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# The Production, Practice, and Potential of 'Community' in Edinburgh's Transition Town Network

A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Gerald Paul Taylor Aiken

St. John's College  
Department of Geography  
Durham University

2014

## Abstract

'Community' is increasingly seen as a solution to the environmental challenge faced in the UK. This original work critically evaluates schemes utilising 'community', focusing on those adopting the Transition Town Network (TTN) name, and those funded through the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF). It is based on qualitative, participative, empirical research with three of Edinburgh's Transition Town Network groups and eighteen of their initiatives. This thesis charts the production of 'community' within these groups, set against the background of 'community' rhetoric both within TTN in general, and increasingly UK environmental policy more widely, specifically in the CCF. It then assesses what 'community' means – and has come to mean – in this context. 'Community' as a term for government capture of innovative political collectives, or as a progressive mobilising force, uniting diverse actors through small-scale belonging, are critically assessed in turn. The thesis argues that the concept of *zuhanden* – 'ready-to-hand', drawn from phenomenology – offers a fruitful way to understand 'community'. Doing so emphasises and captures the hitherto neglected way in which 'community' is acquired, rather than sought. Building on this analysis the thesis then interrogates how 'community' as acquired rather than sought is envisioned and enacted in three of Edinburgh's TTN groups. The thesis argues that this is closely intertwined with the way in which time is understood by such groups; the notion of 'possible futures' which are posited by 'transition'. This is inherently connected to the groups' view of space, and has implications for how they view and achieve success, and the tensions this creates with surrounding actors. It concludes with an assessment of the barriers or opportunities remaining for such 'community' initiatives. Through these issues, the thesis addresses the potentially irreconcilable tensions that exist between the CCF and TTN, and offers valuable lessons for 'community' groups in future.



IN MEMORY OF  
EVELYN (EVA) AIKEN neé McLEAN  
(‘Granny’)  
“Learn all you can”

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## Acronyms

CC	Carbon Conversations
CCF	Climate Challenge Fund
EDAP	Energy Descent and Action Plan
ESEE	Edinburgh South Energy Efficiency
EST	Energy Savings Trust
EU	Edinburgh University
FOES	Friends of the Earth Scotland
II	Influential Individual(s)
MI	Motivational Interviewing
NHER	National Home Energy Rating
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PAR	Participative Action Research
PCATS	Portobello Campaign Against The Superstore
PEDAL	Portobello Energy Descent And Land reform (Portobello Transition Town)
SEAD	Scottish Education for Action and Development
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SNP	Scottish National Party
SOSO	Switch On to Switching Off
TES	Transition Edinburgh South
TEU	Transition Edinburgh University
TSO	Third Sector Organisation(s)
TSS	Transition Support Scotland
TT	Transition Town(s)
TTN	Transition Town Network
TTT	Transition Town Totnes

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Aiken, G. (2011) 'The varieties of 'community' in the transition to low carbon futures' In *10<sup>th</sup> IAS-STS Annual: Critical Issues in Science and Technology* München: Profil.

Aiken, G. (2012) 'Community Transitions to Low Carbon Futures in the Transition Towns Network (TTN)' *Geography Compass* Vol. 6, pp. 89–99.

Aiken, G. (2012) 'Community as a Social Innovation' In *Yearbook 2011 of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Science, Technology and Society* München: Profil.

Aiken, G. (2012) 'UK Environmental Governance through Community' *UGEC Viewpoints*. Vol. 7 (July), pp. 24-28.  
<http://ugec.org/docs/Viewpoints7%20May2012.pdf>

Taylor Aiken, G. (2012) Review of 'G. A. Wilson (2012) *Community Resilience and Environmental Transitions*. London: Earthscan.' *Environmental Values* Vol. 21 (4), pp. 536-538.

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Gerald Taylor Aiken (né Aiken)

“The single individual is decisive in forming community. He can at any moment become higher than community, specifically, as soon as ‘the others’ fall away from the eternal. The cohesiveness of community comes from each one's being a single individual before the eternal. The connectedness of a public, however, or rather its disconnectedness, consists of the numerical character of everything. Only the single individual guarantees community; the public is a chimera. In community the single individual is a microcosm who qualitatively reproduces the cosmos. Community is certainly more than a sum, but yet it is truly a sum of ones. The public, on the other hand, is nonsense - a sum of negative ones, of ones who are not ones.”

Kierkegaard, S. (2007: 64)

## Acknowledgements

Gulp down the salt sea air and taste the coast / The land that brought you up taught you the most / And named your name, gave you chances no one knows / You're with me, climb that tree, climb on.

Taste the Coast, Admiral Fallow

Man [sic.] should not consider his material [intellectual, spiritual or otherwise] possession his own, but as common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need.

Thomas Aquinas

If space were any indicator of worth, need, or debt, this would be – by far – the longest section of the thesis. Perhaps it is fitting, for a thesis on community, that I should have so many to thank. Simply put, without this help and support, this thesis would not be. More fundamentally, thesis or not, much of it enables me to be me. As Satish Kumar says, “you are, therefore I am”.

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“Intellectuals are often held, quite wrongly, to be critical by definition.”

Perry Anderson

I have discovered this to be true of academia likewise. I must thank those in the Iona Community, Green Party, Centre for Human Ecology and St. John’s, who show me what critique really is and can be, where the limits of the

academic or intellectual endeavour lie, and how that limit can serve as an opening.

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Every since my dad first took me to the Merkland Road stand and I spent most of the match watching the crowd, I have been fascinated with space, gathering, agency, togetherness, divisions, antagonism, tactics and what it takes to win. That the match finished 0-0 is perhaps telling. Conversation, debates, arguments. Wrestling, competing, growing. Faith, togetherness, acceptance and provocation with my fellow Aikens. These all developed the grit, stubbornness and work ethic that got me through my time in Durham. I am not only thankful for my family, without them I wouldn't be me; we are co-implicated for good or ill better.

In Amanda, and now emerging in Ruaridh, I find my support, drive, will, inspiration and peace. Here I am known in the full sense. The brains (or should that be mind?) behind team Taylor-Aiken reminds me of one of my favourite quotes:

“the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other”

Paul Ricoeur

The ridiculous nature of authorship convention dictates my name on the spine. Yet I would not be, still less this work completed, without those and countless others not mentioned here. In the case of Amanda this is writ large.



## Chapter 1: Introduction

Are Transition Towns fascist? Advice on writing a thesis often advocates a 'high impact start' to a thesis *"to attract readers' attention, to get them immediately engaged"* (Dunleavy, 2003: 92), but this is not just rhetoric. Criticisms of jingoistic nationalism have long been levelled at 'community'. Now the Transition Town Network (TTN) has been similarly critiqued in the same terms as their central value: 'community'. These critiques are discussed in what follows. This thesis addresses TTN and their relationship to 'community', so it makes sense to first address why this seemingly extreme question can be posed at all.

'Community' as a concept has a long and contested history. Regularly traced back to Tönnies (1955) [1887], in social science, as a synonym for family, or intimacy, subsequent writers have indicated that as a concept it was concerned with reified visions of what 'community' was and ought to be (Bauman, 2001; Crow & Allen, 1994). One of the most well known, and criticised, is Willmott and Young's (1957) study of the East End of London. Here, genuine 'community' was understood as a 'good thing' and more likely to exist in rural, homogenous, well-off locations. The object of Willmott and Young's study – the socially deprived post-war East End of London – offered a dystopic vision of where 'community' was headed. 'Community' has continued to be debated since, but these criticisms of normative uses of 'community' are still found. 'Community's' characteristics traditionally revolve around homogeneity, rurality, a temporal displacement – either yearning for these things to come, or harking back to a bygone age (Defilippis et al. 2006).

These criticisms of 'community' have a long legacy, but show no signs of going away. Timothy Morton recently pointed out that 'community' implies homogeneity and reification through setting up arbitrary in/out boundaries, based, often, on territorial location.

*“The discourse of community... is intrinsically conservative, if not reactionary, if not, at times, fascist” (Morton, 2010, 208).*

‘Community’ as intrinsically fascist by no means reflects the view of environmental ‘community’ projects, and not in its use either. But what is interesting in extreme criticisms such as this is that these major threads in the literature on ‘community’ begin to look very similar to current critiques of TTN.

The standard critique of TTN has focused on their being apolitical, a small, self-selecting, homogenous group (Trainer, 2009) – similar to how the concept of ‘community’ has been criticised. The most well known evaluation has been the Trapeze Collective’s report,<sup>1</sup> *Rocky Road to a Real Transition* (2008). Both the Trapeze Collective and key figures within the TTN movement have kept up a healthy dialogue, but Trapeze still point out that TTN avoids long established forms of political action, such as direct action or confronting interests of power directly. TTN as a movement neglects engaging in what they see as a more ‘confrontational’ politics, advocated by those like Trapeze.

In his initial response to the Trapeze report, a blog posting by Rob Hopkins defended the TTN emphasis on welcoming all comers:

*“Transition should appeal as much to the rotary club and the Women’s Institute as to the authors of this report.”<sup>2</sup>*

TTN presents itself as proleptically enacting a ‘community’ that welcomes all-comers, but there is less recognition that ‘community’ necessitates a boundary. Even if this boundary is not—following Morton—fascist, there will be power and exclusion at play. Early in the TTN’s emergence (2008), there was a storyline on BBC Radio 4’s *The Archers*, talking of the potential

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<sup>1</sup> TRAPESE stands for: Taking Radical Action through Popular Education and Sustainable Everything. A UK based popular education collective. <http://www.trapeze.org/> (Accessed 20 12 2012)

<sup>2</sup> <http://transitionculture.org/2008/05/15/the-rocky-road-to-a-real-transition-by-paul-chatterton-and-alice-cutler-a-review/> (Accessed 17 / 8 / 2011)



for a Transition Town to be started in the village where the soap opera is set – Ambridge.<sup>3</sup> Understandably, given the publicity boon for an emerging movement, this was often mentioned by those in the TTN. However, being mentioned on *The Archers* did nothing to assuage concern that this was becoming Radio 4 activism: rural, middle-class and wrapped up with



particular reified visions of ‘community’.

TTN, then, have had these same criticisms levelled at them as the concept of ‘community’: being overly rural, middle-class and lacking in diversity (in ethnicity or educational background)

(Trapese

Collective, 2008). The point to note here is that TTN groups and one of their central concepts (‘community’) should share such similar journeys, in praise and criticism, both in practice and theory.

Figure 1: Totnes as a utopian, if somewhat removed, site for ‘radio 4 activism’

### 1.1 Transition Town Network beyond ‘community’

<sup>3</sup> <http://transitionculture.org/2008/03/25/transition-ambridge-begins/> (accessed 10 December 2012)

The TTN movement, initially flourishing in small towns such as Totnes, has migrated to larger urban environments. It is still wrestling with and working out how the 'community' it talks about is manifest and realised in such contexts. Given this background, it is interesting that TTN both reflects the rise in 'community' rhetoric in environmental governance, but also with its criticisms of 'community' as a concept, particularly 'community's' urban expression.

Various commentators have interpreted TTN as a 'grassroots technological niche' (Longhurst, 2012). Others identify TTN as a practical working out of Deleuzian inspired politics (Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010), or ethical place-making (Mason & Whitehead 2012). Alternative readings identify TTN's focus on acceptability and accessibility over political action (Chatterton & Cutler 2008). What is constant though is the identification of 'community' as of central importance to TTN. Wilson sees TTN as "*the most prominent example of relocalized community*" (2012: 68) in the quest for 'community' resilience. Seyfang and Haxeltine have stressed the importance of TTN's "*community engagement processes and initiatives*" (2010: 3). Kendrick imagines TTN as fostering:

*"a community-based life, where the things that we need are produced largely through balancing the capacity of the local land to provide for the needs of the people who live on it"* (2011: web page).

These are not wide of the mark. 'Community' is the *raison d'être* for TTN.

The question posed by this is: how far does TTN reflect the wider use of 'community', in that it covers multiple meanings? As Massey has argued, "*relations of dominance may be maintained precisely through the instabilities of meanings*" (2005: 175). I want to argue that TTN use 'community' both to cover a multiple of meanings, and commonly elide it with 'local', 'place', and 'small scale'. These will be explored immediately below, before turning to the permaculture inspired progressive sense of 'community' (Aiken, 2012a) – that of its provocation towards practical action. It is within this that TTN retains a kernel and core of progressive potential.

But – and this cannot be stressed too much – the overall aim of this thesis is not just to work out what ‘community’ means to and within TTN. It is to examine the production, practice, and potential of ‘community’ within specific examples of TTN. Thus, it is important to outline at the outset that ‘community’ is important to TTN. But the investigation goes further and much deeper than merely this.

‘Community’ is key to the aims and sense of identity of TTN. The initiatives are ‘community-led’, are firmly rooted in the ‘local community’, and their eventual goal is a ‘resilient relocalised community’.<sup>4</sup> Alongside this typical use and meaning of ‘community’ TTN do have a specific mobilisation of the term. Their ‘quote of the month’ for January 2012 stated:

*“Community is nearly impossible in a highly monetized society like our own. That is because community is woven from gifts, which is ultimately why poor people often have stronger communities than rich people. If you are financially independent, then you really don't depend on your neighbors—or indeed on any specific person—for anything. You can just pay someone to do it, or pay someone else to do it.”<sup>5</sup>*

This is as good a place as any to start understanding TTN's values. First, contained within this quote is a disdain for aspects of ‘Modern’ life: mobility, affluence, individualism, consumption, and crucially a lack of ‘community’. The connection between being anti-modern and pro-‘community’ stretches right back to Tönnies (expanded more fully in Section 3.2). This is a key insight from which to begin an analysis of TTN's ‘community’ values. ‘Community’ above is seen as the antithesis of ‘financial independence’ and also as not depending on one's neighbours. There are many layers of discourse embedded within this quote, but key is the implied assumption of what being ‘community’ contains; not being an individual, involving greater association and reliance on neighbours - those who live close by. The

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> Accessed 11/06/12

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nationofchange.org/build-community-economy-gifts-1325082127> Accessed from the Transition Network monthly e-mail (January 2012) 09/01/12

'community' here, acting as a cure for Modern ills, is a term elided with 'neighborliness' 'local', and place. As Painter argues, "*in everyday usage these two notions* ['community' and 'neighbourhood'] *are frequently conflated*" (2012: 524). One could also add local, place, and small scale to this bundle of elisions. TTN's 'community' can therefore be seen as a proxy for a (local-) 'community' of place.

These elisions can be traced in the heritage of TTN as a movement. Their key texts include Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* (1973) and also writings on permaculture (Holmgren, 2011; Walker and Salt, 2006). Another source of this call to the 'local community' – that 'community' implies a silent prefix (local-) – was a suspicion of larger scale ways of operating within and organising society. It is also the result of the perceived 'failure' of centrally planned economies, and even neoliberalism, and it is likely a part of a belief in the more anarchic potential of small-scale, micro, and self-organising as a political vision. Thus they have initiated many initiatives such as local currencies, local food networks, and renewable energy schemes (Ryan-Collins, 2011). These are based upon the permaculture vision of 'community' – small-scale, local, and modular. But crucially too, it is *zuhanden*, invoking belonging, practical action. TTN's 'community' acts as a bridge between the strategic deployment of 'community' – with all its elisions – and also the emergent, *zuhanden* practical, being and becoming 'community'.

TTN reflects all of the ways in which 'community' has been used in environmental governance: generating local acceptance, a local, meso-scale approach, and one that builds on a grassroots legacy. However, for TTN, 'community's' value is not to be found wholly in the use or meaning of the term. Part of this is its value as a mobilising, progressive force, which can be seen in its permaculture heritage. This 'community' requires intentionality and arises out of a focus on a common task.

For TTN the Permaculture approach – closely related to complex systems thinking (Johnson 2000) – can be baptised from the ecological into the social realm. Although this description would be an anathema, as neither the social nor ecological realms exist independent of each other according to

this approach. Nature and culture are seen as one continuous and unified process. Adopting this approach from plant communities, each 'community' is seen as both independent and interacting with others. It is both separate from and bound to its neighbouring 'community'. Each 'community' works on and in a different place or scale. These are enmeshed within each other, overlapping and nested.

But why focus on 'community'? Don't TTN have other concerns? Before engaging with TTN's specific use of 'community', two pieces of groundwork need to be laid out. First, an excavation of the two other, central conceptual concerns to TTN: resilience and transition. This is crucial to understand how 'community' sits within TTN's worldview, how their three key concepts interrelate and affect each other. Second, there is an introduction to (what they present as) their two key mobilising concerns for TTN: climate change and peak oil. These will first be addressed, before an outline of the thesis, and its primary concern: TTN and 'community'.

### 1.1.1 Resilience

Resilience is currently a vogue topic, uniting such diverse actors as TTN and the Cabinet Office (Anderson & Adey, 2011), and increasingly prominent in academic analysis too. Holling (1973) developed resilience to describe how natural ecosystems respond to external change and shock; resilience is increasingly adapted for application to the social/cultural realm (McIntosh, 2004, 2008). Wilson (2012) echoing TTN, puts forward the argument that social resilience is crucial to understanding how human systems – from food supply, commodity chains to the fabric of society itself – respond should that fabric tear with the inevitable [sic.] shocks and disturbances that are about to hit. What is not questioned is why resilience's ubiquity has emerged. The pervasiveness of resilience – reaching buzzword status – can be seen as one reason for TTN's increasing prominence. Other concepts of Holling's – panarchy for instance (Garmestani et al., 2009) – have reached nowhere near the all-encompassing prevalence of resilience.

One of TTN's often-proclaimed virtues of 'resilient community' is its organic nature. This builds on its adaption from the natural/ecological realm to that of the social. One attribute of organic and natural systems though, is that of decay. This raises the important question of how any given organisation or 'community' deals with its all too frequent degradation, and accepts when its life span is over. Clinging on to the continuation of any given system past its sell-by date is not healthy. Sometimes the best course of action is not curating or sustaining. Rather, it is necessary to allow any deadening system to decay and disaggregate, in the name of the life that will emerge in its place.

Wilson (2012) identifies the 'resilience' chair having three legs:<sup>6</sup> social, economic, and environmental capital, together implying 'resilient community'. Economic capital is the financial resources available to any 'community', including relative fiscal autonomy and independence. Social capital comprises the 'key sociological function for 'community' survival in times of crisis', such as the ability to rely on neighbours in times of crisis. While environmental capital can be understood as the 'biocapacity' of an area, including biodiversity and a low carbon footprint. Together, high indicators of these three mean the 'community' is resilient. Resilience here is broadly taken to be what Iain Dowie has termed 'bouncebackability'.<sup>7</sup>

Between these factors resilience acts as both Occam's Razor<sup>8</sup> for 'community' flourishing, and a theory of everything. Widely disparate factors from a 'community's' happiness to GDP are included in Wilson's judgement of the relative merits of each 'community's' resilience. Some of these factors are competitive. For instance one given 'community' being seen economically 'rich', necessarily means another is 'poor' – being as they are relative terms. Thus resilience here again reinforces the diverse ways in which each 'community' can be made resilient.

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<sup>6</sup> Also Walker & Salt (2008)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=bouncebackability> Accessed 4/4/2013

<sup>8</sup> The theory that the most elegant and simplest explanation should be favoured.

For Wilson (2012), Walker and Salt (2008), and the permaculture ‘canon’,<sup>9</sup> resilience and ‘community’ are – like the proverbial ‘motherhood and apple pie’ – good things. Literally in fact, since low birth rates, high outmigration, and importing of food sources are give-away indicators of the lack resilience in any ‘community’. However as Haxeltine & Seyfang (2009) point out in reference to TTN, resilience should not be a proxy for localisation, and neither too should ‘community’ and resilience be confused as synonyms. Often for TTN though they are performed as such.

Resilience writings are, on the whole, utopian. Resilience, like ‘community’ or any other sociological category, cannot of course be morally neutral. ‘Resilient’ political ideologies such as Nazism or fundamentally conservative worldviews are not what Wilson (2012), Walker & Salt (2008), or Holling & Gunderson (2002) for instance praise. Wilson (2012) attempts to get round this ideological fix by including ‘openness’ to change and others as indicators of social capital. However resilience is etymologically a fundamentally conservative notion, indicating continuation, sustenance, and endurance – to resist change, bouncing *back*. Resilience’s adoption by progressive causes, from Wilson (2012) to TTN marks a shift from a stance of freeform, breakdown and start anew visions of which the ‘another world is possible’ rhetoric from progressive political movements of earlier decades claimed.

### 1.1.2 Transition

Like resilience, theorisations of “*transition [are] increasingly being deployed to frame and combine discourses*” of ‘community’ (Brown *et al.*, 2012: 1607). In this way transition too can act as an Occam’s Razor, combining all which is ‘good’ in holding together visions of the future.

Given that ‘transition’ is in the naming of *Transition* Towns, it would seem that it is the key concept for TTN. As outlined above though, TTN are primarily, if not exclusively a ‘community’ organisation, with a ‘community’ focus, acting by means of the ‘community’. Yet this ‘community’ is elided

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<sup>9</sup> Davoudi (2012); Holling and Gunderson (2002); Holling (1973)

with resilience, and local, in their task: the transition towards the resilient relocalised community. Given this, it would be remiss to neglect transition completely.

‘Transition’ has wide application in social science, from post-Soviet transition (Stenning & Horschelmann, 2008), post-conflict transition (Lundy & McGovern, 2006), post-apartheid transition (Marais, 2001), or adolescent to adulthood transition (Arnett, 2001). ‘Transition’ for TTN comes from the permaculture realm. The permaculture concept of ecological succession, also seen in the Chicago School/Human Ecology literatures, are adopted for the social (Burnett, 2008: 24). So ‘consciousness raised’, towards the natural fulfilment of human capacity and awareness, can mirror the natural way in which scrubland, goes through stages (transitions), before reaching climax vegetation, depending on the natural carrying capacity of the land. In this way TTN are akin to the ‘pioneer plants’, carrying the new ideas (seeds, species) into which allow any given ‘community’ to reach its potential (climax).<sup>10</sup>

### 1.1.3 Climate Change

Climate change and peak oil have been the “*two great oversights of our time*” for TTN (Hopkins, 2008: 18). This might sound strange given the near ubiquity which climate change awareness (however shallow) has now reached. Five IPCC Reports (1990; 1995; 2001; 2007; 2014) and the Stern Review (2006) indicate that concerns over climate change now reach beyond niche interest. Major UK companies, from *Marks and Spencer* to *Tesco* now engage in carbon footprinting. TTN’s view would be that all these reports or awareness, fail to grasp the severity of the threat posed by an altered climate. This is a threat too grave, that it is only by acting now, that we stand any chance of a future.

Climate change is certainly a major issue, probably the major issue facing humanity (Monbiot, 2006; Lynas, 2007). Lovelock (2006) has argued that the effects of climate change will be overwhelming and inevitable;

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<sup>10</sup> This is discussed in depth in Section 6.2.1



Northcott (2007) that climate change is the biggest moral dilemma of our time. Giddens (2009) has re-directed his attentions to the political challenge presented by climate change. Hulme shows how divergent understandings of 'climate change' – even the problem of positing 'climate change' as unitary – form a “*battleground*”, or “*justification*”, “*inspiration*”, or “*threat*”, behind various movements (2010: xxvii). In this sense, climate change serves as the inspiration behind TTN, but for this thesis, this can be seen to say more about TTN than climate science.

Perhaps due to the growing mainstream acceptance of climate change, for whatever reason climate change is becoming less discussed within TTN than peak oil. Other localisation and resilience concerns, such as local currencies, have replaced the weight of import climate change has had (North, 2010). This thesis is more concerned with the reaction to such an impulse for change, than with making a judgement on that impulse. Whether it is climate change, or another reason, a desire for localisation say, TTN at least say they are acting in response to the twin threats of climate change and peak oil, and it is the *manner* of that response that this thesis is interested in: the response of 'community' action.

Peak oil remains a more persistent concern for TTN. Or at least it had before July 2012. Until then though peak oil and climate change can be seen as *the* key threats to western civilisation, motivating TTN's action.

*“Climate change says we should change, whereas peak oil says we will be forced to change. Both categorically state that fossil fuels have no role to play in our future, and the sooner we stop using them the better”* (Hopkins, 2008: 37, original emphasis).

#### 1.1.4 Peak Oil

Influential activist and environmental writer George Monbiot again provoked a wave of blogs and media articles on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July 2012. He declared that he had been wrong. After publishing many other articles assuming orthodox peak oil theory (Monbiot, 2008, 2010, 2011), Monbiot

recanted: *“Peak oil hasn't happened, and it's unlikely to happen for a very long time”* (2012).

Orthodox peak oil theory states that the decline in oil supplies is inevitable, though estimates vary as to how imminently. Originally formulated by MK Hubbert (1956), his theory that as diminishing oil reserves were discovered, increase in demand would lead to a decline in reserves. Known as the Hubbert Curve, many in TTN are very aware of the intricacies of this argument. Socially, peak oil is interpreted as resulting in higher energy costs, and cutting the lifeline to the modern Economy; ‘oil is the blood supply for society’ stated one volunteer.

The influential blog *Energy Bulletin*<sup>11</sup> is widely read and referred to in TTN circles, and a whole group of writers have emerged to think through the implications of this, centred on California’s *Post Carbon Institute*.<sup>12</sup> The most influential of these writers is Richard Heinberg. In a vast oeuvre the central thrust of his argument can be seen in his book titles: *The Party’s Over: Oil, War, and the Fate of Industrial Societies* (2003); *Powerdown: Options and Actions for a Post-Carbon World* (2005); *Peak Everything: Waking Up to the Century of Declines* (2007). These are highly influential for the groups studied here and reflect something of the tone of belief for TTN too: an imminent totalising crisis, almost apocalyptic sense of urgency, specialist awareness not widely known, and – within the books – the necessity of miraculous saving power of working together: ‘community’.

*“The facts were wrong, now we must change too”* begins Monbiot (2012), arguing that peak oil, for years having been a core tenet of environmentalism, and certainly TTN, should be left behind. Unconventional supplies such as shale oil and tar sands are taking up some of that slack, from diminishing fields such as the North Sea. It is not that oil supplies will inevitably decline that Monbiot is arguing against here, just that before this happens *“there is enough oil in the ground to deep-fry the lot of us”* (2012). Peak oil becomes a purely theoretical point, as climate change has long since done its damage to our species before oil starts to run out.

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<sup>11</sup> Tellingly, this has been recently relaunched as <http://www.resilience.org/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.postcarbon.org/>

When this research was carried out though, peak oil was widely seen as more than just a theoretical point, and so it is invoked here as almost universally agreed upon, at least by those within the TTN groups looked at. Peak Oil almost extends to becoming one of the in/out definers of the group(s). Oil remains the cheapest, most energy dense fuel ever found, and fear of its diminishing supply remains profound (Bailey et al., 2010). However contentious peak oil now appears, the legitimacy of the argument is beyond the scope of this thesis. What matters are the performative effects of this belief, which was certainly held during the course of this research.

## 1.2 Thesis Structure

To investigate these issues I undertook a detailed study of ‘community’ in transition groups in one location: Edinburgh. The above highlights the conditions that give rise to a study of this kind. The thesis is structured around a core of three chapters, reflecting the title’s keywords: Chapter Four (production), Chapter Five (practice), and Chapter Six (potential). Before this though, two pieces (chapters) of groundwork need to be laid.

Chapter Two provides a guidebook to this topic. The groups researched are introduced, both TTN in general, and the three groups investigated more closely: Transition Town Edinburgh Southside (TES), Transition Edinburgh University (TEU), and Portobello Energy Descent And Land reform (PEDAL). Of course, the manner in which this research is carried out crucially affects my understanding, and then representation, of these groups. Because of this, the first half of the chapter is given over to a discussion of these methods adopted in gathering this data.

Chapter Three excavates the ground on which the empirical data builds. After an overview of the central argument of the thesis, there are three main sections. First, the theoretical understanding of ‘community’ begins by taking into account the standard names and figures involved in studies of ‘community’. It then progresses by digging deeper into crucial, hitherto relatively neglected, aspects in the history of ‘community’. This is an excavation of why ‘community’ appears to take on a moral force –

important in understanding why 'community' is seen to control environmental behaviours. But also in the way 'community' rhetoric is applied, as phatic communication. Second, the chapter looks to the way 'community' has been applied from the outside in policy contexts. This is necessary for grasping the tensions between the CCF and TTN explored in Chapter Six. Third, it looks to the expectations placed upon 'community' initiatives themselves, either internally, or from academics. A final section outlines the importance of 'community' for TTN, before a brief outline of some theoretical avenues not undertaken.

The in depth exploration of empirical data begins in Chapter Four. Chapter Four charts the origins of, and reasons for, the central importance of 'community' to the groups studied. First, it outlines the way in which 'community' has been produced officially. This is the way in which government, established actors, all seek to bring 'community' to bear in meeting the environmental challenge. Second, it investigates the informal production of 'community', horizontally facilitated through TTN influential individuals. Third, and most fittingly with TTN's core philosophy, charts the 'spontaneous' emergence of 'community' in response to (perceived) threats, such as climate change or peak oil. After seeing 'community' emerge from these three directions top-down (official), from the side (horizontal), and bottom-up (emergent), the chapter nods to future sections, it outlines some of the ways in which TTN have spread 'community', generating wide appeal and rebranding existing environmental activist groups, and assesses the potential for this continuation.

Chapter Five builds on the groundwork of Chapters Two and Three, and the understandings of 'community' offered in Chapter Four, it turns to the practice of 'community' in PEDAL, TEU, and TES. Fundamentally it exposes the tension between governmentalised forms of 'community' used to discipline individuals into 'correct' environmental actions and behaviours, and the 'community' of experience and belonging. This is important as it offers a potential bridge between political environmental geographies, and those of a more cultural or phenomenological bent. This is done here through the notion of 'community' as *zuhandenheit*, (ready-to-

hand, explained in Chapter Five) and investigating the ways in which this understanding of ‘community’ can only be acquired, not sought after. It does this through a deeper look at TES’s SOSO project, and the Carbon Conversations programme.

Chapter Six attempts to understand the temporal foundations of utopia: how TTN’s temporal understandings allow them to be utopian. This temporal understanding is then folded into their spatial vision of utopia. When attempting to analyse the potential of TTN to achieve their ‘community’ utopia, an exploration of their understandings of success, and the conflicts this fosters, takes up the second section of this chapter. The third section addresses directly these tensions, particularly between the CCF and TTN. It is a tension between government and activist, bottom-up and top-down, and between divergent forms of knowledge and of success. This is crucial to the understanding of the potential of TTN’s ‘community’ for the environmental challenge faced. In many ways, Chapter Six is the key to the thesis. The crescendo, the point to which the thesis builds and the key contribution this work makes.

Chapter Seven acts as a coda, reflecting and extending the key points on the production, practice and potential of ‘community’ in TTN. It sets out the contributions this thesis makes to the wider literature, and to the field in general. An exploration of how to take this research further is also offered. It also returns full circle to make an assessment on the answering of the Research Questions, outlined next.

### 1.2.1 Research Questions

Given the parameters of this thesis<sup>13</sup>, and the focus on the role of ‘community’ involved in low carbon urban transitions, we can pin down the key research questions that guided this research. The key question to address surrounds the production of ‘community’. For Geographers *production* has been most carefully thought through by Lefebvre’s *The*

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<sup>13</sup> Section 2.1.1 explains the reasons for these parameters.

*Production of Space* (1991). This thesis looks not at space directly, but at 'community'. For Lefebvre, there are five key questions that must be adequately addressed in order to explain this production:

*"So far as the concept of production is concerned, it does not become fully concrete or take on a true content until replies of have been given to the questions that it makes possible: 'Who produces?', 'What?', 'How?', 'Why and for Whom?'"* (Lefebvre, 1991:69)

The questions this thesis seeks to answer in response to this are as follows:

RQ1: Who produces 'community'?

RQ2: What specifically is it that is produced, when we talk of the production of 'community'? What is the practice 'community'?

RQ3: How is this 'community' produced?

RQ4: Why is 'community' chosen by the various actors and activists looked at here?

RQ5: For Whom? This is related to the question that should be asked of any activity or endeavour, the first base of ethics, asking *cui bono* – who does it serve?

Due to the focus on TTN and CCF, during the course of this research, we can add one final research question that will help to guide the research.

RQ6: How does this understanding of the who, what, how, why, and for whom, of 'community' help us to understand grassroots, environmental action, social movements such as TTN, or government policy adopting 'community'.

These questions are answered and addressed in the following sections and chapters of this thesis.

Research Question 1 is preliminarily answered in Section 3.1.5, and Sections 3.2 and 3.3, outlining why 'community' has become an attractive option for social movements and governments to meet their desires and expectations – in this case the desire to live a low carbon life. The bulk of Research Question 1 is answered though in Chapter Four, which charts the different actors producing 'community': government schemes (CCF), social movements (TTN), influential individuals, and cultural expectations.

Research Question 2 is mainly answered in Chapter Five. This addresses the role, meaning, and practice of 'community' in the groups looked at here. There are a variety of different things that are produced when 'community' is mentioned or invoked in relation to these groups, these are outlined and explored.

Research Question 3 is the main line of enquiry for Chapter Four. This focuses on the production of 'community' directly. It addresses the specific functions and techniques that are adopted in order to bring this 'community' into being. RQ3 is also touched upon in Chapter Six, which investigates more theoretically the temporal and spatial techniques used by TTN in their building of 'community'.

Research Question 4 is not to be found anywhere specific in the thesis, but is spread out throughout the whole work. Section 6.2.1 for example looks at the importance of 'resilience' and permaculture for TTN, of which 'community' is a core expression. Section 4.4.3 outlines the belief for many studied here that 'community' reaches parts that other initiatives, or social arrangements cannot. Section 3.3 shows the expectations that are laid upon 'community' by government and grassroots actors. All these contribute to why 'community' is the preferred means to target low carbon living.

Research Questions 5 and 6 are both tied up with the potential of 'community'. In whose interests does this deployment, or emergence of 'community' serve? This is addressed in Section 6.3, which looks at the tensions developing within these projects. Section 6.2 on success also addresses the future visions different types of actor related to the groups

studied here see, their different potential directions these projects may go, and how they wish to see them get there.

Before entering into this work, the three key terms of the thesis need to be outlined. Doing so provides a guide to their use and application within the work below.

### 1.2.2 Production, Practice, Potential

In talking of production of 'community' the thesis does not intend to unite Marxist theories of production into *Community Studies*, as Lefebvre did for social space. Rather it refers to the way 'community' is created, used, brought into being, and come to be seen as a social entity or force. The argument here is that both TTN and the CCF policy – alongside the cultural, infrastructural, social, and political context for this study – bring 'community' into being in however recognisable a form. The question for this thesis is not to demonstrate that this is so – that social entities are in some way produced is assumed – but to ask the 'How?', 'Why?', 'What?', 'Who?' and 'What for/for whom?' questions of production; the research questions above.

Practice is perhaps the term most liable to be misunderstood of the three chosen keywords. What practice does not refer to here is the 'Practice Theory' of Bourdieu (1977) or Schatzki (1996, 2001, 2002). This application of practice theory towards issues similar to those chosen here have been influential (for instance Shove, 2003, 2010; *et al.* 2007). This focuses attention away from 'behaviour change' towards more systemic and holistic addressing of (un)environmental activities: practices. Although of background influence for this study, this is not a study of 'practice theory' or a direct engagement with this literature.

This thesis leans on these works only in so much as practice is seen to be "*a logic in action*" (Bourdieu, 2000: 142). The logics of 'community', from TTN and CCF, and the swirl of other relevant actors surrounding them, are embodied, lived out, and practiced in the groups studied here. It is this being-in-community, or the experience of 'community', that is meant by



practice here. The thesis title could equally have been meaning, or role, of 'community' within these initiatives.

'Potential' refers to the future orientation of the examples addressed in the thesis. Part of this is bound up with the *promise* of such initiatives. This is the question of what promises the initiatives make and hold for future action. Promise was eventually rejected though, as potentially too normative a keyword. 'Potential' refers to both the latent ability of these groups to provide a means for low carbon living; alongside the plethora of other side effects 'community' is seen to have. This thesis provides an investigation of what these potentials and side effects are, and are seen to be, and critical reflections of how realistic these expectations are. This thesis also provides an analysis of how these 'potentials' can be used and understood, and what the wider application of 'community' is beyond the examples seen in this thesis. 'Potential' captures both the future orientation of these initiatives, but also the visions different actors invest within them – how they see a successful deployment, or enacting of 'community' in these groups. These different future visions and expectations of success are then subject to competition when they are mutually exclusive. Talk of 'potential' thus also requires an assessment to be made of the tensions, both current and potentially in futurity.

Thus the potential, or promise, of these groups is caught up with three other similar, subsidiary issues: future, success, and tensions. These are addressed in turn, in Chapter Six.

## Chapter 2: 'Community' in Edinburgh's Transition Town Network

*"The very concept of environmental problems presupposes some normative state of nature. To speak of an ecological problem is to make an ethical judgement that society would be better off without it. For this reason the environmental debate is frequently, at base, a debate about what constitutes the good life."*

(Livingstone, 1995: 370)

This chapter reviews and reflects on the methods used to gather the data for this project. I begin by charting the role which Edinburgh itself plays as an actor in this thesis, before turning to explore how the data was gathered. Central to this will be an exploration of my engagement with: (i) each of the groups chosen as case study; and (ii) the considerable material produced by TTN on 'being research subjects'.

In light of this, this chapter introduces the key actors of the thesis. First I outline the general structure of Transition Town Network (TTN), then the three TTN groups in Edinburgh who served as case studies for this project: (1) Portobello Energy Descent and Land Reform (PEDAL); (2) Transition Edinburgh South (TES); and (3) Transition Edinburgh University (TEU). This chapter also presents other key groups and organisations without whom PEDAL, TES, and TEU, could not be understood, most notably the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF), Transition Support Scotland (TSS) and Changeworks. The three groups chosen as case studies have spawned many initiatives to help them meet their aim of building 'resilient relocalised communities'. I outline 18 that have been studied in depth.

### 2.1 Methodology

This PhD was funded by the Economics and Social Research Council (ESRC). The original title of the project was ‘Governing Urban Transitions From The Ground Up: Energy Provision and use in UK cities’<sup>14</sup>. The project was connected to the wider project ESRC Climate Change Leadership Fellowship, *Urban Transitions: climate change, global cities and the transformation of socio-technical networks* (Award Number: RES-066-27-0002). This also involved a Research Associate and 3 other PhD studentships, and all were under the guidance or supervision of grant winner, Professor Harriet Bulkeley.

Being part of the UTACC research group enabled many opportunities that helped this research. The opportunity to present draft plans and research in progress at regular intervals, to write for the UTACC newsletter, and be part of a research team.

My eventual choice of case studies was foreshadowed in my application letter. Reflecting on my work with the Centre for Human Ecology,<sup>15</sup> I wrote:

*“I believe the transition town movement is an excellent example of a grassroots initiative (replicated throughout the UK & Ireland) that uses community and responsibility in such a way that it would be an excellent case study for this studentship.”*<sup>16</sup>

Being a funded studentship, pre-existing parameters for the PhD came with the PhD researcher role. The projects studied were to be: urban; grassroots, or bottom-up; ‘community’-based; and an example of transition. Although the project plan was conceived more socio-technically, addressing ‘community’ in reference to “*response and innovation*”,<sup>17</sup> the focus shifted to address theoretical and empirical concerns that emerged during the course of the research. I also brought to the project experience with grassroots activist groups, working outside, or beyond, establishment actors, and was

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 4, ‘Bulkeley Linked PhD’.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.che.ac.uk/>

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix 5 for a copy of this document.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 4, pp.1.

more interested in the social, than technical drivers and effects of transition. As a result the thesis outline suggested by the studentship advertisement was adjusted to take into account these pre-existing and emerging interests and the research was carried out in accordance with these. Academically this meant less of a focus on the (social-) innovation histories of the 'Dutch School' of transition, rather standing firmly in the tradition of sociological and geographical writings on 'community; less focus on abstract models of transition, more on the theories and experiences of enacting and building such transitions. Nevertheless, each of the original four parameters served to structure and guide the research completed for this study. In what follows, I turn to examine the role each played in shaping the course of this project.

### 2.1.1 Project Parameters

The first condition stipulated a focused on *urban* examples. This study focuses on the UK, a country whose human population is mostly urban. Much of the writing on 'community transitions' focuses on rural – rather than urban – communities, Wilson (2012: 10) being a recent example. As a result, 'the urban' has been somewhat neglected in studies surrounding 'community transitions'; an oversight this project sought to redress. Until recently, renewable energy projects with a 'community'/communal focus could be found almost exclusively in rural settings (Walker, 2008). According to groups like TTN, climate change and its associated high levels of consumption – particularly of oil – is a problem caused in urban settings and associated with the urban condition. Urban settings, with their highly mobile, consumptive, emissions-generating lifestyles, reliant on long supply-chains of food and other resources are seen as driving climate change. The other side of this (ironically) is that this pattern of living is also most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and peak oil.

Many British cities are vulnerable to rising sea levels, disrupted supply-chains, increased immigration pressures, and other associated

problems. While those with access to resources (i.e. the rich) will better handle responses to major shifts in climate, such high consumption lifestyles need to undergo changes that are both logistically and personally challenging. This is not to say that urban environments are intrinsically more profligate than the rural. Counter arguments state cities foster more efficient use of resources, while rural activities can often be more resource demanding. For instance Dodman offers a forceful defence of the urban in the face of those *Blaming cities for climate change* (2009). Not only are per capita emissions generally lower, but also there remains latent potential in a city's role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Gossop, 2011; Dodman, 2009). In the debate between pro- and anti- urbanists:

*“what often goes unnoticed in such moral inventories, however, is the consistent affinity between social and environmental justice, between the communal ethos and a greener urbanism.”* (Davis, 2010: 42)

In light of this, the inherent problematisation of the urban needs to be questioned alongside the neglect of 'community' transitions in this literature.

The project's second condition stated the examination of emergent responses to climate change. Entailed by this are two considerations that comprise the concept of 'emergence':

- (i) Novelty
- (ii) Spontaneity. The case study groups arise spontaneously through small scale, low-level interactions.

Consideration of aspect (i) leads the project to survey and investigate new/novel expressions of grassroots 'community transitions' that arise from a (perceived) need to meet the challenges presented by peak oil. Following from this, the thesis would not be concerned with tried and tested methods, or with initiatives that are designed to ameliorate guilt with little tangible effectiveness, but with vanguard initiatives either in organisational, technological or social structures (Seyfang, 2009a). Aspect (ii) identifies that

the example groups seem to arise spontaneously through small scale, low-level interactions, not 'imposed from on high'. Speth (2005) calls this *Jazz*: 'community' responses to environmental crisis that are unscripted, voluntary initiatives, restless with vitality. This understanding of principles of emergence is based on ideas from complex systems theory (de Landa, 1997; Johnson, 2000). Such groups do not focus on top-down approaches to forming 'community', such as policy. Instead they focus on elements that are not readily intelligible to top-down ways of knowing and acting, such as hints and guesses from 'below the radar' of top-down approaches. That is, they focus on, or below, *the ground-level*. Emergent examples are often to be found arising where there is a need for them, are often short lived and have a fragile, fragmentary, and transient existence. Yet these two directions – (i) & (ii) – are difficult to tease apart fully, as explored below. It is the emergent, or grassroots, characteristics that have evolved from the original 'ground-up' emphasis of the studentship.

The communal approach, my third condition, is perhaps the most novel one. Not only are many current attempts at reducing deleterious environmental effects based on individual behaviour change, the whole framework is one that appeals to utility drivers, such as saving money. The key concepts behind this approach share many of the core principles of neoliberalism. Given this, it is not surprising that it has been taken up by many corporations and advertisers. Neoliberalism places an emphasis on individualism (Harvey, 2005: 2), we can identify a similar focus on individualism being key to understanding our relationship to the environment present in various approaches to tackling climate change. Previous attempts to understand human responses to climate change have focused on various approaches. Economic approaches are typified by a focus on carbon footprint, or carbon offsetting. However, even when these approaches are 'successful' (i.e. the individual switches away from said good) they suffer from various rebound effects.<sup>18</sup> One such rebound effect is evident in the way such economic approaches serve to promote a continual

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<sup>18</sup> One version known as the Khazzoom-Brookes Postulate, where increased energy efficiency leads to increased energy demand.

rush to find a cheaper alternative, rather than questioning the behaviour or beliefs that gives rise to carbon consumption. This stems from a belief that driving change should come from promoting a maximisation of utility. Other approaches address psychological or psycho-spiritual drivers. Such approaches offer convincing explanations of the role which advertising and corporations play as agents of increasing a desire for consumption, increasing individualism, and lessening 'community' (for instance, Curtis, 2002). This school of thought identifies the psyche as the key area in which our drives for consumption – sustainable or otherwise – come from, yet ultimately relies on a hermetically sealed individual unit of one: the self (McIntosh, 2001, 2008). There is also a wide literature on the way in which goods and objects are used to communicate certain identity definers about ourselves to others (Shove et al., 2007: 142), which can then be harnessed to reduce emissions (Barnett et al., 2005, 2010; Lovell et al. 2009).

In each of these three areas: economic, psychological, and social, the unit of analysis is singular, the I, the ego or the self. To a greater or lesser degree this is seen as autonomous, self-contained and independent. This study shifts the focus from individual – towards 'community' approaches to environmental behaviours and practices. Of course, 'community' approaches may be no less problematic – or neoliberal. Many commentators take governance by or through 'community' to task as highly neoliberal, or at least compatible with neoliberalism (Jessop, 2002; Herbert, 2005; Larner & Craig, 2005; Defilippis et al., 2006; Staeheli, 2008). These are explored in greater depth in what follows; at the moment it is sufficient to note the desire to look more closely at 'community' approaches to these issues.

Often 'community' and 'communities' in the literature are seen as single entities, individual actors that interact with others groups or actors; that is an individual on a larger scale. This is problematic as it allows little room for a nuanced understanding of the way 'community' or collectives are comprised of individual people who come together to create that 'community'. There is a focus on the *whole* at expense of the *parts*. This does not allow an appreciation of the great difference between *an individual* and a *group*. This is at once a simple but far-reaching point that will be of

importance in this study. Given this, the assumption of this study is not only that there is no such thing as an individual, if by that one means a self-contained, autonomous, independent rational actor. John Donne was more taciturn: 'No man is an island'. There is something different in the nature of a group or collective to that of being 'alone'. 'Community' is a state of being, which is fundamentally different to being alone, even if others can proximately surround oneself in both these instances. So while not discounting the economic, social, and psychological forces that shape our environmental (or otherwise) actions, this study goes beyond this and is predominantly focused on how these actions are different within, at least in context, a grassroots, urban 'community'.

The last parameter is that of transition. Transition is coming to be more predominantly used in corporate, governmental, and academic circles (Rotmans et al., 2001). Part of its appeal here is the sense that there is a promise that something will be done to combat the problem of climate change and peak oil, some change is occurring, there is a hangover from the Modernist belief in progress. The current state of affairs and our way of life is untenable. The question which follows is one of: 'What then to do?' This is understood as a driver for transition. 'Transitions' are thought to have the following characteristics: they are smooth, have none of the radical disjuncture semblances that revolution, overhauling or of repenting may have. In this way transition is a highly subjective term, an example of what Collini (2010) calls *Blahspeak*.<sup>19</sup> This is both its great asset and weakness. Because things can always be described as in some way in a state of flux it can be an excuse for the current state of affairs, for putting up with something with the promise of better to come. Although not quite as fluid and misused as 'sustainability', or the often-oxymoronic 'sustainable development' is, this fluidity is nonetheless an important aspect of 'transitions' use. The same critique can be levelled at sustainability. Its original meaning hints at stability and continuity. Business as usual and continuity cannot be the solution, when climate change requires such

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<sup>19</sup> After Section 3.2.6 this will be termed 'phatic'.



wholesale change, though we do not necessarily know what form this change needs to take.

‘Transition’ however also has a specific meaning that is rooted in ecological writings, particularly *Resilience Thinking* (Walker and Salt, 2006). This meaning refers to the way in which specific (eco)systems, collectives, or communities, have specifically weakened resilience so that transition (the shift from one state of peri-equilibrium to another) is all but inevitable. All these meanings are retained here, transition is understood as phatic<sup>20</sup> and as an ecological metaphor.

Considering each of the above parameters led to the identification of TTN in Edinburgh as being an appropriate location to choose case studies. TTN at the time was exploding with interest. From articles in specialist publications such as *Resurgence*, to more mainstream *The Guardian*, to the evidence on the ground of what emergent urban ‘community’ transition examples actually existed, TTN came to dominate the scene of initiatives checking each of the four urban, emergent, ‘community’ and transition boxes. However, additional, contingent reasons also contributed to the choice of case studies. A ‘perfect storm’ of contingent conditions meant there seemed to be a surfeit of ‘community transitions’ initiatives in Scotland after undertaking a scoping study. This study existed of a spreadsheet of over 100 such examples found in the UK. These were found through internet searches, personal connections, asking key informed individuals on these issues. Later, it would emerge that the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) was a large cause of the over-representation of these examples in Scotland. Practical reasons too played a role, proximity to Durham (where I was then based) not least of these. At first the study considered a comparative study with examples from each of the four home nations; then comparing the impact of devolution policy on such examples comparing Cardiff and Edinburgh. These were ruled out as it was seen to be possibly spreading the study too thin. Comparative case studies closer in proximity, allowed the depth of study needed. Thus the focus eventually settled on Edinburgh.

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<sup>20</sup> Explored in section 3.5.2

The project also at the stage adopted the focus on ‘community’ as the key phenomena to investigate out of the original four parameters. Urban, grassroots, and transition, became background factors uniting each group looked at. This, again, was due to the need to focus on certain factors, not spread the study too thin and to get to appropriate depth required to make a study worthwhile. ‘Community’ was chosen as the key factor, not only because the original proposal heavily leaned in that direction anyway, also due to the importance of the ‘community’/individualism dimension to the environmental challenge, outlined above. Another factor was my belief in the importance of collectives, togetherness, and commonality to these issues. The AHRC’s *Connected Communities* funding stream also impacted the academic landscape, where ‘community’ at this time was vogue.

Of course it was by no means certain that this project would be carried out via a methodology of case studies. Case studies were chosen due to the desire to understand how urban ‘community’ transition projects operate on the ground in specific cases, and is justified next.

### Case Studies

A case study approach was adopted for this thesis, focusing on three ‘community’ groups and eighteen initiatives spawned by them. In justifying a case study it is important to say not only why which case study is chosen, but also what is it a case study *of*. The desire to discover the use, deployment, and effectiveness of urban ‘community’ responding to the low carbon challenge was a strong one. Initially I drew up an excel spreadsheet comprising any and all such expressions I could find. There were many other interesting examples of ‘community’ urban transition – LILAC, CoRE, Love Milton, Earth Abbey – which the scoping study looked into, and eventually rejected in favour of the examples addressed here. It became clear though that I couldn’t address the study of ‘community’ in environmental governance today without some reference to TTN. At that point, TTN were attracting a wealth of interest, with similar pre-existing groups rebranding as Transition Towns, Transition Neighbourhoods, even

Transition islands. At the same time, TTN's growing popularity distinguished it as the (almost) default option for newly emerging groups interested in environmental issues. With the desire to set some stable parameters to this study, investigating urban transitions *in the same city* would allow a depth of approach, 'control' certain factors too, such as the CCF. The impact of devolution, the 'game-changing' affect of the CCF for such groups, the novel example of TEU,<sup>21</sup> all meant Edinburgh became the place to carry out this study, find the case studies, and 'get involved'. It might have been easier to assess the impact of the CCF by analysing a non-CCF affected comparator city: Manchester, Newcastle, or Belfast. By this stage, the object was not to study the CCF directly though, but the production, practice, and potential of 'community' in TTN. By holding as many variables as controlled as possible, the study aims were strengthened.

Castree (2005) emphasises the need for case studies to go beyond a mere 'checklist'. These case studies show the varieties of 'community' at a practical and emotional level. Not only do they vary in 'checklist' terms, (place/interest, small/large, centripetal/centrifugal) but also they show the breadth of 'community' deployment. Yet through this deployment, they also get to the nub of how being- and acting-together ('community'), is not reducible to a set of 'checklist' characteristics (scale, territory, abstractions to numbers). Case studies generate certain kinds of knowledge, an instance of a group, event, or peoples at a particular juncture in space and time (Flybvjerg, 2006, 2011). This study then is aware of the danger of over-extrapolating results beyond their context. Case studies are strong at generating the in-depth knowledge of the internal dynamics of TTN and analysing their use of 'community'; but weak at dealing with outliers, totalising interpretations of a much larger social movement/phenomena. Case studies – a generally accepted mode of enquiry in social sciences – were useful in limiting the scale of enquiry, and opening up a sufficient level of depth to accurately get to the core issue of the thesis. This approach was practical given the resources of a single authored PhD (Jamieson, 2012).

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<sup>21</sup> First non-place based TTN initiative. It also fitted with my desire to see educational institutes 'step up to the plate' and meet their responsibilities to the environment and 'community'.

### 2.1.2 Dùn Èideann: Place as Actor

*“Edinburgh is one of the most interesting cities in Europe”* (Knox, 1984). These case studies were particular to Edinburgh; this study could not have taken place anywhere else. The findings concern their particular environment, but hold significance beyond Edinburgh, or specific parts of Edinburgh. Certain aspects of this study are ‘of’ these examples: emergence in Edinburgh of both TTN, and the CCF policy. This cannot be easily replicated elsewhere. Yet there are still certain lessons that transcend these particular examples. For instance, the game-changing impact – and contingency – certain government policies can have. Elements particular to Edinburgh’s urban infrastructure, such as stone tenements, facilitate random unexpected interactions between neighbours, and impact the type and guise of ‘community’ found there, which other cities – or areas of Edinburgh – differ in. In what follows a brief plotted history of Edinburgh is given, with particular emphasis given to the aspects that influence this study.

Edinburgh – ‘Athens of the North’ – has long been a place of intellectual endeavour. The Scottish Enlightenment (c.1750) was centred on Edinburgh and was driven through its notable inhabitants including: David Hume (‘the leading neo-sceptic’), Adam Smith (‘father of economics and of capitalism’), James Hutton (‘father of geology’), and Adam Ferguson (‘father of sociology’). With this sweep of characters, Edinburgh’s intellectual tradition more than holds its own. Later, and of more direct import for both this thesis and its author is the Deesider, turned Edinburgh resident, Patrick Geddes. Inventor of Human Ecology, coiner of ‘conurbanisation’, internationalist, his fusion of Ecology and Society sums up the best of not just Edinburgh, but Scotland. His perceptions of space, and the ways these have impacted on the empirical material of this project, will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The enduring stereotype of Edinburghers today is not intellectual, but that of 'Tea Jenny's' – referring to *Jenners*, a large middle class department store. The denizens of Edinburgh parodied taking tea at Jenners. UK wide, Edinburgh is known through Dougal and Hamish's cry 'Ye'll hiv hid yer teee' on popular radio show *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*, indicating the middle class pretence of hospitality. These middle-class perceptions, chime with those of TTN, as seen at the start of Chapter One. The alternative side to Edinburgh is given in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*. That subtitles were used when the film was shown outside Scotland indicates the depth of subculture that exists, beyond the tartan shortbread tins of the tourist trail in Edinburgh's centre.

Scotland is ridden by divisions:<sup>22</sup> between highland and lowland, Celtic and Germanic, coloniser and colonised, Protestant and Catholic. Edinburgh is no different in this regard. The *fitba* divide between Hearts and Hibs is one manifestation of this, but Edinburgh is class divided also. Typically middle-class areas of this study, such as Morningside, Newington, and Bruntsfield are nationally known. Yet not too far away are other less salubrious locations some of which host a TTN presence. Reasons for this are discussed below.

The most major recent change to the capital was the reestablishment of Edinburgh as a political centre following devolution in 1999. With the resulting rise in house prices, proliferation of civil service jobs,<sup>23</sup> and self-identification of Edinburgh as a European capital, Edinburgh can be seen as more confident. Cultural events such as the Edinburgh Festival led to Edinburgh being a destination for cultural types, and more bohemian than the aforementioned crusty stereotype. This study was carried out after the latest crisis of capitalism in 2007. As such, this formed part of the background against which these 'communities' understand and express themselves. The heart was ripped out of Edinburgh's burgeoning finance sector: RBS and HBOS were part nationalised. While not many jobs have been lost to date, confidence is dented.

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<sup>22</sup> What Ascherson (2002) calls 'St Andrews Fault'

<sup>23</sup> Many interviews were carried out in Victoria Quay, offices of the Scottish Government.

Edinburgh was never heavily industrialised, instead relying on its academic, ecclesial, and civic institutions. Given this, the financial crisis was a tough blow for the city. Given the unsustainable property bubble fostered after devolution, it appears in retrospect that some financial impact was inevitable. The main 'industry' is the service sector: finance and tourism. In an Age of Austerity (Summers, 2009) grassroots projects such as those studied were crucially cheaper, than state sponsored ones. But this is typically a part of Scotland less reliant on public sector jobs and state support than elsewhere.

2007 saw a key political change when the SNP became the largest party in Holyrood.<sup>24</sup> Remarkably, in 2011 the SNP went on to win an outright majority. This was indeed perceived as a 'remarkable' victory in a parliamentary system designed to prevent any one party gaining an overall majority. Edinburgh is a capital city on its knees and cut down to size after the financial hits. Yet, it is also finding its voice, growing as a European capital.

Edinburgh is no mere backdrop to this study. It is active in each encounter and event that made this thesis. Not only when doing 'research proper'. Sleeping on Arthur's Seat, lecture halls, anywhere I could, the place served as an actor in this study, conversation piece in my mind, and stimulator of ideas. Yet not only that, the travel to and from Edinburgh was constitutive.

Crossing the border, on my travel from Durham, I became very familiar with the train journey: writing, reading, thinking, preparing, and recovering in that space. I would think of Norman MacCaig, the 'debatable lands', future unknowing, agency and borders. This too is affected this study.

*"I sit with my back to the engine, watching / the landscape pouring  
away out of my eyes. / I think I know where I am going and have /  
some choice in the matter.*

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<sup>24</sup> Location of the Scottish Parliament

*I sit with my back to the future, watching / time pouring away into the  
past. / I sit helplessly / lugged backwards / through the Debatable  
Lands of history, listening..."*

~ Crossing the Border, Norman MacCaig

### **2.1.3 Participatory Research, Interviews, Data Collection**

The main bulk of this research was carried out in Edinburgh, between February 2010 and December 2011. Much of this data is based on attending events put on by the TTN groups, and 'being there'. In order to solidify these experiences, 37 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the key figures of each TTN group studied here. Interviews were also conducted with significant external actors to these groups and key players in the TTN movement. The interviews varied in length from one key figure in TEU who spoke for over four hours, to the shortest – Rob Hopkins – around 20 minutes. Every other interview was over an hour long, with two hours most common. This enabled a more nuanced discussion, through which a sufficient depth could be reached in conversation. Furthermore, these interviews raised points that I pursued and explored beyond the bounds of the interview. Most of all, I felt privileged to be allowed such a window into interviewees lives. Between January-March 2011, the time of my fellowship in Graz, each interview was transcribed. Then the transcriptions, alongside the research diary, and other field notes were collated, coded, and patterns identified before starting the 'write up'.

The material included in what follows was gathered from a variety of sources. Predominantly this was gathered throughout my time as a researcher in Edinburgh. This included meeting up with volunteers, spending time writing and listening in the TEU/TES office and simply being in relevant environments and soaking up the culture. Some of these have been semi-structured interviews, for example with most of the paid staff (not paid interns) at these organisations. However, the data was mainly gathered through informal encounters, which was enabled through building

relationship with initially wary volunteers and staff members. For this reason, my research diaries formed an important record of these encounters and conversations. In this regard my research diaries are an important record of these encounters and conversations. I also sought out and interviewed important figures from outside Edinburgh, for example Ben Brangwyn (TN), interviewed over Skype. Similarly, Skype interviews were conducted with panel members of CCF, staff from Transition Support Scotland and 'former' key members of certain groups. Both PEDAL and TES are old enough that some of the key members have moved on. They offer crucial experience as former 'insiders', and opinions from their 'outside' vantage.

In all of this my aim has been to accurately describe these three organisations as completely as possible, to be aware and critically reflect on the lens through which I do this. To this end, many theoretical routes that I did not anticipate at the start of this project have been followed. For example, I did not expect to find the literature on resilience thinking so influential or central; similarly, many of my pre-conceived notions about sustainability have been altered.

Beyond the burgeoning academic literature on TTN,<sup>25</sup> which is still 'young', another important source of information has been literature produced by TTN. A brief review of the key texts is provided in Section 1.1. *Green Books* publish the majority of TTN's books and resources and serve as an important resource. There are also many articles published by key TTN figures in publications such as *Resurgence*, *Red Pepper* or *CornerHouse*. Popular level weblogs, and of course websites, are an important resource too, as one would expect given the TTN belief in organising and operating as a wiki.<sup>26</sup> These raise an important social justice point on the availability and inclusiveness of the information, and it is important to at least mention this here. There are many other sources of this information in addition to these, from podcasts to the staff magazine of Edinburgh University. Given this,

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.citeulike.org/group/15407> Accessed 18/09/2012

<sup>26</sup> Explored in more depth in Chapter 6.



there were many sources and different ways in which I gathered and learned this information.

#### 2.1.4 Transition Town Network and the Research Interface

TTN have achieved wide prominence so soon and have attracted much interest. TTN had impact on the outgoing Labour government's '*UK Low Carbon Transition Plan*': in 2009, DECC's then Secretary of State, Ed Milliband, attended the Transition Network Conference as 'Keynote Listener'. With the change of UK government and emphasis on 'Big Society', TTN have been identified as a model of grassroots action 'doing it for themselves'.

The interest is not only confined to the media and politics, but has also spread to academic circles. During the course of this research within the field of Geography alone, there has been an increase in presentations involving – and whole sessions that directly and indirectly reference – TTN at the RGS-IBG.<sup>27</sup> This reflects the growing awareness and interest in TTN from both academic and non-academic contexts. There has been a huge interest in TTN from wider society, but also academia (Section 1.1). It is understandable then that TTN both attract and encourage such interest, but also bemoan it.

Key figures within TTN have mused much on the constraints of this level of interest, and the opportunities it may afford. Research on TTN groups can be constraining, as small emergent groups finding their feet, can be thrown by a researcher taking up precious time, asking seemingly obscure, theoretical questions. Mason et al., (2012: 2) point out the danger of critique for critique's sake. Academic pursuits may attempt to be helpful, but critique can be received as unedifying, damaging criticism, "*breaking the faith needed to move mountains and effect social change*". Tellingly, Mason et al. (2012) use TTN as a key example.

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<sup>27</sup> Of which I contributed presentations in 2010, 2011, and 2012, and co-organised a session in 2012, concerning the research presented in this thesis.

TTN label such research as 'extractive': "*the researcher gets a grade or qualification while the transitioners [sic.] get nothing for the effort they've been asked to put in.*"<sup>28</sup> Yet there are also opportunities that such a level of interest can open up, beneficial to both researcher and researched. Academics and intellectuals can benefit from applying their work, engaging with projects outside of the proverbial 'ivory tower'. Activists and TTN volunteers can benefit from the intellectual tools on offer from researchers – being critical, informed, with perspective. Within Geography this tradition of the "scholar-activist"<sup>29</sup> pioneered by Doreen Massey and Duncan Fuller amongst others, or the Public Geographies literature, attempt to navigate this balance (Fuller & Kitchen, 2004).

I went into this research aware of such constraints and opportunities. Yet, just as providing information on environmental issues to the public is not enough by itself to directly foster increased environmental awareness or behaviours (Owens, 2000), only awareness or information are not enough here. This information is part of the research design. TTN too are also aware, and have set out an 8-point plan,<sup>30</sup> and research protocol,<sup>31</sup> for any researchers, which helped guide my research protocol. My getting involved with these groups was *not* any substitute for them giving up their valuable time, what Gillan & Pickerill describe as an "*ethics of immediate reciprocation*" (2012: 136). It was a technique to access the data; an agreement entered into in full awareness, akin to any another social exchange.

The TTN 8-point plan and research protocol was written and adopted after this research started. The benefit of being one of the first to research TTN being the novelty of the group, a downside before TTN could formally outline how they wished to engage with research on their terms. Yet, this dialogue occurred informally and directly with participants. The lack of

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/news/2012-03-29/researching-transition-making-sure-it-benefits-transitioners> Accessed 18/09/2012

<sup>29</sup> Chatterton inverts the emphasis: "Activist-Scholar" (2008)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.transitionresearchnetwork.org/want-to-do-research-with-a-ti.html>  
Accessed 18/09/2012

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.transitionresearchnetwork.org/been-approached-by-a-researcher.html>  
Accessed 18/09/2012

engagement with these plans though does not indicate any antipathy for such documents. After I submitted this thesis I took part in a Transition Research Network workshop (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> January, 2013). Although formally outside the process of this PhD, the creation of *Transition Research Primer v.1.0* after the workshop shows a demonstration to collaboratively defining research, and not researching only as 'extractive'.

### 2.1.5 Methods Adopted

*"By indirection find directions out"*  
(Shakespeare, Hamlet, 2.1.63)

I began research with the 'research fatigue' of TTN (discussed above in section 2.1.4) in mind. Research fatigue then helped me to shapen up the research design to overcome poor response rates, and receiving insufficient, or lesser quality, data. I became clearer about the purpose of the research when communicating with and recruiting potential respondents. There is no 'quick fix' to research fatigue amongst participants, but awareness of it was key in designing the research. As such I adopted key 'traditional' social scientific methods including: semi-structured interviews, case studies (discussed above), focus groups, and ethnomethodology. I now turn to discuss each of these in turn.

#### Ethnography

Rather than this data 'waiting to be un/dis-covered', the people, events and phenomena discussed here, have been socially and spatially (re)produced. The role I played as researcher must also not be underestimated in this. Different means were adopted in order to better understand these social and spatial settings, through which subjects and events emerge. The research was primarily gathered through ethnography. Much of the 'community' dimension to these groups exists beyond or below the verbal,

or even cognisant level. This was needed to get to what Silverman has called the “*innumerable inscrutable habits*” (2008: 11) that made such groups ‘tick’.

This ethnography – literally, writing about people – was carried out throughout my time in Edinburgh. Ethnography is employed to explore cultural phenomena, thought ideal for the aim of getting at the experience of being-in-‘community’ within these groups. This enabled the social meaning and nuances of acts, and words to be more fully understood. Three research diaries were filled with writing up my experiences of meetings, interviews, TTN events, planning meetings, going for coffee/tea with participants, and many more such occurrences. I also recorded my excitement, and everyday thoughts, feelings, poetry and reactions to anything concerning the research project. Extracts from these research diaries are scattered where relevant throughout chapters 4-6.

Ethnographic approaches were chosen due to their ability to understand the specific details of how such urban ‘community’ experiments either emerge from or are implemented from the ground-up. It also had the additional benefit of assessing the messy implications on the ground of government policy (i.e. the CCF).

### Interviews/ Focus Groups

The interviews, and focus groups – once transcribed – form a large part of the data from which this thesis was written. It is tempting to see this as the core research methodology. However each interview or focus group, and the text emerging from that meeting, is inherently based on ethnography, or my ‘being-there’ in Edinburgh.

All transcribed interview and focus group data is in some way ‘manufactured’. Silverman calls this setting up of data gathering the ‘interview society’ (2008: 119-144), where the uncritical default method for gaining any information or awareness is an interview. One central problem identified by critical literature surrounding the study of ‘methods’ is that of uncritically accepting the interviewee’s worldview and version of events (Cook & Crang, 2007: 60-89). While interviewing I have first adopted the

stance of 'seeking first to understand, then be understood' (Covey, 1989: 235-260), a stance of empathetic listening, attempting to see their situation through their eyes. Often questions were firmly based on observations from my time with these groups. ('I've noticed you do this. Why is that?' 'Can you tell me more about what happens then?') Only on rare occasions did I meet, or Skype, interviewees for only that occasion: such as civil servants, or policy makers. The write-up has taken longer than research gathering, going beyond merely reporting what participants have said. It has been a search for clarity, rather than rarity. That is, to accurately reflect how the TTN groups relate to the theoretical concerns I brought to them, not for the novelty or unusual aspects of their practice.

While carrying out these interviews, I adopted what Potter has named *The Dead Social Scientist Test*:

*"The test is whether the interaction would have taken place in the form that it did had the researcher not been born or if the researcher had got run over on the way to the university that morning."* (Potter, 1996:135, in Silverman 2008:53)

In doing so, by basing most of the *direct* evidence in this thesis on transcribed data, it sits within the frameworks of Social Science and Geography, both of which are familiar with such methods, yet remain by no means uncritical of them. The interviews were carried out with the concerns of being rooted in the ethnographic experience, aware of the problems of extractive research, with a commitment to the Public Geographies' dictum: 'declare your own position'. This for me is the desire to 'live ethically and act politically in human geography' (Cloke, 2002).<sup>32</sup>

Being un- or semi-structured, the interviews were a time consuming methodology. Yet, due to the crucial impact of certain key individuals in these groups, it was important to gain the in-depth, rich data such a technique provides. There are two forms of ethical implications from this technique. First, being fair within the interview. This involved being aware

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<sup>32</sup> For this paper, and much else besides, I owe a debt of gratitude to Daniel Whittall.

of power dynamics, while I—as interviewer—would often listen, as a participant worked, and talked. Following Bondi (2003), I sought a stance of empathy, not identification with the interviewee. That is, to understand the interviewees position, feelings and experience, rather than becoming absorbed or overwhelmed by responses.

Secondly, care has been taken when presenting such interview data in this thesis, and other publications. I have sought anonymity for each participant where possible. Given TTN are such a public movement, with many website, article and wider publications, complete confidentiality is in some cases impossible to preserve. Some figures can be guessed through contingent factors. Yet, each name interviewed has been altered when in the text of this thesis. Some names like Richard Lochhead (not interviewed) have not been changed, and others who maintain a public profile (Rob Hopkins or Ben Brangwyn, say) are mentioned. But private comments in interviews have still been made anonymous. Public comments made on 'blogs or other publications have been attributed. Also, much of the communication in interviews is non-verbal, and possibly even non-cognitive. Yet, what makes it into this thesis, is the words spoken, then transcribed. Care has been taken in handling of data.

Factors that led me to adopt these methods were both purposeful and contingent. People happened to be in the right place at the right time. Recruiting on site and snowballing were important. The emphasis was on not imposing too much on participants, on getting involved with their projects, and helping out where possible. Such help was not 'specialist' but that which anyone might do from clearing tables to handing out leaflets. I also came to the realisation that 'community' is not entirely 'open-ended' and problematic as it often is presented in the literature (Defilippis et al., 2010) but is often something specific. As Sandel has described democracy, 'community' does not mean being the same; it does mean 'doing life together'. *"Democracy does not require perfect equality, but it does require that citizens share a common life. What matters is that people of different*

*backgrounds and social positions encounter one another, and bump up against one another, in the course of ordinary life.”<sup>33</sup>*

This turned out to be one of the most important ways to gather the ‘feel’ of the initiatives and led to chance encounters with first timers, at events such as a film showing. One of the core contentions of the thesis is that ‘community’ is more than a definite or indefinite noun - it is also a verb. I could not have reached or appreciated this conclusion at a distance, or without adopting a methodology that enabled me to ‘get involved’ with the ecology of the communities studied.

#### Tone adopted – critique

This thesis attempts to be critical in its treatment of groups such as TTN. By this I mean I do not just want to criticise (however deserved, or well argued such criticisms may be), but to analyse intelligently, thoroughly, and insightfully the activities of TTN, in this case with regards to their production, practice and potential of ‘community’.

Critique is important, as without it these groups cannot grow, evolve and change. I do not hold to the binary that these groups are either the solution to all our problems, or are barking up the wrong tree, deluded or even a collection who are well-intentioned, but ultimately a misguided waste of time. No. I believe there is something fascinating in groups such as TTN, something that deserves to be more widely recognised, and critiqued. Neither are they perfect. Critique in this case is important, as it is necessary for growth, maturity and evolution. The critiques offered here are not intended to be damning, dismissive or destroying (as academic critique can too often slides towards). Rather, it is to be edifying, honest, and honing.

In writing this thesis, I have found it very easy to slip into a cynical, judgemental attitude towards the genuine, well-intentioned, time-consuming and selfless actions, that I believe many of those involved in these groups, interviewed here. The balance to be found here is in not

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/may/17/what-money-cant-buy-michael-sandel-review> Accessed 4/4/2013

blindly praising such grassroots community actions, whatever their ultimate or wider failing, because I do generally side with their aims, beliefs, and objectives. On the whole, I admire them.

Yet, there is also the other extreme to be avoided. Where ‘the academic doth protest too much’. Attempting to justify my work by appearing objective, removed and judgemental. Whereas balance and intelligent public scholarship should be achieved in being fair, constructively critical, pointing out tensions, and inconsistencies where need be, but recognising the contingency and complicity, which lies in each of us.

An example can be found in the common criticism of TTN groups not fairly representing the local community they aim to. This is well founded, referring to the educational background of those involved with TTN groups. Yet, without putting this into the context that these groups are far more representative than the UK’s official forms of representation: in the ethnicity, gender balance or class background of the country’s MSPs and MPs. These criticisms can appear overly harsh, academically smug and expect too much of already hard-pressed people.

This balance between genuine critique, academic rigour, and being fair to those studied in all their positive and negative aspects is hard to achieve, and I do not claim to have fully achieved this. But, this has been the aim and intention throughout.

### 2.1.6 Complicity

This serves as a partial confession then. This research is of the ‘extractive’ kind repudiated by TTN. I aim to get a qualification (PhD) on the back of the time, kindness and efforts of those in the studies I discuss here.

My intention was not *“to identify with grassroots activists and to attempt to shape social policy and public debate through community or other activist groups ... to give activists and citizens the tools to speak for themselves so that their voices would be heard directly”* (Staeheli & Mitchell, 2005: 369). Not because I wish to sabotage or in any way harm the actors discussed



here. These groups are perfectly capable of making their voices heard without me.

In a section on complicity there should also be a word on positionality. I grew up in Speyside, in the fishing settlements of the North East coast, culturally and physically far from Edinburgh. A common phrase used in those parts when discussing questions of Scottish independence is 'London may ignore us, but Edinburgh hates us'. Edinburgh as a capital city is not a large cultural signifier. Yet there is impact. While Edinburgh attempted to present itself as 'Athens of the North', the seemingly uncouth dialect/language I grew up speaking, acquired the name Doric; after the Dorians living in the more rural areas, compared to the culturally refined, and phonetically conservative Attic of Athens. So, although it may seem to those foreign to both Edinburgh and the Highlands that my birth, upbringing and heritage would give me 'insider' status as a Scot within the parts of Edinburgh studied, this is not the case. Politically, however, I do have to declare an interest in these groups. As a founder and chair of County Durham Green Party during my PhD, I have a longstanding interest in Green politics, preceding the study undertaken here. I watched the emergence of TTN with great interest, from its 'pilot study' in Kinsale, and have been keen to see where they go, outside and beyond this study. I support TTN's aims, and although not involved to anything like the degree that would be necessary for an autoethnography, my political sympathies and experiences made the participant observation and ethnography carried out here reasonably straightforward.

## **2.2 The Transition Town Network: Brief Biography of a 'Community' Movement**

*"To be ecological means to participate in a collectivity, but not all collectivities operate as organic wholes."*

(Bennett, 2004: 365)

TTN describe themselves as a “*community-led response to the pressures of climate change, [and] fossil fuel depletion*”.<sup>34</sup> TTN emerged in Totnes, Devon in 2005. Founder Rob Hopkins drew on his prior experience as a permaculture<sup>35</sup> teacher in Kinsale, Ireland. From its inception TTN was firmly rooted in permaculture principles, which can be understood as providing a philosophical basis for TTN (Pickerill, forthcoming: 17). TTN’s role is to support and facilitate growth in TTN groups, the groups in turn seek the aim of building ‘resilient relocalised community’, where they exist. *Transition Totnes* was the first of these groups and there are now 421 ‘Official initiatives’ and 566 ‘Muller initiatives’<sup>36</sup> spreading from England, across the British Isles, extending to the USA, Australia, Canada, and continental Europe.<sup>37</sup> Increasing awareness of the key TTN concerns – both climate change and peak oil – helps understand the prodigious rise in scope and extent of TTN initiatives. Yet most TTN initiatives begin small-scale, are firmly grassroots or bottom-up in ideology and practice, and have limited scope for impact.

From the beginning TTN used permaculture, linked with *Resilience Thinking* (Walker and Salt, 2006) in their approach to socio-ecological systems, of which ‘community’ is a core expression (Mollison, 1988). Permaculture uses ecological design: it seeks to identify patterns in the natural world, and apply them to the social. So, plant and animal ‘communities’ form the basis for the way in which human ‘communities’ should be orchestrated, and set the tone for humanity’s collective relationship with(in) nature.<sup>38</sup> It is from this literature that their particular form of political mobilisation or activism takes root. TTN retains the subjective umbrella nature of ‘community’, its local specificity and

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<sup>34</sup> <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> Accessed 18/09/2012

<sup>35</sup> Design based on natural world principles. Described in depth below. See <http://www.permaculture.org.uk>

<sup>36</sup> Official Transition Network terminology. ‘Muller’s’ work towards ‘Official’ accreditation from Transition Network, highlighting the increasingly structured nature of the TTN ‘movement’.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/> Accessed 27/09/2012

<sup>38</sup> Although the social and the natural are characterised as separate here, they would be seen in permaculture as part of the same system, ecology or network.

grassroots heritage, but they also build on their permaculture heritage with a specific, more particular, meaning to ‘community’.

TTN is based on permaculture, and it is not just Hopkins who has brought his permaculture background to TTN, many of those most involved in TTN initiatives have a background in permaculture, or are cultivating it (Connors & McDonald, 2011). The key concepts incorporated into TTN thinking – resilience, transition, and ‘community’ – have been adopted from a permaculture approach (Holmgren, 2011). Hopkins describes TTN as being *“rooted in permaculture design”*, and endorses Holmgren’s book ‘Permaculture’ *“as a work of great genius”* (2011, back cover).

Holmgren<sup>39</sup> adopts a working definition of permaculture to be *“consciously designed landscapes which mimic the patterns and relationships found in nature”* (2011: xix). ‘Community’ is read off the ecological realm and applied as a normative ideal to the social. Accordingly in permaculture, ‘communities’ have been *“deliberately planned or designed by their participants, rather than unconsciously evolved by social and economic processes”* (2011: 174), they are holistic enough to be *“spiritually based”* and *“would be regarded as utopian”* by both those internal and external to them (2011: 174). The ideal example ‘community’ based on permaculture are the kibbutzes founded in Israel after 1948. This example is influential to TTN, but guides can be found in others such as the bioregional movement<sup>40</sup> or the back-to-the-land movement<sup>41</sup> (Smith, 2005). The ‘community’ of permaculture is foundational to how TTN envisions and plans ‘community’, but the specific permaculture meaning is fused with the plastic, polysemic nature of the word – what I describe in Section 3.2.6 as the subjective, umbrella use the term.

The ‘transition’ in TTN is the transition from current society, towards the ‘resilient relocalised community’. ‘Transition’ is a temporal term; it evokes change, movement, and flow, in keeping with TTN’s permaculture

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<sup>39</sup> David Holmgren, is an Australian permaculture teacher, ecologist, and co-founder of permaculture with Bill Mollison.

<sup>40</sup> Seeing any system as a discrete community, set within naturally defined limits, emphasising locally bound communities, ecologies and cultures.

<sup>41</sup> The desire to own and grow food on one’s own property, often taking the form of anti-urban, flight from cities to rural areas.

base. However, there is little emphasis on the rate of this change; in this way, TTN can appeal to a broad spectrum of both reformers and revolutionaries in promoting the shift to a low carbon future. This is important for TTN, framing themselves as inaugurating a broad coalition of people and interests for the good of ‘the whole community’. Other words, such as activist or radical, could be used but are eschewed, presumably for their divisive potential.<sup>42</sup>

Both ‘transition’ and ‘resilience’ are key conceptual underpinnings for TTN. Yet ‘community’ is just as central a concept, perhaps even the key motif throughout the movement. Although not called the ‘Transition Community Network’, almost nothing TTN sets out to achieve is done either without seeking to established ‘community’, or acting through ‘community’. This highlights the silently implied, assumed values and virtues ‘community’ is often tacitly saturated in, in which everyone is assumed to share. TTN initiatives are supposed to be ‘community-led’. Their chief end is ‘community resilience’, rather than distant, though important, objectives such as cutting carbon emissions percentages or enhancing energy security. For each initiative that springs up, the understanding is that TTN should spread as a contagion,<sup>43</sup> emerging reactively to serve the needs of any given – again – ‘community’. ‘Community’ here emerges as a necessary reaction to concerns over climate change and peak oil. Ben Brangwyn, co-founder of the TTN expressed this with a pithy phrase that has become something of a rallying cry:

*“If we wait for governments, it’ll be too little, too late. If we act as individuals, it’ll be too little. But if we act as communities, it might be just enough, just in time.”<sup>44</sup>*

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<sup>42</sup> Evidence to support this assumption is found in Section 1.1 on ‘Radio 4 Activism’.

<sup>43</sup> Contagion is used by TTN presumably not pejoratively, but to express the silent, rhizomic, quality to the spreading message, as unstoppable, as it is understandable, or rational.

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/support/what-transition-initiative> Accessed 17 / 8 / 2011

'Community' is crucial for TTN. Not only is it the destination of the transition (fostering 'resilient relocalised communities'), it is the means of action ('if we act as communities') by which they get there. The recognition of 'community' as a central value in TTN comes not only from inside the movement, but also from outside. Smith (2011: 101) sees the "overriding grand-narrative" of TTN groups as "galvanising community", in the face of oil addiction and climate change. The popular press<sup>45</sup> also buys into this rhetoric, where TTN's aim is "to move us 'from oil dependency to local resilience', using the power of community" (Irvine 2009, 19). So, TTN has 'community' as a central focus and mobilising notion. However, it is well established that 'community' is a contested term. What more specifically do TTN groups mean when they invoke this concept of 'community'?

First, as seen in Ben Brangwyn's pithy saying above, 'community' is seen as the alternative and antidote to individualism. 'Community' here refers to working together as a group: a collective. For TTN 'community' is effective – the whole being greater than the sum of the parts – but also moves away from the way in which environmental responsibilities and agency have been constructed. Talk of carbon footprints, appeals to saving money, or 'do a little, save a lot' styles of approach; these target the individual as the unit of analysis.<sup>46</sup> The alternative to this, projecting blame onto corporations and governments, is seen as equivalent to hiding one's head in the sand. 'Community' here is the meso-layer that is effective.<sup>47</sup>

Second, there is a strong link between TTN's 'communities' and their location. This production of place is emphasised in the naming of the initiatives. There are exceptions (e.g. *Transition Edinburgh University*, or some of TTN's 'Heart and Soul' groups), but on the whole TTN refers to a 'community' contained within a specific territorial boundary, be it a town (Totnes), a neighbourhood (Brixton) or local area (Transition North Howe).

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<sup>45</sup> The article quoted here is from *Red Pepper*, although articles have been written in most major UK newspapers, usually focusing on the 'community' dimension.

<sup>46</sup> Heiskanen et al. (2010), Hoffman & High-Pippert (2010), and Upham (2012) all address what 'community' adds to the 'failure' of individual centred approaches to environmental behaviours.

<sup>47</sup> Community as an effective medium – medium scale, vehicle through which the low carbon transition can be delivered – is discussed in Middlemiss and Parrish (2010), Jackson (2005), and Walker (2011).

The focus on local responses emphasises this place-base. The groups become communities of interest, within a particular place. Due to the common aim, TTN's volunteers share a 'community' of interest, yet the focus is on the transition of a particular place. TTN's 'community' here is not just an elision between local and 'community' (Amin, 2005), but also between communities of place and interest.<sup>48</sup>

Linked to this point is the scalar nature of 'community' that TTN envisions. This is relatively small, usually around the size of a small English market town (c. 10,000 people),<sup>49</sup> such as Totnes. When the TTN model was adopted in larger urban settings this scalar dimension has generally been retained, focusing on specific neighbourhoods. In Edinburgh, for example, an attempt at a citywide TTN initiative was undertaken, before balking at the size of such a task, and the fragmenting into specific neighbourhood scale TTN cells within the city.

There is also a more subtle and subjective use of 'community' by TTN initiatives. This suggests that the term 'community' evokes a valuable *feeling* alongside a particular meaning. Herbert (2006) has described 'community' as a 'god word', due to its "*appeal, rarely questioned and frequently invoked to legitimize what's done in its name*" (Ridgley, 2010: 379). This subjective aspect to 'community' is certainly another reason for its appeal and perhaps a major factor in the success of TTN as a movement.

This is crucial to understand the background of 'community' in TTN, in general. If this was the aim of the thesis, the study could halt here. However, the experience of, and the being in, 'community', within the specific context of Edinburgh needs much more unpacking. A brief description of how TTN 'arrived' in Edinburgh is given, before addressing the chosen groups for case study.

### 2.2.1 TTN arrives in Edinburgh

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<sup>48</sup> Discussion of 'community' as understood theoretically can be found in Chapter 3.

<sup>49</sup> Still too large to be anything other than an 'imagined community'.

TTN's arrived in Scotland in December 2007, spreading from its Totnes beginning. In Portobello, an anti-supermarket protest group (PCATS), achieved its campaign aims to have no new supermarket in Portobello, but resulted in a protest group with nothing to focus on. PCATS thus morphed into PEDAL and became Scotland's first TTN initiative, despite lacking the 'transition' appellation. PCATS morphed into PEDAL, though the efforts of key individual Eva Schonveld, who used her good contacts with Totnes to help organise a speaking tour of Scotland by Ben Brangwyn.<sup>50</sup>

*"She [Eva] said, would one of you guys like me to come to Scotland? And I said, well if you can make it, you know, to make the journey worthwhile, if you can get a couple of talks going. She came back a week later, with, like, 14 talks in 10 days or something like that."<sup>51</sup> (TN)*

Eva's perspective was similar:

*"So, I asked Transition Network, if they could send somebody up to see if they could come and talk to us. And they said, well, we don't really want to come. It's really far, if you can get a few other places for us to have a tour, well then we'll come. And I'd been building up contacts around Scotland of people who were working at this community level, not necessarily working on Transition, and put word out to them and got about, erm, 10 communities who were interested, and Ben Brangwyn came up, in the winter of 2008. No, 2007. I think December 2007, he came up and did this tour of kind of Aberdeen and Dunbar, [etc.]" (TSS II)*

This speaking tour can be seen as the start of TTN involvement in Scotland. The locations of these talks sparked many of the early TTN initiatives (for instance Dunbar). Having this foothold, however small, in the 'community'

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<sup>50</sup> Key TTN Totnes figure, and alongside Rob Hopkins, Transition Network co-founder.

<sup>51</sup> *"Italicised quote"* without reference indicates verbatim reference from transcribed interview. 'Inverted commas' indicates direct quote from my research diary, or memorable phrase from participant later recalled by myself.

responses to the low carbon challenge, came just in time for the Scottish Government's new flagship policy for carbon reduction: the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF).<sup>52</sup> The CCF funded many TTN initiatives in Scotland, including Transition Support Scotland (TSS), who existed to inaugurate more, and facilitate the growth of existing, TTN initiatives.

## 2.3 The Three Case Studies

The three groups that are part of this project have some shared features. Aside from all being TTN groups, all are based within Edinburgh, and so offer urban expressions of 'community'. There are differences in the character of urban environment though. PEDAL are based in the suburban Portobello, TES in the city centre and Southside, and TEU operate city-wide, with the two main university campus one in the city centre and one further south (King's Buildings). The nature of 'community' in scale and density varies too. The CCF heavily funded all three (relative to the group's overall finances), and although not intended to be part of this study, had a crucial impact.

### 2.3.1 TTN in Edinburgh

Once the decision had been taken to study TTN groups, Edinburgh presented itself as the prime candidate for study. Edinburgh offered the best site through which to study the how transition had manifest and developed itself across differing urban groups, represented by the three case studies. As an opportunity to study the effects that mass interest can have on TTN groups, addressing the Scots examples is particularly interesting given the post-devolution era it currently occupies. At the time of study, the SNP and Green Party held the balance of power in Scotland. This, combined with Scotland's traditional left-of-centre position, led to the self-styled 'world

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<sup>52</sup> The May 2007 general election, elected a first-ever SNP majority, who adopted the Green Party's CCF manifesto promise as policy.



leading', 'historic', and 'groundbreaking' Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.<sup>53</sup> This bill has carbon reduction targets, and also led to the creation of the Climate Change Fund (CCF). This is designed to promote 'community level' action in response to climate change. That 'major' organisations such as Friends of the Earth Scotland could not apply for funding under the CCF has offered opportunities to many local groups that now have access to funds beyond what they could otherwise have hoped for. TTN made the most of this and Scotland's TTN expressions are in the curious situation where the most well developed and highest volunteer levels are in English towns and villages such as Totnes and Lewes, but the funding is far higher in Scotland.

Looking at Scottish examples provides interest also due to the proximity, or lack of it, from Totnes and the major figures in TTN. This makes it possible to chart their influence as they come 'up North' for visits. Within Scotland it made sense to look at the capital. Not only is Edinburgh a nexus of power, it also has a slight radical edge, seen at the 2008 G8 protests.

Scotland has three major urban centres – Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow – and the fit with the urban focus could reasonably only be situated within these. When TTN was taking off in Scotland there was an interesting divergence between how these cities took up the idea. Glasgow, despite being larger and more dispersed, opted to have a united 'Transition Glasgow'. 'Transitioning' such a large place was bound to be difficult and also can be seen as going against TTN principles of being grounded and emergent in a particular place. Edinburgh right from the start opted to completely diversify and have a multitude of small groups, many of which have since been extinguished for various reasons. Edinburgh in this case can be seen as readily grasping the 'TTN message'. In Aberdeen, TTN does exist, but is still nascent. Partly because of the heavy dependence on the oil industry, ecological action has limited depth, leaving little choices for case study.<sup>54</sup> The aim of this study is to investigate what emergent 'community'

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<sup>53</sup> [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) Accessed 28/09/2012

<sup>54</sup> With the exception of the 'Tripping Up Trump' campaign.

projects look like in an urban setting; Edinburgh was the perfect place to assess TTN.

### 2.3.2 Portobello Energy Descent And Land reform

PEDAL – TTN’s 21<sup>st</sup> overall initiative – was founded as a coming together of residents in Portobello, a coastal town within Edinburgh. Portobello’s largely commuter population work in the city of Edinburgh, though it has a fairly strong sense of place. ‘Porty’ has cultural events; its own high street, and is one of the more coherent areas within Edinburgh, partly due to its shoreline which serves as a focal and delineating point. In the early 2000’s it was announced that an unnamed supermarket had applied for planning permission to build a superstore in the neighbourhood. In response to this a core group of residents, many of whom had never been politically active before, combined to successfully fight the planning application before the council.

The success of this campaign, and the feelings generated from belonging to such a group, led to a desire to continue the campaign albeit without a proposed supermarket to fight. From the remains of this Portobello Campaign Against The Superstore (PCATS) a group stayed active, adopting the name PEDAL, and campaigned on issues of concern to TTN. The link between supermarkets, requiring long supply chains, symbolising consumption and homogeneity across town centres, and the TTN concerns of peak oil, climate change, resilience and ‘community’, was for those rebranding as PEDAL a seamless transition. It is interesting that the group identity – or ‘community feeling’ – was never to reach a destination. The ‘community’ wasn’t to be found in achieving certain tasks like the prevention of the supermarket, but in the working towards them. ‘Community’ was not only the destination, but also the journey, in the parlance, and brings to mind the Scots clergyman and ‘community’ activist George MacLeod’s maxim that the only thing that builds ‘community’ is a ‘*common demanding task*’ (Ferguson, 1990).



Figure 2: PEDAL logo

After looking around for various ways to continue the group, the decision was taken to adopt the Transition Town 'branding'. Some PCATS members had read texts outlining the lack of diversity in UK high streets,<sup>55</sup> something TTN were talking about too. Ben Brangwyn, a co-founder of Transition Network, was contacted and the group invited him up from Totnes to speak to the group. PEDAL adopted the 12-point plan and became Scotland's first TTN initiative around 2006, just before Brangwyn's speaking tour of Scotland. This date is vague as there are inconsistencies with when PEDAL became (or will become) a TTN initiative. Although registered as the 21<sup>st</sup> TTN initiative, they avoid the 'Transition Place X' formulaic name of many groups. The key part of each TTN initiative, according to the rubric produced in Totnes, is to produce and enact an Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP). As PEDAL has never gone down this route, some argue that they are not a 'proper' transition town.<sup>56</sup> PEDAL coalesced and morphed from PCATS rather than being founded at one meeting. The identification of the group as a discrete unit is a fuzzy one whereby the group journey toward TTN rather than every officially being within or outside of the process. PEDAL is important for understanding TTN in Scotland for the presence of key member Eva Schonveld, who became the founder and co-ordinator of CCF funded Transition Support Scotland (TSS), facilitating TTN across Scotland.

Addressing PEDAL offers a chance to analyse TTN initiatives beyond the embryonic stage. Given that writings surrounding TTN are still relatively recent, there is a tendency to focus on describing the nascent features in TTN organisations. PEDAL is both novel, in that they diverge from the

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<sup>55</sup> Mentioned were Monbiot's *Corporate Takeover of Britain* (2003), and NEF's *Clone Town Britain* report (2005).

<sup>56</sup> Part of these negative statements about PEDAL (and TES and TEU), from Totnes-based TTN actors – sometimes anti-urban, sometimes anti-Scots – may have been fuelled by jealousy of the CCF funding.

traditional<sup>57</sup> English, peri-rural versions of TTN,<sup>58</sup> but in having a history outside of and beyond the TTN initiative, they provide resources to analyse a more established group. PEDAL differs from the other two groups in this study TES and TEU in that the population of Portobello is mostly middle-class, less transient, and more territorially based.

Perhaps due to the close links between PEDAL and TSS,<sup>59</sup> and close personal connections between CCF figures and PEDAL, PEDAL successfully secured CCF monies.<sup>60</sup> This is ironic, given one oft-repeated phrase in gathering this research, attributed to a key PEDAL figure. They are reputed to have said the CCF 'ruined transition in Scotland', referring the changes and fostered dependency of government monies such funding gives to an emergent, grassroots, bottom-up, volunteer group. These tensions will be explored more fully in the course of this thesis, particularly Chapter Six.

### 2.3.3 Transition Edinburgh Southside

Transition in the Southside of Edinburgh is more typical of TTN initiatives in other urban settings in the UK.<sup>61</sup> A core of people keep the group going, in addition to this core cast of central characters, there are also a number of more transient members. Edinburgh's Southside hosts the university and also contains some of the most affluent areas of Edinburgh (and hence Scotland), like Morningside. It also contains deprived areas, like Oxfgangs further south on the edge of town, new-build developments from the post-war period. Much of the activity of TES takes place in Morningside, the bohemian Marchmont and old Jewish, and now student, quarter of Newington.

In practice most of TES planning takes places in areas with more settled population (Morningside), but many schemes and volunteers are

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<sup>57</sup> If something founded in 2005 can be traditional.

<sup>58</sup> I'm aware that this may be something of a straw man vision of TTN, but such caricatures are important in holding performative agency, and did not emerge in a vacuum; they are at least based in reality.

<sup>59</sup> Literally personified in the charismatic, key figure of both PEDAL and TSS: Eva Schonveld.

<sup>60</sup> *The Herald* called similarly close relationships such as these 'cronyism' (Hutcheon, 2011)

<sup>61</sup> Such as in Brixton or Bristol

taken from the more transient populations (Newington, Marchmont). Due to this impermanence, group volunteers were of a different character to PEDAL: more students, less families, or those with children. TES's initiatives tended to be more focused on lifestyle, rather than infrastructural changes. Part of that may be due to the rented nature of much of the accommodation and the connection to the university. This connection means there is much overlap between the university and the regional initiatives (TES & TEU). One interviewee, for instance, was a founding member of both TES and TEU.

TES are not a middle point for this study, between the more settled population of Portobello and the workplace of university 'community'. They are one of the most active urban Transition groups in Scotland and have made links to other similar groups in the Southside region, like Guerrilla Gardeners, and more established voices, such as churches. TES received funding from CCF for what is becoming their flagship programme *Switching On to Switching Off* (SOSO).<sup>62</sup> This was worthy of further study for a number of reasons. Not only the effect that funded initiative co-ordinators are having on TTN as a whole, but also the shift from looking at lifestyle to infrastructure, and in having a material effect in what is a rather transient area (many of the tenements are rented, multiple occupancy flats).

#### 2.3.4 Transition Edinburgh University

TEU are unique within TTN, due to the novelty, large-scale ambitions and potentials of the programme. It would not have existed without the CCF offering such large quantities of funding, £339,000 awarded to TEU. The TEU proposal represented a coalition of voices concerned with Edinburgh University's carbon track record. Key figures, like David Somerville, the Energy Coordinator, have made links between university senate and both undergraduate and postgraduate student activism. Societies like *People & Planet* are historically active and vocal on environmental issues, and other key students had experience of TTN elsewhere or even within Edinburgh

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<sup>62</sup> All initiatives are described more fully in section 2.4

(TES most commonly). One key actor in the student 'community' was Ric Lander. Described as to me as a 'natural leader', he draws other students along with him and has been the driving force behind much of TEU. He was present, alongside David Somerville at a meeting, to hear a talk on TTN by Eva Schonveld. This was the catalyst for putting together a funding proposal for the CFF. This talk echoes one given by Ben Brangwyn on his tour of Scotland in December 2007 that set the ground for TTN in Scotland to take off.

A major driver – perhaps the key driver – for Edinburgh University throwing itself so wholeheartedly behind such a scheme, can be explained by wider shifts in environmental policy in the UK. Large organisations and councils are required by EU law to make significant carbon reduction savings or face large financial penalties in future. Edinburgh University had a *Switch and Save* campaign which relied on individual behaviour change initiatives along the line of the A-B-C model (Attitudes, Behaviour, Change).<sup>63</sup> Staff responsible for this questioned its effectiveness long-term, or impact beyond the 'usual suspects': one staff member remarked that the initiative was 'totally useless'. In place Edinburgh University adopted some major infrastructural improvements, including some well-publicised innovative CHP schemes.<sup>64</sup> Combined with this technological substitution, Edinburgh University joined the 10:10 campaign and were keen to tap into the history of student activism, students taking a lead in university politics and policy seen in the student-rectors tradition.<sup>65</sup> This groundswell could be seen as synergistic to the top-down drivers of senate-level concerns, pushed by environmental regulation, alongside the moral or emotional imperative for student activists. TEU can be under the 'Baptists and bootleggers' model of environmental governance. Both Baptists and bootleggers were joint campaigners for prohibition: Baptists for moral reasons, bootleggers for business interests (Desombre, 1995). Prohibition made political bedfellows

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<sup>63</sup> As described and parodied by Shove (2010).

<sup>64</sup> For instance: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/sep/08/carbon-emissions-1010-edinburgh-university> Accessed 27 10 12

<sup>65</sup> A trend in 1970's and 1980's for Scottish Universities to elect radical students to the influential position of Rector. Now since cancelled, prominent examples included Gordon Brown in Edinburgh University and John Bell for Glasgow University.

of them both. The environmental and governance challenge likewise eased into bed firebrand student activists, and university policy wonks.

### 2.3.5 Supporting Actors: Climate Challenge Fund, Transition Support Scotland, Changeworks

After having introduced the groups chosen for case study, and before addressing in greater depth the eighteen initiatives spawned by these groups, it makes sense to briefly introduce the other supporting, but no less crucial actors to this study. These are the main funder (CCF), the key supporting umbrella organisation (TSS) and main consultancy used by the three groups (Changeworks). The CCF is a flagship initiative of the Scottish Government to help them meet their ambitious carbon reduction targets (42% by 2020, 80% by 2050). It was *“set up to help communities combat climate change by reducing their carbon emissions”* (Scottish Government, 2011: 1). The CCF’s central focus is carbon reduction carried out through ‘community’. Projects funded address this through food, transport, or energy efficiency refurbishment or advice. The Scottish Government’s Climate Challenge Fund distributed £37.7million in grants during its first period 2008-2011, the period of this research. Although the CCF scheme had recently been extended until March 2015, with £10.3 million available annually, and seems to be a major plank of the SNP/Scottish Governments attempt to reduce carbon emissions through ‘community’. The awards made between 2008-2011 ranged from £7,000 to £650,000 (Scottish Government, 2011: 9). During this period the CCF made 331 awards to 261 ‘communities’. (Short Review: 1). The CCF itself was originally in the Scottish Green Party’s manifesto for the 2007 general election. After the election, the SNP was left as the largest party, but without a majority. To ensure the Green Party support, CCF was adopted as SNP/Scottish Government policy, fitting with the SNP’s self-proclaimed core aim of a successful Scotland through ‘sustained economic growth’. Schemes achieving policy goals through the

medium of 'community' are growing in prominence in the UK. It is against this background that such political techniques can be understood.

When this policy was announced, there was understandable upset from the NGOs and local authorities who could not apply for CCF funds. The CCF wanted locally rooted, sub-national, 'community' groups. They had to genuinely emerge to represent the 'wider community', and not be a front for an existing organisation. Where were such groups to be found? Fortunately, or rather symbiotically, a model of 'community' action emerged concurrently to fill this void: the TTN movement.

Changeworks is another key supplementary actor. As an environmental consultancy they were commissioned by the three groups that comprise my case studies to carry out work funded by the CCF: environmental auditing,<sup>66</sup> and consultancy.<sup>67</sup> Changeworks – an environmental charity and social enterprise – worked in collaboration with these groups to secure funding from the CCF, and then also received a sizeable portion of that funding. Before the CCF policy, they were funded through other government grants: Energy Savings Trust Scotland being one. With the advent of the CCF, they worked in collaboration with the 'community groups', often TTN's like the ones studied here. Changeworks received similar funding albeit vicariously through the 'community'. This circuitous route enabled the 'community' to 'call the shots', yet often the funding would 'end up in the same place' – as a representative from Changeworks put it.



Figure 3: TSS logo

Transition Support Scotland (TSS), a private company limited by guarantee,<sup>68</sup> was

will assess the environmental impacts, and improve businesses, charities, and others. Commissioned, CCF-funded reports schemes by the groups.

<http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk/07da3902a144c4df51af507809cf1730/compdetails>  
Accessed 27/10/12



CCF-funded from June 2008 to March 2011, to promote the TTN model. It helped start up many initiatives, and bring other 'community' groups into the TTN fold. Based in Portobello, then nearby Leith, TSS was closely associated with PEDAL, Eva Schonveld being the key protagonist of both.

## 2.4 The Eighteen Initiatives

Having introduced the three case studies that formed the focus of my research, this section now describes some of the principal initiatives they have taken to further the objectives of TTN. The approximate locations, and 'target communities' of these three groups can be seen in the annotated satellite photo (Figure 4). PEDAL (black) on the Firth of Forth coast. TES (yellow) claims to represent the whole Southside of Edinburgh, however in practice it focuses on Morningside, Grange, Newington, Bruntsfield. These are all areas that are located north of the lighter yellow line. South of the lighter yellow line lies the more deprived neighbourhood, Oxfords. TEU (blue) operated amongst the offices and homes of staff and students of Edinburgh University. The main university building locations are included here for reference: King's Buildings to the South, and the city centre 'campus' further north. It is interesting to note the proximity between TES & TEU; in biography they share volunteers, key people, and objectives, alongside location. Indeed while this research was carried out they both shared an office on Forest Road (orange dot, within TEU circle).

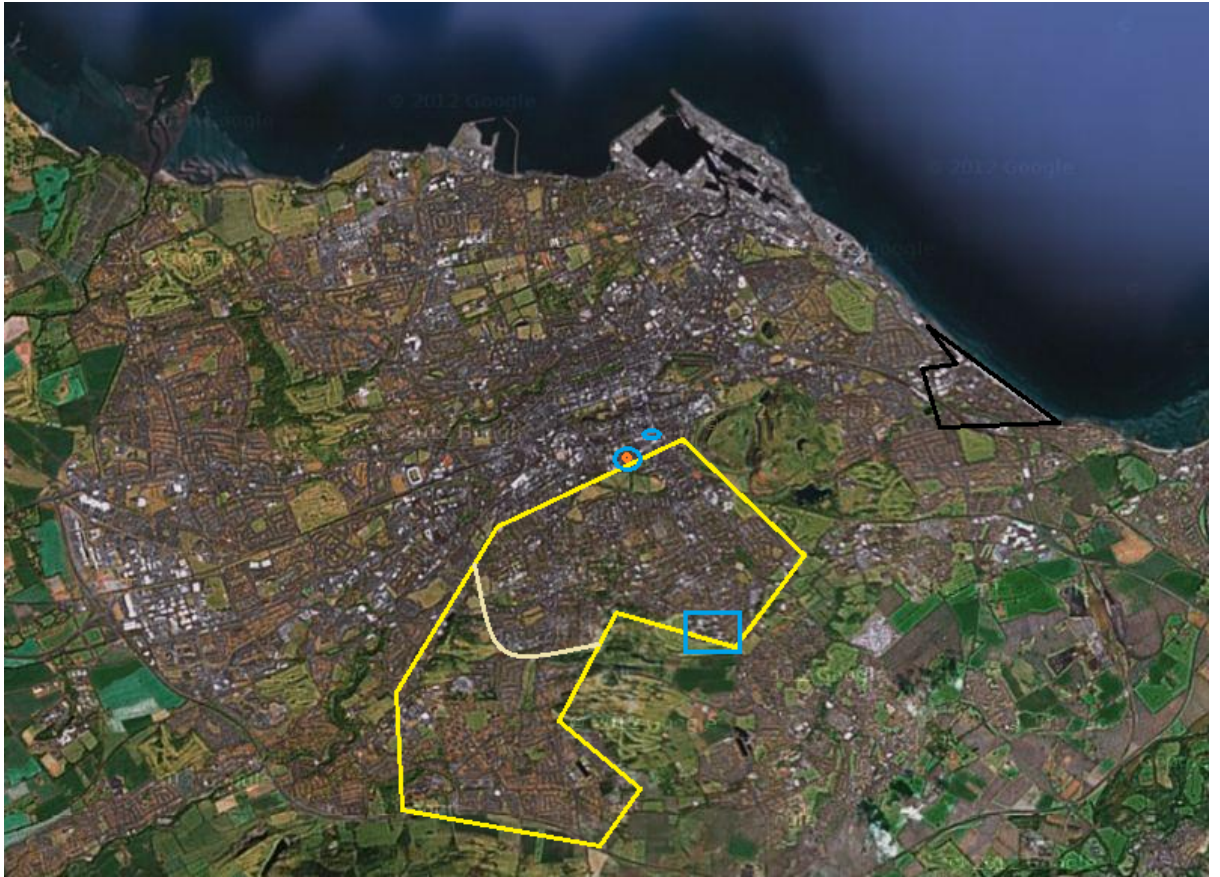


Figure 4: Annotated Satellite Photo of Edinburgh

In order to effect their proposed transition these groups engaged in many activities from which I've selected 18 separate initiatives (in bold). These can be grouped into: awareness raising exercises; gardening and food projects; 'community' group building; and larger scale practical action projects. Each subsection will be address in turn below.

The most common way into TTN activities and groups for newcomers in PEDAL, TES, and TEU was the **screening of films**. This fits in with the TTN activity of 'raising awareness' or 'raising consciousness'. Those more deeply embedded with the Transition thinking can be thought of as the 'TTN core'. This 'core' who have read all the key texts in the TTN 'canon',<sup>69</sup> seen the films, their friendship group encompassed volunteers, they would talk of a 'consensus trance' in Edinburgh. This viewpoint held that wider society was deluded or distracted in an automated status of

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<sup>69</sup> This included the books produced from Totnes, including those from Green Books, Resurgence magazine, books on Peak Oil by those like Richard Heinberg, and on 'inner transitioning' by the likes of Johanna Macy.

consciousness, distinct from what the TTN 'core' believed to be the true state of reality. The implication being that those in TTN knew what was really happening. These Gnostic<sup>70</sup> sensibilities were expressed through the choice of films for these occasions. Often they were information documentaries: *The Age of Stupid*, *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil*, *A World without Oil*, *The end of Suburbia*, *Peak Oil: Imposed by Nature*, *Food Inc.*, *The Corporation*, alongside the TTN produced films *In Transition* & *In Transition 2.0*. Some though, could be seen more along conspiracy theorist lines, such as *Zeitgeist*.

There is some evidence as to the effectiveness of these (Bordwell, 1996). I would often overhear TTN staff and volunteers attempting to express an idea to a newcomer, typically: "have you seen 'Who Killed the Electric Car?'"(Intern 2). In my in-depth interviews too, the films were often harked back to as an occasion when TES, TEU, or PEDAL staff and volunteers first learned of certain ideas and concepts. This was also the case, albeit to a lesser degree, with some of the books in the TTN 'canon'. One interviewee reflected that this may be due to the communal nature of watching films together, reinforced by discussion of some of the key ideas afterwards. Holding discussion after the film proved to be a good pedagogical tool to enable viewer to engage with and discuss the ideas contained therein. TES named their film screenings **Talking Transition**. Both TES and TEU were also involved in the Edinburgh Film Festival's **CineCO** showcasing of similar films.

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<sup>70</sup> School of thought implying matter is evil, and emancipation comes through specialised knowledge, known by only a select few.



Figure 5: Film Festival, films 'to inspire change'

Beyond film screenings, there were also talks and art installations designed to provoke reflection and 'consciousness raise'. TES had a similar format, with the film replaced by a talk, called **Community Taking Action**. These were less well attended and in place of the films included a variety of speakers on the same issues (climate change, peak oil). TEU also had a series of talks, although these often were combined with the university public lectures format: for instance one I attended by Prof. Michael Northcott.



Figure 6: TES's awareness raising art installation 'Hard Rain'. I am in the middle.

TTN groups also attempted to affect raised awareness and behaviour change through many of their other initiatives, other than film screenings and talks. One major plank in this attempt was their use of **Carbon**

**Conversations.**<sup>71</sup> However there were many others, PEDAL for instance put much effort into promoting and advertising a **Car-Free Day** for Portobello each September.

Two of the groups had tie-ins with local churches. TES with Morningside Baptist Church, known as **FaST (Fair and Sustainable Team)**, and PEDAL with **St. Phillip's Church of Scotland** in Portobello. I spent more time with the St. Phillip's initiative, which included integrating environmental themes into the sermons, having special services on ecological themes (particularly harvest). There was one particularly rousing service on the need to recognise truth or renewal 'from the margins' (the sermon was on John the Baptist), explicitly brought back to the role of PEDAL in Portobello society.<sup>72</sup> There were also joint activities planned between PEDAL and St. Phillip's, broadening the range of those who would hear each party's message. TTN and parish ministry are very similar. Both engage with a territorial population in order to promote a message and encourage residents to change. Both also operate through a core interest group to facilitate this and believe the key message.

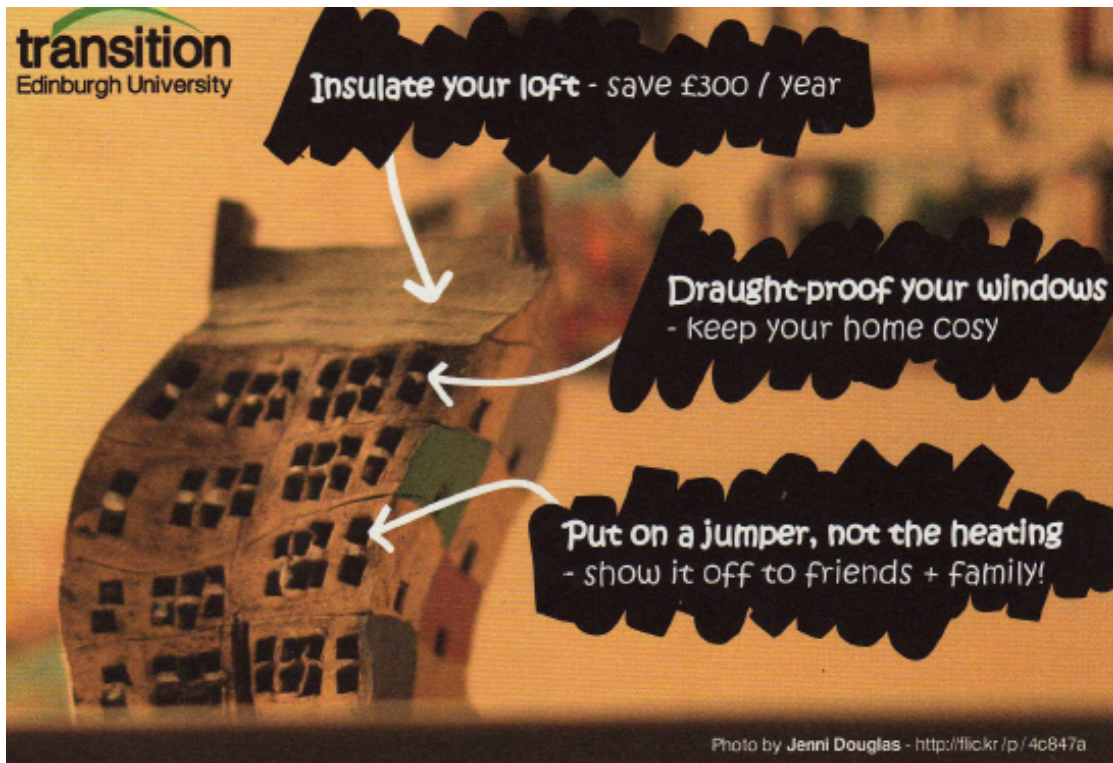
TEU did not have faith-linked types of awareness raising activities, centred as they were often on a transitory (student) or workplace (staff) 'community'. They did have a behaviour change scheme called **Big Switch**. Centred on Pollock Halls of Residence, this used competition between each block to see which could reduce their energy demand and increase recycling rates by the greatest quantity. Accompanied by awareness raising posters, based on the same expectations as Edinburgh University's *Switch and Save* campaign.<sup>73</sup> Because of the transitory nature of the student's time in Pollock Halls, embedding pro-environmental beliefs or practice change, might be seen as more of a challenge.

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<sup>71</sup> "Group discussion helping people understand and act on climate change"  
<http://www.transitionedinburghuni.org.uk/conversations/> Accessed 27/10/12

<sup>72</sup> Written up as (Aiken, 2011)

<sup>73</sup> Edinburgh University's previous large-scale attempt at behaviour change, finished before this research started.



**Imagine a warmer, more comfy home.**

**More money in your pocket and less impact on the environment**

**This is your invitation to a free Big Green Makeover**

The Big Green Makeover project offers:

- Home visits**  
Get one-to-one advice with trained advisors
- Energy Saving Advice Clinics**  
Sign up to a clinic in your building / area.
- Workshops**  
Learn and share tips about what you can do to save energy and reduce waste.

**GET STARTED**

**Sign up today**  
Enroll your flat or be a volunteer  
[www.teu.org.uk/bgm](http://www.teu.org.uk/bgm)

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH natural people & planet

Figure 7: Postcard advertising Big Green Makeover

However, TEU had a more holistic attempt of raising awareness of TTN's core themes with the staff. I attended **Climate Solidarity Training**

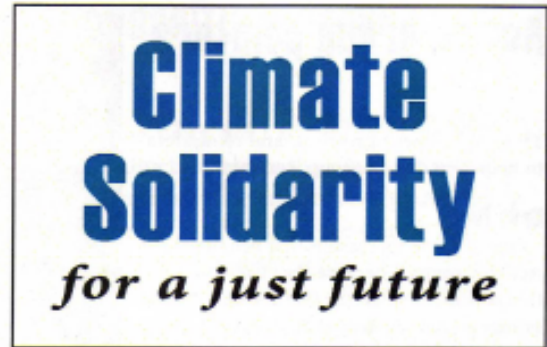
(on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010),<sup>74</sup> an event organised by TEU in conjunction with trade union support. This sought to raise awareness of employment rights in relation to the environment. Primarily it was focused on individual behaviour training though, with the 'community' benefit of these environmental actions understood in aggregate.

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<sup>74</sup> <http://www.transitionedinburghuni.org.uk/2010/03/climate-solidarity-training-march-26th/>

# Action Group Pack

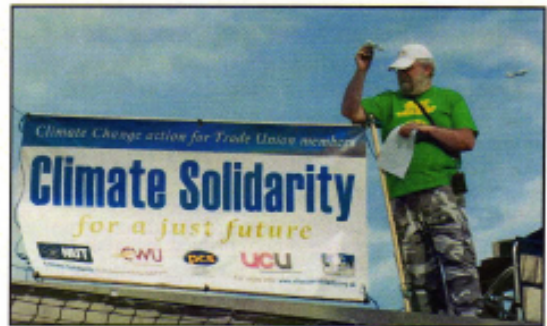
# Introductory materials



## Welcome to Climate Solidarity

**Thank you for being a part of Climate Solidarity.**

This document gives an overview of how the Action Groups work, outline timetables for meetings, and some suggestions on what you will need to do to ensure a successful Action Group. These jobs could be done by one person who agrees to convene the group, or they could be shared out amongst different group members.



Climate Solidarity activist Bob on the 4th plinth in Trafalgar Square on 21st August 2009 Photo: Isabelle Merminod



Photo: Sophia Liang

## What is in this Introductory pack?

- Page 2 give some pointers about what makes for a good Action Group
- Page 3 explains the thinking behind the Action Group model and this campaign
- Page 4 - 5 gives guidance on what needs to be done before the first meeting, and outline plans for each meeting of the Action Group
- Page 6 is an introduction to Climate Solidarity to be read out at the first meeting.

## What is an action group?

A Climate Solidarity Action Group is a group of trade union members, perhaps with some non-union colleagues, who come together to work for a just future.

Specifically, an Action Groups will meet about once a month, for around six months, and look at ways to work together to tackle climate change. The initial focus is on community level action, but there are lots of suggestions for using this as a springboard for workplace and political action, if desired.



Photo: Danny McL

Figure 8: Climate Solidarity

The mainstay projects for those already involved in the TTN groups were gardening, or general food, projects. There was some difference across



the groups as to how these manifested. So TEU, and TES before TEU formed (when it contained many students who subsequently went on to form TEU), were involved with active, subversive, borderline-legal, and fun activities like **Guerrilla Gardening** (Reynolds, 2009). This involved reclaiming surrounding space, and branding of public and unused land, such as disused brownfield sites. At an aesthetic level this included planting 'seed bombs' of flowers into areas which were run down, or vacant and degraded (such as before the quartermile project took off).<sup>75</sup> There were plans to upscale to more productive food, such as growing fruit and vegetables. However, this did not materialise during the course of this research.

The gardening projects were multipurpose. First, they were designed to reduce the environmental impact of existing food chains. These were typified by food that was intensively chemically grown and transported over many miles. Instead, the gardening projects encouraged change toward seasonal, local, and organic foods. The carbon savings here are probably minimal though. Second, gardening was seen as a tangible practical activity with spillover benefits. Eating was seen as a political activity, where by if one eats 'right' 'everything' else would fall into place.<sup>76</sup> TTN groups often assumed that encouraging people to garden and be active would build connections ('community') and help to 'lock in' environmental values and practices. Third, the environmental challenge was seen as a 'bigger than self' problem (WWF, 2011). A 'bigger than self' problem cannot be solved by each person acting rightly on their own, with change occurring cumulatively, in aggregate. 'Community' gardening then tapped into the 'more than the sum of the parts' vision of 'community'.

TES, dealing with a more stable if not sedentary suite of activists, settled for **community gardening** in the Astley Ainslie hospital. NHS land, which was unproductive has been offered for free for TES to use to grow vegetables. PEDAL likewise has a similar scheme in Portobello. This scheme

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<sup>75</sup> One of Scotland's largest regeneration schemes, redeveloping the old Royal Infirmary site in central Edinburgh – so named as it's a quartermile from both the Royal Mile and Edinburgh Castle.

<sup>76</sup> This, at least, is how it was described to me by one particularly passionate volunteer. Commonly ones relationship with nature, consumption, and others, were distilled into the activity of eating.

would not work well for TEU given the transitory nature of its volunteers, requiring maintenance all year round, particularly during harvest and summer growing season, when students would be away from Edinburgh.

TES and TEU also teamed up to 'twin' gardens in the Southside, with volunteers. Large houses, sometimes with only one (perhaps retired, and/or widowed) owner would allow younger, more active volunteers – often students – to come and use their garden for growing veg. One person collected fallen apples and pressed them to create a very small apple juice business. Schemes like this – joining up unused walled gardens, with unused labour – with the potential for creative productions were successful, albeit with limited potential for up-scaling.

PEDAL's relationship with food went further to the instigation and support of the **Portobello farmers market**, and the organic food on sale there.<sup>77</sup> This is enabled by Portobello High Street's status as a satellite 'town-centre' within Edinburgh. TES & TEU are too close to Edinburgh city centre; more typical in their vicinity are coffee and charity shops.

The most frequent type of activity I attended during this research was what could loosely be considered 'community building'. This included social events for existing group volunteers that were designed to foster and strengthen the social bonds within the group. TEU organise these in a way that mirrors many of the 'rival' social experiences put on for students by other university societies. These were called the **Transition Socials** and took a variety of forms, from discussion over snacks, to invited speakers like the awareness raising described above. They are separated out from other initiatives here, as these seemed to serve a primarily social function for TEU and volunteers rather than awareness raising, and were as much for the already existing 'core' group than a form of outreach, in practice if not design.

TEU had one major event called **University Footprints, Community Handprints** where the idea was to collate the existing socials energy, showcase TEU's activities to other universities around Scotland and the UK

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<sup>77</sup> <http://local.stv.tv/edinburgh/23109-organic-market-bucks-recession-to-celebrate-year-of-success/>

with wider representatives invited from People & Planet UK, and across Edinburgh University.



Figure 9: Photo from a TEU Handprint Social, with me in the background.

TES used the ‘community’-building format for outreach, but resisted using the conventional format of student societies. One big event - the **Community Eco-festival** - functioned like a typical Morningside ‘coffee morning’. PEDAL likewise used fund-raiser coffee mornings before acquiring CCF funds and the enabling that came with those lessened the necessity.

Bigger events such as the **‘Diverse Roots of Belonging Conference’** (with an attendance of c.150) also served this ‘community’ building function. Strictly the Transition Network and TSS put this on. However due to its location in Pollock Halls, and large scale, it functioned as a ‘showcase’ for the variety of Edinburgh’s TTN activities. It was also a great opportunity for me to meet those ‘hard to reach’ actors involved in this process who were not as accessible as others.

There were three projects that had larger ambitions and had more of a long-term outlook. The most ambitious of which was PEDAL’s attempt, with Greener Leith, to build the first urban **community-owned wind**

**turbine** in the UK.<sup>78</sup> The plan was for a turbine capacity between 500 and 2,300kW, saving 400-2000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, powering up to 1,300 homes, and providing income for the neighbourhoods Portobello, Craighentiny, and Leith (Reynolds & Lavery, 2012).<sup>79</sup> PEDAL also had a reasonably large **tenement insulation programme**<sup>80</sup> which involved increasing the energy efficiency of Edinburgh's tenements – the standard, multi-occupier, solidly stone-built, residential form in the urban core of Scots cities. TES has a similar but more in-depth approach in **SOSO**. This involved motivational interviewing, in-depth psychological 'nudging',<sup>81</sup> both of which are described in section 5.3.3 in more detail. It is of note to recognise at this stage the activities that the TTN groups practically engaged in to affect their desired transition.

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<sup>78</sup> <http://local.stv.tv/edinburgh/25317-environmental-charity-secures-scottish-government-loan-for-wind-turbine/> (Accessed 1 Dec 2012)  
[http://www.greenbuildingpress.co.uk/article.php?category\\_id=34&article\\_id=1040](http://www.greenbuildingpress.co.uk/article.php?category_id=34&article_id=1040)  
<http://local.stv.tv/edinburgh/27818-leiths-proposed-wind-turbine-could-lose-out-on-100000-of-funding/> <http://local.stv.tv/edinburgh/28453-msps-back-community-call-for-portobello-and-leith-wind-turbine-votes/>

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.greenerleith.org/greener-leith-news/2011/11/18/leithers-back-our-community-owned-wind-turbine-bid-in-huge-n.html>

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.pedal-party.org.uk/2012/05/city-of-edinburgh-councils-free-insulation-scheme-frequently-asked-questions/>

<sup>81</sup> Thaler & Sustein (2008)



# Switched On!

www.switchedonedinburgh.org.uk

ISSUE 2

SUMMER 2010

FREE

Welcome to the summer issue of your community energy newsletter!

Thanks to everyone who took part in our home visits this year. We've had a great response with over 50 households in the street interested in working together to save energy and cut carbon emissions.

The results of our 10 in-depth National Home Energy Rating surveys are now in, and we'll soon be able to give you a bespoke energy report for your home, with the benefits and costs of a range of energy saving measures.

Two stairwells are also taking part in a detailed architectural survey to explore energy-saving measures possible at a whole building level. A renewable energy study is also taking place, with results available soon.

Our handy website is now online, and we're planning an Autumn Eco-Festival for early October. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy our newsletter and have a great summer!

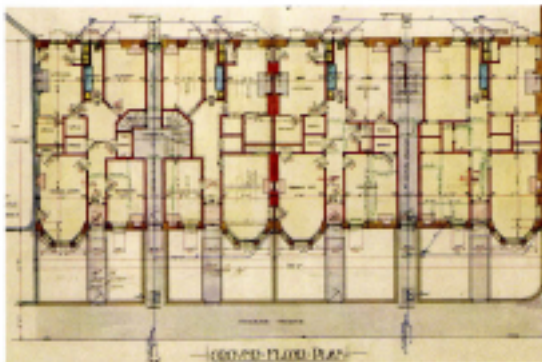
### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Energy survey results
- Architectural survey & Renewables update
- Free loft insulation visit
- Your energy saving tips
- Free Powerdown switch offer- see back page!



Now & then: "Woodburn Terrace is one of the widest, more handsome streets of Morningside. Three horse delivery vans are present and other items to date the scene are the gas lamps and iron railings."

## What might our community look like one hundred years from now?



This prospect and original floor plan of Woodburn Terrace from the early 1900s show how the street has changed over the past 100 years.

The Terrace was built in two phases from c. 1870 - 1890, and named after Woodburn House to the east, now part of the Astley Ainslie Hospital.

## Energy survey results are now in!

The challenge today is to make our community fit for the future. We can do this by cutting our carbon emissions and building local resilience to the twin shocks of climate change and peak oil. Home energy use accounts for almost 30% of the UK's carbon emissions. That's why Transition Edinburgh South is working with the community in Woodburn Terrace to carry out detailed home energy, architectural and renewable energy surveys to identify the best ways to save energy in these 'hard-to-treat' buildings. See inside for the early results!

**COME CELEBRATE AT OUR AUTUMN ECO-FESTIVAL- SEE BACK PAGE!**

Figure 10: SOSO newsletter

Often, projects chosen and engaged with by these groups tend to be guided by institutional forces such as the funding structures of the CCF. The urban morphology and social shopping practices of the town centre, with an active high street, meant that PEDAL could more easily inaugurate a farmers market than TES. The nature of the 'audience', or target 'community', also

has a big impact – this can be seen most clearly in TEU’s ‘constraint’ of only working with students during term time. When working with staff, there is the need to make it a ‘legitimate’ workplace activity, through working with trade unions in ‘solidarity’ for instance.

Yet these activities also come from what these TTN groups’ value and desire to inaugurate. For instance the Carbon Conversations programme structured the possibility of investigating participant’s relationship with food, or offered the chance to engage in reflective practices such as conversations. These are all geared towards some imagined ‘future’. The way in which this future is imagined, responded to, and reacted from, is primarily through a form of prolepsis,<sup>82</sup> and is taken up in Chapter Six. First though, we must more theoretically assess the term ‘community’ more directly.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the necessary foundations for this thesis. It has first outlined the initial parameters that were required by the PhD project at the outset. It then introduces the factors necessary for understanding the context of the thesis to come (Chapters 4-6). These were a brief description of the regional geography of Edinburgh. The methods adopted, while not innovative, have been presented, introducing the key techniques and approaches followed – particularly Cook & Crang (2007) and Silverman (2008). There then follows an evaluation of the particular tensions and challenges in research involving TTN. This involves both a reflection on the literature they use themselves, alongside wider reflection on the methods adopted. The remainder of the chapter was a series of introductions, introducing a brief biography both of TTN in general, and the key actors involved in this study: the three case studies (PEDAL, TES, and TEU); the key ‘external’ actors (CCF, TSS, and Changeworks); and the eighteen initiatives closely studied during the period of study.

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<sup>82</sup> Explored in Section 6.1.

This provides the groundwork for understanding the context, methods, and biographies of the 'community' groups studied. However, the notion of 'community' is taken here as fairly unproblematic. To fully understand these groups it is necessary to delve deeper into wider understandings and applications of 'community'. It is to these understandings of 'community' that the next chapter turns.

## Chapter 3: 'The Highest Human Possibility'? Understanding 'Community'

Chapter Three examines various conceptual understandings of 'community' in order to understand the theoretical and policy history of 'community' as a term. This is important in order to recognise the similarities and differences between this history of 'community' and the specific theoretical approach of this thesis (Section 3.4).

First, Section 3.1 examines 'community' in its broadest sense, taking account of the key figures and concepts that form the 'community heritage'. Discussion here is wide ranging, and takes account of Tönnies, the Chicago School and human ecology tradition, and the main figures of *Community Studies*. Section 3.2 narrows the gauge to address the application of 'community' as used by institutions and government, primarily within the UK. It begins by looking at literature on 'community' as applied by governance theorists. Building on the groundwork of 3.1, I turn to examine the use of 'community' as a moral force. I apply these insights to consider some of the mainstream literature on 'community' in environmental policy.

Section 3.3 focuses in still further on the specific use of 'community' in the attempt to meet the low carbon challenge. This field comprises 'sustainable development', the 'transition to low carbon futures', and 'governing environmental behaviours', and is held loosely. The focus is rather on the specific expectations placed upon 'community' within these fields. This section also goes into greater detail regarding the positionality adopted in this thesis with regard to the understanding and expectation it places on 'community'. Section 3.4 outlines the theoretical core of the thesis, outlining the way in which the eclectic writers, theories and ideas on 'community' are used here. Finally, Section 3.5 addresses other relevant literatures, which are not explored any further here.

### 3.1 Gemeinschaft – Theorising 'Community'



Writings on 'community' are many and varied. Regularly though, they are traced back to Tönnies. This section on the theoretical history of 'community' does likewise. Throughout this exploration I consider the ways in which such understandings of 'community' have impacted the groups and initiatives studied here, introduced in Chapter Two. The discussion then widens to take into account themes from post-structural (3.1.4) work that unsettles many of the standard accounts of 'community' explored earlier in 3.1. Section 3.1.5 provides an important excavation of a reason why 'community' has a moral force. Using secularised theological concepts, it attempts to understand what prior beliefs must already be in place before one's stance on the (im)moral force—or otherwise—of 'community' is taken. Finally, Section 3.1.6 introduces a humble, though important, caveat: that we must take care not to read too much into 'community'. I refer to this as the danger of 'climbing up the wrong tree' and discuss the possibility that 'community', as a term, has become so overloaded with divergent meanings to render it meaningless. The heavy burden of multiple usages overbearing 'community' leads to a danger in it not signifying anything specific at all.

### 3.1.1 Tönnies and 'Community': *Gemeinschaft*, *Gesellschaft*

Social Science writings on 'community' typically begin with Ferdinand Tönnies (Bell & Newby, 1971; Bauman, 2001). Writing in the nineteenth century, Tönnies became concerned with the way in which he saw 'community' as disappearing fast (1955 [1887]). He identified this as an effect of what he characterised as two strong social forces ushering in 'modern society': the industrial revolution and increasing urbanisation. Far from being indifferent to this process, Tönnies had no doubt that this loss of 'community' was a bad thing. With this anti-urban and anti-modern stance he regarded 'modern society' as lacking in morality. In order to characterise this shift in the social fabric of modern society he made a distinction between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. By *Gesellschaft* Tönnies indicated society or association: a form of togetherness he diagnosed as fast replacing

*Gemeinschaft*. *Gemeinschaft* has regularly been translated into English as 'community'. For Tönnies *Gemeinschaft* brought associations of traditional, rural, village-based social order that connoted the familial, intimate, and the personal. Tönnies' conception of *Gemeinschaft* was one he attached a positive value to. It is 'good', and to some extent Tönnies' writing embodied a yearning for this disappearing form of being with others (Lee and Newby, 1983: Ch.3).

Tönnies is not a lone voice. Nineteenth century sociologists contributed to this growth of writings on 'community', their names could almost serve as a roll call of every key figure: Durkheim (1952, 1957, 1964, 1972), Weber (1947, 1958, 1978), and Simmel (1950, 1955, 1968). Yet Tönnies is referred back to most often from this period, and although there are big differences between these characters, in many twentieth century writings on 'community', Tönnies can also be seen as a proxy for nineteenth century thought on the topic. For Tönnies "*capitalism [is] treated as a consequence of the loss of community*" (Bell & Newby, 1971: 22). Interestingly, this is in contrast to Marx inverted the causality: the industrial revolution and capitalism alienate persons from nature and others.<sup>83</sup> The point here is not to solve this chicken and egg scenario, but to note that 'community' and capitalism are seen as antithetical. The same can be seen for 'community' and modern society, or the urban.

Cohen points out that the heritage of writings on 'community' are based on "*a highly selective reading of Tönnies*" (1985: 11), and then offers an alternative interpretation of Tönnies. However, in so doing reinforces Tönnies' position as 'grandfather of community'. Writings on 'community' are frequently traced back to the age of the industrial revolution and birth of capitalism from feudalism. Some attempts are made to relate the concept back to Greek word *Koinonia* ('common unity') or Arabic concept *Asabiyyah* ('solidarity'), in the writings of Ibn Khaldun. The English term 'community' dates to the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> Century (OED) but its academic interpretation can be seen as born in the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>83</sup> This alienation Marx termed *Entfremdung*.

Two of the most comprehensive, historical surveys of recent writings on the topic of 'community', both trace the term back to Tönnies. Delanty (2010: 21-23) describes Tönnies's 'community' as a core "*myth of modernity*", redolent of tradition, rurality, locality, friendliness and positivity. Delanty returns to the late nineteenth century writings, although he holds Tönnies critically – counterpoising with Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel. This reinforces this era as the age of the 'birth of community'. Delanty is concerned with showing how 'community' has wrongly—in his view—been interpreted in opposition to society. This is how 'community' was, and continues to be, framed: predominantly through Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft* distinction.

Bauman (2001), on the other hand, is less concerned with charting the various interpretations of 'community' and the lenses through which it has been viewed. He is more interested in the persistent feeling of a loss of 'community'. For Bauman 'community' is forever "*tantalising*" (2001: 8), just out of reach. Yet even with this 'community ennui', Bauman begins by outlining the *Gesellschaft* (modern society)/ *Gemeinschaft* distinction redefining the difference between the two as 'community' relying on an "*understanding shared by all its members*" (2001: 9). Doing so allows and leads toward an analysis of the internal components of 'community', such as 'belonging', rather than an exclusive focus on external definers: territory, place, or rurality. Yet both Delanty and Bauman inherit the tradition of writings on 'community', paying respect and deference to the nineteenth century sociological fathers – particularly Tönnies.

### 3.1.2 'Community' in Human Ecology

One of the most influential phases in 'community's' interpretation is the Chicago School era (1920s and '30s). Key figures Park and Wirth saw "*communities juxtaposed in the industrial city as an expression of an ecological order, a system of competition and temporary equilibrium based on spatial interdependencies*" (Sibley, 2009: 40). Park envisaged a primarily

ethnicity-based 'community' residing in separate 'natural areas' (Park, 1967 [1925]). This vision of 'community' invokes Waldo Tobler's First Law of Geography: 'Everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things'. Such assumptions of spatial autocorrelation, and the location of 'community' within topologically bounded space prefigure assumptions of 'community' necessitating a border and internal homogeneity, discussed below. Yet, it also neglects the possibility of topological, networked, or dispersed 'communities'. The Chicago School's concern with urban life led to the ecological mapping of 'natural areas' of Chicago, and ethnographies of diverse social groups within the city (Savage et al., 2003: 9). The social, urban realm was viewed through the same principles as the ecological, with different urban communities competing for supremacy and 'natural' waves of succession of businesses and groups of immigrants, most famously in Burgess' concentric ring model.

This urban ecological thinking laid the foundations for urban social geography (Bulmer, 1984), which this thesis contributes to. Yet the influence for this thesis goes further. Park is generally known for his promotion of urban ethnography, and qualitative analysis more widely within the school. These became research methods employed here. Using organic metaphors for explaining the human realm continue from the Chicago School to today. Human ecology and permaculture attempt to theorise the nature-social binary, and relations between. However this iterative relationship did not rely on a concept of 'pure' nature. Relying on human ecology and Darwinian metaphors, the environmental influence on human behaviour, togetherness, and settlement within the Chicago School was as much the urban and built environment, as the 'natural'. This somewhat muddies the waters of any 'clean' divide between environment and social, and the supposed oxymoron of human ecology.

The Chicago School endorsed an early form of 'human ecology': the applicability of biological or ecological ideas to the human realm, in this case the urban. This marks a major break from Tönnies and the anti-urban vision of 'community'. Yet, different communities (ethnicities, social groups) were still understood to 'naturally' reside in certain areas – if only for a period of

time. The Chicago School models, and a human ecology vision of 'community', are important for this study beyond another interpretation or flavour in the history of 'community'. The emphasising of 'community's' organic, ecological, 'natural' character is prominent in permaculture. As Chapter Two demonstrated, permaculture is key to TTN's particular vision of 'community'. By adopting biological metaphors to explain the social, the Chicago School, and Park, were attempting to claim scientific justification for their research. Permaculture invokes the ecological for explanatory power of the social, yet does so to different ends. Justifying 'natural community' appeals to deep principles engrained in nature. Appeals to 'natural' metaphors in permaculture are scientific in the Gaia rather than laboratory sense.

Key figures in this movement of garden cities and human ecology also are influential for this study. Patrick Geddes prefigured much of the Chicago School insistence on the ecological lens through with the urban and 'community' ought to be viewed. Mumford & Geddes (1995), for instance, highlight the importance of the Geddes' thought for the Chicago School, and also a crucial visit Lewis Mumford made to Geddes in Edinburgh in 1925. Patrick Geddes' vision of human ecology is relevant for this study. In a career impossible to convey in a simple description (he designed Tel Aviv), Geddes first described conurbation, coined phrases such as 'head, heart, and hands', or 'think global, act local'. He also authored great lines such as: *"A city is more than a place in space, it is a drama in time." "This is a green world, with animals comparatively few and small, and dependent on the leaves. By leaves we live."*<sup>84</sup>

The permaculture idea of 'consider the situation', whereby each plan for the garden consists of the environment (slope, soil type, hours of sunshine, drainage, etc.) also figured into Geddes' urban planning: his concept of the 'civic survey'. As a town planner he vehemently opposed the 'grid iron' plans that came to typify the US or colonial city, or the centre of Glasgow, against what he saw as considering the 'primary human needs' in

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<sup>84</sup> I'm indebted to a conversation with James Piers Taylor for this section, and indeed much of the inspiration for this thesis.

any situation, or the 'spirit of cities'.<sup>85</sup> He saw these as tied up with the 'community' dimension in town planning. Geddes' heritage is kept alive in Scotland today, with the 'generalist' tradition at universities, or 'head, heart, and hand' figuring as the slogan for the CHE – where many overlaps can be found with TTN in Scotland, and Scots' Green activism in general. The Chicago School is not only an important stage in charting the history of 'community' in geography/social science; it is currently reinterpreted through the permaculture movement, as seen in Chapter Two.

Human ecology can be regarded as outmoded. Yet it is profoundly relevant for a study of this kind. Not only do the groups looked at here hold it a high regard but also phrases such as 'head, heart, and hands' were ubiquitous from participants during the course of this research.

### 3.1.3 'Community' in Social Science: commonality and a border

How can we approach a term so (mis)appropriated, as 'community'? Frazer (1999: 76) suggests we do so by seeing 'community' as a value. Such a value has often been a mobilising concept for those on the political left, akin to the French Revolution's *fraternity*, or as Featherstone has shown for *Solidarity* (2012). This goes alongside Douglas's (1966) view that 'community' symbolised an attitude as much as a description. I wish to outline three separate strands in which 'community' has been understood, though I argue these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive.<sup>86</sup>

**(1) 'Community' as place.** Here 'community' emerges based in lived experience, on a shared location, be it in a small village, neighbourhood, street or other such shared proximate relationship. 'Community' of place, location-bound, can be seen as the 'Straw Man' or 'Aunt Sally' of much of *Community Studies*. Yet the belief that 'community' is inherently, or naturally, only based in a particular location, area, or territory, still attracts

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<sup>85</sup> Geddes (1915: 134-145) is devoted to exploring how one can only know Edinburgh when engaging with its 'life, literature, poetry and art – in the way Scott and Stevenson knew and loved Edinburgh'.

<sup>86</sup> After <http://www.infed.org/community/community.htm> Accessed 20/10/2012

support. This is true throughout the history of literature on 'community' or in TTN mobilisations of the term, as we shall see later in this study.

**(2) 'Community' through interest.** Here the 'community' is again formed through something shared, be it religious belief, occupation, or pastimes. Thus we can talk of the 'geography community', or a 'community' of those who are interested in maps. These 'communities' can be intentional (i.e. deliberately opted-into) or given through descent ('the Jewish community'), or identity ('the gay community'). Cochrane (2007: 48) claims 'community' in relation to UK urban policy, ultimately means only one of two things: a territorially delimited neighbourhood, or identifiable ethnic group. These could broadly map onto these two categories, but I wish to offer one further aspect of 'community'.

**(3) 'Community' in communion.** This is the 'spirit of community', or feeling of belonging, which can exist without the first two factors. Groups who have been through a shared experience—from Chilean miners, to university colleagues graduating together—can have the 'community' spirit that is not based on place or interests. 'Community' in communion can be fostered through shared experience, practice, or identity-based, but not necessarily. This could be the notion of the Muslim *umma*, or the Christian *Communion of Saints*, whereby collective belonging is assumed beyond place and interest. The same factors are at play here, belonging to a group defined in some way by commonality. These two factors—homogeneity and the 'community's' border—are addressed briefly, before an introduction to the key writers on these topics.

Within these three varieties of 'community' two factors remained crucial in this period between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. These are the need for 'community' to have an in/out definer: however visible, each 'community' has a border. Second, within this border those inside the 'community' have something that defines their belonging to such a group, some level of sameness, be it location of residence, area of interest, ethnicity or religion, there is homogeneity.

There are many other wide connotations in the readings of 'community' in this period, such as the near-ubiquitous positive use, or the

reified 'ideal type' manner of seeing 'community'. However both these conditions of possibility—homogeneity, and border—are constant in the descriptions of 'community'; without a border, or internal sameness, it would not be a 'community'. One could *imagine* 'community' as a bad thing, however unusual a position that might be for this period. But 'community' without a border wouldn't be a 'community'. It would leave the question: a 'community' of what exactly?

The 'community' border could be a line on the map, or physical boundaries such as rivers, mountains, or valleys. In addition there are human geographical borders and barriers that structure social separations. Within the border the 'community' is defined to a greater or lesser degree by internal homogeneity. 'Communities' which display a high degree of homogeneity can be found in examples such as the Amish 'community', or an obvious border to a 'gated community'. That borders and homogeneity are essential conditions for the possibility of 'community' is emphasised when these factors are lesser: the 'community' bounds are seen as somehow fostering weaker affiliations. For example, a 'community' of stamp collectors is seen as having a lower degree of 'community' than the Amish. Many prominent writers on 'community', including Redfield (1955) and Tönnies (1955 [1887]), identify internal homogeneity and existence of a border as a precondition for the possibility of 'community' (for instance, Bauman, 2001: 13).

Of course borders and homogeneity are related and often come in pairs. Hillary notes this, describing 'community' like a prison, "*being a social system that not only tended to regulate the total lives of inmates but which also set barriers to the social interaction with the outside.*" (Hillary, in Bell & Newby, 1971: 36). Staeheli (2008: 6) has also argued that even when 'community' is inclusionary, this is based on exclusion: a necessary border and internal homogeneity of some kind.

Two key texts in this post-WWII era chart the rise of *Community Studies*, within the UK. Crow & Allen (1994) investigate the changing nature of 'community' as an object of study. Focusing in particular on the impact of economic change and geographic mobility on how 'community' is viewed. In



doing so, also highlights the unchanging nature of ‘community’, and its continuing central importance to sociologists and social scientists today (Wills, 2012). Bell & Newby review both the US and UK uses of ‘community’, and clearly chart the different theories of ‘community’ that exist. ‘Community’ here is still seen as “*man’s [sic.] natural habitat*” (1971: 22).

Other key milestones in the history of discussion on ‘community’ include Cohen’s (1985) focus on the symbolism involved in the ‘community’, identifying the cultural boundaries created in order to help the ‘community’ function. Anderson (1991) famously outlined the processes that helped create the *Imagined Communities* of nationalism. Etzioni (1995; 1997) ushered in the communitarian agenda – where morality, ‘social order’, and ‘social responsibility’ (his vision of ‘community’) were the tonic for too much individualism. ‘Community’ for Etzioni was in decline, and needed to be promoted. This perceived decline has also been a recurring feature of writings on ‘community’.

‘Community’ has—alongside punk rock, nostalgia, and feminism—been the subject of countless obituaries. Putnam (2000) famously analysed the decline and fall of the civic realm of the US, before setting out parameters for its possible return. The subtitle says it all *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Bauman (2001) implies that longing for a past world is inherent to ‘community’, closely linking it to the myth of Tantalus: forever just out of reach. As we shall see in Chapter Six, ‘community’, for TTN, can be tantalisingly close in the future, as well as the past.

### 3.1.4 ‘Community’ Beyond Borders

‘Community’—as ever—remains subject to multiple interpretations, and has questioned even these two near-universal characteristics: a border containing commonality. Within this broad and diverse body of work, key contributions are made. ‘Community’ conceived of as inherently good, as that which we have lost and cannot recover, still lurks in the background of

most theoretical frameworks. However, the vision of 'community' as necessitating a border, or as homogenous has been profoundly challenged.

For instance, Habermas (1984, 1987, 1998) proposes a theory of *Dialogical Community*, through which he characterises 'community' existing in opposition to established organisations, undermining social norms. 'Community' here is the fundamental basis for relatedness between people, before and beyond any organisation or movement (Elliott, 2009: 896). Under Habermas's analysis 'community'—rather than the social democratic welfare state, or *laissez-faire* capitalism—forms the basis for civil society. This 'community' is both opposed to prevailing norms of market, and also the basis for any form of genuine democracy. If 'community' can be said to be anything it is good—necessary to existence even. 'Community' is a space outside prevailing norms, where alternatives can be practised or experimented with. 'Community' as an alternative economy, say (Gibson-Graham 2006, *et al.* 2013).

Though Habermas makes an important contribution to understanding 'community', Young seeks to push his thought further. Young (1990) argues that if 'community' is a primary mode of experiencing the world, then it must be inherently *diverse*. This has interesting consequences for the way we theorise, understand, and use 'community'. Once we recognise the inherent diversity of 'community', attempts to homogenise it becomes not only reactionary, but also counterproductive.

For Agamben and Nancy—both Derrideans—'community' is a key concern. Both stand opposed to Habermas's 'community' as foundational for the state. For this reason, they also reject Young's analysis of 'community' that builds on Habermas's framework. 'Community' for both Agamben and Nancy is singular, rather than dialogical (Elliott, 2010). Agamben's *The Coming Community* (2009) shows his rejection of essentialism. Thus 'community' cannot be based upon any commonality, or homogeneity: "*there is no essence, no historical or spiritual vocation, no biological destiny that humans must enact or realize*" (2009: 43). 'Community' as Agamben understands it emerges as any singularity demonstrating 'being in common'.

Agamben's conception of 'community' is radically subversive. Against 'traditional' understandings of 'community' – particularly the Straw Man of 'community of place' (Section 3.1.3) – Agamben argues that 'community' is not inherent, essential, or natural. Agamben is not the first to make this claim, but it marks a strong departure from previously accepted understandings of 'community'; yet because it rejects divisions based on identity, politics, or more abstract bases, 'community' under Agamben's interpretation, emerges as profoundly affirming. It becomes a unifying condition of our being- and becoming-together with others, against any imposed categorisation of 'community'. 'Community' becomes *"the principle enemy of the State. Wherever these singularities peacefully demonstrate their being in common there will be a Tiananmen"* (2009: 87).

For Nancy, 'community' is experienced as loss: *"the dissolution, the dislocation, or the conflagration of community ... [is] the gravest and most painful testimony of the modern world"* (1991: 1). But this nostalgia for 'community' is not what it used to be. For Nancy, 'community' is a 'myth', yet—like all myths—is no less powerful, or evocative for that. 'Community' cannot possibly be built or fought for, rather it just *is*. 'Community' here is both foundational, in that it is key to what it means to be human, while also being mythic in the way it is represented and thought of. As Nancy writes, *"one does not produce it ['community'], one experiences or one is constituted by it as the experience of finitude."* (1991: 31).

We can identify the strong influence of Derrida on both Agamben and Nancy through the way they seek to challenge established boundaries, binaries, and assumptions. We can see the same tendencies and influences in Caputo's writing on 'community'; Caputo turns to analyse the etymology of 'community' and identifies the root words *com munis*, that is, a common defence (Caputo & Derrida, 1997: 107-108). Caputo then suggests that 'community' is formed through a violent exclusion of the other. Derrida (2000) preferred hospitality (*hostilis polis*), to give power to the stranger, or enemy. The point is not to make some linguistic argot, but to show that previously settled divisions and boundaries are being challenged. For instance Amin wishes to:

*“dispel the assumption that spatial contiguity implies relational proximity and, in so doing, poses the question of living with diversity less as a matter of building local community than of working with the constraints and possibilities related to the urban as a condition of ‘thrown-togetherness’ (Massey, 2005).” (Amin, 2010)*

This point can be fleshed out through addressing an interrogation of a concept of togetherness closely related to 'community': that of *Solidarity*. This is not to argue that 'community' and 'solidarity' are closely related to one another. Clearly they sometimes are and sometimes are not. The argument here is that Featherstone's (2012) treatment of *Solidarity* can provide us with insights into aspects of 'community'. For Featherstone (2012), *Solidarity* is about generating the similarities needed in order to ground one's commitment to each other, or to a group. Featherstone adopts a similar critique to Agamben, Habermas, and Young, of such solidarities that based are purely on 'given' attributes such as class, nationality, race, etc. as homogeneous. By definition these basis both include and exclude at the same time, and *“traps our understandings of solidarity within a reductive binary of similarity and dissimilarity”* (2012: 23).

Such false binaries are to be challenged, as being ultimately (in the long-term, at a larger scale) more divisive than fostering connections. But Featherstone also deftly avoids what has otherwise been concluded from this recognition: that difference can somehow be the basis for togetherness, be it solidarity or 'community'. Much of the empirical writings on 'community' above showed that connections and belonging are far stronger in groups when grounded in something shared, be that a characteristic, experience, or values, alongside place, class, or race. Featherstone's insight is that such commonality, which is the basis of togetherness or solidarity, is not a 'given'. That is, it is not innate, but can be worked at, produced, and challenged. Crucial for Featherstone is that solidarities and internationalism are mistakenly seen *“as given rather than actively constructed”* (2012: 44). Rather he claims solidarity is something that can be discovered, generated,

or produced. Featherstone challenges the notion that for solidarity to occur “*there needs to be a pre-existing commonality for the solidarity to be durable or effective.*” Instead “*practices of solidarity generate or negotiate such questions of difference through political action.*” (2012: 23) Solidarity is forged not latent.

This insight is important for this study for four reasons.

1. ‘Community’ is stronger when based on some shared characteristic, as has long been appreciated in social science.
2. This commonality can, as Derrida and his followers emphasised, be regressive, divisive, and foster false in/out binaries.
3. Yet, such commonality, following this critique, is not a ‘given’. Such potential for ‘community’ is not only innate, and possibly never realised; it can also be ‘forged’.
4. This study assesses the attempt to forge ‘community’, by the groups described in Chapter Two.

Featherstone continues: “*To understand the role of solidarity in shaping and transforming political relations it is necessary to assert the importance of place-based activity*” (2012: 30). Being place-based, like a TTN initiative or church parish, can be romantic, but can also be the crucial grounding in which to ‘forge’ ‘community’, both with those who happen to be locationally proximate, and also the networked links and chains of materials connecting one place with others far away. One does not have to dig very deep to see the influence of Doreen Massey on these ideas, and this is straight out of the Massey’s notion of ‘place-beyond-place’.

Featherstone (2012: 37) uses Agamben to outline “*an account of solidarity ‘that in no way concerns essence’ (Agamben, 1993: 17-18)*”. This fits nicely in a very well worked argument, but Agamben's anti-essentialist book *The Coming Community* is perhaps more relevant to ‘community’ than solidarity, and hence its deployment here.

Challenging ‘community’s’ need for a border and essential commonality, being aware that such foundations for ‘community’ can be forged and built, may appear to have brought the academic theorisation of

'community' up to date. However, there remain two areas which are underexplored in the literature, yet will prove important for a rich understanding of 'community' as produced and practiced in the groups studied here. These are the insights that: (1) 'Community' shapes the behaviour of its members. (2) 'Community' is phatic.

(1) follows on from the brief discussion of communitarianism above, whilst (2) captures the way in which the overuse and overburdening of the term 'community' renders it meaningless aside from its role as gesturing toward something of which people hold an intuitive understanding. In this way, I offer an exploration of how the term 'community' says more about *contact* than *content*. Furthermore, in what follows, I argue these two areas will play an active role in understanding the wider application of 'community' in TTN.

### 3.1.5 An Archaeology of 'Community' as a Moral Force

*"The most obvious expression of the association of locality and morality is in the notion of community."*

(Smith, 2000: 77)

*"Sinless union with others in the form of community is the realisation of the highest human possibility."*

(Critchley, 2012: 108)

Excavating the foundations of 'community' as influencing, or controlling, moral codes and behaviour has recently been outlined by Critchley (2012), appropriately for the argument below an Anarchist. Outlining how any political position rests on a silently assumed—albeit secularized— theological belief. A similar argument could be made with insights from moral philosophy or behaviour psychology, yet for Critchley it is the secularised political categories that carry most force. For Critchley, one's

view of 'community' rests on one's prior secularised theological position on the human condition, particularly one's (un)belief in original sin. (Dis)belief in original sin (people are craven, selfish, or well intentioned, but ultimately misguided) matters in a secular world; if people cannot be trusted to behave in an environmentally suitable way themselves, then an outside authority is required to keep people 'in check'. Critchley outlines the political theology, or secular theology, that can be seen in the writings of Carl Schmitt (1985, 1996) and John Gray (2002, 2007), both relying on a secularly baptised theological belief in the human condition tainted by original sin. The contention is that one's perception as to what form 'community' ought to take, rests on a prior theological hangover, a position one takes on the nature of the human condition. This is also something appreciated by Arendt (1958). For Critchley the key question is: "*How might the thinking of politics and community change if it is believed that the fact of original sin can be overcome?*" (2012: 11)

For Critchley (2009) it is the basis of what he calls 'mystical anarchism', following Norman Cohn (1970 [1957]). The argument, following Schmitt and Gray, is that despite their differences, 'community', or being with others, requires a belief that one needs the work of an outside authority. For Schmitt this is a dictator, or sovereign with power to protect, for Gray a belief in an external 'utopian optimism'. Critchley pushes Schmitt and Gray further, characterising this 'outside power' as tied up with millenarianism, and apocalyptic thinking.

If a justification is needed for addressing social and political movements through secularised theological categories, such as original sin, one need only look to the influence millenarian thinking has on groups such as TTN. Millenarianism, according to Cohn's (1957) highly influential study, is belief in a certain event, through which salvation is only possible through five criteria: collective, terrestrial, imminent, total, and miraculous. Each of these five aspects is writ large in the TTN worldview. TTN's belief is that only through 'community' can we be saved (collective); that 'we are all in this together' (total), that climate change and peak oil are 'just around the corner' (imminent), and that if humanity will survive the oncoming crises,

then 'it'll be a bloody miracle' (miraculous).<sup>87</sup> All these aspects are illustrative of why apocalyptic narratives take root so readily within TTN groups. The importance of these secular theological categories returns again when 'apocalypse' is addressed in Chapter Six, but is also a major theoretical reason why TTN has so much belief in the power of 'community'.

Critchley's bringing of original sin, and secularised theological concepts, to bear on arguments around 'community' can take three different forms. First, people need to form 'communities' because they cannot be trusted to be by themselves. According to the doctrine of original sin, people are prone to act selfishly. However, through belonging to a 'community', members in conforming to a group norm or particular ego-corrective, behave better. 'Community' here is used to train naturally bad people. Without original sin, there would be no need for 'community'.

An alternative way to read Critchley could be that bad people cannot be trusted in 'community' and they need an outside authority (onto-theological, either a monarch, dictator, or god) to tell them to behave. Here, without original sin 'community' flourishes. That is, what stops people belonging to 'genuine community' (whatever that is), is something approaching original sin, what we might call human nature.

A third way original sin could enter this debate – and Critchley does not touch on this – is that 'community' itself may be salvic. That is, by engaging each person with the face-to-face other, 'community' enacts an inner transformation where by selfishness is curtailed (if not wholly abandoned). In this way 'community' is itself the 'cure' for original sin. To push the secularised theological language further, it is through meeting god, or core kernel of humanity, in the face of the other (each other is made in the image of god - *imageo dei*), one can engage in the salvic process of 'community'. This was the view of Levinas, for instance (Depoortere, 2008).

Critchley favours the first of these three categories, and builds on Young's (1990: 233) warnings of the 'Rousseauist dream' of local, political

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<sup>87</sup> All text in inverted commas in this sentence taken from interviews with and research diary recollections of TTN participants. No quote perfectly matched terrestrial, but the whole movement can be seen as materialistically terrestrial.



autonomous communities (above). These are seen as being both utopian, but also dangerous.

*"The ideal of the immediate copresence of subjects ... is a metaphysical illusion. Even a face-to-face relation between two people is mediated by voice and gesture, spacing and temporality"* (Young, 1990: 233)

Yet with this warning, Critchley sets about attempting to justify a vision of 'community' free from external authority; what he terms 'mystical anarchism' (Critchley, 2009). Despite heeding Young's deep concern with Rousseau, and the idealisation of face-to-face contact, Critchley differs little from Rousseau's vision of the political project of being-together, the central concern of which is:

*"To find a form of association that will defend and protect the person and goods of each associate with the full common force, and by means of which each, uniting with all, nevertheless obey only himself and remain as free as before."* (Rousseau, 1997: 49-50)

It is this political project of being-together that this thesis seeks to understand. It is important to declare the assumptions that this thesis makes regarding 'politics' and 'community'. It does not view either term as involving essential qualities, be these in terms of border or homogeneity; not about the need to transgress these and thereby posit a normative 'community' of inclusion or universalism. Instead, this thesis holds that genuine political action must involve 'community' in some way.

*"Politics is not about representation, but is rather, as Badiou writes, the manifestation of "the 'collective being' of citizen-militants (Badiou, Being and Event – 347)"* (Critchley, 2012: 56) The next sentence from Badiou, not quoted by Critchley, is: *"Indeed, power is induced from the existence of politics; it is not the latter's adequate manifestation."* (Badiou, 2007: 347). The assumption here is that power is induced from politics, which in turn is induced from the collective being of 'citizen-militants'. If TTN/'community'

groups operate as a collective, and attempt to affect (or transition) the world around them, are they then – according to Badiou – the very possibility of politics, and thus power itself?

### 3.1.6 Beyond Polysemy and Polyvalence: ‘Community’ as Phatic Communication

‘Community’ has long been said to have multiple meanings (polysemy). Within Sustainable Development it can also be seen to hold different values, or expectations (polyvalence). This section pushes ‘community’ further by addressing three differing expectations it holds. Section 3.3 addresses the three different expectations ‘community’ holds in sustainable development. Building on this analysis, I suggest that ‘community’ plays an important, though neglected, role in Sustainable Development as phatic communication. That is, that ‘community’ in Sustainable Development is often more about *contact* than *content*, ‘community’ conveys a social function, opposed to conveying information *per se*. I outline the nature of phatic communication, before demonstrating the phatic aspect of ‘community’ as currently practiced and deployed.

The notion of ‘phatic communion’ comes from the Polish anthropologist Malinowski. In an article published in 1923 dealing with the nature of language and the meaning carried by it, he described phatic communion as language that does not “*primarily convey meaning*”, but rather “*fulfil[s] a social function*” (Malinowski, in Jakobson, 1960: 315). Malinowski here is referring to his work with ‘native peoples’ but takes care to point out how often phatic communion is found in Western societies also. He provides examples that still resonate today. Imagine, for instance, two people passing each other, out walking one morning. As they approach each other, one remarks ‘How are you?’ and the other responds ‘Hello, nice day’. There is nothing remarkable about this exchange of words. The point here is that in communication such as this the words themselves are precisely meaning-less. They indicate an acknowledgement of the other’s presence,

but the words communicated here function on the level of gesture. They may both have waved at each other and communicated as much.

Interestingly Malinowski situates this mode of communication, as saying something deep about human nature. Phatic communion “*serves to establish bonds of personal union between people brought about by the mere need to companionship and does not serve any purpose of communicating ideas*” (1960: 316). There is a curious link between this, and the use of ‘community’ as an instrument of governance. The word ‘community’ pertains to have some affectations of a collective. A deep irony in the phatic function of ‘community’ would be not that the word itself devoid of meaning, but the fact that meaning has been wrested from ‘community’ may be the very reason for the wide appeal of the term.

‘Community’ has positive affectations, but these are used as gesture, rather than any recognisable meaning, i.e. any thought-out mode of action or description. The reason that this is accepted and is so pervasive is perhaps due to the double bind of the phatic nature of language and the way it is used precisely to serve a social need; establishing social bonds, without tying those bonds directly to any reflected, derivative thought.

Phatic communication is “*a type of speech where ties of union are created by mere exchange of words*” (Malinowski, 1960: 315). This is precisely what Walker & Devine-Wright (2008) indicate when they characterise the use of ‘community’ in renewable energy projects as having diverse meaning and application above all else. Likewise for the groups above ‘community’ has wide and varied use. Or more particularly when Warren & McFadyen (2010) suggest that the mere use of the term ‘community’ can help to assuage objections to potential renewable energy initiatives like a wind farm.

Arguing that ‘community’ can be seen as a ‘phatic’ term, then serves the following functions. ‘Community’ is phatic when it, one, creates social ties by the mere use of the word, not what the word (possibly) refers to. Two, ‘community’ is phatic when used at the level of gesture by energy companies, or governments, wishing for consent to their plans. That it may be required/encouraged by government policy. (They are socially and culturally compelled to use it, yet not mean anything by it.) Three, as a word

'community' has such a plurality of meaning. This does not mean that it is necessarily meaning-less, just that it can mean vastly different things. This diversity of meaning results in the term becoming so diluted that to find any meaning contained within the gesture is difficult. Four, the communication signifies something different to an inherent message contained within the word. It is communication without content. Therefore potential initiatives can give affectations of being for the good of 'local residents' in actual fact doing no such thing; sometimes the opposite is more accurate.

An interest in phatic communion has enjoyed something of a renaissance recently. For Morton, "*phatic statements make us aware of the actual air between us*" (2007: 37). In this sense they are there more about the contact, and self-referential in the sense that the contact is primarily about the contact: rather than contact designed to serve some means or other, contact to communicate a message, phatic statements are contact without containing content.

Zizek (2008: 67) has a slightly different understanding of phatic communion. He broadens the application of the term to include events, bringing the notion to bear on violence in Western society. For Zizek violence, such as the French suburban riots of 2005, is far from being explicable, or even understandable, are precisely meaning-less. Though it is not in the lack of meaning that gives this act of violence (Zizek would say 'event') its phatic nature. Rather, violence, as an expression of impotence is not there to communicate any demands, but merely to deliver a message. It merely communicates that the protesters exist. It is a way of checking that the channel of communication is open, like a radio speaker transmitting 'Hello, can you hear me?' For Zizek to describe the use of 'community' as a phatic statement would indicate not that the term is devoid of all meaning. Instead 'community' serves the social function of checking whether the channel of communication is open. Those in the 'community' are consenting to being governed, just by being in the 'community' whenever the term is applied. This might explain the attraction amongst policy-makers for using this term, 'community' in any policy document being the equivalent of authorities saying 'can you hear me?' to publics.

The notion of phatic communion with regards to the 'community' label envisioned here is not just linguistic argot. If 'community' low-carbon projects and initiatives can be described as phatic, there is the possibility to use this critique to move beyond a *Community Studies* approach to what is the use of 'community' in the transition to low carbon futures. A *Community Studies* approach would likely produce a typology explicating the difference between 'communities of place' and 'communities of interest'. Conversely, certain linguistic approaches might take evidence that the term 'community' is used in different ways, and indicate 'community' as a floating signifier. However the aim here is not to either defend the notion, content or word, of 'community', but rather to seek a better description of its actual use. Specifically in the realm of the way 'community' is used in the attempted transition to a low carbon future. With this in mind, what advantages might the recognition of 'community' as phatic have?

- (i) By thinking more of the contact than content requires an assessment of why the word is used wherever it is found in this study, rather than just seeing it's status as a 'god word' (Herbert, 2006). It is thus a more critical approach, asking of 'community' *cui bono*: who does it serve?
- (ii) We are prompted to think deeper about why 'community' is used. The next step might then be to think what synonyms might be used in its place. Can it be substituted by: communality, collectivity, fraternity, gang, locale, or inhabitants? Each of these takes us down a different road. The loss here is the absence of a 'warm fuzzy', phatic nature of the term. But the gain is the word has greater purchase, it becomes far less nebulous.
- (iii) This nebulous nature can be seen as an advantage to the term, one of its attractive notions of use. Perhaps this is something to be taken to task. As in academic publications, the clearer you are the greater the potential for people to disagree with you. But with this risk there is the advantage of showing more

straightforwardly the content, rather than contact, of the project that you want to get across.

Section 3.1 has provided a background to understanding 'community', becoming increasingly more specific. It opens by outlining how 'community' had been widely understood and applied in the tradition of Human Ecology, and social science, before addressing more recent approaches to understanding 'community'. Two further relevant approaches for this study were also outlined: 'community' as phatic communication, and 'community' as a moral force. It is important to bear these in mind as possible reasons and motivations behind the use of and beliefs in 'community' by those in the groups studied here, in the rest of this thesis. The remainder of this chapter then seeks to address the application of 'community' by government and policy makers in Section 3.2, and more specifically in relation to environmental expectations in Section 3.3.

### 3.2 The Application of 'Community'

*"... there is something indeed in the social body, in classes, groups and individuals themselves which in some sense escapes relations of power, something which is by no means a more or less docile or reactive primal matter, but rather a centrifugal movement, an inverse energy, a discharge."*

(Foucault, 1980: 138)

Aside from theoretical interrogations, 'community' has also been increasingly applied as a function of government in the UK. This section seeks to outline a theorisation of this adoption of 'community'. Both under the communitarian inspired New Localism of New Labour, or Big Society rhetoric in 2013 Westminster, 'community' is a tool of the state in the UK. *"Under the aegis of New Labour government the belief in 'community' as a*

*strategy for the social took on a distinctively normative hue*" (Wallace, 2010: 809). This normativity referred to the ability of 'community' to get citizens to behave, act morally, and to control groups of citizens (Rose, 1999). This will to govern at 'arms length' through the *"technology of community action"* (Raco & Imrie, 2000: 2197), is seen as deliberate. For instance:

*"the role of community is to mop up the ill effects of the market and to provide the conditions for its continued operation, while the costs of this are born by individuals rather than the state"* (Levitas, in Cochrane, 2007: 49)

This is not confined to the 'Third Way' mode of governance, in the late 1990s/early 2000s, but continues in the UK. In an 'Age of Austerity' (Summers, 2009) it is crucially cheaper to govern through a discourse of 'community' than through state funding, monitoring, and support. Nor is it confined to the UK, through participatory budget making, a drive to localism, worldwide governing by and through 'community' sits in what Painter et al. (2011) identify as the global shift towards localism.

Featherstone et al. (2012) describe the *"austerity localism"* of the current government as a cover for an 'aggressive' roll-back of state services and provision. It also fits with the long-standing government assumption of eliding 'community' to local described by Amin (2005). *"Government policy tends to define community in a narrow, geographically defined manner"* (Fremeaux, 2005). In the UK this attempt to govern by and through 'community' often takes the form of moralising, attempting to control behaviour through group norms and expectations: *"Government through community, even when it works upon pre-existing bonds of allegiance, transforms them, invests them with new values, affiliates them to expertise and re-configures relations of [inclusion] and exclusion"* Rose (1996: 336).

These then are tied together: 'community', responsibility, morality, the local, and projection of responsibility. It is:

*“... part of a reconfiguration of the level of the territory of government from the level of the society (and the nation-state) to the level of community (and localisation). The local is given ontological status as the locus in and through which effective forms of government can be established, regulated, and implemented.”* (Raco & Imrie, 2000: 2194)

Coming to look at the use and application of ‘community’ in this study then, we must have these factors in mind. ‘Community’, as a word, is pleonastic due to the multiple, contradictory, invested meanings it holds. Claimed by both the Right and Left to serve their political ends – *“an alternative to the untrammelled free market (of neo-liberalism) and the strong state (of social democracy)”* (Levitas, in Cochrane, 2007: 11). ‘Community’ has *“not a single meaning, but many”* (Crow and Allen, 1994: 3). This creates a difficulty for discussions surrounding ‘community’ due to the unacknowledged differences in the way the term is used in some debates. It has become a signifier set free from the moorings of its various intended significations, possibly even phatic. This has left some to leave the word to one side, instead focusing on other replacement concepts such as ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1969) or ‘communitarianism’ (Etzioni, 1995). Given this, one of the questions this study will have to answer is what is meant by ‘community’, as use and signifier – if anything at all – in TTN’s specific context of delivering urban transitions.

The attempt to govern by and through ‘community’ then exists more generally within geography and urban studies research examining these processes. It has particular relevance when applied to the attempt to govern individuals carbon lives within environmental governance and policy.

### **3.2.1 ‘Government by Community’: Rose, Foucault and Communitarianism**

The key writer on the governing through ‘community’, and using ‘community’ as a strategy of government is Rose (1999: 167-196). Rose,



building on Foucault, outlines how *“government through community”* is a moralising discourse, and a technical tool of governing. Crucially Rose takes community from polysemic, through to a second stage in the history of ‘community’: community as polyvalent. Rose states *“while the term ‘community’ has long been salient in political thought, it becomes governmental when it is made technical”* (1999: 175).

Foucault rejected notions of power or control from a central locus. Preferring capillary power, in a dispersed form, Foucault used both Bentham’s panopticon to explain the ‘internal policemen’ self-regulation invoked by states, and the use pastoral power. The notion of the pastor, and the pastorate, Foucault takes specifically from Christian tradition, interestingly another secularised theological idea (Foucault, 2009: 147). Pastoral power is distinct from political power. Pastoral power concerns the conduct of souls, and a *“permanent intervention in everyday conduct, in the management of lives, as well as in goods, wealth, and things... It concerns not only the individual, but [also] the community”* (Foucault, 2009: 154). Pastoral power is where moral ‘community’ enters. First, as a separate space, free(er) from coercive state influence; later as states begin to utilise such notions and techniques for itself: government by community. Foucault used the notion of the pomegranate to outline how individuals within ‘community’, ‘communities’, and ‘communities’ of ‘communities’ are subject to this *“The unity of the pomegranate, under its solid envelope, does not exclude the singularity of the seeds, but rather is made up from them, and each seed is as important as the pomegranate”* (Foucault, 2009: 174). Thus ‘community’ unites both individual and collective focus of pastorate power for Foucault.

*“This does not mean that the principle of obedience was wholly unrecognized or suppressed in these communities”* (Foucault, 2009:211). The government by community literature then takes this statement and sees the folding back in of obedience into ‘community’ on a much larger scale. ‘Community’ begins as a space of alternative to prevailing societal norms and pastoral power, yet the argument following Rose, below, is that it now becomes a space of enacting and sustaining such norms. The assumption throughout is that ‘community’ somehow enacts or engenders an alternative

moral code to prevailing society, but what that moral, or value code (valence) is varies. 'Community' shifts from being a site of counter-conduct, to enacting and sustaining state power (*etatique*).

Rose outlines the traditional phases of 'community's' history as an object of study, or descriptive analysis. From being counterpoised to society, emerging from the industrial revolution, the loss of tradition and the rise of individualism, next to the "*damaging effects of metropolitan life in the 1920s and 1930s*" through *Community Studies* in the post WWII period, concerned with the "*apparent anomie created by the disturbance of 'settled' working class urban communities*", and the professional services of the 1960's and 1970's community workers. In each case 'community' was plural (polysemic). Any "*similarity [in use of 'community'] is a little misleading. The community appealed to is different in different cases: differently spatialized and differently temporized*" (Rose, 1999: 172). We can—following Rose—describe 'community' up to the Third Way, Third Sector as the era of 'community' as primarily polysemic. After this, the question of what—if anything—'community' means begins to fade. The more interesting, instructive question becomes the values, ethics, and morals inherent within the form of togetherness known as 'community', and concerns polyvalence, the values inherent in the term. 'What good does community do us?' is asked of polyvalent 'community' (Proctor & Smith, 1999; Smith, 2000: 73-92).

I do not wish to present this as an epochal shift, rather as a new phase, a entering into a new way in which 'community' can be thought of, rather than a definite line separating two eras. 'Community' still currently functions as polysemic, polyvalent, and phatic today. 'Community' as "*the third sector, the third space, the third way of governing, is not primarily a geographical [sic] space, a social space, a sociological space, or a space of services, although it may attach itself to any and all such spatializations. It is a moral field binding people into durable relations*" (Rose, 1999: 172). This is where the relevance of Rose for this study comes in, the way in which 'community' pertains to a moralising discourse, and justifies the secular theological excavation of the term ('community') carried out to investigate where this morality comes from, as a hang-over from previous

moral/ethical discourses (Section 3.1.6). Polyvalent 'community' comprises *"a moral individual with bonds of obligation and responsibilities for conduct that are assembled in a new way—the individual in his or her community is both self-responsible and subject to certain emotional bonds of affinity to a circumscribed 'network' of other individuals—united by family ties, by locality, moral commitment to environmental protection or animal welfare."* (Rose, 1999: 176).

In this way 'community' becomes seen as moral and moralising. 'Community' is the answer, and the question is as much the moral degradation or deviancy of society, as it is about individuation, free market or too much state power. The polyvalence of 'community' starts from the assumption that 'community' contains an inherently moral dimension. First this is assumed to be 'good' by policy. But others have taken up the inherent (im)morality in 'community' in a negative way. Derrida critiques the homogeneity. Morton sees it as fascist. Agamben and Badiou see (becoming) 'community' as inherently human and political and as a good thing. These are conflicts over the good or bad-ness of 'community', but both are united in assuming its inherent (im)morality. Again, 'community' is polyvalent.

*"Communitarianism draws its power from its ways of answering this question: its promise of a new moral contract, a new partnership between an enabling state and responsible citizens, based upon the strengthening of the natural bonds of community."* (Rose, 1999: 186). These moral values are in 'community', not only in communitarianism. This is still relevant today and helps explain the Big Society narratives, which formed a backdrop to this study, as a rebranded form of communitarianism: *"In this way, bonds between individuals are rendered visible in a moral form, and made governable in ways compatible with the autonomy of the individual and the reproduction of the collective: the self must govern itself communally in the service of its own liberty, autonomy and responsibility."* (Rose, 1999: 186). Big Society narratives have taken up this baton. 'Community' has shown itself not only remarkably malleable in its interpretations, but also in the moral values infused within it. Yet this 'community' morality relies on the two conditions above: a border and sameness. *"What matters at this stage is the*

*construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us*" (MacIntyre, 1981: 145). But, for Rose, this relies on *"common and agreed cultural and political virtues for all citizens"*, a problem in a multicultural and pluralistic age.

This is relevant for a number of reasons. 'Community' as a 'natural state of being', or 'part of what it means to be human' is echoed in TTN movements, permaculture and in CCF policy. *"This 'natural-ness' [of Third Way community] is not merely an ontological claim but implies affirmation, a positive evaluation."* (Rose, 1999: 168). Rose—while incredibly important in understanding the government by community background to those groups that form part of this study—conflates 'community' and the third sector as analytical categories. The Third Way is the *"space of semantic and programmatic concerns[ing] 'community'"* (Rose, 1999: 167). While they are clearly related, particularly when concerning political governance (or any Foucauldian style analysis, as he carries out), the conclusion of Rose's chapter on community (invoking Nancy, Agamben, William Connolly and Nancy Fraser), *"practically enacted in all those hybridized, queer, subaltern and non-essentialized communities"* (Rose, 1999: 196) are of more relevance to this study of 'community', rather than the third sector. 'Community' as a topic of study has potential enough to become unwieldy and vague, without also attempting to address the 'third sector' literature. Rose, and those who follow him, are rightly critical of the 'third sector', 'government by community', and other forms of Foucauldian coercive 'community'. Yet, digging deeper to the roots of what 'community', and collective being/becoming might be is more interesting and relevant for this study. *"Community here would be the name for the forms of collectivization that create such new types of non-individuated subjectivity and bring new mobile forces into existence. Whilst it is too early to tell what future there may be for such a radical ethico-politics, perhaps one can find, in the emergence of these creative ways of thinking and acting, some limited grounds for optimism."* (Rose, 1999: 196).

### 3.2.2 Environmental Governance and Policy

Environmental governance, or environmental policy is the attempt to manage, steer or influence environmental issues. From key texts which publicised the extent of environmental degradation in the West: from *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962), through *The Population Bomb* (Erlich, 1968), and Hardin's essay *Tragedy of the Commons* (1968), it has risen in prominence and importance. Originally existing in management, or institutional theory, environmental policy has shifted to a broader project requiring the consent of individuals, communities, NGO's and businesses. This can be seen as the shift from government to governance. It is here that the increasing use of 'community' by the UK state is then also applied in the project of attempting to influence or control the environmental behaviours and actions of its citizens.

This control has been carried out through regulating individual behaviours, although there is a reaction away from this, which can in part explain the rise in importance of 'community' for governments. Dowling (2010: 492) sees the scale of the individual as problematised, but highlights the "*equally problematic scale of the community in climate policy and governance*". For Ockwell et al. (2009: 312), 'community' is the key scale for a successful climate change policy intervention. 'Community' is the site and scale where people can collectively (re)imagine new futures and alter behaviour. Successful, collective, social innovations of this kind are 'walking school buses' and 'organic veg box schemes'. For Jackson (2003: 4) 'community' is "*a social setting that has as yet unexplored potential for encouraging lasting pro-environmental behavioural change*". These literatures do not define 'community' as such, but rather to see it as a site of potential to effectively govern carbon lives (Baldwin, 2010).

In contrast, 'community' is also harnessed through renewable energy policies stemming from a desire for energy self-sufficiency (Kellett, 2007). In this vein, 'community' can be an instrumentalised and individualised vision where collective or communitarian visions are absent (Walker et al., 2007). Given a critique of the way in which 'community' is used in governance the

question remains as to why it is so persuasive in environmental policy? It is important to frame the funding and policy contexts that have impacted the spread and development of TTN. A recent review of 'community' renewable energy projects in the UK they concluded that the 'community' label was "*much used*", and is "*one that continually proved difficult to pin down*" (Walker and Devine-Wright, 2008: 497). Aware of this, two possible reasons for the wide and increasing use in 'community' rhetoric, in UK environmental governance and policy, are set out below:

- (i) 'Community' generates consent from local residents,
- (ii) 'Community' specifies the scale at which transitioning to low carbon futures operate.

### 3.2.3 'Community' Generates Consent

The first reason to explain the rise in 'community' responses to climate change is that such language helps generate buy-in from local residents. The 'community' label varies in use: from projects owned and managed by local residents, to those being branded by 'outside' developers as a way to assuage local opposition, and a full spectrum in between (Walker & Devine-Wright, 2008; Schreuer & Weismeier-Sammer, 2010). The attraction of using 'community' rhetoric is that it can be a useful tool in attempting to see off potential objections from local residents to any new project. 'Community' has long been used as a "*warmly persuasive word*" that is "*never used unfavourably*" (Williams 1983: 76), and can be adopted by energy companies as a positive label to be associated with and help in attempts to pre-empt potential objections, NIMBY or otherwise, to developers plans (Toke et al., 2008; Warren and McFadyen, 2010).

The 'community' 'branding' can make such schemes much more appealing. Devine-Wright (2005) and Toke (2005) both argue that a shift to local ownership of wind farms results in higher levels of acceptance, local support and equity. Warren and Birnie (2009) outline how potential conflict over renewable energy schemes are not so much arguments over facts, but

*“whether they and their community had a personal stake in their development”*; this was down to no more than a *“subjective ‘sense of ownership’”* that the ‘community’ branding or labelling has associations of (2009: 117). This subjective sense is crucial here as the ‘community’ label still retains the positive perception whether or not the project is owned or invests their profits locally. Many of the words relevant to this topic have been seen as subjective, which has perhaps been key to their rise and adoption by a wide variety of stakeholders. One such *“fuzzy”* term – sustainability – has even been described as an *“inherently vague concept”* (Phillis and Andriantiatsaholiniaina, 2001). ‘Community’ here appears phatic, not used to mean anything specific, but rather to acknowledge presence, and enable consent.

#### 3.2.4 ‘Community’ Denotes a Scale

The second reason for the increase in ‘community’ rhetoric refers to the scale that action on environmental issues requires. This scale has two dimensions. First, ‘community’ is seen as a level that exists somewhere between the micro (individual) level, and the macro (governments and corporations). The ‘community’ here is the meso-scale between these two. The second scalar dimension to the use of the term ‘community’ is where it becomes elided with notions of the local, a (local-)‘community’.

Many attempts to frame responses to climate change have focused on the level of the individual (Hinchcliffe, 1996). Most notable here is the personal carbon footprint, however there is also a strong discourse on the behaviour change of individuals that operates on a level akin to personal virtue. Barr and Gilg outline the theoretical and policy reliance on *“individuals as the key agents of change”* (2007: 361) towards any low carbon future. Recently, ‘nudge’ thinking sees the site of low carbon transition as individual choice (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009). ‘Community’ projects tend to eschew such thinking, rejecting market-mediation, or viewing individuals out of their surrounding context. ‘Community’ is here a

rejection of purely individual notions of agency and responsibility – but neither is it a return to structural determinism or that low carbon transitions need to be directed from ‘above’, through governments or corporations. The rise of ‘community’ is part explained by a redressing of this balance by addressing at a meso-level, both action and responsibility between supra-individual agencies and an individualist approach. A counter-argument would be that ‘community’ is the extent of neoliberalism as a means of achieving self-regulation.

‘Community’ as an in-between scale does not fully do justice to the altogether different nature of acting as a collective, rather than as a group of individuals. For example, projects such as those that seek to gather together groups of individuals who want to install solar panels in order to gain economies of scale discount on price, fall short of what is meant by ‘community’ here; that would be an individual approach, albeit on a larger scale. ‘Community’ can be seen as a scale up from individual, but it is also a different category from other ‘meta-individual’ concepts, such as the ‘group’. Heiskanen et al. (2010) conflates the individual with the consumer, counterpoised to this members of communities are ‘citizens’. Harrison et al. (2006: 234) uses this distinction to imply that the problem of ‘free-riders’ only applies to consumers, not citizens. Here, belonging to a ‘community’ response to climate change is seen as a rejection of a market mediation of one’s relations with others, or even one’s relationship to the surrounding environment. Working in a ‘community’ such as this helps keep one ‘on track’, acting as a sort of ego-corrective against the draw of ecologically destructive socio-cultural norms, in a way that being part of a group doesn’t.

A concerted critique of individualism, or reduction of environmental responsibilities to the individual / consumer, provides a fertile ground out of which radical collectives (or a discourse of ‘community’) can emerge. *“There is a rather direct relationship between individual and collective modes of co-ordination, a decline in one almost always leads to an increase in the other”* (Shove 2003: 180). In this sense the use of ‘community’ is better defined by what it is not: it is not individual. But it is not a high-level structure either. Hinchcliffe critiques the *“focus upon a single, rather*



*abstract, scientific hypothesis reproduced the notion that environmental problems were the responsibility of distant and equally abstract institutions*" (1996: 61). 'Community' here serves as a middle way between individualism and supra-individual agencies (governments / corporations).

Walker et al. (2007: 17) again repeats the "*diversity of ways in which the 'community' label has been utilised*" in environmental policy. Despite this, one continual motif throughout this literature though is the way in which 'community' is used as a synonym for the local. Amin (2005) terms this the elision between local and 'community'.

When the UK government released its *Low Carbon Transition Plan*, a major section was given over to role 'communities and homes' would play in future energy policy (DECC, 2009: 77–110). Here, the 'local community' is primarily a concept of scale. These responses are local and desired in addition to overarching policy initiatives, but the fusing of 'community' and 'local responses' are typical. The local response gains more appeal with the very public failure of high-level discussions on carbon reduction, most prominently the Kyoto Protocol and COP 15. Seeing 'community' as local, retains a strong assumption that 'communities' are rooted in particular places: locations. This is adopted by TTN initiatives, but their sense of local goes beyond the concept of communities of place, as often contrasted with communities of interest. Often these TTN 'community' initiatives retain aspects of both communities of place and interest, above.

These two characteristics are by no means exhaustive, but are present and helpful in explaining the rise and character of 'community' responses to climate change and for low carbon futures. TTN, a particularly prominent example of the rise of 'community' responses, contains all both aspects in their practice. They appeal to local government and established political actors, by eschewing words like activist for an appealing umbrella term like 'community'. They attempt to focus on 'local resilience' and local relevance, by shortening feedback loops. Yet they also wish to build on the grassroots legacy, building a coalition of other green groups. It is to these specific, internal, expectations of 'community' that the next section addresses.

### 3.3 Expectations of Low Carbon ‘Community’

Walker (2011) makes an important contribution to discussion of ‘community’ relevant for this study, first outlining the variety of meanings of ‘community’ in carbon governance. This section takes up that challenge setting out three main expectations laid at the door of ‘community’ in the literature on low carbon communities. It is the belief that ‘community’ can meet these expectations that helps explain the rise in funding for, literature on, and examples of such ‘communities’, of which TTN are only one ‘flavour’. These expectations are, in turn, ‘community’ as a context for individual behaviour change; as a grassroots innovation; and lastly the ‘community capacity’ to affect change and to control.

#### 3.3.1 Low Carbon ‘Community’ as a Context for Individual Behaviour Change

Walker outlines how ‘community’ is used to affect behaviour change and patterns of consumption. He writes ‘community’ has a “*galvanizing impact on inhabitants own commitments and an example for others to follow*” (2011: 778). Increasingly, within both policy makers, including the CCF looked at directly here, (CSE, 2007; IPPR, 2010; RSA, 2010), and academics (Jackson, 2005; Seyfang and Smith, 2006; Middlemiss, 2009) a trend is emerging where the attempt is to affect individual behaviour change, albeit through the medium of ‘community’.

While Bickerstaff et al. (2008: 1319), indicate that growth in individualism and self-interest leads to a decline in environmental responsibility. Heiskanen et al. (2010), outline four ways ‘community’ enables low carbon actions that purely individual responses cannot achieve. Individual attempts to act more virtuously can be thwarted, or at least impeded by: (i) surrounding social conventions; (ii) lack of infrastructure; (iii) a feeling of helplessness; and (iv) the social dilemma arising from not

knowing what the best actions may be in any given situation. 'Community', the argument goes, enacts powerful group norms and ego-correctives. The members of 'communities' are citizens not consumers, yet environmental actions here are still taken as individuals, albeit 'reframed' through the lens of 'community'.

Moloney et al. (2010) push further a 'sum of the individual parts' approach to 'community', arguing that while 'community' can help foster individual behaviour change, it can also have the pressure required to affect 'systemic change'. This desire for 'community' groups and initiatives to have a wider impact approaches the second use below: seeing 'community' as a grassroots initiative.

This recent surge of interest in 'community' recognises the untapped potential of 'community' to help encourage pro-environmental behaviours and practices. 'Community' here is envisioned as a support network, with members encouraging each other collectively to help reduce the 'community's' environmental impact in aggregate. The individuals who make up this 'community' have common aims and values. This is again centered on the long-standing assumption of 'community' as a homogenous entity (Crow & Allen, 1994), with normative assumptions of what 'being in' the 'community' means. Carbon Conversations seek to develop explicitly pro-environmental assumption as to what being in 'community' means. For *Carbon Conversations* the participants choose to 'opt-in' to a course designed to reduce their carbon footprint. They stay in, with the sole aim of weaning themselves off their perceived addiction to oil. This is the uniting factor that holds the 'community' together.

For others though, the normative assumption or homogeneity doesn't have to be an environmental one. Baldwin (2010) discusses an initiative at Ipswich Town Football Club where supporters were encouraged to, "*Sav[e their] energy for the Blues*". This tapped into the supporter's common desire to see Ipswich succeed, and sought to win money to put towards their team for new players. Supporters did this by adopting individual behaviour change pledges, motivated by the thought that their self-sacrifice was doing some greater good for the whole.

Jackson has talked about the untapped potential for ‘communities’ to be used as a vehicle for low carbon lifestyles: *“Individual efforts to live more simply are more likely to succeed in a supportive community”* (Jackson, 2009: 150). He cites examples such as the Findhorn Foundation, in which the declared aim is to be *“living simpler, more sustainable lives”* (loc. cit.). Typically the construction of this kind of ‘community’ relies on normative assumptions and the homogenous nature of the shared goal.

The interpretation of ‘community’ as the best way to reduce individual environmental emissions emerges, in part, in reaction to *purely* individual ways of addressing the problem (Seyfang *et al.*, 2010). This view offers a critique of the belief that information and advice on ‘virtuous’ ways to live are enough to motivate change in practice in individuals (for instance, Hinchcliffe, 1996). It is worth asking if ‘community’ as a reaction to this individual outlook does not move far enough away from this. It alters the context of the individual behaviour change, yet is still focused on individual behaviour change. However seeing individual behaviour change in a group context doesn’t seem very different from a ‘community’ one here. So far it is unclear in this example what is gained by the use of the term ‘community’.

We must also account for the non-human and more-than-human elements that make up certain ‘communities’ that is often left to one side in this reading of ‘community’. An important exception being Heiskanen *et al.* (2010) focus on surrounding infrastructure. A less individualistic approach might take into account the technologies, infrastructures, sense of place, spirituality, and people’s memories and biographies, to name just a few elements. These all impact – subtly or otherwise – on the ‘community’ feel, and yet, each of these impacting elements are left out of most discussions.

‘Community’ is, as with any other term, never neutral. It is used widely to encompass a variety of meanings, feelings, and values. Whether consciously or unconsciously, it is used with the dual entity of signifying both *“location and its value-laden entity”* (Freemoux, 2005: 268). Conceiving of behaviour change as primarily individual-centered neglects the extent to which other factors bear on this process. In particular it decontextualises and abstracts behaviour change from the context which it takes place and of

which it is motivated by. The belief for those seeing 'community' as a supporting context for individual behaviour change implies 'community' is that which aids our ability to be virtuous. 'Community' here has a warm, positive function that implies that it is something worth working for; 'community' predicates assumed virtue. This builds on previous analysis of New Labour's use of 'community', pointing to its moralising nature (Wallace, 2010), and its willingness to delegate responsibility away from governments and corporations, to those as seen as inside the 'community' (for instance in Etzioni, 1993; Fremeaux, 2005). There is less in these analysis of 'community's' powerful forces of normatively held assumptions and beliefs; of homogeneity within the group, that can be used for potentially reactive, regressive means as much as the progressive ones the authors above talk of.

Part of 'community's' ability to generate agency can be seen within the *Zuhandenheit* nature of the being and becoming 'community'. This is explored in more depth in Chapter 5. This can be seen in the assumptions that 'community' implied practical action, and was used much more as a verb than a noun. Community-as-verb denotes itself as practical and action orientated. It does so in a way that goes deeper than merely referring to a signifier, or elision with local, place, or scale. In the same way, Heidegger describes how the hammer becomes a part of the hand and arm when used as part of a task. The hammer is not "*grasped thematically as an occurring Thing*" (1962: 98), but rather it is in the act of hammering that its function of hammering is – beyond a theoretical knowledge of what a hammer is and does. Likewise 'community's' task – getting on with doing something – is inherently part of what it is. 'Community' – for TTN – not a 'Thing' in itself; instead it is – like the hammer – that which enables one to achieve the task.

Yet, 'community' here can ascribe more agency than is reasonable to these groups. As Shove (2003) has pointed out, our behaviours and practices are tied up with many things beyond our willingness, virtuousness, or context. The capacity to change these relies on norms and technologies beyond our virtue, or willingness, or capacity to change. Regardless of the supportive context we place (or find) ourselves in.

Seeing 'community' as a context for individual behaviour change does

provide a more subtle look at its locational links. 'Community' is here linked to place, but not tied to a bound territory. By focusing on the normative, and virtuous aspects of the terms here, there is a danger of heading towards seeing 'community' as a panacea. It's important to point out here then, that although 'community' is seen less abstractly here, we should not mistake that for being seen as neutral.

### 3.3.2 Low Carbon 'Community' as a Grassroots Innovation

*"Communities have also been seen as potential sites of 'grassroots innovation'"* (Walker, 2011: 779). If the governmentalised uses (section 3.3) are projecting a concept of 'community' onto a given project, area or group, this section refers to the endogenous, inside-out, bottom-up 'community'. For Seyfang, grassroots initiatives are *"networks of activists and organisations generating novel bottom-up solutions for sustainable development and sustainable consumption; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved"* (2009a: 64). Middlemiss and Parrish also described how *"grassroots initiatives for change"* (2010: 7559) are inherently tied up with 'community'. 'Community' here is seen as a *"space for realising pro-environmental change"* (2010: 7559). There is the sense here of grassroots organisations coming up from below, emerging from the shadows to take their place in civil society. Rather than waiting for the mainstream to come round to green ideas. Blay-Palmer outlines a special edition of *Local Environment* on the need for *"more probing to unpack more about how theory and practice are translated into meaningful action and that sustainable communities emerge from grassroots initiatives"* (2011: 748). Yet has the same assumption of grassroots innovations emerging, up-scaling, 'community' growing, flourishing, and entering the mainstream.

Grassroots 'community' movements are not only local enough to be realisable and tangible. They are also emergent, ground-up activism. The 'community' scale is local, but its movement is centripetal and sensitive to the needs of its local context. 'Community' action then is particular, not a

one-size-fits-all solution. 'Community' here is more *zuhanden* than *vorhanden*, that is to be understood in the being and action of 'community', rather than comprehended as a distinct object. 'Community' as matter-of-fact, tacit, intuitive understanding: it is local, but just as much lived (Bauman, 2001: 10).

Interpreting 'community' as a grassroots innovation is an inherently scalar view, often viewed through Strategic Niche Management<sup>88</sup> and systems innovation literatures. Seyfang & Haxeltine (2012) explicitly name TTN as a grassroots innovation, and differentiate it from behaviour change approaches to the low carbon challenge. These vary from investigations into the value-action gap (Barr et al., 2001; Barr, 2002, 2006), or even 'community' as a context for individual behaviour change, above.

Understanding grassroots innovations as 'communities' has a long lineage. For Smith (2005) the current focus on renewable energy has roots in the alternative technology movement of the 1970's. Smith invites us to remember the radical edge this movement had, and even though this route was not taken, it had long impacts. Not least that current members of business involved in greenwashing, often had schooling in the alternative technology movement. Yet the description of these 'communities' as 'grassroots innovations' is contradictory. Defined as being against the mainstream they still "*hold normative promise*" (Seyfang & Smith, 2007: 595). 'Community' examples here are at once defined as against the mainstream, yet drawn irresistibly towards impacting upon it.

However, with many grassroots examples it can seem far-fetched to see them aim for this level of mainstream impact. 'Earthships'<sup>89</sup> for instance, may have niche value, but it is ambitious to imagine them providing for mainstream housing needs. Although one could imagine this being said about solar PV a decade ago. Grassroots innovations have two options here. First, they could form communities of communities. Here umbrella groups may shelter emerging 'communities' and help them to feel part of a progressive coalition. The Transition Network can be understood as

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<sup>88</sup> Designed to facilitate socio-technical transitions towards sustainable futures. Related to STS and the 'Dutch School' of transitions.

<sup>89</sup> Passive solar housing built using recycled materials.

fulfilling this role, for its constituent TTN cells. Alternatively they themselves may have impact, but not directly, at least not tangibly. They could have symbolic value, leaving behind an inspirational story, or example of how someone did something differently. Often in the TTN groups I studied, this occurred in the way some people talked of groups such as the Levelers, or the Luddites as inspirational examples, or contained members from previous 'failed' initiatives such as Jam74 or Pollock Free State.<sup>90</sup>

'Community' here is characterised by 'small-scale local activity'. To see 'community' as a grassroots innovation is primarily, if not purely, to see it as a scalar category. 'Community' here is also a place, a local place, where things are done differently to an 'out there' mainstream. Of course, by defining themselves against this mainstream, they are embodying it as strongly as if they set out to copy it directly. Yet, already grassroots innovations have concern for the local particularity of each emerging 'community' initiative.

Much of the literature on grassroots innovations emerges from literature on niche-innovations, and when looking at 'community', can be seen as having an overly technological outlook (Seyfang & Haxeltine, 2012: 382; Smith, 2011). As a reaction to this, a friendly critique has emerged focusing on this use of niches, describing them as social innovations (Smith & Seyfang, 2007). Social innovations are "*new forms of socio-economic organisation*" (Schreuer, 2010: 101) which are "*operating in a field where they are dependent on the available technologies and on institutional framework conditions, but at the same time also actively shaping these environments to some extent through their own activities.*" (2010: 105). Talk of 'social innovations' is in part an attempt to move away from technological focused categories, as niches can be seen where the rollout or adoption of the niche is part of a curve, targeting individual rational actors (Aiken, 2012b). Or indeed moving away from seeing the 'mainstream' or 'regime' as a coherent, stable system. Social innovations on the other hand, are like 'community energy' projects in the UK (Walker, 2008), or locally owned

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<sup>90</sup> Two environmental protest groups in Glasgow, not in existence during the time of this research, but previous members and individuals were still influential in the context of these types of groups in Scotland.



wind turbines in Denmark (Toke et al., 2008).

Scott-Cato and Hillier (2010: 870) define social innovation as *“refer[ing] to academic and other intellectual activity that actively engages with contemporary social problems to achieve socially beneficial outcomes”*. For Seyfang (2009a: 69) social innovations are part of an attempt to move away from overly technologically focused analysis. For both the focus is shifted to a particular situation, with locally specific needs, capabilities, and awareness. These ‘community’ innovations are social as they shift the focus from end user to a locally specific context where new forms of energy production and distribution can be experimented with – alongside the social arrangements that make this possible. It is this experimenting with existing technology, in tweaked social settings, that alters the relationship between the infrastructure, practices, and habits (Shove, 2003). Social innovations then are not technologically focused, yet make use of emerging and existing technologies. Social innovations are concerned about reframing social habits and practices as much as in placing themselves as the ‘early adopters’ of new technological innovations.

Given this analysis, we can see that TTN groups maybe interpreted as both a context for individual behaviour change and also as a grassroots or social innovation. Yet TTN are excessive to these, that is, they can fit these definitions sometimes in some examples, but they are not contained only within them. There is one area of work however, which has the potential to encompass some aspects of both these, seen in the ‘community capacity’ notion proposed in the work of Middlemiss (2009, 2010, 2011a, 2011b).

### 3.3.3 ‘Community’ Capacity

As a bridge between these two viewpoints, ‘community’ as a context for grassroots behaviour change and social innovation, ‘community’ can also be seen as a grassroots group, which brings about civic engagement, social innovation, and learning (Mulugetta et al., 2010: 7543). Middlemiss & Parrish (2010: 7561-7562) for instance highlight ‘community capacity’ as

encompassing four dimensions: *cultural capacity*, *organisational capacity*, *infrastructural capacity*, and *personal capacity*.

*Cultural capacity* refers to the acceptance or otherwise of ecological ideas. In Portobello, for example, multi-generational residents – ‘locals’ – had less belief in the importance of ‘acting environmentally’, than the newer residents – ‘incomers’ – who mostly comprised PEDAL. PEDAL’s ‘community’ can be seen to have a greater degree of cultural capacity to act on the low carbon challenge. Those in social housing can be seen, understandably, to have other issues primary.

*Organisational capacity* refers to the formal institutions, third sector, or faith-based organisations, which can resource and support any given ‘community’ (Middlemiss, 2011a). *Infrastructural capacity* refers to the facilities and structure providing more or less potential for low carbon living. For instance areas of fuel poverty or food deserts, will struggle in comparison to the capacity of other well-resourced areas, or ‘communities’. *Personal capacity* refers to the resources of individuals within a ‘community’ – be they time, finances, skills, training, or awareness and willingness to act on environmental concerns.

Middlemiss’s notion of *community capacity* is highly relevant to this study. Explanations of why TES emerged amongst the better-off parts of South Edinburgh can be offered through the *cultural capacity* of well resourced areas such as Morningside or Grange. The notion of *cultural capacity* can also explain why TES does not represent the socio-economically poorer parts of the Southside, like Oxfords, explained through a lack of *personal capacity* amongst inhabitants there. The better-resourced inhabitants in Oxfords, say, (time, financially, education) would devote their attention to other issues, usually social concerns. If those issues were environmental, it was through other groups spoken to as part of this study such as *Piper*, and not TTN.

In Seyfang & Haxeltine’s most extensive survey of UK TTN groups undertaken to date, groups tend to be made up of those who are “*extremely well educated*” (2012: 388). The evidence from this research confirms this.

Also, I found that TTN groups emerge – and are more successful – in areas of Edinburgh with higher *organisational* and *infrastructural capacity*.

In light of Middlemiss (2011b, 2010, 2009), TTN groups can be seen comprising of those with a high degree of *personal* and *cultural capacity*. It is against the wider backdrop of low carbon ‘community’, theoretically as a grassroots innovation and context for individual behaviour change, that TTN sits, or have emerged. It is though ‘community capacity’ that we can more carefully analyse the practice and role of ‘community’ within these groups.

### **3.4 Polysemy, Polyvalence & Phatic ‘Community’: Theoretical Argument of the Thesis**

The theoretical core of the thesis can be summed with the alterative functions of the word ‘community’: polysemic, polyvalent, and phatic. Each is analysed in turn, drawing attention to the key thinkers, authors and ideas brought together under each conception.

The core contention of the thesis is that ‘community’ can be used as a multiple signifier, used to different ends by different actors at different times. The thesis stops short of stating that ‘community’ is a floating empty signifier, which can be filled with any meaning or external referent. Yet, there is something about ‘community’ that lends itself towards different interpretations or understandings. For instance, regular elisions of ‘community’ with small-scale, local and neighbourhood level associations were evident in the CCF, and Scottish Government (Section 4.1.3). However for those involved within these groups a different set of associations were adopted: warm, close, friendly, belonging. Chapter Five in particular outlines the more affective, phenomenological reasons why those involved in these groups found ‘community’ attractive.

In the history of writings on ‘community’, different semantic associations have been drawn to the word. First, Tönnies associates it with intimacy, family, set against wider urban society. Weber and Durkheim associated it with tradition, and broadly conservative associations. The Chicago School and Park often associated ‘community’ with locality and

belonging. Cohen highlights the semantic linkages to various symbolisms in 'community'. Permaculture continued this trend drawing the link to the 'naturalness' of 'pure community'. Morton saw 'community' as fascist. 'Community' was seen to necessitate homogeneity and a border before post-structuralism, and not afterwards. Yet, universally with each of these there is a semantic association being drawn. Section 3.1 can be seen as the history of a variety of different semantic associations 'community' is paired with. 'Community' can be of interest or of place, but with both 'community' is polysemic.

There were other examples of the polysemy 'community' can have in the research gathered for this thesis. Often 'community'—used by the groups studied here—implied action, activity, and getting things done. 'Community' was also used to describe a way to transform individual behaviour and motivation, as 'community' reaches deep within internal motivations and desires (Section 4.4.4). 'Community' was, and is, used in different ways, at different times, by different actors. In short, it is internally multiple, diverse and polysemic.

'Community' also carries with it different associations of values, morals, or ethical assumptions. 'Community' as a moral force can be traced back to Durkheim (1957). As seen in Section 3.2.1, Foucault and Rose place different valences on 'community': Foucault primarily as a site beyond the full reach of pastoral power, Rose as a state-led governmental inculcation of values and morality. Frazer (1999) sees 'community' as a value first and foremost. These normative and performative assumptions were seen in this project as wide and varied as: 'Community' represented the 'good life'. 'Community' represented the natural state of belonging of humans. 'Community' was associated with living life at a human scale, a life of calmer, slower mobility. 'Community' was a feeling, a warm internal feeling of belonging. Each of these is explored in greater detail in the rest of the thesis, but gathered here one can see more clearly the polysemy of 'community'.

There were other moral viewpoints placed on community by those who sought to foster, use, or govern by it. This is outlined in the explanation of the difference between moral and ethical spaces (Section 6.1.7). Moral

spaces are those seen in Charles Booth, who writes of “*a fixed public order of conduct*” (Osbourne and Rose, 2004: 211), where attempts are made to regulate and normalise such ‘good’ behaviour. The moral force of ‘community’ in this research can be identified when it was used to order and organise individual’s environmental behaviours and practices. For example, SOSO sought to use peer-pressure, and external indicators of good citizenship, such as numbers (carbon emission reductions, low footprint). Some of TEU’s schemes attempt to point toward the carbon impact of flights for international students and the guilt associated, can be seen as the attempt to foster a moral space within the student ‘community’. Moral ‘community’ also lends itself towards community-in-aggregate, a collection of individuals, rather than a category different to seeing a ‘community’ as a meta-individual.

Ethical spaces can be seen in the writings of Patrick Geddes as full of contradictions and flow, where attempts are made to create greater self-reflection on one’s environmental relationship to others near and far. ‘Community’ was ethical in this research in the TTN assumption that belonging to ‘community’ would heighten ones relationship to others and foster openness to connections, transforming relationships. ‘Community’ was also a site of learning, where collaborative, do-it-yourself, mutual teaching occurred in groups, delving deeper to understand more fully the implications of everyday seemingly banal actions (school runs, eating strawberries in winter, turning the heating up). This ‘community’ was sensitive to particular locational needs, and focusing on transforming attitudes. Actions were not the explicit focus, but rather the inevitable consequence once attitudes, hearts and minds were altered.

‘Community’ reduced carbon in both moral and ethical ‘community’. Moral ‘community’ provided a (figurative) list of right and wrongs, which were more likely to be adhered to through peer pressure, and group norms. Ethical ‘community’ heightened people’s awareness, deepen understanding and care and concern for environmental issues. Both place onto ‘community’ the different values and expectations ‘community’ brings with them. In this

research 'community's' different values can be seen in the existence of both moral and ethical 'community'.

As explored in Section 3.1.5 this inherent association of 'community' and values or morality/ethics, can be traced back to the secular theology of the term. Chapter Five, in particular Section 5.3.3 on Motivational Interviewing, shows the attempt to use the way values (however internally diverse) automatically assumed and implied by 'community' have been attempted to be instrumentalised, and put to the use of influencing citizens environmental behaviours. This section contends the increasing governmentalisation of 'community' has limits, and addresses the internal politics of the use of 'community' in one particular example, the SOSO project. Yet, even if this is not so, the assumptions throughout this thesis and the different positions within it, are that 'community' retains some moral force, some value-laden impact on those it implicates. The thesis thus argues that 'community' is valent: it has a value or implied value-assumption. Without universalising what these values are, or that they are normatively produced, they remain in practice and can be seen in the way the different actors adopt 'community' as being of crucial importance to their aims. These values or valences are internally diverse. From an attempted instrumentalisation of 'community', to a utopian vision of human flourishing, from getting people to behave, to be happier, to live fuller, more emotionally stable lives, different actors and theorists link 'community' to different value-sets. Yet what connects these is that 'community' is implicated in these values. Community is polyvalent.

'Community' has a wide array of different meanings, associations, and values and ethical assumptions within it. Yet it is also used as a form of social control, as a way of more cynically recognising the presence of others—of such a thing as a 'community'—without any expectation that it may exist, or any recognition of the importance such an entity or value must have on their project. That is, 'community' can be seen as phatic. Phatic communication is relevant here in the way governments and businesses feel socially compelled to adopt the term. However, the adoption of 'community' as a term is often carried out without accepting the importance of the

polysemic nature of the use of 'community, still less the ethical and moral implications within 'community's' polyvalence.

The tendency to use 'community' as phatic is prevalent today. For instance, the English Football Association's (EFA) renaming of the season's traditional curtain raiser in 2002, from Charity Shield to Community Shield, an exhibition game for the EFA and clubs involved (the previous season's league and cup champions).<sup>91</sup> Due to a charity commission investigation deeming the match failed to meet charity law regulations covering the use of the name.<sup>92</sup> 'Community' can be seen as preferred to 'charity' as the name did not legally imply any money donated to good causes, but has a general, non-specific sense of goodwill attached to it. There was no onus to do anything against the increasing commercialisation of football: donate to the hard-pressed or needy. Just what this 'community' refers to was—as per usual—unclear: the football 'community'? The 'local community' around Wembley where the game is held? Perhaps it refers to the 'community' of fans who attend the match? Of course 'community' here does not strictly refer to anything at all. The 'community' part of the Community Shield is primarily used as gesture, rather than any specific meaning denoted; as such the Community Shield is a phatic competition. In this study also, 'community' was often phatic.

The common thread to this thesis is the various ways 'community' has been understood, deployed and performed. In carrying out this central task a variety of theoretical approaches are taken in turn. These are wide and varied, from a discussion of liberal paternalism, ecology writings on plant succession and dynamics to theories of Badiou and human ecology. Yet they all return to discuss the production, practice and potential of 'community', in its polysemic, polyvalent, and phatic forms.

Recent work in geography has shown the benefits of adopting concurrent multiple theoretical approaches to the same topic or case study. Murphy and Smith combine transition and MLP writings with those of

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<sup>91</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/football/1809817.stm> Accessed 12 August 2013

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2002/mar/04/newsstory.sport> Accessed 12 August 2013

regional geography and periphery/core perspectives. They conclude: *“The discussion has confirmed that both are valuable whilst at the same time suggesting that each offers a partial explanation”* (2013: 704). Hargreaves *et al.* (2013: 418) *“aim throughout ... to explore the connections and crossovers between ... [different theoretical approaches,] rather than to try and fuse, hybridise, or integrate these two distinct approaches into a single overarching theory.”* This is also the aim of this thesis. By avoiding the narrow adoption of only one theoretical approach, new insights and connections can be made. However I, like Hargreaves *et al.*, also wish to emphasise that to *“limit our ambitions in this way as a means of emphasising the distinct units of analysis which each theory addresses on its own and which, though they may overlap and connect in various ways, remain very far from congruent.”* (2013: 418).

The theoretical core of this thesis is eclectic, rather than non-theoretical. Every aspect of the production, practice and potential of ‘community’ relates in some way to these three functions of ‘community’: ‘community’ as polysemic, polyvalent and phatic. The disparate traditions and thinkers used are many and varied, yet all are united through the particular empirical focus of addressing the production, practice and potential of ‘community’ in the Transition Town Network in Edinburgh, and also theoretically within the different function of ‘community’ as polysemic, polyvalent and phatic.

To be clear, I am at no point claiming that all theories are equally valid, or that they can be mutually intelligible to one another. Rather, that the value of being able to change one theoretical lens for another results in a fuller explanation of the groups studies being possible. This ‘varifocal’ theoretical lens is adopted here in this thesis. So, different approaches are not held to be sacrosanct, or universally adopted. Rather different attempts to understand the groups are taken at different times. For instance, in Chapter Six, in order to understand how ‘future’ is deployed as a resource for the present requires some different theoretical understandings (for example, Agamben and Badiou) to the other chapters. This is not to claim that these theories ‘fit’ with the others, on the contrary they can often be mutually exclusive. But they are adopted, because they allow us to explore



different ideas, in different ways. In short, they are adopted for their explanatory power. This is the theoretical interpretation the thesis is wedded to: the ability to shed new light on core terminology and ideas.

### 3.5 Some Avenues Not Taken

Before concluding this chapter, a brief excursion must be made concerning three areas of literature that have not been fully engaged with in the rest of this thesis. All three have something to offer this study, yet all three would have taken the study in different directions to the one attempted in the outline of the core concern of this thesis (Section 3.4), and in the research questions (Section 1.2.1). Hence engagement with this work ceases here. These three are: social movement theory, collective action literatures, and social practice theory. Each is discussed in turn.

Social Movement Theory (SMT) refers to the ideas and perspectives used to explain social movements. These have been defined as an “*organized and sustained collective group of people, who seek to challenge power holders and institutions entrenching inequalities of all sorts*” (Ramutsindela, 2009: 199). Given this broad definition SMT is clearly relevant to TTN, and the wider frame of grassroots environmental action where they are seen to sit.

Tilly (2004) shows how social movements have emerged in the last 250 years to become a key site of political contestation. Much of the writing on social movements emphasises the democratic potential of social movements (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Della Porta, 2013). The movements and writings on them, often focus on political identities (feminism, student protests, black civil rights), although can also adopt more universal positions, most notably the environmental movement, which can seek to represent humanity as a whole (Nash, 2005; Goodwin & Jasper, 2009). TTN, although focused on local action, also see this broader picture, and view local community action as a universal solution to peak oil, climate change, and economic collapse. Given the connection between SMT and the environmental movement, there is significant overlap between SMT and the TTN groups comprising this study. TTN also draws inspiration from other

groups who have been (retrospectively) seen as social movements, variously: Luddites, Levellers, anti-GM food campaigners, slow food movement, Via Campesina, counterculture of the 1960's or the anti-globalizations campaigners of the 1990's.

So, TTN can be seen as a social movement, and framing TTN as such requires SMT be used as an explanation. Yet, the focus of this thesis is 'community': the community action of TTN, community policy of CCF, and community as a mobilizing and mollifying term. Clearly the overlap between SMT and any analysis of community is significant. The term 'collective group of people' is crucial to the initial definition above, and thus any SMT analysis requires an appreciation of togetherness, and probably analysis of 'community' too. Yet, whether the reverse holds to be the case is by no means a given. Togetherness—and probably very 'community'—are key to understanding SMT, but not all forms of togetherness (in this thesis the production, practice and potential of 'community') necessarily include SMT. That is, the thesis is an investigation of 'community' in a group/movement who also happen to be a social movement, not an investigation into social movements any deeper than this.

It is for this reason that no further engagement with SMT is offered in this thesis. TTN, as stated, can be seen as a social movement, given their (framing as) grassroots based, seeking to affect purposive change (transition) in their local context and wider society. Here there is no knock-down-drag-out argument for why the SMT analysis goes no further than this section, other than the focus is 'community'. There are the supplementary contingencies of thesis word length, time of study and the need to focus down on particular core concerns, necessitates that many useful—potentially fruitful—avenues of research must be foreclosed. These decisions have been taken, and justification for doing so outlined here.

There are two other areas of potential analysis that must be acknowledged here, before engagement with the groups studied here in full. First, collective action literatures discuss group attempts to further their own aims, to challenge unacceptable or unjust circumstances. Usually this is understood to exist in opposition to purely or largely individual outcomes

(Alinsky, 1947). Literatures on collective action often occur together with ones on activism, and geographies of activism (Mitchell, 2003; Takahashi, 2009; Routledge, 2009). Collective action can be reformist or radical, respond to a specific threat or emerge seemingly from nowhere, or can be highly locally specific or respond to global threats. In each of these pairs, evidence can be found within TTN for each of them.

Again, these writings obviously pertain to a thesis on TTN, and the role of 'community' therein. 'Community', the specific form of togetherness, or collectivity studied here, is seen within TTN as both means and end of their transition: TTN's goal—'relocalised resilient community'—and the manner through which they have purposive agency to achieve this—'community action'. Collective action literatures would aid this study only in the latter half, addressing TTN's means of achieving transition, rather than their chief end.

Again, as with social movement theory, collective action literatures whilst important, are by no means sufficient to understanding TTN's concern with 'community'. 'Community', in its polysemic, polyvalent, and phatic appearances, is interesting to this study due to its capacity to cover both means and ends. It is this coalition of means and end which is an important conclusion of this thesis (Chapter Six), and would not have been reached had only means been studied ahead of ends.

Third and last, social practice literatures must be addressed. Practice is a key part of this study. It is in the thesis title and one chapter (Five) also delves into greater depth looking at the 'practice of community'. Linguistic overlap can also be seen in writers such as Lovell (forthcoming) addressing 'communities of practice'. Yet, despite appearances, these two practices (in this thesis, and in the social practice literature) are homonyms—spelled and pronounced the same but not etymologically linked.

The reasons for avoiding the social practice theory in this thesis are multiple. Despite the path breaking and innovative work done here, this set of theories does not fit a thesis looking at 'community' in all its guises. Practice theory focuses on meso, rather than individual (micro) or structures and system approach (macro). In this literature a practice

involves materials, competences and meanings (Shove, 2012: 14). Practices also involve embodied histories and biographies brought to bear in any pattern or set of actions. Yet, the 'practice' referred to in this thesis is the being and becoming 'community' enacted by these groups, not necessarily the way they relate to objects, technologies, or infrastructures. It is not that this thesis excludes a practice theory approach; it is simply that the thesis is directly focused not on practices, but 'community'. Thus, when 'practice' is used in this thesis, it only refers to the being, becoming and doing of 'community', not to social practice theory.

'Practice theory', traced back to Schatzki (1996, 2001, 2002), or Bourdieu (1977), has found expression and popularity in social sciences through the writings of Shove (2003, 2010; *et al.* 2007; *et. al.* 2012) and others including Strengers (2009), Gram-Hanssen (2011), and Hargreaves *et al.* (2013). There is added relevance for this study beyond homonym here, practice theory has often been used to help understand and better intervene in environmentally damaging activities. Practice theory has been influential for several reasons, and adds important insights. Key studies such as that of showering show how detrimental environmental demands—in this case of water, and energy for heating—can occur in spite of what might assumed from rational, autonomous actors. More than that, social norms such of cleanliness, modern demands for convenience, and expectations of comfort, all play a crucial, if unseen, role (Shove, 2003). According to this set of literatures, a practice is an *"array of activity... embodied and that nexuses of practices are mediated by artefacts, hybrids and natural objects"* (Schatzki, 2000: 11). Seeing an activity, such as showering, as a social practice involves not seeing it as an individual action, or choice, but bound up with social norms, *"concentrating on the processes through which habits are acquired and jettisoned, and on the relationship between consumption and convention, technology and practice"* (Shove, 2003: 199).

Practice theory emphasises the collaborative nature of actions and activities, co-produced between humans and non-humans. But again, as above with SMT, the reverse is not necessarily the case. Studying collaboration, and 'community' as this thesis does, does not require a study

of practice theory. Practice theory moves away from the opposite of 'community'—individualism—by going beyond rational choice theory, for instance, or behaviour change models such as the ABC (Shove, 2010). But this double negative does not automatically lead to a positive contribution to the analysis of 'community' undertaken in this thesis. Examining the production, practice (being and becoming 'community') and potential of 'community' with practice theory would widen the approach and negate the narrowed down focus and attention to detail that a PhD requires. The negative side of this rigorous approach requires neglecting what has proved a popular, far-reaching and influential analysis of environmental actions.

Social Practice literatures have changed how thinking about agency and responsibility are done with respect to environmental effects. Recognising the contingent nature of many of our practices, social practice theory can refuse to ascribe responsibility for action purely to any individual or group of individuals. This is not inherently problematic, many writers beyond those implicated in Actor Network Theory, or non-representational geographies, for instance Massey (2004), have pointed out how responsibility is relational, embodied and implies extension, can be delegated, flow and extend through networks. Practices are always relational, yet, moving too far away from purely individual models of change and agency can be problematic.

Individuals do not have a complete array of options and choices open to them, and actions are always in some way determined by complex systems and infrastructures. Rational autonomous actors do not generate environmental effects, and thus interventions focused on behaviour, providing information, or even transforming beliefs can have little impact. But any theory heading towards an assumption that an individual does not, or cannot, make a decision, or that freedom in any meaningful sense does not exist, leads these theories to become politically problematic. This problem is often obscured by the subject matter, often relatively (seemingly) benign practices such as showering, kitchen habits, or commuting to work. For instance, currently there are no social practice analysis of activities offensive to the liberal academic mindset, or outside the

rule of law, such as paedophilia, online grooming, everyday sexism, or drink-driving.

The concept of the rule of law is instructive here, as it relies on responsibility for a crime residing in the locus on the individual, despite any mitigating factors taking into account during sentencing: upbringing, wider society, or contingent factors (such as bloodstream alcohol levels in a death by dangerous driving charge). Everyday, casual sexism in person and on Twitter, say, can be seen as a social practice, whereby those making on- and offline comments, jokes and non-cognisant remarks can be seen to be shaped by, as well as sustaining and reproducing a particular mindset, culture, set of socio-technical relations, actions and behaviours, in short 'practices'. Why practice theory has so far avoided more provocative social practices is unclear. Theories often pick the 'low hanging fruit' first, those clearer examples justifying their postulates, before going on to scale larger intellectual and societal challenges. Perhaps social practice theory shall go on to attempt a social practice of online grooming or paedophilia in the coming years.

These examples are chosen to be provocative, but seeing them in this light shows the folly that refusing to accept any responsibility (or agency) at an individual level has. These theories can be seen as attractive to academics and policy makers for whom it is unacceptable to see themselves as acting (or have any control in) unjust lifestyles or patterns of behaviours (say, flying to conferences as a practice). The increasing popularity of practice theory can be set against the backdrop of what Cloke (2002) points out as geographers difficulty 'living ethically and acting politically'.

For all these reasons, the engagement with social practice theory literatures stops here. Practice was originally preferred as the title for Chapter Five for many reasons, not least alliterative. The thesis is called the 'production, practice, and potential of community'. For the avoidance of doubt, the renamed title of Chapter Five removes 'practice', this is not a thesis focused on practice theory.

Adopting an analysis of social practice and collective action literatures would compromise this study as it stands. SMT is clearly

synergistic and useful for this study. There is no good reason why it could not be engaged with here, other than constraints of time and space, and the judgement taken early on the research than the area of study—specifically engaging with ‘community’—was to be the core concern of the thesis, and the thread of enquiry throughout. (As explained in the Research Questions, Section 1.2.1). Yet all three for the reasons outlined here shall be directly engaged with no further.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined ‘community’ in an ever-narrowing context. First, it outlined and explored the academic understanding and theorisation of ‘community’. This involved addressing the growing evolution and shaping these writings on ‘community’. This has also been unsettled through questioning core norms of ‘community’: namely the border and internal homogeneity. The argument then turned to examine how and why ‘community’ has come to be understood as a moral force for good, before asking the question of whether ‘community’ can be said to mean anything at all. This led to an introduction and exploration of ‘community’ functioning as phatic communication.

With this discussion in place, the chapter then presented how ‘community’ has been adopted in policy and governance and explored the backdrop to this. The exploration offered here is of great importance for understanding the influence of policies such as the CCF on the examples analysed as part of this study. The chapter then looked to explore the internal expectations lain at the door of ‘community’ by those who seek to practice it; this exploration is integral for any understanding of TTN’s specific understanding of ‘community’.

With the academic and practical background of ‘community’ in place, in what follows I build on and explore this more fully in the next chapters. Chapter Four builds to apply this theoretical background to PEDAL, TES, and TEU. In particular, I explore how and when the ‘community’ rhetoric

emerges in these examples from the top-down, horizontally, and from the bottom-up.



## Chapter 4: Governing Environmental Behaviours: The Production of 'Community' in the Transition Town Network

“Absolute community – myth – is not so much the total fusion of individuals, but the *will* of community: the desire to operate, through the power of myth, the communion that myth represents and that it represents as a communion or communication of wills.”

(Nancy, 1991: 57. Original emphasis)

'Community' – for Nancy – is both a condition of being and yet also a socially constructed myth. This chapter looks to the latter of these and explores how, and to what ends, 'community' has been constructed in three of Edinburgh's TTN groups and their associated initiatives. How has the production of 'community' been mythmaking of a political reality? This involves looking at the perceptions, or the will to construct 'community', and asking certain questions: Where does this come from? What conditions have facilitated its emergence? But also it looks to the building blocks – the on-the-ground building of 'community'.

Similar to this is Anderson's (1983) highly influential concept of the 'imagined community', although the scale of 'community' in the examples addressed here is much smaller than that of nation. Nevertheless Anderson draws attention not to the 'false' or illusory nature of 'community',<sup>93</sup> but rather to the fact that nations – and thus also 'communities' – are actively constructed through processes. Mitchell (2000) pushes Anderson's ideas further to state that: “The question is not what common imagination *exists*, but what common imagination is *forged*” (2000: 269; original emphasis). The purpose of this chapter then is to take up this challenge and to

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<sup>93</sup> “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined,” (Anderson, 1983: 6)

document, analyse, and assess the forging, or construction, of 'community' – the will to community.

This chapter first looks at the construction of 'community' as it has been envisioned from the top-down, or officially. Many have drawn attention to the way in which the UK in particular has seen 'community' adopted as an ideal in urban policy (Levitas, 2000; Rose, 2000; Imrie & Raco, 2003; Amin, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2005). Wallace particularly emphasises the *"one key area which 'community' is in fact explicitly politicised – individualised behaviour"* (2010: 814). This chapter takes up these arguments, and seeks to apply them to UK environmental policy. It describes the 'official' construction of 'community', as a means to govern individual environmental behaviours in the examples of this thesis, introduced in Chapter Two. It notes following others (cf. Bond, 2011) that this vision of 'community', or myth as Nancy puts it, has particular characteristics, explored below.

The first section of this chapter articulates these normative perceptions – 'community' as small scale, local, topographically bounded – in TES, TEU, and PEDAL, before going on to look at the particular 'official' construction of 'community'. This is done through particular funding conditions (particularly the Scottish government's Climate Challenge Fund), the way these 'community' schemes are branded, and the perception that 'community' is in some way needed, for certain people, or certain groups of people to achieve the aims set out for them. Finally, and most universally there is also the assumption that 'community' is effective – effective at governing individual's environmental behaviours.

This chapter then shifts tack and looks towards the perfect storm of conditions that had rendered the forms of 'community' found in Edinburgh's TTN groups. This is not only due to a top-down inspired 'community', but also a convergence of informal or horizontal factors. Particularly important here are the role of key individuals as facilitators, agents of 'community' construction and cohesion. Yet there is also a bottom-up, emergent aspect to these 'communities'. Crucial factors here include the role of external threats. If we can see the official construction of 'community' as that which is

fostered from the top-down, the informal construction of 'community' would be done horizontally, while the emergence of 'community' can be seen as arriving from the ground-up.

Given this backdrop, it makes sense to look more closely into where the (discourse of) 'community' enters PEDAL, TEU, and TES. This takes three broadly separate forms of construction: official, informal, and emergent.

#### 4.1 Official Production of 'Community'

The first place we can see evidence of the official construction of 'community', is in the will for it to be imposed or fostered from the top-down. This is seen at different levels, from those volunteering for TEU, PEDAL, or TES, to those who wish to initiate them and are influential in driving them forward, to those who – at government level – are involved with the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) as panel members, or senior civil servants involved with the administration and evaluation of this policy. In what follows, I will take evidence from all interviews carried out at each of these levels to show that 'community' has been deliberately fostered from the top-down, starting with those involved with the CCF. The CCF was "*set up to help communities combat climate change by reducing their carbon emissions*" (Scottish Government, 2011: 1). Although the central focus of the policy is carbon reduction, a key component on this was to achieve this through 'local communities'. The policy chosen to enact this is the CCF, where emissions reduction is carried out through 'community': the CCF is explained more fully in Section 2.3.5. As outlined above, this fits with wider shifts in UK governance, to achieving policy goals through the medium of 'community', and yet there may also have been other supplementary reasons for this.

The CCF had only three formal criteria for those who could apply to this funding scheme: the "*community should be at the heart of the decision making process*"; the project "*should lead to significant CO2 reductions*"; and

*“it should result in a positive legacy for your community”*.<sup>94</sup> Despite the central importance of ‘community’, the term was not tightly defined. As we have seen this is typical of the use of ‘community’. The term gestures towards some positive well-meant sense of locality, rather than anything firmly described and delimited. Yet it was in and through this ‘community’ that the carbon reduction targets were to be achieved.

A government commissioned study reviewing the first three years of the CCF concluded; *“that community projects are well-placed to deliver pro-environmental behaviour change”* (Scottish Government, 2011: 8). This was due to three reasons: their *“ability to tailor and personalise their messages and interventions to appeal to individual participants’ motivations”*; *“their position in the community as trusted entities that are seen to have the community’s interest at heart”*; and *“their ability to engage those who are ‘moderately interested’ in the environment and open to the idea of change, and spark them into action”* (ibid.)

There are several interesting aspects to this conclusion. As is typical, the word ‘community’ is used three times, to what seems like three apparently different ends (project, location, group). A key word in their reasons for their success is that these projects were ‘seen’ to act nobly. Again, like Warren & Birnie’s (2009) conclusion to the use of ‘community’ when applied to renewable energy schemes, the appearance is important here, rather than any actual specific denoted meaning.

In this way the Scottish Government, through CCF, seeks to govern the environmental behaviours of its citizens. CCF appeals to ‘individual motivations’ thus gaining widespread consent across major sectors of the population. This encourages inclusivity of environmental action, rather than just appealing to minority interest groups: the ‘usual suspects’.

#### **4.1.1 Funding Conditions**

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<sup>94</sup> CCF website: <http://ccf.keepscotlandbeautiful.org/> Accessed 28 Jan 2012

When speaking to those who sat on the CCF panel, those involved with creating the scheme and deciding which groups could apply for funding, or then receive it, were clearly more interested in telling me about the ‘community’ benefits, than my questions around the logistics or actual carbon reduction. One said:

*“The other main, actually the more important criteria, the second criteria is community leadership. So, its carbon reduction, through community action, that is led by the community, er - and these wider benefits, I think you know, that’s the background.” (CCF 1)<sup>95</sup>*

Where this came from is unclear, but there are a number of possible sources. I have already briefly outlined the background policy context, where ‘community’ is seen as an increasing site of governance, in the UK. The two parties who set this policy up were very keen that ‘community’ was to be at the core of it. That these parties were the SNP and the Green Party shows ‘government by community’ goes beyond either the *New Localism* of New Labour, or *Big Society* of the Conservatives, and Liberals. (See Section 2.3.5.) This could suggest that the ‘will of community’ (Nancy, 1991: 57) or the ‘will to govern’ (Li, 2007) by ‘community’ is more deeply embedded in UK politics, than at a party policy level. There are additional reasons why these parties (SNP and Greens) were so keen to use ‘communities’, rather than other institutions – local authorities or NGO’s (FOES, for instance) – or government agencies that may specialize in this (SNH). It is well known that SNP have long had misgivings about the strength of local authorities in the Scottish central belt, and the grip that the Labour party held on such places before the 2011 general election, particularly Glasgow (cf. Red Clydeside).<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> This quotation and most of those that follow are from the transcriptions of interviews. In this instance, the speaker was keen to be ‘off the record’, and so anonymity is preserved where necessary for ethical reasons.

<sup>96</sup> It is questionable whether such a thing as ‘Red Clydeside’ ever existed, and it certainly does not now. Yet influential SNP ‘blogs such as *Bella Caledonia* continues to take aim at a rhetoric of ‘Old Labour’ local authorities in the central belt, seen as centralised, anti-SNP, and politically consanguineous. For instance: <http://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2011/09/29/beyond-centralised-power/> (Accessed 23/11/12)

Off the record, it was put to me by senior CCF figures that something approaching profound distrust of these 'Old Labour' or 'statist' institutions may have resulted in the prominence that 'community' had. Those present at the meeting where the CCF policy was decided and begun said the minister responsible – Richard Lochhead – was keen to explicitly outline this. Another who was not at that meeting, nevertheless very involved stated:

*“Right from the very beginning of this project, apparently the minister has said, I want these to be community projects. He’s been absolutely adamant these are to be community projects, so I think they have been. I mean they’re not NGO projects, which has made a lot of the NGOs scream. WWF and Friends of the Earth could have done lots of really interesting projects, which would have been working with the community, not on. Right or wrong, I’m not sure, but that’s what the decision is.” (CS)*

'Community' was seen as beyond old class-based politics, empowering individuals, without relying on a large state, or even a state visible through local authorities. The emergence of the CCF then, and the central importance of 'community' therein, could also be seen as an attempt to govern by consensus. There is also an incidental quality to this official construction of 'community'. 'Community' fitted nicely for the SNP as *“the perfect example of devolution, things being done differently to, to relate to the, and deliver the aspirations of a political ruling group”* (CCF 1). It also fitted with the Green Party agenda of an almost anarchic, power from the ground-up. Again though, a will to localise runs through both the sources of the policy, and the nature of it. The closest I got to this view baldly stated by someone in power was:

*“They’re not signing up to a program, whether that’s a government program, or an NGO program, or a local authority program. And I think, you know, they are saying, that I particularly, I don’t know about*

*other places, but there's a strong perception in Scotland, particularly in the central belt, of municipal Scotland. You know, communities are done to by local authority, and the tradition is 'If something's no right, they should sort it out' [in a faux Glaswegian accent] not right, they should sort it. And this [the CCF] is turning it on its head, people are saying, for the first time with access to real resources, yes they've been invited to neighbourhood committees and panels and crap, but this is actually the first time they've said 'o'. Well go on then, do something, here's some money to do it with. Taking responsibility for and managing that." (CCF 2)*

This quote hints at another potential motivation for government to use 'community': that of projecting responsibility and agency onto local 'communities', and the blame too, if it doesn't work.

The desire to use 'community' goes beyond central government though. Other institutions involved in this study, such as Edinburgh University, spoke of recognising a shift in governing from diktat to consent: *"it's relatively intractable and relatively difficult in a dispersed, collegiate institution, where you don't have a command economy to tell people what to do"*. The realisation that EU must govern environmental behaviours by consent can be seen as mirroring that of government, albeit on a smaller scale. In both instances, 'community' has been the chosen means by which one can consensually alter environmental behaviours.

When quizzed, those involved with the CCF rejected the suggestion they could be anything other than 'good' for communities, and by inference Scotland, and the environment. One advisor stated passionately:

*"It's certainly not dumping responsibility in that sense, because it is very clearly people taking a, entering into this... [Shifts from forceful speech to reflective] I suppose from a different perspective, you could say implicitly there is some responsibility in that sense..." (CS)*

Agency and responsibility are projected onto local 'communities'. This may not be the intention, and could be a coincidence: whether unwanted or serendipity is open to question. This is similar to when Staeheli (2012: 2) argues that where *"there is considerable overlap in the language used by activists, service providers and the government, the normative values that underpin that language diverge."* For this thesis that language overlap can be seen in the word 'community', yet there is a divergence of values and meaning, critically this enables activists in no way to condone *"a diminution in government responsibilities"* (2012: 2). 'Community' in no way necessitates a withdrawal of state/government responsibilities for those volunteers for TTN. Yet, those from CCF do not necessarily share these underlying values, or what 'community' is assumed to imply for state responsibility for environmental behaviours.

Edinburgh University were open to fostering 'community' initiatives, for many reasons. They felt the real need to reduce energy costs, and were willing to 'try anything' to reduce demand. 'Community' programmes were cheap enough to be 'worth a punt'. Edinburgh University also felt the pinch of another top-down initiative, EU (European) regulation necessitated taking effective action on emissions reduction. Baldly expressed as *"the need to keep out of the courts"* (TEU 1), the effect that environmental legislation was having and projected to have. They also, fitting with the localism agenda, were keen to 'devolve' responsibility for gas and electricity to each department, school, and college. This came along and fitted hand-in-glove, with the desire to push local autonomy and responsibility in the TTN groups looked at here, and also the 'community' legislation of the CCF. If EU were going down that route anyway, the assumption was why not at least apply for money to get to where they were already heading, only faster?

The sense of deliberately inaugurating 'communities' in order to tackle emissions existed not just at the top level of governments and business. These high level aims can be seen within the groups they fund: governments' desires acting at a distance. Within the groups funded by CCF, they often saw their role as proleptically initiating (See Section 6.1) and



being the 'community' willed by such policies. One staff worker for TES summed up their job and the prime function of TES as:

*"I think its trying to establish, maybe communities?" and later, "I see it as creating communities for the future... It's developing communities, within the area. It is enabling, it's enabling community action, that's how I see it." (TES 3)*

Carbon Conversations helped achieve this, been seen as essentially:

*"Creating a community. The outcome of this is to convert people. To think about their carbon lives. So again, it is trying to create a community out of that. I suppose it is. Getting back to the common interest thing. You're question was, is this trying to really attract people that haven't got any interest in this to start with. You're saying are we creating a community out of... [trails off] We're trying to create a common interest." (TES 3)*

This shows that the aims of the CCF policy are not just found at the top level. They percolate down to the ground level, the level of those carrying out this work: funded from above – governments acting vicariously through 'community groups'. Even here there is heightened awareness, of the strategic value in creating 'community'. This may be towards certain ends,<sup>97</sup> nevertheless creating 'community' assumes central import. There may be different expectations as to what that 'community' is, or what performative quality it has on those within the 'community' – but 'community' as something utopian to aim for, something good, something worthy of effort and cultivation is systemic here.

These groups share similar aims to those of government policy (such as the CCF). Whether there is a causal relationship here, or a mutual co-evolving is unclear. But the role of the 'carrot' of funding is key. The attempt to create 'community' in a top-down sense runs wider than government or

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<sup>97</sup> 'converting people' was mentioned.

large institutions though. One volunteer mused on why institutions like Edinburgh University were so keen to adopt the ‘community’ approach, reeling off a list of top-down initiatives that had created the space for groups like TEU to grow: national government climate acts, the carrot of legislation, the stick of green targets, and nationwide target setting such as the 10:10 campaign.<sup>98</sup> Likewise, TTN initiatives were very keen to seed off other groups, and deliberately foster ‘community’ initiatives. We will return to this when looking at the ‘informal’ construction of ‘community’.

The way that ‘community’ has been officially been constructed ensures not just deliberate top-down construction. The role of the funding conditions, has ensured a particular vision of ‘community’ is fostered. The particular characteristics of the CCF, the internal dynamics within it influences ‘community’ on the ground, and looking at the production, practice, and potential of ‘community’ in carbon reduction in Scotland at this time is impossible without reference to it.

As explored in Chapter Two, the three TTN groups that ended up becoming the case studies for this project happened to have certain factors constant. Not perfectly controlled by design, but happenstance, (all TTN initiatives, all based in Edinburgh, all concerned with energy in some way) and certain factors set as variable (type of urban environment - one based in suburban Portobello (PEDAL), one city centre (TES), and one a city-wide network (TEU); a variety of expressions of ‘community’ in scale, density). One factor that came to be a constant, although it was not designed in the study set up was that the CCF in some way funded all three, often heavily. Many, if not all, ‘community’ initiatives appearing in Scotland at this time were linked to the CCF. TEU, TES, and PEDAL would not exist in the way they evolved without CCF funding. I asked an environmental consultant what difference, if any, there was in carrying out consultancy for a ‘community’ group, or specifically a TTN group, compared to other work (businesses, individuals, local authorities, etc.). *“Well all of those groups [PEDAL, TES, TEU] are - we think of them as Transition groups, yes. But probably primarily as CCF money groups.”* (EX 1)

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<sup>98</sup> Paraphrase of notes from research diary

This comment reflects both the impossibility of seeing such groups independent of their funding: due to the increased profile, scope and scale funding offers; and the constraints of funding conditions too. But also that the consultancy groups have been forced to drum up business from 'community' groups. Whereas before the money came direct from government, possibly through government agencies such as the Energy Savings Trust (EST), now these funds are diverted, via the CCF and 'community' groups, to these same environmental agencies. This vicarious flow of money - perhaps to where it would have ended up beforehand, has vastly increased the prominence of 'community' groups. The money ends up with Changeworks, flowing through 'community' groups such as TTN. Leaving TTN 'community' groups with the responsibility of having to 'correctly' spend it. The flow of money through TTN increases their agency and responsibility for spending. Expecting such responsibility from 'community' groups, often made up of volunteers, and often without experience of setting up charity status or bank accounts is problematic.

#### 4.1.2 Coalescence

CCF has variously influenced 'community' groups. It provides a carrot, around which groups can coalesce. It was questionable as to where these 'community' groups would emerge, but the quantity of money from CCF meant it very probable that 'community' would emerge. Groups formed coalitions, to secure funding, and the opportunities it provides, such as full-time staff. TEU,

*“was pretty informal until we made a formal submission to the Climate Challenge Fund. It was the opportunity afforded by the Climate Challenge Fund which gelled the group...the opportunity of being able to employ somebody, three people, full-time to carry out a proper scoping exercise, which was what gelled the group.” (TEU 2)*

In the case of TES, two separate projects operating in Morningside and Newington, united and named themselves TES explicitly as a means to achieve funding. The funding wasn't just a carrot though. I found evidence that personal connections between those on the funding panel and those interested in setting up these groups collaborated in getting their proposals, and even the aim of the project just right, to fit with the aims of the CCF, and its vision of 'community'. One panel member described the process:

*"We were sort of meeting, just talking through what the application might look like and ... looking at what XX [existing group] were doing, and he [environmental community activist] was, all the language of their mission statement, whatever it was, essentially it was rise up and change things, campaign for this and campaign for that. So XX [said person] and I were translating some of that into, sort of CCF language and XX [said group] language. Ok, so by that, by campaign to change such and such, you mean 'engage and explore the opportunities to?', 'O, ok, I suppose we could say that.' It was just the, so there was, they had a much stronger campaigning tradition, a tradition which is tempered with this community engagement and transition model, so it's quite interesting."* (CCF 1)

This 'tempering' seems to have occurred in every project studied here. 'Community'-type language is used to fit with funders' aims. It both mollifies the emergent energy for change alongside adopting such open-ended language so presenting the case for 'success' of the project is easier at a later date, reconciling both government and grassroots aims.

Likewise the university project was continually keen to point out to me how the framing of the TEU had to be done so the project couldn't be seen to benefit the university. It had to come from, and be seen to come from, the student and staff 'community', not from the institution itself. One of the members of staff of the university likened it to getting, *"students to see if we can gee up, articulate and formalise, and get them to articulate and formalise, requests that they're making of the institution"* (TEU 1). CCF

funding provided an imperative for the aims of the university to be articulated from a bottom-up perspective.

So, the coalescence around the CCF is within groups, between groups, and also between funders and the 'community' aims and language. This again demonstrates 'community' has a certain "*functional malleability*" (Walker et al., 2007: 64).

#### 4.1.3 CCF vision of 'Community'

These top-down processes have also led to the increased prominence of the TTN model as a key expression of what a 'community' group looks like. Social Science has a long history identifying 'community' as a polysemic term. However, the 'community' nature of these projects wasn't interpreted as totally open-ended. Rather it focused on a certain vision of 'community'. When I questioned the overly rural, reified nature of 'community' in the projects that had received funding<sup>99</sup>, one of the funding panel members told me:

*"One of the things we recognised is that the requirements for these to be community projects, in urban areas is much more difficult to define a community. Where people generally think of community, meaning community of place, I think. I don't think I'm being patronising here, but most people wouldn't start thinking about community of interest...[trails off]" (CS).*

Most of those 'communities' funded by the CCF were 'archetypal' or 'straw man' communities of place – territorially demarcated, topographically bound. Other, more imaginative, networked, or less reified expressions of 'community' were under-represented in those funded by the CCF. In practice 'community' for the CCF acted as a synonym for place, and the early round of CCF funding can be seen as place-based policy under another name. TEU can

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<sup>99</sup> CCF projects on Scottish Isles, and in the Highlands were over-represented, in population terms. Early prominent CCF funded projects included a one on Eigg, an island of 60 people. <http://ccf.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/page.aspx?id=61> (Accessed 23/11/12)

be seen as a product the university very consciously and deliberately cultivated. Such groups were designed with the aim of successfully applying to the CCF, knowing the CCF's desire to 'balance out' their successful bids away from the reified and rural. Urban 'communities' didn't receive funding to the same extent:

*"I don't know, I just think it's because they've found it difficult to demonstrate ['community'], I think. Probably the CCF's been a bit, maybe not... [trails off]" (CS)*

The need to be able to 'demonstrate' that the project is a 'community' one is part of the reason why this leads to reified, rural vision of 'community'. This is a vision of 'community' that can easily be described in a funding bid, and grasped by a panel member. It's far easier to have a topographical map, with a line round a piece of territory and then be able to say 'this is our community, or who we represent'. Topological representations of space and 'community' can be seen as less traditional, or not what has come to be seen as the norm, at least through CCF eyes. The need for each project to demonstrate that they are a 'community' project, then can lead to a certain vision of 'community' chosen and preferred. This form of 'cartographic anxiety' refers to the *"desire to corral complex nomad spatialities into coherent and mappable territorial configurations"* (Painter, 2008: 356).

Not only did the vision tend towards 'community' of place, but also the TTN view of 'community' was favoured. TEU, TES, and PEDAL all had some sort of coherent identity prior to adopting the TTN principles and branding (either an anti-supermarket protest group (PEDAL), a student society (TEU), or an energy efficiency pressure group (EESSE/TES)). One of these reasons was explicitly the draw of a high quantity of funding. Here's what the figurehead of one group that joined with a Transition initiative in the same area prior to applying for funding:

*"The concept of transition came along, and we said we're ostensibly doing the same stuff - we'll use the name Transition, we'll adopt the*

*branding. They've got loads of money, they're a much bigger group."*  
(TES 4).

This does not suggest a change in principles, or emphasis. It was recognised though that TTN was becoming a known brand, one that fitted the CCF aims of 'community' projects, being locally rooted, not relying on a local authority or NGO's. The TTN view of 'community' fitted snugly with the CCF's, and both emerged around the same time.<sup>100</sup> Although some of the collaboration in developing funding plans between the CCF panel and the emergent groups before funding decision were made suggests that some compromise in principles or focus may have occurred. Certainly a change in language used or presentation ('demonstration') by projects took place.

TTN came to be better funded in Scotland, even more so than the originating 'homelands of Transition' - the small market towns of South-West England where it emerged. A representative from the Transition 'hub' in Totnes:

*"This is a crazy situation where Transition Support Scotland is better financed than Transition Network. I mean, glorious, glorious that it was. And I'd be lying if I said there wasn't a tinge of jealousy."* (TN)

CCF representatives saw TTN as trusted to have the same vision of 'community' that the CCF wished to promote; rural, reified, cartographic:

*"There's several different models seem to be emerging, and one is the Transition model. So, in the Transition, the Transition comes through with being a Transition project, generally we'll [funding panel] say 'yeah', it looks fine. And unless there's something dubious about it, or ridiculously over-ambitious or whatever, we'll fund it."* (CCF 2).

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<sup>100</sup> CCF started in 2008. Ben Brangwyn's speaking tour of Scotland – often referred to as the start point/year zero of Transition in Scotland was in November & December 2007.

The presumption seemed to be that with TTN proposals, it was less a case of 'why?' fund it, than 'why not?'

This was known beyond the funding panel and a shift went on in certain groups to adopt TTN branding in order to achieve funding. Existing TTN groups also slightly altered their aims in order to achieve funding. Both the pervasiveness of the TTN brand and the lure of funding bringing these groups into the centre - more alike each other. CCF had a normalising influence on these groups.

Part of this internal shifting within TTN groups can be seen in the way 'community' was built through food initiatives, to a focus on what volunteers often saw as more abstract and technical concerns like energy. These didn't require regular meetings, or 'community spirit' to achieve, but were often technologically focused. 'Community' became a vehicle for individual change, rather than a shift away from individualism towards a more communal approach. One gardener with a TTN group bemoaned the sidelining of their passion – food resilience – towards what they saw as the groups' new focus on energy:

*"You've seen the food projects for example. The gardening projects. There is money, but it's not with the energy ones that's the big money. That's the CCF money. That's big. The school gardening projects they don't have that much money."* (TES 7)

One TES volunteer reflected on their priorities shifting from food projects, like Guerrilla Gardening or developing a 'community orchard', to energy projects – promoting energy efficiency and more technological solutions: *"I ended up doing more of the energy, because with the Climate Challenge Fund..."* (TES 7)

Each time the CCF is blamed for addressing what were seen as more abstract concerns (energy) ahead of the more tangible concerns (food, gardening). As CCF valued the quantitative Carbon savings, the lesser savings from food projects were sidelined, before going for the 'big wins', of



energy. In general the supplementary benefits were looked over in favour of what could be counted.<sup>101</sup>

#### 4.1.4 Effective 'Community'

The final aspect of officially constructed 'community' to mention here refers to the belief that 'community' is an effective means of shifting carbon behaviours and practices. This belief that 'community' is the thing that matters, the thing that's missing, and needed, then means that policies like the CCF, and their adoption hold greater sway.

There was amongst most of the people spoken to for this study an assumption that 'community', was not only the natural order of things, but also – where lacking – a reason for whatever ills perceived in any given area or section of society. One volunteer said that:

*“the underlying values of it [TTN's vision of 'community'] are very potent, within certain groups of people, but they are probably universal. You know, this need for community that has been eroded in the world, by modern capitalist society, there's basically no such thing as community - just a sea of individuals, so by focusing on that, it's a very powerful thing.”* (TES 6)

'Community' wasn't just a surface thing; it reached the parts others failed to, so to speak. This was the *“strength of community”* (CCF 1). 'Community' dug deeper. *“[R]unning a few carbon reduction workshops doesn't cut it”* wanting 'real community'. There was throughout a yearning, for some normative vision of a yet-to-be or has-been temporally displaced 'community'.

TES had digested the influential *Weathercocks and Signposts* report – which moves away from product marketing-based strategies for behaviour change, towards internal, intrinsic motivators, such as 'community' (Crompton, 2008). WWF produced *Weathercocks and Signposts* to help

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<sup>101</sup> Although a common theme in these projects was the use of behaviour pledges to justify carbon savings.

groups make effective actions and campaigns when raising awareness on environmental issues. TES then used this to claim a focus on 'community' was the only effective, long-lasting approach to addressing environmental behaviours. Without this - the critique went - solutions were mere technological fixes, or ascribing responsibility to some out-of-sight authorities. These solutions may have been effective in the short term, but were called 'extrinsic'; 'community' rather was an 'intrinsic' motivator, not a surface, individualistic, short-term thing.

It was "*motivating to act as a community*" (TEU 3), due to "*peer pressure*" (TEU 3). Often I was asked to "*imagine what we can do if we can get them to act as a community* (PEDAL 2)". A common theme was the overcoming of individual desires. It "*empowers you more*" as "*there's nothing worse than feeling alone with a problem*" (TSS 2). Another volunteer expressed his frustration at working on the "*too slow*" (TES 2) individual level, and expressed a desire for a critical mass. A phrase I often heard was that 'community' was a "*hearts and minds thing*" (TEU 6). Another stated the 'community' approach was actually slower, but it was more effective, whereas being part of 'community' was empowering.

'Community' was seen as adopting an inclusive approach and was often a reason for this. It was both inclusive in the acceptance of its effectiveness: "*everyone knows it's a way of potentially reaching more people, and [tapping into] local knowledge too*" (TN). Yet, also inclusive due to the number of factors it draws together to address. Amongst those mentioned were: health, happiness, employment, engagement, climate change, peak oil. Depending on the definition of 'community' it was also seen as welcoming diversity: "*If it's a local community - a street community - it's not just the usual suspects.*" (CCF 2).

Whether these claims are true or not is almost irrelevant here. That there was such a wide spread faith in the potential for 'community', is enough for it to be performatively adopted as a key way to reduce environmental impact. Both from governance level actors, and also bottom-up activists as something to go along with.

One local councillor rejected what he saw as the TTN perspective of ‘community’ as altruistic. It was he claimed hedonistic, but that we still have a natural urge to join together because it is effective and worthwhile. “*We can’t get the things we want from acting as an individual*” (Porty 1). Yet there remains the perception of a need for ‘community’, which was a common theme also.

## 4.2 Informal ‘Community’

Section 4.2 looks at the ways in which ‘community’ was informally developed within PEDAL, TES, and TEU. It first looks to one of their key techniques in forming this ‘community’: facilitation (Section 4.2.1). Before looking at the manner in which this facilitation is carried out mainly by what are termed ‘influential individuals’ (Section 4.2.2). But crucially Section 4.2.3 shows, just as above in section 4.1, an underlying normative belief in the power of ‘community’ was all-persuasive. It is this belief that makes ‘community’ so sought after. It is explored below.

### 4.2.1 The Role of Facilitation in the Development of ‘Community’

In a different way to the top-down deliberate construction of ‘community’, the TTN ethos, alongside those who would identify as insiders, predominately spoke of ‘community’ as not something that could be instigated from above. Nor either something that ‘just happened’, but something that one could help cultivate, or set certain conditions to encourage its growth. TTN groups see themselves as facilitators of ‘community’.

One volunteer saw her role as cultivating rather than creating ‘community’, differently nuanced to the ‘official’ construction described above:

*“In the Royal Ed. community gardens there. It’s developing communities, within the area. Is it enabling. It’s enabling community action. That’s how I see it. Although I think the Transition movement itself is more about, is about community. In my short time in TES, it’s, maybe it’s because I’m working, you know, and I’m working to enable community?” (TES 7)*

This focus on enabling, rather than provoking or instigating ‘community’ was prevalent amongst volunteers and staff workers. ‘Community’ was something that would not occur by itself, but rather needed to be encouraged and facilitated:

*“It’s up to us. I’m more for targeting people who need targeting. Cos otherwise I think what’s the point. Other than just re-enforcing just what some people believe. It would be like a conference I suppose... Maybe it is like a conference? Whereas I think it is important to be able to create community. From nothing. And make people realise that there are common interests, which I hope I did.” (TES 7)*

One of the those who did instigate the ‘community’ group rejected the notion that (s)he, or any one policy (CCF) were behind the rise of this group, and that this was a major case for their attractiveness:

*“I think because the kind of group we are, we’re very much into participatory approaches and training and community awareness as well. Quite a lot of people sympathise with what we do. So that’s probably why we’re still attracting people.” (TES 6)*

When pressed to describe her role, typical of others I spoke to, she focused on the inclusive nature of her role, identifying as a facilitator:

*“GA: How would you describe your role?”*

*TES 6: I think probably a facilitator. Somebody that is there in the background."*

This view differs from others who said the role of key figures like this person was and is crucial to the informal construction of 'community'. This is in common with the way many others described their role and fits with TTN principles. Ben Brangwyn, co-founder of the Transition Network described his role:

*"I'm thinking about the idea of ecological corridors. Where you have one ecosystem island, and another ecosystem island, and if you can put like a sort of biodiversity corridor between the two, then the richness expands tremendously. Massively, doesn't it? Between both. And maybe I was being a little bit of a ... I don't know, a ...*

*GA: A wildlife conduit?*

*BB: a wildlife conduit."*

Those involved in TTN often refer back to ecological metaphors to describe what is happening in the social realm. What is being described here then is the role of Transition Network, and the individuals involved in TTN themselves as a "*biodiversity corridor*", in connecting different TTN groups, and facilitating the spread of ideas, energy and inspiration between them. The concept of facilitation fits with the TTN principles, but it is also seen in their biography (Sections 2.2.1 and 2.3).

In Scotland, much of this facilitation has come from Transition Support Scotland (TSS). TSS exists to facilitate and promote the growth of TTN initiatives in Scotland. Again funded by the CCF<sup>102</sup>, although not one of the groups looked at directly by this study, it has been involved in each group to a significant degree (TEU less so). As such, interviews and other research were carried out with present and past TSS employees and volunteers too. There was also a desire to get groups doing "Transition type

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<sup>102</sup> Although not a 'community' like any other funded by the CCF – that this got funded highlights the close relationship between the CCF and TSS, and the faith CCF shown in the TTN model of 'community' action.

things' to take the TTN branding, and come under the TSS banner. TSS can also be seen as a facilitator.

This informal facilitation does not just come from the bottom-up though. One member of the CCF panel talked of their role as being something similar, of facilitating the conditions by which 'communities' can emerge:

*"People are saying, yeah, we are exploring what does this mean and I think that's really quite exciting. It's creating; it's opening up this space for stuff to happen. That wouldn't otherwise happen, because it's not, it's not, yes the money's part of it, but it's also sort of the opportunity of, not quite recognition, but sort of an impetus to do something. I was opening that up, it doesn't, I mean people can do stuff themselves to take responsibility doing it rather than just lobbying the council to change something or whatever."* (CCF 1).

When reflecting on the CCF policy one of the advantages had been the enabling, facilitating of a space where these groups could experiment with the notion of 'community', in a way they had not before:

*"I think what I am seeing though, is that this funding has created a space for organizations or groups of people, who are trying to do stuff, who are trying to do good stuff, to broaden the way they thought about community, or the way they thought about doing good stuff, was actually, yes, we could engage with more people around us in this place. And it's not just about the school projects, the project with the school, or our local food or it's actually, so I think it's. It is opening up, creating the space for people to actually do some projects, and actually explore what it does mean to work with community."* (CCF 1)

Later this panel member talked of getting the "community to rise up" (CCF 1). In this sense the CCF has opened up an opportunity for groups to take advantage of. In a similar way, someone involved with the TEU project,

spoke of their desire to enable 'community' action of the students. In these examples facilitation combines both top-down creating the space for something to happen, and bottom-up coalescence to fill that space. This shows the contingency of both the government policy, and the take-off of TTN as a concept in Scotland. Both enabling, facilitating the rise of these groups.

#### 4.2.2 Influential Individuals

After coding the transcribed interviews, research diary notes and external secondary material, by far the largest code referring to how 'community' was constructed 'informally', or horizontally, was that of 'influential individuals'. By this it was meant the way that certain individuals, by reasons of their persuasive charisma, or dynamic energy, were the driving force behind the construction of these groups (DEFRA, 2009). Despite the official attempts at constructing 'community' described above, without these individuals<sup>103</sup> it is questionable whether 'Transition' and 'community' would have appeared so central in the governing of environmental behaviours in Edinburgh. Governing behaviours for CCF; awareness raising for TTN. Certainly TES, PEDAL, and TEU would not have developed as they have done. The qualities that these individuals have are most importantly networking; energy; being driven, even at cost of appearing pushy; and having a real charisma.

The first key quality is their ability to network. They can build coalitions and spot potentially fruitful collaborations. Ahead of TES achieving its funding success it was positioning itself well as the umbrella for other groups in the area.

*"So there was 10 of us and one of the people was XXXX, who's also in TES. She's the kind of person who just goes to everything, she knows what's going on. She's really good at networking. She I think said, well,*

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<sup>103</sup> Perhaps not these specific individuals, but certainly not without someone fulfilling this role.

*there's actually a group in Morningside, a Transition group, who have an energy group too. And I was like, well, we're both in South Edinburgh, we're both doing work on energy, why don't we link up?"* (TES 2).

These two groups were then together under TTN branding. Of central importance in this was the ability of key individuals to make links between groups and to other key individuals. TES 4 was elsewhere described as a *"very good networker – incredibly networked"*. All of these individuals exhibit these qualities to some extent. They also all are characterised by a high work rate, with seemingly vast reserves of energy.

*"I know XXXX here has done quite a lot of that with different groups. He's very vocal. He really is man. He was up here yesterday – just like 'arr!' just like –o, my god – you're like XXXX [another influential individual] on crack. He's really nice, you know. He's got lots of time for people. But he's great, he's got a really nice manner, he's really. He's got so much energy, you know."* (TES 2).

These Influential Individuals recognised something of themselves in the definition I put to one of them as having lots of energy: *"Yeah, I've always been someone like that"* (TES 6). A characteristic of their energy though is in the directed, focused nature of the vision they have, they are forward looking: *"he's very innovative. And he's proactive, has been chasing opportunities"* (TEU II).

II's were driven by the rolling out of 'Transition', again recognising this quality in themselves: *"I think, to be honest. Of everyone in the group in PEDAL, I was the probably the most aware of Transition as developing as a movement"* (TSS II).

Influential Individuals used their network of connections to bring people on board. Often it was explained to me that people had 'joined' these 'Transition communities', due to being asked, or inspired by, one of these key individuals. A side effect though of their sheer energy and drive, is the



potential to also alienate those who don't share their vision.<sup>104</sup> One key figure was described as:

*"probably the main driver, but just cos she manages to annoy a lot of people, but it manages to get things done...I've to be careful what I say on tape, but she manages to rub people up the wrong way. Quiet a lot of the time...But she's got the ability. She's still here and stuff has changed. She got this Transition initiative off the ground."* (TES 3).

Someone, not connected with that project, but otherwise well plugged in to the environmental 'community' scene recognised their importance: *"yeah, (s)he's got a force"* (EX 1).

There was evidence these key individuals recognised this divisive nature these strong personalities may have, recognising that *"yeah, people got pissed off with me"* (TES 6). Another was always the *"wise guy in the corner"* (TEU II). Off the record, others – particularly those who had been part of these groups but since left – expressed similar sentiments, often more strongly. Of those who left, it was mentioned that this *'Marmite'* nature of the key figures was a major contributory reason to their 'defection'. One implicitly recognised this divisive potential when praising the solidarity and longevity of the 'core' of their initiative: *"we've lost very few members who didn't necessarily share my particular enthusiasm"* (TES 6).

Part of the reason why these key individuals are crucial for the development of these emergent 'communities', and yet also turn some people off, is they come to be seen as synonymous with the 'community' group they spearhead. PEDAL was described as being *"one key player"* (PEDAL 5). They may be prickly, yet they seem to be all-or-nothing individuals, death-or-glory types. They are *"real champions"*, who *"live by example"*, acting as *"grit in the oyster"* (CCF 1).

One local councillor outlined how these qualities didn't just belong to one or two individuals. *"Everybody within the board is quite a strong*

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<sup>104</sup> In an early iteration of this code, these people were known as 'Marmites', due to the 'love 'em or hate 'em' perception of Marmite in the UK.

*character. Some express themselves and some are more comfortable with conflict than others. But everyone is quite strong with their viewpoints.*" (Porty 1). These chime with my experience of being with such groups, often those who belonged there were idealistic, and had certain opinions. It is understandable then that the key figure in each TTN group looked at here was either the meta-example of this, or just had to be such a strong character in order to focus such a group of wilful participants.

A key quality is that these Influential Individuals were well resourced. One of these resources being time: *"it's like anybody who's willing to start something up. You know you're willing to put in a certain amount [of time.]"* (TES 3). In this they fit with the kind of 'middle-class activism' described by Hastings & Matthews (2011a, 2011b), Matthews & Hastings (2012a, 2012b), but also notions of high 'community capacity' (Middlemiss & Parrish, 2010)

TTN's prominence in more affluent neighbourhoods of Edinburgh were put down to a prevalence of those who had lots of free time required setting up such a group:

*"I think another thing that we found in our groups, it tended to be quite unbalanced in each group, it was either, older people like me, or students and young people. Because, you know, young... They're the people who have time."* (TES 6).

So these key figures are not perhaps all that different from the others in the group – but perhaps have more of the qualities that the others have – opinions, strength of conviction, and time. They are also quite charismatic individuals, and can often be looked up to by those in the group. One described being inspired by the II's *"big plan"*, and his enthusiasm: *"he'll tell you all about it, he'll never stop", "he does do it in a chaotic way, but he's certainly the driving force."* (TEU 4).

Often those I spoke to would talk at length about the role one certain person had played to make such a venture possible. I had asked why TES

had taken off in a very middle-class part of Edinburgh (Morningside). Class was denied as a factor, but rather:

*“Then we come back to the leader and charisma I think... Because she’s a very – the person who runs X [another TTN group – not studied here] – lovely person, but I think she’s a person you either warm to or not. Also, she’s an older person, which sadly, suggests for some people, if you’re older you’re slightly weaker. Possibly. Unless you are a big figure. If you are sort of middle aged, and driven and you know,... So, there’s that subjective thing I think. So that might be part of the - not problem – but the issue why it hasn’t taken off.” (TES 2).*

This fits with Seyfang’s (2009b) survey of TTN UK-wide. But what about the difference with the key individual in TES I asked?

*“She’s very driven, she’s an intellect, she works at the university and all of this. And she has a network before she already started Transition Edinburgh South. Of friends and those with similar interests.*

*GA: To what extent would it have been possible without her?*

*TES 2: Well that’s interesting. Again, because I’m new on the scene, it’s hard to say. Well, new on the scene – 6 months. You know, I don’t think it would have happened. Well, if it would have happened it wouldn’t of happened with such gusto. I think there would just have been little isolated work... She’s driven and she’s an absolute hard worker. She works day and night, God knows how she rests.” (TES 2).*

When I asked if this necessity of a key figurehead, or leader, was a contradiction with TTN’s model – the shift in language turns to naming these people as the key facilitator - a much more acceptable term, as outlined above. One of these ‘Influential Individuals’ rejected the notion that there was any key individual, yet then straight away mentions other key figures:

*"I don't know if there's a key figure. I think there's ... we don't particularly want key figures, that's not the way we operate. I think, you know, there's quite a lot of people that are developing their interests in lots of different ways in our group. For instance, XXXX is a very good networker. And she's very, the kind of, the community garden really was an opportunity that she got going. It started off very small actually. XXXX phoned me up..." (TES 6).*

TTN much prefer talk of a flat hierarchy:

*"I think I'm involved and I have my finger in many different pies, but I don't think we operate – we're not an organisation that is interested in somebody to govern or somebody to direct other people. I think what we want to do is give everybody the opportunity to develop themselves, their talents in the group." (TES 6).*

This isn't just humility or false modesty, the concept of a leader is certainly one they would reject – it doesn't fit with TTN philosophy, as Eva explained to me:

*"So, it's only this year that I've seen that group, ha, well I was going calling them leaders, and I put out a call to see whether anybody would like to come along for a day for leaders of transition groups. And I had no responses to it. Not one. It's very unusual, and then I changed it to dogsbodies, and got a lot of response! Because that's how people felt. You know, they don't see themselves as leaders, they see themselves as the people who are going to do everything and who won't let their group fail... and so, they'll pick up the pieces or they'll pick up the slack, when it looks like that meeting just won't happen, they'll make sure it does, so it looks like job's not going to get done, they'll be the ones who do it in the end, and so that's a fairly recent thing." (TSS II).*

Influential Individuals dislike the name leader, and yet it seems these types of people are crucial for the movement. But this quote also highlights that whatever name is given to these characters – leaders, facilitators, dogsbodies – the success or otherwise of these groups relies on these well resourced key individuals: resourced with motivation, energy, time, charisma and networks and the ability to exploit them.

#### 4.2.3 Normative Horizontal Creation of ‘Community’

It must also be mentioned here that when ‘community’ has been deliberately constructed horizontally, or informally, it is not just the techniques (facilitation) or key resources (these influential individuals) that were required. There was also in PEDAL, TES, and TEU, as when ‘community’ was constructed ‘officially’, an underlying belief in ‘community’. This belief involved a double movement. First, normative perceptions as to what ‘community’ is/are. And secondly, this vision has then been sought after and attempted to be constructed.

More will be said as to what exactly is meant or practiced when ‘community’ was invoked in Chapter Five, but here it is mentioned as it impinges on why these Influential Individuals are motivated to do the work they do, and also why they employ facilitation techniques. Broadly, ‘community’ by Influential Individuals and key TTN actors is the ‘community of place’ straw man of Section 3.1.3. (See Section 5.2.2)

This belief was clearly evident from those attempting to create ‘community’ horizontally. However whether this is entirely informal, or just the favoured view that is chosen and the fostered from above is unclear. It is unclear whether this was deliberate, or coincidental; I would argue it is at least symbiotic. These ideas of ‘community’ are clearly promulgated from above (or though funding allowed to spread) and then rendered manifest from below. The CCF examples that succeed (at least in securing funding) had commonly held belief in certain notions of ‘community’ as faith in its effective possibilities. There is no doubt that the remarkable synergy

between both the CCF and the TTN vision of 'community' has been powerfully serendipitous for both. The funders looked for this same vision of 'community' as TTN:

*“Almost all of the projects [that received funding] have been communities of place. I’m not sure if we’ve ever articulated this, but it’s implicit that it’s always been when we would look for that community group, that was leading it, to demonstrate. No, actually I think it’s implicit, rather than explicit, that we’re looking for them to show how they’re connecting to community, so... location. In a community of place. So, if it’s a Transition group, we’ll be looking to see, have they actually got any support? Have they got community council involved? Is the mothers and toddlers group involved? The traders association involved? We’re looking for evidence that there is community leadership in the sense that is this truly led by the community, it’s not a front for the local authority to try and develop a save, a sustainable waste project or something. Which sometimes has happened. cos it’s really community led. It’s not just been prompted or promoted by the council. Community, how they’re demonstrating real community engagement? And those, so yes, that is where the diversity would come from, erm, and I think, that’s implicit, if they aren’t... I think it would be obvious if they weren’t showing engagement with wider community. So, that’s where the diversity bit would come in.” (CS).*

This then commonly held normative belief that led to certain types of 'community' construction, where 'community' as seen to be firmly place-bound. This can be seen in the TTN practice of naming their cells after the place/territory where they 'belong'. In urban environments they retain this notion by operating at the neighbourhood scale. For SOSO, the acting out of this faith in 'community' of place (bounded, topographical and neo-Euclidean) can be seen in their SOSO project, and the central importance of 'community of place/geography' therein:

*“Well, with the energy project, just by the nature of the project, there was a conscious decision at the start to focus on street area. Because we just thought, well it [‘community’] needs to be geographical.” (CS).*

There were many different aims noted for using the street as the definition of the ‘community’, among them peer-pressure, but these were seen as being more effective when ‘community’ is normatively presumed to operate at street level:

*“So, through the energy project what we’re trying to do is create this community of the street. To say, actually at a street level, it’s very demotivating trying to act on an individual level. It’s like, why should I pay to get double-glazing. Why should I change all my lightbulbs, when, ok, it’s going to save me money, but actually I don’t care all that much about saving money? And anyway there’s going to be one coal mine in China opening that’s going to dwarf what I can do. But if you can say, actually everyone on this street is up for this. We’ve spoke to all your neighbours and there’s about a hundred people on the street up for making some kind of change. Actually your neighbour upstairs, you’ve thought about draft proofing, well your neighbour has done draft proofing and the guy across the road has installed this double-glazing, maybe you could go and meet up with him – or maybe we could have an evening. So, it’s community in a couple of senses. It’s motivating acting as a community, you’re not just an individual, trying to do these things by yourself, but your neighbours are doing it too, so it’s also creating social norms.” (TES 2).*

The reason given for this later was explicitly due to the task in hand:

*“Well, community means a lot of different things, doesn’t it? To open that out... How I’ve explained it before is communities of interest, and communities of place. TES is a community of interest and the community in Woodburn Terrace is a community of place. And they’re*

*very different types of community. But I think, what you need for certain types of actual practical, changes sustainability related changes, you need communities of place.” (TES 2).*

Although they were aware that there were different framings of ‘community’, and multiple uses – the best, most effective one was a ‘community of place’; this was also the vision they sought to construct.

### **4.3 Emergent ‘Community’**

The third way in which ‘community’ has been constructed – both as a discourse and tangibly produced – is from the bottom-up. ‘Community’ was to ‘rise up’ to take control of its own future. Asking where this rising up emerged from and why it happened in certain places and not others, a similar story was told by those involved in the groups: *“It was amazing, it really took off. I think we probably just were in the right area – I don’t know why it really took off.” (TES 5).* After some discussion about what that ‘right area’ would mean - perhaps keen to ward off suggests of it being a class issue with the area (Morningside – well known as the stereotype of middle class in Scotland), one interviewee settled on the people, local residents:

*“I mean I think, cos I’m just trying to think about our members... it’s a combination of kind of professional people, with an interest in environmental issues... They’ve got skills, some of them, they’ve got knowledge, they’ve got concern about the environment and the need to be active.” (TES 4).*

Yet there was an assumption that the untapped resources were plentiful uniformly across Edinburgh, and they just had to be unleashed:

*“You know people live in these houses and stay on their own and don’t meet their neighbours, and yet when we went along the street, there was amazing resources in the street. My next door neighbour was*



*working on the tidal wave up on the Pentland Firth and XXXX is going to make Glasgow sustainable, you know. There was a guy who worked in the oil industry that is really interested in sustainability and there's neighbours who have really interesting skills and interests and there's a richness in the communities that if we tap into we can do a lot of things with people if we get them going." (TES 4).*

The assumption was that these kinds of people would live in every neighbourhood in Edinburgh. If only they would tap into the resources on their doorsteps, TTN and 'community' would 'emerge'. This attitude wasn't just seen in the examples in Edinburgh but was mentioned key TTN figures I spoke to in Transition Totnes too:

*"the other thing that comes across, in a lot of places, is that whole idea of not needing to parachute in an expert from somewhere else. I mean I've been absolutely staggered by the level of expertise that, I've encountered in rooms of transition groups. I was in Lewes, and we were talking about local currency, We just went round the room, saying who we are and there were two university economics lecturers, there was somebody who had been involved in high finance, there was somebody else who had been involved in small credit schemes in Africa. It's like holy shit, you couldn't have got this group of people together if you tried, and again, and again, and again, you see that. Let's get around local expertise in using local building materials, in low impact in low energy housing. There's so many people who've been experimenting for years." (TN).*

That these sorts of people are found by these 'community' initiatives does suggest an informal, if not emergent, quality to recruitment populating these groups. Yet the uneven distribution of such well-resourced people (resourced with time, skills, motivation) was not acknowledged, and could provide a clue as to why TES has more presence in certain affluent

neighbourhoods of Edinburgh's Southside (Newington, Morningside, Grange) and not others (Oxgangs, or Wester Hailes).

The *Mapping the Big Society* report (Mohan, 2011) suggests a clustering of such people, described as a 'civic core', which are likely to volunteer in Third Sector Organisations: such as the groups looked at here. It also described the types of people more likely to volunteer. These were female, aged 45-60, educated to at least degree level, with a professional career. This matches incredibly closely to what Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012) found in their nationwide survey of TTN groups, and implies a high degree of *individual capacity* also (Middlemiss, 2009). These also map on well to volunteers for TES, TEU, and PEDAL. Perhaps 'community' groups such as these are more likely to emerge in areas which populate the 'civic core'? It would certainly seem to be a contributing factor alongside the official and informal conditions described above.

There are some examples of how this emergence from below of 'community' occurs. This first is in the way it is acquired rather than sought. Here 'community' is something that sneaks up on you, rather than the object of focus. 'Community' here is natural, unconscious even. The bottom-up ethos attracts others to the movement, it was often pointed out to me that:

*"Because we're saying what do people, what do you want to do? We're working with the community." (PEDAL 4)*

For one volunteer it was a matter of happenstance, combined with a grassroots ethos that he found attractive:

*"I'm a very bored PhD student. And I learned about TES and it looked really nice so I started joining. And I liked the dynamics. So, that's why. But, I haven't made a list of 10 interesting tree hugger groups in the area that are making – sort of – money so I haven't done that. So, that all came up and I was very happy to join. And now what is special about it, at the end of the day it is still a grassroots organisation and I like that very much." (TES 9).*

Likewise for the TEU initiative too, those at their events would often cite that it was 'student-led' as a reason for their enthusiasm for the project.

#### 4.3.1 External Threat

Part of the reason why the 'community' emerges in a particular place and in specific circumstances could be due to the pressure from some sort of outside source, which then draws the group together into a cohesive 'community'. 'Community' then is what is coalescing around a specific event,<sup>105</sup> rather than top-down coalition around a funding bid, or opportunity. Rather this is responding to specific, tangible demands or threats.

An example of this is the 'community' group that eventually morphed into PEDAL. They started as an anti-supermarket protest group in response to plans for a superstore<sup>106</sup> to be built in Portobello. 'Porty' as it is known locally, has long seen itself as separate from central Edinburgh<sup>107</sup> and is proud of its high street. One of the prime motivations in the successful campaign to refuse planning permission to the developers was the desire to save the high street. One local councillor told me:

*"The reason why we resisted the superstore so much is because we wanted to use the High Street shops, where you can walk to them. So, it wasn't just from something idealistic, it was from something of benefit to us." (PEDAL 5).*

The emergence of 'community' here was not something fluffy, idealistic and unswervingly positive - altruistic even. But rather emerges from a selfish or idealistic desire to club together to respond to an external threat. Some of

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<sup>105</sup> Social Movements Literature talks of the importance of an 'event' that provokes community response.

<sup>106</sup> Tesco was rumoured, although the name of the company was never officially declared.

<sup>107</sup> Officially incorporated into the City of Edinburgh in 1896, but with a longer history, this date still lives in folk memory in the town/neighbourhood/suburb.

these threats mentioned to me were the credit crunch and peak oil. Often those really involved with groups took on an almost apocalyptic, urgent tone:

*"in terms of peak oil potentially happening as we speak. Erm, and you know, and the potential subsequent world collapse of the world economy."* (TES 4).

In this way 'community' responds to (perceived) threats and is practical and down to earth:

*"I mean this is pragmatic, and as I said and it's a grassroots initiative."* (TES 6).

The groups showed that they were aware of this factor. Meaning a possibility of creating or exaggerating claims of threats, in order to cultivate the right conditions for 'community' to emerge:

*"It's survival. For those that choose to think that we are in a survival situation, there is a threat. Those that choose to think that there is a threat, they will transition. Those that don't, that think well somebody else can look after it, or it's not going to happen in my lifetime, will carry on driving their 4x4's, etc. Or that think they just can't deal with the hippies. You know, there's this sort of agenda, isn't there. They can't be bothered, or they like their lifestyle."* (TES 8).

#### **4.3.2 Coloniser of Other Groups**

The TTN brand has much potential to increase its profile. This statement is based partly on TTN's potential to continue their trajectory, often – though not exclusively – acting as a coloniser of other existing groups. This is fleshed out below with examples from TES, Edinburgh University's People

and Planet student society – a precursor to TEU, and PEDAL emerging from a protest group (PCATS), to ‘official’ Transition Town. An exception is ‘Greener Leith’ who thought about becoming a TTN initiative, before deciding against it.

TTN, in keeping with its permaculture philosophy, is fond of ecological metaphors for the explaining the social, or normatively providing a model for emulation. The ‘colonisation’ of other groups refers then to the ecological concept of plant succession, over the history of colonialism. Colonisation here refers to the migration of the concept of ‘transition’, as developed by TTN in Totnes, and its adoption by existing green groups.

The first example of this was in PEDAL’s genesis. Portobello originally had an anti-supermarket protest, known as PCATS (Portobello Campaign Against The Superstore). In May 2005 PCATS:

*“successfully opposed a planning application for an 85,000sq ft superstore development in Portobello, Edinburgh. Although the supermarket developer was never revealed, local campaigners suspected it was an application from Tesco.”<sup>108</sup>*

From the energy of this campaign emerged the group PEDAL. PEDAL can be seen as the phoenix that emerged from the ashes of PCATS. However, it is not so simple to say PEDAL directly inherited PCATS role; rather PCATS morphed into PEDAL. PEDAL, and other TTN groups, saw as pejorative ‘mere branding’; particularly if this was a craven attempt to gain funding. I asked staff member of PEDAL if they had undergone an ‘opportunistic rebrand’:

*“Two things I would say. Firstly, PEDAL isn’t that group that campaigned against the superstore. There’s a few people from that group - PCATS - which is actually still in existence. Even if only in an administrative sense. An e-mail address somewhere. That was a campaign made up of hundreds of folk. PEDAL was the group who said*

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<sup>108</sup> <http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid=2383> Accessed 08/05/2012

*PCATS is the campaign against what we don't want - but what is it we do want? And the key individuals in that had a real passion around climate change and peak oil. And the other thing to say about that is that PEDAL was the first Transition group in Scotland. So, it wasn't like we rebranded ourselves as it was emerging in Edinburgh. Actually a lot of the key people helped to spread the message around Scotland."*  
(PEDAL 1).

Keen to dissociate PEDAL from PCATS as an opportunistic rebrand in order to get funding, there is clearly a direct link, if not inheritance, between the two groups. Second, PEDAL see themselves as being vanguard - the first TTN initiative in Scotland. Even if they themselves are not rebranded - they, through TSS, do send out key individuals in order to facilitate the rebranding of other groups elsewhere. In outlining why PEDAL are not colonised, they assume the colonising of others. In effect: 'PEDAL cannot be colonised, because they are doing that work elsewhere.' Even in arguing against - TTN relies to a large degree on rebranding existing groups in order to grow and increase in size and number of initiatives.

In each TTN group studied in this project the adoption of the Transition logo can be seen to take place over preexisting groups, for instance TES's incorporation of ESEE (Edinburgh South Energy Efficiency). Originally TES entered into a partnership with ESEE - an autonomous, emergent grassroots group - in order to gain funding from the CCF.

*"Basically at first it was like we're going to - we'll do a project together, in partnership. But as it's developed it's basically become a Transition.*

*GA: So, the name has been dropped?*

*TES 2: Yeah... There's not been like an ESEE group meeting. But the people who came to ESEE still, they have either got involved in TES now or are doing something else."* (TES 2).

This is a key challenge for the future of TTN. When the groups are so loosely formed with little in the way of defined boundaries and organisational

coherence (as ESEE can be seen) they are prey to running out of momentum, or being co-opted or incorporated by other bigger, more defined groups, such as TES. Part of this was strategic. With greater potential for funding through the TTN label, TES and ESEE collaborated on SOSO. For the 'Transition' label and message to be sustained, it would seem that they need to become more like the defined entity of TES, than the loose 'emergent collective' of ESEE. As key figures became paid by TES/ESEE to run the project, gradually the ESEE tag was dropped.

*"It seemed like TES, for whatever reason, that identity has prevailed, or persisted. Whereas the other one, maybe just because it just didn't have the ideology or it was just the name we came up with to say what we are doing. Transition sort of embodies a lot more."* (TES 2).

TEU can be seen as following a similar pattern. The *People and Planet* society sought funding from the CCF, in so doing deliberately adopted the TTN identification. Already an engaged, vibrant student activism group, the TTN model was adopted in order to provide a coherent narrative to the project, a more official, acceptable and – crucially – fundable, framing for their work.

*"I think, Transition Edinburgh University is unique, in a sense that it's taking, bits of the Transition model, bits of student activism, green student activism, melding them together ... with staff support essentially"* (TEU 4)

One of those involved with putting TEU's CCF application together explained it to me thus:

*"he was involved in putting the original application together. There were two applications, the first one was a sort of feasibility study and then the next one was to do the big one. ... and we were sort of, him and*

*Adam<sup>109</sup> and I were meeting just talking through what the application might look like and ... looking at what were People and Planet doing and he was, all the language of their mission statement whatever it was, essentially it was rise up and change things, campaign for this and campaign for that. XXXX and I were translating some of that into, sort of CCF language and university language. Ok, so by that, by campaign to change the such and such, you mean, engage and explore the opportunities to ... 'oh, ok I suppose we could say that'. It was just the, so there was, they had a much stronger campaigning tradition, a tradition which is tempered with this community engagement and transition model, so it's quite interesting." (TEU II).*

Relevant here is the way those putting together the CCF bid – without which TEU would not exist – cautiously and deliberately adopted the dynamism of People and Planet (energy, activism, earnestness) with a ‘community engagement and Transition model’ that would be appeal more towards funders, and other interests of power. By these means the TTN label propagates. This colonial strategy of taking over other groups, and drawing their members also rebounded as TEU drew many of the volunteers from TES, when the university initiative was founded.

This model for ‘creating’ TTN groups through rebranding proved so successful, or ubiquitous, that TSS tried to adopt it as a sort of (un)official policy. The purpose of TSS being to spread and strengthen TTN groups throughout Scotland. One way they did this was to “bring into the fold” groups that “were already doing Transition in all but name” (TSS II). Or ‘transition with a small t, not a big T’. By rebranding these groups, they were rightfully returning to the philosophical spark that TTN embodied - and it encompassed groups that were doing all manner of activities broadly ecological.

TSS were sensitive to being seen as rebranding existing groups. One angrily reacted to the notion of ‘rebranding’: “I have not pushed Transition – I don’t believe prothlethysing Transition and converting groups is necessary. I

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<sup>109</sup> Name changed



*was bringing elements of Transition Thinking into [other ecological group, Green Leith]" (TSS II). One TSS employee after reflecting on TES, TEU, and PEDAL, conceded: "Everybody's got a history, nobody's starting from scratch." (TSS 2). All three had in some way been rebranded or 'grown towards' TTN. CCF also recognised TTN labels on prior initiatives in order to receive CCF money: "lots of CCF are rebranded, but we're relaxed about that" (CCF 2).*

Adopting TTN's model onto a diverse range of already existing groups, with promise of funding, recognition from local authorities, media outlets, collectivism and mutual support, is not always unproblematic. The problems are acute when understood as the imposition of a model developed in peri-urban South West England, adopted without alteration in Scotland's capital city. Most of those involved in these TTN groups, whom I came across for this study, and particularly those who talked most about the need for 'community' and 'belonging' often had non-Scots accents. Discussing whether, and in what ways, they belonged, those who had lived in these places all their lives (particularly Portobello), had confusion about what I was asking. When I pushed, the answer was 'of course we belong here'. Of course they had their family and friends nearby, and had no plans to leave. Their belonging was so obvious to be implicit, assumed and tacit. When I raised the issues to the conversational level, they didn't know how to respond.

*"Community is more likely to be expressed in an active search to achieve belonging than in preserving boundaries" (Delanty, 2010: 153). Therein lies a problem for TTN in communicating their message. 'Community' and belonging are often assumed by those who have it, hence are not interested in talking about or seeking it. Those who wish to talk about it, feel it as lack. At extreme TTN can be seen as a middle-class rural ideology imposed upon urban Scotland. Why were there no local accents in the fairly largish meeting we just had I asked?*

*TES 7:        Yeah, but it's English. And this is the problem.  
Transition's English.*

*GA:    It is English?*

TES 7: *It's got English language, it's got English assumptions in it. When I wrote my ... [deleted to preserve anonymity] I actually accused Rob [Hopkins] of Neo-colonialism.*" (TES 7)

*"They say 'listen to the elders' [one of the 12 steps], we wid nivar say 'at. Whit's wrang wii 'auld fowk'?"* (TSS 2), reflecting that TTN's emphasis on 'community' attracts incomers rather than the indigenous: *"Because incomers have a deeper need for community. Because they haven't got it."* (TSS 2).

One volunteer joined her group as *"Transition is a means to a community"* (PEDAL 5), the implication being for those who don't already have it. This need was reflected in the view from those funding such projects. Urban areas in particular were seen as lacking in 'community' and needed it (perhaps because funders, as touched on above, found it hard to find projects with the vision of 'community' they were looking for.)

Again, I asked why Scots were rarely to be found in Edinburgh's TTN groups: *"I'm not sure the indigenous are responding in that way to Transition. I think they're rejecting it rather than doing that."* (TES 5). I put this conversation to a key TTN figure from Totnes: *"well, there are lots of things going on.... Well, you're absolutely right, that has a positive aspect to it but it also has a negative aspect to it..."* (TT1), before reflecting on how in ecological systems often there is a need for an external influence to disrupt and provoke the ecological system to a new level of maturity. This may be so, but TTN were usually uncomfortable when discussing issues of the 'indigenous'.

By attracting incomers with a need for 'community' or belonging there will be natural limits to how far Transition's 'community' rhetoric can take them. As one anti-wind turbine activist in Portobello put it: *"Transition is anti-Scottish"* (Porty 4).

#### 4.4 TTN Potential to Affect Wider Change

*“New collective assemblages of enunciation are beginning to form an identity out of fragmentary ventures, at times risky initiatives, trial and error experiments; different ways of seeing and making the world.”*

(Guattari, 1995: 120)

So far this chapter has addressed the techniques and processes through which ‘community’ has been produced: officially, informally, and emerging. With each of these though there lurks a belief in the power and effectiveness of ‘community’ explored in Section 3.2 and 4.1.4. This belief exists in top-down actors such as the CCF, with the low- and medium- level actors and activists in TTN too. The remainder of this chapter analyses the potential of these initiatives to affect wider change, beyond the small scale *“fragmentary ventures”* they currently are. TTN, building on their permaculture heritage, are explicit about their need to grow and evolve: acting as ecosystems act. Given the manner in which ‘community’ is produced by, with, and through TTN, what is the potential for the continuation, upscaling and increased prevalence of TTN’s ‘community’? This is both in terms of assessing how this belief emerges, spreads, and takes root.

The ‘12 steps of transition’ (Hopkins, 2008) were often recalled by volunteers; defining TTN’s orthodoxy, if not its’ orthopraxis. TTN was seen as innately desiring to grow, to impact, and to alter and use the structures surrounding them. This attempt to affect wider change was sought more than it was defined. Political structures (Edinburgh City Council)<sup>110</sup> and infrastructure (the lack of cycle paths) needed to change – but much less was said on how and in what way this would occur. ‘Transition’ is an attractive term, implying moving away, but without commitment to any particular future vision, or the speed with which that is approached. Another volunteer talked of the potential for ‘seeding’ and ‘nurturing off other groups’, again using permaculture language. Growth and larger numbers of TTN groups are a good in and of themselves – before any transition they might help achieve.

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<sup>110</sup> “Build a bridge to local government” is one of the 12 steps.

CCF also anticipated potential 'wider benefits' of having an explicitly 'community' scheme. This involved spill-over effects beyond the confines of the project, or funded entities. *"I think it would be obvious if they weren't showing an engagement with the wider community. That's where diversity comes in."* (CCF 1). One claimed they wouldn't fund projects that did not have the potential to make a greater impact. *"I think it would be pretty obvious if it was just, 'we want to get our street insulation', 'we're not interested in anyone else.' I was just, if they're just a street full of hippies and they want to get their houses insulated for free, well, it'd be pretty obvious"* (CS) and they wouldn't get funding.

CCF were funding and investing in potential as much as the present. This was something the TTN projects were clearly alive too as well. They saw their project as inspiring wider change, but also that this aspect was something that funders were keen on:

*"I always keep putting it in the report we send to the CCF – we are about long-term, not short-term change. What we're trying to do is develop projects that are about long-term change. And shifting people's values, it doesn't happen overnight."* (TES 4).

The growth and impact of these groups was identified as being as symbolic as it was tangible. One funder claimed the TTN and 'community' groups would *"potentially have a huge ripple effect"* and *"raise the bar"* (CCF 1). TEU's effect would be: *"not just by replication, not just by taking the same model and doing it again, by learning from it, and doing things, so if Edinburgh University as a result had a rigorous travel policy"* and later *"there's a whole lot of norming stuff to come out of this [TEU] as well I think"* (TEU II) referring to both the way in which 'community' uses norms of behaviour change, and the totemic TEU project acting as an inspiration for others.

Even when symbolic, the point is that these groups were seen to have a lasting impact, beyond their territorial confines, the duration of funding, and those directly involved: beyond space, time and individuals. An

'Inspirational Individual', reflecting on the long-term impact of these initiatives foresaw an onwards march of progress, however slow, saying 'it's like a ratchet'. This one-way track of growing TTN, of increasing awareness, was the hopeful future where their work becomes easier. Achieved by 'shoring up their base':

*"But I actually think that people do get it, and sometimes you can see a lightbulb going off in their head as to whether they realise or not. O! and it might be a peak oil moment or it might be a grave concern about population or resource depletion or any other depletions. And what we're trying to do. What I'm interested in doing is to, maximise the number of people who 'get it', who can then apply their energy enthusiasm capacity to delivering solutions rather than, as almost inevitably at the moment, at the current paradigm, of growth is good, contributing to the problems."* (TES 6).

For one local councillor who ended up working with PEDAL, stated that their views had changed through that engagement. This was a shift that they foresaw occurring with others:

*"Whereby we thought they were a load of do-gooders and hippies. There is that barrier, and to engage people outside the normal circle is something we haven't really done as yet. There is the potential there, and once it clicks, it will become the norm for people to regard it that way."* (Porty 1).

The prospect of getting TEU off the ground highlights many of these themes. For instance, see the following dialogue with one person who was with the process of setting up TEU from the start:

*"GA: Was it explicit to brand TEU as Transition from the start? As opposed to People & Planet, or some other student society? Or did Transition come along later?"*

TEU 3: *yeah, well XXXX did actually. And you could get into all sorts, dynamics between People and Planet and Transition as well. People and Planet, as a society and this initiative sort of spun out of that, and at the time there was quite a lot of debate over, you know, should, how should they be linked? Because we didn't want it just to take over and that People and Planet would suffer as a result, because everyone would be just involved in Transition and not in the broader stuff, global justice and fair trade and all the rest of it, and there was one of the big debates, , is it going to be a separate society? But one of the things that XXXX did was, he was very enthusiastic, but he also took the idea as a proposal to the People and Planet national decision-making body forum and adopted it as the new campaign across the UK. Which he was very pleased about that. and, so, now it's trying to get things started at lots of different universities. Yip."* (TEU 3).

There are a number of key themes to draw out here. First the belief that TTN would be more acceptable to welcoming in others than the 'usual suspects' of *People and Planet*. Second that TTN would help seed off other initiatives elsewhere.

#### **4.4.1 Why Grow?**

The question that follows is why do TTN seek to grow? A key reason they wish to grow centres on TTN's desire for mainstream legitimacy, or being taken seriously by other relevant bodies. As one Totnes-based key figure stated:

*"... a lot of the existing bodies that we need to work with, local councils, local businesses, other institutions, movements, they need something that they can, something concrete that they can connect to it. If we were just some highly mobile diaspora of Transition thinking individuals, who weren't accountable at all, then you know, who would want to deal with us? Who would want to give us money, who would*

*want to give us time, except our chair of trustees, into [muffled] messaging around behaviour change. It just wouldn't happen.” (TT 2).*

Another initial instigator of the TTN defended the shift towards more formal hierarchy:

*“We need organisations, we need roles, we need accountability, ... and we operate in a framework that's got a lot of structures and constraints. That, you know we have to sit within.” (TT 1).*

One member of TSS echoed the sense that as the movement grows it helps enshrine legitimacy. It is a positive feedback system:

*“What we do as a bunch of communities as a movement, is also a persuasion job. And it gives them, the more communities come on board, the more credibility we have and better able we are to persuade even more communities to consider this idea.” (TSS II).*

TTN's potential lies in their growth, in terms of both size and number of initiatives. But it also lies in the critique of wider society. TTN's 'success' is not the same as seeking growth of the organisation or 'community' (TTN), but often the two were elided. Successful aims meant more 'community', and *vice versa*. For some in the initiatives the challenge of TTN was upward pressure on those local authorities and legislators/policy makers.

*“We need local authorities to remove barriers to help communities help them do it themselves. You know like installing wood burning stoves. We can't do that because of the clean air act.” (TSS II).*

However, when asked how effective this pressure had been, I was told:

*“Actually seeing these legislative changes that were coming from pressure, that's not something we've actually started.” (TSS II).*

Nevertheless this was still how those involved with TES, PEDAL, and TEU saw themselves and their role. TEU existed to challenge and impact everything:

*“GA: In what way do you have an impact? Are we talking behaviour change, or patterns of living?”*

*TEU 2: you name it.*

*GA: everything?*

*TEU2: the whole shebang. Yes, that they would think before jumping onto that flight to Prague for the weekend or they might go somewhere else or whatever. Right through to the values that they pass onto their kids or whatever. Um, so that’s the key thing that a lower Carbon lifestyle will have been engendered, in those that the programme has touched.” (TEU 2).*

The legacy of these groups was in having altered things, often in a niggly, provocative way.

*“They [TEU] will have, by being sand in the oyster, they will have engendered new things.” (CCF 1).*

This effect is not necessarily consensual, but relies on getting under others’ skin to provoke change. This impact was expressed in the challenge to alter the infrastructure surrounding us, not just behaviours, attitudes, and values:

*“the wider change, the deep change that we [TEU] enact is infrastructural change (cycle paths, insulation, CHP schemes, etc.) This is change that outlasts us. It’s here we’re investing in our legacy really.” (TEU 5).*

In this sense the challenge of TTN goes right to the heart of systemic change. The apocryphal story about rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic, was



mentioned a number of times. TTN saw themselves not doing this, but rather 'saw the inconsistencies at the heart of the system'. They saw themselves as also challenging these, not just being aware of them.

This desire to challenge 'the system' can lead to a change qua change attitude: where change – any change – is a good thing. This is maybe why TTN are a movement focused more on 'community' than transition. TTN are not desiring change for change's sake, the way change is sought is more important. TTN's motto could be 'change is good: so long as we do it together'.

#### 4.4.2 Impediments to Sustained Production of 'Community'

Alongside TTN's desire and potential for growth, and their will to be impactful on others, TTN have impediments to fulfilling this potential. This view mainly came from sources outside the TTN groups looked at here, those who saw a 'rose-tinted' perception existing inside PEDAL, TES, and TEU. The potential of sustaining this production had certain 'limits to growth'.

One civil servant, who oversaw CCF projects, saw no 'overspill' from the food projects towards other carbon savings. This was put down to a lack of will from those around them to undertake costly, deep sacrifice. A Portobello resident was critical of PEDAL claiming to represent and determine the future of their neighbourhood:

*"I think this is a bit of an issue, particularly with Transition groups. My view – there's a bit of a, an issue with, which is, hype over reality. You call yourself a Transition Town as soon as you've got two people who've agreed to do something. That's it, and then it's like, so you're a Transition Town, you know and so on. What's happening in Portobello? I don't know! [getting animated]... a few meetings, they've shown the Age of Stupid, and [losing train of thought] ... I just think, I have some reservations about some of this stuff... I'm feeling uncomfortable about*

*a lot of this. I ought not to be saying this, in terms of it wouldn't be good for PEDAL, it wouldn't be good for me to be saying any of this stuff. Saying, actually, I'm not convinced by a lot of this stuff. So, without having excluded it myself, it's just my perception as an interested observer, very, very detached. Thinking some of this doesn't stack up."* (Porty 3).

I also received responses, when stopping people on Portobello High Street and sitting next to some 'locals' in the pub along like lines of 'naw pal – nivar heard o 'em'. One randomly selected person, when asked about PEDAL, replied:

*"I've seen the poster, they're that bunch of hippies aren't they?"* (Porty 2).

It is important then to say that PEDAL are both unknown amongst some Porty residents, and when known can signal antipathy and negativity. Below, I turn to three particular groups of residents: the Community Council, Amenity Society and Heritage Trust.<sup>111</sup>

Many thought that PEDAL's veg boxes, orchards, allotments were 'fine' (*"literally, they're more down to earth"*), but there was also a strong negative reaction to any proposed wind turbine (*"Whacky", "out there"*). *"Porty folk are happy to accept minimal changes"*. Perhaps a positive spin on some of the conservative nature of the denizens of Edinburgh or Porty – 'Edinburgh on sea'. The food projects were 'unobjectionable', besides, one reflected 'I eat organic you know'. But the prospects of more 'visible' changes to the infrastructure of the town were not warmly received.

I was told, *"the Amenity society doesn't like solar panels on the front of buildings"*. Except one case where *"I didn't clipe, and they didn't put in an application."* It was not so much dog-in-the-manger from these groups, but

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<sup>111</sup> The following 4 paragraphs are based quotes from my meetings and focus groups with members of these groups.

there was the sense they operated in a wholly different worldview to PEDAL. These are part of the challenge facing for PEDAL (and other TTN initiatives) to fulfil their potential.

Generally those I spoke to talked about how they preferred the solar panels over wind turbines and food projects over wind: 'we just don't like wind'. They were wary of some of the more 'radical demands' of PEDAL.

*"PEDAL wants a different relationship with the land, but in an urban environment – you don't have any land", PEDAL "wish people to connect with the land, more than their urban nature allows them to do."*

Beyond the detail of the proposed wind turbine, or the facts and figures, here note that entrenched attitudes, and cultural differences between PEDAL and others in Portobello places serious limits on their potential growth and challenge in Portobello and, by proxy, elsewhere.

It also came down to the class of those involved in TTN groups. Some people, it was felt, just didn't have the requisite resources (time, wealth, skills, political stance, ideology) to create a TTN initiative where they live – even if they so wished. There is a reason for the geographic distribution of TTN. These structural factors have been partly fleshed out by the work of Mohan (2012) and others on the 'civic core' – those who give to charity, donate time, money and unpaid labour, enabling volunteer, third sector, and 'community' groups to flourish. Without such a 'civic core' – *"middle aged, have higher education qualifications, are owner-occupiers, actively practice religion, and have lived in the same neighbourhood for at least ten years"* (Mohan, 2012: 1124) – TTN groups would not exist. This civic core description – other than TEU – also maps onto my experiences of those involved in TTN groups, and their 'success' stories. It could be characterising residents of Woodburn Terrace, those present at a TTN AGM, or 'social'.

Structural reasons, alongside certain contingent factors such as 'influential individuals', meant that TTN could only emerge in certain places

at certain times.<sup>112</sup> The causation of one initiative was put down to “a combination of a kind of professional people, with an interest in environmental issues.” (TES 4). TTN’s emergence can be seen as a perfect storm, an alignment of factors provoking a groundswell uprising. “We were there at the right time in a way”, “I think it’s just a set of circumstances which were right” (TES 4). There was also the need to grow towards the mainstream ways of operating, to be organised, and think strategically: “If you don’t have a proper administrative structure, things fall apart.” (TSS II). Without these contingent factors, and with the cultural differences to those surrounding them, TTN has certain ‘limits to growth’.

#### 4.4.3 Wide Variety of Potential Buy-in

This section addresses how TTN went about awareness raising. TTN are conscious not to put off others, through potentially divisive terminology such as ‘anarchist’, or ‘activist’. This attempt to go beyond the ‘usual suspects’ of such groups could result in no more than good intentions, but it is important to assess their potential future impact. A key reason why TTN groups have broad appeal is in the way they can act as a synthesis for other generally ecological groups, in narrative, and branding. Yet it also lies in the way TTN can appeal beyond these ‘usual suspects’. This can be described as TTN’s wide range of potential buy-in – its “underlying values are very potent”. Another volunteer described the TTN’s philosophy as being a very ‘sticky’<sup>113</sup> idea: one that is memorable, easily graspable, and can explain a wide variety of factors simply, elegantly. TTN here are akin to an Occam’s Razor for environmental social moments.

*“It resonates with a lot of different people and it simplifies these very complex issues into two, or maybe three - local, resilient, sustainable.*

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<sup>112</sup> See Section 6.1.6 on Kairos.

<sup>113</sup> Presumably after Gladwell (2000: 89-132)

*That basically anyone can understand, with a bit of unpacking” (TES 9).*

TTN see themselves as reformers, not revolutionaries. There are two ways to read this. The first is that TTN packages quite radical ideas in a nice, acceptable format. They smuggle in radical conclusions within acceptable language, to those who would be turned off by condemnations of capitalism, or even the words ‘activism’ or ‘anarchist’.<sup>114</sup> The second view is that they excoriate the radical potential that awareness of such issues as peak oil and climate change brings, into well meaning, fluffy concepts around ‘community’, without actually doing anything. Without a profound prophetic critique of consumer capitalism, or even mentioning capitalism.

The second view was perfectly précised in something one of the CCF funders stated - perhaps with an interest of ‘not rocking the boat’. I asked did TTN not eventually aim to do away with jobs such as his, and government at that scale in general? The SNP the civil servant said, were firmly in line with TTN’s ethos. *“The SNP’s key issues are resilience and localism too.”* And later: *“Transition espouse radical ideas, but they act at a very small scale. They make homemade jam.”* (CS). Damning with faint praise indeed. Well-meaning, phatic terms, such as ‘localism’ and ‘resilience’ could encompass a government who promote both a Donald Trump golf course and directly encourage and fund TTN. The local extent of TTN’s ambitions (jam) could be seen as no threat to the SNP and ‘business as usual’.

Yet there was also the desire to ‘get things done’ and move beyond the ‘usual suspects’ – named as ‘those at climate camp or whatever’. For a TEU founder, it was a ‘big challenge’ to make the required shift to a low carbon future attractive and compelling for the general public. The assumption here is that this shift required personal effort – behaviour change that required such language as ‘community’. ‘Community’ had *“quite*

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<sup>114</sup> This is not quite ‘entryism’, the practice of joining a larger organisation – in the case society at large – in the hope of redirecting their aims towards your own more radical ones, increasing the reach your smaller, more niche group would otherwise have. Nevertheless it is interesting to speculate on what Entryism’s great advocate Leon Trotsky would make of TTN.

*a lot of resonance” (TEU II) more than abstract carbon figures. TTN was “something which can appeal to individuals and they can align with that, they can understand that” (TEU II).*

One of the CCF funding panel members praised TTN’s as *“being cautious and not winding up people at the same time.” (CCF 1).* This affable stance runs right through TTN groups. *“These people are normal. Maybe some individuals protest at Faslane and all that. But no way as a community. We’re very inoffensive.” (PEDAL 5).*



**Figure 11 PEDAL logo**

Evidence for both of these options were in the data collected.

*“PEDAL stands for many things, but no-one in the wider community [Portobello] is quite sure what. For example the picture of the bike. Nice message, but what does it communicate?” (Porty 4).* PEDAL were not just ‘nice and fluffy’ but had worked very hard on specific proposals, that would get the wind turbine achieved, despite the impediments faced. In terms of judging what TTN can achieve, it depends on which one of these two directions TTN takes. If TTN can smuggle in radical conclusions that they stay true to, then they can have a huge impact. If TTN are ‘all froth in the latte’ (Porty 3) (‘All talk and no trousers’, Porty 2), then they will soon run out of steam.

#### **4.4.4 ‘Community’ as a Deep Transition**

TTN’s potential can be seen not only in numbers of adherents attracted, but in the depth of attachment to both the ‘community’ and the ideals held. The deepest well of hope for future impact in these ‘community’ schemes came though in the belief that their ‘community’ approach posited a depth of transition, rather than one of breadth, or surface: a qualitative transition over a quantitative one. Both these positions assume the *effectiveness* of

'community' (Section 4.1.4), TTN see 'community' as effective because of its depth though, CCF due to its possible acceptance by many different people. 'Community' for TTN was seen to focus on process rather than outcomes, as Chatterton (2013) has outlined for LILAC. 'Community' went beyond the numbers, the superficial, or even the behaviour change - 'altering hearts and minds'.

Part of this depth can be seen in the Carbon Conversations project:

*"Carbon Conversations is really great, with Mary Rendell [CC founder], being a psychotherapist. And there's a lot of deep stuff in there, if you run the group well ... I think it's really good." What's so good about it? I asked. "because it's really engaging people at a much deeper level of understanding, because I think, when we're dealing with the issues of climate change, it's a very scary thing. And I don't buy into psychoanalysis very much, but I do feel that the idea when things are too difficult and too big, we suppress them, and they just – they're not there anymore. Well, through Carbon Conversations there's quite a lot of things, it's quite subtle, the way it's done, that brings these things up and make us connect with it, and learn to start address them and deal with them. And a lot of the stuff is actually the initiatives that are done to address climate change, they don't go there. I honestly believe this, and I say it all the time, that when we go and do loft insulation, we do a lot of crap, because we're not changing people. [getting more irate] We're giving them their loft insulated so they can go and spend money going to Spain next year – it's not change, it's not sustainability, why are we doing this? What good is that? Why? What is that going to do in the long term? Nothing. It's not going to change anything. " (TES 5).*

TTN's work with 'community' was deep because it avoided 'technological substitution', or a focus on abstract indicators like carbon emissions. It got to people's deepest motivations and desires; it was systemic, requiring long-term change.

Often I would ask of each project, who(m) or what is it that is doing the transitioning. With responses varying between the buildings, the habits or practices, to the 'community', or the whole city. Often though the answer referred to themselves, or some level of consciousness that was the key to the transition they sought to enact. What was transitioning was "*depth not breadth*" (TES 5), a "*raising of consciousness*" (TEU 4), or that I wouldn't see it "*'cos it's absolutely subtly principles. Real depth.*" (PEDAL 5).

Who or what transitions? "*It's us, people – we need to become more aware, because the environment will always respond to us, so we need to become more aware of it.*" (PEDAL 4).

Because of this, there was a rejection of technological substitution and an increasing focus on the psycho-spiritual aspects of transition.

*"I think what I love about community, obviously I've been involved in this and I've done other stuff before – it's the uniqueness, so each group each person has to be treated individually. The other difference is it's a real hearts and minds thing, it's winning people over so that they get committed and continue, kind of. Trying to push out this message of action to other people and stay involved. Whereas a lot of the other projects that we work with are quite, erm, you know lets just get measures put in, but someone might be putting it in because it's cheap, and that's it. You know, whereas we hope a lot of community stuff is about digging down a bit deeper and changing peoples values on that kind of level."* (EX).

It was in asking these questions that many volunteers referred me to the work of Johanna Macy and others who could be considered in the TTN reading list 'canon' (e.g. Gary Snyder, Bill Mollison). I would find it impossible to describe this emic data in an etic way. But it often there is the desire to talk about the depth of transition as a sort of psycho-spiritual transition. There was a desire to move deeper, reflected in the 'heart and soul' Transition groups:



*“This is the kind of work that I’m interested in developing. The work of Johanna Macy and others ... looking after ourselves, and understanding our connection with nature, and understanding these deep rooted values, that are really, really important to developing our work in the best possible way.” “To get to that level of depth, the scale has to shrink right in?” I asked: “yes, you need to go smaller.” (TES 4).*

It could be seen that TTN groups are valued not by how many participants they have, but what projects they have achieved, or how earnestly they believe. I was often told from those volunteers with these groups, that their work was about ‘head, heart and hand’. There was the scientific (head) knowledge about climate change, and the practical responses to that (hand). But an oft-neglected aspect was the desire to live ethically, ‘tread lightly’, and act with compassion. Often implicitly, tacitly, this was assumed to flow from the ‘community’ approach taken.

However, by seeing ‘community’ as having a depth of impact, can be for multiple ends. Depth of impact was seen as laudable by one of those responsible for allocating CCF funding:

*“I think, even if it fails, it’s easier to find hope, or success, but I guess, will they achieve the ambitious Carbon targets they’ve set? I doubt it. Erm, will they have learned? Will they have got more people within the staff and student university community thinking about these issues in some way or other? Yes. Will they have got them changing their behavior sufficiently to save the world? No. Will all the people involved in that have learned a hell of a lot from the process and being a hell of a lot better at doing whatever they do next? Yes. In some ways, so long as the people, the staff working on it, the project, so long as they don’t get so burnt out that they decide to go away and re-train as accountants or something.” (CCF 1).*

Here, not only is it easier for funders to argue for ‘successful’ allocation of funding, presenting nebulous or sub-surface impacts from the funding. But

there is a hope, a faith, that in future, in some way as yet unseen or unknown, the project will be having impacts.

Another key aspect of the deeper nature of TTN's 'community' is it not being seen to be a flash in the pan, but something more long-term. A key source of tension between these groups and their CCF funding was that those in the groups saw their work as going 'beyond' the funding criteria. *"They're [CCF] talking about the short term, we're talking about the long term. Which you can't really do it short term from a behaviour change. As you say, they want number crunching, well, we can do all that, but the longevity of it is meaningless."* (TES 6)

A civil servant defended the more critical comments of CCF I relayed to him, by saying in effect, 'wait and see'. *"We're talking about longer term change here - 30% in 5 years, not 5% in one."* This was *"more of a hearts and minds thing"* (CS) which he interestingly characterised as 'resilience'.

One volunteer claimed their area of action with TTN was more important than others by saying *"Our group are learning about sustaining themselves for the future"*, due to *"conscious change"* (TEU 6). *"Consciousness change"* or *"Consciousness raising"* were often invoked as core purposes for these groups. Therefore their effects would be long-term and below the surface. How would I know, I would ask?

*"We [TTN] will inaugurate a new age of long lost place-based communities"* (PEDAL 4). More often though, there was a lack of clarity, or precision in their answers. Typical would be 'going where the energy is'. *"This takes time. I mean, how much can we achieve in 15 months?"* (the length of funding remaining), rhetorically asked one group leader: *"This takes years to bed in"*. *"You might not see any change immediately, but over the next few years you will actually start to see people's behaviour change"* (PEDAL 5). Whether this would be the case or not, perhaps only time will tell. From my time involved with such conversations though, I am at least convinced that they fully believe in it.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

The production of 'community' within TTN comes from a variety of sources. Whether this reflects, or causes the varieties of 'community' within TTN or not is uncertain. TTN's 'community' is in part defined by its capaciousness. Its ability to provide the ground in which coalitions can be forged is inherent to its revolutionary and radical potential.

This chapter has shown how, first, 'community' is produced in certain forms due to the influence of distinct official, or top-top attempts to establish and mould 'community groups'. 'Community' here takes the form of 'legitimate political actors', legitimately 'representing' different areas, or groups of peoples.

Secondly, it has shown how 'community' is produced informally, or horizontally, within the TTN network itself. This refers to the capture and rebranding of existing 'community' groups to fit with the TTN aims and branding. Additionally, it has explored how the different visions of 'community' are shaped and moulded by strong characters within the groups, who I referred to as influential individuals.

Thirdly, this chapter explored how 'community' is produced or forged from the ground-up, and appears emergent. This is perhaps the most faithful production of 'community' to the TTN philosophy, or permaculture-inspired vision of 'community'. 'Community' emerges due to the perceived threat of climate change and peak oil, alongside concerns over relocalisation. This emergence is sometimes provoked through awareness raising of the potential threats. It also emerges through the perceived effectiveness and need of a 'community' response, as understood in terms of being deep and mobilising.

The analysis of 'community' advanced throughout this chapter helps us to understand what 'community' within TTN, can and does, variously mean. Given the central importance of 'community' for TTN, and the different productions of 'community', it makes sense that TTN's 'community' is variegated, diverse, and plural. This is varied even given the normative assumptions TTN and those involved with TTN tends to make about 'community'. Different actors, or groups of actors produce 'community' in different ways, gives rise to future tensions (explored in Chapter Six). For

TTN to advance its cause, it can pay close attention to supporting these influential individuals who are so crucial to the development of 'community'. Influential individuals internally named 'dogsbodies' above. This 'community' is in turn, crucial to the aims and objectives within each TTN group. It is to this that the next chapter now turns. Looking towards the role, or practice, of 'community' within TTN.

## Chapter 5: Acquiring and Seeking 'Community': The Depth and Strategic Limits to *Zuhandenheit* 'Community'

'Community' has often been understood as a contested term: polysemic, polyvalent, equivocal, and multiple. It also has the potential to produce widespread buy-in. 'Community', as a widespread term, covers a multitude of sins. This chapter seeks to address the variety of meanings implicated in the use of 'community' in Edinburgh's TTN groups.

Building on an analysis of the three Transition groups (mobilised by the notion of 'community'-action), and eighteen separate initiatives spawned by these groups, it first explores what 'community' means for those constituting these groups. I introduce the phenomenological term *Zuhanden* to explore and emphasise the nature of participation and engagement experienced by those who participate in 'community'. Following Heidegger's distinction between *zuhanden* (ready-to-hand) and *vorhanden* (present-at-hand) (1962: 96ff), *zuhanden* emphasises how subjects are practically involved and immersed within 'community'. This is a constitutive experience of 'community'. Instead of seeing the 'community' as an entity to be engaged with or theorised about (as one would in a present-at-hand mode), the 'community' is that which subjects are immersed within and within which they are practically engaged. The significance and meaning of 'community' is derived and apprehended through this primarily active and practical orientation. Exploring the *zuhanden* aspects of 'community' as practical action that is centrifugal. *Zuhanden* comprises more than just practical action though, and Section 5.1.2 assesses this 'just is' aspect of being 'community'.

Section 5.2 assesses the main differences between the strategic deployment of 'community', and how it is felt and lived, by those doing, and being 'community'. Some of these strategic deployments can be instrumentalised, such as 'community's' elisions with place, small-scale, and local. However, they cannot be instrumentalised, when it comes to eliding 'community' with belonging. Pushing the limits to this excessive, or

capacious nature of 'community', Section 5.3 addresses one such attempted strategic deployment of 'community' to govern the environmental behaviours in one street: the *Switched On to Switching Off* (SOSO) project.

By addressing the polyvalent, polysemic, multiple meanings invested within 'community', the chapter concludes by assessing just how the term 'community' can help provide (the semblance of) common ground for divergent actors and aims to sit within low carbon initiatives. Through the example of SOSO, and their Motivational Interviewing technique in particular, the chapter charts the limits to this domestication or state deployment of *zuhandenheit* 'community'.

### 5.1 Irreducible 'Community'

*"Many radical political organizations founder on the desire for community. Too often people in groups working for social change take mutual friendship to be the goal of the group, and thus judge themselves wanting as a group when they do not achieve such commonality. Such a desire for community often channels energy away from the political goals of the group, and produces a clique atmosphere which keeps groups small and turns away potential members."*

(Young, 1990: 235)

'Community', it seems, has never gone out of fashion. Throughout its long history it has been used to underpin various ideologies, ways of idealizing and organizing society, and normative perceptions of what constitutes the 'good life' (Crow & Allen, 1994; Delanty, 2010). Rarely has there been outright hostility to the notion of 'community' (an exception being Morton 2010). More common is the subtle re-defining of 'community' towards

different meanings.<sup>115</sup> Like motherhood and apple pie, it is a ‘good thing’ (Section 3.1).

The near ubiquity of ‘community’s’ positive use covers a multitude of potential meanings. Taking just Carbon governance, ‘community’s’ variety extends to: “*an actor, a scale of activity, a spatial setting, a form of network and a type of process*” (Walker, 2011: 777). But is it the case that this plurality and broad array of meaning eviscerates any potential of the term to mobilise and inspire environmental actors? Or does there still remain something progressive and motivational about the feel and appeal of ‘community’? Below I outline TTN’s use of ‘community’ in the groups looked at here, before going on to explore how its reinterpretation of ‘community’ grows from TTN’s permaculture heritage. This heritage is progressive, vanguard, and novel even: that is, ‘community’s’ centrifugal, *zuhanden*, practical-action nature.

### 5.1.1 *Zuhandenheit*

A key unexplored aspect of the ‘community’ found in TTN is *zuhandenheit*, which is to imply ‘community’s’ practical action nature, combined with a ‘just is’, being-in-community. This meaning is not strictly either connoted or denoted by TTN, but rather implied that the ‘community’ is itself a movement. Many in the groups looked at here all somehow assumed this to be innate to the notion of ‘community’. It is in the *doing* that the ‘community’ is understood, in practice not definition. Or rather, that ‘community’ is not understood, but rather realised. This is not – or cannot be – understood in a rational, codified sense. Rather it ‘just is’. This was often how ‘community’ was presented to me, as researcher with these groups. It was something ineffable, that couldn’t be expressed in words, or in an interview, rather I had to ‘go on a journey’ with them. The argument that ‘community’ has a truth that is unspeakable, and that ‘community’ is forged in and through practice are different. The value and reason for using *zuhanden* to describe ‘community’ here is that it encompasses both this being and practice

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<sup>115</sup> For instance the re-reading of community in ‘communitarianism’ (Etzioni, 1995).

dimension of what it means to be-in-community.

This does not mean that these meanings, or understandings, were not verbally expressed. Interviewees frequently gestured towards it, finding succinct words elusive. Often volunteers would attempt to express this and in doing so wondered aloud *"how can I say it..."* Some participants clearly valued the 'belonging' or 'normative' aspect to 'community' but could, would, or did not express this directly. For example when some volunteers talked the 'best bit' of 'community', they expressed it as 'swimming with the tide' when in a TTN group. This 'just is', or *zuhanden* aspect to 'community' is not something that can be read off from participants behaviour, actions, speech-acts, or discourse analysis. This sense of 'community' is not separate to its associations, but is the undergirding or starting point of them.

As Bauman puts it:

*"This understanding [of 'community'] does not need to be sought, let alone laboriously built or fought for: that understanding is there, ready-made and ready to use - so that we understand each other without words and never need to ask, apprehensively, 'what do you mean?' The kind of understanding on which community rests precedes all agreements and disagreements. Such understanding is not a finishing line, but the starting point of all togetherness."* (2001: 10 [emphasis in the original]).

One could say at this point that what 'community' denotes is action, doing. This is true, but only partially so. The awareness of this was not the ability to draw a line between the signified and signifier - rather it was a *"knowing in your bones"* (PEDAL 4). Many volunteers expressed reluctance to attempt to identify and define what 'community' meant. Doing so would represent an abstraction from what 'community' did. In this way 'community' stands for something - if it stands for anything - ineffable, grounding, perhaps what it means to be human.

Getting close to this one volunteer declared 'community' to be a by-word for 'practical projects'. This is what I have referred to as the *zuhanden*



nature of 'community'. In much of the data gathered, this summed up most neatly what many of the 'community' projects were about. The CCF funded them all as "*collective, practical action projects*".<sup>116</sup> This is how they were described from the top-down (CCF). From the bottom-up, there was more of sense that it could not be described as such. This wasn't due to inarticulateness; volunteers could be quite eloquent on other issues. Although we can see the 'community' dimension in the 'collective' part of this, Heidegger's concept of engaging with objects as *zuhanden* neatly encapsulates the 'practical' and 'action' parts of this definition. The projects were all purposive, that is they were focused on a specific goal, and they were also both means and end. That is they were operating as a 'community' not solely as an end in itself, but in order to use it as a tool to achieve something greater. In this sense 'community' was practical. The *zuhanden* nature of these 'community' projects was best summed up by one volunteer who simply stated:

*"I wouldn't put it ['community'] as a noun, I'd put it as a verb."* (TES 3).

Community-as-verb also helps to move beyond much of the history of academic debates around 'community'. At root, debates around whether 'community' is or should be normative or not: have a definite or indefinite article. Or around assumptions as to what that definite article (the 'community') implies: place-based, local, small scale, effective, etc. Yet often debates and writings on 'community' assume community-as-noun.

Community-as-verb denotes itself as practical and action orientated. It does so in a way that goes deeper than merely referring to a signifier, or elision with local, place, or scale. In the same way, Heidegger describes how the hammer becomes a part of the hand and arm when used as part of a task. The hammer is not "*grasped thematically as an occurring Thing*" (1962: 98), but rather it is in the act of hammering that its function of hammering is – beyond a theoretical knowledge of what a hammer is and does. Likewise

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<sup>116</sup> <http://ccf.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/> (Accessed 09/01/12)

'community's' task – getting on with doing something – is inherently part of what it is. 'Community' – for TTN – not a 'Thing' in itself; instead it is – like the hammer – that which enables one to achieve the task.

In interviews, I asked the variety of actors relevant for this study what difference taking a 'community-approach' made to the nature each group. Both those inside and out had similar things to say about this deliberately open-ended question. Those inside the groups were positive:

*"We work together, we do things together." We like to "keep things as practical as possible - not too fluffy." We "see what's practical and what can be done." (TES 6).*

The following can be seen as typical responses from those outside, but working with, these groups (the council, wider civil society, the environmental consultants employed):<sup>117</sup>

They were focused on meeting their needs, described in the third person as: *"not just something idealistic, something of use to us"* (TES 4). TTN groups were also described to me as having: *"the appreciation of the real, practical"* (Porty 1). TTN *"have always been a practical organisation, really pragmatic: How can we get stuff done? How can we get groups to change their behaviours? How can we implement stuff? How can we help people to do that?"* (PEDAL 5). TTN are *"getting their hands dirty and that's getting some real."* (CCF 1).

There were differences between how the different actors involved with and in the groups studied saw and characterised 'community'. Here however, various actors from both inside and outside the groups saw a common identification of 'community' as inherently tied up with its actions focus, its verb nature.

These common themes were continually hinted at as to the

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<sup>117</sup> These actors are all quite different, but are grouped together here to draw the connections between those outside and inside these 'community' groups.

distinctiveness of the 'community' approach. In the literature on 'community' it can sometimes be typecast as 'dreamy' or head-in-the-clouds, with examples like Christiania in Copenhagen (Jones, 2011). For whatever reasons the data from these groups tells us quite the opposite. Far from being 'dreamy' or 'fluffy', TTN use 'community' as a sort of *Trojan unicorn* for the group to coalesce around and as a wide enough placeholder to enable collective, widespread, effective, practical action. I often found 'community' in TES, TEU and PEDAL in the way Chatterton & Pickerill (2010) found other values among the activists they studied:

*"Values such as being anti-capitalist, and equality and justice were commonly shared and did form an almost invisible common ground, but they were rarely openly discussed or regularly interrogated"* (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2010: 486).

Perhaps this is due to the 'grounded', 'small-scale' approach taken. At times the *zuhanden* nature of 'community' was the stated aim or desire of these groups. One volunteer saw their vision for the Transition cell as: *"Capturing those communities of interest and allowing them to grow into something that's practical and possible."* (TES 3).

The opposite to this *zuhanden* nature of 'community' was seen as disembodied and abstract. The majority of participants took issue with the way environmental responsibility was reduced to a number - for instance the carbon footprint. In this the CCF was often parodied by those inside the 'community' groups as being only focused on numbers - specific carbon reduction targets.<sup>118</sup> TTN rather, was a 'real community', embodied, lived, and relational - but also driven by its desire to do something, to work together on a common task. Again, there was a common theme, by which it was meant that taking a 'community' approach meant actually working on something together. Not just talking about it, or even being able to describe it. The *zuhanden* nature of these groups was elegantly explained by one

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<sup>118</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/28142748/2> Demonstrates the CCF focus on numbers. (Accessed 1 Dec 2012)

volunteer. Transition groups were not a 'community' of place, or even of interest, but of "praxis". "It's the doing. It's head, heart and hand." (TES 1).

The value-added of seeing 'community' as *zuhanden* is in combining both the *being*, the experience of living 'community', with the 'community' forged through practice, working on a common task, that exists in TTN.

### 5.1.2 'Community' as Acquired not Sought

This *zuhanden* 'community' comprises two aspects: being-in-community, and its practical action nature. This being-in-community needs further fleshing out though. Chapter Four demonstrated the deliberate attempts to produce 'community' from the top-down, or from within these TTN groups. This section shows that often for TTN groups, the experience of being-in-community is not something that can be deliberately fostered, either from the top-down, emerges bottom-up or facilitated from within. This is the notion that 'community' cannot be approached directly, but rather appears supplementary, unknowingly, unwittingly, and surprisingly. 'Community' for volunteers was not something that could be directly aimed at, or deliberately planned. Rather it is that which sneaks up alongside when working together on something else. It is a supplementary, rather than overt goal. That is, 'community' for those within TTN is often acquired subtly, not sought directly.

'Community' is an encouraged and crucial side-effect of their work together on a common task, but it is not that which they seek to build above all else, to the detriment of their task. As the Young quote above indicates, seeking 'community' above all else can lead to the destruction of that very 'community'. Or rather 'community' becomes something much more insidious than what one was pursuing. Bonhoeffer<sup>119</sup> précised this: "*He [sic.] who loves the community destroys community, he who loves brethren builds community.*" Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* is one of most insightful texts on 'community' I read during the course of this research. As Frankl (2004) wrote of happiness, 'community' cannot be pursued, but rather ensues.

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<sup>119</sup> German Lutheran pastor, prominent anti-Nazi, and theologian.

'Community', for those in the TTN groups was often something that subtly appeared to 'just happen'. It was once described to be as 'sort of sneaking up on you from behind'. 'Community' said one staff worker couldn't be imposed, but rather "*people learn these kinds of values from their peers*" (TES 2).

'Community', despite the efforts of those in SOSO (described later in the chapter) to create the 'community' of the street, through websites, street events and information evenings 'just happened'. In a way that didn't seem to relate to the SOSO team's efforts. Sometimes these events resulted in a depth of relationship between participants, but there appeared to be no reason or rhyme to that.

In each of these TTN groups there was a focus upon a common task. This was the thing that drew the people together, and primarily what built 'community'. For example one TES volunteer described how a common task could draw everyone together. He described TTN thus: "*Come, let's meet together, learn how to do it and we'll go and do it.*" (TES 2).

There was one quote, from George MacLeod, that was mentioned to me a few times in the course of this study. MacLeod was a 'community' organiser and minister from Govan in the 1930's, and was responsible for the rebuilding of Iona Abbey, subsequently forming the Iona Community. He famously declared that the only thing that builds 'community' is a "*demanding common task*" (Ferguson, 2004). It must have all three dimensions, it must be common, and something worked on together. It must be a task, a practical activity we get on with (*zuhanden*). It must also be demanding. It is not something that costs little time, effort and energy. Those who most readily claimed belonging to PEDAL, TEU, or TES, based those claims on it having cost them. They had all three elements of this. For MacLeod the demanding common task was rebuilding Iona Abbey, for the TTN it was the journey towards a relocalised resilient future, practically seen in 'community' orchards, insulation schemes and consciousness raising.

This was recognised by many I spoke to within PEDAL, TES, and TEU (less so from outside them). "*People need a focus*" (TEU 4) for the

'community' to work. For people to 'chip-in' there needed to be a clear goal, which they attempt to achieve. There was a belief that the ultimate demanding common task was to come; when the world without oil arrives ("*when the shit hits the fan*") "*we will all end up, most of us, in a community*" (TSS 1). There was a certain necessity to it, while in affluent Edinburgh one can afford to feed and water oneself; there was less perceived need for a demanding common task. Survival was often proleptically envisioned as the ultimate demanding common task.

This is the case in TTN too. The key task of cells, so the plan goes, is to create an Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP). The EDAP is the key piece – perhaps object – of TTN's activities. An EDAP is a local plan detailing a step-by-step approach to reduce energy demand more broadly, and specifically dependence of oil, supplementary benefits include rejuvenating the local economy. Chapter Six explores the EDAP more fully, particularly Section 6.1.2. 'Community' here is the supplementary benefit, all focused on the demanding common task of writing and putting into action the EDAP. For sure, not every TTN group sees it this way, and perhaps, following Young above, these are the ones who become insular, (a clique) channeling energy away from their political aims.

Certainly those within the groups who had been involved with environmental activism before were well aware of this and spoke of being continually on guard against it. "*This is not just a social club*" (TES II).

One way of seeing this is in the story of PEDAL after the supermarket campaign. The demanding common task to protest against the incoming supermarket and to save the high street was won (Section 2.3.2). 'Community', as a supplementary benefit, had been realised. People did not join the campaign to be part of a 'community', but that is what they found after their successful campaign. The question facing this group was how to keep the spirit of collective action together, how to belong as a 'community' action group. The path they choose was to form a TTN group with that energy. They kept the 'community' together, not by pursuing it, but by substituting the demanding common task that had brought them together in the first place.

## 5.2 Governmentalised 'Community': Acquired or Sought?

Section 2.3.5 on the CCF and Section 4.1 showed way in which the CCF goes about strategically attempting to deploy 'community'. Seeing TTN's 'community' in Section 5.1 as acquired not sought, and *zuhanden*, would then appear to be a straight contradiction. Indeed these two views often were mutually exclusive and, as Section 6.3 will show, contributed to major sources of tensions in the TTN groups looked at here. There was the clear attempt to strategically deploy – or seek – 'community' from the top, like via the CCF. But from the bottom, from the volunteers and activists, 'community' was acquired, not sought. As this chapter seeks to see more clearly the practice of 'community', what it meant to those involved in TTN (at whatever level) it makes sense to assess this difference more here. In the rest of this section the various elisions made between 'community' and other terms (local, small-scale); the associated patterns of use (belonging); and the practice, meaning and role played by 'community' in TES, TEU, and PEDAL are more fully fleshed out.

### 5.2.1 Scale and *Zuhandenheit*

In what follows this strategic deployment of 'community' is placed against the beliefs, motivations and practices of those engaging in these groups – working from the ground up. Often volunteer's motivations for action were fuelled by the practical action potential of 'community' to 'do something new'. It is not so clean a split between CCF funders eliding 'community' with small scale, local, and place-bound, whereas TTN participants 'being' 'community' as *zuhanden*. These groups were as much internally as externally plural in their 'community' associations. Each group had those – primarily those paid staff, and key instigators behind each group – who sought to strategically deploy 'community', for instance towards a 'target community'. Yet more common amongst the volunteers, were phenomenological, *zuhanden* experiences: belonging to, being in, and

bringing about 'community' as an action.

Within Edinburgh's TTN groups, one type of actor did have a firmly local vision of 'community', those of each group's key individual. An example of this can be seen in December 2008. One influential individual expected to be interested in the TTN concept attended a talk from a Transition Totnes key figure:

*"Well, there was the Transition Edinburgh meeting that was organised by XXXX to kind of seed new groups. And at that meeting there was a few of us, and I was there, with a friend. And then we put ourselves into groups in the local area groups. And then I kind of, sort of became the kind of contact person for that group and that's how it started, in effect. From the people that were in my local area." (TES 4).*

The 'communities' that were to carry out the Transition were from their very inauguration conceived by those key individuals as local, neighbourhood-based entities.

'Community' was assumed to be at its most pure when it is, what social scientists have termed, a 'community of place', or 'geographical community'.<sup>120</sup> The belief that the most 'natural' form of 'community' is smaller in scale, and bound to location, came up a number of times in my data. When asked about TEU, a representative from Transition Network was aware that 'communities of interest' are 'community' in the definitional sense; *"but it also has negative aspects to it, when we look at communities that are not geographically based."* (TT 2).

The other forms of 'community' were seen as a by-product of the forces of modernity (mobility, individualism, or possibly the urban condition itself) But 'community' that gets things done - the 'community's' that results in 'actual practical changes' were locally based.

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<sup>120</sup> I have been tempted to insert a [Sic.] every time 'geographically' was used to imply territory or community of place in my data.



[In today's world,] *"we don't actually have to be community. We don't have to because we can move around. But we also don't have to, because we don't rely on the people around us. For the things that we need and getting used to the fact that we, you know, so it doesn't matter if we don't know our neighbours. It doesn't matter if we, you know, decide to up sticks and move to somewhere else. And it doesn't matter if all our friends are on the other side of town, even if we've lived in the same area for 20 years. Because we don't need our neighbours. We've got no need of them, whatsoever."* (TSS II)

'Community' rather stood against what were seen as Modern vices, consumption included:

*"We have a purpose, we buy into something that is happening – I'm interested in quality of life, I don't believe in high consumption. I've always believed in people living well together."* (TES 4).

Also possibly the urban condition itself:

*"Because they're seeing the huge job of transitioning cities is not possible, for a group of however large volunteers."* (CCF 1).

It was certainly common that those involved with these groups valorised the rural idyll. Typical was the idea that it is somehow harder to 'transition' towards a 'relocalised resilient community' in urban environments.

*"In a village, that's very different. It's probably; it's much easier to approach people. And I think it's much easier to you know, generate the momentum, where you have this critical mass of people, the critical mass has to be much smaller. If you have a village of 500, if you have 30 people who are going on the street, that's a big thing you know."* (TES 6).

Others held the same view. One CCF funded staff worker said: *“In order to have resilient communities what we have to do is to relocalise”* and later, *“We’re trying to get together and persuade people that we need to make our communities more local.”* (TES 6). Suggestions of a form of ‘community’ that was dispersed, transient, and still low carbon, were not received with enthusiasm. Other interviewees described these extra-territorial forms of ‘community’ as part of a ‘technocratic’ vision of the future. Despite acknowledging the potential for ‘community’ in non- or extra- local forms, local was still seen as better, or more natural, somehow.

*“I see community as just an extended network of people, who get to know each other and maybe have different aspects of their interests, with all the other people in the community, in that area. But there’s a different level of community, there’s the close neighbour kind of community ... you know living in Morningside,<sup>121</sup> what is it like as a Morningside, to live in that – you know how is that different from Grange<sup>121</sup> or from Marchmont<sup>121</sup> or from Bruntsfield?<sup>121</sup> So there’s somehow as humans, we organise ourselves in these kind of geographical units.”* (TES 2).

The local ‘community’ was seen as the ‘natural state of being’ - as someone else described it - to which the human belongs. This is, in some ways, the smoking gun of TTN. Their view of the ‘community as the natural state of being’, which – as we have seen in this section, is local, and - as we shall see in the next – is small scale.

### 5.2.2 ‘Community’s’ Elisions: Small-Scale, Local, Place Based

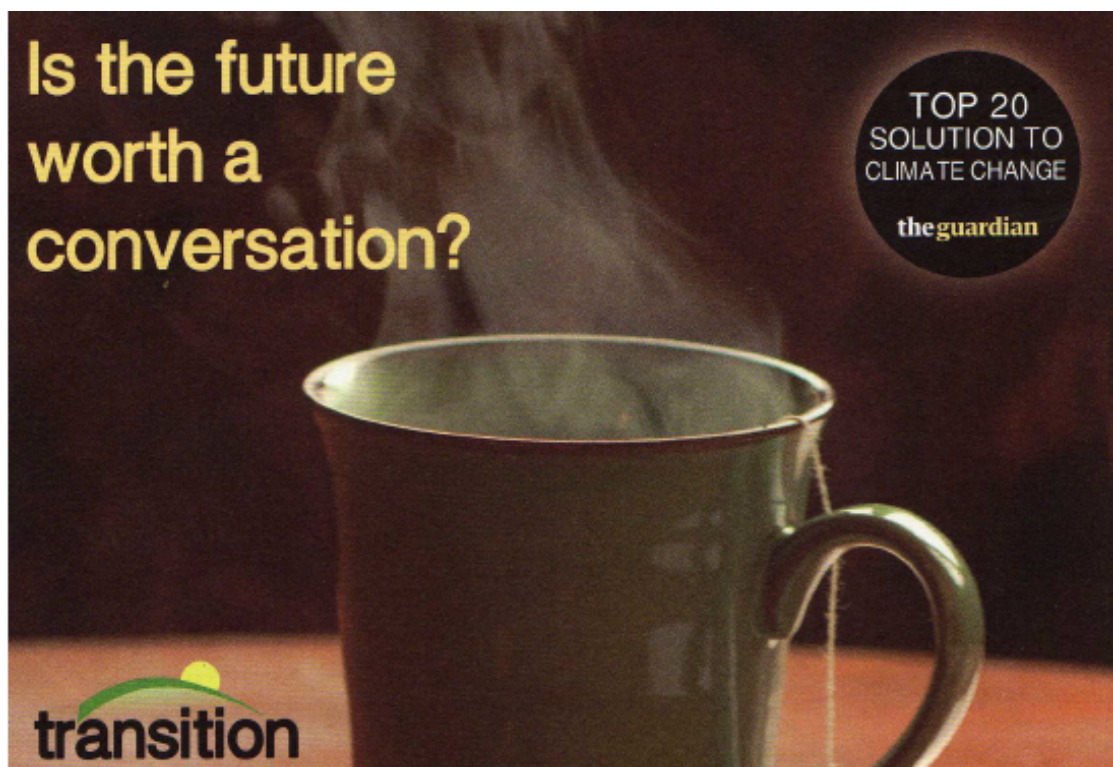
TTN then, do take the wider, positive, catch-all sense of ‘community’. Yet are also motivated by real world practical action. One example of this tension can be seen in their use of Carbon Conversations (CC).

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<sup>121</sup> Different areas of Edinburgh

CC is a program designed by Ruth Randall (2009a, 2009b) in order to help individuals reduce their Carbon Footprint (Hargreaves, 2012). On the surface, this course can seem to be individual in focus, however the notion of the 'group', and of meeting together are so important to the process, it cannot be described as a solely individual approach. This provokes an interesting dilemma: the course can take the group as its focus, yet it is for reasons of its 'community' dimension, and effectiveness for which it has been funded and brought in by TTN.

TTN groups I studied brought in the CC materials in order to use them for their claimed ability to cut Carbon (Clark, 2009), something the CCF stipulates as necessary for their awarding of funding. In this way CC and TTN do not necessarily share ideologies about the practice of 'community' in 'locality', 'community' here being used to smuggle in many of TTN's stated aims: awareness raising, the good life of conversation and discussion (See Figure 12). 'Community' appears often in the CC literature, and they too take aim at the individual, consumption focus of much of wider society. 'Community' was also mentioned as a motivation by those running the group. Since they were also employees of these TTN initiatives this is perhaps less surprising.



**When it comes to climate change, mixed messages are everywhere.**

Most people are concerned about climate change, but **how are we actually going to prevent it?** Turn our tellys off standby? Go live in a cave?

Here in Scotland, the average individual impact is, on average:

- 3x higher than the global average
- 6x bigger than the UK 2050 target
- 8x more than a sustainable average

If we really are going to protect our climate, some big changes are needed, but let's take it one step at a time...

**This is your invitation to Carbon Conversations**

5 discussions in a small group designed to help you kick start your low carbon life.

Each session is a supporting, non preaching space to:

- learn about our impact: energy, travel, food, & more
- share ideas
- create plans
- talk and meet new people
- begin to get a grip on climate change

Participants usually reduce their impact by a tonne during the course.

**GET STARTED**

**Enroll in a course**  
[www.teu.org.uk/conversations](http://www.teu.org.uk/conversations)  
[carbonconversations@teu.org.uk](mailto:carbonconversations@teu.org.uk)

Logos: natural scotland, people & planet, Cambridge Carbon Footprint

Figure 12: postcard to recruit participants for CC

CC can be seen as a ‘community’ programme with little local rootedness. The participants gather from many different areas to meet together for 6 consecutive evenings, plus one follow-up 2 months later. The course organisers talked of using the group as an ego-corrective, helping to norm behavior. Key to this is making it visible and explicit what carbon reduction behaviours people were undertaking to the group. ‘Community’ neatly sidesteps what Heiskanen et al. describe as the *“helplessness”* (2010: 7588) felt by many taking environmental actions. Often CC was described as a ‘community’ by participants, albeit a dispersed, transitory one. However the ‘community’ focus of this group was not only in the group itself. CC course participants, after completing the programme of meetings disperse, perhaps to never see each other again. They are not like other dispersed ‘communities’ who maintain themselves across distance. Rather, CC are deliberately transitory in their inception. The aim of the CC group I attended was to seed off other groups. We were told at the end to think of what we could do in our local area, our street, and our tenement. To embed ‘community’, to foster (local-)community.

This ‘community’ was set up as a network and there to support and

seed off the flourishing of other local forms of 'community'. The CC group itself was not to be locally rooted, and only accept members from a certain area. Yet its *telos*, the end point of its use, was still to strengthen more local forms of 'community'. The networked forms of 'community' employed by TTN did likewise, Transition Network being a good example. It describes its role *"to inspire, encourage, connect, support and train communities as they self-organise around the transition model"*,<sup>122</sup> and exists to support the growth of local 'community', seen as the more 'natural' kind. Even when the forms of 'community' practiced and utilised by TTN groups or not 'local', community of place, 'community' denoting place, is the norm. When, territorially nucleated examples are excluded, like CC, the small-scale aspect of 'community' is instead emphasised.

Here, there is a divergent understanding of 'community', between CCF, CC and TTN, but also internally within these. Crucial to TTN's success, 'community' has become a multiple placeholder, yet it also enables practical action. It is a banner under which many different actors can unite, a seemingly fluffy term under which radical conclusions can be smuggled, what Jones (2007: 43) has named a 'Trojan Unicorn'. Like a Trojan horse, but with some of the new age dimensions, TTN's deep transition fosters.

### 5.2.3 'Community' Elided with Local

Key figures within TTN draw on the 'local' nature of 'community', more than Carbon Conversations. However both were focused upon the small-scale nature of 'community'. Here it is important to note the two different aspects of scale – level and size. As seen in this section, TTN envisions the ideal 'community' as small scale both in terms of size (relatively low numbers), but also level. Here level indicates where 'community' exists: 'under the radar', below the mainstream, or at a grassroots level.

TTN's 'community' denoting local, indeed elided with it as Amin (2005) points out and criticizes, relates to the assumption that 'community'

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<sup>122</sup> <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/about> Accessed 1 Aug 2012

is inherently small scale. The Transition *Town* movement – as the name suggests – has always been concerned with operating within the medium sized units of geography: towns, not cities or villages, and ‘communities’, not individuals or governments/nations. The ‘Transition’ they talk of is driven by concerns over climate change and peak oil, and towards a ‘relocalised resilient community’; it is achieved through ‘community action’. The size and type of ‘community’ Transition Towns refer to here is that of the town. Around 10,000 people in size, coherent in scope, and firmly place-based. Transition Towns’ way of operating and conceiving of transition reflect their emergence in the peri-rural market towns of South West England; most prominently, Totnes.

TTN has faced the challenge of translating their understanding of ‘community’ from a (peri-)rural to an urban setting. The first thing to notice in this translation is that the scale is retained. The focus shifts from town to neighbourhood – but the envisioned place of transition is still seen at c.10,000 residents. When the TTN idea first arrived in Edinburgh, an attempt was made at a citywide group, as explored above. Before balking at the size of the task, and fragmenting into smaller, neighbourhood size initiatives – such as *PEDAL* in Portobello, the site for Scotland’s first TTN initiative, and one of the first urban examples anywhere.

The importance of scale (small scale, local) for TTN can be seen in their permaculture heritage. The scale talked of by those in the TTN groups studied here is ‘small’, but there was also a more specific actualisation of the scale of ‘community’ envisioned. One staff member envisioned a ‘community’ of “*sixty to seventy people*” (TES 2), another volunteer mentioned Malcolm Gladwell’s notion that the most efficient operating size of ‘community’ was 150 people (Gladwell, 2000: 169). A member of *PEDAL* mused on the perfect ‘community’ group being “*twenty or thirty*” people (*PEDAL* 5). One in Transition Edinburgh South (TES) said “*on our books we have over 170 people, but people who are really closely involved would probably have about - it changes quite a bit - but about 20 or 30, that kind of are closely count[ed] as our group.*” (TES 1).

Big was often seen as less preferable by those in TTN. Even

'community council wards' or 'neighbourhood partnership areas' were too big; these could brush over issues, weren't 'in-depth' enough, and did not have to address them directly. Being local, and being small scale were often linked by interviewees. *"Community keeps it simple, close"* (TT 1), said a representative from Totnes. 'Community' is the *"incidental, small scale interactions"* (TEU 5). Another described 'community' as *"human, personal"* (TEU 2). The 'community' scale is the small scale, the local scale, and the relational scale:

*"The community groups tend to be very small. They tend to be made up of a small number of very committed people, and they are committed usually not just to that group but to several other things that they are doing as well. They are the kinds of people who make commitments and get involved".* (TES 1)

#### 5.2.4 'Community' Denotes Belonging

This section looks at the additional meanings and significations implied when 'community' was used in this project. That 'community' is connotive as much as denotive has long been established. Douglas (1966) indicated that 'community' symbolised an attitude as much as it was a description.

'Community' was often invoked as a byword for belonging. Those in a 'community' scheme had a greater sense that it formed part of their identity than any other scheme. 'Community'-based projects were identified as being driven by the needs of those involved, for most of those I met within the groups there was a genuine feeling of ownership over the project, and its aims and direction. Much of the way this was introduced to me was through pointing out the differences between a 'community' approach and one that wasn't.

A 'community' scheme wasn't one tied up in bureaucracy, or feeling lost amongst a huge scheme. It was somehow graspable. The 'community' approach wasn't *"neighbourhood committees and panels and crap"* (CCF 1). Volunteers talked of their desires to feel they belonged to the project and

group. One was drawn to TES because: *"I'd really like to have our own project", "our own community"* (TES 6). One outside voice, who nevertheless had much dealing with TES noted *"allegiance and pride"* (EX) in the group. Another liked 'community' groups as they were small enough to *"still feel part of it"* (SP 2).

Interestingly some nuanced this. The belonging felt was often to the Transition initiative, not to the area, or even the project when I went deeper. One volunteer keenly pointed out how she belong not to any particular place, but TTN as a whole, exemplifying this by describing key relationships and friendship she had developed. Another volunteer with TES, on reflection stated a degree of antipathy towards his 'area', as often those living nearby don't care for TTN values either. It was - he claimed - more subjective. One feels one belongs. Another still, told me that I should describe these 'communities' only on the basis of self-identification.<sup>123</sup> Using the example of crime, where one is a victim only when that identification comes from within, likewise the belonging to a 'community' or not, cannot be labeled from outside.

One of the central features of those heavily involved in these groups was a real sense of solidarity and being collectively involved with others sharing the same beliefs. It is perhaps this commonality above all others that TTN base their 'community' ideal upon. *"Through transition groups you meet people who have similar interest to yourself, and I think that's what is important - it [the 'community'] is the value system that you buy into."* (TEU 4). This way of way of thinking, particularly this volunteer, resonates with the Iris Marian Young quote at the outset of this chapter.

In this sense, we could see the 'community' envisioned here, being a 'community of interest', it's just that the interest around which the 'community' is coalescing is that each are in some sense interested in feeling they belong. This is not to say whether such belonging is a need, at the level of fundamental human needs (Max-Neef 1991; Maslow 1943) it could just as

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<sup>123</sup> There is an interesting tension between those who 'belong' at an ontological level, thrown towards it, who wouldn't intellectually assent to such a statement. Compared to those who talk about belonging and place, perhaps as recognition of lack. Perhaps self-identification works for other social scientific concepts to community.



equally be narcissistic and egotistical, a desire to associate homogeneously only with those who hold the same beliefs, opinions and lifestyle choices. It is just to point out that when 'community' is invoked often what is denoted was a sense of belonging. *'The search to belong'* was even the title of an event TSS held in November 2010.

One potential driver for this desire for belonging, might come from those involved in such groups as activists, who are often new to the area. One councilor named it as *"lots of incomers involved in Transition"* (Porty 1). 'Incomers' here being often those from outside Scotland, but sometimes also Scots from beyond Edinburgh, or even the 'local' area. The phrase 'search to belong' came up in my notes a number of times, beyond the November 2010 event. One pointed out that with the decline in other forms of civil society organisations (faith groups, political parties) the TTN groups can offer that sense of belonging with other like-minded folk where other groups once served that need. One would need a larger sociological study to back up such claims, but it didn't run against the evidence I found.

For instance, when carrying out research on the joint efforts of St. Philip's church (Portobello) and PEDAL, it became clear that there were significant overlaps in how each related to territory, belief, and belonging. St. Philip's has its parish area - territorially demarcated, akin to PEDAL's 'target community'. Yet this is only loosely related to the 'core' (congregations for the church) - those who sustain the organisation and often come from outside the target area. Both groups believe they exist to serve the members of the territorially defined area (parish/Portobello). Both groups have powerful group norms based on feelings of belief. For St. Philip's they have obvious creeds and rituals, more subtly, but likewise PEDAL. The belief is in 'peer-reviewed science', climate change and peak oil - or as a member of PEDAL put it to me *"those who get it"* (PEDAL 2). Both groups also use notions of 'community' and belonging effectively. Effective in setting up groups norms. Also, in the belief that they, 'the core', are somehow proleptically inaugurating a future 'community', that will be rolled out and applied to the 'target community' or parish. Through similar methods and approaches, TTN could serve the function of belonging in civil

society that churches have in the past - for those who would be put off attending them now.

### 5.2.5 'Community' Denotes an Inclusive Belonging

'Community' meant for many of those involved in these projects belonging, but it also meant more than that. It was a *crucially* inclusive belonging. 'Community' was both inclusive and welcoming. For many theorists this runs contrary to the inherent in/out boundary nature 'community' requires.

For Derrida (2000) – as many others – 'community' is always exclusionary, setting up false insider/outsider boundaries. For him, hospitality on the other hand was what transgressed those boundaries. This sits within the post-structural tradition writing on 'community' of attempting to prioritise difference over unity (Delanty, 2010: 103-118). For Derrida the difference is to be found in transgressing the boundary of 'community'. Others such as Nancy (1991) seeks to highlight the internal difference within communities. For the evidence gathered here though, 'community', rather than appearing exclusive was linked to the ability to welcome all-comers. Perhaps this was a preemptive attempt to deflect accusations of self-interested groups, but nevertheless it was there.

Despite the deliberately vague nature and use of the 'community' label was the persistent perception that a 'community' was by nature welcoming, inclusive. Nailing down a definition here would result in the openness of the 'community' lessening - both in terms of semantics and hospitality. The sense of 'community' implying belonging was firmly denoted rather than connoted.

The 'community' approach was described as a "*holistic approach*" (TSS 2). It was, I was told, a false dichotomy to discuss the different realms of environmental action, because the 'community' approach includes everything and everyone. This holism was taken to quite a radical degree by the SOSO project. When I asked about the inclusive nature of the 'community' that takes a definite border to their work (only Woodburn Terrace), I had expected to find tensions. However, when I asked what was

transitioning, I was told it was the street 'community' that included everything, human and more-than-human. I asked speculatively, if all the residents were replaced by others, what would this do to the 'community'? No, I was told, something would still remain, the built environment, a legacy, the remaining infrastructure even the 'memory of the place'. This was a view of 'community' that included technologies, materials, practices and habits not just people. Perhaps being so certain as to where the physical, euclidean boundaries of their 'community' lay meant a welcoming of the intangibles. A phrase mentioned to me by a member of the PEDAL and St. Phillips link-up might cover this: 'roots down, walls down'. Although some evidence from Sociology would say that the more rooted people are, the more the walls actually go *up*, the idea from this volunteer was that the more rooted, grounded and secure one is, and in the perception of what ones 'community' is, the more one can welcome others and difference into the 'community'.

Otherwise, the inclusive nature of 'community' was seen as a good ideal to have. Because we were a 'community': "*we're not ideological*" (TSS II), "*what we want to do is to give everyone the opportunity to develop themselves*" (TES 4). Which is of course an ideological position.

PEDAL for example, was described to me as a "*real mix of people*" (PEDAL 6) unified solely because 'Transition is what interests them'. An environmental consultant who had worked with all three of TES, TEU, and PEDAL, when asked to pick out common themes in the groups claimed they were only "*united in their diversity*" (EX).

On my first exposure to TES I was continually told by one participant how welcome I was: "*You see it's a very open society. You could join today - you could come - we're having a session tonight, you could come to the session and join in. It's a very open community*" (TES 1). It was clear that being open was crucial to the legitimacy of these groups. Perhaps this was in order to demonstrate their deserving of funding to represent the 'wider community'. Perhaps too, it was to ward off the critiques of the middle-class accusations previously leveled at such groups (Trapese, 2008).

The border of TEU I was told "*has always been intentionally vague, the whole reason for this initiative [TEU] was to see if Transition could work as a*

*community, not a community defined geographically [sic.] but in a sort of community of interest.” (TEU II). The openness in both cases is very much part of their identity and understanding of what it is to be a ‘community’.*

*“GA: What is it that makes people club together?*

*TEU 3: It’s very innate isn’t it ...I think it’s possibly something we can’t even explain.”*

It is this ineffable, innate perceived quality to ‘community’ that became one of the primary reasons why ‘community’ denoted belonging.

### **5.2.6 ‘Community’ Denotes Belonging, as it is Self-Directed**

This section delves into ‘community’ as belonging, in the key way it rubbed up against ‘community’ as strategised, planned, and deployed centrally. ‘Community’ – for many volunteers – denoted a self-directed sense of ownership. A central understanding of what ‘community’ meant to those involved in the groups looked at here revolved around the notion that they were in some sense self-directed, that they could achieve the goals they set for themselves. In this way, ‘community’ denotes a ground-up sense of emergent, centripetal action. However, there are often power struggles despite, or because of, this. ‘Community’ here was opposed to imposed ways of operating or going about Carbon reduction or environmental action. ‘Community’ ‘went its own way’. By going its own way it is meant that the aims and ways of operating are internal to the ‘community’, not fulfilling another agenda. This is part of where the tension between the TTN focus on resilience and the CCF on Carbon accounting came in. Transition & resilience was seen as an internal desire to the ‘community’, whereas ‘abstract’ *“Accounting for Carbon”* (Lovell & MacKenzie, 2011) represented more of an ‘auditory’ approach (not emergent, but top-down).

This tension took two distinct forms. The first was a sense that the ‘community’ was a group of individuals who could act to greater effect,

where the whole was seen as greater than the sum of its parts.<sup>124</sup> But there was also a secondary meaning to this, whereby ‘community’ is category different to a group of individuals. In this one was enabled, edified almost, to increase their agency, to achieve much more than would be possible as an individual, even an individual in a supportive group.

Part of this sense was that ‘communities’ were not top-down, a ‘community’ template couldn’t be imposed from outside. Neither too, could exogenous aims be given to a ‘genuine’ existing ‘community’. ‘Community’ wasn’t something that came from the top-down:

*“There’s these two things, there’s the social norms, behaviour change from the top-down that you can set up and manipulate people by doing that. And I don’t think we’re trying to - we’re maybe achieving that - but I don’t think that’s something we’re consciously aiming for. What we’re trying to do is promote this, it’s just a sensible, normal - something any right thinking person would do.” (TSS II).*

Words like “*autonomous*” were continually used by volunteers when talking about what attracted them to TTN. Autonomous here refers to both the TTN group being outside larger control, but also those within the group are free to express and live out their ecological beliefs. The ‘norming’ that goes on in the ‘community’ was seen as freeing, rather than stifling.

TTN’s ‘community’ was self-directing: “*You don’t follow a rule book, you can evolve it as you like.*” (TES 6). It is interesting to note how the different actors approach rulebooks. TTN firmly started off as a self-immolating, auto-deconstructing entity. As TTN groups have encountered more success they have felt power struggles take root. As Scott-Cato & Hillier note: “*The Transition Network is beginning to demonstrate some arborescent, hierarchical tendencies, largely as an attempt to protect the Transition brand.*” (2010: 876). This will be more fully discussed when addressing how these groups have come to terms with success and tensions with funders, in the next chapter. In relation to the quote above though – it

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<sup>124</sup> A key permaculture concept (Burnett, 2008: 35).

is important to note that the notion of being self-directed was employed to serve particular purposes. I managed to interview some of those who had been very involved with one of the TTN groups, but since left. In all three cases this had resulted from tensions with the Influential Individual. The ability to renounce a rulebook where one wanted had a clear dimension of power to it.

As the saying goes, 'power denied is power abused'. In this case those charismatic key figures in each group, could renounce formal hierarchy, assuming (deliberately or not) in its place informal personal authority. They could set the behavioural norms that the 'community' regulated.

There was often a lot of 'norming'<sup>125</sup> to these groups – typical in the literature on 'community' (Delanty, 2010). TTN volunteers often felt surrounded by others who shared their ecological beliefs and behaviours. One vignette might explain this. At one of the planning meetings a friend of a regular had been brought along - in what felt like a friendly atmosphere she had talked about how the toilet in the flat where the meeting was held wasn't flushed. The newcomer felt this to be quite disgusting. However for those in the group, the phrase 'if it's brown, flush it down - if it's yellow, let it mellow' was used to highlight the overuse of water and the need not to flush at every opportunity. Here the standards of behaviour/belief become a definer of ones in/out status. Those who held such beliefs/ ascribed to such behaviours. Those in the groups may have been free to reject conventional norms - such as flushing the toilet. However they were enabled to do this through group norms, which encouraged and supported their beliefs and behaviours. Hence describing it as 'swimming with the tide'. It may have been true that they didn't follow the rulebook formally - despite the guru-like status ascribed to Rob Hopkins and his books, however this doesn't mean that norms and expected codes of behaviour were absent from these groups.

It is a curious situation then, whereby Transition's rulebook, or 12 steps, involves rejecting that rulebook. Step 11 out of 12 originally was "*Let*

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<sup>125</sup> The way 'community' creates certain expectations, assumed universals, or norms within its membership group.

*it go where it wants to go*" (Hopkins, 2008: 172). Yet, after that freedom is instituted, these groups become governed by informal codes and norms. This is not a case of 'who will liberate us from our liberators'. Rather it is those Influential Individuals, who wish to see the self-direction from these groups occurs within their frame of reference. Those involved in TTN in Totnes likewise want to see the initiatives 'go their own way' according to ways they can understand. Those I spoke to in Transition Network, seemed genuinely shocked that TEU could not have an EDAP yet. *"How can you be Transition without an EDAP?"* (TT 2). Having given the individual TTN volunteers the context for collective action, both the Influential Individuals, and those in Totnes, were then reluctant to see those people attempt their own centripetal action outside this context. A context that 'works' in terms of results, media coverage and number of initiatives.

*"There's all kind of whacky ideas in our groups, you know. And this is what's so lovely about it. So there is community of interests, so it's capturing those community of interests and allowing them that to grow into something that is practical and possible. You know and some people have a tendency to have a very negative view about what they can achieve, you know? Some people have never been enabled to develop, they have these ideas in their head, but have never been able to "Oh, I can't put it into practice" and in a way, as a group together, what we can say is 'yes, you can'! you know, so and so can contribute this, so and so can contribute that, we can do it, you know. So that's really in a way the strength of these groups."* (TES 4).

Much of this resides in Transition's prior beliefs and values as to what 'community' is and how it ought to operate. In one conversation I had with some of the key figures of Transition Totnes, I asked them about their relationship to technology. I found it interesting that they strongly rejected any notion of technology as being salvic, particularly geoengineering, biofuels or any form of GM. However they are very interested in some new technologies, for instance solar. Describing the 'viral' spread of their

movement, TTN often use Internet metaphors, such as a wiki, and open-source. In a case of a 'slip of the tongue' I asked just how Luddite TTN really was. What followed was huge treatise on who the Luddites were, their aims, and how they had been cruelly misrepresented, and parodied pejoratively. Entirely voluntarily these 'big beasts'<sup>126</sup> of TTN then proceeded to state that this misrepresentation of Luddites came second in annoyance to them only to the way the term 'anarchy' was used pejoratively. That they took such defense of terms 'anarchy' and 'luddite' tells much about their political philosophy. Luddism and Anarchism are key ideas that many in TTN have thought of much, and really value the philosophical basis of. Although by no means every TES, PEDAL, or TEU volunteer would describe themselves as an Anarchist, it is not uncommon.

In speaking to those who had left these groups (often due to issues of 'control', i.e. disagreeing with the Influential Individual, the groups function often resting within their 'control') it became clear that the groups were free – but that this in itself was no guarantor of virtue.

They weren't so much 'free to do what we tell you' as Hicks (1993) would have it. Rather it was that freedom was something of an ideology. One couldn't 'choose to conform' - conform to aspects of modernity (mobility, consumption). Often it seemed a genuine shock that someone, given a free choice, would rather live an independent, individual, consumptive life. When this was posited to them, it was tried to explain away, with various references to psychoanalysis, Stockholm syndrome, and most often not being a 'really' free choice. The overriding rule, was there were no rules. But this rejection of rules formally, led to an informal rule - of 'community' code of behaviour.

This belief impacted to a huge degree on how Transition groups carried out their projects. Much of the work, and skills had to come from within the 'community' themselves. One TES volunteer said:

*"We've been able to do quite a lot of things that are really growing our*

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<sup>126</sup> As they had been described to me.



*training capacity and that's quite important because we're not just interested in getting consultants to do things for us, but in getting consultants to do things for ourselves. To develop a skill base - right at the beginning this was our idea." (TES 1).*

This fits very nicely with the TTN idea of 'reskilling', from within the 'community' new skills are learned, preserved and the 'community' as a whole rises in its potential to do.

PEDAL's 'community' orchard was described in these terms. *"Nobody has gone into this with the idea that they're going to control who goes into the orchard. It was always intended to be free and with open access to it." (PEDAL 4).* The TES 'community' orchard as: *"Nobody owns anything, but everybody just works anywhere, and if anything is ready anybody can take it. Yeah, that's really cool." (TES 1).*

As one external consultant reflected to me *"its got quite sort of anarchist lines to it hasn't it?" (EX).* Other words she used to describe TEU, PEDAL, and TES were 'unstructured', 'unpredictable', 'risky', 'disorganised'. TTN would not have seen these as a bad thing. Ultimately this belief shows TTN groups have a high degree of faith in people organising themselves.

This belief did not solely come from TTN though. For the funders the agency and responsibility to spend the funding must reside within the 'communities' themselves. *"This group have voluntarily thought that it'd be a good thing to cut its carbon emissions by this much, we think it's a good idea, and we'd love to see them succeed, and here some money, we'll give them some money to do that." (CCF 1).* The sense here is very much that the will for transition come from within the 'community', they have the desire to act, and the CCF merely acts as a facilitator. *"It's actually the first time, for many of them, they've actually had to do this stuff for real." (CCF 1).*

A positive spin was put on all this, but there was a negative lurking too. These groups would advertise for individuals to do some work for them. TES for instance advertised for an 'unpaid internship' to redo their website, as no-one within the group had the skills. They relied that in an 'age of austerity' many skilled people out of work would wish to have something

extra for their CV, and cover any gaps in employment. Sure enough often such workers came forward. TES claimed ‘everyone could win’ in this situation. TES got their tasks without outsourcing, they could still claim to be reliant on skills from ‘within the community’, funders did not need to spend more, and the Big Society discourse could spread. Other volunteers and myself – from my privileged position as a researcher – were more skeptical, and critical.

By delving deeper into the tensions within ‘community’ in the example here, we see division in the practice of ‘community’, what it means, or has come to mean, and the role ‘community’ plays. ‘Community’ has attempted to be deployed to achieve certain goals and aims from above: targeted, demonstrated, sought. Yet, from below, from those within these groups, ‘community’ appears as something unrepresentable: a condition of being, something achieved through practice, something ineffable, yet fully known when experienced. By looking into the way ‘community’ often is seen to connote belonging, some of these tensions can be uncovered. By looking into one specific project though, we can see this tension ever more clearly. It is next that the Chapter turns to address *Switch On to Switching Off*.

### 5.3 Switched On to Switching Off (SOSO)

#### 5.3.1 SOSO

SOSO can act as a potential hinge between these *zuhanden* experiences of ‘community’, and the capacity for engaged practical action in TTN initiatives. This throws the differences between *zuhanden* ‘community’, and deployed, targeted ‘community’ together. SOSO attempted the deployment of *zuhandenheit* ‘community’ through its technique of Motivational Interviewing. This section then highlights the potential limits to strategically deploying this form of ‘community’.

The SOSO project is jointly delivered by Transition Edinburgh South (TES) and Edinburgh South Energy Efficiency (ESEE). Its attention focused upon two stone-built 19<sup>th</sup> century inner-city tenement streets in Edinburgh:

Woodburn Terrace and Hope Park.<sup>127</sup> SOSO's aim is to find novel and bespoke ways to reduce energy consumption in these streets. For this SOSO employ various strategies, central to their methodologies being Motivational Interviewing. Funded by the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund (CCF), SOSO also commissioned detailed NHER (National Home Energy Rating) surveys of the streets' typical households. SOSO worked in conjunction with partner organisations such as Changeworks, Scottish Education for Action and Development (SEAD), and Piper. Such organisations provided assistance in training TTN volunteers and gave detailed advice on energy efficiency and micro-renewables.



**Figure 13 Hope Terrace**

TES and SOSO have different focused 'target communities'. TES (claims to) represent Edinburgh's Southside as a whole, which has a population of at least 20,000. In contrast, SOSO adopted an intensively narrow focus: a single street of 200-300 residents. In what follows I outline this in greater depth before going on to discuss the role Motivational

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<sup>127</sup> For brevity only Woodburn Terrace will be focused on.

Interviewing has its endeavors. The focus on one street reflects a key part of the project's view of the ideal target 'community'. Territorially defined and bounded by location, it sees a target 'community' as locally defined 'community' of place.

### 5.3.2 Woodburn Terrace



Figure 14 Woodburn Terrace



The SOSO project targets Woodburn Terrace, a street in the Morningside area of Edinburgh. The four-storey buildings have small gardens only for those who live on the ground floor, and shared stairwells for those on floors

1 to 3. It has a reputation for being an affluent area. The postcode for Woodburn Terrace ranks at the highest possible level in three categories: 'family income', 'interest in current affairs' and being 'educated to degree level'.<sup>128</sup> In the ACORN designation of UK postcodes, it is in the 'Educated Urbanites' category, 'Number 16: Prosperous Young Professionals - flats'. The housing in the street is mostly traditional Scottish central-belt tenements. These are well built but lack some basic energy efficiency measures, such as double-glazing.<sup>129</sup> Like much of central Edinburgh it is also in a conservation area, meaning there are strong legislative hurdles to certain energy efficiency measures. For example, only recently has the law changed to allow sash windows, required by the conservation by-laws, to be double-glazed.



Figure 15 Woodburn Terrace

Given this, SOSO's vision of an energy efficient street then is a challenging one. However, it is also one where much headway can be made given the low environmental performance base. Important to note here is SOSO's techniques for achieving this 'transition' is their commitment to taking "*a novel, grassroots approach to tackling sustainability at an individual and community level*" (SOSO manual, 2010: 6). Their aim has dual foci: "*to build an increasing sense of community, and work towards sustainability*" (ibid.) It is important to identify that for SOSO environmental concerns are

<sup>128</sup> <http://www.upmystreet.com> (Accessed 01/08/12)

<sup>129</sup> Typical of Edinburgh's housing stock over one hundred years old.

only half of their *raison d'être* – ‘community’ is central too. It is both the destination, the intended outcome of their activities, and also tool or technique they will use to achieve their aims. For SOSO, ‘community’ is both means and end. Like Heidegger’s hammer, ‘community’ does the hammering.

### 5.3.3 Motivational Interviewing

Motivational interviewing (MI) is the cornerstone of SOSO’s efforts in targeting the residents of Woodburn Terrace. Jamieson described MI as “*empathetic authority*” (2012: 122), it is designed to alter behaviour of the participant, or target, person through empathetically listen to the resident, understanding and not judging their condition and concerns. But the interviewer is to actively intervene in order to change the behaviour, to set goals and targets to give a ‘positive’ outcome. Because of this MI can be seen as part of the rise in ‘liberal paternalism’ in the UK. All the other parts of their work, from the detailed study of the typical issues for their flat type, to training the interviewers, are built around this keystone. Those who carry out the motivational interviews have knowledge of the typical energy issues affecting the house they are to visit, from the energy reports commissioned by SOSO and provided by environmental consulting groups such as Changeworks.<sup>130</sup> Continuity is ensured as much as possible in the follow-up visits so that the volunteers carrying out the interviews have as much an opportunity as possible to build relationships with the residents. Knowledge of this information, alongside the training and grounding in psychological techniques equips the interviewers with the skills necessary to generate discussion, challenge thoughts, and provoke behaviour change.<sup>131</sup>

SOSO have developed a highly refined technique (MI) for their project. Their second training handbook runs to 74 pages of detailed descriptions, diagrams, and discussion of the process. It is all a bespoke

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<sup>130</sup> For instance, residents in top floor flats will have different issues (loss of heat through the ceiling), compared to those on the ground floor, which in turn impacts the effectiveness of potential energy efficiency measures.

<sup>131</sup> The interviewers can return to the residents in order to gather data for their ‘community audit’, or to give out free gifts such as smart meters or TV powerdown device.

design for the TES/SOSO volunteers to have “*at their fingertips*” the highest chance to “*empower community members [street residents] and support their potential for change and sustainability, in the context of domestic energy consumption.*” (SOSO manual, 2010: 5)

The Motivational Interview process involves 6 stages:

1. Preparation - This is the background work the volunteer interviewer puts in, reading the handbook, practicing the interview techniques with each other, identifying a specific approach to take in relation to each householder. Preparation also encompasses seemingly small details such as the phrasing of questions, soft skills that will decrease the possibility of an unsuccessful visit and increase the probability of behaviour change.<sup>132</sup>

2. Contact - Focuses here on small details again. Introducing SOSO as a “*community energy project*”<sup>133</sup> rather than TES. ‘Transition’ is seen as being more aloof, branded, and removed. This again highlights the belief that even the term ‘community’ brings down barriers. The volunteers were all encouraged to mention that we were part of a ‘community group’ and were neighbours and volunteers.

3. Visit - The crucial stage in which the interviewers enter the house/flat on Woodburn Terrace. The volunteers were encouraged to have prepared some “*striking statistics*” for “*WOW! Factor*”. The conversation was to continually return to revolve around central concepts such as climate change and what “*we can do about it*”. The residents were encouraged to think about becoming a Green Street initiative or setting a “*Community-level carbon saving target*”.

4. Follow up - This was achieved through leaflets summarising the visit, introduction to resources, and invites to events put on by SOSO/TES. These events varied from information sessions to purely ‘community building’ events, such as High Teas.

5. Evaluation - Qualitative analysis was carried out on the interview data, alongside feeding back to organisations that subsequently analyse the

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<sup>132</sup> Similar to recent work on ‘nudge thinking’ (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009), or ‘liberal paternalism’ (Pykett, J et al., 2011)

<sup>133</sup> All quotations in this sections are from the SOSO Handbook.

interviews effectiveness. Both Changeworks, and CCF's monitoring by Brook Lyndhurst are involved at this stage. This identifies and measures the effectiveness of MI and "*counts the carbon saved*".

6. Data Collection - This is a feedback stage helping to educate people to read and evaluate their own energy bills. Although named 'stage 6' the handbook emphasises this is a continuous iterative process, allowing continual feedback and tweaking.

MI was designed for and emerges from this project and street, being primarily conceptualised and configured by one of the streets residents, who is also a key figure in TES. Their prior experience as a Psychologist is strongly evidenced throughout the MI handbook, and other surrounding documentation. Statistics, ideas, and concepts are fully referenced. It deals with advanced, technical, conceptual ideas and techniques. The document is a product of local ingenuity and also the TTN belief in locally emerging projects. However it is important to remember the relatively privileged nature of Woodburn Terrace in terms of the time, talents, and resources of street residents, and SOSO volunteers. It is questionable whether this is easily replicable in Edinburgh's other streets with different characteristics.

Motivational Interviewing can be seen as an attempt to put to the use of the state, in the governing of carbon lives, the *zuhanden* aspects of 'community'. Chosen for funding by the CCF, it is also mentioned much in their promotional material. SOSO was one of the chosen projects looked at in the evaluation of the CCF by BrookLyndhurst. An evaluation the key civil servant responsible for the commissioning, said was "*designed to demonstrate success*" of the CCF. Yet how far *zuhandenheit* 'community' aspect can be fully instrumentalised – as the elisions between local, small scale have been – remains to be seen.

### 5.3.4 'Community' and Individual Motivational Interviewing

One potential critique of MI as a technique used to aid the transition to low carbon futures is that it is individually focused. As such it is not too dissimilar to previous attempts to identify the 'value-action-gap' (Barr &



Gilg, 2007). SOSO's interviews can and do have individual impact, and indeed this is encouraged in the training of potential interviewers, which I underwent. However when combined with other SOSO activities MI is prevented from becoming a glorified 'environmental pep talk'. There are particular aspects to the approach that make the location-based 'community' integral to the approach. SOSO takes the information from the interviews with householders and then analyse it to create what they call a 'Community Audit'.

The 'community' audit identifies trends and clusters of similar thoughts, motivations, or struggles in householders' attitudes. When this is combined with the data from the energy surveys the focus on a single street becomes more understandable. For example, close neighbours can be put in touch with those who are undergoing similar challenges and share thoughts with their environmental impact. Here the 'community' dimension sees close residents supporting and mutually reinforcing certain (visible) behaviour norms. However, recently these residents have had little or no contact with those who they live in very close proximity to. The urban setting can limit the impact neighbourly norms have, for example one clear outward sign of an environmental purchase, the difference between a hybrid and a 4x4, would not play out in an urban terraced street such as Woodburn Terrace with its dearth of parking spaces. Even through the sharing of stairwells and floors, ceilings and walls, tenement living can be just as individualistic as the rest of UK society.<sup>134</sup> The subtle reinforcing of behavioural norms that 'community' produces can have less impact in an urban setting than wished.

With grander ambitions, a National Home Energy Rating (NEHR) report identified the potential for certain micro-generation opportunities in Woodburn Terrace. Where there is a cluster of residents who are interested in certain options, SOSO brings them together with suppliers and can offer reduced, economies of scale, prices for such measures. This is perhaps the innovative area with the greatest potential in their plans. The cost benefits

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<sup>134</sup> One resident told me that in over 20 years of living in their family home, (s)he had only once came into contact with the family above - and that was when their shower broke and leaked into their flat below.

are spread across the street residents buying in the scheme.

The nature of the built infrastructure in Woodburn Terrace means any action on energy efficiency, impacts on neighbours. Due to the household centred way that each household pays the bills there can be little incentive for households to 'team up'. For example a flat on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor could take a measure to seal over some of the cornicing, and reduce the cold-bridging – which the reports identified as a major loss of heat in the flats. The loss of heat to the flat above, the flat on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor in this instance, then has to invest more in energy. The savings on the second floor might be offset by the third. Residents mentioned this possibility frequently. Some of the residents were quite up-front about their own individual flat focus. Not seeing the problems on a 'street view' as SOSO might wish, or idealise. There are options like heat loss through windows, where heat is lost to 'outside' where this is not the case too.

Economies of scale, the infrastructure, and the forming of clusters of similarly inclined groups within the street are all factors that rely, at least in part, on the locational proximity of the residents. Crucially too, the 'community' was seen as having sufficient depth to enable 'getting things done'. That is 'community' as *zuhanden*.

Yet the attempt to strategically deploy this *zuhanden* form of 'community' cannot be wholly strategic – at least in this example. Attempts to govern environmental behaviours and practices through nudge thinking (Thaler & Sunstein, 2009) or liberal paternalism (Pykett *et al.*, 2011) seem destined to become more frequent. The powerful aspects of 'community' – group norms, participant buy-in, phatic positivity – are attractive in the attempt to govern individuals' carbon lives. Yet it is the very attractiveness of this, which hints at its limit. 'Community', as Heidegger's hammer, is the actual engagement in the task, the job to be done, and cannot be objectively studied at a distance or strategically deployed. Such a mode of engagement is a category different, *vorhanden*, not *zuhanden*.

#### 5.4 Domesticating 'Community'?

Many of the discussions around the role 'community' plays in environmental governance take 'community' as the unit of analysis. This is to be welcomed, and can result in the critique of the seeming universal positive use and deployment of 'community'. But 'community' as a multiple placeholder requires further work.

Some prior excavation is required to analyse and assess how and why it is mobilised, to what ends, and by whom. Ultimately this is required before asking what it can achieve. Following this work here, it seems 'community' can be a Trojan unicorn, used to smuggle in radical alternatives underneath a seemingly benign banner. Yet, this also implies the potential for smuggling in other alternatives: coercive, regressive, or governmental. 'Community' can also provide the semblance of common ground, for divergent actors such as CCF and TTN to sit, along the lines of Hajer's 'discourse coalition'.<sup>135</sup> In this sense 'community' can reflect Shaw's aphorism about two sides 'divided by a common language' (Sacks, 2005: 88).<sup>136</sup> Deeper than the talk of semantics, elisions, or common placeholders though, 'community' can and does inspire and provoke all-too-real motivations for practical action projects.

It is the contention of this chapter, that it is often only in the doing, in the *zuhanden* engagement, community-as-verb aspects, where we can grasp the specific use of 'community'. Here 'community' is acquired, not sought, and can only ensue, not be directly pursued.

The phenomenological (*zuhanden*) reading of these communities allows one to see the radical and political potential of them. This goes beyond an element of a coalition, or another node or group. For instance environmental 'community' initiatives are not just another 'flavour' with a broader, existing movement – akin to the LGBTQIA<sup>137</sup> mobilisation within a trade union. Rather the groups described here are a category different. The

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<sup>135</sup> "an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices." (Hajer, 2002: 32)

<sup>136</sup> "America and England are two countries divided by a common language" George Bernard Shaw

<sup>137</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, or Asexual.

*zuhanden* aspect of 'community' cannot be fully domesticated and put to the use of the state, as attempted within the MI programme.

Given that I argue for a 'community' as a verb rather than a noun and its *zuhanden*, intuitive nature – what does this mean for a form of government that looks to govern through and by 'community'? 'Community' here is excessive to government – hence its radical potential. Yet on the other hand it has been entrained as a technology of government. There is a sense here with community-as-doing which is against the governmentalisation and instrumentalisation of 'community' identified earlier in the paper. Much like Heidegger's hammer, 'community' is not an object to be studied at a distance, or strategically deployed (*vorhanden*). Rather 'community' is the thing itself engaged in action (*zuhanden*).

The practice of 'community' within TTN is excessive, but also capacious. Practice here denotes how 'community' is enacted, lived, and deployed, when rubber hits the road. This is in contrast to the prior perception of 'community' before it is produced, nor a reified ideal type. In this sense Chapter Five has looked to some extent at the *meaning* of 'community' found within the groups looked at here. But the practice, or performance, or 'community' goes beyond meaning, or the practice of 'community' to see how the ideas attempted to be produced in Chapter Four have been taken up on the ground. This chapter has addressed more specifically how TTN utilises, deploys, and practices 'community'; how 'community' operates, and what it means for TTN.

As stated in Chapter One 'community' is incredibly important for TTN, but rarely understood, or critically appreciated how or why so. This chapter argues that this undertheorised, or rarely understood aspect of 'community', is inherently tied up with how it is enacted within TTN. That is because 'community' for TTN, often cannot be directly, cognitively, understood or approached. It is acquired not sought, and seen in its action based *zuhandenheit* aspects.

This is despite the way in which 'community' is increasingly deployed as a strategy to effectively discipline carbon lives. This is the way 'community' practice attempted to utilise its ego-corrective, moral

behaviour qualities, in the attempt to meet certain government targets, and strategic objectives. This chapter argues that this gets close to the more phenomenological being-in-‘community’ that TTN experience. Close enough to use the same language to describe it. Yet, this being-in-community is excessive to the strategic objective of ‘effective community’.

This tension is teased out through two key examples: SOSO and Carbon Conversations. In each example ‘community’ is practiced as a discourse coalition around which these two divergent understandings of ‘community’ (governmentalised and *zuhandenheit*) can sit. Even though these two cannot ever be fully reconciled. It is this irreconcilable practices and beliefs in ‘community’ that then creates tensions in the groups looked at here. It is these tensions that Chapter Six address.

## Chapter 6: What Can ‘Community’ Achieve? Time, Success, Tension

*“What have future generations ever done for us?”*

(Groucho Marx)

*“Step 1. Set up a steering group and design its demise from the outset.”*

The first of the ‘12 steps of Transition’

(Hopkins, 2008: 168)

*“We’re living on borrowed time”*

(TES volunteer)

This thesis seeks to understand ‘community’ within PEDAL, TES, and TEU. As shown, ‘community’ is crucial in their attempted ‘transition’ to a low carbon future, broadly understood. This chapter turns to the concept of that future directly, and investigates the particular relationship of the ‘community’ invoked, understood, and acted in these groups, to time. First, it assesses just what relationship TTN’s ‘community’ has to futurity. TTN invokes ‘community’ as an insurance policy against the future, as a temporal ‘event’, and has a fascinating, complex relationship to time. Anderson states *“geographers remain too wedded to the assumption that the future is either a blank or a telos. In contrast I begin from the presence of the future and the experience of that presence.”* (2010: 793) This can be true for TTN alongside geographers. Building on TTN’s idea and enacting of prolepsis, TTN’s relationship to the future strictly speaking eschews a blank or a telos. Yet both of these are there in their future, a future made present.

These questions then lead on to another issue – that of success. Just how possible futures are imagined, brought into being, and foreclosed is

related to how these groups see the ‘successful community’, or ‘successful transition’. TTN’s vision of success is part of their vision of resilience, and stems from their permaculture heritage. Success too is differently important for the CCF and creates certain tensions.

The third section of this chapter looks at the tensions, emerging both within and out with these groups. Primarily this is tied up with different worldviews, and perceptions of what constitutes future success, and how one orders one’s actions in the light of that vision. Primarily these tensions are revealed in the attitude to money, primarily the CCF funding. This offers a window into how an emerging hopeful, valorised movement (TTN) is coping with high pressure from researchers (myself included), and government funders (CCF). In all these three sections, a core question is presented to TTN. Just what is it ‘community’ can achieve?

## 6.1 The Proleptic Event

*“I asked for my horse to be brought from the stable. The servant didn’t understand me. So, I went into the stable, saddled my horse and got on it. Far away I heard a bugle sound out. I asked my servant what it meant but he didn’t know and hadn’t heard. By the gate he stopped me and asked: ‘Where are you riding to?’ I answered, ‘away from here, away from here, always away from here. Only by going that way can I reach my goal.’ ‘Then you know your target?’, he asked. ‘Yes’, I said, ‘I have already said so, “Away-From-Here”, that is my destination.’ ‘But, you have no provisions with you,’ he said. ‘I don’t need any,’ I said. ‘The journey is so long that I will die of hunger if I do not get something along the way. It is, fortunately, a truly immense journey.’”*

(Kafka, *der Aufbruch* [author’s translation])

*“a collectivity is already moving forward into the  
future”*

(Weil, 2006 [1949]: 8)

Social movements often respond to, or react away from a specific ‘event’<sup>138</sup> in the present or near past (Tilly, 2004; North, 2011: 1584-1585). For instance, a change in governing structures or the proposed new supermarket that sparked PCATS, the precursor to PEDAL. Even when movements are claimed to emerge ‘spontaneously’, there is often a trigger event, such as the shooting of Mark Duggan in Tottenham, or the self-immolation of Tunisian stallholder Mohamed Bouazizi, in sparking the 2011 summer uprisings in England, and the ‘Arab Spring’, respectively. The TTN groups looked at for this study have an interesting relationship to the idea of the ‘event’, distinct from the ‘event’ of Mark Duggan or Mohammad Bouazizi. TTN are proleptic in the sense that they anticipate future events, such as climate change and peak oil. Not only do they anticipate, but TTN also ‘act ahead of time’ as one staff member put it. They behave in a way not literally necessary or applicable to the present (such as life without oil), in order to proleptically inaugurate such a future. The ‘event’ TTN are proleptically responding to is an as-yet-to-come, imagined apocalyptic vision of a world without oil, battered by climate change. In this TTN perform a curious loop of imagining a future towards which society, or the world, is heading.<sup>139</sup> Instead of seeing this future as destination though, TTN re-imagine this future into the present through a process of ‘backcasting’, described below. Like the rider, in the above short story, TTN’s direction of travel, is ‘Away-from-here’ (*Weg-von-hier*). That is TTN’s goal (*das Ziel*). It is this ‘fidelity’ to

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<sup>138</sup> Event here is used philosophically, as a moment in time. For Badiou (2007) an event is an ‘intervention’, a breaking of ‘ordinary time’. For Caputo it is a ‘horizon breaching occasion’, ‘the event is truth’, <http://figureground.ca/2012/10/14/interview-with-john-d-caputo/> Accessed 31 10 2012

<sup>139</sup> Seen in the ‘canon’ of TTN literature, for instance the books of Heinberg *Powerdown*, *A World Without Oil*. More extreme resources mentioned to me during this research included the site <http://www.dieoff.org/> advocating voluntary human extinction.



a proleptically inaugurated future event, which is crucial to grasping TTN's relationship between time and 'community'.

TTN was founded as 'a *response* to the twin threats of climate change and peak oil',<sup>140</sup> this is what motivates and drives them. This raises the question, what is it exactly they are responding to? Climate change<sup>141</sup> and peak oil are not 'events' understood in conventional terms. That is, they are 'events' in the future, they are events only in so much as they are imagined, projected and planned for. These events are then responded to, only in so much as the response is to an imagined, inaugurated future, a future realised in the present. In this way TTN are a proleptic movement.

Social movements generally travel towards a specific desired future goal, or away from a definite event in the past. For instance, the Communist Party travels towards the common ownership of the means of production. Although away from private ownership, it is their intended future goal, which is clear, motivating and inspiring. Other movements see some dissatisfaction in the present or near past, and intent to move away from it. Many environmental justice campaigns have operated in this way. The 'events' symbolised by Mark Duggan or Mohamed Bouazizi above fit this pattern too. The transition TTN envisions doesn't however strictly fit into either of these categories.

The TTN groups studied here do intend to travel, but they are not travelling directly towards something. Like Kafka's rider, at first they appear to be travelling somewhere – low carbon society perhaps. But on closer questioning, it appears that that somewhere they are travelling to, is actually an 'Away-From-Here'. They are travelling away from something, but that something – climate change and peak oil – is imagined, forecasted, and predicted. These events are imagined into the present, or near past, before reacting to them. In this way TTN – akin to the peace movement and nuclear

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<sup>140</sup> <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/why-do-transition> Accessed 20 10 2012

<sup>141</sup> Climate change is of course happening now; it is present. However TTN often portrays climate change as 'in the future' where: urban life is untenable, regular extreme weather events will occur, and there is flooding of low-lying major cities due to rising sea levels.

war – are moving away from a future event, a subtle but important distinction.<sup>142</sup>

One way to describe this can be seen in the above short story by Franz Kafka. TTN are utopian. TTN's goal, like the rider's is to be away from here. To be away-from-here though, is not simply to be in another place, an 'over there'. It is rather, as Judith Butler's interpretation of this short story indicates, to be "*free of the spatio-temporal conditions of 'here'. We would not only have to be elsewhere, but that very elsewhere would have to transcend the spatio-temporal conditions of any existing place*" (Butler, 2011). In this way, utopia – literally *u topos* (no place) – according to Thomas More, is this very *Weg-von-hier*, which the rider attempts to reach. TTN seek to reach/attain a utopian away-from-here. For Foucault too "*utopias are sites with no real place*" (1967).

The key theoriser of this 'on the move'/'away from here' is Derrida. Here Kafka, much admired by Derrida, can be seen here as foreshadowing the Derridean 'on the move', and 'away from here' key characteristic of deconstruction. Derrida, moving away from literary theory, to concerns over ethics, hospitality and justice, increasingly stressed this 'on the move' towards the end of his career and life.<sup>143</sup> Key interpreters of Derrida – notably Caputo (1997, 2006, 2013; Caputo & Derrida, 1997) and Kearney (2004) – state that for Derrida, this continual travelling 'away-from-here' (*Weg-von-hier*) is the essence (no irony intended) of deconstruction.

How does this relate to TTN's 'community'? Derrida was openly hostile to 'community' – the focus of attention here:

*"I don't much like the word community, I am not even sure I like the thing. If by community one implies, as is often the case, a harmonious group, consensus, and fundamental agreement beneath the phenomena of discord or war, then I don't believe in it very much and I sense in it as*

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<sup>142</sup> This does not assume that this is unique to TTN, still less does it assume the singularity of all events, or movements. Even UK environmental policy talks of "Putting Britain on the path to a low Carbon future" (DFT, 2009: 3).

<sup>143</sup> As seen in the shift of focus from works such as, say, *Of Grammatology* (1974) and *Writing and Difference* (1978) to *Of Hospitality* (2000) and *Acts of Religion* (2002).

*much a threat as promise. There is also doubtless this irrepressible desire for a 'community' to form but also for it to know its limit – and for its limit to be its opening.”* (Derrida, 1995:355). Community is to *“build a common (com) defence (munis), as a wall is put up around a city to keep the stranger or foreigner out.”* (Derrida, 1997:108)

Derrida’s deep-rooted suspicion of ‘community’ – continually linked etymologically by Derrida to munitions, ‘community’ being a common defence – has been understood as *“reducing the ethical commitment to the other”* (Wortham, 2010: 74). ‘Community’ is not the problem for Derrida *per se*, rather it is when one removes oneself from engagement with the other – a perennial concern of his. Derrida nevertheless saw ‘community’ as having the potential to live up to its promise – the promise of *being-with-others*.

Without this opening, the transgression of this limit, ‘community’ becomes regressive, and eventually, fascist. It is in the being on the move, in the travelling away-from-here, that TTN and the ‘community’ they envision can become progressive, a movement rather than an institution. Without this progressive sense, the ‘straw man’ of the reified, romantic ‘community’ of place becomes an ideal type, constraining and suffocating the ‘natural’ vibrancy to any ‘community’. TTN – theoretically at least – travel hopefully into futurity,<sup>144</sup> away from the proleptic apocalypse. A future apocalypse, inaugurated into the present or near past.

What of this exists in the examples looked at for this study? An aspect of TTN’s proleptic thinking can be seen in Kafka, but also in evidence that these groups see themselves as *Living in the End Times* (Zizek, 2010). In this, the apocalypse, a state of permanent crisis, can be identified in ‘reading the surrounding signs’ as apocalyptic, TTN can be seen to reflect and fit into this understanding of what it is to exist now. In the activities described above (Section 2.4: film screening, Carbon Conversations, conferences, Big Switch), the raising of the ‘consciousness’ of the impending apocalypse, is integral to

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<sup>144</sup> Futurity is preferred to ‘the future’, due to the open-ended nature of many possible futures, not presuming a definite ‘the’.

TTN, and serves as the justification to their larger scale projects (SOSO, wind turbine, gardening). Each of these projects can be seen as an attempt to move *Weg-von-hier*: away from future climate change, peak oil and the apocalypse.

How is it that the ‘Weg-von-heir’ impulse can prevent ‘community’ from being homogenous, reified, reactionary, fascist even?

*“The privilege granted to unity, to totality, to organic ensembles, to community as a homogenized whole – this is a danger for responsibility, for decision, for ethics, for politics. That is why I insisted upon what prevents unity from closing upon itself, from being closed up.”* (Derrida, 1997: 13)

For Derrida, and Kafka, ‘community’ needs an opening, a transgression in order to fulfil itself. This Derrida thought of as ‘hospitality’. The utopian impulse to move ‘away from here’, not to be set on a destination, but to continually deconstruct the present, and present environment, is not just in Derrida and Kafka, but TTN’s theoretical underpinnings too. It is to this will to deconstruct, to transgress itself, and move away-from-here, that can be seen within TTN’s ideology.

So far, so theoretical. Next this chapter turns to TTN empirically, to what extent do they tend towards the ossified, regressive community-as-closed? Or do they live up to their theoretical permaculture-based, deconstruction-compatible promise? To move away-from-here, temporally displaced, continually striving to reach their utopian destination.

### 6.1.1 Weg-von-hier in the Transition Town Network

The event<sup>145</sup> that is in ‘the future’, the event that gives TTN their *raison d’être*, is made present by and in them. It is made present not only though

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<sup>145</sup> Climate change is continuous, and can be described as a process, rather than an event. Yet the way it is invoked by these TTN groups – “*when the shit hits the fan*”, “*when the oil*

these TTN group's talking, thinking, writing about it and thus giving it some present purchase. The apocalyptic event is also made present through TTN's actions. By preparing for such an event, and by acting as if this event is imminent, or even present, it becomes a process of ordering ones actions. TTN's actions are ordered in light of the perceived presence of the event *to-come*. This action by TTN primarily consists of ordering oneself and acting as a 'community'.

TTN have shown themselves to be remarkably adept at using the 'apocalyptic narrative'. What North terms using "*dangerous climate change as a mobilising issue*" (North, 2011: 1584). After the economic crunch in the autumn of 2008, the Transition Network website added a third harbinger of doom and talked of three threats to civilisation of economic contraction alongside their established two of peak oil and climate change. Whether or not such an apocalypse is about to occur or not, it becomes more than just an idea, an 'out there', when one begins to act as if 'the apocalypse' will occur, or is occurring. TTN mobilise as individuals and groups, to form 'communities' around such a concept. This performativity of the apocalypse brings the 'Transitioning' into the present. Ironically at the same time as 'acting against it', attempting to forestall and immobilise the apocalyptic event, TTN are transforming it from an apocalyptic event, to a proleptic one. TTN's prolepsis is both prefigurative and performative. Performative as it is in the acting against where they partially bring it into being; prefigurative, in the sense that they are attempting to provide an early example of what 'communities of the future'<sup>146</sup> will have to look and be like. The TTN mode of operating is based on travelling away from this proleptic apocalyptic event – as a 'community'. Step 11 of their original founding 12 steps appreciated this:

*"Step 11: Let it [the TTN group] go where it wants to go. Step 11 is really pretty straightforward, requiring very little elucidation. In essence, if you start out developing your Transition process with a clear*

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*runs out*", "we will be overrun with climate refugees" – is often in the manner of an event described above, an 'intervention', or 'unveiling'.

<sup>146</sup> How one staff worker described what TTN's ultimate aim to establish was.

*idea of where it will go, it will inevitably go elsewhere. You need to be open to it ... facilitating people asking the right questions, rather than to come up with the right answers.” (Hopkins, 2008: 172).*

The ‘right questions’ here are becoming more interested in the ‘peer-reviewed science of climate change’ and acceptance of peak oil.<sup>147</sup> The open answer indicates the many possible futures in which the response to this challenge may take. This is the internal contradiction I wish to bring attention to in this chapter. In theory, TTN are ‘open to the future’, in practice, there is the ‘correct way to be open to the future’. This is essential to grasp before understanding TTN’s tensions with funding structures, such as the CCF, below.

In this way TTN theoretically fits with the Derridean/Kafkaesque ‘away-from-here’ of the previous section. The transition is ‘away from here’. There is no prior planning concerning destination, not even vector or direction of travel. Just the desire to move, and to get away from here. “*We don’t know exactly what to do, but we know we have to act now.*” (PEDAL 5). But the here TTN and the three Edinburgh groups are moving away from is not here (as in the here and now, fully tangible, and material present), it is the both ‘now’ and ‘not yet’ of the impending proleptic apocalypse. It is a there that appears here. This is the event that TTN are to be ‘on the move’ from.

TTN theory talks of decisions been made by consensus and of directions being reached through a process of emergence. The movement, and the three Edinburgh TTN groups, uses *Open Space* ways of operating (Hopkins, 2008: 168-169). *Open Space* is a methodology for reaching decisions, and has four rules:

1. Whoever comes are the right people.

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<sup>147</sup> As Monbiot (2012) indicates, with the discovery of ‘fracking’, shale gas, and tar sands oil, this consensus within TTN is being challenged. At the time the research was carried out though, it was near universally accepted.  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/02/peak-oil-we-we-wrong>  
(Accessed 08 11 12)

2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have.
3. Whenever it starts is the right time.
4. When it's over, it's over.

TTN is designed to be open-source and bottom-up. It is conceived as the very opposite of what Shove & Walker (2007; 2008) describe as “*Transition management*” and the detrimental effects of this. The destination is open-ended, emergent. So far, so fitting with ideas of moving ‘away-from-here’. This is how TTN combine the mobilising event being a future one, and also characterising possible future(s) as open and possible - by using the proleptic event. This theoretical position is challenged however, whenever one brings up potential responses to this proleptic event, such as geo-engineering, or a high-tech, super-individualised future. TTN are open in theory, but – again, and very importantly – there is a correct way in which to be open.

In Badiou’s terminology the only way one can be truthful is to stay faithful to the event.<sup>148</sup> But in the partially perceptible, almost accessible, apocalyptic event of climate change of peak oil that is realised in the present, is this the event TTN remain faithful to? Surely not, as they seek to avert such an event. TTN are built in opposition to it. Perhaps here it is interesting to note another of TTN’s temporal techniques, this time not of foretelling a given future into the present, but of harking back into an idealised past. When TTN are faced with justifying the plausibility of each town, village and neighbourhood growing their own food, becoming resilient, self-reliant, they talk about the ‘Dig For Victory’ campaign in WWII. Look back and see what remarkable things were achieved then, TTN say. ‘Community’ here is never present, at least ‘community’ as PEDAL, TES, and TEU described and idealised it. It is always temporally displaced. Either back towards an imagined utopia where ‘we all clubbed together’<sup>149</sup> akin to WWII, or forward

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<sup>148</sup> For more see Badiou’s *Being and Event* (2007) pp. 232- 239

<sup>149</sup> PEDAL volunteer

to an imagined utopia where ‘all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well’.<sup>150</sup>

But, as Anderson and Harrison, following Derrida, express it “ *we can only define the event negatively – the event is the impossible which happens*” (2010: 22). Integral to the event, the event as rupture, is its unforeseen nature. They are unexpected, unanticipated and radically alterior. Does it make sense then to talk of an impending apocalypse as an ‘event’? Well, yes and no. The apocalypse that TTN envisions is both wholly expected (that extreme weather events will increase) and entirely unpredictable (where and when will such extreme events occur). Indeed from a geophysics point of view this unpredictability is all the more certain given the increase in energy in the earth’s system. The proleptically inaugurated event then is (an almost ‘Rumsfeldian’) certain uncertainty, a known unknown.

So the apocalypse is seen as an event, and in the TTN ‘paradigm’ this is realised in their planning for and anticipation of *A World Without Oil*, as the documentary has it. This view of the task facing ‘community’ is one that is irreducible to ‘localism’, and possibly neither any established form of political action. It is acting as a collective, the essence of being political. As Zizek states:

*“In order to approach these problems adequately, it will be necessary to invent new forms of large-scale collective action; neither standard forms of state intervention nor the much-praised forms of local self-organisation will be up to the job.”* (2009: 84).

Both simultaneously pre-emptively enacting and acting to avoid the apocalypse, TTN’s vision of ‘community’ is inherently tied up with time. This proleptic character of TTN in PEDAL, TEU, and TES shall next be fleshed out with examples of the view from TTN theory (the books, publications, websites, etc.) that concern this, then with the view from the participants.

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<sup>150</sup> Attributed to Julian of Norwich, and referred to by a TTN volunteer.



### 6.1.2 Backcasting

The core action plan for TTN groups is the Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP). This is the year-by-year, blow-by-blow schedule for how they will reduce their reliance on insecure energy sources (i.e. fossil fuels) in order to build the 'resilient relocalised community'. More often than not, they also include the wider aims of TTN, such as local food plans. "An EDAP sets out the vision for a powered-down, resilient, relocalised future, and then backcasts, in a series of practical steps, creating a map for getting from here to there." (Hopkins, 2008: 172). Key to this is the 'backcasting' component. Frustrated with the perceived mainstream myopia, and 'clairvoyance of current forecasting' (staff member),<sup>151</sup> backcasting posits a different relationship to futurity 'from the mainstream'. From the intended destination, (2020, 2015, or 2050) the small achievable steps that need to be taken in order to reach the desired goal are worked back to the present day. This technique – similar to others employed by DECC (2009), or CAT's 'Zero Carbon Britain 2030' report – enables both a wide, sweeping vision to be inspired, but also small, practical tasks to be done. The different temperaments of 'diggers and dreamers'<sup>152</sup> can work to the same task and schedule.

It is worth noting here that this can be seen as theoretically incompatible with the *Open Space* beliefs and techniques described above (Section 1.1). TTN, TES, TEU, and PEDAL, though don't desire to be theoretically 'pure', and neither does this analysis. However it is interested in how TTN manage this contradiction, and how these ideas motivate and mobilise them. This internal contradiction within TTN is essential to grasp though. Without being able to justify a set future through backcasting, TTN appear without any certainty. Without *Open Space* (Section 6.1.1), the future can seem predetermined, and cynicism sets in. TTN staff and volunteers flit

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<sup>151</sup> One of many examples given of dissatisfaction with forecasting was given to me during this research, from weather forecasters, to the economic forecasters who 'singularly failed to see the recession coming'.

<sup>152</sup> As the parlance has it. <http://www.diggersanddreamers.org.uk/> Accessed 31 10 2012

between these two positions depending on which vision of the future is most amenable at which point.

It may seem with backcasting, that the goal is still a vision to be built. However the inspiration behind this often comes from the date of the plan (2015, 2020, 2050, whenever) being seen as dystopic, or apocalyptic. It was this vision that was the motivation for working towards the EDAP, 'resilient, relocalised community' vision. Backcasting was described by one Influential Individual as *"The core technique of Transition, it brings the future to bear in the present."* (TSS II).

TTN, akin to DEFRA, HSBC, and others, are fond of talking about 'future-proofing'. For TTN though 'community' is a sort of insulation against the future, insurance for whatever shock may befall them. 'Community' seen as the essence of 'resilience', indeed one can be read as a proxy for the other in these groups. TEU participants emphasised the importance to me of 'open-ended planning', of the importance of re-imagining the university in 2015. In this there was an emphasis of multiple possible futures, but also backcasting. There was a definite vision of the university in 2015, which was then reacted to. The other TTN groups (TES, PEDAL) all had similar views and plans.

For each group studied here this goal, vision, or telos, was loosely held. A vague drifting towards rather than fast and direct, travelling as peregrination rather than SatNav A to B journeying. However the apocalyptic propulsion behind working for this vision was uncontested. It often formed a powerful in/out norming boundary for the 'Transition community', decided by whether or not one 'believed in peer reviewed science', as one put it. Another was keen to point out the almost Gnostic qualities of the TTN movement. *"Most people don't see it [the apocalypse] coming, but we have to prepare for it"* (TES 4).

The future here acts as a resource to be used for the present. The political inspiration behind the anti-globalisation slogan of the 1990's – 'Another world is possible', or (re)imagining the world created anew, nearly evaporates. The groups can still journey 'away from' this present proleptic event. Yet, the mobilizing force behind this prolepsis, is that such an event

(an apocalypse) is in some sense inevitable. Ironically, TTN's empowering narrative of 'taking control of our future', rests on some fairly accepting assumptions about what is or isn't possible when people collaborate on projects together.

### 6.1.3 Transition Town Network and Time: Participants

These theoretical ideas were in evidence in conversations and time spent with the participants of these groups. One of the influential individuals of TES was quite clear on this topic. 'Transition is about the future' she declared. *"I'm seeing this is about the future."* (TES 4). Then followed a conversation around the ways TTN and others describe future events, ranging between open possible futures, and a closed, unidirectional, and linear 'the future'.<sup>153</sup> I thought this might encourage further reflection on the continual refrains I had heard around the TTN groups in Edinburgh: 'Edinburgh needs to be future-proofed', 'we're saving the future!' Wasn't seeing the future as determined, and linear, as 'the', not a closed way to think? Didn't that way lie determinism, apathy and accepting belief in the apocalypse? Unexpectedly she responded: *"That's right. So there will be time, before this hits. I mean, it's one of these issues that you get back to at the end of life."* (TES 4). She went on to describe the very bad things that will happen: climate refugees, warfare, famine, floods, and droughts, using the word 'Biblical' a number of times. There was a firm belief that *"it's gonna be just like the Hopkins books"* (TES 4) and the other literature TTN refer to, like Heinberg's *'Powerdown'* (2005), referred to above as the TTN 'canon'.

For all the TTN talk of 'taking control of our future', there is a strong apocalyptic strand running through TTN. This though was a very deliberate strategy from some of those within TTN. By positing a very real and near apocalyptic threat, they could use this to react to it. It was seen as mobilizing, inspiring rather than fostering apathy and cynicism. One key

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<sup>153</sup> My opening of this topic coming from a close reading of Massey's (2005) reflections on this.

Totnes figure said about the apocalypse: *"Yeah, I'm trying to trigger that."* (TT1).

Initially I took this to be shorthand for trying to trigger the awareness of the coming apocalypse. But a reappraisal could be that they did indeed intend to trigger the apocalypse – the apocalypse as a proleptically inaugurated event, which TTN would then travel 'away from'. TTN's actions also fit with reading the apocalypse as radical and anti-imperial, *"not merely as a coded future prediction, informing reactionary politics"* (Megoran, 2012: 5).

As so often with the terminology in these groups, the relationship of TTN to time was expressed in the Patrick Geddes inspired triad of 'Head, Heart and Hand'. The TTN temporal version of this was mused on by one volunteer. *"Transition is present-orientated in terms of action, but future orientated in terms of view."* But what about the 'dig for victory', 'Blitz spirit' posters and branding? *"Well, maybe there is some past orientated."* ... *"Perhaps the hand is the present, what we do. Our head is in the future though, so maybe our heart is in the past?"* (TEU 5).

It is interesting to reflect that the 'ideal community' often posited by those in TTN is defined in terms of space (reified, place-based, territory-bound), yet imagined across time, just out-of-sight (in future, when the apocalypse hits, or a past 'Blitz spirit', grandparents generation). Much akin to Jones – a writer a participant referred me to:

*"Another thing that the majority of Thatcher's children have never experienced is, possibly, even more elusive: a sense of community. Our society is now so atomised, privatised and individualised that most people under, say, thirty, have no idea of what a community, a real community, is truly like. I, along with most of my peers, had only this quaint idea from the wistful descriptions of elders who had grown up in one."* (Jones, 2007: 2).

The temporal deferment of 'community' then is shifted towards the past as much as it is 'the future'. Yet it is futurity that gives these groups their mobilising force, and compulsion to act now.

#### 6.1.4 Temporal 'Community'

*"There is a time for everything, a season for every activity"*

(Ecclesiastes 3:1)

*"time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, time in the mode of a festival. These heterotopias are not orientated towards the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal."*

(Foucault, 1967)

This section looks more specifically at the various ways the three TTN groups interact with time. For many of the interventions employed by these groups, the notion of temporality was crucial. Guerrilla Gardeners or the one-off festivals are examples of initiatives that were designed to last a limited period of time. Other events had certain diurnal, or other seasonal rhythms to them: such as once a month farmers markets in Portobello and many of TEU's awareness raising events. A crucial aspect for many of these is the temporary, carnival-esque nature of these occasions. The intended design wasn't to be a long-term or 'sustainable' venture. By making such an intervention into the everyday experiences of those around them – the belief is that long-term legacy would live on, not in the intervention itself, but perhaps the memory of it – if at all. The initiative itself is temporary, the effect not. As section 6.2 will explore on success, self-immolation or death of the initiative, can be in-built from the start. This future 'will to failure' has a distinct temporal dimension, as will be further elucidated through discussion of the temporary, through Bey's concept of the Temporary

Autonomous Zone (TAZ), Foucault's notion of temporary heterotopias and reflections on temporary spaces.

These three TTN groups expressed a desire to form a temporal/temporary 'community' in many different ways. TEU had two distinct forms of 'community' they attempted to transition. The university staff can be seen as a workplace 'community', and the schemes to facilitate this akin to staff training programs, with workshops in conjunction with unions (UCU, NUT, CWU, PCS), and a Carbon Conversations course for staff. For the university's students though, TEU were acutely aware of the high turnover of 'community' members: the short term times, yearly cycles of graduation and matriculation. For the students, in a very real sense they were a temporal 'community', it wasn't built to last, and TEU's activities had to take this into account. Some of the other initiatives sought not to find longevity, but showcase one-off, temporary and inspirational activities. This can be seen in the work of the Guerilla Gardeners group in Edinburgh's southside. Here was no attempt to create a stable, durable 'community' garden, but rather to claim ownership and re-brand the space/place, for a short time, totemically.

The next two sections tease this out more fully. First, we look at one way in which the TTN directly studied here engage in temporal spaces, and temporary events after the manner of a 'heterotopia' or Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ). Second, how these TTN creative impulses relates to 'Kairos moments'. This is also to be seen in akairos moments. That is the initial creative spark outstaying its welcome. The last section will draw together how the TTN relationship to time in all its utopian/heterotopian nature is folded into its spatial understandings.

#### 6.1.5 Temporary Autonomous Zones and Foucault's Heterotopias

*"Life is not hurrying on to a receding future,  
nor hankering after an imagined past."*

(R S Thomas, 'The Bright Field')

*“In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure and the police the place of pirates.”*

(Foucault, 1967)

The Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ) is developed from a study of piracy by the anarchist Hakim Bey (1991). Bey looked at the way in which Pirate culture organised, and existed underneath the radar of imperial/state knowledge systems or policing. TAZ refers to the way pirate communities would self-organise, set-up camp in a particular location where they would then indulge in the traditional pirate activities of ‘wine, women and song’. By the time the alarm was raised, the institutional/state authorities would send forth police forces to re-establish order and bring these pirates to justice. Bey describes such collectives creating a TAZ as *“an uprising which does not directly engage with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it.”*<sup>154</sup>

Section 6.1.7 discusses TTN’s spatial imaginings in more depth. Here it is important to note TTN mean not to liberate specific territorially-based places from state control (akin to Copenhagen’s Christiania), but rather society’s way of thinking of such places, of ‘community’, and of possibility. TTN by no means wishing to valorise piracy or other such law breaking activity, on the contrary they often go out of their way to present themselves as inoffensively as possibly, to the critique of being apolitical (Trapese Collective, 2008). Relevant though is the means by which the pirates self-organised. Those people who found themselves not favoured by the empire had certain means by which to register their discontent. They could work within the state apparatus, enter into negotiations with them, or formally oppose them, through warfare. This is perhaps similar to Gramsci’s separation of ‘war of position’ from ‘war of manoeuvre’. Gramsci’s ‘war of position’ is the shoring up of ones base, helping create the fertile conditions

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<sup>154</sup> Available from <http://hermetic.com/bey/taz3.html#labelTAZ> (Original emphasis)  
Accessed 18/07/12

for revolution, without directly engaging in it.<sup>155</sup> The ‘war of manoeuvre’ however is the deployment of all ones resources against the enemy, attempting to immobilize them, and render them incapable. For TTN a ‘war of position’ might involve education, ‘raising consciousness’, and attempting to break the ‘consensus trance’ of those in their ‘target community’. The war of maneuver could be a direct confrontation of powerful vested interested in the ‘culture of consumerism’, for example PCATS taking on the supermarket in Portobello. These pirate places – TAZs – took a different tack; they simply ignored the conventional power structures. By doing so, instead of opposing formally, they could undermine the authority’s legitimacy.

This can be seen in line with Badiou’s distinction between politics and state rituals. Badiou, following Lazarus (1996), diagnoses that political actions are commonly identified in voting, or joining a political party. However, these are more akin to participating in the ‘Roman empire cults’, than actual political actions that he defines as “*organised collective action*” (Badiou, 2008: 11). Politics for Rancière is not ‘given’ as such, or inherently in such collectives. Politics can be collective action, but not innately. For Rancière politics is that which ‘disrupts the social order’. Zizek describes it as ‘changing the playing field’. Politics is about asking the higher order questions, not merely playing the game, but disputing the rules of the game one finds oneself in. In doing so, this reveals the contingency of the surrounding social structure. Rather than directly deal with certain structures, TTN can undermine any legitimacy authorities may have, by simply ignoring them. TAZ political action can be seen as highly authentically political and not against the state either, it is just that they ignore the state.

This is not to suggest that TTN are TAZ communities, the dissimilarities are legion. For instance, TTN emerged in an age of instant technological communication, and an era of increased visibility. But there is still something valid in the distinction between (in)formally engaging politically in the UK context, with policy, governance, or simply ignoring

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<sup>155</sup> Perry Anderson conflates this with civil hegemony “*Civil Hegemony = War of Position = United Front*” (1976: 13) and ‘War of Manoeuvre’ with Marx’s ‘Permanent Revolution’.



such schemes of organisation and knowledge. The TAZ model has been applied to a number of different ways society structures itself, for example festivals, football stadiums, special spaces where 'normal' rules of operation and control are to a certain extent set aside. As the name suggests, a TAZ cannot be permanent (such would be another institutional/bureaucratic structure), they are also tangible places, not a place of utopia (*u topos*). For many different reasons TAZ were completely unintelligible to institutional power, partly because by necessity, they were not craven, they were willing to be temporary, to die.

TTN's use and idea of the 'temporary' is again permaculture inspired.<sup>156</sup> The very first step of the '12 steps of Transition' (Hopkins, 2008: 148) states "*1. Set up a steering group and design its demise from the outset.*" TTN have begun to move away from the '12 steps', and have shown themselves to be adept at fitting with existing or new governments and funding structures.<sup>157</sup> Yet, if deconstruction has anything to teach us, it is that the founding principles of any organisation, or entity, remain its most powerful sense of identity, the kernel that gives it meaning. This built-in 'will to death', saw TTN as an emergent uprising, flourishing, achieving its aims, and then – inevitably – collapsing. This design was to prevent the replication and sustaining of coercive power structures. That was the idea anyway – part of what this thesis shows is how such creative impulses become co-opted, subject to government capture, institutionalised, and alter from their founding principles.

How are these ideas relevant for helping to understand these TTN groups and initiatives? I wish to argue they help explain TTN's ability to be utopian in two important ways.

First, TTN don't seek to directly confront structures they see as needing to be dismantled – they just ignore them, undermine them. TTN would often complain about certain planning regulations in Edinburgh, a place with many historical building and preservation orders, and world heritage site regulation too. The desire to 'ignore' these and install

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<sup>156</sup> Section 6.2.1 has more on the permaculture heritage of this 'death drive'.

<sup>157</sup> As this thesis shows when the TTN concept moves to Edinburgh and Scotland.

technologies anyway existed, and were claimed to have occurred. For instance, I heard anecdotal evidence of Portobello residents installing solar panel without adequate permission, with tacit PEDAL support or approval. With grander projects PEDAL could not be so invisible, but the desire to just do away with regulations was still expressed often. Guerilla Gardeners (Section 2.4) did not request planning permission either, or apply for permission from the council for any of their activities. They act as if these things do not need to happen, as if 'community' engagement is all the permission that is needed.

Second, by creating temporary spaces, they can show just what is possible, in a way the attempt to do something permanent might 'fail' through lack of planning, resources, or commitments. These temporary spaces include Carbon Conversations, the TES Eco-festival, farmers markets, and Transition Socials. Strangely, those at the TES *Community Eco-festival* or the TSS/TTN *Diverse Roots of Belonging* conference described these events as a form of 'liberation'. For the short time of the conference the rooms and venue was not just Edinburgh University's 'Pollock Halls' part of a neoliberal university, a home for students or conference guests, or perpetuating an elite. The types of conversations people had, the way in which these conversations flowed, signaled 'another world is possible'. The guests there saw a vision of how society could potentially be. A future glimpse through a one-off coming together of like minds.

These conferences would not have engendered this had they sought to go on for a week. People would have become frustrated, tensions emerge, and the daily banality of life got in the way. But because these events were designed to be deliberately temporary, they could be seen by the conference guests as 'freeing', 'visionary' and 'liberating'. In this sense conference guests became 'imagineers', being able to think of possibilities. Imagineering implies "*the experience of reality as immediate*" (Routledge, 1997: 371).

How this relates to TTN's vision of 'community' can partly be explained through the concepts of utopia and heterotopia. Foucault in

discussing this adopts the device of the mirror to explain heterotopia.<sup>158</sup> The mirror used as the reflection seen in the 'utopian mirror' is not what is actually there – the 'mirror image' is just a reflection of reality. Yet, the mirror itself is fully present and its reflection is looked at with a view to making reality most resemble what one wishes to see in the mirror image. Utopia – the mirror image – is the ideal, the perfect ideal type. The heterotopia – reality – is dirty and contested (Soja, 1996: 154-163).

TTN's vision of 'community' can often be utopian – that is, not really here or there, but a reflection in the mirror. This is often temporally displaced, harking back to the 'dig for victory campaigns' or looking forward to 'after the apocalypse' when we will all inevitably be in our own local communities. This mirror vision of the utopian 'community' does not actually exist (in the strictest present terms), but it does affect and help adjust TTN's present figuring out of 'community'.

'Community' as it exists on the ground now is a heterotopia – imperfect, impure, contested.<sup>159</sup> Which is why when TTN search for an example of the 'community' they wish for – it is temporally displaced (either past or future, or a temporary, carnival-esque, TAZ-like event). TTN in this mirror analogy are continually looking at the mirror of the 'utopian community' and adjusting themselves until they most accurately reflect the vision of 'community' they wish to see.

TTN make use of the temporary in many of their other meetings. The Carbon Conversations course is only 6 sessions, plus one follow-up. The farmers market once a month – impossible to do all of one's shopping from there currently, but perhaps a foretaste of what may be possible in future.

By clarifying in advance that these activities will be temporary – with no expectation of the permanent – these initiatives can in fact be seen as ensuring that they remain more long lasting. By focusing on the temporary, and not fixating with what these schemes may become at a later future date, these initiatives are focusing on 'now'. 'Now' has quite a mobilising force for

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<sup>158</sup> <http://www.foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>

(accessed 19/07/12)

<sup>159</sup> Nancy describes this 'community' as a *mêlée*.

TTN and these three Edinburgh groups, and it is to 'now', to the *kairos* that the next section addresses.

#### 6.1.6 Kairos

*"The kairos – the opportune moment that ruptures the monotony and repetitiveness of chronological time – has to be grasped by a political subject."*

(Hardt & Negri, 2009:165)

For all three groups looked at it was important not just to focus on temporary spaces and events, but also to carefully and strategically choose the correct, or opportune, moment for their initiatives. For TEU, they had clearly mapped out the key times of the year when targeting students was more or less opportune. Fresher's week was a key time and the February 'Green Week' too. SOSO had clearly laid out in their handbook for volunteers the best times to knock on doors of residents of Woodburn Terrace. For all three groups there was a correct time for everything. Miss that time, and no matter how hard you tried, or how much effort you put in, the moment had passed. These moments, the correct or opportune occasion for action, can be seen as moments of *Kairos*. *Kairos* is the window of opportunity. Yet there were also moments that could be seen in its shadow side – *akairos*, the inopportune occasion or wrong moment. These included PEDAL's proposed wind turbine. A time of economic recession, and cuts to available funds was not the ideal time to be looking for funding. It seemed to one key PEDAL figure that it would not happen simply because "*the moment had passed*" (PEDAL 3).

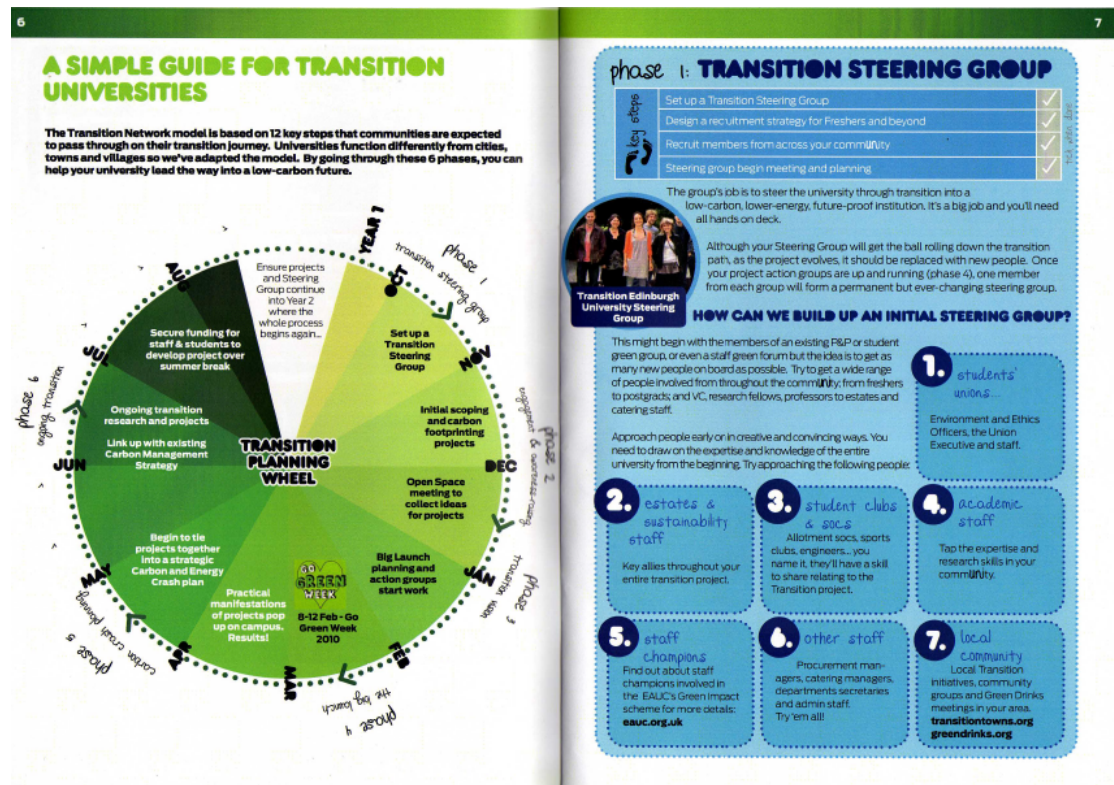


Figure 16: TEU's annual cycle of events

*Kairos* is important to TTN for their sense of urgency. For peak oil – ‘now is the time to find alternative energy sources before it’s too late’ (interviewee), climate change – “whatever I write will almost certainly have been overtaken by events by the time this book is printed” (Hopkins, 2008: 30), and ‘community’ – ‘when we act as a ‘community’ we can do just enough, just in time’.

*Kairos* – designating both a point in time, alongside a period of time (Boer, 2010) has been utilized by many of the theorists (both Marxist and extra-Marxist) of revolution. Sometimes based on New Testament writings, especially St. Paul, the notion of approaching a critical juncture is not new as a mobilizing imperative. For Benjamin (1996: 395) it was *Jetztzeit*, or ‘now-time’ that served this function (Negri, 2005: 101-107). Agamben (2005) contrasts *kronos* – the regular, metronomic, and chronological ticking of time, what Adam (2004: 112-116) calls ‘clock time’ – with *Kairos*. *Kairos* is the messianic moment, where one can seize control of the forces that make the world.

*Kairos* here is used as a temporal term – the right or opportune time. Yet, it also refers to place. In Homer’s *Iliad*, *kairos* is used to refer to the right place on the body for an arrow to find its mark. *Kairos* then, refers to the correct, exact, or opportune place, in both time and space. This helps to understand and explain the contingency with which TTN ‘took off’ or not in certain areas of Edinburgh, at certain times: *Kairos* moments for the flourishing of these three groups. On the other hand, at times one worked ‘against where the energy is’ – as one volunteer put it.<sup>160</sup> In periods of *akairos*, one takes their energy, skills and abilities and goes elsewhere – seen in the *Open Space* (Section 6.1.1) way of operating. The continual creating and re-creating of opportunity and possibility activist groups often engage in (say, Gramsci’s ‘war of position’) is less to be seen here. Rather TTN are ‘waiting’ for the right time. One could critique this as an ‘adolescent’ attitude, of doing what comes easy, quickly, with fun. Not creating the conditions that make revolution possible.

The *Kairos* moment for TEU, PEDAL, and TES provided them with much of their sense of urgency, and also formed the link between the proleptic event and their focus on the temporary. This presence of the future is what is provoking the need to act now – the *Kairos* moment.

The three (prolepsis; the present event provoking urgency; the power of now) are closely tied together like a Gordian knot, proving difficult to untangle. The proleptic event is TTN’s presence of the future, it is this presence which provokes their urgency, and need to act fast, act now, this imperative then draws people together into a ‘community’. It is the urgency that we need to act now in turn which shapes their focus on the temporary, the symbolic and the ‘un-sustainable’ initiatives.

It is here that *Kairos* becomes tied up with ‘community’ too. TTN volunteers referred me to *New York Review of Books* article called, appropriately enough ‘*How Close to Catastrophe?*’ warning to his theme McKibben (2006: np) warns:

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<sup>160</sup> Another volunteer described it as when the ‘universe is against you’.

*“The technology we need most badly is the technology of community—the knowledge about how to cooperate to get things done. Our sense of community is in disrepair at least in part because the prosperity that flowed from cheap fossil fuel has allowed us all to become extremely individualized, even hyperindividualized, in ways that, as we only now begin to understand, represent a truly Faustian bargain.”*

The TTN rhetoric of *Kairos* says now is the time to act, and it is the time for ‘community’. Without it, it may be too late – we may have entered *akairos*. The quest for an open future, beyond some *kairos* moment, is writ large for instance in Zizek’s voluminous work. The basic tension within this corpus is thus: any revolution will ultimately falter, since it would emerge from the logic of capitalism. The tension revolves around the need for an alternative, but the impossibility of seeing any way that would emerge – Zizek turns to, and then repudiates: collective action, revolution, small-scale charity acts.

Here we see what happens after the *Kairos* moment that is the founding of TTN groups. They are inevitably co-opted, and then inevitably fail to reach their own high standards;<sup>161</sup> they inevitably are formed in the logic of that which they wish to oppose (individual, consumptive society). TTN volunteers pointed some of these tensions out. For instance, Green Books marketing of Rob Hopkins’ books – what would appear to be the opposite of TTN’s initial creative impulse. As jarring as a government/CCF funding scheme to govern individual’s carbon lives, against a grassroots, autopoietic, ‘another world is possible’, permaculture-inspired ‘community’.

Yet as Adam & Groves (2007: 15) point out, it is this seeming ‘inevitably’ that needs to be avoided:

*“The futurity of matter and the aspirations of others as well as future peoples’ needs and rights begin to re-emerge from the shadows. All that is air congeals into form, becomes tangible and real. We can take responsibility for our dreams and aspirations projected into products and processes. We can accompany latent, immanent, interconnected*

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<sup>161</sup> More on this in section 6.2

*process-worlds of our own making to their realisations sometime, somewhere.”*

TTN may (inevitably) be co-opted. Again, TTN and their *Kairos* moment are as performative as much as prefigurative. But in attempting to be faithful to this *Kairos* moment, TTN goes further than most at attempting to size the moment come what may.

### 6.1.7 Spatial Phenomonotechnics

*“time and space must be thought together... thinking of time and space together does not mean they are identical (for instance in some undifferentiated four-dimensionality), rather it means that the imagination of one will have repercussions (though not always followed through) for the imagination of the other and that space and time are implicated in each other.”*

(Massey, 2005: 18)

This chapter has so far broadly looked at the concept of time in relation to TTN and specific groups looked at for this study. The *Weg-von-hier*, proleptic stance, the importance of the temporary nature and *Kairos* moments all influence their relationship to time. To finish off this section, this temporal understanding and practice of TTN is assessed on its implications for spatiality.

As seen with TTN’s permaculture heritage, PEDAL, TES, and TEU can be seen as paradoxically – given the prevailing way in which ‘sustainability’ is linked to environmental issues – as against sustaining. TTN theory is concerned with ‘natural’ rhythms involving life and death. It is these rhythms of life and death that TTN seek to emulate. Death of TTN here has two possible meanings. The first is a fragmenting of the organisational shape beyond recognition. This could be through members of the group moving



on, but even if the group were to replace all their members with new ones something would remain. For instance, the belief that Woodburn Terrace ought to undergo a transition beyond its population, in infrastructures and more-than-human elements. The second way it could die is to ossify, to stagnate and to remove its vivifying energy. There are a number of different ways in which this could happen (institutionalism, 5-year plans, introspectively focusing on process and sustainability of the organisation) but because of TTN's core beliefs that all their principles are adopted from the socio-ecological realm (for TTN there is no need for the 'socio' prefix there), everything must die. This *memento mori* is enshrined in the group from the start. It guards against hubris, and is meant to engender humility, seen as a natural precondition of being. The question for TTN then is not how they can continue to develop good work, to influence other groups, to ensure a legacy. Rather the awareness is that they will die, the only question is how. Do they stultify and conform, or do they burn up gloriously and see what emerges from the fecund ashes?

#### What is then TTN's view of, or relationship to, space?

In some ways, this ought to be the crucial question of the thesis. As Sloterdijk has stated "*The first virtue of space is the ability to create distance between bodies.*"<sup>162</sup> For spatial theorists from Kant onwards space is necessary for any experience. For Heidegger the condition for being-together of bodies, *mitsein* – that which is primary before any thought of collectives, being-with-others or 'community'. Space is also crucial for TTN. Spatial theorist Massey sees TTN as a vanguard example of an organisation that is trying to rethink the boundaries between place and space, through "*thinking about one's locally based responsibility*" (Massey, et al., 2009: 412), though critical of "*a lot of the thinking about place has nature as a stable backdrop, as the eternal. Some of the romanticisms of place would do that too.*" TTN can be uncritically 'Romantic' about place,<sup>163</sup> and yet they also

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<sup>162</sup> Sloterdijk, P. *Foreword to the Theory of Spheres* (2004: 226)

<sup>163</sup> Also 'community' as seen in chapter Five.

conceive of a space that is not Euclidean, but rather implicitly tied up with relationality and responsibility. In this sense it embodies Massey's 'place-beyond-place',<sup>164</sup> the opening up of ones place-based relations – including 'community' – to the unseen, implicit connections across the whole world. I want to argue too, that because of their curious relationship to time, above, TTN's spatial imaginings – expanded upon below, following Osborne & Rose (2004) – are, at least in the first instance, smooth rather than striated,<sup>165</sup> and ethical rather than moral.

Osborne and Rose (2004) use Patrick Geddes and Charles Booth and their work as proxies for these two positions. Interestingly, given the location of this thesis' empirical research – and Geddes's long association with Edinburgh and Human Ecology – this ties in neatly, if in serendipitously with TTN in Edinburgh.

Osbourne and Rose identify Patrick Geddes's views of space as smooth: "*contridictions, undulate and flow*" (2004: 211). But for Charles Booth they claim space is striated: "*regular, ordered, organised*" (*ibid.*). When governing environmental behaviours, Geddes stands as proxy for an ethical approach, "*a self-regulating of civic existence*" (*ibid.*), whereas Booth for moral governance "*a fixed public order of conduct*" (*ibid.*)

TTN, I wish to argue, can be seen oscillating between these two positions. Their permaculutre basis means they lean more towards the former Geddes-ian, "empathetic", "organic" relationship with environmental others and places; space as smooth, responsibility ethical. However the 'rubber hits the road' of their tie-in with CCF and experience of forming bank accounts, office bearers, institutionalism, means they now have to operate as more Booth-ian – "*abstract social thought*" (*ibid.*) characterises their relationships to 'target communities', 'carbon accounting' and the like.

*"Swampy and his fellow ecowarriers using the smooth space of the tree dwellers to oppose those who would striate the space for roads and airports."* (Barry, 2001 in Osborne & Rose, 2004). Here is a clear elucidation of the

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<sup>164</sup> Massey (2005) uses *place-beyond-place* to emphasise that any given locality is understood as the product and producer of global relations.

<sup>165</sup> Following the distinction introduced in Deleuze and Guatarri's *Thousand Plateaus* (2004: 410)

tension between these two rhetorical devices (Booth vs Geddes, smooth vs striated). Yet TTN initially desire to seek to performatively, proleptically inaugurate the 'apocalypse'. TTN, in the groups looked at here, place a huge value on 'awareness raising', 'consciousness raising', to encourage people to 'self-regulate'. This, enacted through their eco-festivals, and film screenings, sees TTN as essentially a movement of education, of learning. *"Unlike Booth, Geddes was directly concerned with the civic project of intervening in the consciousness of citizens, in the name of 'an active, experienced environment' "* (2004: 219) – TTN likewise.

Geddes's 'ethics of outlook' sought to open up possible futures of response. Booth's social survey by contrast was a snapshot in time.<sup>166</sup> For TTN, the codification of morals serves as a useful present way to govern environmental behaviours in the present, often through numbers, but a constraint beyond that. The peer pressure into acting green (Griskevicius *et al.*, 2010) formed by 'community', or groups keeping us in check through an ego-corrective, is an ethical mode of governing rather than a moral one. It is here the powerful norming effect of 'community', in governing individuals' carbon lives comes into play. 'Community' here is seen as ethical, rather than moral, though not immoral.

More Hobbesian than Rousseau,<sup>167</sup> 'community' here is about learning. 'Community' 'makes us good' as one participant said. Part of it was learning to be good, but part of it forgetting too. *"We're not brainwashing, we're not teaching them they must be good, we're forgetting what the world teaches us, that we're only an individual and buying stuff makes us happy."* (TEU 1).

TTN's *"civic activities produce their own space"* (2004: 220) - this is a spatial understanding, that – at origins at least – begins as ethical, smooth, unfolding, and Geddes-ian. TTN may start from a position more like Geddes. But experience of dealing with Booth-like governing structures has drawn them towards striated and moral space. It is to this journeying of TTN, or more specifically the tension within it, that the next section now turns.

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<sup>166</sup> Booth mapped poverty in London, producing street level colours indicating the income and social class of their residents.

<sup>167</sup> As outlined in Chapter 3.

## 6.2 Success

*“Institutions tend to become the enemy of the very event they intend to embody”*

(Caputo, 2007: 136)

*“Too much of revolutionary thought does not even pose the problem of transition, paying attention only to the overture and neglecting all the acts of the drama that must follow.”*

(Hardt & Negri, 2009: 361-362)

*“Any failure is a lesson which, ultimately, can be incorporated into the positive universality of the construction of a truth.”*

(Badiou, 2010)

This section looks at the role of success and failure in TEU, TES, and PEDAL. It does not seek to counterpoise failure and success, but asks instead just what ‘success’ would mean to different actors involved in these groups. Often success from one point of view appears as failure from another. For funders, key figures in each group, and – increasingly – those in control of the Transition Network, success can be defined by specific, tangible (often ordinal) goals – for instance numbers denoting the quantity of carbon cut. For those operating from the ground-up though, there was often a preference for less strictly ‘sustainable’ outcomes. This tension, in how they saw success, ran throughout these groups. It was often referred to as the ‘prophet’ vs ‘priest’ mindset. The prophet seeks to do something new in any given situation, often acting from the margins; whereas the priest’s job is to sustain the institution, often centrally, from within. It could also be seen as

the tension between ‘curating’ (after Sloterdijk) and the always-unsettling deconstructive impulse (again, after Derrida).<sup>168</sup>

The TTN ideal, which inspired and helped give cohesion to TEU, TES, and PEDAL, had begun to be moved away from by the time of, and during the course of, this research. Key initial principles from the 12 steps of transition (such as ‘let it go where it wants’, or ‘design its demise from the outset’) were eschewed. Transition Network moved away from the ‘12 steps’ approach, with later books (such as Hopkins, 2011, and ‘blog posts’) talking about ‘patterned language’ and ‘ingredients of transition’. In the TTN conference held in Edinburgh Rob Hopkins led a session designed explicitly to rid the notion of the 12 steps being legislative, even to be acknowledged at all, from those TTN volunteers who were there. TTN moved to saying that these 12 steps were too prescriptive and constraining. Likewise PEDAL, TES, and TEU talked of moving away from the ‘Totnes model’ and avoiding ‘colonialism’.<sup>169</sup> TEU for instance had no intention of designing an EDAP - seen as the crux of the transition project. Being critical about this shift however, one can suspect that the removal of these key phrases and away from the original 12 steps of Transition can be seen as TTN’s ‘Clause IV’ moment.<sup>170</sup> Removing them allowed TTN to participate in more funding structures, institutions and established structures of power, without obvious compromise. With this shift also comes an altering of TTN’s, particularly the examples studied here, vision of success – what these groups were there to achieve. It also indicated a shift in vision of ‘community’: the bottom-up, phenomenological, *zuhanden* view discussed in the previous chapter to ‘community’ more as an instrumental way to govern individuals carbon lives.

### 6.2.1 Resilience

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<sup>168</sup> The tension to which Sloterdijk devotes the last section of *Derrida: An Egyptian* (2009)

<sup>169</sup> Though as Section 4.3.2 showed, TSS had this practice themselves.

<sup>170</sup> The UK Labour party’s removal of their constitution’s ‘clause IV’ at the party special conference in 1995, defines shift from ‘Labour’ to ‘New Labour’, curtailing the more radical (socialist) tendencies of the party, making the party ‘electable’.

TTN, emerging from Rob Hopkins experiences in Kinsale, Co. Cork as a permaculture teacher, have always seen permaculture as its undergirding, interwoven theoretical position. Permaculture's vision of 'community', much like its view of success is tied up with its view of resilience (Walker et al., 2004). For 'resilience thinking' sustainability can be placed with other 'business as usual' approaches. This reliance on permaculture comes through in many crossovers between TTN and the Permaculture Association, the quoting of key permaculture texts (Holmgren, 2002; Walker & Salt, 2006) in TTN literature. Many volunteers also have a background in permaculture, or human ecology, and this helps explain the 'natural' focus of TTN groups on food and gardening projects.

TTN's application of permaculture seeks to adopt ecological principles into the social realm. Although this would make no sense as the ecological realm and the social are not seen as separate, but rather part of one seamless cloth of creation. More accurate would be to say TTN seeks to get socio-ecological processes into line with 'what we can learn from nature'. TTN's 'community' then is learnt from plant communities, and a successful 'community' is seen as vibrant, diverse, modular, co-dependent, autonomous: in sum, resilient. This resilience being defined by the oft-quoted phrase of C.S. Holling's:

*"the ability of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise through change, so as to retain the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks."*

This seems to fit with sustainability, the system would be sustained, endure through shocks and disturbances. But initially TTN adopted a more radical, integrated reading of resilience, whereby each group of cell would almost exist with a 'death drive' (*Todestrieb*, Freud), 'being towards death' (*Sein-zum-Tode*, Heidegger), or auto-deconstruct, or self-deconstruction (Derrida). This helps show the connections between this wider theoretical points discussed in Section 6.1, with permaculture's 'philosophy', and TTN.

In resilience thinking, everything exists in a constant state of flux (the first of many counter-intuitives, which may be why it sits so well with the later Derrida). Ecological systems – of which an ideal ‘community’ would be one – exist in flow between four stages, seen in the diagram (below).

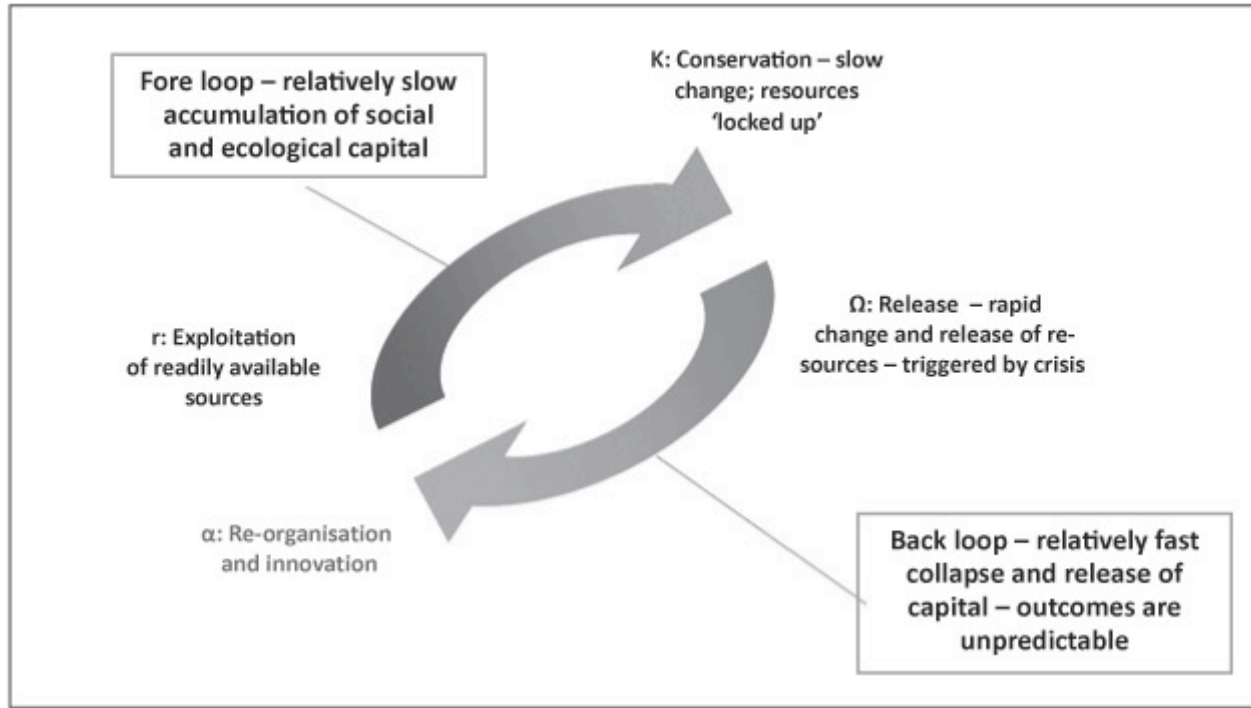


Figure 17: From Salt and Walker (2006: 82)

The first stage in Fig. 14 – the rapid growth (r Phase) – is the exploitation of readily available resources (the first stage we shall address – these phases are cyclical, and one can start anywhere. Resilience thinking can often seem to take the structure and intelligibility of *Finnegan’s Wake*.) Characterised by intense activity, exploiting all available opportunities, ecologically these would be weeds, or pioneer plants. Socially these would be new start-ups, entrepreneurs, or seen in the explosion of ‘dot.com’ companies.

The conservation phase (K Phase) proceeds incrementally. This is the storing of energy, materials, and the consolidation of the previous rapid growth (r). Ecologically this phase results in organic mass on the forest floor, socially it can be seen in the acquiring of human capital and knowledge.

The Release Phase ( $\Omega$  Phase) can occur suddenly. The previously placid conservation shifts to what seems like sheer chaos. Indeed many of the apocalyptic statements from TTN volunteers saw society in the K phase (consensus trance), with the inevitable onset of  $\Omega$  – chaos; once climate change and peak oil hit. In an ecosystem  $\Omega$  could take the form of forest fires, insect pests and disease, for instance the Ash Tree disease entering the UK in late 2012. Socio-economically it could take the form of a market shock or new technology entering and disturbing a previously perceived equilibrium. This could be seen as some form of ‘failure’.

The reorganisation phase ( $\alpha$  Phase) sees the uncertainty unleashed in  $\Omega$ , begin to coalesce around new emerging certainties. Ecologically this can be the chance for new species enter an ecosystem, or for old one to ‘regroup’, for instance after a forest fire. Socially, from the fall-out of previous ‘failed’ groups can emerge new initiatives, collectives, or alliances.

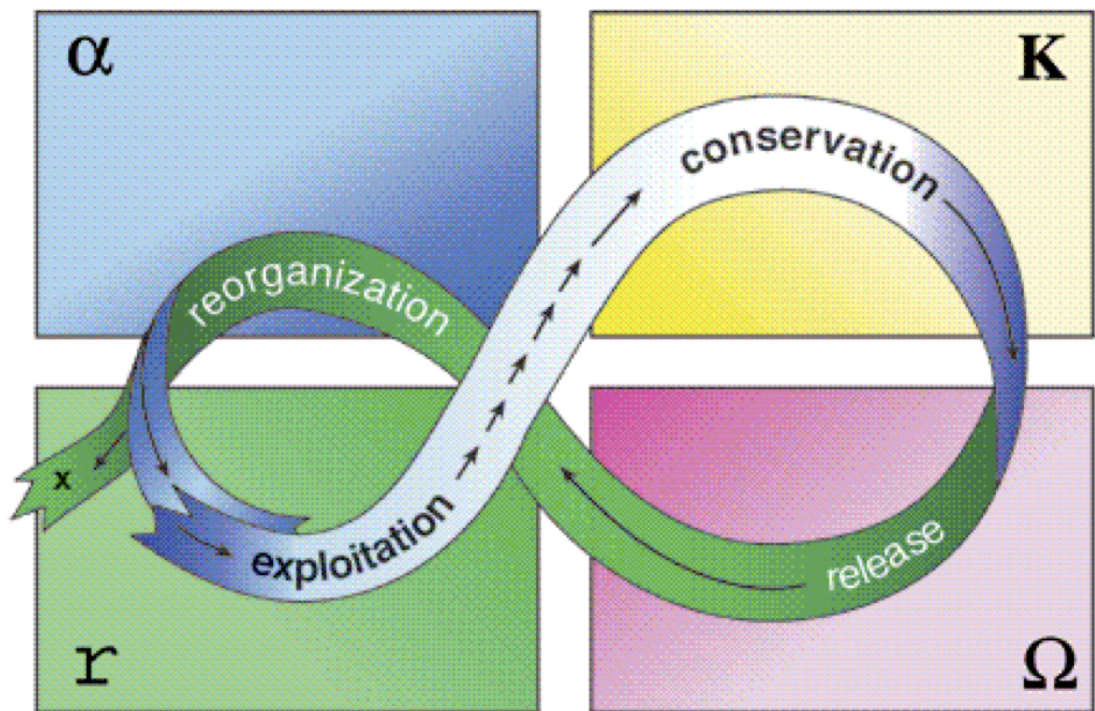


Figure 18: From Gunderson and Holling, 2002. (Found in Salt and Walker pp.81)

As seen in Fig.15, key to the systems stability, and continuing functioning – its resilience – is its ability to flow through the figure of eight. A crucial component is the  $\Omega$  or chaos phase. This allows the build up of



tension and locked up resources to scatter, and be re-ordered, the filtering and resettling of components. In much the same way as a forest fire can aid resilience long-term, and conserving, or sustaining, a forest without any form of release, could lead to a rapid, uncontrollable descent down the chaos phase, and destruction of the whole system. According to this model, sustaining a system in the K phase can destroy resilience. Paradoxically, chaos, and release, can help long-term resilience according to this view. When applied to the social realm, the folly of attempting to institutionalise, curate, and 'sustain' certain groups or 'naturally occurring communities' becomes clear.

So, TTN, emerging from and existing within a permaculture context had a vision of 'community' as both natural, but also that 'communities' without a period of break-down and build again, would never be fully resilient. Resilience being true, long-term sustainability – sustainability commonly, and mistakenly, seen as short term, the folly of building up a K stage before a fall. As Salt and Walker tellingly state "*The longer the conservation phase persists the smaller the shock needed to end it*" (2006: 77). TTN therefore had to avoid a sustaining of the K Phase, and build in a controlled chaos phase. A social equivalent to managed forest fires, fire breaks in large forests, or setting strip fires to moorland - so that when the chaos (fire) hits, the cycle can be orderly ushered through the  $\alpha$  stage. Viewing experience in these episodic phases, where certain activities were more or less opportune fits with the discussion of *Kairos* moments in Section 6.1.6.

Hence why TTN had, in their original 12 stage plan 'let the community go where it wants to' and 'design its demise from the outset'. This was crucial to avoid the folly of seeking to preserve the group beyond its *kairos* 'correct time', where it was not longer useful, or needed. Hence also their use of *Open Space* (Section 6.1.1). For TTN 'success' meant knowing when was the correct time to exit stage left, to not ruin the play by clinging to ones position on stage, while more effective, or relevant, actors waited for their turn. According to this model, TTN overstaying their welcome on the stage of environmental activism could result not just in the

removal of their role on stage, but the abandonment of the theatre, the breakdown of the stage itself. TTN's movement and aims were bigger than themselves, so they need to humbly remove themselves before someone else came to supplant them. If there still remained a role for TTN, they would 'naturally re-emerge', and form again.

This was clear from my interviews with those from Transition Network in Totnes:

*"I go back to some of the permaculture ideas around succession. You know, when there's a piece of devastated ground, and that might be an analogy for our societies. The first thing that comes in are the pioneer plants and they bring up. And they bring in nutrients and break up the ground and eventually you get a climax ecosystem. And that's a forest, in a lot of places, and maybe we're [TTN] pioneer plants, and transition groups will disappear into something else...[trails off]" (TN)*

The view of TTN cells acting as pioneer plants fits with permaculture thinking, and also with their view of success. Section 6.3 will show the presence of funding can alter this view. Success in this view is not necessarily sustaining the institution. Rather it could be the steepening of the fall from K to – the inevitable –  $\Omega$  to come. 'Failure' of the group, self-immolating could actually be success - in that they have gone with the flow, served their allotted time-span, and avoided catastrophic collapse.

One volunteer for TES feared the sustaining of TES, ahead of doing the task it was created for (building the 'resilient relocalised community'):

*"What if you turned up in 10 years? [Me, as researcher] and there's [staff worker] sitting there, and still getting the money! It [TES] would be an NGO. It would be an NGO and continuously striving to get more grants to employ people to interact with the wider community, but not really achieving its own redundancy." (TES 1).*

Failure then, the immolation of the group, is inevitable. The question is whether one chooses when to enter the chaos phase, in the sure faith that something will emerge the other side, or to hang onto conservation, unprepared for the bigger picture. (In this case seen as peak oil and climate change.) TTN seek to fail, but to have a ‘good’ failure, rather than a wholly unexpected, catastrophic one. This is related to the previous section on time, where the apocalypse is wholly unexpected, and yet still pre-empted.

Success, for TTN’s volunteers – and TTN as a whole in its beginnings – was perhaps quite Beckettian: *“All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever Tried. Ever Failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”* (Beckett, Worstword Ho, 1989). Failure was not something to be feared for TTN, but perhaps success was. This at least was the theoretical underpinning. There was less evidence on the ground in these three groups, that on a day-to-day basis these groups worked towards failure. Yet, the theory had important implications to how TTN viewed the funding CCF provided as a double-edged sword.

### 6.2.2 The Condition of the (Im)possibility

With this understanding of success in the theory of TTN, there is a question of why these groups would consider applying for funding at all. These three Edinburgh groups, and TTN in Scotland systematically pursued CCF funds. Both served each other’s needs in a coincidental, or symbiotic, relationship (Sections 2.3.5 and 4.2.3). There were competing voices in attempting to answer the question of why TSS so systematically pursue CCF funding to spread the TTN model across Scotland. Some felt that it was possible to have such funding and remain true to their principles. This may be possible, but the belief that money (whatever the source) is morally neutral, and injections of finance can preserve the volunteering emergent group intact – without any change for good or ill – is clearly false. A change must occur, for good or ill. A second, more nuanced, view held that perhaps funding didn’t automatically lead to the ‘selling out’ of the group’s initial principles. Roughly this can be called the ‘why not?’ perspective and a few participants held this view (all references to this from my coding were from those either

paid directly from CCF funds, or were key in applying for them, and can be seen as vested in some way.) This is clearly possible.

The third view revolved around what I have called the 'condition of the (im)possibility'. By this it is meant, that the funding in some way served as a condition of possibility. It increased the groups profile, gave them more resources, and enabled more scope in their ambitions (funds, scale). Yet it is also the case that through securing this funding, that these groups were in some way going against their founding principles, or desires. Making it impossible to fulfill them.

To a certain extent having these funds made it impossible that TTN could achieve their final goal. They worked towards a 'resilient relocalised community', but if this was achieved through funded staff members, then how much of the permaculture inspired autopoietic vision they proclaimed can they now claim?<sup>171</sup>

TTN could wish for a 'natural community' of territorially bound, place based locals, yet if this was affected and carried out by a network of interested like-minds then means and ends are of a different kind. In this way, acting as an interest group ('community' of interest) enabled the possibility of building this intended future. Yet within it contained the seeds of the impossibility of ever wholly achieving that. Funding enabled action on a grander scale than was possible before, but by doing so precluded the possibility of that finality being achieved. One enables the other, but it also prevents it. As Derrida pointed out:

*"These two orders of the unconditional and the conditional are... in a relation of contradiction, where they both remain both irreducible to one another and indissociable."* (Derrida, 2001, p. Xi in Massey, 2005: 176)

Derrida, towards the end of his life, increasingly toyed with the notion of the 'undeconstructable'. This was that which could not be reduced, or even realised. Examples, such as justice or God were given. These were

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<sup>171</sup> Explained more fully in section 6.3.2

undeconstructable and, he thought, could not be approached in practice or theory. Rather one could only head towards them through - utterly deconstructable - constructs in faltering, tentative attempts. One could head towards justice, for instance, through the law. But the law would always fall short, would always be incomplete and would always end up an impediment to realising the fully undeconstructable, in this case justice. Derrida stated: *'The very condition of the possibility, is that very same condition of the impossibility.'* In this sense, the law could help on the journey towards justice, but however perfect, the law would always fall short, and result in being an impediment to justice, and require the work of deconstruction to remove its impediment.

Likewise, the CCF can be seen as this 'deconstructable' tool on the way to TTN achieving its 'undeconstructable' aim of the 'resilient relocalised community'. It helps get them further along this route, through increased funding, employing staff workers, etc. But that these people are employed then leads to the same ossification, institutionalism or impediment that any law would have - and needs to be removed (deconstructed) in order to get closer to their 'undeconstructable' aims.

During the course of my research, this was seen in a number of examples. First, in (perceived) rates of volunteering for all three groups volunteers noted that - particularly in TES and PEDAL - once the funding arrived, rates of volunteering decreased. TEU as such never actually existed in a pre-funded state, being part of student society People & Planet.

One influential individual pointed out the possibilities presented through funding: *"It's given us the opportunities to really fast-track what we would have taken much longer to do if we had to fund-raise. And you know, people used to give us their time for free before"* (TES 6). Even if that came with the caveat of reduction of volunteers. It was this opportunity to speed-up, to up-scale, that makes the going down the route of applying for funding attractive. Even if that means compromising their belief in fragile, emergent collectives. *"Because we are an actually constituted group we can apply for funding and that happened."*

Volunteers often felt though that getting the funding in some way had put a halt to the 'genuine community' feel of the process. Smith et al. point out that this can be seen as "*volunteering entailing more than volunteering*" (2010: 258) where professionalisation can adversely affect the situated, embodied, and emotional practices of volunteering. Volunteers recognised that the group could achieve more with funding, but this was more professionalized, ordered and institutional.

*"In many respects I feel that getting the grant divorces you somewhat from that. Although a couple of weeks ago we had an apple day in the orchard and - it was great! Loads of kids came and all the people I'd not seen before, but maybe not as many as I'd hoped for. But when you were raising your own money - just a coffee morning would bring people in who wouldn't normally get involved. As soon as you start getting grants, I know that you've got to have a step change. Because unless you've got a grant you can't do certain things. But at the same time it does stop you having that contact with people who don't already know the message."* (TES 4).

Funding can also alter the relationship with time, requiring quick deadlines, and short-term goals.

*"So you've got, people working in a voluntary capacity who for 2 or 3 years have taken on the responsibility for the orchard. You then have a paid employee who comes in and they're got a different emphasis for it. They'd like to grow potatoes there. So, you've got a conflict - yes but it's the orchard - yes but, I'd like to grow potatoes. And resolving those especially when, being a little bit unkind - the paid worker finishes at the end of March and goes off and does something else. Now they may not, they may still be involved but there is that they're only there for the short term - we're there for the long period. And you know what you know, you don't plant an orchard and gather the apples next year. You*

*plant an orchard in 10 years time. You know you're looking at the future."* (TES 4).

One member of Portobello's anti-supermarket campaign, who didn't then make the leap when they 're-branded' as PEDAL, said PEDAL had 'too much money than they knew what to do with'. It was the 'opposite of the anti-supermarket campaign' where 'everyone clubbed together' to pay for and do the tasks together (PEDAL 6). The enlarging into PEDAL with professional workers had removed the 'community feeling brought out through adversity'. Again, the other, shadow, side to the increased profile and scope of PEDAL.

One of the environmental consultants employed by these groups identified a pattern with 'community' groups, where once they have a funded member of staff, volunteering patterns change, they become reliant on that paid work and enter a cycle of hopping from one grant to another - chasing the next grant (which enables them to achieve their original aims and objectives) ends up taking increasing quantities of time and energy.

*"Bigger organisations have systems and structures in place, X can maybe continue through a funding crisis, whereas a smaller group, it's not got funding for a bit and then struggles to continue the work. These are very real issues"* (TEU 4).

The arriving of funding brings opportunities, but by eroding/shifting of their volunteering base, can leave them vulnerable. As one of the TEU volunteers, who then became a paid employee said 'funding success gets you part of the way there, but then becomes an impediment - you gain something and lose something'. *"Without funding there's simply not enough time to do everything we need to,"* recognising that *"most of the problem with success is with funding"* (TES 1).

### **6.2.3 Defining Success: a Double-Edged Sword**

*“The fool deals with death by not thinking about it, the wise man simultaneously thinks about it all the time, and gets on with his life.”*

(Michel de Montaigne)

The increase in profile, scope, and scale of the groups and their activities was understood by some to be ‘successful’ - most readily seen in their attraction and winning of more and more funding.<sup>172</sup> Yet, despite this success and funding acting as both facilitator and impediment for future achievements or opportunities, it could also be seen as a double-edged sword. This is slightly different to it being the condition of (im)possibility, and refers to the way in which success is defined. Most obviously seen in the divergent ways success was defined by funders (CCF) or by different actors within PEDAL, TES, and TEU.

So, for one of the consultants doing the CCF funded work, outsourced from the three Edinburgh groups, a successful ‘community group’ was when it became ‘sustainable’:

*“the ideal would be you become so respected or good at what you’re doing, you build on the experience you have the good quality people there to give the help, that although your giving stuff away for free you’ve still got some stuff... if they get money through funds like CCF, so you can still sustain a people to make sure that the people are still there, that they don’t, you know, there’s actually funding for them to continue doing the work they’re doing.” (EX).*

What is interesting for this chapter is during the course of my research those with an involvement of volunteering for, instigating, or doing paid work for one of these three groups for more than two years often straddled a ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ boundary. The theory said the group should disappear - to be ‘so good so our job that we don’t need Transition, like the

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<sup>172</sup> For higher profile campaigns, for examples PEDAL’s proposed wind turbine, or SOSO.



police should be', as one put it. In practice, it was 'how can we go on' – to find the next source of funding, thinking ahead to the next project.

One influential individual straddled this tension in a few minutes of interview.

*"The Transition movement is about, you have things, but your groups disappears – that what it is. It's about creating opportunities and allowing people to grow." (TES 4).*

Presumably then to disappear, at least in that form. Within two minutes though, this tension came out between the theory and how this played out within the group in practice.

*"TES 4: you kind of work out your demise.*

*GA: When would that be? Is it as soon as possible?*

*TES 4: Well, ... we don't. In the funded project, we do quite a lot of planning because we have to, and we've got to be careful how we administer it and we have signed up for some stuff which we want to deliver – it's different. But, we think within TES, I think we just let things happen and see how it goes."*

A key part of this is the way in which 'success' was not just internally contested within TTN groups (between inspirational individuals and volunteers, between theory and practice), but also between TTN groups and those which had set definite parameters on what constitutes successful use of the funds.

Those who ran the CCF fund were protective of it. Both those who administered the fund, and those who awarded monies. One described the CCF as "*my brainchild*" (CS), another said "*there was no-one else*" (CCF 1) than CCF who would have led the TTN groups to flourish. From this perspective the fund was described as a success because of the finance involved (£27.3m), but also because of the legacy sustained. The guiding principles for those involved I was told was:

*'A) spend the money; B) community-led (no local authorities or NGO's; C) involved all communities across Scotland - not exemplar, but an even spread; D) community was to be at the heart of the decision making; E) significant CO2 reduction; F) must leave a legacy' (CS).*

It was this last part F where the real philosophical or theoretical jarring with TTN occurred. Legacy being 'something tangible', not just inspirational. Brook Lyndhurst were commissioned to run the review of the projects to 'look for successful CCF examples, not failures'. Being responsible for the CCF meant 'my job is to sell success', said one key civil servant.

This meant that the view from Victoria Quay<sup>173</sup> was one of incredulity that TTN could have any complaints about the funding. *"TTN was moribund before CCF"; "Transition has gained hugely from this money"* (CS). This tension is not so much an argument over facts - but of framing. Primarily how does one frame success. For TTN, small scale is better, local preferable, and 'community' volunteering has more integrity. For CCF, legacy, impact, and scope take precedent.

*"Part of it is being successful. It's the whole thing ...[sigh] The objectives of it have to be crystal clear. The objectives of the Climate Challenge Fund I think have to be enhanced. Because the objective for sustainability should include some kind of emotional element for the community to bond and grow and further develop, otherwise you get your carbon figures, but there's no longevity to it."* (TES 1)

By defining success so tightly and specifically, in abstract carbon reduction figures, the CCF were seen by many involved with the initiatives as 'missing the wood for the trees', not recognizing the ineffable, tacit 'community' dimension within.

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<sup>173</sup> Scottish civil service HQ, where those administering CCF were based.

#### 6.2.4 Of Prophets and Priests

*“The problem of transition, however, ...is not spontaneous. How can the transition be governed? What or who draws the political diagonal that guides the transition? The political line, after all, is not always straight and immediately obvious but moves diagonally through mysterious curves. These questions, though, throw us back into the dilemmas of vanguards, leadership, and representation. Revolutionary movements have repeatedly in history allowed the helm to be taken and the process steered by charismatic figures or leadership groups.”*

(Hardt & Negri, 2009: 363)

When I gathered this data, the question of success, how to define it, whether it was a good thing or not seemed to center around the split between the ‘prophet’ and the ‘priest’. Steiner has claimed that the story of the Jewish nation is of that between the prophet and the priest, before broadening to find this tension in each institution – even the human condition itself.<sup>174</sup> This tension could also be sketched as between institutionalism (priest) and utopianism (prophet). Steiner sees the figure of Jeremiah as the key prophetic figure, a voice from the margins calling Israel back to its original vision, or statement of beliefs. The priestly class – who would eventually win out and pronounce Jeremiah as both traitor and heretic – were those who were primarily concerned with sustaining the existing system, not rocking the boat, and loyalty to the institution. Prophet vs priest is not unique to ancient Judaism. Radical leftist thought today sees this tension in the debate between Critchley’s call for the Left to be *Infinitely Demanding*, with completely unrealistic demands in order to make a point that the current order can’t accommodate such prophetic dreams and desires. Zizek in

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<sup>174</sup> <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2012/05/george-steiner-homelands/> (accessed 31/07/11)

contrast calls for all too achievable small-scale demands to made (Zizek, 2007).<sup>175</sup>

The prophet vs priest distinction is different to the gradualist/reformist vs revolutionary split, seen for instance in socialist thought as the tension between Fabians, who sought to affect small scale change within given power structures against a desire to tear down and start again, in a radical break. Both prophet and priest can be equally committed to the same goals, it is more of a difference over tactics, how one engages with institutions. Prophets provoke and challenge from the outside or margins, priests curate from within.

For instance after the death of Lenin the Soviet experiment had two broad choices embodied in Stalin (priest) as an arch conservative and Trotsky (prophet) with his more messianic outlook.

*“In Marxist socialism, indeed in all utopian socialism, to prophesise, to exercise a radical critique of the established present, the prophet always stands to the left of the priest, and in the infinitely complicated relationship between Trotsky and Stalin this is completely crystalised.”<sup>176</sup>*

TTN has a shorter heritage than Judaism, or Socialism, yet within them the prophet/priest tension can be identified too. Justin Kendrick, one of the key figures in TTN in Scotland has written for his desire to see TTN – following Hopkins (2008) – ‘come in under the radar’ (Kendrick, 2011). To withdraw from oppressive structures, rather than directly oppose them. Under this view, ‘success’ lies in not being complicit with what you identify and disagree with in society done around you. This may have also been the source of the belief in the temporary, or *Kairos* ‘community’ moments as key. Similar to Rancière and Badiou’s vision of ‘genuine’ politics in section 6.1.5, acting politically, and successfully lies in not engaging or legitimizing established structures. Prophetic and priestly visions of success look very

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<sup>175</sup> This reference has the back-story of their ‘spat’ over this issue, and LRB debate.

<sup>176</sup> <http://backdoorbroadcasting.net/2012/05/george-steiner-homelands/> (accessed 31 July 2011)

different from each other here. TTN at least in their early days, eschewed institutions, longevity, and sustaining, in favour of a permaculture (step 11), break down and start again approach. Perhaps this is the journey that all radical groups make as they institutionalise. To start they need a prophetic impulse,<sup>177</sup> yet if they are to be continued and sustained, they require a priestly approach.

The groups looked at for this study had pressure (both internal and external) to become priests. The funding structures, government capture, the formalisation of the emergent transition cells all marked a shift where the key figure in each group needed to exhibit priestly rather than prophetic characteristics. The pressure was to become less of a 'community' group, more like a service provider, less of a provocative grassroots movement, more a 'partner' to environmental consultants and government. Scandrett *et al.* highlight the importance of environmental groups working with 'powerless' communities rather than having an "*impact on policy*" (2000: 473), in order to achieve tactically important challenging the rules, over temporary policy 'success', despite pressures to conform.

Changeworks who carried out of the environmental consultancy for these groups can be seen as putting pressure on them to become more priestly. Changeworks saw a 'successful' group as one which was stable enough to require their services and to commit to longer term contracts. Here the pressure to become priestly was also tied up with vision of success – the successful group, was stable, more institutionalised. More organised, priestly, TTN groups suited Changeworks' interests, much preferring to deal with 'stable', organized structures. In relation to attitudes towards futurity, it also enabled more settled planning and forecasting. Through their engagement with the TTN groups there was 'peer pressure' to become more institutionalised, or mainstream, alongside the funding structure they had to fit into or would become dependent upon. Changeworks itself made this 'transition': "*Changeworks used to be a community group, and now is more of an institution - I don't want to say business 'cos that's a horrible word*" (EX).

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<sup>177</sup> For instance an 'Influential Individual'

By definition the groups engaged with Changeworks were those who had compromised, become institutions, shifted from prophets to priests, were the ones who were still around. The examples remaining then were the ones who were institutions. TTN volunteers would often talk highly of the examples that had 'failed' – The Levelers, The Diggers, Jam 74, or Pollock Free State protest groups - yet the existing groups nearby must have had some impact. It was, said one member of Changeworks, much better to 'stabilise':

*"it means how much energy they've got to work on different personal energy they've got in their lives they've got to give to volunteering. Or even a big issue. I mean the security of the organisation is that they have bigger systems and structures in place, like Changeworks can maybe continue through funding crises, whereas a smaller group, its got funding for a bit and then struggles to continue the work. Very real issues for them I think." (EX).*

The civil servants I spoke to likened TTN to their political paymasters 'They're a bit like the SNP you know, they started with this single goal, but their aim has changed, they've developed other platforms and agendas. But they've had to do that to ensure their own success and longevity.'

The SNP – originally a party of independence or nothing – gradually took on other issues, first anti-Trident, anti-NATO, and then wider social concerns, now abandoning those pacifist, anti-nuclear positions. A similar shift can be seen in TTN. Originally focused on peak oil and climate change, now looking at local economics,<sup>178</sup> and abandoning the '12 steps', one can see their platform similarly widen and dilute. Originally TES/TEU and PEDAL's job was to put themselves out of business, to sow the seeds of their own demise from the outset. They are transitioning away from this goal.

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<sup>178</sup> Partly in the light of the recession, TTN has been concerned with 'local money' from very early on in their biography though.

## 6.3 Tensions

*“Not everything that counts can be counted. It’s true that where the catch-phrase of the late-nineteenth-century politics was ‘We are all socialists now’, the motto (epitaph?) of our age seems rather to be ‘We are all accountants now’.”*

(Collini, 2012:120)

*“It’s not the voting that’s democracy, it’s the counting.”*

(Dotty, in Jumpers, Tom Stoppard, 1972: Act I)

By far the greatest tension to emerge from the researched groups revolved around their relationship with funding sources - primarily the CCF. For many this was *the* source of all other tensions; for a significant number involved in these groups, it was a clash of ideologies that were mutually incompatible. People talked of the CCF ‘killing’ Transition - of ‘riding roughshod’ over TTN’s long-term vision, manageable stages, and below the surface work - by focusing on Carbon saving to the detriment of all else. As one volunteer pithily put it: *“There’s a contradiction between CCF funding and Transition movements”* (TES 1).

Sections 6.1 and 6.2 have looked at the theoretical roots of these tensions. This section turns to look at these tensions directly. What form do they take, how are they negotiated, what potential to continue or resolve them exists? This section then first takes the tension between CCF’s aims of carbon reduction and TES, TEU, and PEDAL, alongside individual volunteer’s aims and desires (6.3.1). It then looks more at the underlying philosophical tensions between the CCF and funding in general, and TTN’s core beliefs and ideology.

### 6.3.1 ‘Community’ Tensions

*“There’s a contradiction between CCF funding and Transition movements.” (TES 1)*

By far the greatest tension to emerge from this research revolved around the grassroots initiative’s relationship with funding sources—primarily the CCF. For many this was *the* source of all other tensions; for a significant number involved in these groups, it was a clash of ideologies that were mutually incompatible. People talked of the CCF ‘killing’ Transition—‘riding roughshod’ over TTN’s long-term vision, manageable stages, and below the surface work—by focusing on Carbon saving to the detriment of all else.

For the CCF, the preferences were for easily abstracted, numerically defined targets and achievements—most prominently CO2 reduction. The TTN groups studied here often favoured a more relational approach to one’s environmental (ir)responsibilities, yet as they grew and moved away from their founding permaculture principles, TTN increasingly sought colonisation, rebranding existing groups, numbers and greater ‘impact’. Following Tsoukas (1997), this search for a number to define the aims and objectives for each group can be seen as *The Tyranny of Light*: the counterintuitive coercion produced through the ‘transparency’ of numbers. The transparency hiding more than it reveals. In this ‘audit society’ (Power, 1994), more information leads to less understanding, and ‘big data’—the increasing statistics and numbers available—can lead to society being less rationally governable.

The primary complaint TTN volunteers had of the CCF was they were only interested in ‘numbers’: quantifiable, measurable carbon emissions reduction. CCF money was allocated on the basis of ‘cutting carbon’. Each category of actor<sup>179</sup> involved in the distribution of CCF grants were under pressure to demonstrate effective use of public money, most often as a carbon saving. This tension existed in both the CCF and TTN groups.

A panel member claimed many applications for funding were of low quality: *“very few are interested in reducing carbon per se”* (CCF 1). Those submitting the bids also felt this pressure. One key ‘community’ group

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<sup>179</sup> Funding panel, funding managers, bidders, and those implementing the projects too.



member, outlined what made a successful application for funding: clear “*articulation and formalisation*” of carbon savings. “*We’re bidding against deliverability*” they stated, “*there’s a real need for funders to be shown delivered quantified carbon cuts*” (TEU II).

One CCF manager pointed to the flexible principles behind it, hoping that the decision whether to award money or not was not ‘solely down to carbon’. “*At the beginning certainly [CCF was a policy based on measuring], but that’s changed as we’ve gone through it though.*” (CS). The 30% cut in carbon required to be a successful bid was “*guidance rather than substantive*”. Yet this caveat indicated a faith in numbers and targets: “*but I think it’s good guidance, I think it’s a good motivator for people to work harder, but I don’t think we need to make decisions based on it.*” (CS).

The CCF used numbers as part of a target-driven approach to governing. Numbers were useful CCF to assess and compare their various projects, and to clearly demonstrate success. Setting a 30% cut figure abstracted it in some way from the ‘community’ benefits the CCF also sought. Beyond the CCF panel belief that the percentage cut was important, ‘community’ volunteers felt pressure to be able to demonstrate their achieved percentage cut in carbon emissions. Numbers were seen as clearer, easily demonstrated and unarguable.

### 6.3.2 Ways of Knowing

Late modern societies’ preferred knowledge has been seen as increasingly “*objectified, commodified, abstract and [amenable to] decontextualisations*” (Tsoukas, 1997: 872). Tsoukas posits an increasing belief that the more abstract the information, the more transparent, and thus greater trust in the process of governing. Could the tensions, above, be underlined by the abstract reified carbon accounting sought by the CCF, being a different form of knowledge or understanding of environmental (ir)responsibilities sought by TTN? Franklin *et al.* contrast unfavorably the “*aspatial and target-led*” approach to building sustainable communities, to “*experiential and process-orientated approaches*” (Franklin et al., 2011: 347), which can, respectively,

be seen as a proxy for CCF and TTN.

Often those involved in TTN projects wanted to focus on the tangible and practical TTN staple projects such as food or gardening. However ‘the funders dream’, due to their ‘big wins’ in terms of carbon savings, were energy projects, involving numbers. Large carbon savings were often the unseen, unglamorous aspects of energy issues: perhaps switching energy supplier, installing insulation or embedded emissions. TTN here are more imminent than transcendent. Often volunteer’s key frustration with the CCF was the need for a number. The requirement to prove, justify and account for their activities in an essentially quantifiable manner. Numbers were both a betrayal of TTN ideology and harder to sell to their ‘target community’. One volunteer outlined their frustration with the CCF process:

*“Well, when you fill in the form, everything that you put has to have numbers on it... you know, you’re not going to prove it unless, there’s enough Carbon cut in there. So, there’s a tendency to emphasise that and to exaggerate that, but then that becomes the focus ... I think it could be more Transition Handbook style, and I think maybe that might bring in more volunteers, because that tends to be the stuff that people are more interested in, which inevitably is food, and stuff which is necessarily more... That’s what most people want to get involved in, but doesn’t necessarily equal big carbon cutting.” (TEU 6)*

Enthused by the prospect for ‘community’-action, the volunteer felt this was being compromised by CCF accountancy procedures. Another outlined the tension between what CCF funding conditions required, and what first attracted them to the TTN ideology.

*“I think there is a slight tension between ... the demands of the Climate Challenge Fund, which is very much about carbon cutting, and that’s not the only thing it’s asking, but that seems core. And you need to put numbers on this, so, in order to get the funding, so that we could build our capacity, we’re committed to lots of things, which we now have to chase and put numbers on. A lot of the stuff that made me excited about transition which was about resilience, and learning, re-learning and re-*

*teaching new skills, reskilling, all that sort of thing. Because it is more difficult to put Carbon numbers on, because that's not necessarily not what it's about, that very much gets put as a secondary thing, 'o well, we'll do that if we have any time, which we don't, so actually, we're trying to think of all the big things that we can do to try and demonstrate some Carbon cutting. ... it's sort of being hijacked in a way, when you get those external constraints, then I think that can, pull things in directions that you wouldn't necessarily want to go if you were doing it in a very, ... [TTN way]" (TES 5).*

Realising the vision of TTN became compromised through the CCF funding process. The worry being that the funding locked you in to needing more funding.

This cycle of lock-in went something along the lines of being driven to numbers, then towards more pledges, or survey data, rather than the 'deeper' shift that TTN requires, hence more individualism, and a drift away from the nebulous, collective and qualitative nature of 'community', which the group originally focused on. Abstraction, quantification, financialisation and individualism were seen as grouped together. TTN stood for the very opposite: embodied, qualitative, and collective - or 'community'. Quantification was seen as part of the problem.

The fusing of these very different issues, were not just found amongst TTN: *"If we can get people living and working in that bit of Scotland, then probably it will save some money - I mean save some Carbon"* (CS). Was this substitution of money for carbon a slip of the tongue or does it indicate that bureaucratic mindset where individual, abstract, and financialisation are fused, as fusing occurs from below.

These distinctions between the TTN and CCF can be seen in Scott's (1997) parsing of abstract (*episteme*) and local (*metis*) knowledge. Scott argued that to 'see' like a state was to see in abstractions, not the complexity of society or ecological life. TTN would argue that the CCF focus on abstract, disembodied numbers is an *episteme* way of knowing. TTN's focus on relationship, context, long-term, deep, and internal transition, can be

understood as *metis*.

The CCF's 'community' with its abstract focus on carbon numbers, was seen as putting an 'emotive label on a figurative aim' (Volunteer). The group's 'community' though was emotional, *metis*: CCF was quantitative, instrumental.

*"It's figures, it's not emotional isn't it. The Climate Challenge Fund are trying to, they think they'll make it both. They think, well number-crunch, but the outcome of it will, also be developing community spirit and community strength and da-da-da."* (TES 2).

For 'community resilience' to emerge from abstract objective governing, was seen as a *non sequitur*:

*"It's not necessarily saying that emotion is going to fall out of number crunching, it just happens. It's two completely different things. If that happens, it's an indirect consequence."* (TES 2).

Emotion and 'community' were used interchangeably in this interview. The process of applying for funding, alongside formalising many of these groups, also served to more tightly define their 'community'. During one focus group with staff I was shown an OS map of the local area. One tried to explain their difficulties defining their 'target community' funding required. Each bidder had to demonstrate they represented a specific 'community'. Not only were the goals of the groups more objective, abstract and reified, but so too became their vision of 'community': a fixed topographical boundary, less porous or networked. An *episteme* 'community', not *metis*.

This shift in 'community' perception led to a number of key Transition figures claimed that CCF was 'destroying' the TTN movement in Scotland. *"We're being usurped!"* (TES 1). This—aside from a salutary lesson in being careful what you wish for—again highlights the clash of worldviews between many of those involved in TTN and CCF.

The further 'down' the Transition groups, from key individuals, through paid staff and volunteers, to those on the fringes, the more negative people were about role of CCF funding compromising the group aims. One

potential reason is that they do not see so clearly the effects of the money. Some volunteers were hostile to money 'sully'ing' TTN's ideological position praising DIY. Those (in)formal leadership positions within TTN initiatives could see the benefits and potential pitfalls of funding. Yet, no interviewee was unswervingly positive about the impact of CCF money on TTN groups, even those responsible for managing the fund at civil servant level.

Funding has given groups in the emergent TTN movement a 'shot in the arm' (TSS II), whether or not it has overridden the preexisting fragile, emergent network.

*"you gain something and you lose something, I think this is the major challenge with the Transition model in general. The level of commitment, and the level of time needed to run it. Without funding, the problem is that there's simply not enough time to do it. So, the problem with that and before we got funding—most of my experience was before we got funding—the problem with that is that the core group shrunk and shrunk and shrunk, until literally there were three of us in a room, for months and months on end. We had all these wonderful projects designed and no core. For the 3 or 4 or 5 of us in that middle it was becoming really draining and grating and wearing because we felt we were carrying this whole thing and we felt that if we were to just let it go two years of work would go down the tube. So, if you don't have funding that's the problem, how do you sustain a project that really can make a difference without funding? If you do have funding on the other hand – yeah, (laughs) you're tied in to the outcomes of the remit of the funding. Yeah... just money I don't know how to put it... It becomes more of a job... and it carries all the job stuff with it. So I think ... I think it creates an in and out thing also with the people that work there. They 'own' it. So really in a community group and there's no money involved in any way, the ownership is much easier to disperse—the people working there—they own it." (TEU 5)*

So what exactly had gone on in the group? Clearly there was a breakdown of understanding between some of the TTN volunteers, and those of the CCF. We can broadly group TTN and CCF into two worldviews (Table 1, below). Was this an outcome of the struggles and different competing interests existing within any group? There are, however, hints of a more fundamental source of tension between Scott's two 'ways of knowing'. The following sections turn to the roots of these tensions, tracing out the source in the bifurcation of means and end (6.3.3), marketisation, post-democratic and logics that accompanied the entrance of CCF money and 'numbers' to the TTN groups studied here.

	CCF	TTN
Preferred form of knowledge	episteme	metis
Means and Ends	Divided	United
Reason for adopting community	Instrumental 'it works'	Core part of their ideology, what it means to be human.
Goals	Target-led	Process-oriented
Evaluation and demonstration	Number-focused	Intentional
Relations	Quantitative	Qualitative
Environmental (carbon) savings	Demonstrable	Relational
Permaculture aspects focused on	Colonisation, growth, plant succession	Chaos phase, death and rebirth

**Table 1: Broad outline of the core tensions between CCF and TTN.**

### 6.3.3 Means and Ends

A core part of TTN's worldview is the coalition of means and end. That is, the ways they seek to transition, to travel towards their desired goal, are the same—or at least of the same category—as those goals. TTN's aim of achieving the 'resilient relocalised community', is achieved through sustainable, local actions, enacted by the community: community is both means and end. Granted 'community' is polysemic enough to capture a range of potential meanings. The way TTN wish to travel is also where they want to go. Means and ends are united in their aim of arriving at community

resilience. How do TTN intend to get there? Through community projects and ‘acting as a community’. TTN—in theory at least—intends a uniting of means and ends.

Crucial for coalition of means and ends is the intrinsically link between task and reward. In *The Moral Limits to Markets* Sandel outlines certain activities—paying a child write a thank you letter for birthday gifts, or commissioning a company to write your best man’s speech—where the actions or activity does not readily translate from a qualitative to a quantitative function. In each of these the means (paying the child to write a thank-you letter) impairs the end (the production of grateful, heartfelt letters, not to mention grateful children). One cannot buy friendship, “*somehow, the money that buys the friendship dissolves it, or turns it into something else*” (2013: 94). Likewise community. There is something about the ‘feel’ of community that is diminished, if not extinguished, from the entry of money, and the CCF’s number-based accounting into the community.

Honorific goods like Oscars cannot be bought; other items, such as kidneys perhaps should not be bought, states Sandel. Of interest here is not the morality of such sentiments. But that entry of money, and number-based valuation into a relationship fundamentally alters it. The end point, whether friendship, community, or environmental relationships, are fundamentally altered by the mediation of money and numbers. They also help to crowd out value judgments. In many cases “*the good [product] survives the selling, but is arguably degraded, or corrupted or diminished as a result*” (2013: 96). Why is this? I want to argue it is because of a separation of means and ends.

One can learn a language, work on the grammar, learn the vocabulary in order to read the great works of literature in that language. Or in order to achieve a certain grade in an exam, for instrumental reasons, perhaps boosting career prospects. Only in the former are means and end firmly linked. Sandel is concerned about the creeping marketisation of daily life, but the broader point is relevant here. Certain activities are seen as primarily about relationships, genuine belonging, or moral duty, and the intermediary of money dilutes the relationship somehow. “*The reason it diminishes them is that money can't buy friends: friendship and the social*

*practices that sustain it are constituted by certain norms, attitudes and virtues. Commodifying these practices displaces these norms-sympathy, generosity, thoughtfulness, attentiveness-and replaces them with market values.” “A bought apology or wedding toast, though recognizable as something akin to an authentic one, is nevertheless tainted and diminished. Money can buy these things, but only in a somewhat degraded form” (2013: 117).*

Likewise for TTN ‘community’—community projects, community action, and community belonging—is seen as ‘part of what it is to be human’, constituted by certain norms, attitudes and values, rather than an instrumental scheme such as the CCF. Paying someone to belong to ‘community’ is like paying lover of German to read Goethe. It just does not make sense.

Sandel goes part of the way to explain why bifurcation of ends and means matters so much, through discussion of “*intrinsic motivations (such as moral conviction or interest in the task at hand) and external ones (such as money or other tangible rewards)*. *When people are engaged in an activity they consider intrinsically worthwhile, offering them money may weaken their motivation by depreciating or 'crowding out' their intrinsic interest or commitment. Standard economics theory construes all motivations, whatever their character or source, as preferences and assumes they are additive. But this misses the corrosive effect of money.*” (Sandel, 2013: 122)

This is highly relevant for groups such as Transition Towns. Often environmental activists are motivated intrinsically. They feel an obligation to act on behalf of the planet for deeper ethical reasons. Should governments wish to promote environmental behaviours and actions, they should be wary of this crowding-out effect. Promoting the intrinsic motivations ought to be their concern. Yet, when CCF enters the process, funding has helped ‘crowd-out’ intrinsic motivations in place of external numbers-based reasoning.

Other sources in environmental movement have said similar things. Influential reports *Weathercocks and Signposts* (Crompton, 2008) and *Common Causes* (WWF, 2011), focus on intrinsic motivators such as



'community', as more effective, long-lasting, deeper motivations for action, than payment or a target to reach. Yet, digging deeper, part of the issue is also a divergence between means and ends. The way the activity is encouraged, the reasons for it being carried out (paying staff workers, working towards abstract carbon reduction numbers, the reification of environmental knowledge) diverge from the ends the group wish to achieve (living justly, being in right relationship with human and nonhuman others, the relocalised resilient community). Identifying means and ends, not merely intrinsic and external motivations, can explain not only the entry of market forces into these groups, but also the way tensions emerged and internal groups dynamics altered.

Once the door of an intermediary (in this case an abstract number) enters, markets can get a foothold. It has often been pointed out that neoliberalisation, alongside the increasing individualisation, and marketisation of everyday life, has diluted the prospects for community action, and togetherness (Young, 1990). It has also been pointed out how community activity and projects can (however unwittingly) belong to a neoliberal agenda (Rose, 1999). The neoliberalisation of grassroots community groups is not only an external force, but through the prising apart of means and ends, can enter into the groups themselves. Community members begin to think in instrumental and individual, rather than collective terms. Or whether they are getting value for money from the paid staff.

In this case, the community groups paying hired workers. Seen in this way, it confirms the findings of Ariely's (2010: 75-102) series of experiments demonstrating that paying people for a task may elicit less effort from them than asking them to do it for free, especially if it is a good deed (Heyman & Ariely, 2004). TTN's 'good deeds' were environmental activism, and local deepening exercises. TEU used CCF grant money to hire a series of paid interns on part-time, short-term contracts. Here again, interviewers noted 'what they loved doing, had become their job' (Intern-1).

Some would no doubt conclude like Machiavelli, that if the target, and CCF accountancy procedures achieve their aim of cutting carbon, the end

justifies the means. Others, as one Wu Ming—Italian storytelling collective who offer counter narratives to foundational myths—character put it: “*Over the years I’ve learned that the means change the end*” (Ismail, in Wu Ming: 2013).

#### 6.3.4 TTN and CCF: Clash of Worldviews?

*“the key characteristic of a living network is that it continually produces itself. The being and doing of [living systems] are inseparable, and this is their specific mode of organisation. **Autopoiesis**, or ‘self-making’, is a network patterns in which the function of each component is to participate in the production or transformation of other components in the network. In this way, the network continually makes itself. It is produced by its components and in turn produces those components”*

(Fritjof Capra, ‘The Web of Life’)

This section takes a deeper look at the differences that emerged in PEDAL, TES, and TEU as a result of the tensions over the funding they received. At a more philosophical level than section 6.3.1, this funding presented very challenging questions to these groups over what it was they were there to achieve. This cut to questions of success (Section 6.2), but also to the core of their underlying beliefs, or philosophy. For many TTN participants, TTN’s underlying value system is one of permaculture, which emphasises resilience, and meshwork. For those tasked with overseeing the continuation and expansion of these groups, they often fell back on notions of hierarchy and organisation over what DeLanda (1997) calls ‘morphogenesis’ – before the final form ‘settles’, before difference is

realised.<sup>180</sup> This section then looks at how compatible, if at all, TTN's founding philosophical belief in Autopoiesis<sup>181</sup> and Meshwork<sup>182</sup> – seen in TTN practices of *Open Space Technology* and the *Law of Two Feet* – can be with government funding.

#### Transition belief in meshwork, network or morphogenesis.

There are a number of different interpretations of the core values of the TTN. These include as one of 'resilience' (Barr & Devine-Wright, 2012), Deleuzean philosophy (Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010), de-growth (Trainer, 2012), ethical place-making (Mason & Whitehead, 2012) or even one's own personal 'inner transition' (Prentice, 2012). I have been keen to emphasize its permaculture heritage, and deep philosophical debt to which it owes.<sup>183</sup> Many of these other issues (particularly resilience) can be incorporated within, and better contextualised, when understanding TTN as an essentially permaculture movement for the social realm. From the very beginning of TTN, it had an emphasis on bottom-up, organic, 'community'-based movement, one understood as valuing meshwork, morphogenesis and autopoiesis.

Crucial to this is what was described to me as 'designed demise' or 'composting' of the groups. Like the '*Law of Two Feet*' in *Open Space* meetings, often certain tasks, or groups of chairs in the hall where the planning of those tasks was to be discussed, are left undone, or unoccupied. People have 'gone where the energy is' and been recycled into the groups/tasks until completion/boredom there have been achieved. This 'composting' is not arbitrary or random, but rather occurs whenever the task is complete.

This notion is crucial to understanding TTN. Although they may not all express this, composting sums up both their permaculture beliefs and the

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<sup>180</sup> Bauman makes a similar claim about community as a 'warm circle' – before the in/out boundary becomes codified, defined and definite.

<sup>181</sup> Self-creation. To be autopoietic the TTN cell would 'spontaneously emerge'

<sup>182</sup> web of being. Opposed to hierarchy. The sum of different strands, but more than a 'network', the meshwork contains the gaps between the strands (Ingold, 2007)

<sup>183</sup> For instance Aiken (2012).

practice that I experienced in the research. This is not meant to be wholly understandable. Any 'organisation' that wishes to be seen valuing multiplicity, chaos and openness, can appear inconsistent at best, and often incoherent.

TTN has had a tension between this theoretical 'meshwork' and aspects of a hierarchy before its engagement with CCF. Totnes can decide between groups being 'official' and 'mullers' – a new hierarchy. This is not to say all the mention of 'temporality', 'openness', or 'decentralisation' is just empty rhetoric. Rather it is to avoid a simplistic retelling of the TTN story whereby it was 'pure' or 'original', until it reached Scotland and the CCF. TTN would more than likely have to face these hurdles at some point. But it is still interesting to assess just what has changed when TTN came across the Rubicon<sup>184</sup> of the CCF, from which it can probably never return, at least in Scotland.

This section also tries to avoid positing hierarchy and meshwork in opposition, and take sides. Yet as DeLanda states "*decentralisation is preferable to centralisation for many reasons*". And TTN themselves state though the Law of Two Feet, that over control does stifle creativity and energy.

This incoherence can be seen most readily in the fusing of CCF and TTN in Scotland. TTN is both deeply idealistic, and thoroughly pragmatic. With both of these, and the emergence of *Transition Network Ltd.*, as we shall see though, something has to give. Does this connecting with the CCF make TTN no different to other political or social movements conditioned by mainstream expectations? Or does it add to its complexity, or incoherence?

#### CCF belief in hierarchy, organisation, structure.

TTN has a permaculture philosophical base, and belief in the self-immolation or composting of each group. CCF funding on the other hand, has required quite a different model, or way of being for these groups.

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<sup>184</sup> Rubicon implies not being able to return, perhaps Hadrian's Wall is the Roman analogy best suited here though.

The nascent TTN movement in Scotland was clearly interested in the potential of the CCF as soon as it became likely that such a fund would emerge. There was much appreciation of the opportunity amongst TTN volunteers at that time and ability to achieve medium-term plans. It also opened up avenues in terms of legitimacy – council officials were more comfortable dealing with paid employees than a loose affiliation of activists.

Likewise those who managed and allocated CCF funding, had a vested interest in it ‘succeeding’. TTN become seen from this angle as a ‘safe bet’ for funding. A civil servant working on the project at the time stated the desire for Scotland to become a place where TTN would flourish. *“We wanted to get ahead of England in terms of Transition – we’re ahead of England, that’s where we want to be.”* (CS).

Even though this required a ‘massaging’ of the funding criteria to enable TTN to be so well placed to apply for funding.<sup>185</sup> Much of this was seen by those involved at this stage (2008-9) as being due to strong personal connections between those managing and allocating the CCF money, and those involved with TTN in Scotland/PEDAL.

Yet despite this initial mutual attraction between CCF and TTN in Scotland, there is now recognition of the differences, if not quite repulsion between the two. Building on the categories before this is due to 3 reasons.

1) The recognition that CCF funding requires a formal hierarchical structure, a bank account, office bearers and (more) clearly defined membership. Not only is this often more difficult to achieve for those who come from outside the professional classes, but it also moves away from TTN’s early permaculture way of operating, as morphogenesis.

2) It has also forced the focus towards energy over food, and carbon accounting over the relational ‘community’ resilience. As one external consultant reflecting on the impact of CCF funding upon the ‘community’ group sector reflected: *“I think in any study done around this time, [you can see] the CCF’s changed things immensely. It’s done a lot of good stuff, and it’s had a lot of weird effects. But it’s had a big effect, whichever way you look at it.”* (EX).

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<sup>185</sup> The very fact that TSS was funded at all goes against key CCF principles.

One TTN volunteer said: *“CCF money just driven everyone into this carbon reduction, frantic things. And that’s not what we’re about, we’re fundamentally about getting people involved in considering what to do and then looking at how we can make Transitions.”* (EX 2). The volunteer felt that many of these groups did quite different things before TTN had funding, or even the prospect of funding.

3) It also changed the nature of volunteering. As a TTN ‘executive’ stated to me: *“it’s the nature of Transition not to be financially based.”* (TT 2).

Part of this is TTN’s volunteering ideal of ‘community’. People come together and all ‘chip-in’ with whatever they have to hand. CCF meant paid employees, and a more professional outlook to the TTN operation. *“There’s lots of issues in paying people and how people feel about volunteering”* (TES 7) said one involved with TES but who left before this study took place.

It was often pointed out to me that in the ‘early days’ the ‘community spirit’ was built through everyone volunteering together. However once there was a paid member of staff to do the job, volunteers were not to be found. Also the ‘community spirit’ was no longer being built. Ways of raising funds before the CCF, like coffee mornings, had supplementary – yet crucial – benefits, engendering feelings of belonging and group solidarity. A number of long-term volunteers felt that CCF money diminished, or at least significantly altered, the ‘community’.

The funding was seen to have *“gelled the [TES] group”* (TES 2), that before was ‘pretty informal’. Yet this gelling, was institutionally, through defined in/out boundaries, clear hierarchy and structure. The *“challenge is to look for subsequent funding”* (TES 2), but has this inaugurated a cycle of reliance and dependency on the CCF funds? *“There’s no doubting the benefits of a dedicated team”* (TEU 4), said one TEU staff member.

**Table 2: Matrix showing the more theoretical areas of CCF and TTN divergence**

	CCF	TTN
Forms of knowledge	episteme	metis
The role of funding	Condition of the possibility	Condition of the impossibility

How it maps onto the Derridean schema	Law	Justice
Vision of 'success'	Hierarchy, growth, structure	Autopoiesis, morphogenesis,
Vision of the future	Planned, Forecasted	Hopeful, Apocalyptic, Backcasted
Model of leadership	Priest	Prophet
Phase of the Resilience cycle	K Phase (conservation)	Ω phase (chaos)

Tensions between CCF and TTN: Marx's 'Dual Power' or Gramsci's 'Modern Prince'?

The tension between these two different worldviews, or ways of operating can be seen in a number of ways. When I first started exploring the tension between CCF and TTN Scotland I began to see this as a good empirical example of the Marxist notion of 'dual power'. Dual power refers to the way an attempted 'transition' between the current 'system' and an alternative future one can come about (Mason, 2012: 17). The new way of operating is that which emerges not through antagonistically opposing existing hierarchies, but subtly undermining them. Both co-exist simultaneously and the new vision gradually begins to accrue more legitimacy, and be seen as the natural way of being, or doing things. It was described to me as 'building the new world order in the shell of the old'.

TTN groups here would exist under the radar, not directly opposing energy company cartels, but through removing their possibility - by customers joining co-operative groups. 'Clone Town Superstores' would not be protested against, occupied or invaded by TTN volunteers, but through such events as farmers markets, would be rendered obsolete.

However through CCF, State support has come to be required by many of these groups, established with AGM's and bank accounts, they need paid employees to keep going, hence they depend on CCF or state subsidy.

Such a situation is no 'waiting in the wings'. But the relationship between the CCF and TTN is perhaps more amenable to understanding by placing it in light of Gramsci's *'Modern Prince'*.

In this Gramsci describes two different ways in which revolutionary movements can affect change (as introduced in Section 6.1.5). First a 'war of position' involves direct opposition through campaigning, or trade union activity. This is digging in the trenches, a sort of 'shoring up of one's base', that TTN groups can be seen to do through their 'deepening' exercises. TTN's 'war of position' can be seen as their attempts to gain legitimacy. Yet at a certain point, this 'war of position' must come of age and enter into a 'war of maneuver'. A 'war of maneuver' entails direct revolution against the state. This can be seen as the 'relocalised, resilient community' they proleptically seek to inaugurate.

Those employed by CCF money, vicariously through these three TTN groups, were clear about the tensions they saw in this link up. One of these was the funding cycle, where the money had to be spent by the end of the funding period in March: We've "*so much to do, and then there's the pressure of getting completed by March, because the funding runs out.*" "*What will happen to the farmer's market when the funding runs out?*" (PEDAL 1).

There was a fear of losing funding, which obviously was not there before. A need to shore up ones position, rather than think of new ways to destabilize the current system. The leader of TSS was also under deadlines: "*I'm trying to build a Scottish network, very quickly, given that my finding runs out next year.*" (TSS II). These arbitrary deadlines were seen as robbing much of the *joie de vivre*, or volunteering, 'community' spirit that had attracted them in the first place. All six of those employed by TEU spoke of their vocation or calling becoming a job, rather than doing it for the sheer joy. "*I had more of a community with these guys [co-workers] before we got the funding. That's the first barrier we now have.*" (TEU 4).

Those employed had a different relationship to the task of Transition. Volunteering numbers also diminished. In TES there emerged tension between the volunteers and paid staff once they had secured money. Although the premise was that many would carry out the volunteering



interviews required for the SOSO project. The paid staff was seen as there to do the work: what then was the need of the 'community' (the volunteers) then one asked? Perhaps this showed that money doesn't facilitate strong 'community'. Or maybe the need for 'community' - where there is no prospect of funding sources. In the SOSO project though, funding reduced volunteering rates. *"At the end of the day he [paid staff] did the interviews"* (TES 1). Whereas previously the interviewing was done by volunteers. Some volunteers were even more explicit about why they thought CCF was bad for TTN - it wasn't so much CCF as money itself that was the problem. *"Keep the community poor - only then can it be sustainable."* (PEDAL 5).

Perhaps this is where TTN's original philosophical objection to funding or standard ways of operating as an institution are so radical. *"Money comes with a history, and it comes with an influence"* (PEDAL 2), but some money is cleaner than others.

This was seen on the group by a volunteer too: *"getting the grant divorces you"* (TES 2) from building 'community'. Mainly through activity fund-raisers. It also meant that the groups became less diverse. PEDAL's coffee morning fund-raisers were seen as reaching beyond the usual suspects as coffee mornings bring in many different others. *"Funding can mean you don't meet those who don't know the message."* (TES 2).

Others indicated this attitude too. *"Well, I'm not going to go out delivering leaflets - because we've got a paid worker to do that", "I've got better things to do with my time"* (TEU 7).

Rather than enabling an environmental 'war of position', or setting up dual power structures, CCF seems to have co-opted and created dependency amongst the groups studied here, a dependency on the potential future funding. Seen clearly when in the TEU 'lost' its funding. Or rather its subsequent bid was rejected.

When I left my research, those of at top of these groups were agnostic about CCF money, while the volunteer at the 'bottom' tended to be against it. The view from CCF had also shifted. From excitement about the TTN brand legitimising their fund, to a more critical stance.

One fund manager thought TTN should be very grateful for CCF support. *"Transition was virtually moribund in Scotland before funding."* They stated. *"They were three that we were aware of that were either existing or nascent, but that's it. Pretty low level."* Who has gained? *"Well, we both have."* (CCF 2).

The civil servant felt the problems faced by TTN through CCF funding were their own failings, not wholly the grant. TTN chose to have paid staff as part of their bid – the CCF didn't tell them to do so. They could have gone entirely voluntary, so why didn't they? He stated, going on to develop an analogy with CCF grant and lottery 'winners'. If the lottery winnings were squandered, was this the fault of the lottery, or ticket holders who now found themselves managing sums of money they couldn't have dreamed. *"It's not the lottery's fault they spent the money on champagne and holidays"* (CS) - his conclusion was clear.

It was not the CCF to blame, but the groups themselves, searching for paid staff, stability, or legitimacy. When TTN could have sufficed with volunteers and small-scale ambitions. Funding enabled and disabled: it was the condition of the (im)possibility. Interestingly, by the end of this interview, the civil servant came closest to the TTN permaculture philosophy found in their early writings, and 'blogs. Yet through this telling anecdote about lottery winners, we can see much. As Amin (2005) has pointed out, throwing 'community' at hard-pressed groups, it not a new technique in UK governance. Creating the conditions where they seek after such funds, and then turning round and blaming them for wasting it on 'champagne and holidays' or part-time support staff and training courses. Perhaps it is through this that TTN sold its soul.

Why did TTN employ staff? There was nothing to force them to do so, however great the peer pressure. This could have been self-fulfilling. The groups who did not go down the route enabled by CCF funding, were not studied here. This could be because they do not exist, or never have. Such groups did not have the increased profile and scope that CCF funding enabled. Not having an Internet presence, only being known within their small-scale area, precluded my finding out about them and selecting them as

case studies. Aware of any potential confirmation bias, I am inclined to suggest that other groups may well exist, however far beyond my awareness of them they are. The ones who 'chose to die', well, I could not find them, perhaps because of that very fact.

## 6.4 Conclusion

Chapter Six has added to the understanding the practice of 'community' within TTN, begun in Chapter Five. It assesses the potential, or promise of 'community' within TTN in two ways. First, it makes an assessment as to what the potential of TTN as a whole is/will be. This is done through looking at their crucial concept: 'community'. How durable or temporary is the 'community' they enact? Also, do they desire a sustained 'community' at all? The successful 'community' for TTN looks different to that of funders CCF.

Second, it also looked at how the role of potential, or promise, figures in the movement, as it exists in the present. That is, how is the future orientation of TTN inherently tied up with how they live, and act, now: how is the future deployed and enacted as a resource for the present.

Making this distinction is crucial, and the chapter as a whole is more concerned with the latter way of addressing potential and promise. This chapter, like TTN when discussing 'the future', says more about the present than it does about the future. The first half of this chapter is theoretical, and is made more concrete in the second half. This involves digging deeper into the specific tensions that emerged between CCF and TTN.

By opening up this line of enquiry, the chapter allows us to see more fully how time relates to TTN and their 'community'. Connected to this, is the way in which TTN views future success. What exactly is the successful vision towards which they seek to travel? It is this contestation over vision that helps explain many tensions both now, and in expectation. It is these tensions which this chapter, and the bulk of the thesis has ended. Whether resolvable or not, they will certainly be part of the potential directions taken by these initiatives.



## Chapter 7: Coda: Production, Practice, Potential

This thesis has addressed the *production* of ‘community’. Lefebvre examines how *The Production of Space* goes beyond discourses ‘on’ space, or discussions of ‘social space’ (Lefebvre, 1991). This thesis does likewise for ‘community’. Rather than discuss the different meanings of space, Lefebvre analysed struggles over how space was culturally produced; in part by addressing the grassroots ‘lived examples of space’ (Shields, 2010: 210). This thesis has followed a similar line of enquiry, addressing ‘community’ rather than space. Rather than labour an old discussion of what ‘community’ means (Chapter Three), it has sought to explore the tensions in how ‘community’ is culturally produced in each group and initiative explored here.

*“So far as the concept of production is concerned, it does not become fully concrete or take on a true content until replies of have been given to the questions that it makes possible: ‘Who produces?’, ‘What?’, ‘How?’, ‘Why and for Whom?’”* (Lefebvre, 1991: 69)

The answers this thesis has given to the challenge of documenting production (bearing in mind this thesis is concerned with ‘community’, Lefebvre with space) can be seen in Chapter Four, and as follows. ‘Community’ is produced by various actors: TTN themselves; top-down through government initiatives, in this case the CCF; and key individual visions within the groups studied. This is for various ends: because ‘community’ is believed to be an effective means to control (reduce) carbon consumption; because ‘community’ is the good life; ‘community’ is necessary to survive a life without oil; because ‘community’ makes us better people. This is done through localising, developing close, intimate, face to face, and almost familiar relationships. ‘Community’ is used to dig deeper through *Carbon Conversations*, or to increase ones ‘belonging’ to their street (SOSO) or neighbourhood (PEDAL/Portobello). For TTN ‘community’ fits

with their utopian vision of society they wish to build. Of these five Lefevrean questions, 'What?' 'community' produces is answered fully, not in Chapter Four, but in Chapter Five: the *practice* of 'community'. Indeed the whole of the thesis is concerned with not just production, but also the practice and potential of 'community'. The following three sections outline these findings, also making note where relevant to where answers to the Research Questions can be found. As a reminder, here are the six research questions outlined in Section 1.2.1.

RQ1: Who produces 'community'?

RQ2: What specifically is it that is produced, when we talk of the production of 'community'? What is the practice 'community'?

RQ3: How is this 'community' produced?

RQ4: Why is 'community' chosen by the various actors and activists looked at here?

RQ5: For Whom? This is related to the question that should be asked of any activity or endeavour, the first base of ethics, asking *cui bono* – who does it serve?

RQ6: How does this understanding of the who, what, how, why, and for whom, of 'community' help us to understand grassroots, environmental action, social movements such as TTN, or government policy adopting 'community'.

## 7.1 Production

The main finding of this thesis is a deep analysis of how and why 'community' is important to TTN groups. 'Community' is an ever-present within these groups, but is rarely appreciated in wider literature and

practice. When acknowledged as integral, what is missing is why and in what way 'community' has import. There are good reasons for this, as explored in Chapter Five, where 'community' is cannot be directly approached, but is a key side effect to many of the groups' activities.

The TTN model has shifted, both through time as explored in Chapter Six, and also through space. It shifts, changes, mutates, and transforms depending on the context. The contexts within Edinburgh are different in many ways. Middlemiss (2010; & Parrish, 2010) has explored the *cultural capacity* of different communities, this is a key influence in how TTN manifests (or does not manifest) in different areas to Totnes, and different areas of Edinburgh [RQ1, RQ3]. Cultural capacity can also be seen as the key difference between Totnes where the TTN developed, and Edinburgh and Scotland in general. Yet the context of this study was also crucially institutionally and policy different too. The advent of the CCF 'transformed utterly' the opportunities and expectations of 'community groups in Scotland'. Transition Edinburgh University in particular showed how unsuited the model developed for Totnes is for a workplace and student population.

The other of Middlemiss's capacities – *individual capacity* – has had a huge impact the groups studied here. This – alongside cultural capacity is key to any understanding of where and why 'community' groups take off [RQ4]. Without the Influential Individuals in each TTN group studied here, none would have taken the form they did [RQ1]. It may be possible to understand this category demographically, mostly: middle-class, and well educated, tending to be female, middle-aged, and faith-based (Hastings & Matthews, 2011a; Mohan, 2010). But, each Influential Individual necessitates a different biography, and passions, no matter how effective, driven, and proactive they all tend to be. These tend map onto different directions and passions for each group. For TES having a Psychologist influential individual led to the importance of Motivational Interviewing in their attempt to bring into being 'resilient relocalised community'. TTN shifts as it travels [RQ6].

Yet, this creates tensions. These tensions comprise the second major research finding. The first tension is between the centralising impulse of attempting to totalise, and universalise, the TTN experience, seen through the setting up of *Transition Network Ltd.* (Section 6.3.2) with the particular TTN examples who adhere, sometimes in following the original aims of TTN, sometimes through the way TTN shifts as it travels, of “*going where it wants*”.<sup>186</sup> These tensions are in the manner in which ‘community’ is produced. Is ‘community’, or even TTN groups themselves, seen to be a CCF agenda, or genuinely ‘of the people’? [RQ5] There are tensions in each group around insiders and outsiders, both the group boundary, and the view that PEDAL followed the perceived agenda of ‘incomers’ to Portobello. Finally there were tensions between a ‘managerialist’ approach to each TTN groups projects, contrasted with a grassroots approach. The thesis has also critically assessed the tension between those inspired by the permaculture vision, who wish to do something new, and those employed as a staff member, seeking the next grant to stay alive. I have referred to this particular tension as prophet or priest [RQ6].

There is evidence too, for previous assertions that Chapter Five pushed this knowledge further by presenting ‘community’ as a phatic term, both for those in policy and those pushing for ‘community’ ever more [RQ4].

A key contribution of this thesis reinforces anti-essentialist challenges to the notion of ‘community’ as a ‘given’, as Featherstone has done for *Solidarity* (2012) (Section 3.1.4). Rather ‘community’ can be constructed, willed, and brought into being. This was attempted through top-down, official government attempts; horizontal, facilitation of ‘community’, via individuals and infrastructures; also through the grassroots, emergent, bottom-up. This thesis demonstrates that ‘community’ is demonstrated in multiple ways within what appears to be the same social movement (TTN) or policy arena (CCF). This highlights the unmanageable, excessive, and capacious qualities of ‘community’. It should provide caution for any ‘community’ policy expecting to be rolled out universally. Or any ‘successful’ grassroots social movement attempted to be copied and cloned

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<sup>186</sup> Step 11 of the 12 Steps (Hopkins, 2008: 172)



for another context. The rolling out of 'community' is not smooth, and falls prey to the uneven nature of geography and space. 'Community', in some way, is 'of' a particular context [RQ3].

Building on this, one contribution advancing understanding of 'community' revolves around the notion of the phatic, not brought to bear on writings on 'community' as yet. This is novel and provides a language to be able to talk of a disciplinary, or governmentalised 'community' regimes of low carbon living. What matters is only 'keeping the channel of communication open', the government gaining consent by acknowledging a publics existence, but without equipping them with the genuinely political tools to change circumstances. 'Community' can be able to control and consent in this analysis, not challenge and provoke. This matters, as an addition to theorising 'governing by community' is another angle to critique government misapplication of 'community'. The awareness that governments and corporations can abuse the 'community' label also provides an important note to be wary whenever it is applied as unswervingly positive [RQ2, RQ4].

## 7.2 Practice

Chapter Five addressed the *practice* of 'community'. This explores the practice 'community' takes within these groups, what 'community' means, or has come to mean. This is a tension between a strategic deployment through the CCF and an emergent faith in 'community' and other people, from TTN. On the ground, 'community' belief and practice often takes the form of a *zuhanden* practical action. It is being in 'community' that gets things done, 'community' is the tool attached to us. In this sense 'community's' meaning, is not an object to reflect on, be discussed and cognitively understood. Rather it is lived, embodied, and just *is*. In this sense 'community' for these groups is most often acquired, not sought.

For the CCF on the other hand 'community' is not so much acquired, as required. It is required to get people to behave. To live reduced carbon lives. As shown in Section 3.1.5, this belief in the moral nature of

'community' goes back to ones view of human nature and the human condition. 'Community' is necessary and useful to govern for CCF; 'community' is natural, and should be facilitated and cherished for TTN.

The enactment of 'community' by the TTN groups studied here shows us a way to consider the possibilities and characteristics of 'community'. These are that 'community' has no ready synonym, no other word that can be as affective, mobilising, encompassing, and engaging. 'Community' is not fungible [RQ2]. 'Community' can be used as a 'god word' and has 'functional malleability', in its diversity of use and application.

These possibilities and characteristics are important in order to understand the practice of 'community' in the governing of climate change. 'Community' can inspire, form discourse coalitions, and be used as a vehicle for Entryism [RQ4]. A Fifth Columnist smuggling of radical conclusion within seemingly inoffensive language: 'community' as a Trojan Unicorn (Section 5.1.1 & 5.4) [RQ2]. 'Community' is also a social response to (perceived) crisis and future events. Chapter Six demonstrated that the proleptic movement of inaugurating future events into the present or near past can be a powerful vehicle for mobilising action on a 'community' level, to imagine alternate futures, and be utopian [RQ6].

'Community' is not a given and can be constructed. Chapter Five showed that the form, or manner of the 'community' often envisioned by grassroots TTN activists, understood through the lens of permaculture, could not be imposed from the top-down. This was attempted through schemes like the CCF. The CCF sought to promote a certain vision of 'community', often place-based, through funding schemes. It involved codifying groups, setting strict in/out boundaries, becoming 'official' with bank accounts and office bearers. It was a 'community' that needed to be *demonstrated*. Yet the centrifugal, action-orientated, *zuhandenheit* experience of 'being-in-community' often challenged this. Or again was excessive to it. The contribution to the literature here is of worth to 'community groups' such as TTN, as much as for the theorising of these dynamics. Chapter Five can be seen as a note of caution to similar groups attempting to meet their aims through divergent means: where medium and

message bifurcate. That is, where the goal or destination are mutually contradictory to the means of travel getting there [RQ2, RQ5].

Chapter Five demonstrated that 'community' as *zuhandenheit* helps us to understand key differences between critiques of governmentalised 'community', and the appeal for 'community' amongst grassroots actors and activists. It serves as a bridge between the more-than-representational geographic approach to grassroots 'community' movements (Nichols & Ralston, 2012; Scott-Cato & Hillier, 2010), and the more politically inspired writings (Aiken, 2012a; Trapese, 2008; Amin, 2005). This bridge offers the hugely important caution to such groups that 'community' energy, to be kept fresh, on the move, and alive, needs to be focused on an activity other than keeping the 'community' going (Young, 1990: 235). Yet it also reminds critiques of the adoption of 'community' as a cover for government cuts, part of a neoliberal agenda, or a Big Society or an 'Age of Austerity' supply of useful volunteering. Such 'community' projects are not appealing to, or sustained by, those who seek to defend such policies, but have other reasons for being in the 'community'. Chapter Five offered belonging, the feeling of urgent action needed in the face of massive future challenges, and the feeling of 'swimming with the tide' as some of these reasons [RQ2, RQ5].

The last contribution this thesis makes to understanding the practice of 'community' is to emphasise the strange, unknowing nature of 'community'. 'Community' in anything approaching its fullest sense is acquired rather than sought. 'Community' is that strangest of social phenomena in that it cannot be seen directly, but only out of the side of ones eye. It 'sort of sneaks up alongside ye' (TEU 6). Like approaching a horse for the first time, one must lower ones head, approach circuitously, and slowly. It is by approaching directly, with eyes open, and confidently, that the horse is scared away; likewise the willed 'community'. Perhaps this is why 'community' it is said, is not to be seen, but is a feeling. This thesis sought not to understand what 'community' is, as if that were some sort of essential truth, rather it has been to examine how 'community' has come to be understood. In the research carried out here, this is how 'genuine community' appears. 'Community' achieved only through work on a

‘demanding common task’. One does not simply walk into ‘community’ [RQ2].

### 7.3 Potential

Chapter Six made an assessment of the potential of ‘community’ in each of these projects. The first thing that must be said about this is the potential for what exactly. These groups were internally divided about what would constitute the ‘successful’ project. This can be clearly seen in the broad distinction between the TTN and CCF vision of success, but it is again important to stress the internally contestation with these two entities. For TTN ‘community’ has potential to reach their aims of a ‘resilient relocalised community’ because it is part of their aims. For TTN their goal and their means of travel are the same thing: *Weg-von hier*. Building the world we wish to be a part of starts now, yesterday even, due to the urgent nature of their task. For the CCF ‘community’ has the potential to reach their aims of a low carbon Scotland because this is how the devolved Scottish Government has chosen to brand itself, how they foresee future European and international legislation going, and because they believe the renewable technologies are the next great national resource after North Sea oil. But more importantly for this thesis, because they believe people belong to discrete local units, and crucially behave better when less mobile, more ‘community’ means less deviance in their citizenry. ‘Community’ keeps people in check, under control, and behaving.

At the outset this thesis noted the similarity between TTN and the discourse of ‘community’ (Chapter One). That both had faced similar critiques and similar values used to promote and see value in them. TTN and ‘community’ could be independent and just happen to share the same critique by coincidence. The thesis did not claim that TTN and ‘community’ were causal in either direction though. ‘Community’ and TTN could be concurrent, or consecutive: the criticisms of them likewise. During the course of this thesis though, there is enough evidence to outline a reason why ‘community’ and TTN share the same critiques and praising.

'Community' is the central concern for TTN, therefore alongside 'community' it also attracts the criticisms and valorisation that 'community' has done and continues to do so. This is the reason for many of the critiques of TTN this thesis puts forward. They are – at base – criticisms of the concept of 'community': a caveat being the variations in how 'community' is understood. This helps explain how TTN can so swiftly become darlings of government funded schemes, schemes well versed in using 'community'.

Next we can make an assessment of the potential of 'community'. For TTN 'community' has both limited and unlimited potential. Limited, as it cannot be up-scaled. It involves continual breakdown and build anew, it is a keep it small, keep it simple vision of doing things for themselves. But when 'community' takes this form, it is limitless in its ability to motivate people for action, and also as a goal to aim at.

These tensions hint at a potential faltering of the 'community' project. The conditions that have brought 'community' and TTN this far may also be the reasons for their demise. 'Community' in TTN cannot fulfil everybody's expectations of it. Often these are mutually exclusive. 'Community' cannot both help fulfil government targets, building the low carbon economy, with world leading sustainability; and reduce consumption, entering degrowth, and foster relationships with nature, as many TTN would wish.

Perhaps this is what happens to all groups who plan to build an alternative vision of society. The Polish party *Solidarity* were once committed to anarcho-syndicalism. That now seems more of an anachronism. Will TTN go that way? The evidence on the ground, and this thesis, does not indicate that it cannot, or has not started going that way. Yet, it does not indicate that it will either. It is unclear whether it is through collaboration with governmentalised schemes that eviscerates TTN of its radical potential, or whether they act the normal Schwejkian obedience, showing up TTN and its target-driven, number-focus, as absurd. This is the under-the-radar tactics many in TTN mentioned. In the distinction between prophet and priest, or Stalin and Trotsky, Schwejkian responses are often the only ones left to those acting from the grassroots.

To avoid this, pressure groups and social movements often attempt to express their demands or visions for the future through mission statements. These can prove fruitful records for those interested in calling an organisation or institution back to its founding purpose, and Chapter Six demonstrated they did so for TTN. For instance the charters of UK universities are worth reading in the light of their current activities. The role of the founding statement by social movements provides not just a vital record of their beliefs and way of operating at that point in time, but can also be used to keep future iterations of that ‘community’ in check. The function of the 12 Steps for TTN offers a way of addressing the role such foundational statements have for growing, shifting social movements. What the responsibility such statements should have, and how to hold their context appropriately is a key question for TTN. As shown in Chapter Six, without the record of the 12 Steps, volunteers and would have much less chance to pointedly demonstrate how and why different TTN group activities (a focus on winning grants for example) might be represent a shift away from first principles [RQ3, RQ6].

Another contribution is linked to mission statements. Research on TTN has often seen it in the light of Deleuze-inspired ‘rhizome’ theories (North, 2010; Scott-Cato, 2010; Bailey et al., 2012). This makes sense given the overlap between permaculture ways of operating and ‘ecosophy’ ideas. However this thesis shows the potential in adopting a more Derridan analysis – or at least Derrida inspired. Analysing TTN through a Derridean lens had not been the object of study for this thesis, but it shows the value in future research addressing this [RQ6]. Not only through the Derridean anti-essentialist writers on ‘community’ (Nancy, Agamben, Caputo) (Section 3.1.4), but concepts such as the ‘condition of (im)possibility’ are of great value (Section 6.2.2). Most readily, it is the use of deconstruction in returning organisations, groups, and movements to their first principles, as Chapter Six showed; to be humble, visionary, proactive, and unsettled. A Derridean understanding of environmental ‘community’ groups such as TTN is new. This is not merely to “criticize the notion of community on both philosophical and practical grounds” as Iris Marion Young has (1995: 234).

On the contrary, I have shown that ‘community’ can and does achieve many things. Yet this Derrida-inspired approach can prevent ‘community’ movements becoming stultifying, ossifying, and institutional, and crucially far removed from starting principles. In order to save ‘community’ from journeying from *zuhandenheit* ‘community’ to governmentalised moralising ‘community’, from prophet to priest, deconstruction is necessary [RQ5, RQ6].

The role of time in general remains under-theorised in literatures on TTN. (Exceptions are Bastian, 2011, 2012; Brown et al., 2012, Gilchrist, 2012) By bringing notions of *kairos* (Section 6.1.6), temporal displacement (Section 6.1), and the *Weg-von-hier* (Section 6.1.1) into contact with TTN, there is a fruitful and fecund depth of understanding to be achieved. This understanding is the importance of ‘acting now’ for groups, and the hugely motivating accompanying urgency that comes alongside. Chapter Six shows that in order to travel hopefully into futurity, the groups studied here adopted a *Weg-von-hier* approach that combated the cynicism or apathy that might have affected these groups [RQ3, RQ6].

More specifically building on the above point, this thesis investigated the temporal foundations of utopia. The weaving of spatial and temporally displaced utopias and utopian thinking are writ large in TTN (Section 6.1.7). What this thesis shows is the manner in which this is brought about. The curious temporal loops achieved by the groups studied here enable them to be utopian. This is also closely linked to their ability to behave apocalyptically, urgently, and reflectively towards *the future*. Bringing such a secularised theology understanding to social categories again offers a new way in to understanding such groups and their ways of operating (Section 3.1.5, and Chapter Six) [RQ3, RQ6].

As stated at the outset, ‘community’ is incredibly important for TTN, but rarely is it understood why, or in what way. This thesis has looked to address this. By addressing the production, practice, and potential of ‘community’, TTN can be understood more fully.

## 7.4 Avenues for Future Research

In many ways the research presented in this document has only scratched the surface. Not only have I made reams more notes, transcribed interviews, and coded reflections and notes other than those which 'made the final cut'; but there exists much more beyond what I saw, appreciated, and experienced with these groups. Avenues to develop this work further are of two categories. Those areas of the literature it could engage with more fully, and further empirical examples to highlight by comparison key factors.

The tentative exploration of the archaeology of 'community' as a moral force, begun here, has the potential to be further excavated. There is a large literature on environmental justice, but relatively limited work on environmentalism and moral philosophy (exceptions being Northcott, 1996; Szerszynski, 1996; DesJardins, 2006). For instance there could be theoretical engagement with emerging work on 'evil geographies' (Tuan, 1999; Cloke, 2011). This would further problematise the notion of environmental bads, how and why they come to be known as such. Can such environmental actions be seen as evil at all? And if so is it more akin to 'banal' evil (Arendt, 1963), 'contingent bad will' (Ricoeur, 1960), the underside of a subjective truth process (Badiou, 2001: 67), or a Levinasian lack of 'recognition of the other', either human or environmental? Integral to each of these views is the notion of togetherness, and there is much to learn about the connection between evil, 'community', and (un)environmental actions. Further work could be done with the work of philosophers such as Brian Elliot (2009; 2010), theologians like Timothy Gorringer (2002), to advance work of Geographers such as David M. Smith (1999; 2000) with further exploration of morality and 'community' with regards to the environment.

This chimes with role of secular theological categories in wider research. Pushing further groups chosen as case studies into how they see 'community' as a moral force for good environmental actions would show this work in wider relief. Eco-congregations, for instance, might be interesting as a proxy for 'community' as a moral force for what is presented



as 'good'. Examples where 'community' cannot so simply be assumed to be a moral force for good, for instance Lovell's (forthcoming) work on 'epistemic communities', would add needed nuance. Literature on the notion on 'community' can be critical, for instance research on NIMBYism. Yet examples on the ground, and government uses of 'community', can miss this. The research here shows that both CCF and TTN, in different ways, respectively assume 'community' to be an effective vehicle for controlling environmental behaviours, or fostering a deeper caring relationship with the environment.

This work could also benefit from further reflection on research ethics. Being fair to those you research is a reasonable concern. However, as Gillan & Pickerill (2012) point out, such methods need to also take into consideration those who might share very different ethics. Given the value in pushing research into unenvironmental evils or actions, how would such research principles affect research into groups offending the liberal mindset of academia?

All geography exists in some sense between the two extremes of the universal and the particular. This work at once reflects the particular environment and policy, cultural, individual concerns of where and when it was carried out. Although I do not hold to the singularity of each event, by placing this work alongside other similar examples, closer attention can be paid to what is contingent, and what is more widely applicable from this study. Work with other EU policies similar to the CCF; perhaps in similar-sized Northern European countries such as Norway, Denmark, or Ireland would be interesting.

TTN's goal of resilience will only be achieved, they see it, when our local communities are both independent and interacting – again a coalescence of means and end. This is enacted in the TTN model in two ways: *Open Space Technology* and the *Law of Two Feet* (Hopkins, 2008: 168). *Open Space Technology* involves four principles: whoever comes are the right people, whatever happens is the only thing that could have, whenever it starts is the right time, and when it's over it's over. The *Law of Two Feet* states that when you find yourself not being useful, you take your two feet

and go somewhere where you can offer something. This is a model of 'community' that is flexiform, shapeshifting, and never permanent. It is rooted locally, based on small-scale personal interactions, but has swings and ebbs and flows of people, ideas and energy throughout. In short, everything exists in a permanent state of transition.

It is here that the 'sense of community' that TTN seeks to engender can be recognised. It is a vision where the 'community' is an active causal agent of the transition. It retains the place-base, grassroots and local legacies, but it is also something that doesn't just happen passively to a particular place or group of people. It is actively worked for, and requires time, attention to detail and commitment.

'Community' here is active rather than passive. TTN here can be seen against the backdrop of a wider shift in the use of 'community' in environmental governance; this is perhaps one reason for its significant rise in attracting funding. But there is also another separate lineage for transition and the use of 'community', which cannot be wholly understood by looking at environmental governance trends itself, but by recognition of the resilient, permaculture base. Rather than being apolitical as the Trapeze Collective and others suggest, TTN can be understood as creating an alternative politics, one that is not concerned with voting or other 'rituals of the State' (Badiou, 2008: 11–12). Politics is not about representation, but is rather, as Badiou writes, the manifestation of "*the 'collective being' of citizen-militants. Indeed, power is induced from the existence of politics; it is not the latter's adequate manifestation.*" (Badiou, 2007: 347). For Badiou, power is induced from politics, which in turn flows from the collective being of citizen-militants. If TTN groups (or any others) then operate as a collective, and attempt to affect (transition) the world around them, then they are – according to Badiou – the very possibility of politics, and thus power themselves. Not a 'tool of governance', where 'community' label is phatic meaning-less. Rather TTN "*proactively create alternatives and produce*

*immediate forms of action, often fuelled by a frustration with the slowness and inadequacy of existing responses” (Bulkeley & Newell, 2010: 83).<sup>187</sup>*

It is not that the previous uses of ‘community’ are not to be found in the TTN model, but that in themselves these are insufficient to wholly grasping TTN’s ‘community’. For TTN, at different times ‘community’ operates as a synonym for area, or locale; on other occasions replaceable by movement, or collective. These are there, but at times it is more helpful to see ‘community’, for TTN, as also having synonyms such as *Res Publica*,<sup>188</sup> or autopoiesis.<sup>189</sup> These offer different, proactive, borderless self-organisation vision of ‘community’. No doubt, this is easier to outline in theory than when the rubber hits the road and power struggles take root. We must also recognise that TTN are still a relatively new movement. Yet it is important to acknowledge the vision of ‘community’ as inherently reflecting of each TTN group’s particular location(s).

With this in mind, one possible reason for the select group that get involved in TTN groups – and the criticisms of exclusive in / out boundaries that follow – might be found in a recent report that describes a ‘civic core’ of the population (Mohan, 2011). Members of this ‘civic core’ give disproportionately to charity or volunteer (Büchs et al., 2011, 2012). These people tend to be middle-aged, well educated and live in prosperous areas.<sup>190</sup> They are well resourced – financially, educationally and with time – and are also more likely to be women, and to be involved with a faith-based ‘community’ (Wills, 2012).<sup>191</sup> This maps on incredibly well to the profile of those who tend to constitute TTN groups, and with the permaculture vision of ‘community’. It makes sense that this particular demographic would work towards kibbutz-style ‘community’ outlined above. Given this, it is not surprising that TTN will attract those who tend to volunteer, or those with

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<sup>187</sup> Of course, both these interpretations can be equally true, ‘community’ being – following Althusser (2006) – a *décalage* word. A *décalage* is a mutually true contradictory meaning contained within the word, phrase, or term, where any attempted definition or synonym takes you in a different direction. From the French for skew, or deviation.

<sup>188</sup> A rough definition could be ‘commonwealth’

<sup>189</sup> A rough definition could be ‘self-creation’

<sup>190</sup> This chimes with Painter et al. (2011)

<sup>191</sup> The recent work of Paul Cloke in other spheres evidences this also: Williams, et al., 2012; Cloke, 2011; Cloke & Beaumont, in press.

the resources to be able to volunteer. TTN seems to emerge – or is more likely to emerge – where the ‘civic core’ is more populous and prominent. This is not to dismiss TTN’s issues with diversity, but inherent to the very movement, given its permaculture base, are rules, like the *Law of Two Feet*. These will necessarily attract those more used to using their feet – the more mobile members of society who are prone to volunteering.

Cohen’s (2010) study of inclusion and diversity within TTN found flaws with the TTN model, despite the movement’s rapid growth. For all TTN’s focus on rhetoric of ‘community’ and being inclusive, it found them to appeal to a narrow section of the population. Following Lichterman (1995), this was put partly down to a vision of ‘community’ that, while emphasising inclusivity, also wanted to empower individuals through this ‘community’. This, it was argued, appealed more readily and was more accessible to a specific subset of the population, those who were, broadly, more educated and well resourced. TTN have an inclusive understanding and, although this is not realised in full yet, have not shirked conversation with their detractors, as evidenced by their continued conversation with the Trapeze Collective.

The TTN movement reflects the wider environmental governance context it sits in, when it uses ‘community’ narratives and rhetoric. But it also has a quite different legacy it builds on: that of its permaculture heritage.<sup>192</sup> For all the place-specific nature of the ‘community’ TTN talks about, its own sense of the word is indelibly marked by its own particular context, and history of those who make up and are attracted to the movement.

This is not to say this version of ‘community’ is free from criticism. Rather critiques of the apolitical and homogenous nature of TTN cells should recognise the rather different nature of TTN’s ‘community’. By talking of an autopoiesis, fully emergent, locally specific nature of the groups, an analysis must look to the geography of the movement. This means not only looking to the scale that ‘community’ operates on, nor the wider

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<sup>192</sup> This permaculture heritage is outlined more fully in Section 2.2, and theoretically in Section 6.2.1

environment in which TTN has emerged, but also the spatial distribution, and place-based specifics of each example. Such a geographic analysis requires looking at difference, for example, the difference between the resources (time, wealth, education, class) that those who get involved with the movement have and those who don't.

'Community' of place has been critiqued, and many different 'communities of X' (place, interest, practice, work, etc.) examples have followed. For TTN though, the most useful 'communities of X' typology is what Massey (2007) calls, communities of place beyond place. For TTN does not seek to overturn or move away from prior uses of 'community', but through their permaculture perspective, adds a new subtle twist. It is this going beyond, or delving deeper, that needs to be understood about TTN's relationship to and use of 'community'.

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## Appendix 1

Interview No.	Type of actor	Date of interview	Interview code
1	CCF Panel Member	3 March 2010	CCF 1
2	TEU Staff	24 March 2010	TEU 1
3	TEU II	19 April 2010	TEU II
4	TSS II	22 April 2010	TSS II
5	TEU Staff	29 April 2010	TEU 2
6	TEU Staff	3 May 2010	TEU 3
7	TEU Staff	3 May 2010	TEU 4
8	TEU Staff	3 May 2010	TEU 5
9	Transition Network	10 September 2010	TN
10	TES board member	30 September 2010	TES 1
11	TES Staff	6 October 2010	TES 2
12	TES Staff	10 October 2010	TES 3
13	PEDAL Staff	11 October 2010	PEDAL 1
14	PEDAL Staff	11 October 2010	PEDAL 2
15	PEDAL Staff	11 October 2010	PEDAL 3
16	TES II	19 October 2010	TES 4
17	TES Staff	20 October 2010	TES 5
18	TES II	26 October 2010	TES 6
19	TEU Staff	1 November 2010	TEU 6
20	PEDAL partner organisation	2 November 2010	SP 1
21	PEDAL partner organisation	2 November 2010	SP 2
22	Changeworks	17 November 2010	EX 1
23	PEDAL trustee	22 November 2010	PEDAL 4
24	Local	22 November	Porty 1

	Councillor	2010	
25	PEDAL board member	22 November 2010	PEDAL 5
26	Portobello Amenity Trust	23 November 2010	Porty 2
27	Portobello Community Council	23 November 2010	Porty 3
28	Portobello anti-wind turbine campaigner	23 November 2010	Porty 4
29	TSS Staff	24 November 2010	TSS 2
30	Environmental Activist	24 November 2010	EX 2
31	Civil Servant	6 December 2010	CCF 2
32	Lothian Buses (PEDAL partner organisation)	6 December 2010	EX 3
33	Local Businessman	7 December 2010	EX 4
34	TES ex-volunteer	22 June 2011	TES 7
35	TES ex-volunteer	22 June 2011	TES 8
36	TEU ex-volunteer	17 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	TEU 7
37	TEU ex-volunteer	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	TEU 8
38	PEDAL ex-volunteer	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	PEDAL 6
39	Carbon Conversations participant	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2011	CC 1
40	CCF Panel member	3 <sup>rd</sup> June 2011	CCF 2
41	Carbon conversation participant	4 <sup>th</sup> June 2011	CC 2
42	Totnes Transition person	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	TT 1
43	Totnes Transition person	10 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	TT 2

44	TEU Intern	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	Intern 1
45	TEU Intern	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	Intern 2

## Appendix 2

### Indicative list of events attended

This is not exhaustive, and many insights from the participant observation were cumulatively formed over many low-level social and semi-formal group gatherings. Yet the more formal meetings and important 'high points' are listed below.

#### February 2010

11<sup>th</sup> The Role of Civil Society after Copenhagen, Public Lecture.

#### March

5<sup>th</sup> Transition Handprint Social: Keeping Homes Warm in a Low Carbon World. (TEU)

26<sup>th</sup> Climate Solidarity Training. (TEU)

26<sup>th</sup> University Footprints, Community Handprints. (TEU)

#### April

29<sup>th</sup> Transition Handprint Social: Food for the Future. (TEU)

#### June

5<sup>th</sup> Cineco, Green Film Festival. (TSS)

23<sup>rd</sup> Talking Transition, Public Talks. (TEU)

#### July

24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> Big Tent Festival, Falkland, Fife. (TTN/TSS)

#### September

3<sup>rd</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Organic Fortnight.

22<sup>nd</sup> Vision of Change: Hard Rain, Art Exhibition. (TSS/TEU/TES)

28<sup>th</sup> Working Together to Create Healthy Environments

## October

- 9<sup>th</sup>            TES Eco-festival
- 25-31<sup>st</sup>        Edinburgh University environment week. (TEU)

## November

- 4<sup>th</sup>            Sustainable Scotland Network Conference. (all)
- 17<sup>th</sup>            SOSO interview training. (TES)
- 19<sup>th</sup>            TSS National Gathering.
- 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>       Diverse Roots to Belonging, TTN conference. (All)
- 22<sup>nd</sup>            'A Rubbish Evening', talk on waste. (TEU)

## November & December

Monday evenings, Carbon Conversations course. (TES)

## October 2011

- 12<sup>th</sup>            Scotland's Renewable Future, public talk (TEU)

Peripatetic events include: Green Drinks (all), TEU's Handprint Socials, TEU Steering Group Meetings, film screenings (all), Portobello Market (PEDAL), Community Orchard (TES, PEDAL), Coffee Mornings (all).

### **Appendix 3**

Form used to inform potential participants and interviewees of the project.  
(Attached)

### **Appendix 4**

Bulkeley Linked PhD.  
(Attached)

### **Appendix 5**

Letter of Application.  
(Attached)