practices and experiences.

Following on from the notion of ideology itself as something fluid, created through the linguistic and other communicative actions and environments in which people find themselves, the ideology of ‘rationalism’ as it pertains to governance actors and processes can also be seen in this light. In Giddens’ view, such ‘trust in abstract systems’ precludes thinking about and questioning assumptions. However the systems themselves are not static and are open to disruption:

"Trust in abstract systems is bound up with collective lifestyle patterns, themselves subject to change... In modern societies, lifestyle choices are both constitutive of daily life and geared to abstract systems. There is a fundamental sense in which the whole institutional apparatus of modernity... depends upon potentially volatile mechanisms of trust. The compulsive character of modernity remains largely hidden from view so long as the Promethean impulse holds sway, especially when it is backed by the pre-eminent authority of science. When these factors are placed in question, however, as it happening today, the coincidence of lifestyle patterns and
global processes of social reproduction come under strain. Alterations in lifestyle practices can then become deeply subversive of core abstract systems. For instance, a general move away from consumerism in modern economies would have massive implications for contemporary economic institutions.” (Giddens 1994, p.90)

Giddens goes on to note that in the absence of disruption to the abstract systems, or ideologies, that people live their lives by, trust becomes in a sense frozen and the actions of actors are not necessarily then based upon a novel re-engagement with the abstract systems in light of alternatives.

"Compulsiveness... is frozen trust, commitment which has no object but is self-perpetuating.... A world of abstract systems, and potentially open lifestyle choices... demands active engagement. Trust... is invested in the light of the selection of alternatives. When such alternatives become filtered out by unexplicated commitments - compulsions - trust devolves into simple repetitive urgency. Frozen trust blocks re-engagement with the abstract systems that have come to dominate the content of day-to-day life." (Giddens 1994, p.91)

The planning system runs to a certain extent, as might any bureaucracy on frozen trust in abstract systems. One such system is the divide between the urban and the rural, and the sense that the planning system is there in a large part in order to protect the rural. The planner again:

“T’ve been in planning for getting on for twenty five years as a practitioner and I think the, the rule that I had as a planner, probably ten fifteen years ago, you almost felt that you were protecting the countryside. The decisions you were making were helping the protection of the countryside from inappropriate development. And I guess we were doing that mostly from the point of view of protecting the visual character of the countryside, you know, preventing urban sprawl, it was all about, you know it's a green and pleasant land, it's an attractive countryside, and what we don't want is houses, dotted here there and everywhere, and um, the work that I did when I was working in England in two authorities which had greenbelt land, we very much saw greenbelt as a way of constraining conurbations and so we didn't want development that was going to allow those conurbations to extend any further. Um, and the justification for that I guess, there's the issue that's been running at Dale Farm at the moment…” (Pembrokeshire County Council Planner, Author’s

12 Dale Farm refers to the controversial extension of a designated gypsy and traveller site into an area of ‘greenbelt land’(Barkham 2011). It resulted in the dramatic eviction of gypsy and traveller families, costing the council millions. Besides the controversy related to allegations of discrimination, the site was deemed controversial because though greenbelt it was mainly covered in hardcore and had been in mixed use (none of which was agricultural for some forty years. Nevertheless in the eyes of
There are several interesting points about this understanding. One is the use of the term ‘rule’, which suggests a simplified understanding of the purpose. ‘Protecting’ the countryside is something that is done, against the threat of ‘inappropriate’ development. However, as for what that means, it seems to be reduced simply to ‘what we don’t want’ which is ‘houses dotted here there and everywhere’. These ideas, that there are rules, appropriate and inappropriate development and that the ‘countryside’ was in need of protection from the latter are deeply ingrained in planning thinking. They represent however, simplified and reductionist ideas of what were part of what were in fact far more utopian ideas.

The greenbelt idea or ideology in British planning can be traced back to the 1940s and the early emergence of planning. Much has been written on the greenbelt phenomena (Amati 2008; Gant et al. 2011), and there are many debates to be had around this idea. As noted in the literature chapter, the idea was an off-shoot of the far more holistic and utopian ideals of Ebenezer Howard in Garden Cities. Howard’s utopian ideas were incorporated into a ‘professionalised’ bureaucratic system and were reduced to certain component parts. What remains of the Garden City idea is a crude distinction between ‘city’ and ‘country’ which almost implicitly contains the idea of ‘human’ and ‘nature’. It is against this idea that many low impact developers have had to argue, pointing out that in fact the city can be just as, if not more, supportive of ‘nature’ as can the countryside. If the measure used for example, is biodiversity, many urban areas are more biodiverse than ‘the countryside’, as a result of farming practices that are monocultural, intensive and soil denuding, and high in use extensive herbicides and pesticides. Conversely, if the countryside needs protecting, it is more from the agricultural practices that are damaging it than any kind of human habitation.

Drawing on Lefebvre’s (1991) model of the production of space, Halfacree (2007) unpicks the dominant assumptions or ideologies that relate to rural space in the UK, and how these are challenged by alternatives in the form of the ‘radical’ rural spaces produced by low impact developers. Based on the idea that space is produced through the interactions between ‘representations of space’, ‘spatial practices’ and planners it represented encroachment of the urban into the rural by virtue of the fact that it was greenbelt designated land.
‘representational spaces’ à la Lefebvre, Halfacree outlines firstly, a twin set of conceptions of the rural emerging in the post-WWII years, that of productivism on the one hand, with the rural reduced to a place for industrialized agriculture, and of pastoralism, or an idealised notion of the rural as a place of quaintness and community in which life was slower and somehow better (the ‘rural idyll’). Out of these ideas, have emerged various notions of the postproductivist rural landscape. On this Halfacree speculates further, classifying a number of different ‘species’ of postproductivist rural space. In Halfacree’s analysis, the postproductivist rural may be ‘super-productivist’ ‘consuming idylls’ ‘effaced rurality’ or ‘radical ruralities’. Presumably each of these post-productivist space types can and will co-exist since space is produced through the thoughts and actions of individuals and groups and will therefore always be diverse. However, the model also involves making a distinction between the mainstream and the alternative, or in Lefebvrian language, the first three species of space continue to represent ‘abstract’ space, or space produced by dominant capitalism, whereas the latter presents a challenge to it. This is an important distinction because it sets the latter definition in opposition to a fundamental and underriding ideology upon which conceptions of the rural, and by extension, a fundamental ideology of planning, are based.

Halfacree’s argument suggests, as does this research, the potential for a set of ‘lifestyle practices’ to be ‘deeply subversive of core abstract systems’ (Giddens 1994). However, while Halfacree centres this possibility around conceptions of rural space, I would argue that this the core abstract system that these actions have the potential to disrupt include the division between urban and rural in the first place, and duality, division and compartmentalisation in the second place. However, whilst the aesthetics and ideologies embodied by the low impact/alternative movement have the potential to do this, it is worth recognizing what they are up against.

A significant point about the institutional culture based on reductionism, boxes/cells and the lack of space for free thinking, along with the frozen trust in abstract systems is that it is difficult for ideas like ‘sustainable development’ which have been described as holistic ideas to permeate this environment. This inability to comprehend sustainable development as a holistic idea, not something related to individual buildings, or even to ‘lifestyles’ or individual practices, but to something more woven
in and interconnected is potentially a factor in the lack of enthusiasm, creativity and engagement with the concept on the part of planners. The County Council’s response to the Lammas application was illustrative of this. The application was refused multiple times before being accepted by a Planning Inspector. On being questioned on why the County Council had been (and continues to be) so ambivalent, Simon Dale for example, noted that:

“My main impression, and I might well be wrong, but my main impression was just that the sort of pretext for doing this sort of thing was way outside their [local councillors]... um, worldview, if you like. Even climate change, you know, or the need to change the way we do farming, were outside their idea[l?] and the idea that we'd want to live lives which were really hard work and exist on next to no money just seemed, probably seemed completely implausible and that we must certainly be on the blag and we were wanting to do something much less respectful once we actually got the permission” (Simon Dale, author’s interview)

While many residents of Tir-y-Gafel and other members of Lammas and visitors to the site often talked about the seriousness of environmental issues, when it came to planners, this was seen rather more as an idea that was being imposed upon them from outside/above, alongside all the many other ideas that were being imposed upon them. A local planner on being questioned about what sustainability meant to them and whether it was an important issue when it came to planning decisions seemed to struggle a bit to make the concept meaningful:

“I've yes, I'm not sure where I've seen this definition of sustainability but my understanding of it is that it is to allow uh, the development aspirations of current generations without uh, reducing or impacting on the development aspirations of future generations, and so it's that notion that you know, there's a finite amount of resources, and we need to manage those responsibly, so that decisions that we're making are not prejudicing the development aspirations of future generations. Now, buh-- [pause - struggling] I can understand what that means, but it depends how far we're taking that into the future, because I think my view is that you can't have any sort of development aspirations without prejudicing the aspirations of future generations to some degree.” (Pembrokeshire County Council Planner, author’s interview)

In expanding on this thought, considering the future of humanity, the same planner somewhat sheepishly relates this notion to cosmology, and grapples with a wider worldview.
“I guess it's about scale and degree isn't it. You know I've, [half laugh] I sometimes think about cosmology and you know, our place in the universe really [laughing] and in the long run, there won't be a planet earth, so it's not a question of when planet earth dies, well it's not a question of if, it's a question of when really. Um, so um on that millions of years billions of years timescale, you think, well why are we so concerned with sustainability? But you know the rational view is that you know, with climate change, with the use of fossil fuels, it's clear that the rate at which we've been developing and using those resources is going to have severe, you know, implications for development, and maybe it's only three or four generations forward, so, I think, I can understand where sustainability's come from. I suppose the sustainability argument is being applied across the board, and should it be applied across the board? You know it's all right to require people in metropolitan areas to use public transport because those facilities exist, and you know you probably have more accessibility in a metropolitan area without a car than you do with a car. You come to West Wales and you haven't got the public transport alternative, so should we have the same, you know, sustainability appraisals as you do in a metropolitan area. So I think that's probably something that needs to be looked at.” (Pembrokeshire County Council Planner, author’s interview)

There is a distinct sense in the planner’s comments that he is struggling to internalize or incorporate the discourse of sustainability as it might relate to his own position both as an individual and as a decision maker. Attempting to treat sustainability as either one specific thing that can be placed in a box, or even as an abstract system does not really work. The ability to engage with the concept of sustainable development in a way requires thinking outside the box in ways which would probably not be seen as ‘appropriate’ as they cannot be backed up with specifics or details.

6.6 IDEOLOGY, RATIONALITY, AND BUILDING REGULATIONS

Another indication of a clash of ideologies came in the form of the interactions with the building regulations department once planning permission had been granted and people had move onto the Lammas site (to later be named Tir y Gafel) and begun building their homes. After having finally obtained planning permission, making the move onto the site (essentially a windy former sheep farm), started the process of setting up the bases for land-based activities, and managing to build homes for their families, the LI developers who had managed to achieve this all in two years found themselves faced with building regulations notices. The notices were in many ways
bizarre. For example, they required that residents have indoor toilets, or mains connected fire alarms. In the latter case, this was in direct conflict with the planning permission, which required the eco-village to remain off-grid! The notices were accompanied by court summons and threats of demolition. The various households who had been served notices of violations adopted very different positions in responding.

Earlier in the chapter, I discussed and compared Paul Wimbush’s more conventional and angular building with Simon Dale’s more rounded, irregular, organically-shaped building. In the dispute around building regulations, Wimbush and Dale’s attitudes also differed in a similar way to their building styles. While Wimbush went about systematically gathering the data required to convince the building regulators, including purchasing multiple damp monitors, calling in engineers, and getting each point ticked off the list one by one, Simon Dale (who incidentally has a Master’s degree in physics), wrote an emotive document arguing that low impact developments should be exempted or at least have special and different regulations applied to them than conventional buildings, arguing that this was fundamentally a different style of living and that the imposition of the itemised regulations did not make sense in this context.

The argument was that the house (and its inhabitants and lifestyle) should be viewed as an interconnected system, a complex whole, rather than each part being considered separately. Furthermore they argued that producing the kinds of information that the building regulations required limited the types of materials that future LID builders could use (for instance precluding the use of salvaged panes of glass since it was impossible to certify these); the types of techniques they could use (since the building regulations were not set up for instance to deal with reciprocal-framed roofs); and indeed whether they could build at all given the added expense of these two factors coupled with the expense of the specialists required to sign off on the various items. The different approaches to this issue of evidence-provision in the face of building regulations is in a way symbolic of the different understandings, between the rational, modernist approach of the state, to which Wimbush adapted and responded in kind, and the radical alternative end of the spectrum, which requested that there be space for creativity and diversity, trust and personal responsibility.
The literature on sustainable architecture, much like the literature on planning theory, also involves arguments around the need to move beyond the rationalist framework and the bias towards modernism in style which is prevalent even among purportedly ‘green’ builders. For example, Williamson et al note that:

“In societies of European descent or influence three trademarks, dualism, reductionism and positivism, pervade modern living… [D]ualism expresses a distinction between body and mind, between matter and spirit, and between reason and emotion… Cartesian dualism effectively sets humans apart from nature, but also an individual self apart from ‘the other’ of everything outside the self. Conventionally, responsibility for ‘the other’ is dealt with by articulating codes of appropriate behaviour.” (Williamson et al., 2003, p. 7)

They go on to describe how these tendencies towards dualism, reductionism and positivism impact upon our understandings of sustainable architecture, such that it is reduced to component parts, decontextualized, and depersonalised. Although this call exists academically however, there appears to remain a strong divide between ‘green builders’ and low impact developers such as Simon Dale. The former appear to be attracted by a kind of ecological modernization view (Hajer 1995), jumping at new technological and market driven solutions, whereas the latter embrace an ethics of
using available materials, low tech methods and are from the school of thought that values a strong connection between ethical values, space, and building.

Alongside the dominant or mainstream approaches in architecture, the institutional settings of planning (and associated policy areas such as building regulation), also appear to continue to be quite modernist in character. Indeed, it is possible to see alternative types of knowledge (for example, the intuitive or emotive) as deeply unsettling to those accustomed to working within this system. This could be interpreted as a kind of ‘cartesian anxiety’ (Bernstein 1983) existing within the system. In spite of the academic recognition that knowledge with the planning system is socially constructed and produced via networks of social relations (Rydin, 2007, p.52), there remains a sense within the planning system that there should ultimately be a correct answer based on the evidence, and that the evidence should be based not only upon reason but upon rationality (used in a modernist sense).

In the case of building regulations, the system is compartmentalised and reduced to its component parts. This makes it effective for a kind of putting together in different ways of the same parts. It is a system designed with a building industry in mind, which has a particular way of doing things. The argument being put forth by Dale and Saville was therefore, that this system was not fit for purpose for the kind of building and life they were trying to produce, not because it was impossible to apply necessarily, but because of its connotations, its relegation of buildings and dwelling to a set of component parts. In the end, the regulators won this battle, with few compromises, and the situation remains that building regulations apply in the same way to both low impact and conventional buildings. Dale and Saville’s points about thinking about the building and the lifestyles of inhabitants holistically seems to have largely fallen on deaf ears, either through being incomprehensible to the system, or because there was indeed a play of power involved in aiming to regularise and control low impact building.

Although the only examples given here are two takes on the situation, three other families were also subjected to the building regulations, and responded in different ways depending on their level of respect for the system as opposed to their own judgement and knowledge. The variety of reactions caused some degree of rift among
the community with some feeling that a stand should have been taken, as a group, on the matter, while others approached it independently.

6.7 Reflections

This chapter has been a preliminary exploration into an idea that has serious implications not only for how LID is viewed but also how a transition to sustainable development might be envisaged. There is an attempt to draw out the politics involved in building in the context of Lammas. There are several aspects that emerge as important. Firstly, attention is drawn to the tension between a rationalist mode of thinking in building or a deeply ecological or very low impact one. In the case of the latter, Simon Dale, Tony Wrench, and others who have adopted a very low impact style, build homes for a tiny fraction of the cost of building a conventional home or even a conventionally Styled small eco-home like Paul Wimbush’s. The process of building is also significant, with materials salvaged, and family and friends involved in the process to the extent that it is a collective or communal effort. Much more could be said about this process, including the multi-sensory aspects of it, the haptic, the olfactory, the aural. Much more could be said too about the sensation of being inside a building like this and the affective environment therein as well as the dialectic between the bodies of people and the space. This has necessarily only been a brief foray into this area, but a fruitful one in terms of opening up some new lines of inquiry.

The work suggests, following others such as Kraftl & Adey, that it is important to consider the affective qualities of buildings as well as their symbolic and representational aspects. In response to Lees’ call for architectural geographies that retain a critical concern with politics but embed consideration of the bodily, sensuous and processual, I suggest that there is potential in returning to Lefebvre’s trialectic model and considering the inter-relationships between representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices. In this case study, the model provides insights into both the spaces of the mainstream and the spaces of the alternative. Halfacree’s analysis of rural space draws attention to the potential production of different kinds of rural space, including alternative rural space. This chapter has
sought to expand upon this in the context of physical buildings and the important role they play in embodying these different ideologies.

Some exploration is made into the affective environment of an eco-home, in this case Tony Wrench’s roundhouse. The shapes and forms of this home not only stem from a particular ecological and social ethos, but they also then shape the behaviour of occupants of the building, furthering this ethos through embodied action. This is a significant point since it suggests that there is a fundamental difference between building and living in a low impact eco-home compared to attempting to live a low impact lifestyle in an existing old stone farmhouse (as in the case of Brithdir Mawr) or in a conventional home in a town or village, which is where the planners are in general being pressured to suggest people live instead of building new homes in the countryside. The politics of affect in this case then are related to the politics of sustainable development.

The relationship between aesthetics and ideology is seen as a dialectic, with ecological buildings not as objects but as parts of processes of dwelling, being and thinking. As such, they are both representative and affective, and play a role in the promotion of a specific aesthetic-ideology. This suggests that there is much more to such ‘experiments’ and the potential reduction of the experiment to a set of technologies, building materials, or techniques, that could be taken out of context and put into other contexts without being understood as a complete and evolving system.

In the case of Lammas and Tir-y-Gafel, Paul Wimbush’s conventionally-styled building is the physical presence of an ideology, which is ‘mainstreaming the alternative’. It aims to speak to an ideology of ‘rationalism’ and to allay fears about the ‘irrational’ and irregular.

Likewise, a relationship is seen between the spaces, physical and affective as well as institutionalised and bureaucratic of County Council planners. This is viewed as a space of compartmentalisation and forced neutrality, and feigned objectivity. In a sense, it is a dehumanizing space and process. Individuals within this space struggle not only to think and act outside prescribed boxes, but even to act creatively within them! This is not to say that creativity and innovation are not possible within these environments, as clearly there are plenty of possibilities for such. However these are not spaces in which creativity, innovation, openness and self-expression are
encouraged. A significant aspect of ‘thinking’ is lost in such environments, the kind of thinking that might be associated with the aesthetic. In terms of ideology expressed in the aesthetic of such places, rationalism is upheld as an ideal. Combined with the neutering of affective, aesthetic, moral or emotional response, the compartmentalisation of knowledge into reductionist boxes, and the necessitation for frozen trust in abstract systems brought on by the inability (lack of space) to engage with those abstract systems, means that it is very difficult to imagine utopian, and holistic ideas, such as that of sustainable development, permeating into this environment.

Planning and associated policies are based on compartmentalising and on ‘specialist’ knowledge. This is a deep-seated issue embedded into the organizational culture which, it could be argued, limits the possibilities for individual creativity, innovation, and imagination. In other words, thinking outside the box becomes much harder when your physical and symbolic world are both composed of sets of boxes. Additionally, the pressure upon actors within this system to set aside any and all personal opinions, histories, personality, and emotion means that the objects dealt with are deliberately made abstract. The human, the natural, the moral, are all removed from the argument. Policy makers and policy enactors claim or strive towards rational modern neutrality. The problem with this is that it denies any other way of understanding the world, and the importance that may be contained within that. The interface at which the mainstream world of policy begins to deal with the alternative world of ‘low impact development’ is one which is faced with this challenge of understanding.

As Gidden’s notes however, ‘alterations in lifestyle practices can become deeply subversive of core abstract systems’, and in this sense the aesthetic and ideological of the Lammas, the low impact and alternative movement are challenging some of these deep-seated ideas. Finally, a question that arises is to what extent can low impact building or eco-building more generally be seen in Ranciere’s terms as a re-partition of the sensible? The proliferation of the images of low impact eco-homes via the Internet, and the pressure on the planning and building regulations system to find ways of accommodating them suggest that the voices of low impact builders are being heard as rational arguments. However, as illustrated by the difficulties with building regulations and the persistence of the rationalist, reductionist model, there is perhaps some way to go.
7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 GOVERNANCE AND TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: MAINSTREAMING THE ALTERNATIVE?

The core argument of this research has been that ‘governance for sustainable development’ does open up opportunities for political engagement, a still contentious claim within the governance literature. However, in order to get a clearer picture of governance for sustainable development academic research needs to break away from a perspective on governance that centres on ‘the state’ and looks only at processes and programs initiated by the state where other actors have been invited to participate. While these are valuable to look at they inevitably suffer from the tautological problem of remaining ‘in the shadow of hierarchy’ (Jessop 2003; Whitehead 2003). If we begin instead by looking at what is often termed ‘niche’ or ‘grassroots’ (Seyfang & Haxeltine 2012; Kemp et al. 1998; Smith 2007) but rather than regarding these as peculiarities regard them as actors initiating processes of governance for sustainable development we begin to shape new academic perspectives. Altering this perspective is the first step towards truly embracing and accepting what has been termed ‘radical’ sustainability (Pickerill & Maxey 2012; Pickerill & Maxey 2009a). This both reanimates the governance for sustainable discourses and politicises the transitions management literatures.

From this perspective, the question of participation in governance is altered. Rather than looking at how the state can engage other actors, this perspective looks at how other actors can engage the state, and what barriers of communication and understanding have to be overcome in order to do this.

Viewing examples such as this case study as processes of governance for sustainability also has the effect of problematizing assumptions about power and its relationship to the state. While a disproportionate level of certain kinds of power (coercive, infrastructural…) may be within the remit of the state, as well as access to resources of power such as the economic and legislative, non-state actors potentially have access to substantial facilitative, networked, associational power. In addition, the
ability to engage in ‘rational’ discourses and to tap into networks of knowledge production also provides power within a democratic environment, potentially enabling changes in governmental policies. The research offers interesting findings in relation to the complex roles and types of knowledge within such a process, potentially subverting the idea that even knowledge used in a classic governmentality sense – i.e. targets, monitoring data, and reduction of aspects of life to numerical values – can be absorbed into processes in a way that is empowering. As Tao (formerly Paul) Wimbush notes in a recent film clip made in 2014:

“In terms of planning, it hardly enters my consciousness now really. We did our fourth year annual monitoring report last Spring and we are on track to exceed all of the planning targets, and yeah, that's the end of that. The planning system will continue to monitor us, monitor our performance, indefinitely, forever. Just checking that we're doing what we said we're gonna do. And that's fine. From my perspective that's quite useful. Because it requires us to produce annual reports and they provide a really valuable resource for academia to evaluate the productivity of projects like this compared to conventional agriculture and that helps reinforce our premise that human beings can live differently on the earth in a way that is beautiful and productive and not exploiting the animal kingdom or the plant kingdom.” (Iles 2014)

The argument made by this research is therefore not that there is a fundamental difference in terms of what types of knowledge are valued by the state (or the mainstream) and the alternative, but that what matters is how that information is shared and used. Lammas has democratised knowledge within its processes by sharing it in an easily accessible way on the Lammas website, and inviting interpretation. This is a continued means of harnessing the potential associational power of knowledge networks.

Adopting a methodological approach based on Harvey’s principles of dialectics and Lefebvre’s Production of Space allowed an exploration of the case that balanced structure and agency, continually considering the processes through which representations of space, spatial practices and representational spaces are in dialectic (or trialectic) relation with each other (Soja 1996). Moreover the methodology builds on Halfacree’s use of it by considering the multiplicity even within what might be called the ‘radical rural’ (Halfacree 2007), as well as within the ‘state’.

The thesis is an exploration of what Beck might call the ‘sub-political’ – though arguably the distinction between political and sub-political is less useful if we
consider the governance of sustainable development to be something stemming from ‘sub-politics’. In this respect the thesis explores multiple spatialities of politics. These include the material spaces of occupation and direct action, the spaces of rational argumentation including policy consultations, and the spaces of networked knowledge and facilitative power. The thesis also explores the power and politics of buildings through attending to the dialectic between the representational and the spatial practices of buildings.

A core underlying concern of this thesis has been around what it might mean to make a transition to sustainable development. If the process of governance for sustainable development is, as Meadowcroft (2007) suggests, a political process in which people negotiate and imagine, discuss and reimagine possible futures, what are the conditions that make those imaginings possible? If we look at ‘grassroots sustainability initiatives’ as niche projects, are we attending sufficiently, as Meadowcroft in a different paper warns, to the politics of such projects (2011)?

These questions accord with an integral debate within human geography regarding emancipatory politics. Critical geography has long drawn on the Marxist tradition for its critical analysis, and I would argue that there is much within the huge volume of Marxist-inspired work that still provides one of the best starting points for understanding the destructive forces of capitalism in social and environmental terms. However, just as the state and government has changed form and new modes and technologies of governance prevail, so too do the forms of organised resistance. The suggestion then is that recent re-engagements with anarchist geographies may provide ways of looking at the disparate, dispersed, fluid forms of both governance and resistance (and governance within resistance) that characterise the contemporary era (Springer et al. 2012; Springer 2013).

In fact, even staunch Marxists such as Harvey recognize that Marxist thinking is in need of an update (Laughland & Maynard 2012), considering that the divide between bourgeois and ‘working class’ is no longer as meaningful as it once was, at least not in many contemporary contexts, and though there remains a distinction between privileged and under-privileged, there is little to unite all those who might be in the latter category. And without unity, a systematic attack on a system is far less feasible than it ever was. Moreover, as the commentators on anarchism point out, Marxist
perspectives often suffer from the desire to replace one hegemonic system with another (Springer 2013). Ultimately the fact that the new system might be more just or fair does not wholly compensate for the continuation of hegemony. Anarchist perspectives on the other hand suggest a different pattern of governing, involving self-organizing groups that do not, as in the Marxist perspective necessarily need to unite against a common enemy that requires overthrowing, but instead operate in a non-hierarchical fashion in various webs of interaction.

Indeed, Marxists and others alike are beginning to consider the small scale, diverse approaches to change as cumulatively more effective and moreover more feasible than top-down regime change. Andy Merrifield, in Magical Marxism begins by describing a kind of quiet movement that he noticed when he moved to Auvergne in France, following in the footsteps of Guy Debord:

“All around me the, often hidden away in small hamlets and tiny communities, were and are groups of people who’ve constructed active and passive fortresses for themselves, and who are creating whole new collective defense systems against spectacular society and its culture of consumption. And from these outposts, from these ‘new undergrounds,’ these ‘new reserves,’ they’re sometimes launching frontal attacks on this degenerative system…[P]eople are coming together...in their desire to create new practical concepts about how to live and function in our neo-Dark Age. We’re glimpsing... ‘new islands of safety where history can be remembered and the human being can continue to dream and function.’ …where people are struggling to affirm terra novas and new magical geographies of the imagination, new islands of safety inspired by dream, by the normative desire to do something more autonomous, something more meaningful in our own neo-Dark Age.” (Merrifield 2011, p.xv)

However, Merrifield himself notes that his book and even its title will be contentious among Marxist and other radical scholars. Whether or not these small, diverse, dispersed and often quiet rather than confrontational actions could collectively sum up to larger-scale change, or regime change to use the transitions literature term, is a question that divides.

In Harvey’s most recent book, buoyed perhaps by the recent springing up of voices and movements of dissent in pockets around the world, there seems to be recognition that in the diversity itself, regardless of whether all the disparate movements unite together for revolution, there is the potential for change:

“Lefebvre’s concept of heterotopias (radically different from that of Foucault) delineates liminal social spaces of possibility where “something different” is not only possible, but foundational for the defining of revolutionary
trajectories. This “something different” does not necessarily arise out of a conscious plan, but more simply out of what people do, feel, sense, and come to articulate as they seek meaning in their daily lives. Such practices create heterotopic spaces all over the place. We do not have to wait upon the grand revolution to constitute such spaces. Lefebvre’s theory of a revolutionary movement is the other way round: the spontaneous coming together in a moment of “irruption,” when disparate heterotopic groups suddenly see, if only for a fleeting moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically different.” (Harvey 2012, p.xvii)

However, although this seems a modified version of the kind of revolution normally part of the Marxist thinking, there is still an implication that the change needs to happen on a grand scale simultaneously, and indeed, many environmentalists as well as advocates of social justice would agree.

There are parallels to be drawn between the Marxist vs. anarchist geography camps, and the different perspectives of past (and possibly current) ‘intentional communities’. Michael Cummings for example (Cummings 1987) makes the distinction between radicals and communalists, with the former aiming to transform society as a whole, and the latter aiming to create examples ‘microcosms that society can use as laboratories to learn from and to modify and use their principles.’ (Greenleaf 2002, p.20). Both groups want change but:

“radicals think communalists’ fatal flaw is narrowness of scope and perspective... [while] communitarians fault radicals for alienating everyone, and doubt the purity of their motives, suspecting that radicals are more into power for its own sake than for the changes any power might bring.” (Greenleaf 2002, p.20)

As it happens, critical geographers and those who start intentional communities have the same debates and divisions.

I found such criticisms echoed often when I spoke to people about my research. The reaction of many was that this was of too small a scale to make a difference or that due to being relatively non-disruptive that such activities would not really engender revolutionary change in the over-arching hegemonic system. This is perhaps what Swyngedouw, drawing on Ranciere might say: that it does not fundamentally change or redistribute the sensibilities, particularly in this case where LID is – intentionally on the part of the LIDers I would hasten to interject – absorbed into the mainstream system of government. I think this would be too simplistic a reading however and am inclined to see the LID movement and its achievements as a sophisticated politics of
resistance built on the creative and associational power of what Beck might call ‘sub-political’ groups (Beck 1994).

In response to a critique that would seek to interpret this case instead as a form of governmentality I would suggest that such a reading would be disempowering of those engaged in these activities. Far from serving the purpose of a critical, emancipatory human geography, it would be actively re-interpreting the LID movement in a way that robbed it of its agency and power. Besides lacking the desire to do that, my research simply did not suggest that this was the case. It would be very hard to argue that in some way government was responsible for producing the kinds of internal paradigms that lead people to pursue low impact lifestyles. Indeed, these projects have emerged from a long history of what has been called ‘counterculture’ (Roszak 1969). There is a legacy spanning decades of activities emerging from the alternative world that has been in various ways disruptive to governmental forms of control. And indeed, as a wider movement, such disruptive activities stemming from the alternative world continue. In Wales for instance, Tipi Valley, established in the 1970s, resisted the efforts of the planning department to regulate it until only very recently, by continually moving the dwelling structures.

As Beck notes, the placing of the environment onto the agenda at a global level and every other level was not the result of the farsightedness of political leaders or industry, it was the result of disparate small groups of people pursuing varied goals with a vague sense of what is right. Lammas and the fraction of the LID movement that is aiming to go through the planning system in this new way, through discussion and engagement with the planning system and other state actors in an attempt to work with these actors, represent one part of a disparate movement. The collective power of this movement arguably lies in precisely its diverse, fluid and responsive nature, as well as in its access to networks of association and the ability to engage in rational argument. This chimes with Hetherington’s attempts to characterise the alternative, finding that neither the alternative nor the mainstream are inextricable and clearly identifiable:

“As specific, identifiable groups… they are often individually short-lived, fluid in composition and rather ephemeral in a networked, dispersed sort of way... Groups emerge and develop as nodes within wider, more diffuse networks of supporters and become the source of a locally situated set of identity politics and lifestyle practices... [I]t is difficult to continue to speak of this diffused and
dispersed cultural assemblage in simple terms like counter-culture. While a certain degree of opposition to the values of society might remain, it is now less easy to identify what the mainstream is.” (Hetherington 1998, p.3)

This continuum is precisely what the founders of Lammas were aiming to tap into. As Tao Wimbush put it when I first interviewed him about the project, on my suggestion that it seemed like a half-way point between the mainstream and the alternative:

“[That has been a] very deliberate thing on my part. I mean, my background is fairly radical. Ten years I was completely outside of mainstream society, no electricity, no bank account, completely off grid... But this project from the outset, was designed to provide an attractive, affordable, realistic, achievable, exit route from mainstream society, designed to provide those people willing to take their heads out of the sand, to provide solutions, so that they could be self-reliant in terms of energy, food, water, and basic, systems. And that's why the basic premise of the planning policy revolves around families' ability to meet their minimum household needs from their plot. So that's very much the angle that we're coming from, that's very much why we've gone this way about it, that's why I built this building first on our plot, because this is the most conventional-looking building and the most easily related to, from the mainstream world.” (Wimbush 2011, author’s interview)

Over the last five years since Lammas gained planning permission tens of thousands of people have encountered the project, either through the weekly visiting days in the summer, through courses and events, through volunteering or through the Internet in various ways. Several new LID projects have emerged in Wales drawing on the One Planet Development policy, with one gaining planning permission next to Lammas very recently. And a One Planet Council has emerged to help people go through the process (One Planet Council n.d.). The website currently lists four OPD applications that have been approved and four in process. There are more in development stages.

As testimony to the fact that the mainstreaming aspect has not absorbed the possibility for dissent into the police order of the state, there are still LI developers who go the route of not applying for advance planning permission. A case in point is that of Charlie and Meg’s roundhouse (see Figure 20). Having built the house without applying for advance permission the couple then mounted a campaign via the Internet to be allowed to stay in it. An online petition garnered over a hundred thousand signatures. People from around the world were moved by the beauty of the little home and the story of a young couple trying to stay on their parents farm and live a modest
lifestyle there. Such cases continue to challenge the status quo and question the logic of a system. These are embodied voices of dissent. In short, there are multiple strategies at play within the LID movement, some of which fit more neatly into the rubric of governance than others, but perhaps all necessary in order to keep the process dynamic and to continue to challenge assumptions and make space for difference.

Figure 20: Charlie and Meg’s Roundhouse Change.org petition

7.2 WHY THE LID MOVEMENT?

The literatures on governance for sustainable development have for the most part been focused on various levels of government. However, these studies have tended to find that there has been little progress towards SD from within these arenas (Jordan 2008; Meadowcroft 2011). Meadowcroft (2011) argues that this there are specific reasons for this:

“It is easy to castigate political leaders for short-sighted decisions and their failure to get to grips with sustainability. But transforming the societal development trajectory is necessarily a long, messy and painful process. The short-term focus of prevailing arrangements (electoral cycles, voter attention span, planning horizons) is often
criticized. Yet there are good reasons why we keep politicians coming back for renewed mandates every four years, and why democracies hesitate to commit scarce social resources to projects that will only bear fruit decades into the future. Experience with environmental policy since the 1970s suggests three big problems for political engagement with sustainability: (a) there are lots of other things to worry about; (b) uncertainties overwhelm action; and (c) change disturbs established interests” (Meadowcroft 2011, p.71).

All three of these issues could equally be said to apply to the planning system. Democratic engagement with the system is necessary in order to demand change, but this requires the involvement of people who may not see this as their biggest concern. Even if people are concerned, it can be difficult to know what to suggest, and finally, there are powerful established interests that will aim to block changes that impact upon their interests. These are significant issues when it comes to thinking about where the impetus for sustainable development might conceivable arise from, and how it can be enacted.

State actors, particularly planners are – and this may sound paradoxical – quite limited in their power when it comes to sustainable development. They are limited in a number of ways. Firstly, since local councils now rarely actually own much land or do much building, planners are limited in terms of what kind of development they can actually promote. Secondly, they are limited in terms of imagining creative, different, alternative futures by a system that involves attending to volumes of policy from multiple levels of government (EU, UK, Wales and local in this case, not to mention UN directives) and listening to their local publics. Since it is impossible to truly interpret this volume of policy, which is also continually changing, planners are forced to rely on simplified paradigms for decision-making and have difficulty dealing with things that fall outside of their existing understanding. In terms of diversification in rural areas, and in terms of sustainable development this is a serious limitation. I will discuss more about what I think sustainable development means shortly to further illustrate this point.

Planners are also ultimately involved in a system of politics over which they have no control. From all angles they essentially are limited only to reacting and even then only through drawing on documentation. Even once they have justified a decision, in cases where this is contentious, their recommendations can be overruled by councillors, or questioned by appellants. In short, even if sustainable development (with the environmental and social aspects retained) were seriously adopted as the
overriding paradigm of planning, it is doubtful that planners would be able to deliver on it. This is a significant point which seems to be quite overlooked in planning literatures which still tend to focus on technical solutions (e.g. Wheeler & Beatley 2004). This is not to say that no change can come about through the planning system. It can and it does, but it tends to be initiated either through the participation of organised groups in whatever ways are available, or the intervention of politicians, or as in this case, both as well as various other factors – like Welsh Government AMs who are serious about sustainability.

It is worth recognizing that even in the case of political decisions in government and attendant policy documents that the mechanisms available to government to initiate or promote sustainable development are also limited. Though new research into ‘behaviour change’ approaches is exploring a kind of soft paternalism approach to encouraging people to make different lifestyle choices (Whitehead et al. 2011; Jones et al. 2011), ultimately it is difficult to see how even such subtle means would be sufficient to engender the kind of wide-scale change needed to begin to address the trajectory of environmental damage being caused by human activities. Moreover, this sounds much like Swyngedouw’s warning of governmentality rather than governance, and the use of environmental discourses as a means of curtailing freedoms and controlling citizens (Swyngedouw 2010; 2005; 2009). Instead of this, the message from Lammas is that people will be motivated to change their behaviour by seeing the possibility of an alternative way of life that is attractive and possible, enabled by rather than made more difficult by the wider system in which it is embedded.

In short, in the transition to sustainable development governance processes and actors are vital, yet the most important processes and actors may not be the ones that attention has been focused on heavily in the literatures. Once we rethink the position of ‘niche’ grassroots initiatives such as Lammas and the wider LID movement as central actors in a governance process and the politics of sustainable development, we open up new avenues for analysis that overcome some of the problems with existing approaches.
7.3 HOW WILL WE KNOW SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Much of this thesis has been concerned with exploring what is meant by knowledge and how this relates to SD. Rydin and others have suggested that the question of knowledge is of vita importance in governing SD and that the planning system is still struggling to imagine knowledge beyond very reductionist models (Rydin 2007; Rydin 2010; Owens et al. 2006). My research suggests that the types of knowledge that come into play in planning are actually quite diverse and include a strong reliance on embodied and aesthetic knowledge, as well as ‘technical’ knowledge.

Since the planning system is in some respects the frontline of debates around spatial expression, it is required to find ways of incorporating diverse social, cultural and political knowledge into its operations. I would argue that the planning system and planners, under these kinds of pressures, actually do quite a remarkable job. However, though the types of knowledge and ‘evidence’ and the ways in which they are produced are diverse, the ways of speaking about knowledge and its role in planning is limited and de-politicized. This is an issue that has actually been the case in human geography as well, until only fairly recently, following feminist geography interventions. I would argue that it is not different knowledge types that the planning system needs to come to grips with, but for space and legitimacy to be afforded to recognising the validity of different types of knowledge and argumentation. It will not be possible for the planning system to handle the open-endedness of the concept of sustainable development without being able to recognise and openly discuss the politics of sustainability. Sustainable development is fundamentally a utopian project, but one that, as Hedren and Linner have assessed, requires thinking differently about utopias, as open-ended, collectively-debated, and through ‘prismatic blueprints’ rather than fixed end goals (Hedrén & Linnér 2009). The planning system is seriously limited in its ability to do this largely due to an emphasis on evidence that belies the ever-present questions around what evidence is, should be, and suggests. In other words, the interpretation process which is necessarily political, moral, ethical and ‘more than rational’.

To return to a quote introduced in the literature review, Meadowcroft suggests that:

“Governance for sustainable development implies a process of ‘societal self-steering’: society as a whole is to be involved in the critical interrogation of existing practices, and to take up the conscious effort to bring about change. Thus
it involves not only actions and policies to orient development along certain lines, but also the collective discussion and decision required to define those lines. Value choices – about the kind of society in which we want to live, about the kind of world we want to leave to posterity – lie at the heart of governance for sustainable development. At base, it is not a technical project, although technical expertise is essential, but a political project. For, while the concept indicates issues that should be of concern, its practical bearing cannot be established independent of the concrete life circumstances of a particular society and the needs, interests, values and aspirations of its members. Thus governance for sustainable development is ‘interactive’, not just in the instrumental sense that societal inputs can facilitate progress towards known objectives, but also in the deeper sense that the objectives themselves must be collectively defined, refined and re-defined.” (Meadowcroft, 2007a, p. 302)

This quote from Meadowcroft highlights again the fact that sustainable development as an idea cannot be determined nor enacted as a technocratic exercise. It requires involving society in setting objectives and refining and re-defining these over time. It is in this process that movements such as LID have so much to offer. Drawing on decades of experimentation with trying to live in low impact ways and in more socially and environmentally benign ways, the movement brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the project of sustainable development.

These actors were equipped in a number of ways to initiate this process of ‘societal self-steering’. Firstly, they possessed expert knowledge gathered through long-term detailed, contextually embedded experimental case studies. Flyvbjerg (1998) notes that expert status and knowledge is built up only through the detailed analysis of multiple case studies, and therefore the actors within the low impact movement can be described as experts in sustainable living.

The expert knowledge of these actors also has another advantage, this is that it is free from the hegemonic ideology of rationalism that pervades the planning system. This hegemonic ideology can be described as the misconception that Davoudi (2006) refers to as the idea that experts are neutral and value-free and that they know best. Within the planning system, people upheld this belief even when their own statements contradicted this idea. The ideology is so pervasive that it makes it nearly impossible to think – or at least admit to thinking – in any other way. This has the effect of shutting down discussions of ethics, morals, spirituality, embodied and situated knowledge and multiple ways of knowing and being. Having said that, the deliberative nature of planning at the policy writing stage (and to a lesser extent at the
development control level) involves the testimony of ‘expert witnesses’ and in this regard, experts on LID have entered into this

By virtue of the intellectual freedom afforded in the low impact development movement in contrast, multiple ways of thinking, being and knowing are not only allowed but actively embraced and encouraged. This is not at all to say that those in the low impact movement are anti-scientific or even that there is a lack of appreciation for the usefulness of reductionist methods. The difference rather lies in not being subject to an ideology that demands belief in the notion that knowledge can be neutral and value-free and not subject to processes of interpretation. The people who are part of the Lammas project instead recognize the potential uses of reductionist knowledge, such as for example, recording and documenting the yields of particular crops, or measuring component parts of soil, however there is also a strong recognition within the movement that there is far more to it than tables of numbers, including the continual processes and complex interactions involved in ‘living a question’, in short there is recognition of the processual nature of life and the interactive relationships between thinking, doing, dwelling and being. In a way this can be described as a dialectical way of thinking: the parts are produced only in relation to the whole just as the whole is produced in relation to the parts (Harvey 1996). There is therefore a recognition that reductionist thinking fails in some respects through its inability to capture complexity, and its reliance on fixed boundaries.

The ability to think dialectically and to accept and acknowledge that knowledge is created in multiple ways, including the aesthetic (embodied), enables people within the low impact movement to engage with the notion of sustainable development in a different way. Once the compulsion to try and define sustainable development empirically, objectively and in a de-contextualised way is removed, it becomes possible to aim towards this notion and to work towards it through processes of working out ‘the kind of society in which we want to live’ and ‘the kind of world we want to leave to posterity’. As Meadowcroft notes above, value choices are at the heart of this, and value choices are not something which can be defined technically.

7.4 AND WHAT IS YOUR CONTRIBUTION?

Throughout the research a somewhat troubling question has been: what am I giving back to people in exchange for their time, information and thoughts? This is perhaps
always the case with research and always a tension. Although I did not set out with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach in mind the question of reciprocity or the potential for the work to make some kind of actual difference or intervention was always in my mind. For various reasons, including the time, energy and focus demanded by trying to meet the academic requirements of a PhD thesis I often felt I did not have much to offer by way of writing up interim findings or sharing reports etc.

That said, I presented on the work in both academic and non-academic contexts, made it a central part of a short course I taught to a small group of undergraduates from the United States, as well as two third year lectures for a ‘Risk and Resilience’ module at Aberystwyth. I took a group of students to Lammas for an open day and discussion with Tao (formerly Paul), and this as well as the lectures inspired several essays and further interest. I also presented the work at a one-day symposium in Aberystwyth that I co-organised called ‘Wales: An Environmental Leader?’ to which we invited Jane Davidson as a discussant on the session I presented in, as well as opening the event to the public and inviting NGOs the head of the Welsh Sustainability Commission and others. Someone who saw my presentation then invited me to speak at another small conference, held in Mid Wales (the Fforest Centre near Cilgerran), on rural sustainability. Jane Davidson as well as another former Assembly Member (Sue Essex) who had been head of planning were in attendance, and my paper preceded one by the head of planning for Wales. My presentation on sustainability as a utopian idea and the limitations of the planning system for attending to this opened up a fruitful space of discussion with this diverse audience.

An academic piece of work of this length is perhaps not really designed for public consumption. However, Tao Wimbush was one of a few people who did actually read a draft and said kindly:

“I really enjoyed reading it. I think that, perhaps due to you coming in with no agenda, you identified and considered many of the main tensions within and around the project with an astute intelligence. I particularly enjoyed the intricacies of your observations... for my part I am keen to get it up on our website so that it can play whatever part it needs to in its own life! I do know that the academic documents we put up online get downloaded at a surprising frequency.” (Wimbush 2015, personal correspondance)
Besides sharing the full document online and with research participants in electronic form, I have aspirations to write several shorter academic journal articles based on the research material. At least one of these is aimed as an intervention into planning theory and practice with the intention of trying to provide some tools to enable the planning system to better handle the politics of sustainable development. In these ways I hope that this work will go on to have not only an academic legacy but also serve as an intervention in the transformation of paradigms within society (in a very small way obviously but nevertheless).

7.5 LIVING IN THE FUTURE: TOWARDS A POLITICS OF HOPE

I have used Lammas and the interactions with the state centred around this case study to illustrate a politics of hope and transformation, led by individuals and collectives interested in a truly different, alternative, sustainable cultural shift, one which recognizes the limitations of ‘economic growth’ in ‘meeting the needs of the present without jeopardizing the needs of future generations’. If we are to truly begin to rethink our ways, to change the dominant paradigm, we need to be open to thinking radically and to being radically different to what the dominant mainstream messages tell us we should be. Lammas and the low impact development movement are not presented here as a panacea or a utopia – at least not in the colloquial sense of an impossible or imaginary ‘no place’. They are represented however as a kind of politics of ‘eutopia’ – a conversation about what a good place, a good life, looks like (and smells like and feels like…). Not only politics and planning, but also critical geography should be open to thinking radically differently when it comes to imagining alternative futures. I’d like to end with a quote by a friend, which I think encapsulates the arguments I have been making in this thesis. Away at a working weekend on another LID (Embercombe) I asked him ‘what does it smell like?’ To which he responded:

“It smells of smoke and streams, of catkins, of hearth and heart, of other ways – under the sun, under the stars… it smells of Spring.” (Antony Lyons, 2015)
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Appendix 1: Full Text of Policy 52

Joint Unitary Development Plan for Pembrokeshire – Adopted June/July 2006

Policy 52 Low Impact Development making a Positive Contribution

Low impact development that makes a positive contribution will only be permitted where:

i) the proposal will make a positive environmental, social and/or economic contribution with public benefit; and

ii) all activities and structures on site have low impact in terms of the environment and use of resources; and

iii) opportunities to reuse buildings which are available in the proposal’s area of operation have been investigated and shown to be impracticable; and

iv) the development is well integrated into the landscape and does not have adverse visual effects; and

v) the proposal requires a countryside location and is tied directly to the land on which it is located, and involves agriculture, forestry or horticulture; and

vi) the proposal will provide sufficient livelihood for and substantially meet the needs of residents on the site; and

vii) the number of adult residents should be directly related to the functional requirements of the enterprise; and

viii) in the event of the development involving members of more than one family, the proposal will be managed and controlled by a trust, co-operative or other similar mechanism in which the occupiers have an interest.

5.4.42 Sustainable Development has emerged as the overarching objective of the planning system in the last decade. This policy provides a context for permitting development in the countryside which contributes to that agenda (see paragraph 2.2.3 National & Regional Section of the Plan) as an exception to normal planning policy, where the proposals are tied directly to the land and the proposal provides sufficient
livelihood for the occupants.

5.4.43 Proof that there is a positive contribution from the development in terms of the environment, the use of resources, and a combination of social/economic benefits will be needed. Public benefits might include providing services to the community. Proof that the proposals will achieve a neutral or at least the lowest possible adverse impact for each part of the government’s sustainability agenda must be submitted.

5.4.44 To this end any proposal will have to submit an integrated site management plan, biodiversity and landscape character assessment together with a business and improvement plan and sustainability action plan for the site. These will detail the activities and structures on site and the environmental management of the site as well as sustainability objectives to be achieved by the development. The Business Improvement Plan will also provide evidence of the functional needs of the enterprise and financial information as to the likely returns to be achieved. It will be necessary to establish that the land use activities proposed are able to financially support the occupants. The applicants will be expected to enter into a S106 agreement relating to the continued operation of the site, based upon the site management plan.

5.4.45 SPG will be prepared, setting out a step by step approach to considering proposals under this policy. The guidance will include a comprehensive checklist of sustainability design and construction matters to be included in any assessment. A checklist will include the requirements for development and associated activities to:

- be of a scale appropriate to the site and the enterprise proposed;
- accord with sustainable construction and design principles;
- use materials which are natural, renewable, recycled and where possible locally sourced;
- incorporate comprehensive measures to minimise energy use, light pollution and waste production; and
- be capable of easily being dismantled and removed from the site and the site restored to an appropriate state in accordance with the terms set out in the management plan.

5.4.46 In advance of preparing SPG the report ‘Low Impact Development – Further Research’ will be used as interim supplementary guidance to inform the application of this policy.

5.4.47 Within the National Park developments must demonstrate themselves to be compatible and not adversely effect the special qualities of the National Park landscape (Policy 5 & 67)
Appendix 2: Details of Interviewees and Events Attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date (of initial interview)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paul Wimbush</td>
<td>Founding member of Lammas and resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Apr-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larch Maxey</td>
<td>One of founding members of Lammas / Ecological Land Co-Op</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Sep-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Poppelwell</td>
<td>Planner at Pembrokeshire County Council</td>
<td>PCC offices, Haverfordwest</td>
<td>Oct-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Borer</td>
<td>Architect with interest in sustainability</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyndis Cole</td>
<td>Consultant at Land Use Consultants</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Shorten</td>
<td>Consultant at Land Use Consultants</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Davidson</td>
<td>Former Assembly Member and Sustainability advocate</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Smith</td>
<td>Planner at Pembrokeshire County Council</td>
<td>PCC offices, Haverfordwest</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Wrench</td>
<td>Resident at Brithdir Mawr eco-community</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Dale</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marianne Gipson</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayres Gipson</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kit Owen</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saara Owen</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine Saville</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigel Lishman</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Holloway</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Holloway</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jude Dunn</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andy Wells</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leander Wolstenholme</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katie Taggart</td>
<td>Resident of Tir-y-Gafel</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob and Janet</td>
<td>Residents of Glandwr – led the ‘Dim Lammas’ (No Lammas) campaign</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Nov-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role/Position</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Host(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Lawrence</td>
<td>Building Regulations Officer at Pembrokeshire</td>
<td>PCC offices, Haverfordwest</td>
<td>Jan-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Ratcliffe</td>
<td>Advocate of low impact living</td>
<td>Individual's home</td>
<td>Feb-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>Involved in initial stages of Lammas</td>
<td>Café</td>
<td>Feb-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Poulter</td>
<td>Planning inspector (who decided in favour of</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>May-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Fairlie</td>
<td>Low Impact Development advocate and writer</td>
<td>Hay Festival</td>
<td>May-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Danks</td>
<td>Consultant at Reading Agricultural Consultants</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Sep-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ieuan Williams</td>
<td>Consultant at Reading Agricultural Consultants</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Sep-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martina Dunne</td>
<td>Planner at Pembrokeshire Coast National Park</td>
<td>PCNPA offices, Pembroke Dock</td>
<td>Sep-12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Events Attended**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of event</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Host(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning for Low Impact</td>
<td>Radford Mill Farm, nr. Bath</td>
<td>Low Impact Living Initiatives</td>
<td>26-27 February 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact Development with Simon Fairlie</td>
<td>Tir-y-Gafel/Lammas</td>
<td>Lammas / Jasmine</td>
<td>Spring 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lammas Open Day</td>
<td>Tir-y-Gafel/Lammas</td>
<td>Lammas / Kit</td>
<td>Summer 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building an Eco-village weekend</td>
<td>Tir-y-Gafel/Lammas</td>
<td>Lammas</td>
<td>9-11 September 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Regulations Court</td>
<td>Haverfordwest County Court</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>23 January 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Court Hearing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ceredigion County Council</td>
<td>23 January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Big Discussion</td>
<td>Tir-y-Gafel/Lammas</td>
<td>Lammas / Ayres</td>
<td>15 January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornerwood Planning Hearing</td>
<td>Ceredigion County Council</td>
<td>Ceredigion County Council</td>
<td>16 October 2012</td>
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