Making Connections: the Narratives of Motivation for Moving to an Eco-community

Penny Clark

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Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
University of Surrey

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Abstract

This research aims to explore and analyse the narratives that people form for their motivations for moving to an eco-community, in particular looking at how they present and interconnect their life circumstances, motivations and values, and how this informs a sense of identity. Currently, no other research contextualises perceived motivations for moving to an eco-community into a holistic narrative, so this dissertation offers a novel contribution to the body of research on eco-communities.

This research adopts an interpretative, qualitative and narrative approach. Using purposive and convenience sampling, 23 participants from three eco-communities took part in face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Data was transcribed and then analysed using a mixture of content and thematic analysis.

It was found that, although participants' life experiences were diverse, there were clear commonalities which formed a fairly consistent narrative. Participants framed their lives prior to living in an eco-community as "alternative", picking out the following as significant biographical details: unusual upbringings or lifestyles, travel, and a childhood in close contact with nature, or within a community which grew food. Participants identified mainstream society as deeply flawed, and in contrast depicted eco-communities as spaces which offered a remedy to those flaws. Their perceived motivations for moving to an eco-community were varied, but centred around a desire to connect with other people through community living, and a desire to feel a greater connection with the land. Perceived motivations, values and life stories were linked together to form a coherent narrative. Within this narrative, participants constructed a sense of identity through how they related to the eco-community environment, their work there, their placement within the social landscape, and through the narrative itself.

Based on the findings of this research, some tentative ideas to encourage identity-forming around pro-environmental practices are suggested as a way to increase engagement in sustainability behaviours.

Contents

14,997 words

Acknowledgments

I would like to say thank you to the people in Lammas Ecovillage, Pendragon Community and the third community (who wish to remain anonymous) for hosting me and making me feel very welcome. I am very grateful to my points of contact at each community, who acted as advocates for my research project. I am so grateful as well to the people who gave up their time to take part in this study.

I would also like to thank my dissertation supervisor, Kate Burningham, for all her fantastic help and advice throughout.

Chapter One. Introduction

> So I started to read avidly about alternative lifestyles […] so I'm, I'm actually on a mission to find me, really, you know […]
>
> Jeffrey, Cavendish House

This research aims to explore and analyse the narratives that people form for their motivations for moving to ecovillages/eco-communities (hereafter referred to as eco-communities, except for purposes of definition), looking in particular at how people construct their life stories, values and sense of identity in relation to giving reasons for moving to an eco-community. Using an interpretative approach, 23 participants from three different eco-communities were interviewed. What emerged were rich narratives, which, despite their diversity, contained unifying and interconnected themes of unusual early-life experiences, disillusionment with mainstream social norms and values, viewing eco-communities as possessing the essential qualities that mainstream society lacks, and the seeking of identity through positioning the self as "alternative", connecting to the land and to likeminded people, and through the life-narrative itself.

Why this topic?

By challenging institutional, organisational, and cultural authority (Ergas, 2010, p.35), eco-communities offer both a different worldview (Della Porta and Diani, 1999, p.26) and an alternative model of a more environmentally sustainable way of living (Tinsley and George, 2006). This model offers a subversion to the unsustainable practices which are embedded in everyday life, and regarded as normal (Hards, 2011). As scientific evidence points to climate change posing serious global risks which demand an urgent response (Stern, 2006, p.i), increasing our understanding of what moves people to seek "green" lifestyles and adopt "green" identities becomes a valuable undertaking in our collective journey to combat climate change and other associated negative human impacts upon the planet. This study hopes to offer some insight into how to encourage others to adopt "green" lifestyles.

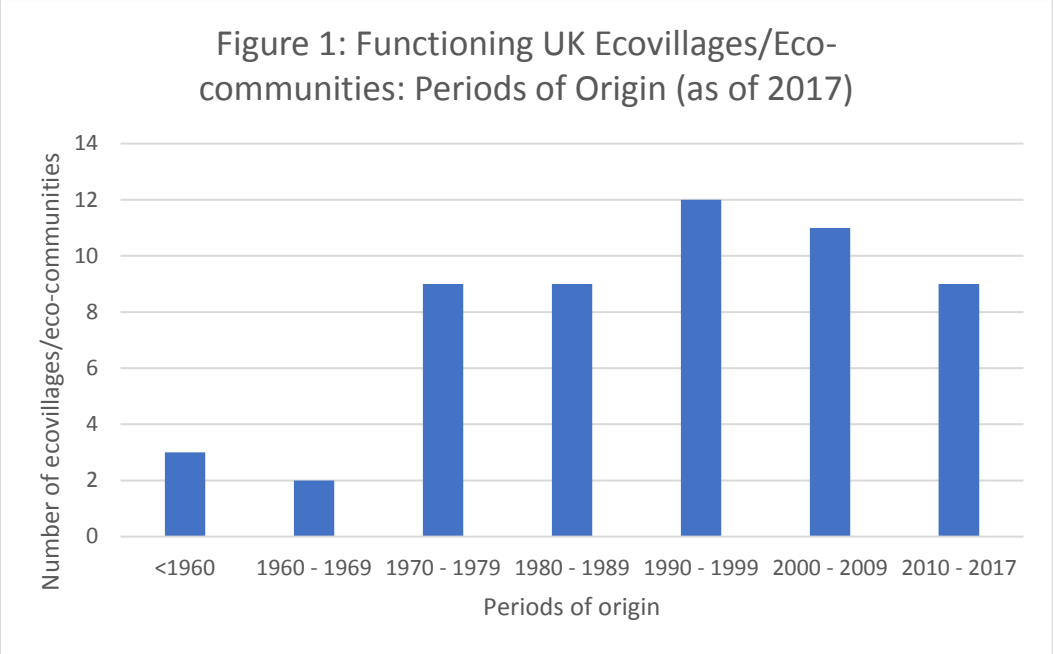
As eco-communities are a fairly new concept (Kasper, 2008), there has been relatively little research about them, and there is no available research that is specifically dedicated to a holistic understanding of peoples' constructed motivations for moving to an eco-community. Therefore, this dissertation will present findings which will be a valuable and novel addition to the current body of research on eco-communities.

Defining and describing ecovillages and eco-communities

An ecovillage can be defined as an intentional, traditional or urban community of between 50 – 500 people (Kasper, 2008) using local participatory processes to integrate ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of sustainability in order to regenerate social and natural environments (Global Ecovillage Network, 2017). Eco-communities can be defined as a type of intentional community that has an ecological focus. Intentional communities are a group of five or more people, including some not related by blood, marriage or adoption (Ergas, 2010, p.34), who have 'chosen to live together with a common purpose, working cooperatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values' (Kozeny, 1995), and *eco*-communities can essentially be viewed as ecovillages in miniature. The number of ecovillages/eco-communities is difficult to know, as they are frequently unconnected to formal networks (Kasper, 2008; Ergas, 2010). As of 2005, there were 147 ecovillages (*not* including eco-communities) registered with the Global Ecovillage Network in Europe (Kasper, 2008). According to *Diggers and Dreamers* (2017), which is the only directory of the UK's intentional communities, there are 57 communities (*including* ecovillages) which have a primary focus or strong interest in sustainability. It is likely that more exist.

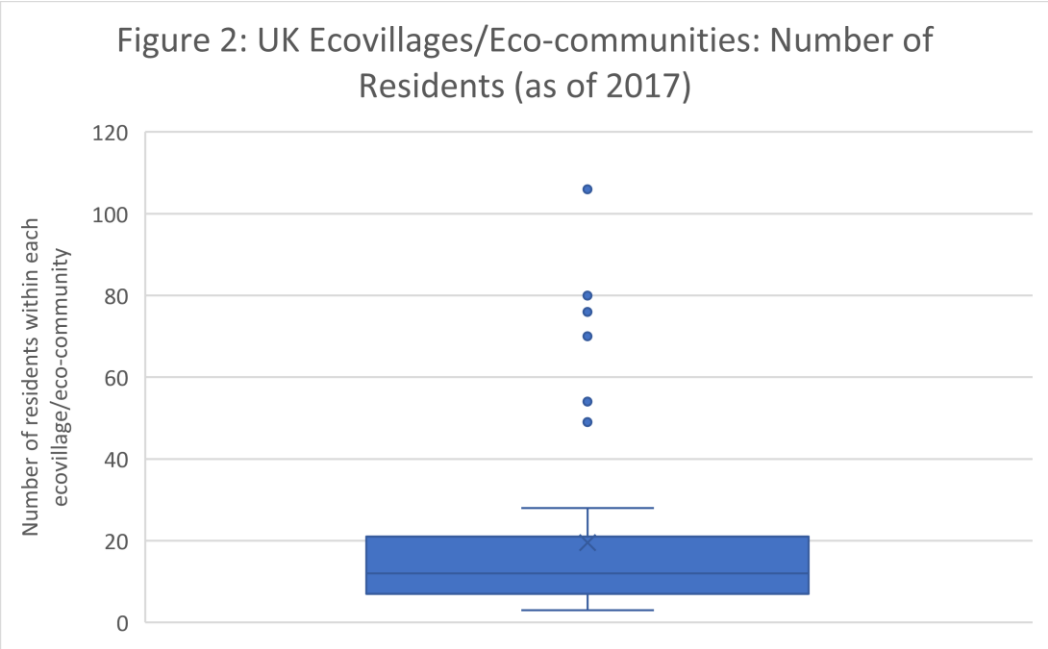
Figure 1 shows the periods of origin for the still-functioning ecovillages/eco-communities within the UK. Data for lapsed communities is unfortunately not available, but the information here does show that significant numbers of ecovillages/eco-communities began in the 1970s (which is when the modern "green" movement took off [Doherty, 2002]) and that the founding of ecovillages/eco-communities peaked in the 1990s, which is when the term "ecovillage" came into common usage (Kasper, 2008). The eco-communities featured within this research range in their periods of origin, with one established several decades ago[1], one established in 2009 and one in 2013. Conducting interviews with members of recently founded eco-communities was a pragmatic choice, as the experience of joining the community was likely to be a more recent memory for these individuals. The community founded several decades ago widened the variety of participants, thereby increasing the reliability of the research, and provided an interesting contrast to the two other communities.

[1] The date of establishment is not featured here, as this community wishes to remain anonymous.



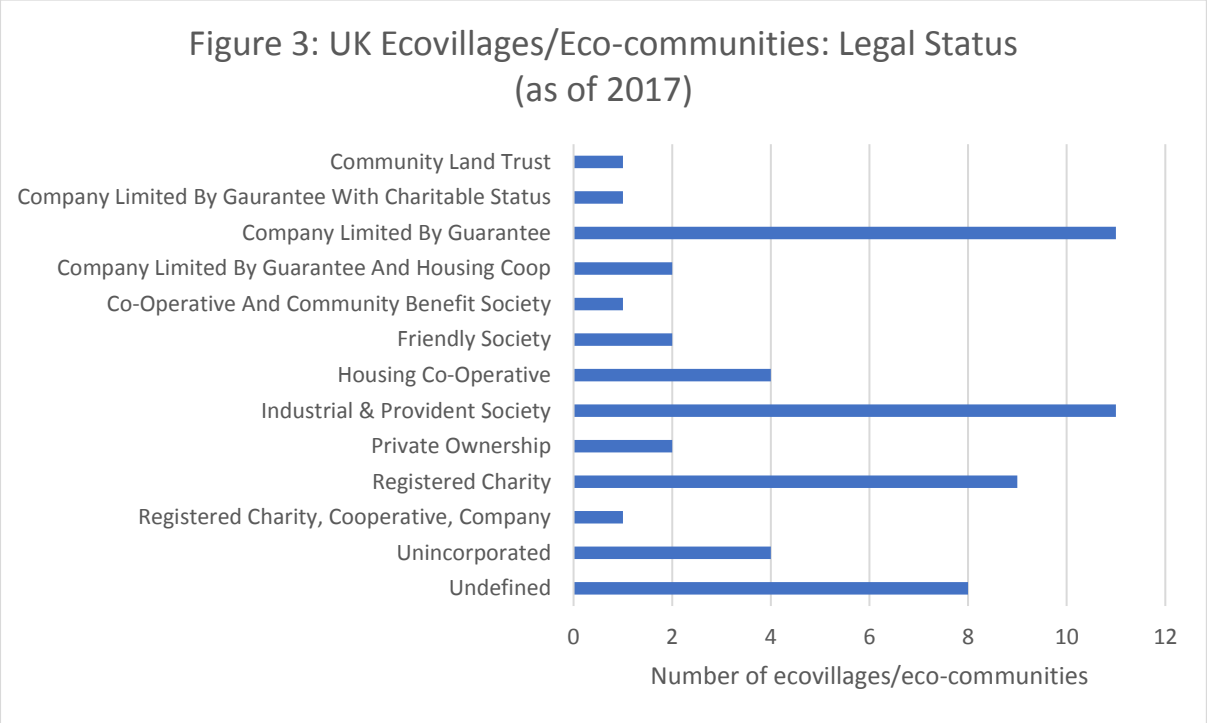
Data source: *Diggers and Dreamers*

Figure 2 shows the number of residents within UK ecovillages/eco-communities. The populations vary widely, from five (a community called Tinker's Bubble), to 106 (an ecovillage in Scotland called Findhorn), with a median of 11.5 people (*Diggers and Dreamers*). As can be seen, the majority fall into the "community" rather than the "village" category, with numbers of 20 and under. The three eco-communities within this research had populations of approximately 50, 20 and 12. This variety of sizes allowed for this research to gain insight into a variety of communities, although it should be noted that all the communities featured were larger than average.



Data source: *Diggers and Dreamers*

Figure 3 shows the legal statuses of the different ecovillages/eco-communities. They fall into numerous categories, though almost all are run on a philanthropic, not-for-profit basis, which is reflective of the anti-materialist principles that the "green" movement was founded upon (Doherty, 2002). Although two out of three communities within this study had a legal structure which is designed to be co-owned and run on a basis of being beneficial to the community and not-for-profit, both of these communities also had aspects of private ownership, with members effectively owning their own houses. The third community was privately owned by one member, who rented the space to the other members.

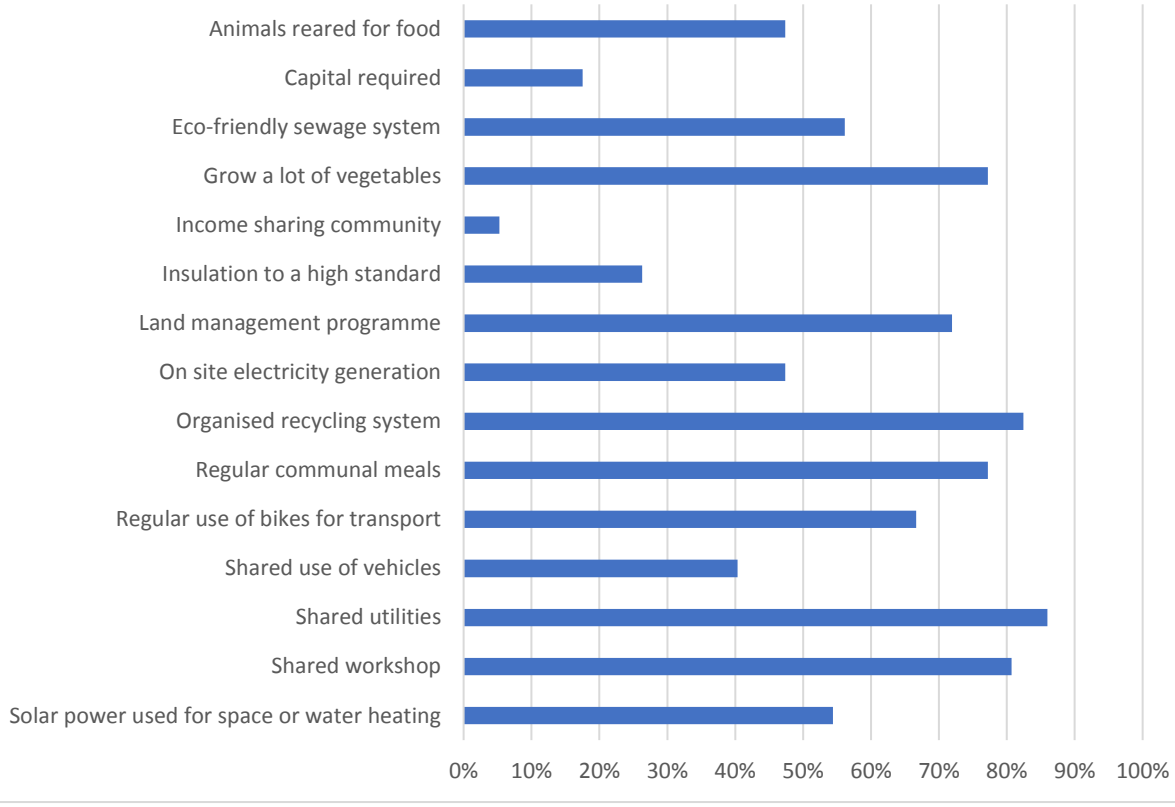


Data source: *Diggers and Dreamers*

Figure 4 shows the percentage of UK ecovillages/eco-communities which engage in certain aspects of community living and sustainable practices. The top practices are sharing utilities (86 percent) growing vegetables (77 percent) and eating communally (77 percent). The percentage of communities which have a land management scheme is also high, which demonstrates that most communities engage in a form of farming. With all communities visited as part of this research, a central theme of communal life was either the growing of food or eating meals together (or both). The majority of ecovillages/eco-communities are rural rather than urban (77 percent), which is frequently due to rural land being more affordable, and zoning and buildings regulations being easier to negotiate (Kasper, 2008, p.20). For eco-communities, such access to land is vital in order for them to produce their own food. Two of the three communities visited in this research were in a

rural location, and one was urban, though it had a large garden in which food was grown.

Figure 4: UK Ecovillages/Eco-communites: Community Living & Sustainable Practices (as of 2017)



Data source: *Diggers and Dreamers*

Structure

This dissertation contains four further chapters. Chapter Two (the literature review) shows that current research largely depicts motivations for moving to eco-communities as value-based, but does very little to place these values within the context of people's life-narratives, plus does not show how the motivations which people give are related to each other – two points which this research seeks to answer. Furthermore, by drawing upon theoretical perspectives and existing research, the literature review argues that moving to an eco-community enables people to construct a sense of identity.

Chapter Three (the methodology) outlines and justifies the interpretative framework adopted, the research questions being addressed, the use of purposive and convenience sampling for both the eco-communities and the 23 participants, the use of semi-structured interviews as a research method and the employment of both content and thematic data analysis; as well as covering ethical considerations, issues of reflexivity and methodological limitations.

Chapter Four (the analysis and discussion) summarises and analyses the findings of the research. It identifies the most typical narrative that participants constructed to describe their journey (in terms of life story, values and motivations) in moving to an eco-community. It then goes on to look in greater detail at some of the most common themes, showing how participants' perceived motivations centred around *connection to other people* and *connection to the land*. Finally, the Chapter demonstrates how participants viewed their move to an eco-community as identity-forming.

In Chapter Five (the conclusion) the key findings of the study are summarised, and, based on these findings, tentative practical suggestions to encourage the taking up of "green" lifestyles are made. Empirical and theoretical limitations are discussed, and suggestions for further research are posed.

Chapter Two. Literature Review

> Again, this is how we treat ourselves, this is how we treat each other, this is how we treat the planet, and, so that, so that inner work, is a beginning […]
>
> Laura, Pendragon Community

Introduction

This literature review mainly draws upon ten ethnographic or qualitative studies into eco-communities (or intentional communities with an ecological focus), which are largely based within the USA or the UK. Several of these studies have touched upon the motivations people have given for moving to eco-communities; however, almost none have framed these motivations within the context of people's narratives, as this research proposes to do. The existing research demonstrates that individuals give a variety of reasons for moving to an eco-community. Although diverse, these reasons can largely be regarded as *terminal* values – that is, desirable states of existence, such as *a sense of community* or *living with nature* (rather than *instrumental* values, which are preferred methods of behaviour, such as *honesty*) (Rokeach, 1973). Previous research has also shown that individuals move to eco-communities to find an environment which they feel is congruent with their identity (Kirby, 2003). However, this review will argue that the move to an eco-community is an exercise in identity *construction*, rather than a search for an environment to match a previously existing sense of self.

This chapter begins by looking at the role that values play within eco-communities, and how previous research has categorised these values. This topic is of interest as people's perceived motivations for moving to an eco-community tend to be value-based. The review then briefly examines how individuals have framed their initial interest in eco-community life, and the manner in which those seeking to move to an eco-community tend to reject mainstream values, before describing what other studies have found in regards to motivations for moving. The review goes on to assess how individuals interlink certain values within eco-communities. This is of particular interest, as the lessons learned here may have some bearing on how individuals link together perceived motivations and life events into a narrative for moving to an eco-community, which is an as-yet unexplored topic. The review then goes on to look at the role of identity in moving to an eco-community: first making the case that identity-forming can be viewed as an extension of values; then demonstrating how those moving to an eco-community can construct a sense of identity through modes of behaviour acted out within a community of likeminded people.

Values

Eco-communities and values

Research shows that many of the rationales given for living within an eco-community are value-based, with values being defined as 'conceptions or beliefs about desirable modes of conduct or states of being that transcend specific situations, guide decision making and […] evaluation of events' (Gecas, 2000, p.95). A large body of research has been centred around the construction of the vision and values of different eco-communities (Bengis, 2008; DePasqualin *et al.*, 2008; Ergas, 2010; Holmes, 2006; Jones, 2011; Mulder *et al.*, 2006; Tolle, 2011; Kasper, 2008; Wagner, 2007; Wight, 2008; cited in Wagner, 2012, p.85). These visions and values tend to be carefully constructed (Kasper, 2008), generally falling into three categories – social, ecological and spiritual. According to Jackson, most are 'dominated initially by one of these impulses, but tend gradually to integrate the other two aspects' (2004, p.2). Litfin, who conducted an ethnography of 14 eco-communities, adds the element of 'creative alternative economies' to the mix, defining eco-communities' value-based commonalities as ecology, economy, community and consciousness (Chitewere, 2015). This conscious defining of values indicates firstly that eco-community inhabitants are concerned with attaining a lifestyle attuned with certain values, and secondly, that these values are homogenous enough to fall into categories.

Perceptions on what triggers the motivation to live in an eco-community

However, the focus of this research is on what narratives individuals construct around their motives for *joining* eco-communities, rather than their values post-move – though the two are doubtlessly connected. Wallbridge, in her ethnography of six UK-based intentional communities, provides an indication of the origins of residents' interest in community life. She reports that 'people often spoke about their childhood […] many individuals commented on how their community was reminiscent of that period of their lives' (2011, pp.203-204). Shirani *et al.* also found that ecovillage residents frequently 'described an early environmental awareness that remained relevant throughout their lives' (2015, p.67); and Kirby, researching Ithaca Ecovillage in New York, noted that many of its residents had been social/environmental activists prior to moving (2004). These findings indicate that moving to an eco-community is often narrated as a continuation of previously held values, rather than an abrupt change. However, the scarcity of research means that no valid conclusions can be drawn. This dissertation seeks to fill this gap by investigating how individuals frame their life stories from the perspective of their move to an eco-community.

Rejecting mainstream values

According to collective behaviour theory, the values which form social movements begin with a rejection of traditional norms, which no longer succeed in providing a satisfactory structure for behaviour (Della Porta and Diani, 1999, p.6). An example of this is Inglehart's concept of postmaterialism (whereby individuals reject materialism and consumerism in favour of other lifestyle values), which is explained within the context of class and ecovillages by Ergas, who states that as the middle classes – who make up the majority of ecovillage inhabitants (Kirby, 2004) – have not experienced scarcity, they disparage consumerism and therefore find the material downward mobility experienced during the transition to an ecovillage acceptable (2010, p.36). Such disillusionment with mainstream values was also recorded by Shirani *et al.*, while researching changing attitudes to environmentalism. They interviewed a resident at Lammas Ecovillage in Wales, who reported feeling 'incandescent with rage' when learning about climate change (2015, p.63). Overall, however, research into the nature of eco-community residents' rejections of mainstream values is lacking. This dissertation looks at how eco-community residents frame the mainstream lifestyle, norms and values, to understand how they link these views with their perceived motivations for moving to an eco-community.

Perceived motivations for living in eco-communities

Several studies report residents expressing a myriad of reasons for moving to an eco-community, the majority of which are value-based. In her qualitative study of Ithaca Ecovillage, in New York, Fischetti found that reported reasons for moving included seeking a greater sense of community, Ithaca's sustainability agenda, seeking a connection with the land, and a safe space for children. Some said that they were seeking insulation from mainstream society, while others described something lacking in mainstream existence, or said that the move was a logical step in their quest to live out their values. Most residents said that they moved to Ithaca for a range of reasons (2008, p.149).

In Kasper's ethnographic study of eight ecovillages in the US, she, like Fischetti, found that residents reported a great variety of motivations for wanting to be part of an ecovillage: foremost among them were ecological sympathies; a longing for community; a safer environment and a good atmosphere for children; and other reasons, including to 'escape the craziness of consumer society' (2008, pp.14-15).

Similarly, Tolle, who interviewed members of Lammas Ecovillage in Wales on topics which included their motivations for living in the community, found that answers included: a desire to live in the countryside; living "the good life", especially for those bringing up children; a (sometimes spiritual)

affinity with nature; living in close proximity with likeminded people; “green” values; and affordability (2011, p.15).

To elaborate upon Tolle’s mention of affordability, it should be noted that the reasons given for moving to an eco-community may be pragmatic as well as value-based. Bohill, who conducted a multiple case-study of five intentional communities in Australia, stated that ‘defining a vision or goal as paramount to intentional community living limits the way in which intentional communities also act as sites of resistance for participants that join an intentional community because of their socio-economic circumstances or through relationships’ (2010, p.356). This observation is reflected by Jones, who in a comparative analysis of four intentional communities in New Zealand, found that younger residents in the Tui Community tended to relate to community living as a lifestyle, rather than an ideological choice (2011, p.220).

The above studies (Fischetti, 2008; Kasper, 2008; Tolle, 2011; Bohill, 2010; Jones, 2011; Ergas, 2010; Sargisson, 2001) are enlightening in that, within the diversity of motivations which they report, several commonalities across the studies emerge, e.g. seeking out likeminded people, ecological sympathies, and more. However, there is no discussion of how these motivations interlink and form part of a broader narrative, and little to no indication of which – if any – are perceived as more important. This dissertation seeks to provide answers to these gaps in the research.

Eco-communities and interconnected values

Despite the lack of research on how multiple motivations to move to an eco-community connect with each other and form a coherent narrative, certain values of interconnectedness within ecovillages indicate that this is a topic worthy of investigation.

In her ethnography of an ecovillage in the United States, Ergas found that ecovillagers related to community members and nature interdependently, and that this formed an important part of their philosophy. They emphasised ‘the importance of respecting all forms of relationships whether they are with plants, animals, or other humans’ which was ‘indicative of the symbiotic, circular relationship ecovillagers perceive as necessary for the survival of the planet’ (2010, p.41). This desire for a circular relationship with the planet and its inhabitants was also expressed through valuing self-reliance. Ergas found members who variously made their own clothes, shelter and rope, grew their own food, and kept animals for their meat; as well as members who were critical of formal institutions, such as education or health clinics (2010, p.42).

Similarly, in an ethnographic study of six ecovillages, Sargisson found that the

> compost loos [are] […] not simply eco-fads, or issues of domestic convenience […] Rather, they pragmatically enact a worldview that stresses the connection of […] consumption and waste […] [which] encourages a holistic consciousness of human impact on the planet.
>
> 2001, pp.81-82

She notes how this holistic lifestyle is expressed architecturally:

> [t]he farmhouse at Talamh […] has a number of outbuildings and barns used for social meetings, music, and dancing, and office space. […] Their approach to life is one that integrates work and play, ecology and fun, politics and everyday life.
>
> *ibid*

This lack of compartmentalisation, and the emphasis placed on the cyclical and interdependent relationship between people and the planet, indicates a value-system that may inform individuals' narratives of their move to an eco-community.

Identity

Identity as an extension of values

It has been found that those who participate in social movements frequently gain an enlargement, fulfilment and realisation personal identity (Gamson, 1992, p.56), which is, in part, a result of individuals conceiving their identity in terms of the values they hold (Gecas, 2000, p.96). The concept of *identity* is a complex and debated term, but will be defined here using a symbolic interactionist perspective, as a perceived 'internalized set of meanings attached to a role played in a network of social relationships' (Stryker *et al.*, 2000, p.6). These perceived internalised meanings (values), must therefore be expressed, and expressed within a social network, in order for a sense of affirmation to occur. It will be argued within this literature review that identity is constructed through the meaning attached to actions which are carried out within a social network of likeminded individuals.

Identity: pre-existing the move to an eco-community or reconstructed upon arrival?

Snow and McAdam use the term 'identity seeking' to describe 'the process whereby individuals strongly imbued with a particular identity actively search for groups […] with perspectives and practices consistent with that identity and that allow for its expression' (2000, p.48); and Pinel and Swann. likewise state that 'people seem most attracted to social movements that are associated with identities that match their own identities' (2000, p.142). As previously mentioned, Kirby, in his ethnography of Ithaca Ecovillage, observed that the move to Ithaca allowed residents to find the 'consonance between identity and behaviour that they were seeking' (2003, p.332). All of these perspectives argue for an individual's sense of identity as pre-existing, and the move to an eco-

community as an exterior fulfilment to a pre-existing interior self. This dissertation contends that identity is 'negotiated, emergent and adaptable' (Scott, 2015, p.76), and that the move to an eco-community allows individuals to *construct* a sense of their identity, rather than fulfil it. This view of identity is espoused by Abrams *et al.*, who visited and researched British communes in the 1970s, finding that commune seekers were escaping 'the routine processes by which selves are constructed' within mainstream society (1976, p.94) in order to construct their own personally authentic identity. Similarly, Wallbridge discusses how three of her interviewees saw moving to an ecovillage as a chance to pursue an exploration of themselves (2011, p.194). This shows that communities can be spaces of re-evaluation and redefinition. But how has past research depicted the construction of identity within eco-communities?

Constructing identity through the expression of values

The move to an eco-community can be viewed as a radical statement of identity-change in itself, as it frequently results in the breaking of old social bonds, and immerses the new resident in a novel form of collective action, in which political leanings, life choices and the organisation of everyday life may be different (Della Porta and Diani, 1999, p.90). The aforementioned consciously defined values which are typically central to eco-communities (Kasper, 2008), and the culture in some communities of exploring and articulating personal beliefs (Bohill, 2010) may also act as prompts to bring contemplation on ideas of selfhood to the fore.

Della Porta and Diani state that one key way in which the identity of a social movement is shown is through 'models of behaviour which define the specificity of activists' (1999, pp.97-98). Existing research has shown that models of behaviour specific to ecovillage life *have* aided residents in constructing their individual identities. Fischetti gives the example of ecovillagers' housebuilding doubling up as an identity-building activity, which allowed inhabitants to confirm their identities as someone who cares about the environment (2008, p.148). The embodiment of identity through action is expressed by an ecovillage's welcome pamphlet, which Ergas (2010) mentions in her ethnographic study, which carries the message of "being the change you seek". Here, identity, action and the desire for change are equated, and so identity becomes an actively and consciously constructed process. Bohill describes residents voluntarily dedicating communal land as a wildlife sanctuary as 'self-forming', as it actively demonstrates attributing flora and fauna with intrinsic value, rather than viewing the land in terms of economic worth (2010, p.348). Bohill furthermore found that residents reported their experiences of community life in a way that 'starkly contrasted with living in suburbia', and allowed for a better quality of life (2010, p.350). This "us" (the ecovillagers) and "them" (those living in suburbia) 'implies a positive definition for those

participating […] and a negative identification of those who are […] excluded', and through this creation of a boundary, constructs a sense of identity (Della Porta and Diani, 1999, p.87). It is through these collective actions (Fischetti, 2008; Bohill, 2010), and the identity-building framing of actions (Ergas, 2008; Bohill, 2010), that continuous redefinitions of identity are produced and reinforced. In 'Chapter Four. Analysis and Discussion', this dissertation will argue that the way in which individuals view their actions within an eco-community has an identity-forming function.

Constructing identity within a social network

According to Stryker's definition of identity, action alone is not enough, but must be played out in a 'network of social relationships' (2000, p.6), which is in keeping with a key tenet of symbolic interactionism: that we give meanings to things based on our social interactions (Blumer, 1969). This principle is reflected by Wallbridge, who observes that intentional communities provide an ideological and material *forum* in which members' selves can be reimagined, transformed and realised in people's day-to-day lives (2011, pp.191-192) – the word *forum* indicating the public nature of this reimagining.

Identity, then, is inextricably bound up with where the self is situated within the individual's social landscape. The emphasis ecovillage residents placed on feeling happily situated within a community was recorded by Bohill, who wrote that her participants discussed 'feeling connected, having a sense of belonging, trusting the group, being safe and having a sense of being part of a cohesive group' (2010, p.350). This "need to belong" is defined as universal by Baumeister *et al.*, who, through a literature review, found that people require 'an ongoing series of pleasant (or neutral) interactions with the same other person or small set of people […] within the context of an ongoing relationship characterized by mutual caring and concern' (2000, p.240). As has been previously shown, the seeking of a likeminded community or group of people is frequently mentioned as a key motivator for people in moving to an eco-community (Fischetti, 2008; Kasper, 2008; Tolle, 2011). Baumeister *et al.* noted that joining a social movement is sometimes a method of seeking new significant relationships after previous social attachments have lapsed (2000, p.244). Indeed, two of Wallbridge's interviewees came to their communities in search of 'something new' after a divorce and children leaving home (2011, p.194).

This seeking of new relationships can lead to identification with the group, and the forming of collective identities. Collective identity refers to 'emergent shared beliefs about membership, boundaries, and activities of a social movement held by movement members' (Stryker *et al.*, 2000, p.6). This dissertation argues that one manner in which collective identity is constructed and

consolidated within eco-communities is through residents viewing their way of life as an example to others. Ergas, who conducted an ethnographic study of an urban ecovillage in the United States, found that 18 of her 24 interviewees mentioned a desire to reach out to the community to share their version of sustainability (2010, p.32). Kasper found that out of the eight ecovillages she visited, almost all wanted to serve as an example of an alternative lifestyle (2008, p.19). Fischetti, too, noted that some were attracted to the 'idea of being a model to mainstream society and an articulation of a positive vision for social change' (2008, p.149). This dissertation contextualises this desire to be seen as an example to others as a method of identity-construction/consolidation, showing that, by differentiating themselves from the rest of the world, yet being recognised by it, eco-community members reinforce both their collective and individual identity (Calhoun, 1994).

In her ethnography of an urban ecovillage, Ergas linked the forming of collective identity with how meanings are given to actions, noting that the process towards collective identity involved several steps, including networking and communication between individuals, emotional investment, recognition that the individuals formed a unit within a larger system, and the defining of goals and actions. She recognised collective identity as a group's construction of meaning and actions (2010, p.36). Identity, community and action are therefore bound together, each shaping and reinforcing the other. Weir summarises this succinctly: 'we are only ourselves through our connections: to others, to goods, to ourselves' (2009, p.541). Seemingly separate reported motivations to move to an eco-community – that of identity-construction, community-seeking, and desiring a lifestyle that allows certain values to be expressed – all have a relationship with each other. This idea has been touched upon by some studies into ecovillages (Ergas, 2008; Wallbridge, 2011), and has been discussed within the context of social movements, however, the way in which people weave together these different concepts into a coherent narrative has not been explored.

This Research

This literature review has shown that there are significant gaps in the current research that this dissertation will hope to fill. There is very little research into what biographical events are reported as triggering an interest in eco-communities, or in the manner of disillusionment with mainstream values that is said to lead to the seeking of alternative norms. Reasons given for moving to an eco-community tend to be simply listed, rather than explored in relation to each other, or to individuals' backgrounds. Existing research into the interconnectedness of values within ecovillages shows that there is potential for given motivations to move to be interconnected too. This dissertation will explore and analyse eco-community residents' narratives of their move to their current home, seeking to fulfil the aforementioned gaps in the current research. Furthermore, whilst the concept of

identity and social movements has been investigated, there is little research which looks specifically at how moving to an eco-community is an identity-constructing exercise. By drawing together past research, this review has shown how identity may be formed within eco-communities through the expression of shared values within a likeminded community. This dissertation will expand upon this topic, and will show how individuals articulate their identity within the context of their narrative of moving to an eco-community.

Chapter Three. Methodology

> […] when you type this up or whatever… dreadful thing you're gonna have to do… […] best of luck with all that…
>
> William, Lammas

Research Question

What narratives do people construct to explain their perceived motivations for moving to an eco-community?

Sub-questions

In answering the research question, the following sub-questions will be addressed:

- What life circumstances do people identify as leading them to move an eco-community?
- What values do people identify as leading them to move to an eco-community?
- In what way do people link these life circumstances, values and motivations into a narrative?
- In what way are identities constructed within people's narratives of moving to an eco-community?

Approach

This research is framed by an interpretivist perspective, in that participant responses are viewed as socially constructed (Magnusson, 2015; Mills, 1940). This approach, stemming from symbolic interactionism, aims to capture how participants interpret or attach meaning to their actions (Berg, 2004, p.8) in order to form a narrative, from which a sense of identity is constructed (Giddens, 1991, p.54). The data gathered was qualitative, as this allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions (Berg, 2004, p.7). It also enables comparisons with other sociological research into eco-communities, as most favour qualitative methods (Wagner, 2012).

A multiple case-study approach has been adopted, as this allows comprehensive data gathering while recognising that the context forms a vital part of the data (Punch, 2005). To mitigate against the issues of reliability that this raises (Brewer, 2000), this study will treat findings as emergent hypotheses, which can then be contextualised within existing studies (Punch, 2005, p.146), and which may be pursued in subsequent studies (Berg, 2004, p.258).

The methodology employed was face-to-face semi-structured interviews, which allow the freedom and depth to access people's meaning-endowing capacities (Brewer, 2000) and permit wording and question order to be adjusted as needed (Berg, 2004, p.79). This increases participant engagement

by encouraging a more natural flow of conversation (Berg, 2004, p.111). A narrative approach to interviews was used, in that participants were encouraged to "tell their story". This approach is suitable for inquiry into people's life-journeys, as it allows for temporal, experience-based, holistic data to be gathered (Hards, 2011, p.770).

Sample

The Eco-communities

Using the online directory of UK intentional communities, *Diggers and Dreamers,* I identified communities in the South East of England (this region was convenient for travel) with an ecological focus, shortlisting several which welcomed visitors and were diverse to one another. This diversity was important, as it would increase the richness of the sample, and provide some demonstration of how the context of each community influenced the people they attracted and the narratives of those people. I arranged for visits of between four and six days to one ecovillage and two eco-communities between 2nd-16th July 2017.

Cavendish House[2]

Cavendish House is a long-established rural community, with roughly fifty residents. Residents are largely Caucasian, middle-class, university-educated and identify as left-wing or socialist. There is an even split of men and women, and a mixture of families, couples and single people. People tend to be over forty, and live on their pensions or through part-time work. They occupy a large building and maintain its upkeep together, though each person/family has several private rooms. They farm a sizeable amount of land, producing much of their own food and eating lunch and dinner together.

Lammas Ecovillage

Lammas (established 2009) is a picturesque ecovillage situated in rural Pembrokeshire. There are approximately twenty permanent residents, plus several long-term volunteers. Permanent residents tend to be Caucasian, middle-class, middle-aged couples with children. Some couples run their own businesses, while others work part-time. Each family unit has their own five acre plots of land which surrounds a community building called the "Hub", and all have built their own houses, which are varied in design. Volunteers live in caravans, tipis and tents. Water, woodland and electricity are managed communally.

[2] This community wished to remain anonymous, therefore the name "Cavendish House" is a pseudonym, and no identifying features are mentioned here.

Pendragon Community

Pendragon Community (established 2013) is an urban commune situated in Glastonbury. It has twelve residents: 2 male adults, 5 female adults and 5 young children (all are Caucasian, and tend to be middle-class). One resident is the landlord, and the others pay rent to him. Residents tend to work part-time or infrequently, and have their own business ventures. They live together in a large house with a garden, and tend to eat communally and socialise together.

The Participants

To obtain participants a mixture of non-probability convenience and purposive sampling was used. Whilst this type of sampling causes problems of reliability, it does allow the selection of participants who will add diversity to the sample, increasing its representativeness (Berg, 2004, p.34), and indeed, efforts were made to acquire participants that were representative of eco-community dwellers as a whole. Overall, 23 people were interviewed, with a gender breakdown of 12 males and 11 females. This gender balance was representative of both Lammas and Cavendish House (whereas Pendragon Community was female-dominated). Interviewee's ages ranged from 31 to 95 years old, with a mean average age of 56. Participants can largely be described as middle-class[3], and all but two were Caucasian and British; this class and ethnic bias is in-keeping with eco-community dwellers as a whole (Kirby, 2004). Further information can be found in *Appendix A.*

Interview Method

In writing my topic schedule (see *Appendix B*) I first listed the underlying concepts and information that I wanted to find out, and then constructed questions which would allow me to access that data in a way which participants would relate to (Berg, 2004, p.84). I conducted a pilot interview with a member of the Bristol Co-Housing Project, which allowed me to refine the topic schedule and rehearse my interview technique (Brewer, 2000, p.64). Over time, I found that my research topic changed emphasis from people's perceived motivations for moving to an eco-community, to how people constructed a *narrative* around their perceived motivations. As such, whilst my interview was semi-structured, over time I found that a *less* structured version of my original interview proved more fruitful in encouraging participants to construct their narratives. My questions would often be led by what the participants were saying, though I made sure to steer conversation in the desired direction (Hesse-Biber, 2011, p.5).

Ensuring that participants felt comfortable was important, both ethically and in terms of gathering data successfully. I allowed participants to decide upon the location of the interview, thereby

[3] This observation was subjective, based upon the overall impression of participants' past or current occupations, their parent's occupations, their wealth, accents and modes of dress and appearance.

ensuring that it took place in a space they were comfortable with. Most interviews were conducted within private or semi-private spaces. Several interviews were conducted whilst the interviewee and I completed tasks together, e.g. berry-picking (see *Appendix A* for details). I attempted to build rapport through polite and friendly communication, employing questions, prompts and probes in a conversational manner (Patton, 1987, p.122). Memorising the topic areas of interest, plus audio recording rather than taking notes, allowed as full as possible engagement with the participants (Fielding and Thomas, 2008, p.257). Interviews lasted between 28–79 minutes, with a mean average of 48 minutes (see *Appendix A* for details).

Data Analysis

I transcribed my interviews verbatim onto a qualitative data software program. Due to time constraints, the decision was made to omit some small sections which were deemed irrelevant. However, I acknowledge that full transcription is best practice. It was my aim to conduct an inductive thematic analysis, as it is good practice to ensure that any findings are directly related to recorded observations (Berg and Lune, 2012). However, prior research into new social movements theory and collective behaviour theory did influence the type of information I was looking for. I looked systematically for patterns within the data (Berg, 2004, p.115) before labelling the data to construct an initial thematic framework. I was interested in seeing how different themes were interconnected, and so used content analysis to see which themes linked most frequently (see *Appendix C)*, before examining these links to understand how participants were relating them to each other. This exercise also allowed me to refine my thematic framework by combining some categories together (Spencer *et al.*, 2014, p.282). I then constructed a flow chart to visually represent how the themes interlinked (see *Figure 5*) which informed how the data was presented. The resulting data was then treated as emergent hypotheses, to be contextualised within existing theories. As is frequently acknowledged, in reality interpretation was a retroductive process, involving the 'interplay of induction and deduction' (Ragin and Amoroso, 2011, p.76).

Reflexivity

The ability to locate yourself and your own biases within research is essential in producing findings which do not merely reflect your own prejudices. Bias can be introduced at any stage of the research, and indeed, a certain level of bias is inherent and unavoidable. Reflexivity should not just be a mere acknowledgement that it is impossible to remove oneself from one's research, but should instead lead to practical thinking about how research can be conducted in a responsible and accountable manner (Skeggs, 2002, p.368).

Prior to the fieldwork I used existing research and relevant theoretical frameworks to build the interview topic schedule, to ensure that the manner in which questions were framed had a basis in existing research and theory, rather than just my own "hunches".

During the fieldwork a challenge I encountered was the tension between my relationship with eco-community members as a friendly acquaintance, and as a researcher. Members were more likely to agree to an interview with me if I was friendly, interested and open. However, I also had to make an effort *not* to ask potential interviewees questions which I would ask them again during the interview, as this would draw attention to the artificiality of interaction in the interview, thereby sabotaging the research. Furthermore, I had to refrain from voicing opinions on topics relevant to the research, e.g. climate change, in case this would influence interviewee responses at a later stage.

Similarly, during the interview process I tried to be engaged and positive about what the participants were sharing, without showing any bias towards the content of their answers. There were moments where I did not succeed. I occasionally endorsed the content of participants' answers (e.g. by responding 'Sound's great!' when a participant told me that they had been able to switch to part-time work). However, careful attention to the transcript during analysis ensured that I accounted for any of my verbal biases, and thought about how they may have affected interviewee responses.

I furthermore kept a field journal, which allowed me to reflect upon my research, and the wider experience of staying with the different communities. I found that the emphasis of my study shifted over time from perceived motivations, to the narrative surrounding perceived motivations, as I came to realise that the motivations given were part of a wider story. I adjusted my interview technique and overall research question to reflect this.

During the process of analysis I was careful to ground any findings and resulting conclusions in the data (Berg and Lune, 2012, p.205). Content analysis was particularly helpful when justifying generalisations.

Ethics

I followed the ESRC Core Ethical Principles during my research, with particular focus on ensuring participants were appropriately informed of the nature of the study, and that their rights were respected (ESRC).

Participants were asked to read an information sheet and sign a consent form before taking part in the interview (see *Appendix D*).

Consent forms will be securely stored for 6 years and then destroyed. Audio data will be securely stored for ten years and then destroyed.

Participants were anonymised and attributed with pseudonyms. Verbatim quotations have had identifying characteristics removed. One community opted to remain anonymous as a whole, therefore they too have been anonymised and attributed with a pseudonym.

Limitations

Despite the best attempts to ensure a representative sample, the methods of convenience and purposive sampling were flawed in some respects. There was a bias towards slightly older participants, as younger participants tended to have jobs, therefore making them less able to give their time for an interview. Whilst male and female voices are represented evenly as a whole, they are not represented equally within each community, as a greater number of women were interviewed at my last placement, Cavendish House, in order to make up for the sample at Lammas being disproportionately male. Furthermore, it should be noted that those who volunteered to be interviewed may be different in some ways to those who did not want to be interviewed.

Ecovillages and eco-communities are hugely diverse, therefore even through visiting three fairly varied communities, I cannot hope that my findings will represent the movement as a whole. Rather, my findings will be treated as hypotheses, to be subject to further testing amongst other communities.

Chapter Four. Analysis and Discussion

> Um… finding my story at the time just meant like actually having an adventure. Actually following a course which was different from the mainstream, I suppose.
>
> Joshua, Lammas

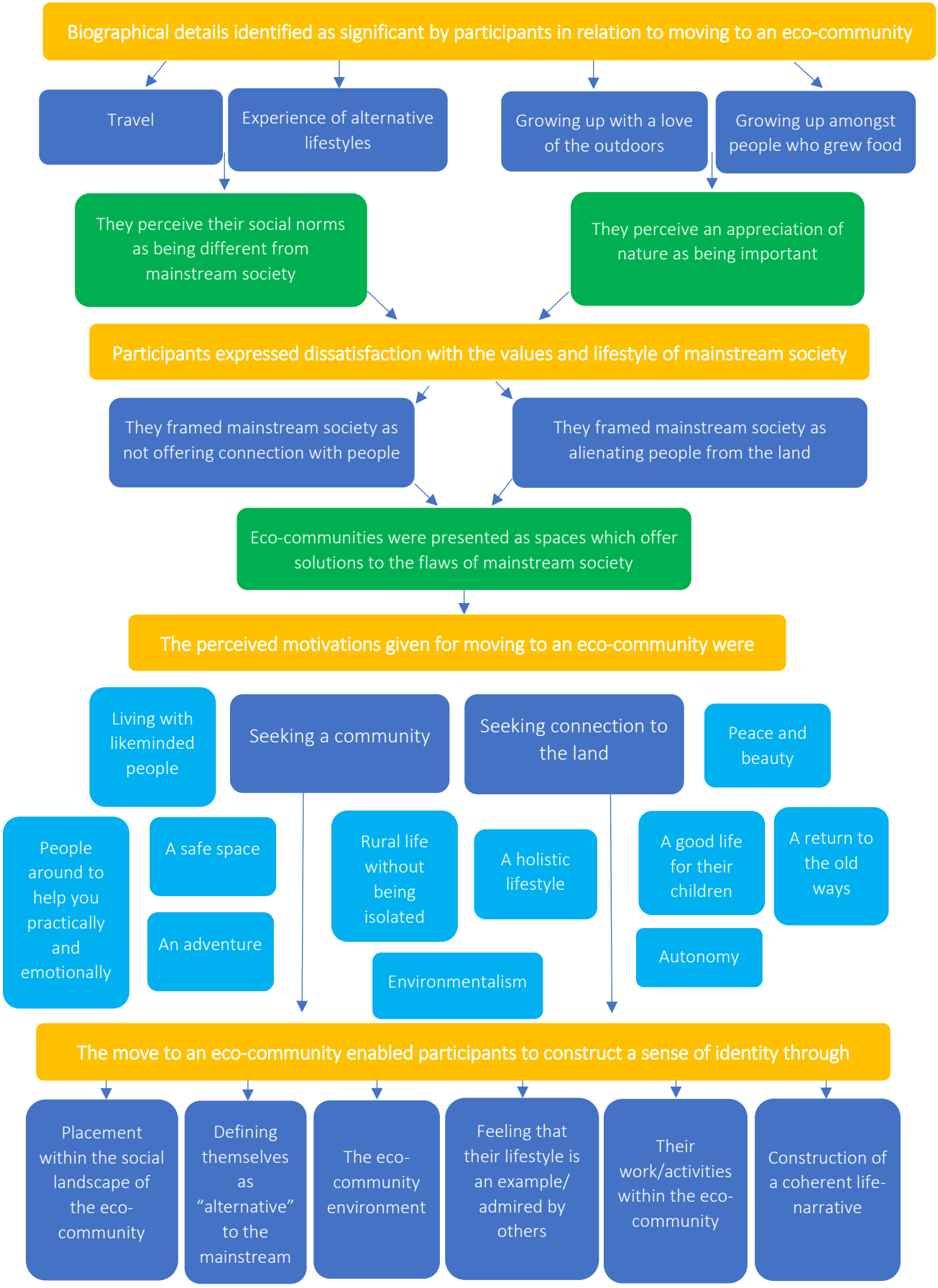
What at first appeared to be a bewildering amount of data, containing a myriad of perceived motivations, values and life experiences, began to settle into a coherent pattern as I started to comprehend how the numerous, complex and interlinked data gathered fitted into the outline of a broader narrative. Participants' stories were often told out of chronological sequence, and sometimes re-constructed during the interview ('as you ask a question, I kind of pose an answer in one way, and then you think: actually […]' [Brian, Lammas]); yet, it became evident that participants were linking together life events, values and perceived motivations to *construct coherent narratives.*

Figure 5 summarises the narrative that participants tended to construct in terms of the values, motivations and sense of identity, both before and after moving to an eco-community. The structure of this chapter reflects *Figure 5*, whilst also demonstrating some of the key ways in which different perceived motivations were interlinked.

Attention is drawn to where there were striking differences between the three communities, however (perhaps in an effort to form my own coherent narrative), I have focussed on what participants had in common, rather than what set them apart.

This chapter begins by describing and discussing the life events which were frequently mentioned by participants, before exploring the two perceived motivations which were central to participants' narratives: *a desire to connect with likeminded people*, and *a desire to connect with the land*. For each, it is shown that the typified narrative is that mainstream society restricts people's ability to connect, whereas life in an eco-community enables connection. Within the section 'Connecting with the land', sub-headed sections illustrate and discuss how participants interlinked other perceived motivations with *connection with the land and/or people* to form a coherent narrative. In the final section, 'Identity', it is argued that participants construct a sense of identity through perceiving themselves as different from mainstream society, being and acting within the eco-community environment, being situated within a social landscape and finally, through the act of narration itself.

Figure 5: Moving to an eco-community – the narrative



Biographical commonalities

Participants tended to emphasise similar biographical details when narrating the process of their move to an eco-community.

Sixteen (out of twenty-three) participants brought up being in touch with nature as children, most commonly through experiencing growing their own food, or through what participant Donna (Cavendish House) referred to as an 'outdoorsy' childhood. This reflects Wallbridge's observation that many community dwellers felt that their community life was reminiscent of their childhoods (2011, pp.203-204). A large body of research demonstrates the strong link between children's regular contact with the natural world and a love of nature and positive environmental ethic (White, 2004), which may suggest that these early experiences did play a role in participants' desire for eco-community life.

Nineteen participants mentioned that they had travelled prior to living in an eco-community. Victoria travelled around Africa as a child, due to her father's work. Nick studied martial arts in China. Joshua walked the coasts of England and Ireland, and cycled around parts of Western Europe. For most participants, experiences of travel were mentioned without much elaboration; though for some, travel was featured within their narratives as a means of comparing differences and similarities between their own culture (Reisinger, 2013, p.140) thereby encouraging them to question their way of living, as Rose articulated:

> It's very easy, if you live in a small English community, to think: "This is how it should be done. This is how life is lived." And it's not true. You know, there are a million ways of living, of which British and suburban living is one […]
>
> Rose, Cavendish House

Furthermore, 20 participants reported having an unusual upbringing or lifestyle before moving to an eco-community. Joseph (Lammas) was raised 'on the poverty line' by a 'radical, left-wing, single, female parent' in Greenham Common Peace Camp (a long-term protest camp against nuclear weapons); Samantha was brought up in a rurally isolated area by parents who were artists; and Nick and Melanie lived off-grid as raw vegans in Spain. For many, the move to an eco-community was *not* presented as having a large normative disruption in their lives:

> *(Referring to life in an eco-community)*
>
> Yeah a bit tougher physically, no creature comforts. Yeah, that's fine, that doesn't bother me at all. […] I lived in a snowhole for one winter of my life, so this is kind of… OK.
>
> Brian, Lammas

These findings are in line with Kirby's (2004) observation that many ecovillage dwellers were involved in social/environmental activism prior to moving to Ithaca Ecovillage, as many of the alternative life trajectories in this study tended to involve this type of activism in some format. However, this study expands upon Kirby's finding, showing the wide variety of alternative norms that people drew upon as part of their narrative. Their life journeys were presented as a continuation of values which often involved an a-typical childhood, unusual living and/or working situations and social/environmental activism. This framing of their earlier lives enabled participants to form a continuous narrative about their move to an eco-community (Giddens, 1991, p.53). Their a-typical earlier lives provided a contrast to "mainstream" life, which was framed as both flawed and undesirable.

Seeking community

Overall, seeking a community was signified as the most important motive for participants when moving to an eco-community. I interpreted nine participants as depicting community-seeking as their primary concern, with almost all others acknowledging community-life as a positive contributing factor in their decision to move. This section will illustrate that many participants indicated that there was something lacking in their social circle before moving to an eco-community, and that almost all participants presented the norms and values of society as different to their own, and restrictive to forming communities. Finally, this section will look at the diverse ways in which participants valued community life.

Disillusionment: community and social norms

Baumeister *et al.* noted that joining a social movement is sometimes a method of seeking new significant relationships after previous social attachments have lapsed (2000, p.244), and indeed, it was the case that nine participants were divorced prior to moving to their eco-community, with some referencing the move as related to the breakdown of their relationship. Furthermore, this study showed that the seeking of community was not only due to social attachments lapsing, but due to perceived unsatisfactory social bonds: seven participants reported feeling like a misfit within their old social circle (e.g. 'I'm the black sheep of the family' [Adam, Pendragon Community], 'most of [my friends] thought I was a bit of a weirdo already anyway' [Donna, Cavendish House]). This was

especially true of Pendragon Community members, who, as well as identifying with their community, identified themselves as part of the Glastonbury community, a place which Laura referred to as 'a town of outsiders'.

Participants almost universally criticised mainstream society, with some labelling it as 'crazy' (Laura, Pendragon Community) and 'fucked up' (Adam, Pendragon Community). On the whole, participants presented the mainstream normative lifestyle as a trap, which both stifled and failed to represent who they were, wrongly prioritised money and work, and stunted human connections. Donna spoke of feeling alienated from the consumerist values of her social circle, prior to her move:

> the social groups I was mixing with were all about cars and holidays and money… being flash, and I just… started thinking how silly they all were and, and, I just was less and less impressed with, with all the bling, and… the Essex lifestyle.
>
> Donna, Cavendish House

Donna's attitude, which was reflected by many other participants, is illustrative of Inglehart's concept of postmaterialism, and so lends further weight to the theory that postmaterialists are core supporters of the environmental movement (Inglehart, 1981). William presented life in his eco-community as offering a greater connection with others. He contrasted this with cites and 'modern life', thereby defining his lifestyle through a comparison:

> there is definitely this thing, more so here, of people looking out for people […] in the community, you know. Er, and that, kind of soulless-ness, hasn't totally happened here, that is so apparent in the cities, or in that kind of way of modern life.
>
> William, Lammas

Similarly, Adam favourably compared community life with mainstream society, representing his community as a remedy to the lack of family connection in society:

> You know, a lot of people feel they want family, you know it's like our society leaves people without family. It's, it, um… it breaks up families and, you know the old system of family life is, um, no longer there.
>
> […]
>
> there is a huge positive benefit to living this way, you know, we do have that family […]
>
> Adam, Pendragon Community

Overall, participants expressed a dissatisfaction with the perceived priority given to money-making

and materialism in society, and felt that society did not support the forming of strong communities or families. Some specifically linked these two ideas together ('with industrialisation and the ability to move about, and jobs you take, it's broken up as I mentioned, the extended family' [Lawrence, Cavendish House]), although most did not. In either case, participants represented mainstream norms as not providing a 'satisfactory structure for behaviour' (Della Porta and Diani, 1999, p.6) thereby setting the narrative up for eco-community life to offer a better alternative.

The meaning of community

Community was depicted as being of vital importance to participants, although how community was valued differed widely. The phrase "looking for likeminded people" was common, along with the desire to find a family. This idea of family was especially strong in Pendragon Community, which, with just twelve residents, was the closest in size to a traditional family, with members who had been drawn to the community and to Glastonbury in part because they felt like "misfits". The notion of living in the countryside without being isolated was also often expressed. For some, such as Sandra (Cavendish House), the community represented safety: 'And for me the security here was very important […] my own personal circumstances were not that brilliant, so it was fantastic'. For others, conversely, the move to the community represented an adventure: 'I guess this lifestyle isn't for everybody, but […] Just give it a go, have a bit of adventure in your life' (Donna, Cavendish House). Some mentioned the pragmatic aspect of community-life, pointing out that many jobs are easier when shared. Several thought of communities as a practical way to live more sustainably, through actions such as growing food or sharing utilities. A few participants articulated their interest in community as ideological. Lawrence (Cavendish House) believed the nuclear family to be too small, which was an impression that had stayed with him ever since the death of his father, when he was a child. He said: 'I believe the idea of this place is what attracts me, and […] whoever's here, in a sense, is secondary to that.' Adam (Pendragon Community) also viewed community life as beneficial on an ideological level, perceiving it as a way to confront personal and interpersonal difficulties, and as a way for the public to better resist manipulation by organisations:

> Well the benefits are that you learn to live with each other […] when you have a difficulty with some other individual in society, er, it… you're gonna have the same skillset that you've learnt at home, that you will naturally use to deal with that. […] there's less fear of other people, and there's more valuing of other people. And you're less vulnerable to the manipulations of powerful people and organisations that have some interest in controlling us, which seems to be a major problem in society.
>
> Adam, Pendragon Community

The varied ways in which participants thought about communities shows the subtle diversities within just one perceived motivation (community-seeking). In the next section, the role of community will be further explored in relation to the concept of *connecting with the land*.

Seeking connection with the land

This section firstly explores the ways in which participants reported feeling alienated from their surroundings prior to their move. Secondly, it investigates how moving to an eco-community allowed participants to connect with the land, exploring how this key motivation was interlinked with other values, including community, a holistic lifestyle, a sense of autonomy and environmentalism. Throughout this section the role of community is referenced when relevant, as participants frequently articulated community living as enabling or being an innate part of the aforementioned values.

Disillusionment: alienation from the land

Many participants framed mainstream society as not allowing connection to the land. To some, having this connection was presented as being vital to their sense of self.

> […] we use chemicals on our baths to clean them, that says very clearly on the label that it kills fish and frogs. It's harmful to aquatic life, and we flush it down the plughole […] so my parents are intelligent people, and they make choices that they have to push down, and as a result they are unhappy, you know… to some degree.
>
> Laura, Pendragon Community

In Laura's narrative, this denial of the damage people are doing to the natural world was linked with damage to people's mental health. Personal health and the health of the planet were connected. Joshua presented mainstream life as leaving him detached from the physical world, and conversely, eco-community life as allowing him to reconnect:

> […] if you're cold, or, in the mainstream, you press a button and your house warms up, whereas, out here, if you're cold, you've got to chop wood, and you've got to know how to light a fire. You've got to know how to keep wood dry […]
>
> Joshua, Lammas

Participants commonly presented societal structures as unsupportive of their desire to live closely with the land:

> to be able to live on the land in this country is challenging because, you know, because basically if you buy a piece of land you've got, you can only legally allowed to stay on it for 28 days of the year.
>
> […]
>
> It boggles the mind, it's just like, you can't actually be indigenous on this land in this country. There's so much resistance to it. […] the reality of it is hyper-controlling, because when you do that, you start removing yourself from… the distractions, and the market-place, basically, and the money […]
>
> Nick, Pendragon Community

Nick viewed the legal impediments to 'indigenous' living as a purposeful obstruction to keep the population from becoming distracted from a capitalist lifestyle. This is consistent with Touraine's argument that the aim of new movements is to 'defend civil society against encroachment from the increasingly technocratic state' (Scott, 1990, p.17). In this sense, eco-communities are represented as a defended space, set apart from the lifestyle and values of the 'technocratic state'.

Connecting with the land

This desire to connect with the land, either practically or spiritually, permeated the narratives of participants within all three communities, and was often mentioned as a motivator which stemmed from positive childhood experiences with nature and food growing. Most participants in rural eco-communities mentioned with pleasure the peace, quiet and beauty that they associated with rural living:

> I love trees and flowers and butterflies and good food and clean water and silent nights and, you know, all these things… that's what's good in life for me.
>
> Steven, Lammas

Many also articulated an interest in food production.

> *And when you first came here, what […] appealed to you about it?*
>
> […] living with a lot of like-minded people, um, being able to live a greener life […] And, you know, all the opportunities there are here, you know to milk cows and make cheese […]
>
> Victoria, Pendragon Community

Connecting with the land sub-topic: community

Participants commonly linked *community* and having a *connection with the land* together, though did so in several different ways. To Nick, nature itself was presented as a supportive community:

> […] it's the community of life beyond the non-human, where like […] you always get that sense of support, you know, just being around like massive trees […]
>
> Nick, Pendragon Community

David narrated his desire to connect with the land as being awakened *through* community, when he stayed in Tipi Valley, living with a community of people who expressed values which appealed to him:

> the relationship which the people and the community had with the land base […] was one of total respect and love. And, as a result they lived a very low impact, very light… lifestyle, that was, yeah, really in harmony with the natural rhythms, and I found that incredibly rewarding […]
>
> David, Lammas

Conversely, Heather saw food growing as a way of building a community, viewing the land as a means to bringing communities together:

> I […] realised how nice and how good for a lot of people around you, and yourself, it is to be growing food. Um, community-wise, I mean, that's the crux of it, it's getting people involved, it's getting people's hands dirty, it's – teaching the kids […]
>
> Heather, Lammas

The frequency with which connection to the land and connection to other people are featured together does have a pragmatic element: working the land is a difficult task without a community to help, and, if a community is to live out its environmental values, it needs land to work on.

<u>Connecting with the land sub-topic: holism</u>

However, to many participants, the connection between community and the land were part of a wider philosophy on the right way to live: the idea that all elements of life, in particular people and the land, should be connected and cyclical. Joshua articulated a frustration with the perceived fragmented nature of mainstream society:

> Yeah, [mainstream life] didn't appeal, because it was all so fragmented. It was like, where's your old people? Oh they're in the old people's home. Where's all the – where's all the disabled people? Who are just as viable, just as important to understand the whole of life. Oh, they're in the day centre […] actually, everyone can learn everything from everyone […]
>
> Joshua, Lammas

Joshua frames mainstream society as not allowing people to understand 'the whole of life'. To Nick, living "indigenously" (in a community) and living from the land were presented as a natural way of being, and one that he aspired to:

> And growing your own food and having that connection is like, feels like, really like an integral part of it, it's just normal, like… […] indigenous populations […] they're just living on the earth, you know, getting their food from the earth, and like, having their families and growing together and like, evolving culturally, you know, they've got their music and they've got their, like, ceremony and they've got their myth, and they're there […] basically, they're just on the earth […]
>
> Nick, Pendragon Community

All actions are rooted in being 'on the earth', a connection which is both 'integral' and 'normal', and linked to what is perceived as ancient human practices and evolution, indicating a natural and symbiotic relationship with the land. This desire to depend upon and have a harmonious and cyclical relationship with the land was articulated in all eco-communities. Of particular symbolic importance was food production: by growing food, sharing meals and then turning waste (human or otherwise) into compost, residents were able to live their narrative of a holistic life, where people are connected to each other and to the land. This is reflective of Ergas' (2010) observation that ecovillagers' philosophy was 'indicative of the symbiotic, circular relationship ecovillagers perceive as necessary for the survival of the planet' (Ergas, 2010, p.41). This narrative of the connectedness of eco-communities was presented as a solution to the flaws of the mainstream lifestyle, either on a personal or a societal level.

Connecting with the land sub-topic: autonomy

According to new social movements theory the seeking of personal autonomy is a major theme within new movements (Scott, 1990, p.20), and indeed, several participants said that connecting to the land, through food production or otherwise, was empowering. This was especially evident in Lammas, which out of the three communities visited was the only place where people lived in separate buildings, thereby promoting a more individualistic outlook. Nichole (Lammas) said: 'Yeah and you see, it really empowers you. If you know how to grow your own food […]'. Her attitude was echoed by Jeffrey (Cavendish House): 'It's growing your own fruits and vegetables. It's taking control of your own life', and by Joshua (Lammas): 'as soon as you become autonomous, you begin to get your power back, and […] I suppose that's what this kind of lifestyle has given us, is, the feeling of, um, having a bit more power back'. For Heather, the autonomy that her lifestyle allows is presented as having a moral aspect:

> I guess yeah, my mum's kind of taught me to do things for myself, you know […] And I guess, that's… if I want to live in this world, then I feel I should… be able to, without having to involve all these extraordinary, unnecessary amenities, like […] I dunno, getting a packet, a sandwich from a petrol station is like, one of the worst things you could possibly do I guess isn't it […] sustainably-wise. Because it's just dripping in oil isn't it? So just make your own, at home. It doesn't take much.
>
> Heather, Lammas

What Heather (and perhaps Joshua) describe is akin to a deeper kind of autonomy, which challenges the wider societal restrictions on freedom to live more sustainably. As residents are able to control their own means of production (a term used by Joseph, Lammas) they can minimise their engagement with the institutions which do not align with their values, such as the food industry. The eco-community lifestyle therefore is framed as a way to 'release the individual from conditions which are oppressive and constraining' (Scott, 1990, p.20).

Connecting with the land sub-topic: environmentalism

The importance of autonomy was further emphasised when participants spoke about their environmentalist values. Environmentalism as a topic did not come up for long in most interviews, although once it did (sometimes prompted by the interviewer, sometimes not) almost all expressed concerns about the human impact upon the world, and professed sustainability to play an important role in their lifestyle choices, with environmental values being frequently linked to working on the land within a community. To most participants, environmentalism was referred to as a global problem (e.g. 'all the science is really clear, we are… stampeding… towards a cliff as a species' [David, Lammas]) but perceived as something to be tackled on a local scale, in particular with reference to food production. Donna saw her environmental impact upon the land as being local, rather than global, and saw being part of a community as essential to that:

> I also, sort of feel that it doesn't matter how much individuals reduce their carbon footprint or… I just kind of feel that it's never gonna make a difference in the grand scheme of things […] And I feel that being here you can, you can make changes and you can protect countryside, almost, on a local scale, whereas I feel like I can't do that in the bigger picture […]
>
> Donna, Cavendish House

On the whole, participants presented living in an eco-community as giving them greater autonomy and scope to increase their positive environmental impact, and as a means of expressing their environmental values, on both a pragmatic and identity-affirming level:

> from an ecological perspective […] this would be a way of living that we could share in a collective, um, existence and lifestyle, we could grow our own fruits and vegetables. We could dig the earth, we could tread the earth lightly, and leave a small footprint when we pop our clogs and die […]
>
> Jeffrey, Cavendish House

To Jeffrey, life in an eco-community represented a shared ecological lifestyle which involves both a literal digging of the earth, and a metaphorical light footprint upon the earth. His words are a prime example of how life in an eco-community is presented as uniting belief and life (Sargisson, 2001, p.76), supporting a holistic view of life (Ergas, 2010, p.41), an autonomous existence, and as linking environmentalism with connection to the land and community life.

So far, this chapter has analysed the life journeys, motivations and values which participants articulated while talking about moving to an eco-community. Next, this chapter will show how participants wove identity-construction into their narratives.

Identity

In this section it will be argued that the terminal values described thus far (e.g. love of nature) had an identity-forming component to participants, and that being able to act out or live these values within a social network gave participants a sense of affirmation (Gecas, 2000, p.95) which was further reinforced through the approval of outsiders, and shaped by the act of narration.

Self-labelling as "alternative"

Participants frequently defined themselves or their lifestyles as "alternative".

> As [my son] said […] I'm an anomaly […]
>
> Brian, Lammas

> […] my turn of mind was to be an alternative person anyway…
>
> Diana, Cavendish House

This relation to themselves as being set apart from the mainstream – creation of an "us/I" and "them" – becomes a method of identity construction (Della Porta and Diani, 1990, p.87) which reflects participants' disenchantment with mainstream values and norms, thereby harmonising their values with their sense of self. This self-definition as "alternative" was not without self-consciousness. Residents at one eco-community gleefully showed me a video satirising the lifestyle of a so-called "S.N.A.G." (sensitive new age guy) (Whalan, 2016) declaring it to be part of my 'education' on who they were. This video parodied the 'expressive equipment' of "S.N.A.G.s"

including objects, rituals and models of behaviour (Goffman, 1959, p.32; Della Porta and Diani, 1999, p.98). This self-mockery depicted both an awareness and an anxiety about how their identity may be perceived by others – by laughing at themselves they removed power from anyone who might be tempted to do the same. This small event indicated my role as an outsider in reminding participants that they were "different", and that the self-reflecting environment that they lived in was a microcosm which could be intruded upon. In the next section this link between environment and sense of self will be further explored.

The environment as a means of identity construction

Wallbridge's (2011) observation (featured in the literature review) that moving to an eco-community gave individuals an opportunity to re-imagine themselves, reflected the perceived experiences of participants in this study, who placed a strong emphasis on the environment as self-forming:

> And I think in all honesty, that, the driver for me was to… get out of the city […] I was losing the ability to be… sure of myself, you know, in that sort of place, and… yeah, things can look very black […]
>
> William, Lammas

William linked his inability to be sure of himself to his environment twice ('get out of the city […] in that sort of place') which indicates that he saw the move to the eco-community as allowing him a reduction in uncertainty about his self (Deaux, 2000, p.10). Similarly, Brian expressed very strongly that his environment did not reflect his identity:

> *Yeah, and you've kind of said like, that this kind of lifestyle is sort of "who you are." When you were living in _____, did you ever have a feeling of dissonance between –*
>
> Yes.
>
> *who you are, and –*
>
> Yes.
>
> *what you were doing?*
>
> That's an easy question, I can do that. Yeah, yeah, very much so. Yeah, yeah, it didn't feel very comfortable.
>
> Brian, Lammas

The idea of *discomfort* – which evokes the idea of physical misplacement – was also articulated by Donna (Cavendish House), who described her lifestyle not matching her values as 'uncomfortable'. In response to this perceived lack of congruence with their surroundings, many participants described a process of seeking an environment which suited them, e.g. Laura, Rose and Martin visited various

communities; William, Victoria and Donna volunteered at farms and communities to experience life there. Markus and Nurius (1986) view this type of activity as trying out alternative possible selves, a process which Jeffrey described when narrating how his exploration of alternative lifestyles was a journey to find who he was:

> […] I started to read avidly about alternative lifestyles, alternative religions, so I'm, I'm actually on a mission to find me, really, you know, having been brought up for eighteen years with a family, er, a little bit stifled. You move away, and you try and find yourself.
>
> Jeffrey, Cavendish House

Jeffrey furthermore expressed how arriving at his eco-community allowed him to reconnect with a part of himself:

> On the day I walked in through the gate, was the day I realised that this – I'd drifted away from my dream *(laughs)*
>
> *Ibid*

Jeffrey linked the house and grounds with an internal desire, demonstrating that he saw the self, the environment, and with it, a way of living, as being connected. The eco-communities were articulated as a means by which Jeffrey, and many other participants, were able to realise their identities (Gamson, 1992, p.56) through 'giving material form to a narrative of self-identity' (Giddens, 1991, p.81).

Similarly, some participants also linked the work they did within the eco-community with their identity. When speaking of working on the land, Steven (Lammas) said: 'it's what I do, it's what I know, it's what I am'. Physically working with the land is a symbolic and literal expression of the connection to the land which so many participants articulated as important. The next section looks at the equally significant perceived role that participant's communities played in identity-forming.

Placement in a social landscape

The *community* aspect of eco-community life was depicted as the strongest motivation for most participants, and, according to a symbolic interactionist perspective, played a vital role in participants' identity-forming (Stryker, 2000; Della Porta and Diani, 1990). The link between community and identity was verbalised by some participants, for example, Laura:

> I really appreciate that people talk about spirituality and magic […] to live in a town, where that's just sort of accepted […] makes me feel so… at home. And, just… I just always felt when I came here I was able to be my best self. […] if you live in a community […] that is not like that, then you have to

> keep a part of yourself quiet and hidden, and not be too exuberant and, and yourself essentially.
>
> Laura, Pendragon Community

Laura's expresses that environment matching her inner self enables her to 'be [her] best self', indicating that her identity is a construction which responds to her social landscape, as Della Porta and Diani state: 'the production of identities corresponds to the emergence of new networks of relationships of trust among movement actors' (1990, pp.87-88). Laura presents her feeling of security within her community as allowing her to reveal a part of herself that was previously 'quiet and hidden', and she views her identity as *matching* to her social environment. Heather has a slightly different view, situating herself as fitting into a community where people have different roles:

> […] we want to buy some land, with some people […] your butcher and your baker and… you know… your candlestick maker *(laughs).* That would be the dream, isn't it?
>
> Heather, Lammas

Her identity as a food grower would be different to that of the 'butcher […] baker and […] candlestick maker', and yet this difference would allow her to have her place within the community. This reference to traditional roles (however tongue-in-cheek) shows that Heather herself has a desire to be traditional – to fit into the social landscape, to have a place in society.

Identity affirmation: part of a social movement

However, although being part of the immediate community was clearly important to participants, none identified what they were doing as being part of the wider environmental movement. Despite expressing strong environmental values, none labelled themselves as "environmentalists", "hippies" or any other "green" label that would categorise them as being part of a broader social group. In fact, these labels were generally referenced in order to reject them:

> it's not something I wear as a badge, you know […] we just both want to do something about that in our own little way without, um, you know… wearing home-spun loin-cloths, sort of thing, which, you know, you do get a lot of, hard-line, fundamentalist types attracted to this way of life as well, you know, doing everything with a billhook by candlelight… fair play to them, but, er, you know… it's not about that for me.
>
> Steven, Lammas

Steven's reference to 'home-spun loin-cloths' is in-keeping with Black and Cherrier's finding that those who engage in pro-environmental behaviours reject the label or identity of "conservationist"

due to a fear of being 'stigmatized as a crazy person' (2010). Perhaps this is to be expected from individuals who presented themselves as seeking a community – a third of whom also referred to themselves as being outsiders previously – they present their goal as social cohesion, rather than the conflict and stigma that a controversial label might bring.

Group identity was presented as being based upon the community, rather than a broader environmental movement, with each community having its own distinct identity; an aspect that befits new social movement theory, which states that new social movements emphasise individuality (Scott, 1990, p.30). For some participants, being a part of this movement, through being perceived as an example to others, offered further affirmation of their sense of self. New social movements are not characterised by ideological participation (Della Porta and Diani, 1990, p.12), but instead attempt to bring about change by changing values and developing alternative lifestyles (Scott, 1990, p.17). Indeed, Lammas was not holding rallies with speeches, but instead was inviting interested people to take guided tours of the land and smallholdings. Out of the three communities visited, participants from Lammas were the most passionate about being perceived as an example, as the community had been conceived as a blueprint that others could copy:

> *how important was it to you that this place could be seen as an example to others […]?*
>
> It was always designed from the outset to be a flagship project, yeah. Because, you know, nine people moving out of the city into some fields in Pembrokeshire's not gonna change a thing. But if we can inspire ninety, or nine hundred, or nine thousand or ninety thousand people to do it, we're in with a chance.
>
> David, Lammas

Overall, 16 out of 23 participants felt that their lifestyle could serve as an example to others, a finding that is congruent with previous studies (Fischetti, 2008; Ergas, 2008; Kasper, 2008). Members of the longest-running community, Cavendish House, were least enthused about their way of life as an example, perhaps due to the cynicism and ideological fatigue that occurs over time. Several participants articulated how the admiration of others gave them a strong sense of affirmation in terms of what they were doing:

> there's a terrible tendency […] [to] not have a view of what you've achieved. People coming on tours, showing people round, you know […] there's a kind of a pat on the back sort of thing going on, it's, er… really healthy, you know, I didn't know I needed it until we started to get it, and then I, find it very positive to see it. […] it is reflected in other people's eyes particularly.
>
> William, Lammas

William depicts his identity as an ecovillager as being played out within a social network (Stryker, 2000, p.6), and reflected back to him 'in other people's eyes'. Being an example to others, and representing a positively perceived way of life is expressed as gratifying to him. Every community opened themselves to the public in some format, either through tours, local events, or, of course, through allowing researchers to come and visit. By differentiating themselves from the world, and being recognised by it, the residents categorised themselves, thereby reinforcing their identity as members of their community (Calhoun, 1994). The interview process during this research was in fact another example of such differentiation and recognition, therefore meaning that, during the interviews, identity construction was an act of co-creation between interviewer and interviewee.

Self-identity through narrative

During the research it became evident that participants formed a version of themselves at the time of the interview through constructing their narratives (Hards, 2011). According to Giddens, identity is to be found within the capacity to keep a particular narrative going (1991, p.54). By attributing themselves with consistent and congruent values and motivations, contextualised within what were presented as relevant life events, participants were constructing and presenting a coherent identity. Some participants were particularly reflexive about the link between self-narrative and self-identity, none more so than Joshua. To him, a central theme of his life was finding his sense of self, which he articulated as "finding his story":

> *[…] what does the term "finding your story" mean to you?*
>
> Um… finding my story at the time just meant like actually having an adventure. Actually following a course which was different from the mainstream, I suppose. Because that's all I'd ever really known, and that's kind of… I felt, doomed, in a way, to follow that course. And, finding my story… ended up me being a poet for a long time, writing about the things that really meant a lot to me, and I begun to perform with that, I began to travel with that, and it was a means of, kind of meeting people, and everything.
>
> Joshua, Lammas

Joshua's narration touches upon many of the key points discussed in this chapter. His conscious definition of himself as different from the 'mainstream' is an identity-forming act (Della Porta and Diani, 1990, p.87). Through 'being a poet' (another self-definition) he expressed his sense of self ('writing about the things that really meant a lot to me') and *performs* this version of himself ('I begun to perform with that'). According to his narrative, this performance was linked with travel and meeting people – in other words, this sense of self was tied to his environment and his social

landscape. All of this is described as “finding his story” – constructing an identity through a narrative, which Joshua then re-constructed (or perhaps constructed for the first time) during this interview. Joshua’s words indicate identity as something which is negotiated and emergent (Scott, 2015, p.76) and based upon constructing a coherent narrative (Giddens, 1991; Hards, 2011). By making sense of their stories, participants made sense of themselves.

Chapter Five. Conclusion

> […] it's a story that I'm never tired of telling […]
>
> Lawrence, Cavendish House

Conclusions

This research aimed to explore and analyse the narratives that people form for their motivations for moving to an eco-community, in particular looking at how they present and interconnect their life circumstances, motivations and values, and how this informs a sense of identity.

The literature review showed that whilst some studies had given superficial lists of motivations for moving to an eco-community, almost none had situated these motivations within a broader life narrative, or related identity construction to such a narrative. By drawing together research, the literature review argued that the narratives of moving to an eco-community would serve an identity-forming function.

Although participants' narratives were diverse, there were clear commonalities, summarised here:

> I've always felt like the weirdest women in the village […]
>
> Laura, Pendragon Community

Participants identified similar biographical details as being significant to their narratives, in particular: a love of the outdoors stemming from childhood, an unconventional upbringing, experiences of travel, and exploration of alternative lifestyles. The former biographical detail aligned participants' current values with their childhood values; and the latter three details distanced participants from mainstream society, presenting them as unusual, and in the case of those who travelled, observers of different cultures.

> […] we are… stampeding… towards a cliff as a species […]
>
> David, Lammas

Participants framed mainstream society as deeply flawed, with the most common criticisms being that it is environmentally unsustainable, places too much emphasis on materialism, divides families and communities, does not allow connection with the land, and traps people within a system of work. These observations build upon the participants' self-images as outsiders, who rejected the values of mainstream society.

> […] there is a huge positive benefit to living this way […]
>
> Adam, Pendragon Community

The perceived flaws of mainstream society became the narrative foil against which eco-communities could be favourably contrasted, enabling participants to make sense of their narrative of moving to an eco-community as a journey from disempowerment to autonomy, alienation to connection and discontentment to contentment.

> […] it all just blurs into one […]
>
> Steven, Lammas

The perceived motivations for moving to an eco-community were numerous, though they all centred around two overarching themes: *connecting with a likeminded community*, and *connecting to the land*. Participants frequently connected perceived motivations together, e.g. *environmentalism* was linked with *autonomy.* The two overarching themes (*connecting with a likeminded community*, and *connecting to the land*) were regularly related to one another. Similarly, pragmatic motivations were congruent with spiritual or value-based motivations e.g. growing food was perceived as financially practical, spiritually fulfilling and good for the environment. By drawing together these different motivations, participants formed a narrative from which they could construct a coherent sense of identity.

> […] I'm actually on a mission to find me, really […]
>
> Jeffrey, Cavendish House

This sense of identity was constructed in-part through self-definition as being "alternative" from the mainstream, which is consistent with participants' narratives of unusual upbringings or lifestyles. Participants related to their eco-communities as spaces for constructing a sense of identity, and presented the activities which they did there as identity-forming. The social landscape also played an important role in identity construction and consolidation, with some participants framing their sense of self in terms of their placement within the community, and the majority of participants viewing their way of life as an example to others, although this was within the context of their community, rather than being part of a wider environmental movement. This perceived social approval from others was a means for participants to consolidate their sense of self, and their constructed narrative was furthermore significant in identity-formation.

This dissertation contributes several new findings to the body of research on eco-communities. It has significantly embellished upon previous research, including: investigating which biographical events individuals perceive as significant within the context of their move to an eco-community; exploring how these individuals perceive the norms and values of mainstream society; and demonstrating how the motivations given for moving to an eco-community interlink, and can in fact be categorised under two overarching themes of *connecting with a likeminded community*, and *connecting to the land.* Most of all, this dissertation contextualises all of this information within a typified narrative that individuals give for moving to an eco-community, which, it has been argued, has an identity-forming function.

Although this research was not conducted with the aim of coming up with practical recommendations, I believe that there are some which can be made on the basis of this dissertation's findings. Through understanding the constructed narratives of those who have moved to eco-communities, we can have greater insight into what narratives of engaging in pro-environmental behaviours may be attractive to others. The findings of this research suggest that projects which encourage connection to the local community and to local green spaces are appealing, and that such projects should avoid labelling themselves as part of an environmental movement, as people tend to disassociate themselves from this label. As forming narratives around spaces, actions, or within a social network can be identity-forming, and as it has been found that identity-related factors shape pro-environmental practices (Hards, 2011, p.766), encouraging people to form a narrative from taking part in projects, e.g. by keeping a blog, or inviting the local press to report upon projects, would further enable individuals to incorporate caring about the environment into their constructed identity, thereby arguably inspiring them to participate in further pro-environmental activities.

Limitations

Having already mentioned methodological limitations in 'Chapter Three. Methodology', I will focus upon empirical and theoretical limitations.

Each eco-community had their own unique atmosphere and ethos, and tended to attract (or perhaps mould) a certain type of person. It was a limitation of this study that the nuance of how each community may have shaped participants' responses was not fully conveyed. Furthermore, the effects of age, gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity were not explored. All of these topics are worthy of further research.

Another limitation is the difficulty of reflecting 23 participants' experiences effectively. Given the subject of this research, I am aware that this dissertation is itself a narrative, in fact, *a narrative of narratives*. As such, those whose stories had elements which were not perceived as reflecting the majority of participants' experiences were not represented. By necessity this research presents a simplified version of the diverse narratives that participants gave.

As has been mentioned, this research adopts an interpretivist perspective, viewing identity as 'negotiated, emergent and adaptable' (Scott, 2015, p.76), and as shaped by environmental and social contexts (Stryker, 2000). Gluck criticises this perspective as 'almost wholly impervious to the more complex, more problematic discourse on consciousness' (1993, p.217). It is not within the scope of this study to engage with this topic, yet it will be noted here that the use of one sociological perspective inevitably limits the interpretation of the data.

Suggestions for further research

This dissertation has focussed upon the manner in which participants' stories linked to make a coherent narrative. However, there were some elements of contradiction either between different participants, or within individual participant's narratives, which warrant further investigation. For example, a number of participants perceived the move to an eco-community as a return to their rural roots *and* as a novel adventure; further, some participants viewed eco-community life as a return to a traditional way of living *and* as "the future". These contradictory tensions in participants' narratives would be worth exploring. Moreover, there were some actions (in particular, in relation to environmentalism) which did not fit with participants' self-constructed identity, and were uncomfortable for participants to relate, e.g. shopping for certain items at the supermarket. It would be interesting to research how participants reconcile actions and values which do not fit into their narrative, and so disrupt their sense of self.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information

Anonymised name	Gender	Age Group	Interview length (minutes)	Eco-community	Interview location/activity	Primary motivation for move to an eco-community (as interpreted by interviewer)	Love of nature prior to move	Farming / outdoors background	Travel prior to move	Unconventional lifestyle prior to move
Adam	Male	60 - 69	79	Pendragon Community	Sitting in the art studio.	Seeking family	No	No	Yes	Yes
Brian	Male	50 - 59	35	Lammas	Had a cup of tea sitting in a shady spot outside his caravan, looking over his land.	Autonomy?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
David	Male	40 - 49	53	Lammas	Sitting on a bench overlooking a garden	Spirituality	Yes	Yes	Somewhat	Yes
Diana	Female	90 +	28	Cavendish House	In Diana's living room.	Anti-authoritariansim	No	Yes	No	Yes
Donna	Female	40 - 49	45	Cavendish House	In the kitchen while Donna cooked, helping her out by spiralising courgettes.	Adventure-seeking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Heather	Female	30 - 39	56	Lammas	Sat on a picnic bench outside their dwelling.	Community, environmentalism	Yes	No	Somewhat	Yes
Hugo	Male	60 - 69	28	Cavendish House	Sitting on a picnic bench in the garden.	Adventure-seeking	No	Yes	Don't know	No
Jeffrey	Male	60 - 69	41	Cavendish House	Sitting on a picnic bench in the garden.	Seeking community, amongst other things	Yes	Yes	Somewhat	Yes
Joseph	Male	40 - 49	97	Lammas	In his caravan while Joseph chopped onions and watched his juicer. Then, after Joseph's son came in, needing to use the table, we moved to a volunteer's caravan.	Autonomy, efficiency	No	Yes	Somewhat	Yes
Joshua	Male	30 - 39	56	Lammas	Sat on a picnic bench outside their dwelling.	Autonomy, holism	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Laura	Female	30 - 39	41	Pendragon Community	In the studio room, on one of the sofas.	Seeking community	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Lawrence	Male	80 - 89	54	Cavendish House	Sitting on a picnic bench in the garden.	Seeking community, but in a more ideological sense	No	No	Yes	Yes
Martha	Female	30 - 39	67	Lammas	When I arrived I had a short tour of the land with Martha. I helped her look after a baby she was babysitting, pick some wild strawberries and mind a dog. We walked down to the foundations of their house where I met Steven. Martha made us all a cup of tea, and we sat on some plastic seats outdoors and did the interview there. Partway through Martha took the baby for a walk, and then returned.	Seeking community	Yes	Yes	Somewhat	No
Martin	Male	70 - 79	33	Cavendish House	Sitting on a picnic bench in the garden.	Environmentalism, food production	No	Don't know	Yes	Yes
Melanie	Female	30 - 39	78	Pendragon Community	In the studio room, sitting on the floor, with some unusual tea.	Seeking community	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nick	Male	30 - 39	78	Pendragon Community	In the studio room, sitting on the floor, with some unusual tea.	Connection to nature through spirituality	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nicole	Female	60 - 69	40	Lammas	Sitting on a picnic bench outside the farmhouse, drinking Nichole's homemade soda water.	Connection to nature, self-sufficiency, spiritualism	Yes	No	Yes	No

Anonymised name	Gender	Age Group	Interview length (minutes)	Eco-community	Interview location/activity	Primary motivation for move to an eco-community (as interpreted by interviewer)	Love of nature prior to move	Farming / outdoors background	Travel prior to move	Unconventional lifestyle prior to move
Rose	Female	60 - 69	42	Cavendish House	In Rose's kitchen/dining room.	Community-seeking, adventure-seeking, environmentalism	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Samantha	Female	60 - 69	32	Cavendish House	Sitting on a picnic bench in the garden.	Affordability, pragmatism	No	Yes	No	Yes
Sandra	Female	80 - 89	30	Cavendish House	While helping Sandra out in the kitchen.	Seeking rural life - farming; also seeking the security of a community	No	Yes	No	Yes
Steven	Male	30 - 39	67	Lammas	When I arrived I had a short tour of the land with Martha. I helped her look after a baby she was babysitting, pick some wild strawberries and mind a dog. We walked down to the foundations of their house where I met Steven. Martha made us all a cup of tea, and we sat on some plastic seats outdoors and did the interview there. Partway through Martha took the baby for a walk, and then returned.	"It's who I am" hard to say - lots of motivations come together	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Victoria	Female	60 - 69	31	Cavendish House	After helping Victoria with making bread, we did the interview sitting on a picnic bench in the garden. Some new picnic benches were being delivered while we spoke.	Seeking a community; wants to farm	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
William	Male	50 - 59	58	Lammas	Picking red currents together on his plot.	Social approval, mental health (which came from lack of community?)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Appendix B: Topic Schedule

Brief opening questions on current living situation

Who do you live here with?

How long have you lived in *X* for?

Life before the eco-community

So you moved here in…? Where did you live before?

Probes:

- Location
- Job
- Lifestyle

Ask about life history as far as seems relevant.

Motivations and transition to the eco-community

Where did your initial interest in living in an intentional community come from?

Prompts:

- How did you find out about intentional communities?
- What was the appeal? Lifestyle, values, practical aspects, social aspects…?

How did you first learn about *X*?

Prompts:

- Did you search for it or hear about it?
- How did you get in touch initially? And then what happened?

What appealed to you about this place?

Probes:

- Lifestyle (what about the lifestyle?)
- Community aspect (“ “)
- Values (“ “)
- Affordability (“ “)

What made you decide that you wanted to live here?

Prompts:

- What was going through your head when you were making that decision?

Probes:

- *(If the participant gives several reasons)* Were there one or two particular reasons which played the biggest role in your decision to move here?

(If topic hasn't come up) How important are environmental values to you?

What did your social circle (friends/family) think of your decision to live there?

Probes:

- Any differing reactions?

Have you kept in touch with your "old" social circle since moving to X?

Probes:

- Why/why not?

Can you describe the process of moving here?

Prompts

- Gaining community's agreement
- What did you do with your possessions? (if you had to downsize)

Probes

- Was it easy?
- What difficulties did you encounter?

After the transition to the ecovillage/community

How has your life changed since moving here?

Probes

- Daily routines of housework/gardening
- Work
- Social life
- Environmental values
- Lifestyle
- Identity

Demographic question

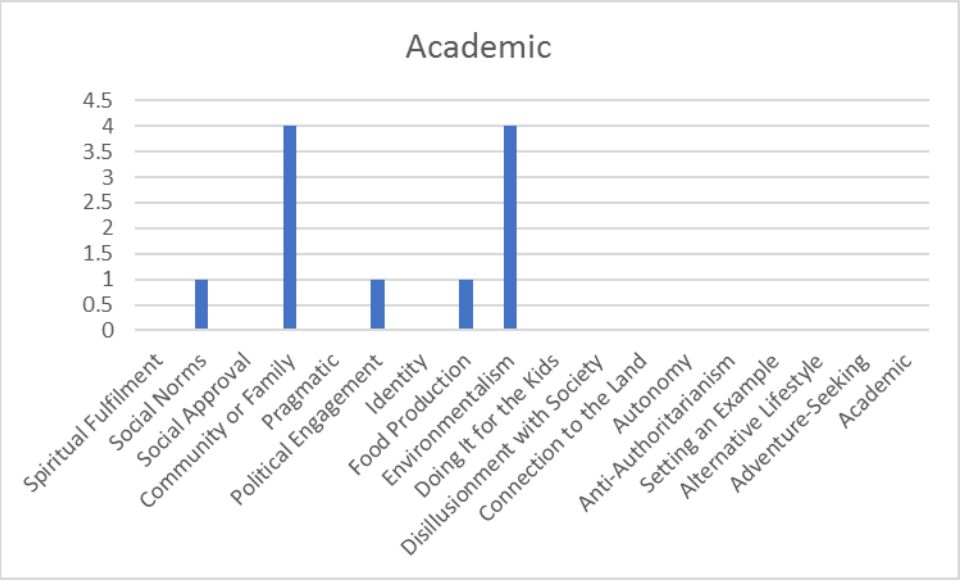
How old are you?

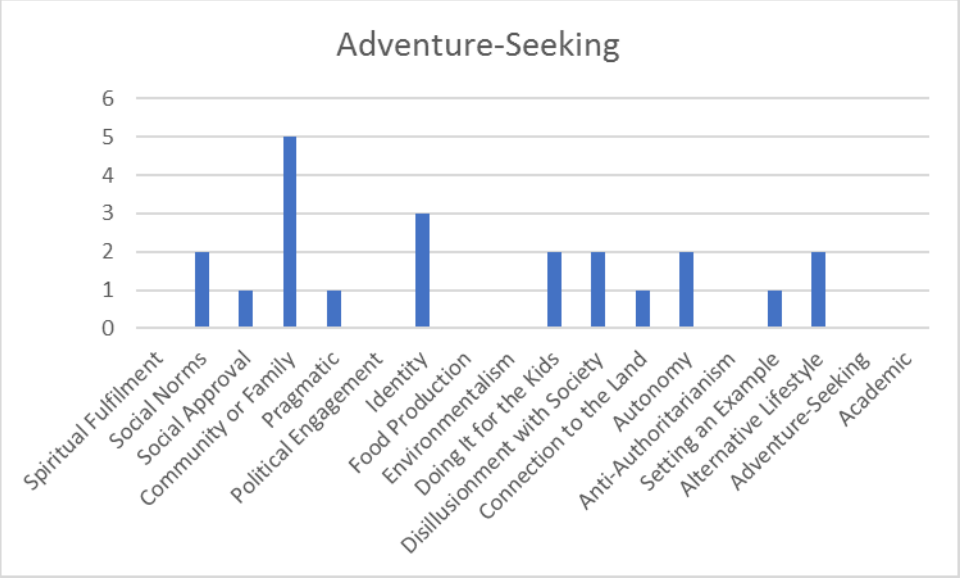
Finally…

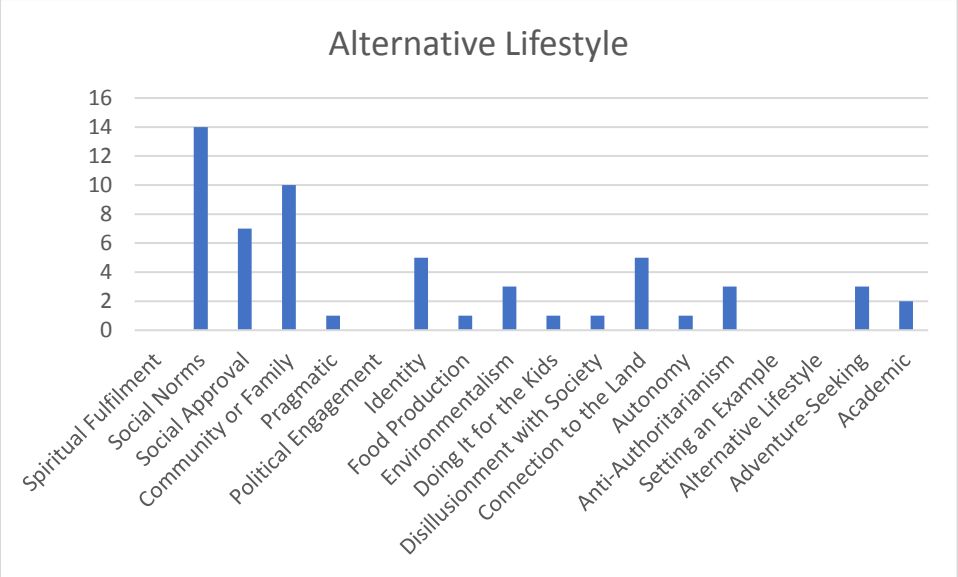
Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix C: Analysis – Interconnection of Themes

As an initial step during the analysis, a content analysis was used to quantify the number of times participants linked one theme to another, either by directly linking the two, or by mentioning them together. The bar charts below show how many times each theme was related to each of the other themes. This activity helped initially identifying how the prevalent themes were connected, and was also useful in justifying the consolidation of some very similar themes together.



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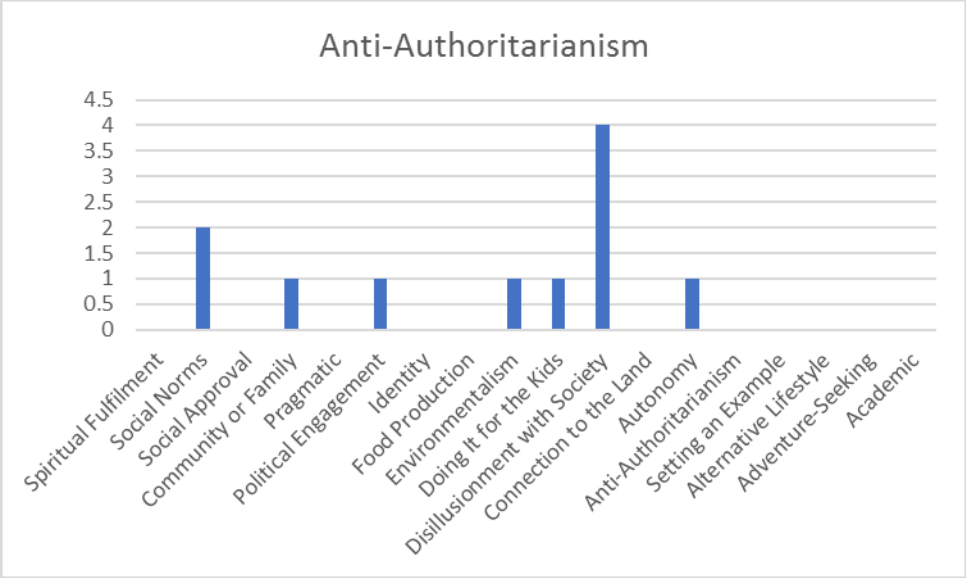
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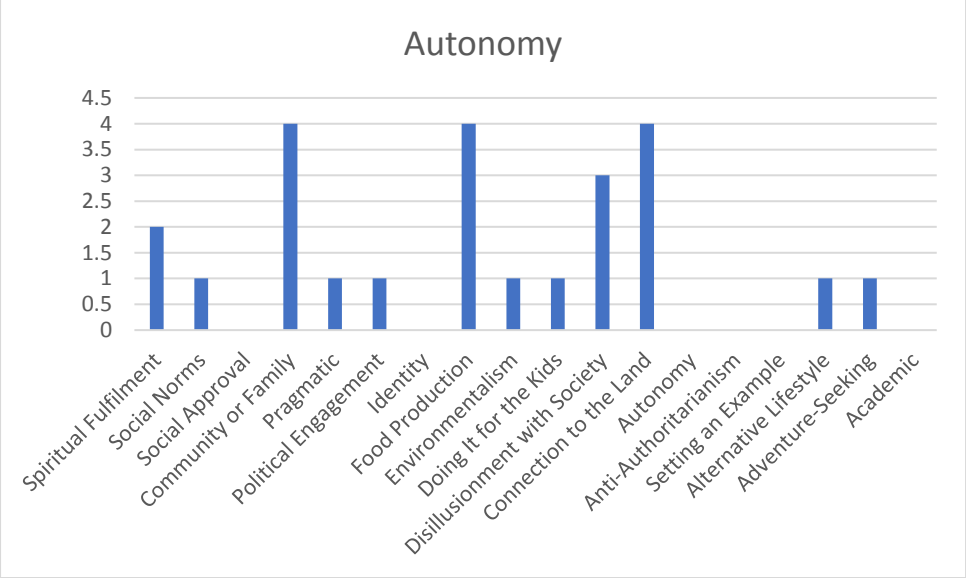
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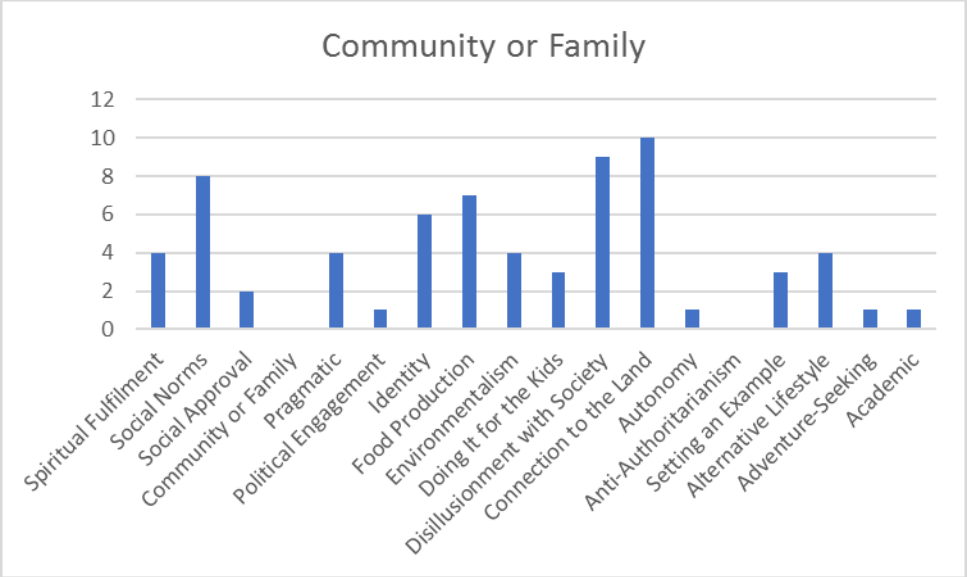
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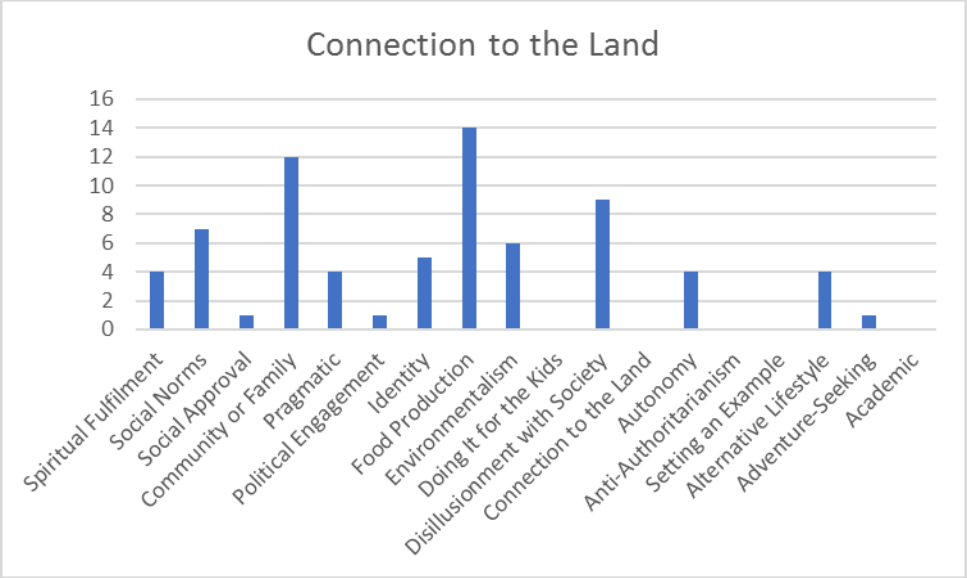
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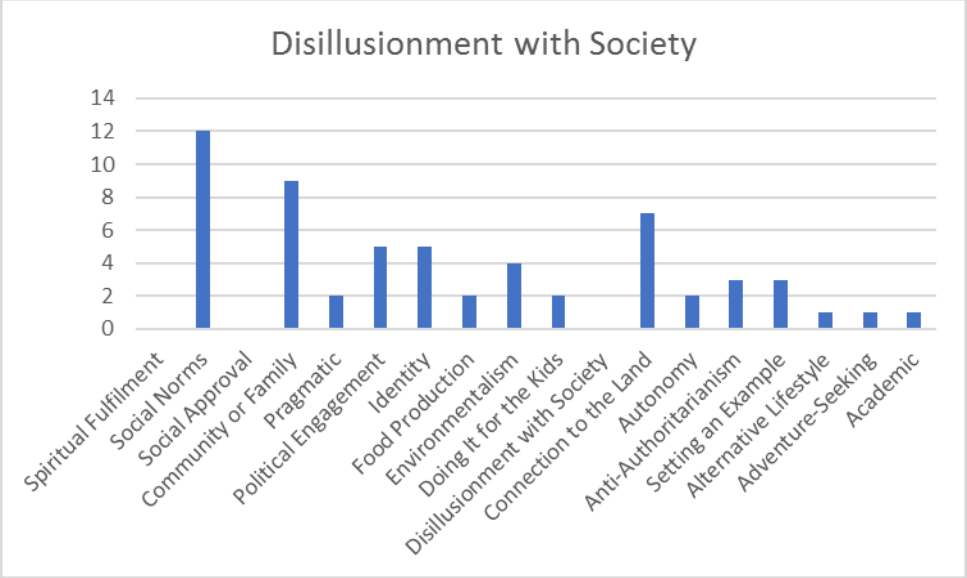
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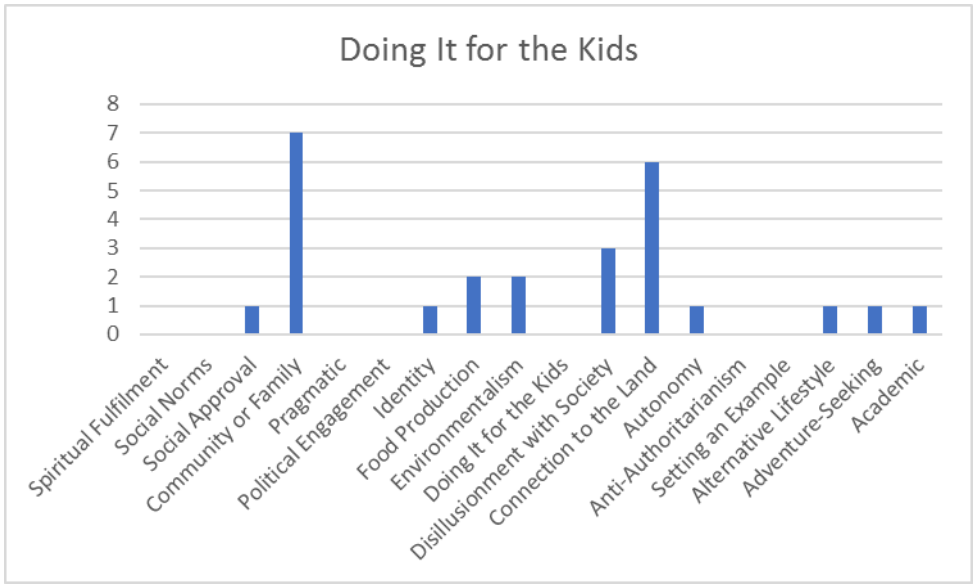
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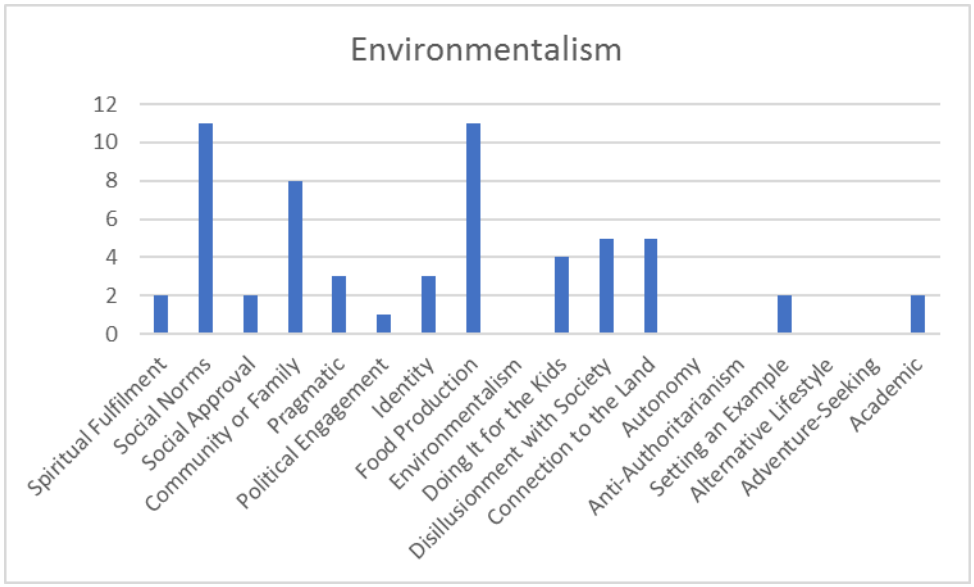
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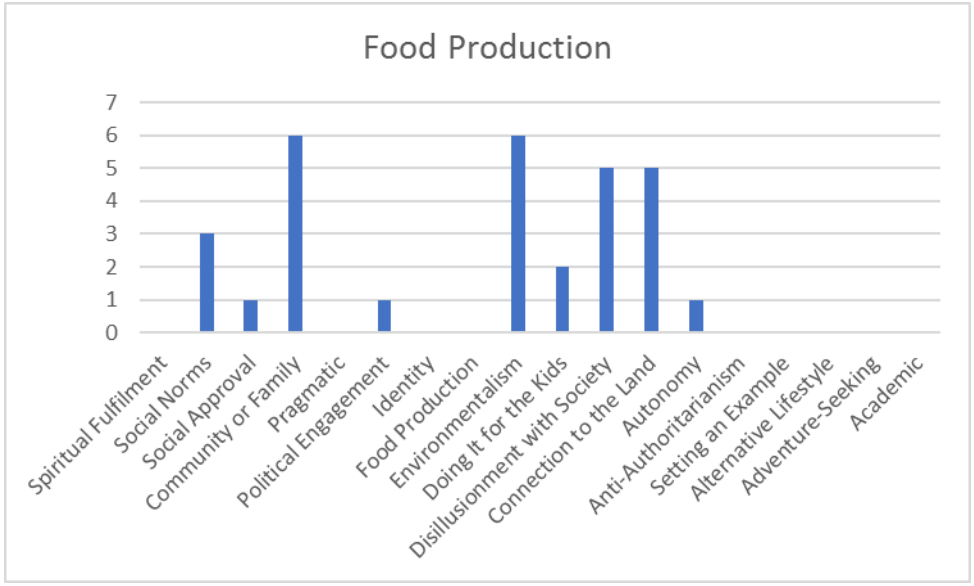
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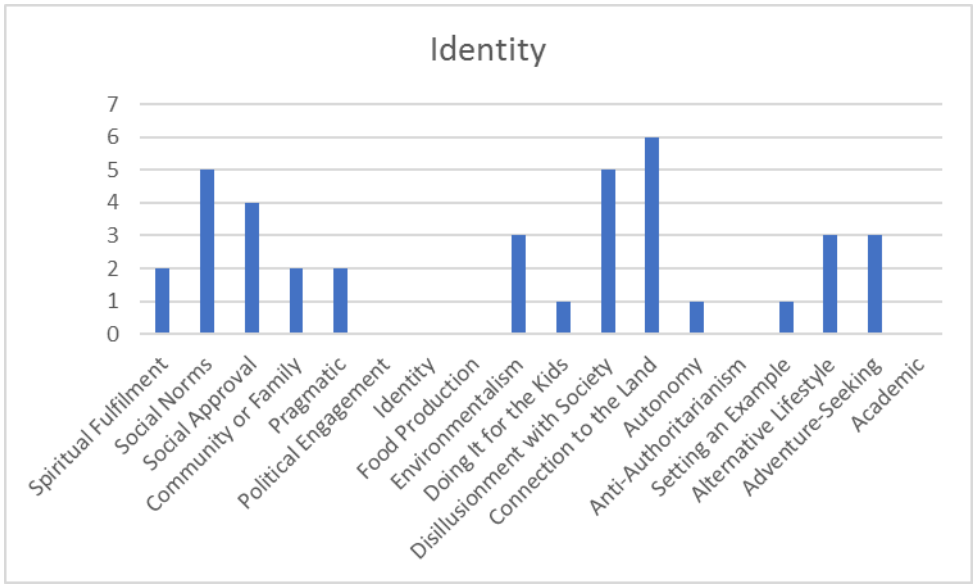
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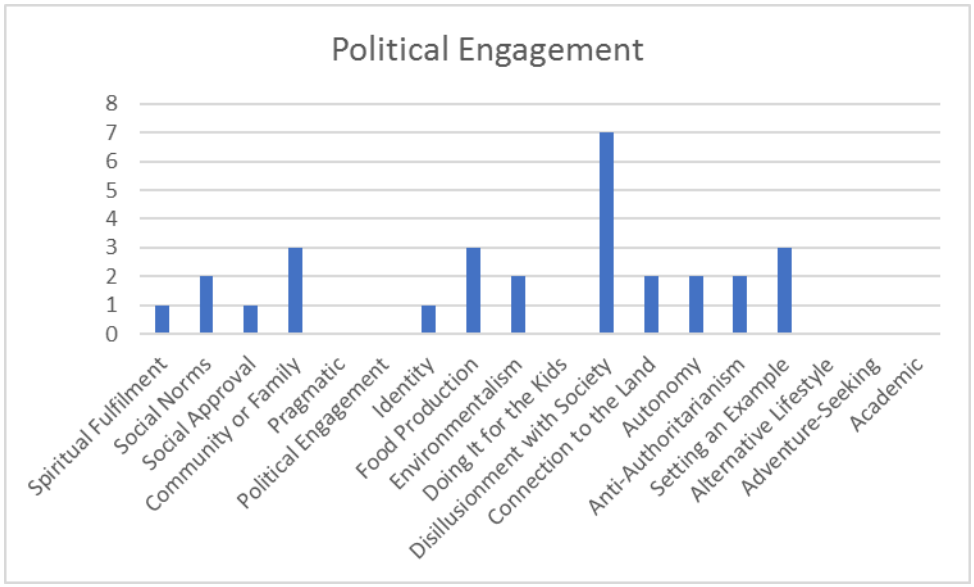
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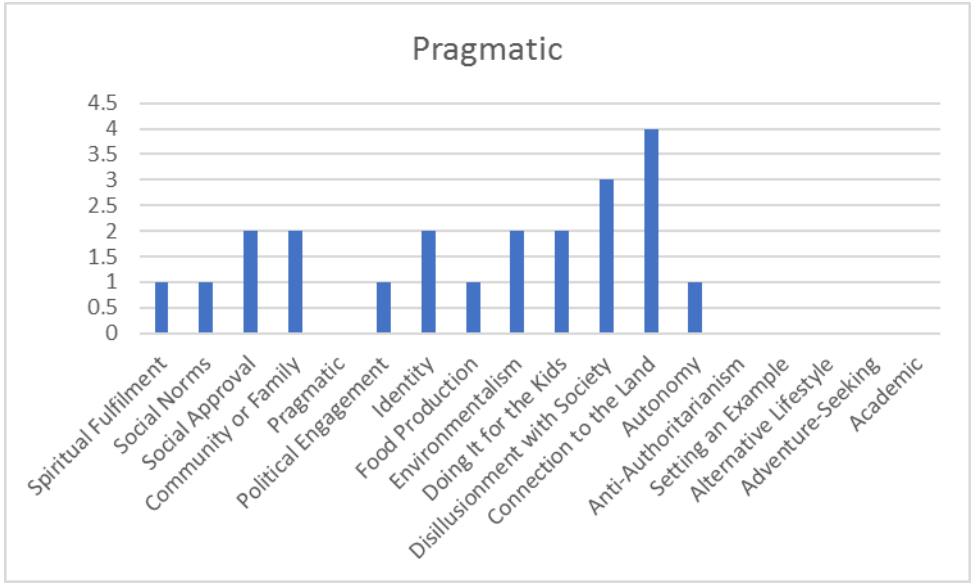
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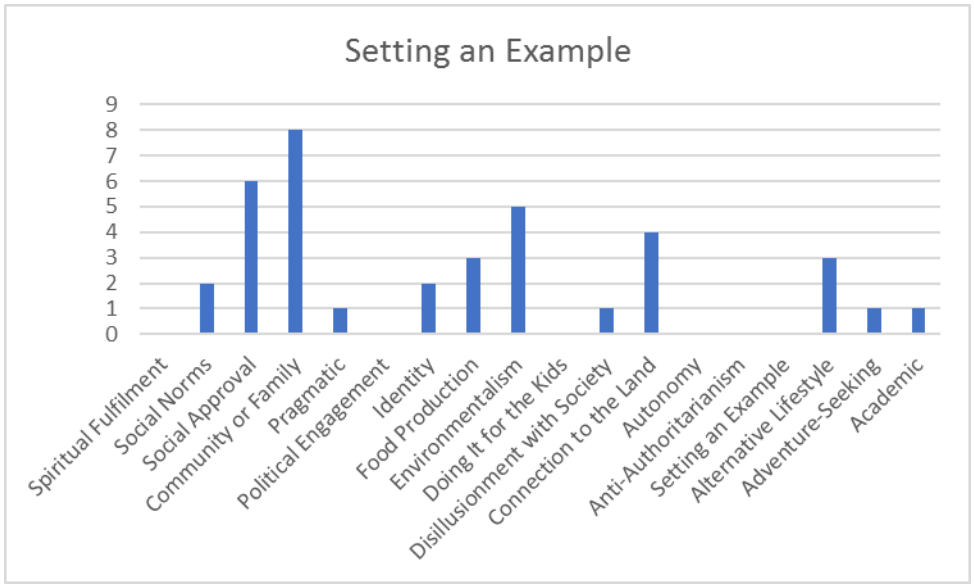
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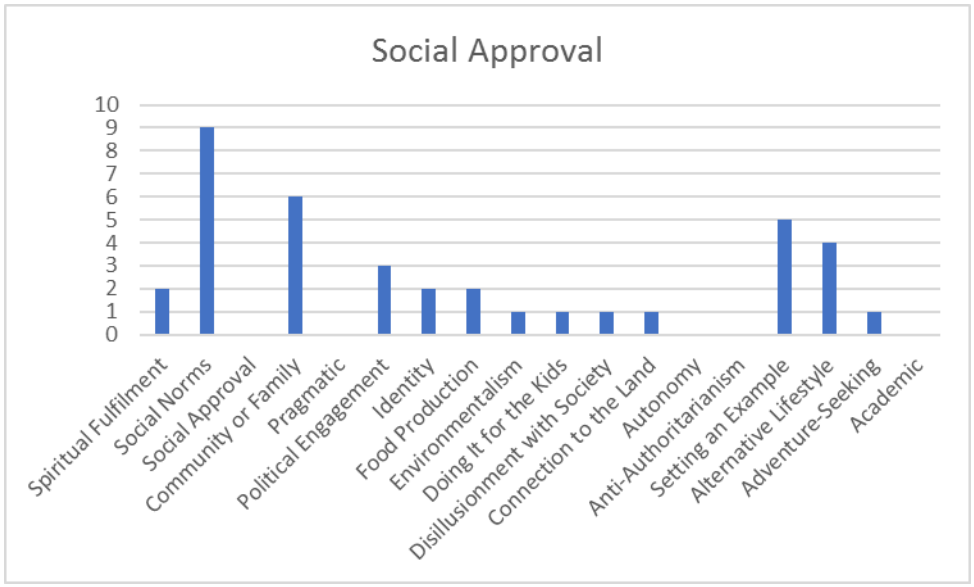
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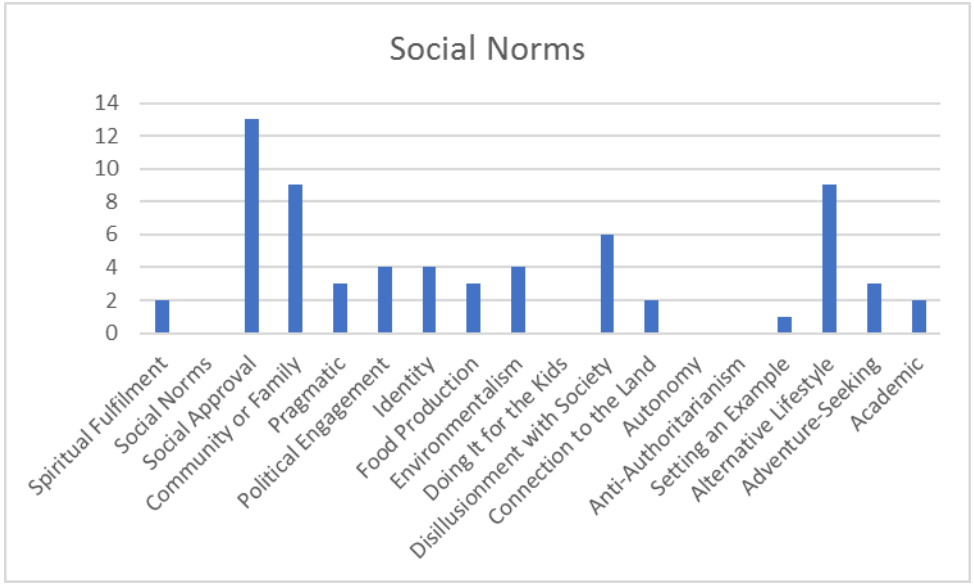
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Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet Version 2, 27/06/17

Moving to an ecovillage/eco-community

Introduction

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether to take part or not you need to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and ask questions about anything you do not understand. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to understand the motivations behind people's decisions to live within an eco-community or ecovillage, and to explore their experience of the move from their previous habitation to their eco-community/village.

Why have I been invited to take part in the study?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you either live within an ecovillage or eco-community, or considered living in one but decided not/were unable to.

About 15 participants will take part in this study.

Do I have to take part?

No, you do not have to participate. You can withdraw your participation at any time. You can request for your data to be withdrawn without giving a reason until publication of the data during September 2017.

If you withdraw from the study, all data gathered involving you will be destroyed.

What will my involvement require?

If you agree to take part, I will then ask you to sign a consent form. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and a copy of your signed consent form. Your involvement will last for approximately 60-90 minutes.

What will I have to do?

The interview will be more like an informal conversation, in which you talk about your motivations for moving to an ecovillage/eco-community, as well as the move from your previous habitation/lifestyle to your current habitation/lifestyle. The interview will be audio recorded, and this recording will later be transcribed as data for the research project.

What will happen to data that I provide?

Research data are stored securely for at least 10 years following their last access and project data (related to the administration of the project, e.g. your consent form) for at least 6 years in line with the University of Surrey policies.

Personal data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

The risks are very minimal. There is a possibility that the interview questions may raise unpleasant or distressing memories, but you are free not to answer any questions, or to withdraw at any time.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that you will find taking part in this study an interesting and enjoyable experience.

What happens when the research study stops?

It will be made clear when the interview has come to an end. The audio recording will be stopped. If you have any questions at all please feel free to ask them.

What if there is a problem?

Any complaint or concern about any aspect of the way you have been dealt with during the course of the study will be addressed; please contact the researcher Penny Clark on 07562657210 or pc00323@surrey.ac.uk in the first instance, or Penny Clark's Supervisor Dr. Kate Burningham on 01483 68 6688 or k.burningham@surrey.ac.uk. To get in touch with somebody who is independent of the research team, contact the Head of Sociology Professor Jon Garland on 01483 68 2829 or j.garland@surrey.ac.uk.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. Your details will be held in complete confidence and we will follow ethical and legal practice in relation to all study procedures. Personal data, consisting of name, contact details and audio recordings will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) so that unauthorised individuals will not have access to them.

Your personal data will be accessed, processed and securely destroyed by the researcher, Penny Clark. In order to check that this research is carried out in line with the law and good research practice, monitoring and auditing can be carried out by independent authorised individuals. Data collected during the study may be looked at by authorised individuals from the University of Surrey. All will have a duty of confidentiality to you as a participant and we will do our best to meet this duty.

The data you provide will be anonymised and your personal data will be stored securely. You will not be identified in any publications resulting from this research and those reading them will not know who has contributed to it. We may like to use anonymous verbatim quotations in publications, but it will be ensured that these quotations do not contain any identifying features.

Full contact details of researcher and supervisor

Researcher: Penny Clark:	07562657210	pc00323@surrey.ac.uk
Supervisor: Dr. Kate Burningham	01483686688	k.burningham@surrey.ac.uk

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by the University of Surrey has not received any funding. There are no conflicts of interest.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Moving to an ecovillage/eco-community

Please initial each box

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided (version 1, date 22/06/17). I have been given a full explanation by the researcher of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. ☐
- I have been advised about any disadvantages/risks to my well-being which may result. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result. ☐
- I agree to comply with the requirements of the study as outlined to me to the best of my abilities. ☐
- I agree for my anonymised data to be used for this study. ☐
- I give consent for the interview to be audio recorded. ☐
- I give consent to anonymous verbatim quotations being used in publications. ☐
- I understand that all project data will be held for at least 6 years and all research data for at least 10 years in accordance with University policy. ☐
- I understand that my personal data is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). ☐
- I understand that all data collected during the study may be looked at for monitoring and auditing purposes by authorised individuals from the University of Surrey. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records. ☐
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision, without prejudice and without my legal rights being affected. ☐
- I understand that I can request for my data to be withdrawn until publication of the data during September 2017 and that following my request all data already collected from me will be destroyed. ☐
- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation. ☐

Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS) .....

Signed .....

Date .....

Name of researcher taking consent (BLOCK CAPITALS) .....

Signed .....

Date ……..