

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

Community as idea and community  
practices: tensions and  
consequences for urban communal  
growing in Glasgow

Helen Traill

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# Declaration

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# Abstract

In an era of 'community empowerment' and the devolution of welfare responsibilities to local groups, it is important to understand what community comes to mean in everyday life. Through two growing projects in Glasgow, this thesis discusses such meanings in local processes of exclusion and urban land development, and uses the sites to explore too the politics of collective growing. To do so, I consider the meanings, tensions and contradictions that emerge between the practices of being communal and the naming of such as community.

I draw on a multi-sited ethnography and in depth interviews to elucidate the emergence of that which comes to be called community as a situated, empirical phenomenon. As an overburdened concept, I suggest community is not necessarily the most helpful analytical term to describe the collective activity in both case studies. Instead, I argue for seeing community primarily as a frame that guides and makes sense of communal practices.

Whilst some hope has been located in community gardens and similar urban interventions as potential sources of renewal and collective resistance to the harsher vagaries of neoliberal capitalism, this thesis argues that communal growing does not present a systematic alternative, although it does appropriate urban land in occasionally subversive ways. Communal growing does however offer insights into the complexities of creating places for autonomy and survival in austere conditions. I reflect on the selective reproduction of class and social exclusions in growing spaces, and the tentative production of a time and space outwith the logics of the capitalist city, and yet within its bounds. Ultimately this thesis argues that community is not an anodyne or empty concept, but rather a dynamic and symbolically important idea shaping local urban life.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>List of images</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Chapter One:</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Situating community as a frame</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Communal gardening as contestation</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Communal growing in space and time</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Structure of the thesis</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	
<b>Situating the methodology</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Glasgow and the question of urban development</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Case Studies</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Whereness and participant observation</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Insider out: distance and heroism</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Ethical and practical limitations</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Anonymity, vulnerability and avoiding harm</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Data and analytical strategy</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Representation and articulation</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Chapter 3:</b>	
<b>Community as idea and communal practices</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Gardening as an organising process</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Cultivating connection: complexity and intention</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Connecting through community at the meadow</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>The problem of inclusivity and openness</b>	<b>99</b>

A community within a community _____	102
Conclusions _____	108

#### **Chapter four:**

The making and unmaking of difference _____	111
Grassroots and questions of representation _____	112
'Not a race thing, but a class divide' _____	122
Employment, class and capitalism _____	126
Making connections, representing interests _____	133
The middle class and the other _____	136
Practicing inclusivity _____	150
The Figure of the Parent _____	159
Female labour and the mothers' campaign _____	160
On 'garden babies' and defensive masculinity _____	166
Conclusions _____	170

#### **Chapter five:**

Communal growing's urban intervention _____	174
Land use, land value, land use-value _____	176
Narrating the North Kelvin Meadow and the Children's Wood _____	178
The class dynamics of local autonomy _____	193
Common ownership, open ground _____	198
Considering commoning _____	209
Anarchism and Do-It-Yourself _____	211
Rhythmic disruption as communal escape _____	218
The politics of alterity and autonomy _____	231

#### **Chapter Six:**

The political imagination of communal growing _____	235
Funding and neutrality _____	239
Oppositional organising at the meadow _____	255
Organisational responses to co-option _____	263
The influence of partnership work _____	268

<b>The importance of non-alignment</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>(A)political imaginations</b>	<b>276</b>
<b>Subjective politicisation</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>Causes of depoliticisation</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>291</b>
 <b>Chapter 7</b>	
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>Staying with communal complexity</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>The lens of inclusion</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>Cultivating slowness and narrating space</b>	<b>306</b>
<b>A moral rather than political framing</b>	<b>309</b>
<b>Class and the limits of utopian practice</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>320</b>

# List of images

Figure 1: A sign on a fence marks the land as the Children's Wood	42
Figure 2: Planned development for the site, printed out by activists and hung up on fences	43
Figure 3: Paths run through the meadow, this one heading towards the raised beds.	45
Figure 4: Communal raised beds surrounded by long grass and clover	45
Figure 5: Woodlands Community Garden in winter	47
Figure 6: Planters made and planted by Woodlands hanging on the railing on West Princes Street, along from the garden.	48
Figure 7: A new sign at the Woodlands Garden in 2016	49
Figure 8: Attempts to discourage fly tipping by Woodlands along West Princes Street	50
Figure 9: A notice from the meadow narrating the site history	179
Figure 10: A Compendium Trust plan in a publication from 2006 showing planned sports facilities on the meadow	181
Figure 11: A planter (number 3), West Princes Street.	189
Figure 12: A Woodlands garden sign saying 'Don't dump here'	190
Figure 13: A sign that appeared in July 2016 signposting fictional place on the meadow	202
Figure 14: BMX runs through the trees on the meadow	202
Figure 15: A tree house on the meadow	213
Figure 16: A fence mended with fallen branches, Kelbourne Street	213
Figure 17: Don't waste Woodlands poster hanging from Woodlands Community Garden fence	251
Figure 18: Children's Wood tweet, screenshot	259



# Chapter One:

## Introduction

Communal growing projects, such as urban meadows and community gardens, intervene in the local landscape and offer a re-imagination of everyday urban life. They do so through practices of being communal and inclusive, and through challenging relations to urban land. In the contemporary climate of suspicion around immigration and difference in the UK, community has the potential to become a nostalgic throwback, but it also presents a horizon of renewal. This research explores the meaning and consequences of urban community in the context of two community-based growing projects in Glasgow, Scotland. It does so in order to address processes of exclusion and urban land development, and to raise the question of the political implications of concerted communal action.

Examining how community is practiced in growing projects as an empirical topic, I explore how this shapes their engagement with urban struggles. I ask what tensions or contradictions were created within and between that practice of communality and the naming of it as community. Particularly, discontinuities between the discourse on inclusion and practical exclusions were evident in the growing projects. In exploring too the projects' relationship with derelict space and the development of the city, this research engages with processes of local development. I argue that community as a guiding concept and communal practices shape the experience of the urban environment, and can challenge development as usual, although it does so in ambiguous ways. In this, urban growing projects have the capacity to create different experiences of the urban, curating a slow, experiential space.

This thesis has a distinct concern with the relation communal growing's urban intervention has to politics, both analytically and in terms of the way people within the urban community projects define their action. I contend that communal growing projects critically engage with urban struggles in the city, shifting the experience of social exclusion and reshaping local development and aesthetics. Yet they do so often outside of the language of politics, which raises questions about what shapes the emergence of politicised or otherwise understandings of growing. Further, communal growing continues to be a site for patterns of social exclusions and for the making and remaking of inclusion as a practice. This thesis engages with gender, race, class, employment and disability as aspects of this. Through boundary processes and narratives of inclusion, growing is a site for the contestation of these social categories but also their reproduction. I argue this has important implications for how we think about urban resistance in the everyday, particularly the capacity of communities to prefigure a systematic alternative to capitalist urbanity.

The research was broadly guided by a concern to explore the meanings community has in urban communal growing projects. In considering this as an empirical question, I wanted to leave open the possibility of multiplicity and conflicting ideas within community as a concept in the field. The research also emerged from the question of what practical tensions and political implications were imputed through framing the projects as 'community' projects. This was particularly considered with reference to how community projects interact with social processes of exclusion and urban development. In so asking, this project seeks to add to the academic literature relating to the idea of community and its place as a contested and multifaceted aspect of urban life. As an overburdened concept, there is a need to strip this back to ask how community is practiced and what it comes to mean, and further to ask

whether community is the most helpful analytical concept to describe those practices.

Part of the weight placed on community is as a site of resistance to neoliberal governance. While there is a critical need to understand what urban resistance might look like, whether community is an appropriate vessel for the hope of urban renewal needs addressing. Communal growing does not present a systematic alternative, but it does offer insight into the complexities of collective organising and survival in austere conditions. Scholarly attention to these kinds of problems presents an opportunity to create a sociology that works to comprehend alternative ways of living together, through understanding the practices of being communal; and to offer hope from the viewpoint of everyday disruptions to what can seem like systemic givens.

What follows is an ethnography of two communal growing spaces in Glasgow, exploring the practices of communality and their connection to the politics of inclusion and urban land use. One growing site is a community garden, and the other an urban meadow. Both sit on the edge of affluence, on the boundary of Glasgow's middle-class West End, providing rich sites to explore the interwoven boundary-making practices inherent both in communality and in neighbourhood definition. Situating the research in Glasgow offers a chance to explore the dynamics of a post-industrial city and to expand the geographical focus of the urban growing literature. Glasgow offers a particularly fruitful space to discuss urban growing too because of its high levels of derelict land and the local political will to find uses for it, including a city council funding stream directed towards supporting temporary uses of derelict space in the city.

Drawing on the rich material from this context, this thesis contributes to sociological knowledge in two main ways. Firstly, I seek to extend recent theorising that situates community as a practice (Blokland 2017; Studdert and Walkerdine 2016a, 2016b), and reconnect it with the crucial symbolic importance of community as an idea (c.f. Cohen 1985). Secondly, I wish to contribute to the understanding of communal gardening by situating it within the dynamics of depoliticisation that occur within the broader field of communal growing, building on the work of Claire Nettle (2014) that situates communal growing as social action.

In connecting the micro-practices of communality to dynamics of inclusion and urban land politics, this thesis naturally spans a range of theoretical and thematic debates, and the chapters draw on different theoretical tools as and when they afford a helpful way of seeing the phenomenon. This introduction outlines the literatures that broadly underpin this thesis as a whole, focusing on debates around communality itself, as well as the various connections of communal gardening to important concepts like neoliberalisation, the politics of gardening and the commons. It then offers a sketch of the four empirical chapters in more detail, outlining their approaches to conceptualising community, inclusivity, urban development and politics, respectively.

## **Situating community as a frame**

Both projects self-define as communities, but the meaning of community has been deeply contested in sociology. The question arises within this contestation as to the suitability of community as a category of analysis. Brubaker (2013) makes a helpful distinction between terms which arise from the social world itself (categories of practice) and the terms we adopt as scholars (categories of analysis). He argues that scholars should be clear about which categories of practice make poor categories of analysis. As Brubaker

and Cooper (2000) have argued in the context of other concepts, there is a need to ask if community is a useful category of analysis, or whether we are uncritically borrowing a term from common parlance. The issue in relation to the idea of community is that community is often used as an unclear descriptor, and in doing so there is the potential to overlook its capacity to organise and structure social life. While I argue community should not perhaps be seen as an extant social form, it remains a potent signifier, for example, in its insertion into policy. In the late 1990s New Labour programmes such as the New Deal for Communities asked rather a lot of community, in expecting community revitalisation to support economic growth without much in the way of structural change or investment (Amin 2005). What I want to discuss here is that situating community in such a way, as a moral project, has consequences for how communal organising becomes framed.

Getting a clear understanding of what is meant by community has important implications politically as well as conceptually. The fuzzy nostalgia evoked by the term has a palatable meaninglessness (through over-saturation of emotional meaningfulness) that allows its easy input into political discourse, into Big Society and New Labour (Wallace 2010; Amin 2005). Community has in contemporary discourse become a strategically employed 'zombie category', in Beck's (2002) sense of overburdened and therefore meaningless concepts. Community's use in a policy context as a rosy aim and expression of collective living retreats from some of its more problematic aspects, including its possible closures and rigidity (Belton 2013).

Community creates a conceptual tension within the community gardening literature. It embodies an idealised notion of 'morally valued social relations' but also a sense of geography (Kurtz 2001, p.661). This sense of geography

can reflect the authors' intent to use community descriptively, as a synonym for neighbourhood or place. This has resonance with the rich vein of community studies (Elias & Scotston 1965; Bell & Newby 1971), which also tended to take communities as geographically given, if socially constructed. Witheridge and Morris (2016) borrow a definition from Greenspace Scotland that suggests slightly circularly that community gardens are 'locally managed pieces of land that are developed in response to and reflect the needs of the communities in which they are based' (Witheridge & Morris 2016, p.202). Yet self-defining communities come in a wide-range of forms, from on-line chat groups through village idylls to middle-grounds that defy easy categorisation (Brint 2001; Calhoun 1998). Within the community gardening literature, taxonomical distinctions can be drawn between gardens which are interest-based or place-based, as Firth *et al.* (2011) do, as a way of discussing the variation in the make-up of communities that emerge around growing together. This captures distinctions between social groups that identify with the idea of community, but the idea itself becomes stretched in this usage.

Community has been used sociologically in a manner of different ways, usually in direct relation to the most pressing social changes of the age. Arising in part from a crisis around industrialisation and urbanisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, community as a concept began as something lost (Delanty 2003; Mulligan 2014; Walkerdine & Studdert 2012). This in part derived from a functional understanding of the distinction between the rural and urban, which equated the former with an automatic community that was distinctly problematised by the form of the city. Tönnies (1955) offers one such notion in the distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, often translated as community and society respectively. A similar account exists in Durkheim's (1984) mechanical and organic forms of solidarity, which emphasises the automatic connection assumed in rural community. Such formulations of

community versus the urban are often read as pessimistic shifts away from community, but Delanty (2003) has argued that both Tönnies and Durkheim were both readily aware of the potential for urban community. He argues that Durkheim's work on anomie is a study of the failure of urban community to arise, not an indictment of its impossibility outside of a rural setting. Nonetheless, such structural accounts tended to see community as something more readily apparent in the rural context and to position the urban as a problem. In this, the scale of the metropolitan is positioned as disrupting an easy sense of belonging and connection. This was challenged somewhat by the Chicago School, for example in the work of Wirth (1938) whose work explores the emergence of 'mosaic' communities within the city, as enclaves. As ecological accounts, the Chicago School based community in a specific geography, in essence finding village-equivalents in the city. In this, a reliance on proximity was important in producing communal life. It is in such studies that urban community is situated as not only possible, but very much present.

If the unitary communities found by Wirth and his colleagues existed in the 1930s, they became problematised in an era of new technologies and globalisation. From conceptualizing these latter phenomena, ideas such as time-space compression (Harvey 1989), and community without propinquity arose (Calhoun 1998), challenging the implicit geography of community and releasing it from the specific bounds of a neighbourhood. However, this also created challenges for scholars who felt that community no longer represented the social form under study. Out of these pressures grew ideas such as social capital and networks. Castells (1996) and others expected technology to erase community because of its ability to compress space and time. Such terminologies as social capital (in Putnam's (2000) sense as social connectivity) and networks however do not capture the rich imaginary

inherent in community, leading to the continued use of the term (Mulligan 2014).

Symbolic constructivists took a different route – one based less in geography, and more in the creation of boundaries. Benedict Anderson (2006) has been particularly influential in discussing ‘imagined communities’, arguing that the social forms of the nation state are deliberately created through forms of boundary making and identity politics. At a more localised level, the work of Antony Cohen (1985) makes similar claims for the importance of boundaries in creating communities. Cohen derives his approach from Wittgenstein and the idea of finding meaning in use, exploring community as something embedded in consciousness and intimately symbolic. Yet Cohen still sees community as possible and extant. An efflorescence of subcultures, relations across continents and a general sense of social fragmentation has led to categorisations and typologies such as Calhoun’s (1998) ‘community without propinquity’ and Brint’s (2001) exhaustive taxonomisation of *Gemeinschaft*-like behaviours. The variation inherent in these types of community, and the differences between those social forms, call into question any notion of community as a replicable social thing (Brint 2001; Delanty 2003).

In this vein, there are those who argue community does not or cannot exist. From either a philosophical position, or a social one (no communities are found, no social form is designated), these scholars are sceptical of the idea of community as a whole. For example, Nancy (1991) sees community as impossible due to the inoperability of the idea of total communion, deriving this from ideas around divinity and imminence. Delanty (2003) argues that these kind of sceptical ideas (which he relates to postmodern theorizing and loss of obvious identity categories) are based on a lack of unity and foundational identity, citing Agamben’s *The Coming Community* and



Maffesoli's work on neotribalism as examples of this approach to communality. These accounts thus either problematise the idea of community like Nancy or theorise a new, emotional and unstable form of community, which again stretches the idea of community in a questionable direction.

While the myriad forms of social life that garner the name community reflect a conclusion akin to Nancy's (1991) 'inoperability', the power of the term and its ability to shape social life remains significant, and processes of being communal remain present in accounts of everyday life (Mulligan 2014; Walkerdine & Studdert 2012). Thus, it is fruitful to draw on the sceptical and constructivist positions, to see community as impossible but still striven for. In this formulation, community becomes a symbolically important frame for action, but an impossible object. Here Goffman's (1975) notion of the frame becomes useful as a way to suggest that community is not just a social construct, but a socially constructed frame towards which communal action is oriented. This is to argue for the analytical separation of community as a framing device from communal practices. The distinction is intended to partially move away from the morally valued but conceptually imprecise idea of a community, but still recognise the important symbolic role which community retains. This is to argue that community is a valued category of practice but that it has little ontological reality as an object, and thus designates very little as a category of analysis. From this, I want to argue that communal practices are practices from which to create a basis for social solidarity and belonging, even though they may lack a basis in some primal foundation (Delanty 2003). In this, it draws on work that considers community as a practice, such as Talja Blokland's (2017). Within such an approach to community as a social practice, boundary making is central, as well as the deliberate creation of solidarity (Mulligan 2014; Blokland 2017). Further, recent theorisations that situate community as a kind of 'micro-

sociality' (Studdert 2016; Studdert & Walkerdine 2016a) from which communal meaning emerges are also useful in centring practice as at the core of communal behaviour, or what Studdert and Walkerdine call 'communal beingness' (Walkerdine 2010; Walkerdine 2016; Studdert & Walkerdine 2016b). In the empirical chapters to follow, communal practices will be explored in depth, although I also want to engage with the symbolic resonance of the idea and its important role in guiding social action (Brint 2001; Mulligan 2014).

The renewed political focus on community as a means to salve social ills has placed the idea in a strange vacuum, with an increasing plasticity. In order to pull it from this zombie existence, it was left in this research as an open category – to be explored in practice, as value and as a problematised idea. Although the research was framed around two growing spaces that self-identify as communities, only one is a community garden in the strictest sense. The other is an urban meadow and wood. The field proved particularly aware of the difficulty and fluidity of the community-idea, creating a fertile ground to explore how it works as a concept, and how people relate their actions to community as an idealised notion. In what follows, community will be used primarily as a category of practice (Brubaker 2013). This reflects the lack of analytical usefulness of using community to conceptualise the practices of being communal. Yet that community as an idea retains emotive and political power is important; it shapes what emerges in significant ways. The questions asked here thus become how community as an idea shapes social behaviour; how it creates and facilitates communal action; and what work is done in labelling a social group, action or organisation as a community. Rather than discuss this as community building or creation however, it makes analytic sense to explore these as ways of being communal, as negotiations and struggles within the urban environment. This shift is intended to conceptually

address the issue of the continued emotional valence of community while remaining sceptical of the relevance of community as an extant social form.

## **Communal gardening as contestation**

Conceptualising community is not a purely abstract exercise. It intersects with concrete political questions. In an urban environment, growing is often engaged in contestations around food politics and land use. In a communal context, this takes on wider implications: moving from individual subversion to potentially solidaristic action. 'Radical Gardening' (Mckay 2011) is a way of viewing the practice of communal gardening that focuses on land use, resistance to global food, protest, and political action. This radical end of the spectrum is closest in timbre to so-called 'guerrilla gardening' and its implications of subversive action and land reclamation (Adams & Hardman 2014). Equally, as Hodgkinson (2005: 67) puts it: 'in maintaining your own patch of earth, you escape the world of money, governments, supermarkets... digging is anarchy'. This sense of digging as anarchic, as autonomous, is reflected in less polemic terms in Claire Nettle's (2014) work on community gardening as direct action, framing political growing as a form of intervention that she situates as the politics of example. Recognising the limited impact of community gardening at even an urban scale, this is to situate growing as demonstrating an alternative way of living the city and relating to other urban dwellers. In this way, the politics of communal growing can be seen as the politics of mundanity, of backyard protest and kitchen organising around local issues. But Nettle (2014) is careful to limit gardening as direct action to only those gardens who deliberately situate themselves as such. It is in this that a question arises about whether any kind of an alterity is posed in community gardening more broadly, and what role intentionality plays in how we assess the urban interventions of communal growing.

This is to suggest that the connection to land and projection of an alternative way of thinking about consuming food in communal growing may differ from the dominant discourse, but it does not necessarily follow that this would produce an anti-capitalist ideology or politics without a deliberate focus on one. It is interesting in this context to discuss Glover et al.'s (2005) research that sought to determine whether democratic engagement was affected by participation in community gardening. The results were mixed, with a weak but statistically significant association between democratic values and intensity of involvement in a community garden. They posit a public sphere effect, with gardening a 'social *and* civic activity... [P]articipation in the gardens may have facilitated social exchange and heightened critical consciousness about neighbourhood issues, which potentially prompted participants to adopt and practice democratic values' (Glover et al. 2005:88, emphasis in original). Yet the direction of causality is suggested rather than proven, and in many cases the authors emphasise how seemingly political action can be avowedly non-political when the activity in question is a leisure pursuit. The micro-politics of growing does not automatically connect to the politics of the state. It is individualised, it is removed from the processes of formal politics. The present research pursues this tendency, asking explicitly about the relationship communal growing projects have to people's political imaginary in order to question how this disconnection comes about.

Much of the community gardening literature deals with other critical ideas beyond politics. The disparate literature on communal growing intersects disciplines from landscape architecture through health studies to geography and sociology. It has explored also a wide range of topics from the idea of expressive protest (Martinez 2009) to challenges to policy and land development (Stamp 1987). Not all of it is directly relevant here, but there is a critical reading possible of the broad literature. Focusing on ecological issues

such as biodiversity, as Irvine, Johnson and Peters (1999) do, or on what effect communal gardening has on dementia and mental health (a good overview available in Armstrong 2000), can produce a wider question. One can ask: what does it mean when community gardens take on social and mental health functions? Does this represent a shifting of responsibility away from the state (a neoliberal roll-back)? That the communal growing literature raises wider socio-political questions is itself part of the impetus here: because beneath the literature on social capital, prison schemes and food poverty are deep political contentions. This is not to say an awareness of these dynamics is missing entirely from the literature, but that a closer engagement with the consequences of communal growing practices is an important way of asking questions of apparently anodyne practices.

Communal growing projects in contemporary cities owe some precedent to historical gardening practices. Birky and Strom (2013) date communal growing to allotment gardens emerging the 1700s in Britain. Primarily to boost the availability of food and largely a working class practice, allotmenting saw another surge in the 19th Century in communal form (Kurtz 2001; Birky & Strom 2013). These antecedents are usually attributed to a crisis narrative, as a waxing and waning means of supplementing food supply. This is often illustrated by efforts during the world wars in America and in the UK to 'Dig for Victory', as the British wartime slogan has it. Further, during the depression, the model of communal growing was used to reduce the strain on poor funds and to offer a dignified way to provide poor relief, that was also 'economically expedient' in its efficiency (Pudup 2008, p.1229). A newer phase of communal growing is often cited as starting in the 1970s, where countercultural movements were linked to guerrilla gardening and ways of countering urban decay (Birky & Strom 2013; Firth et al. 2011). This contemporary arc of growing is argued to be more diverse than previous arcs,

not least in terms of class (Birky & Strom 2013) and in terms of increased diversity of projects themselves (Firth et al. 2011). Indeed, such is the range of communal gardening projects that Pudup (2008) takes issue with the breadth of urban projects that can be termed community gardens. She sees the term as deeply imprecise. Partly, this diversity and imprecision comes from a shift from distinct hunger-based growing to a much broader array of motivations and needs. The diversity of food growing projects in cities across the world, but particularly the community gardens of the North, has increasingly been studied in this newer form as beneficial for community development and public health. Kurtz discusses how community gardens are seen by some as 'low cost form of urban renewal' (2001, p.656). Yet for all their vaunted benefits, they are also importantly a part of the shifting urban fabric itself, and as such need to be considered within the broader context of urban development.

Neoliberalism (or to see it as a process, neoliberalisation) has become the common term by which scholars reference the complex of policy and economic decision-making that shapes contemporary cities, and one which has been critically invoked to explain the role of community gardens in cities of the global North (Pudup 2008; Rosol 2012; Ghose & Pettygrove 2014). Described as a 'hegemonic project' by Stuart Hall (2002, p.381) and a 'new religion' by Peck and Tickell (2002), neoliberalism is a dominant discourse promoting free market ideology, which Harvey (2007) has explored as a class project. It is however disputed because of its shape-shifting nature, tied as it is to particular urban 'path-dependencies' that provoke specific urban manifestations that bear only family resemblance to each other (Peck et al. 2009). It is questioned as a result by radical geographers such as Gibson-Graham (2008) who see focusing on neoliberal processes as counterproductive because of the way it creates a false unity and can be

disempowering. Equally, Barnett (2010, p.269) has argued that critiques of neoliberalisation have tended to 'reduce the social to a residual effect of more fundamental political-economic rationalities', thus questioning whether centring economic ideations is beneficial in the study of social processes. Yet neoliberalisation is somewhat unavoidable because of its influence on urban restructuring (Brenner & Theodore 2002; Peck et al. 2013). Neoliberalisation as a process combines its early 'roll-back' aspects including the destruction of governmental interventions and policies (the 'Keynesian and/or collectivist strategies' towards which it has a 'profound antipathy' (Peck & Tickell 2002, p.381)) with more recent 'roll-out' policies, the creation of new regulations and interventions to push its own agenda, particularly interventions to create markets and punish those identified as unprofitable (Peck & Tickell 2002). In its contemporary mode, Davis (2016) has argued that neoliberalism has moved beyond a previous stage where it had to justify itself democratically, moving into a more punitive stage, confident in its ideological dominance. This sense of fait accompli – the already existing, already dominant – in neoliberalism is what Keil (2009) has referred to as 'roll-with-it' neoliberalism. He argues we have adjusted to neoliberalism's central tenets, and that it no longer must justify itself. Indeed this is reflected in the work of Paton et al. (2016) in the east of Glasgow which suggests a process of neoliberal internalisation. They found gratitude as a response to regeneration attempts that were part of the austerity agenda, part and parcel of which is the restriction of benefits that has negatively impacted the area.

The relevance here of neoliberalisation stems from its influence in urban development, and the questions it raises for community growing as an urban phenomenon. Scholars have questioned the role of community gardens under neoliberal conditions because they may be unwittingly (or unwillingly) supportive of its governance strategies, even while expressing a collectivity

that runs contrary to neoliberal individualism. This tension runs through the work of Ghose and Pettygrove (2014) who explore this as the contradiction between individual empowerment and the challenges of inclusion faced by different community gardens in Milwaukee. In their work, they focus on how funding can inadvertently reinforce the inequalities of wealth, education or race that community gardens may be trying to overcome. Equally attuned to this difficulty are Drake and Lawson (2014) who explore the association of community gardens with vacancy and temporary use of land. Community garden activists and organisers often reproduce a narrative of growing as a (temporary) way to ameliorate urban vacancy, despite seeing community gardens as good in and of themselves (Drake & Lawson 2014). It would be possible to read this as the internalisation of a neoliberal discourse, but it seems more akin to Tonkiss' (2013) discussion of the anti-utopianism of temporary projects in the neoliberal city: a willingness to work between, rather than against, the dictates of contemporary capitalism. In a similar vein, Pudup (2008) questions the automatic resistance associated with community gardening, suggesting a more complex idea around the potential production of neoliberal subjectivities in gardening under certain conditions. These subjectivities vary, and need not be totally depoliticised, but depend on the context of their production. Within both Pudup's (2008) and Drake and Lawson's (2014) work, their slightly pessimistic analyses are still about a tension between tacit support of neoliberal policy and the radical intent of projects themselves. This tension often goes noted but is not directly explored as a lived phenomenon, something this research seeks to explore. It is interesting to investigate these tensions in light of the work of Gibson-Graham (1996). Gibson-Graham suggest that the unity and power that scholars attribute to capitalism is often a result of that work, rather than a real coherence or unity in the hegemonic project. In sympathy with such an ethic, I



want to stay with the ambiguities of such tensions within communal growing projects.

Taking a neoliberal perspective tends to critically read into practices like communal gardening a creeping turn to voluntary maintenance of public goods. For example, Rosol (2010) is interested in civic participation and the relationship between community gardens and local governance. She suggests a shift in the meaning of civic participation, due to neoliberal ideology and the voluntaristic turn. Rosol (2010; 2012) does not suggest that this automatically leads to community gardens supporting neoliberal agendas, but argues that because of this context shift there is a need to be careful about attributing radical politics to voluntaristic projects. This perspective lends a critical lens from which to understand shifts in governance and their relation to communal phenomena, but it must be balanced against the resistant opportunities incipient in this development. Williams, Goodwin and Cloke (2014) suggest that taking the perspective of difference instead of domination can form a more even-handed approach to the increasing localisation of services, focusing on cases where local politics can be seen to be not merely co-opted but also invigorated and potentially radically important. This produces, unsurprisingly, a more optimistic prognosis.

Urban community projects are often concerned with difference and both case studies are aware of and working to lessen inequality. Gardening projects are not always geared overtly towards overcoming exclusions, but the communal in community gardening can be deemed helpful in improving social capital and bridging racial or class barriers (Glover 2004; Cumbers et al. 2017). But what if they are simultaneously encouraging an exclusionary trend? The work of Voicu and Been (2008) explores the way community gardens relate to a rise in local house prices and, in this vein, Wolch, Byrne and Newell (2014) write

of the idea of being 'just green enough' to improve sites without attracting this gentrifying tendency. The urban studies literature too is well aware of the effects of greening on gentrification. A signal site to discuss in this respect is the High Line in New York, which Loughran (2014) explores as a park that brings a specific (middle-class) kind of commerce to the area through its commercial policies and excludes the homeless through a focus on motion, while raising surrounding housing values. Similarly, focusing on a process he calls 'ecogentrification', Quastel (2009) links commercially owned community gardens to broader processes of urban renewal, critiquing the use of growing in regeneration projects.

The question this raises to community gardens is a prickly one: are community gardens playing a part in a gentrifying process? What class dynamics are at play in communal growing's urban interventions? This has been explored in the US context but much like the rest of the communal gardening literature far less in the UK, and rarely in Scotland until fairly recently. Thus, this thesis seeks to expand the geographical focus of the literature. Further, I am looking to widen the scope of work such as McClintock's (2014) where he argues that the internal contradictions of urban agriculture (his preferred term for communal growing in the city) are central to understanding their potential. Instead of seeing gardens as either neoliberal or radical, he argues that both tendencies are present in urban agricultural projects and that a conceptual polarity is neither helpful nor productive.

Nonetheless, the local scale might be, in its devolved and defunded way, the point at which challenging neoliberal policy becomes possible. Neoliberal policy creates a potentially fertile ground for the production of a collective consciousness and political awareness through devolving to charities and individuals at the local level the support of swathes of the population, from

mental health to food security. While capitalism has, thus far, been fairly successful at incorporating the counter-cultural projects that have sprung up in its cracks, from artist squatting in Berlin to warehouse raves and street markets (Andres & Grésillon 2013), it does seem contradictory that it should so encourage the collective response. Observers have not yet found good reason for optimism in the face of neoliberalism, yet Keil (2009) has suggested that the hyper commodification of neoliberalism might produce its own destruction in the extremes of its logic. This destruction, he argues, might come in the form of the rise of solidaristic, communalist solutions to capitalism's injuries. As communal approaches to social life, the case studies to be explored here could inhabit this terrain, but again there is a need to approach this with caution. Community is already burdened with a great deal of meanings and hopes (Amin 2005; Mulligan 2014).

There are practical questions that emerge in working towards communal urban projects and they deserve some attention. Particularly, communal growing meets a number of issues as a result of the milieu in which they work. Communal organisations are shaped by funding and by relationships with external bodies, such as local councils and other third sector organisations. Social movement studies have studied these dynamics in detail and can provide a number of useful terms that will be utilised in chapter six to discuss contextual and organisational impacts on the production of communal growing projects. Organisational dynamics – internal and external – have been understood in social movement scholarship as important for understanding the trajectory of movements (Snow et al. 2004).

This is not however to argue that communal growing is a form of social movement per se, but instead to argue that as actors in an urban setting, trying to work often against the grain, similar concerns exist. Community

gardens have been explored using such tools in the work of Nettle (2014), who argues that reframing social movements beyond protest dynamics is a fruitful way of understanding different modes of social organisation, including community gardens. Further, the sympathy between social movements and community-based endeavours like communal growing is in fact illustrated by the congruence of these organisational challenges. As Voss and Williams (2012) argue, social movement scholarship has not often engaged with grassroots organising that does not centre the state or hold as its central objective contestation of state policy and power, and in this vein Nettle (2014) argues for a reconsideration of how we understand protest itself. There is some benefit then to exploring the everyday sites of communal connection and capacity building, and tools derived from social movement scholarship can be helpful here (c.f. Doherty et al. 2003). Specifically, social movement constructs can help move beyond narratives of co-option or contestation, and to see the production of communal growing as part of an organisationally inflected, politically positioned process.

## **Communal growing in space and time**

The contestation and challenge of communal urbanism is experienced through the production of a specific space and time. Critical questions arise about what relation this space and time has to the wider urban environment in which it is enmeshed. Is it supportive of dominant temporal narratives, or a source of real contestation? In the context of this question, it is worth noting that Lefebvrian (1991) *lived space* in practice is not automatically resistant. When space is appropriated, when it is enlivened, and lived, it is not always contrary – even if the use of that space is counter to its intended use. This is the point Alistair Jones (2013) is making when he talks about ludic space. Important here is not that contrary space, as in some extremely critical formulations, is actually part of the neoliberal furniture (e.g. the way BMX riders can create

exactly the sort of alternative milieu intended (Spinney 2010)). It is that some engagements with space are playful rather than subversive, avoiding rather than engaging with power structures. Jones quotes Thrift (1997a) who sums this up perfectly: 'Play eludes power, rather than confronts it' (Jones 2013, p.1147). The point here is that using space is not itself enough: there is a need for a deliberate consciousness and practiced subversion in order for a use of space to be deliberately resistant in this sense (c.f. perhaps the Situationist movement). In the context of crafting communality, this is about the intention as much as the action: community itself is hardly a radical term. As such, the question becomes not just what kind of alternative social practices are produced in the context of communal growing, but what relation they bear to the outside dynamics of the city and what intentions focus the projects.

Another way of reframing the relation of communal growing to space in a perhaps more long-term way is to utilise the notion of the commons. The idea of the commons has entered the community gardens literature as a way of talking about reimagining relations to the production of space, primarily in the work of Eizenberg (2012). An old idea based in serfdom; the commons historically denotes what Eizenberg (2012, p.765) calls 'a property with no rights allocation and regulation, and as belonging to everybody and hence to nobody'. The notion of the commons cuts across the idea of land ownership, across the public-private divide in land ownership, offering a different model for relating to one another and the land on which we live (Eizenberg 2012; Follmann & Viehoff 2015). Importantly, community gardens represent 'actually existing commons' for Eizenberg, rather than ideal types, and in this respect are not perfect replications of the idea. Instantiated as they are in 'actually existing neoliberalism' however, their mere existence is to some extent evidence of the existence of alternatives to that form of urban organisation. Indeed, they have been argued to be the 'ever present "dark"

side to hegemonic narratives of “improvement” and “enclosure” (Bresnihan & Byrne 2015, p.38). The commons – as a commentary on ownership – present an important way of rethinking land relations and within that, human relations.

Besides the inherent critique of capitalist relations with land in communal growing, there is also a question raised by community growing around time. Relating in part to the therapeutic aspect of gardening, the spaces of the case studies arguably reflect a rhythmic break from the experience of the wider urban landscape. The emphasis on seasonality and slowness, certain experiences of being present with others, offer a different experience not only of space but also of time. In this respect, it could be seen to critique contemporary time-relations, a rejection of accelerated time, or time-space compression, of liquidity (Bauman 2000) and of the disruptive effect of technologies and practices which disconnect from what Ellison (2013) called ‘thick time’. Thick time refers to a specific kind of experience of temporality associated with clock time and fixed, continuous spatialities. The relation communal growing has with time however is more complex than bucolic respite from the experience of contemporary time-pressure, this latter itself problematic (Southerton 2009). The regulation of time and the rhythmicity of the field sites play an important part in the structure of their community practice, curtailing as well as creating opportunities for escape. This will be explored with reference to Lefebvre’s notion of ‘rhythmanalysis’, based in the understanding that ‘Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is **rhythm**’ (Lefebvre 2004: 15, emphasis in original). The case studies provide a lived time and space that provides and curates not only the escape from the rest of the urban, but further provides the basis for communality in repeated social events. Thinking through rhythms provides a framework for understanding the precise kind of

alternative presented by both case studies – a lived place of difference understood in the field as distinct from the experience of the rest of the city.

This creation of urban difference is perhaps the most persuasive grounds for arguing that communal growing has an analytically political facet, something that Nettle (2014) situates as the politics of example inherent in community gardening's more political outposts. This can also be understood as the right to the city, as the right to shape the city as participants will it to be shaped (Lefebvre 1996). Whilst the right to the city is a broadly used concept that Attoh (2011) describes as '*strategically fuzzy*', it has been used in communal growing literature to situate a fundamental claim to space in the urban, particularly as gardens come under threat (Schmelzkopf 2002; Martinez 2009; Staeheli et al. 2002). It is useful here as a means of situating the creative aspect of curating alternative spaces in the city, based as it is in Lefebvre's notion of the city as 'closer to a work of art than to a simple material product' (1996 [1968]: 101). Nevertheless, creating spaces of difference, of other ways of living, as I will explore in what follows, needs to be understood in its class context. Lefebvre (1996) was keen to emphasise the importance of the working class in the production of the city as a place of creation and encounter. It is in this vein that the right to the city, and the alterity of communal growing's urban intervention, will be discussed here: as potential sites of exclusion, and as potentially problematic escapes for the white middle classes.

## **Structure of the thesis**

The questions of politics, exclusion, urban life and communality are thus intertwined. For clarity, I start with meaning and practices associated locally with the idea of community, building through the chapters from this basis to discuss inclusion as a social practice, urban interventions and latterly politics.

Each chapter builds on what has come before, although they pose discrete questions. This introduction and chapter two introduce major concepts, methods and sites, and are followed by four empirical chapters.

Chapter three looks at the idea of community, exploring practices and discourses. There, I discuss the complexities, closures, difficulties and dreams innate to the idea of community. The chapter will argue that an open conceptualisation of community has surfaced in these projects, one with a strong sense of inclusion that can unite and bring people together. The theoretical separation of community as value from communal practices as lived experience will be explored, as well as the tension between discourses of openness and practices of closure. Reflecting on the empirical evidence, it will argue that community as a concept is not analytically useful, although the idea of community is an important facilitator of communal practices. It latterly explores a key problematic within the way community is oriented to in the case studies, the tension between openness as a cultural orientation and practices of boundary making. This also establishes the ground for the next chapter, which engages directly in who is within and without the boundaries of these practices of communality.

In this way, chapter four will consider the closure inherent in community, through the patterns of exclusion in each field site. In the field, some exclusions are defended, others elided. The main argument of this chapter is that in conceptualising themselves as inclusive and open, the projects then create tensions when their practices create exclusions, but that these exclusions are usually tacit, reinforcing dominant forms of exclusion. I will explore two important qualifications to this. The first is the central practices of reflexivity of both projects. The second is the occasionally subversive ways in which heteronormative patterns of dominance are subverted, around



gender and employment. Thus beyond what practices are oriented towards community, in order to explore what community means, it is necessary to ask, who gets to be in the community?

Chapter five then explores the spatial and temporal interventions that the projects facilitate. Primarily, this is about the experience of time and space in both projects and how their differences and similarities say something about the way we experience green space in the city. Moving beyond the idea that green space is therapeutic or peaceful in the context of a city, this chapter asks how is that incorporated in to spatial and temporal practices, and how is it discussed. How are the rhythms of the spaces co-ordinated and how does this relate back to experiences of communality – specifically drawing here on the contrast between the marshalled and organised time of a community garden, against the freer but less concretely communal experience of the urban meadow. In chapter five, an analytically political interpretation of communal growing emerges from its intervention in urban space and time, as a form of everyday urban politics (Beveridge and Koch 2017).

It is from this analytical concept of politics that chapter six, the final substantive chapter, departs. In chapter six, I will argue that politics in these spaces is often a difficult term, not universally accepted as a category of practice. This relates to a number of factors to be explored in relation to ideas around the dilemmas of organisations receiving funding from states and charities, and around ideas of political opportunity structure. Demonstrating an alternative framing of the projects around value and connection rather than politics, this suggests an importantly depoliticised idea that runs contrary to the feminist notion of the personal as political and clearly demarcates the two. This is suggestively related to the idea of the delegitimisation of politics in everyday life. This raises a question: does this

pull the teeth of any counter hegemonic activity, if it cannot express in political terms its differences with the overarching structure of governance? Or, does it entertain a different arena for contestation – a question of morals rather than politics, avoiding perhaps the idea of politicking and instead focusing on questions of the good city and a good life; questions of political philosophy, but abstracted from an explicit evocation of politics.

Following this structure, this thesis thus opens up questions around the meanings and consequences of community, as it shapes practices of communal growing in Glasgow. The discussion brings these threads together and reconnects them to demonstrate the ultimately interwoven questions of class, community, and urban politics. It relates this back to the way urban life is experienced in Glasgow itself, and to processes of participation, politics, and exclusion. To build this argument, this thesis draws on a period of qualitative data collection around two case studies: the Woodlands Community Garden, and the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood. The next chapter situates these case studies within the broader urban milieu and explores the methodological groundings of the thesis in ethnographic practice.

# Chapter Two:

## Situating the methodology

The thesis's aims of exploring the meaning and consequences of community required situating in space and time, as well as methodologically. In this chapter, I want to explicate the decisions and challenges that guided Glasgow as a site for exploring them, as well as the methodological approach of a multi-sited ethnography. In the case of the latter, I explore questions of data collection and analysis, with a concern for the position of the researcher in the field, ethical and practical issues and questions of representation, *inter alia*. Firstly however this chapter proceeds from the question of the situation of the study in Scotland's biggest city, and introduces the case studies themselves.

Much of the community gardening literature has emerged out of North America, with a particular focus on New York's community gardens after they were threatened with mass eviction in the 1990s. A great deal of useful work has come out of this scholarship, but a literature that has a large emphasis on New York is likely to be skewed by its contemporarily high land prices and rampant real estate speculation. This is not to say there is not community gardening literature based outside of New York and the USA more broadly: gardens in Milwaukee (Ghose & Pettygrove 2014), cities across Australia (Nettle 2014), Berlin (Rosol 2010; Rosol 2012), and indeed Singapore (Tan & Neo 2009) have been studied. What has been interesting in this is that there are important connections between these sites, particularly around questions of co-option and neoliberal governance, although in each case inflected with the specificities of its locale. Situating this study in Glasgow, it comes as part of a recent emergence of community gardening studies there (Crossan et al. 2016; Cumbers et al. 2017). What makes Glasgow interesting in contrast to

New York, Singapore and indeed the cities across Australia is the particular post-industrial situation in Glasgow, with high rates of derelict land and a permissive, even encouraging, local authority who encourage temporary uses of land to combat the high rates of empty and unused lots in the city (Cumbers et al. 2017). In this way, I hope to expand the discussion of this flourishing practice in Scotland's largest city.

## **Glasgow and the question of urban development**

Glasgow was once the second city of the British Empire. It is now home to entrenched structural problems, endemic poverty and health inequalities. Known as the 'sick man of Europe' (Whyte & Ajetunmobi 2012), Glasgow struggles with high early mortality rates and large swathes of derelict and vacant land. There are neighbourhoods in the east of the city where, according to data from 2015 when the fieldwork began, 100% of people lived within 500m of a derelict site (ScotStat, n.d.). But taking proximity to dereliction at 1000m, almost everyone in the city lives close to a derelict site (Maantay 2013). The two have been linked, although the exact causality of the link between poor health, poverty and derelict land is still disputed (Walsh et al. 2016; Maantay 2013; Crawford et al. 2007). Within this context, my doctoral research seeks to ask what relationship interventions in derelict space (communal gardens) have with wider urban social processes, particularly around reorienting urban development and social exclusion. It focuses on two particular sites based on the edges of the West End, which represents something of a middle-class enclave. Notably, both interventions have been largely successful in sustaining themselves, and both sit on the edge of what might be designated as the West End, although this could be contested.

Derelict sites in the West End are less common than in other previously more industrial areas to the East or near the river. Technically vacant sites are

however still high. Within walking distance of both field sites in this research, gap sites where tenements have come down stood filled with rubble, buddleia and wildflowers, and an old church demolished into crumbled stone sits besides a play park. However, the West End has been the site of a number of recent housing developments, including the development of new student housing units and the development of the old BBC Scotland site into expensive housing. There are local concerns about what this means in an already densely populated area of Glasgow, particularly around parking. The West End is an area of Glasgow with relatively high property prices, although this drops off fairly quickly around the boundaries. Under these conditions, vacancy becomes a possible opportunity for profit. However, planning conditions and local opposition to development often move against housing development, including ultimately unsuccessful mobilisations against the BBC Scotland site's transformation into housing. The council claims a projected housing shortfall that must be met, which often overrules local opposition. Glasgow's long-term large-scale vacancy problem has provoked a focus on temporary land uses, as well as a series of focused regeneration attempts, although usually not in the West End.

The vast tracts of land designated derelict or obsolete in Glasgow present distinct challenges for the city and over the years regeneration attempts have moved from a more social focus (improving housing and amenities) to one driven by economic measures of city success, inviting foreign investment, iconic developments and celebrating globally visible urban spectacles with 'legacy' projects (Crawford et al. 2007; Paton et al. 2016; Paddison 2002; Paton et al. 2012; Mooney 2004; Gray & Mooney 2011). Particularly these efforts have been criticised for stigmatizing areas as beyond help, blaming instead 'problem people' (Paton et al. 2012) and also for a particularly thin notion of consultation, a veneer of participation, but with a real focus instead

on economic goals and city marketing (Macleod 2012; Mooney 2004; Paddison 2002; Crawford et al. 2007). These efforts have primarily focused on the East End (where the Commonwealth Games were hosted in 2014) and the centre of Glasgow, including the development of an area promoted as the International Financial Services District. The West End's relative affluence means that it has not been the focus of such large scale regeneration attempts, although it retains a Glaswegian level of vacancy. If anything, the West End has begun to encroach down to Partick (documented in Paton's (2014) work on the gentrification of Partick and its effect on working-class residents) and northward into Maryhill. Both field sites sit on the edge of the West End, one to the north on that Maryhill border, and the other to the east in an interstitial area between the West End and the centre of town. Their interstitiality is notable in that it provides a space for potentially heightened dynamics of contestation. Within the context of the valorisation of Glasgow's West End, it also provides fertile ground for exploring who gets to determine Glasgow and whose voice matters in those conversations.

Within this, it is worth challenging the narrative of 'dereliction' that comes to define the spaces that are to be turned into high-rise offices or community orchards. Communal growing projects are most often engaged in revitalising land that has lapsed into disrepair, leading Drake and Lawson (2014) to question their association with vacancy, and the potential complicity in regeneration this implies. Behind this criticism is a question: what does it mean to be derelict? A counter-reading of dereliction would parallel Weber's (2002) work on the purposive use of the term 'blight'. Writing about redevelopment in the United States, she highlights the use of the organic metaphor of blight to invite in creative destruction and redevelopment. Dereliction as a result of creative destruction, in the phraseology borrowed from Schumpeter, has been argued to be a normal part of capitalist

development (Németh & Langhorst 2014; Harvey 2007). 'Derelict' does much the same work as 'blight' – it devalues current uses of the land (by plant life, illicit uses by the homeless, or dog walkers), and stigmatises it as problematic, as empty. The Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Register, and other official registries, do not take into consideration unofficial uses, usually illicit as they are. In this respect, is land ever truly disused or derelict, or simply outside of the circuits of capital and bureaucratic definition? It would seem spaces become illegible outwith these discursive boundaries. This becomes relevant in this thesis as projects work to position themselves as legible within systems that do not recognise illicit use or marginalise unofficial local representation.

Recent research on creative urbanism has drawn a link between dereliction and the possibilities of what Loukaitou-Sideris (1996) called the 'cracks in the city', although this language emphasises marginality and miscreant behaviour. Yet the dividing line between creative appropriations of space being seen as alternative or progressive, and their role in gentrification and capitalist development is thin (Tonkiss 2013; Kamvasinou 2015; Spataro 2015; Andres & Grésillon 2013). The ambiguity of what have become known as 'meanwhile uses' is worth exploring. In the context of community gardens, it has specific implications: community gardens utilise spaces which might be deemed derelict, vacant or 'under utilised' in the terms of Stalled Spaces programme (Glasgow City Council n.d.), the Scottish Government's funding stream for meanwhile use. Given the focus on temporary use in this form of interstitial urbanism, that Németh and Langhurst (2014, p.144) speak of as 'intentionally time limited' use contrary to the 'preferred permanent option', one can question their conclusion that this can be a boon for communities. They do note however that meanwhile uses may cause all sorts of pitfalls, from the tension-wrought process of negotiating the end of a tenancy, to the potential for groups involved in the project to return to marginalisation, after a brief

period of 'community empowerment'. This latter tendency is indicative of the short-term view and low value placed on communities, particularly in reference to their engagement with their lived environment, but also in terms of the shallowness of any attempts to 'empower' or 'cohere' a community.

Glasgow city has around 60-70 community gardens that have emerged from rubble and formal vacancy. They are interconnected through staff mobility and networks like the Glasgow Local Food Network and the North Glasgow Community Food Initiative, and often support each other's campaigns and gala days. Community gardens have tended to emerge in Glasgow through local groups organizing around empty spaces, although increasingly local housing associations show interest in creating them. A preponderance of community gardens in Glasgow must partly be apportioned to the scale of dereliction and available space, but also to a movement associated with environmental interest and community-level concern. Networks of activists work together, sharing funding advice and growing knowledge, as well as practically supporting each other through things like where to source half whisky barrels and soil for raised beds. There are alternative forms of temporary urbanism emerging too in response to the swathes of under-used land. These community-focused, if not community-led, projects begin to move away from the economic rationality of redevelopment efforts in the city which are geared towards marketisation and investment, instead perhaps positing a bottom-up urbanism based in communality and a rationality of sharing and participation.

## **Case studies**

Within this Glaswegian context, the two case studies chosen represent two prominent examples of communal growing through which to explore communality. Representing two diverse approaches to intervening in the botanical life of the city, they offer a solid basis for comparing differing ways



of growing in an urban context and differing styles of communal urbanism. They were chosen as sites with established communal dynamics, but also as sites that differed along a number of axes. Firstly, only one is a community garden, the other an urban meadow. Whilst the literature on community gardens is increasingly established, there is less work on wild urban spaces, which the meadow claims to be. Contrasting the two offers a window onto different forms of urban communal growing and a number of the different formal and organisational possibilities. The meadow is not particularly formalised as a space, with two organisations working to save it and no formal permission to use the land. Growing holds a particular role within this as a form of protest, as well as an activity in itself. By contrast, the community garden is much more formalised, as part of a community development trust, has only one overarching organisation, and no battle to save it. Woodlands also own their site, rather than to all intents and purposes squatting it. Thus, the two sites differ along important organisational and formal axes, positioned differently within the broader field of communal growing within Glasgow. In this, they offer the opportunity to think through two different ways in which communal growing emerges, and in their contrast highlight the variability of communal growing. Nevertheless, what emerged was also a great deal of congruence, as will be explored in the substantive chapters.

The first case study is colloquially known as the North Kelvin Meadow, and the Children's Wood. Fondly, people refer to the meadow and wood interchangeably. The settled terms by which people refer to the space belies the contestation behind the name of the space itself. Although signs like the one in figure 1 appear on the site declaring it as the meadow and wood,



**Figure 1: A sign on a fence marks the land as the Children's Wood. 2015. Photograph taken by author.**

the council in 2016 was still referring to the space as the former Clouston Street pitches. This nominative contest is part of a broader challenge around the possible development of the space into housing, around which a campaign emerged to save the space and what it has become.

Its local names refer to what has happened since it was last used as pitches. The green space on the northern edge of Glasgow's West End is largely grassy now, with well-established shrubbery and many trees. It has also sprouted a number of human-built structures from tree houses, to raised beds and children's play equipment. The North Kelvin Meadow is generally taken to refer to the whole site, and it is a name that is encompassed by the campaign of the same name to save the site from being developed into flats. The whole space can also be called the Children's Wood, although this name more often refers to a wooded section of the green space where birch trees proliferate,

that has been populated recently with wooden tepee and a mud kitchen. Besides referring to the physical space of the site, the Children's Wood also refers to a splinter group from the North Kelvin Meadow campaign that emerged in 2011. Its nominative focus on children belies a much broader concern with community building and campaigning to save the space. They also in later years began to develop it into an asset for locals. What is of interest here is not just the space itself but the relationship between the various charitable organisations, networks of people, and the practices they engage in.

The trajectory of contestation dates back to the 1990s when plans to develop the site for housing faced local dissent. A charity called the Compendium Trust was created to turn the site into a sports facility, instead of turning it over for housing. This campaign to some extent succeeded: the housing plans failed to gain planning permission. Years later, after the sport facility plans fell through,



**Figure 2: Planned development for the site, printed out by activists and hung up on fences. 2015. Photograph taken by author.**

activists and organisers disbanded. That was in 2006-7. In 2008, plans emerged to develop meadow again (see figure 2). Out of dissent to this phase grew the North Kelvin Meadow campaign and latterly the Children's Wood organisation. Both refer to charitable organisations as well as spaces within Glasgow, and both groups organise activities from growing sessions to protests and gala days. Both have fought to keep the meadow as a wild space, as communal land, rather than turn it into housing. Along the way, they have turned the space from underused sports pitches (overgrown with grass) to the green haven that it is now.

I first encountered the meadow and wood on a frosty morning in late December 2014. It had a certain austere beauty and is surprisingly open once past the initial tree line around its boundary. In the winter, the scale of the site is obvious, as is its centrality to the social lives of local individuals. Even in the frosty cold of late December, it was in use by families passing through and dog walkers. The meadow is a site of commonality, and it is a place of meeting, sharing and commoning. In summer, the site becomes an urban oasis, with foliage obscuring surrounding buildings (see figure 3 where the only suggestion of buildings is a chimney in the top left corner). Questions arise however as to whom gets to share in the abundance of green space in this particularly green area of Glasgow. The meadow is equidistant from Byres Road, the affluent shopping street in the West End, and Maryhill Road, the latter often shorthand for proximity to deprivation. The space is associated with both, and the tensions arising from different claims to the land are explored in the substantive chapters. These dynamics are worked out around the main activities on site: through dog walking, vegetable growing (see figure 4), orchard maintaining and child's play, and tensions between these.





**Figure 3: Paths run through the meadow, this one heading towards the raised beds. 2015. Photograph taken by author.**



**Figure 4: Communal raised beds surrounded by long grass and clover. 2015. Photograph taken by author.**

The case study is of interest in a number of ways, not least in its tensions around who gets to be community. The site is well known for its long campaign to save the meadow from development. This is part of a long trajectory of collective action to invest energy in the space to transform it. It raises questions about who shapes the city and what kinds of sacrifices and compromises are necessary along the way. This is of particular note because of the Glaswegian inflection: the staunchly held notion of inclusion, the strong vein of social inclusion and a deep suspicion of those in power. These are arguably Glaswegian in that they are tied to a sense of place and identity, to questions of Scottish independence and whether the meadow sits in North Kelvinside (arguably a marketing term) or indeed in Maryhill. Contestations around who names, shapes and owns the city refract through this site, making it an excellent place to ask what community means in relation to urban development, exclusion and politics.

The second case study is the Woodlands Community Garden. It is part of a wider charity, the Woodlands Community Development Trust (WCDDT), with aims broader than growing vegetables and the funding to do so. Its distinctive position in the Glasgow community gardening scene has produced many connections with other sites. Its distinctiveness derives not only from its longevity (surviving since 2008) but also the scale of interventions carried out by the WCDDT. Some visitors to the garden expect it to be a large professional affair, and are surprised that it is only the size of a tenement block, and primarily consists of raised beds for individuals and families and some communal plots. It is neighbourly in scale and indeed in focus. The Woodlands Community Garden sits in the Woodlands area of Glasgow. Woodlands is an interstitial area – on its eastern side bordered by the M8 motorway and beyond that the city centre, and with the affluent West End proper to its west. It is in many ways a transitory space, with a large number of temporary



**Figure 5: Woodlands Community Garden in winter. 2016. Photograph taken by author.**

residents and a disproportionate number of HMOs and privately rented accommodation (to students to some degree because of the proximity to the university). This has been made particularly obvious by recent research commissioned by WCDT themselves. The garden sits in an area of middling deprivation, neither greatly affluent nor home to great deprivation. It is in this sense, middling in a number of its aspects.

The Woodlands Community Garden emerged from a gap site that, by the time it was turned over to the WCDT, had been vacant for decades. The Trust built on the other sites given to them, but not the site of the garden. Nevertheless, the garden's previous life as a tenement is obviated in the landscape of the garden, where the path from the road has been built up to street level, and slopes down on either side to the level of the foundations. Areas of the garden sit much below the street, and the process of creating the garden involved sculpting its current shape from the rubble. After a house fire in the 1970s, the site lay vacant until 2010. Alongside the garden, the WCDT also runs a community café and has a studio space site under construction, alongside a number of outreach and education projects. While the garden is the main



concern of this research, its entanglement and sympathy with the other projects means considering gardening alongside these other activities made sense. The garden lends legitimacy and support to the other projects, as well as sharing volunteers and sometimes physical space with them. The garden as a social phenomenon does not stop at the physical or formal boundaries of the site itself. It encroaches onto the lane behind the garden, growing in raised beds along the lane, and onto the street in signs and planters (see figures 6 and 7).

Woodlands provides an interesting case here not just because it has physically intervened – reshaping the physical fabric of the city – but because it does so



**Figure 6: Planters made and planted by Woodlands hanging on the railing on West Princes Street, along from the garden. 2016. Photograph by author.**



with a specific ideological mandate, invoking the idea of community as a basis for locally-driven development. In this is a reification of the local and the communal that raises questions about for whom cities are made and using whose ideas. In this, the interstitiality of Woodlands is also of interest. It provides a counter-point to the meadow in that it sits in a less valorised area with a high turn over of students and temporary tenants. This leads to tensions around whether or not Woodlands is properly cared for, something the WCDT are directly engaged with promoting (see signage efforts to stop fly tipping in figure 8). They are also actively changing the area, attempting to 'green' it and providing opportunities for communal behaviour to emerge. Exploring their engagement with development, exclusion and politics shines a light on city making at a local level.



**Figure 7: A new sign at the Woodlands Garden in 2016. Photograph by author.**

The contrast between the sites was a fruitful way to explore dynamics of communality in relation to organisational differences, and the ways in which communal behaviours vary in different formations. Further, when considering the political aspects of communal growing, it seems important to keep a broad notion of what that encompasses in order to think through the different forms and frames, the hindrances and the flourishing, that can be highlighted in a broad comparison of urban communal growing.



**Figure 8: Attempts to discourage fly tipping by Woodlands along West Princes Street. 2016. Photograph by author.**

## Methodology

The case studies developed here emerged out of multi-sited qualitative research that proceeded largely inductively. A well-established practice, multi-sited research allows for comparative research between two or more instances of similar phenomena, allowing for reflections on the particularities and continuities between different locales (Carney 2017). It was appropriate in this research in two ways. Firstly, communal growing tends to be a discontinuous process. Growing happens at repeated intervals, but often the sites lay dormant for long periods of time. This meant that the feasibility of studying more than one site increased. Indeed, comparing growing sites is common in community gardening research (e.g. in Pudup 2008; Crossan et al. 2016; Ghose & Pettygrove 2014). Secondly, a comparative element was explicitly sought. Although qualitative research that relies on participant observation aims for in depth and intensive knowledge rather than expressly seeking generalizable knowledge, by using multiple cases, it was possible to look at the different ways in which communal growing emerges and expressly explore the very localised and specific tensions around each site. This allows for more easily separating out what is idiosyncratic at each site from what is a product of systemic processes. The case studies developed here relied on multiple qualitative methods – primarily participant observation and interviews. Mitchell (1983) has argued for using as many tools as necessary in the construction of case studies. This has sympathy with those such as Jones (2013) who uses a ‘bricolage of ethnographic methods’, utilising observations and interception interviews to study South Bank in London. Seeking to answer exploratory research questions about meaning and relations in this thesis required ‘open-ended commitment, generous attentiveness, relational depth, and sensitivity to context’ (Ingold 2014, p.384) all of which are associated with in-depth qualitative methods.

Using both participant observation and qualitative interviews involves a kind of 'methodological eclecticism' that can help with empirical verification, and as a reality check on causal mechanisms (Silva et al. 2009, p.313). Between the interviews, social media posts and observations, there were often productive gaps between what was said and what was done which aligned with the idea Jerolmack and Khan (2014) propose as the 'attitudinal fallacy'. Since however interviews and observations deal with slightly different data, it is more a case of using the different strands of the research to enrich and understand the complexity of phenomena, rather than to refute the sincerity or continuity of participants. Thus, the richness of the life-world accessible through interviews can add to the observations of social life as practiced.

The case studies were selected from a range of community gardens mapped by the Glasgow Local Food Network. Both case studies present established gardens on the edge of the middle-class West End, allowing for the exploration of the evolving dynamics in these edge neighbourhoods. I contacted organisations at both sites and was welcomed as a volunteer at both. Across both sites, I carried out approximately 200 hours of participant observation and thirty-four interviews across two growing seasons (roughly April to September in 2015 and 2016). At Woodlands, this was regular volunteering at their gardening sessions, whereas at the meadow this tended to be irregular, project focused volunteering such as shed painting. I attended community events, various meetings to which I was invited and visited the sites regularly over the two seasons I carried out the research, capturing as broad an array of times and activities as possible. I also visited a number of other gardens in Glasgow, to broaden my sense of how communal gardening works in other sites and to understand better the distinct character of both sites.

## **Whereness and participant observation**

The applicability of participant observation has two rationales: the research questions and a sense of precedent. In order to explore communality and community, it is necessary to do so at the site/in sight of such action. As noted above, observational methods do not rely on what people say as a good indicator of what they do (Jerolmack & Khan 2014). Besides the practical applicability to the research intention, qualitative methods have a long history of use within the social sciences. Anthropology has since its inception used a form of participant observation to study culture and community. Participant observation is a widely utilised strategy for approaching urban space, giving a physical relationship with the site. It offers a way to be sensitive to the local specificity of the project (Byrne 2005; Hall 2013). This notion of the importance of geographic specificity is resonant with the detailed exploration in this thesis of the relationships gardens had with their neighbourhoods and broader contexts – including the relevance of Scottish politics, Glasgow City Council and the various struggles around neighbourhood distinctions.

My fieldwork shows the limits of methodological understandings of the field as a bounded realm that exists separately from the researcher's other routines and spaces. During the research, I lived in the West End of Glasgow where the research was carried out. In this sense, I was enmeshed in the broader milieu of both sites. As Swann and Hughes (2016, p.686) note, quoting Elias, this brings 'problems of involvement and detachment'. I was a stranger to Glasgow initially, but research touched my life in ways that were daily, readily eroding its peculiarity. As Fraser (2013) found in his work on Glasgow gangs, I would regularly bump into people from the field in my daily life. Fraser notes that 'During the fieldwork period, [he] could scarcely go out for a pint of milk without bumping into one or more of them' (Fraser 2013, p.975). Participants were my neighbours; others' paths crossed mine seemingly randomly in the



West End. Beyond this, social media posts on Facebook and Twitter, and newsletters and requests to volunteer by email, also interrupted my daily life. Combined, this made the distinctions between field and not-field blurry at best. This blurring meant that if research encounters arose in unusual contexts (such as supermarkets), I would often ask participants explicitly if they minded our conversation adding to my research. More often, conversations and observations outside of the physical field site gave background data that informed my understanding of the case studies, rather than explicitly becoming data. With regards to online data, social media was used as sensitizing rather than substantive data, although the websites of the organisations were included in the analysis. The broader point is not a novel one: the physical presence of participants created everyday interactions, and the online presence of both sites maintained my awareness of them. A traditional notion of the field as a bracketed space and time perhaps misses 'that "everyday life" for much of the world is becoming increasingly technologically mediated' (Murthy 2008, p.849), even as it has to deal with blurry boundaries of being in and out of the field.

## **Insider out: distance and heroism**

The dynamics of being an insider or an outsider also disrupt the field as a clearly delineated site. As Fairbrother (2017) recently noted, these dynamics can be overplayed and are not insurmountable barriers to understanding a field. I was neither insider nor outsider. I was the academic intruder, but being Scottish (if from Edinburgh) meant that in many ways I was already less strange than another may have been. In many ways I was at home in the West End of Glasgow, occasionally described by participants as the part of Glasgow most like Edinburgh (i.e. middle-class). As Coffey argued, the traditional notions of home and away with regards to fieldwork, of strangeness and gradual membership, are becoming accepted as problematic in themselves:

‘The image of the heroic ethnographer confronting an alien culture is now untenable, and fails to reflect much of what ethnographers do, if indeed it ever did reflect the lived reality of fieldwork’ (Coffey 1999, p.22). Sultana (2007) has discussed in the context of working in rural Bangladesh as an urban, middle-class Bangladeshi, the way difference is relational and constructed in the research moment. Sultana’s experiences were of shifting differences and similarities, of barriers and entry points. Similarly, at any given moment, I was talking to those I was similar to, those I differed from, along many axes and for the sake of rapport, I often emphasised different personal narratives to reflect this. I found that whilst I was arriving from England, and from academia, I was not greatly different to the majority of my participants: my whiteness, my middle-class background and educational profile all very readily fit into both sites. I also have a child – one who was born between two periods of fieldwork. I was pregnant for the first growing season, and had a small child for the second that I researched. This lent itself to access as both spaces emphasise family and parenthood. A more fluid understanding of researcher-researched boundaries helps to clarify this process as in motion, rather than fixed. Pregnancy was also an ice-breaker, and as Eggert (2017) noted having a child in a research setting lends itself to rapport in situations where family is resonant.

Parenthood also lent me a personal prism through which to see motherhood particularly, and certain discomforts I felt in the field informed some of the analysis in those sections. I reflect on those moments in what follows, where it becomes relevant. However, as Matthew Desmond (2016) argues in a post-script to *Evicted*, there’s a danger of ethnographic writing becoming about the researcher in first-person narratives. As far as possible, I focus on other people’s stories, feelings and doings to illustrate the narrative. Nevertheless, there are notable ways in which I became to some extent part of the fabric of

the garden and meadow: not least because with a child in tow I blended in. This might not have been possible for other researchers, and I owe some of the material on parenting to this. However, it also led to certain roles and assumptions being made about me, often with the idea of mothering superseding my role as a researcher. I was often asked where my child was during the second phase of the research, something which foregrounded the assumption of myself as primary caregiver and the place of a young child as being with the mother. This emphasised for me not only assumptions about mothering as my now primary social role, but also a certain blurriness about who I was in the field. Becoming a mother and occasionally bringing a child to the field transgressed expectations about academic distance, and further confused an already perhaps misunderstood research tool in participant observation. It is notable that in being around and asking questions (carrying out participant observation), the notion of research can be forgotten in amongst chopping up compost and potting on seedlings.

There were moments when social characteristics other than motherhood were brought to the fore by the research. I was implicated as a classed actor in the places I was researching. This is reflected in awkward class-talk, where my middle-classness seemed to appear as a barrier to people naming the spaces as classed. Naturally I cannot account for the unspoken. Walkerdine (2016) discusses these as 'hidden transcripts' following James Scott, referring to that which cannot be said by those who are subordinated. She reflects on the silences in her own research and moments of absence as flagging up these hidden transcripts that are ultimately unknowable. Walkerdine (2016) speaks to that which will not be said, invoking bell hooks to reflect on whether we can ever undo the power relationships inherent in research. Seeing hints of class-based discomfort in the field, it seems likely that there are things that were unsayable to me. It remains that as a middle class mother, I was invited into



the space in certain ways. Others without this access, or without this lens, might see the projects differently particularly where it pertains to gender roles. I cannot say what another would have seen in my place; only acknowledge that I was inevitably an imperfect tool in knowledge production.

## **Ethical and practical limitations**

Much of the research was conducted by participant observation. This method favoured the regular sessions at the Woodlands Community Garden. It was harder to reach those invested in, using and engaging with the North Kelvin Meadow, particularly activists and committees. This made the site more amenable to interviews. There were two main reasons to instigate this shift in method. Firstly, much of the organisational aspects of the meadow were hidden on site – presented primarily in already-formed events, side conversations, and signage. This led to questions about how the committees did their work, which impacted their campaigning amongst other things. The second reason relates to the role of children at both sites, but was most obvious at the meadow. Toddler play is a common activity at the meadow and forms a central aspect of the Children's Wood's arranged activities. This created a research issue in that toddler play is quite unpredictable, often individualised and difficult to become a participant in, without a toddler in tow. Latterly, I did have a child of almost appropriate age, but involving him in the research provoked an ethical question about his involvement, and a practical question. Although ultimately I do not believe he would have come to any harm in the field, he would also provide a distraction from my core purpose in being there. This also brought up the issue of the difficulty of asking questions and getting clear answers when the primary activity at hand is a children's play group. This is interesting in and of itself, but does not lend itself to easy data collection around meanings held by participants. Instead, a method of interviews was practically preferable, in that it foregrounded

conversation over play in that particular moment and focused the interviewee and I on meanings and the spaces we inhabited. Nevertheless, at a number of interviews, children were present, suggesting that the distance between the interviews and observations in the meadow setting is not as far apart in practice as the formal distinction might suggest.

A total of 34 interviews were carried out, including a handful of interviews with other garden workers in Glasgow. The substantive interviews were skewed towards the meadow. Five interviews were carried out with four staff members at the Woodlands garden, two of which were volunteers before they were staff. At the meadow, twenty-five interviews were carried out with twenty-two individuals. Four other garden co-ordinators in north Glasgow were interviewed as grounding for wider dynamics in the city, although they don't feature heavily in what follows. Employees at both sites were interviewed, but at the meadow this extended too to committee members, raised bed gardeners, parents, dog walkers and activists. Audio recordings were taken of all interviews and transcribed into word processing documents. Interviews were originally conceived as a minor bolster to the observational data but gained greater centrality as the discontinuity and multiplicity of the meadow as a phenomenon became apparent. In trying to explore aspects of community, I sought other ways of finding active community organisation members to talk to. The nebulousness of the site thus lent a specific character to the participant observation – the passing through, the peace, the children running about – but little in the way of the meanings attributed to the space.

Interviews were a means of exploring meanings, stories associated with the space and of walking the site with others. Indeed, most of the interviews took place at the meadow or garden, including in the rain, and sometimes with interviewees' children or dogs in tow. The exceptions were three interviews

carried out in local cafés, and one interviewee who requested I come to her home (which overlooks the meadow). Meeting on-site used the spaces as a natural vehicle for conversations about the case studies (Evans & Jones 2011) and in this way are continuous with conversations held during the participant observation, although they were recorded at the time rather than written down later. Being on-site offered not only triggers for what was said but also placed us in the path of others, accidental meetings and so forth happened during interviews, grounding them in the everyday life of the projects (c.f. Kusenbach 2003 and the 'go-along' interview). Daniel Miller (2012, p.31) has written with suspicion of the 'artificial procedure that we call an interview' and Paul ten Have suggests that their artificiality stems from the difference from an 'ordinary conversation' (Ten Have 2012, p.35). But instead of seeing interviews as artificial or abnormal, the interviews I carried out formed something more like a continuum with participant observation: they were not a qualitatively different social research method. Further, as a participant (who is also a social researcher) pointed out during one interview, we often reflexively narrate ourselves to each other in cafes, one on one, so perhaps the interview as a research situation is not as unusual as can be suggested. The interviews were open-ended and approached as conversations – left largely unstructured, following themes but also the narratives offered by respondents about the spaces we were in. In this way, they were intended as exploratory in the same way the research questions are framed: looking for meaning and connections, noting tensions and staying with complexity. Importantly, some interviewees never subsequently appeared in my field notes, compounding the usefulness of expanding the methods from observational to include a substantive number of interviews. As one human with two parallel case studies, it was impossible to be present always, and further, to always engage everyone on site, if that were indeed an aim. Nevertheless, it emphasises the inevitably partial nature of the two case study method. Da Col (2017, p.3)

invokes Maurice Bloch to call ethnographies ‘snapshots of ongoing processes’. As with any picture, what lies outwith the frame always remains unknown. The interviews filled in some details obviously missing, providing insight particularly into emotional attachment and the place of the projects in the lives of participants. Snowball sampling was the primary method of accessing activists and committed users of the meadow case study in order to interview them – using two key campaigners to reach participants, as well as approaching some participants spontaneously in the space to fill obvious gaps, such as dog walkers. I sought difference and considered the research concluded when I reached data saturation, no longer hearing or seeing things that challenged the forming analysis (Strauss & Corbin 1998). This was done with aim of accessing the core group of activists, particularly targeting those involved in organising the campaigns. I was interested in expanding from the casual users I was meeting in the meadow to include those who explicitly were working to save the space and whose decisions were shaping the development of the meadow itself. Saturation may have been reached earlier than it might have been in a purely interview based project because of the dialogue between the interviews and the participant observation, and the reliance on neither as the sole data source.

## **Anonymity, vulnerability and avoiding harm**

Anonymity was a concern in the research. This meant careful writing and anonymisation of participants. All research participants have pseudonyms, including children and dogs. Anonymity has particular resonance in this context because some of the things discussed here are internally contentious and others are more broadly so. Participants themselves had concerns about the research and its capacity to potentially endanger the spaces. At Woodlands, this meant that staff answered questions from the viewpoint of their role and organisational responsibilities, something which came up in

later conversations around things previously said. At the meadow, there was a concern from some quarters that I should not focus on internal disagreements and dissention, because they were all 'on the same side' in the end: trying to save the space. This led to a sometimes-glossy picture from key figures, and a tendency to get frustrated with questions about disagreements. What this emphasises, rather than duplicity from respondents, is what is at stake: the very sites themselves are not always safe from extinction, there are always threats to continuity and this shaped how the research unfolded. Particularly, this required sensitivity to participants' defensiveness in my approach to the research and assurances of my intentions as a researcher not to cause harm to the projects.

The traditional concern with vulnerability and harm also permeates the project. There were times in the research when a sense of fully informed consent from participants became difficult, for reasons of age, disability, or indeed suspected inebriation. Care had to be taken in these instances to engage sensitively with their needs while still recognising the capacity of the person in question. I decided to keep in the thesis the account of one man who during our conversation offered me a can of beer, whilst deciding to stop hiding the one he had kept until this point within his sleeve. Up until this point, I had assumed that, whilst being rather candid with me, he was capable of understanding the context of our conversation. Since it was mid-morning, his drinking (and offering to share) made me uncomfortable and made me consider his capacity to consent. He was particularly keen to talk about the benefits and changes that had happened on site, and had a relationship that had broken down with organisers at the site. He went on however to make a number of personal disclosures about his life that went beyond the normal bounds of a conversation on the meadow. Rather than erase him entirely from the research due to my suspicions around his relationship to alcohol, I have

kept his account in what follows. That which I decided could not be used referred to his own personal story which, while moving, seemed gratuitous in the context of telling the story of the meadow, and seemed more likely to be damaging in that it included personal disclosures I am not sure he would have made sober. To not use the material gained from the conversation however seemed unfair to him, especially considering his informal exclusion from meadow campaigning, and his suspected alcohol issue.

Other ethical issues around consent and harm arise in relation to children, who were omnipresent in the field. Families and children permeate the research, yet specifically with young kids, consent is something that is usually devolved to their responsible adults. In the flow of an urban meadow or a busy festive day at a garden, consent can be hard to seek – for adults as well as children. Children are usually in the spaces at play, and although they may have interesting things to say about community, such opinions weren't sought. It might be an interesting angle for future research, to specifically look at how children experience communal spaces, and given the concern often around the exclusion of young adults, it might be a question worth asking. But in the context of this research, the testimonies and actions of adults were generally taken as being sufficient to answer the research questions, including parents' reflections on their children's relation to the space. That said, there are children who necessarily feature in what follows either as care-receivers or as parental appendages. This is not to underestimate the importance of family life and children at either site, or to deny agency to minors. Instead it is a recognition of the insensitivity of the approach to the emotional and communal lives of children, and restraints on ethical grounds on behalf of the researcher.

While I do not to disclose the individuals' (including non-humans') identities, the projects themselves would be very difficult to anonymise without losing some fairly key details. The North Kelvin Meadow site is unique in its position and well known, creating a situation where anyone au fait with the details of their contest with the council would know of which project I spoke.

Woodlands too has an unusual situation within the wider urban ecology of Glasgow as a long standing, successful garden based out of a community development trust. Concern then was to protect individuals. This was done through use of pseudonyms and the obscuring of details where necessary to prevent identification. The specific context within the west of Glasgow of both sites is key to their identities and struggles, and these were thus kept. The focus then is usually on the collective, but in such a way as to represent this as knowledge embedded in the specificity of the urban context (Byrne 2005).

## **Data and analytical strategy**

In data gathering and analysis, an iterative approach was followed, with early analyses informing latter stages of the research. Materials gathered included interview transcripts and extensive field notes that were written after research trips to the sites. Further data were found online. Electronic and social media have been a key way for both sites to communicate with interested parties and so emails and public messages have been utilised as useful illustrations and public messages. I took photographs as aide memoires and images have been used illustratively in the thesis. Unless otherwise indicated, I took all photographs used in this thesis. Photographs were also a documentation of change, both seasonal and progressive. These methods allowed for the direct observation of growing practices and the formal and informal uses of the spaces researched sites. Informal conversations and more structured interviews allowed me to discuss participants' thoughts and feelings around the sites, community and their fellow gardeners, activists,

parents and other site users. The combined methods illuminated how people used, thought of, felt, organised, worked, relaxed, cared, shared, and otherwise incorporated into their daily lives, the spaces and practices under consideration.

Slightly different data were collected from the sites. Because of the greater amenity to participant observation methods of the Woodlands Community Garden, a greater amount of field note data exists from that site. The North Kelvin Meadow site differed in its amenity to these methods, mostly because its main organised events were either gala days or children's playgroups rather than regular gardening sessions. As discussed above, interviews became a prominent means of data collection, meaning transcripts form a large part of the corpus of data in the meadow case study. Bringing together these data and beginning to understand them proceeded in a grounded way. Interview transcripts and field notes were coded thematically and compiled into broad topical documents, from which the following thesis was written. However, some of this began before the second stage of the research. This allowed the first period of observational research and interviews to inform the second period. Two growing seasons were encompassed during the research, allowing me to move forward iteratively, to contest earlier formed ideas and observe the evolution of the sites.

Multiple methods are sometimes assumed to dovetail. Yet differences in presentation and vantage point meant that some contradiction between the results from different methods occurred. The antagonistic triangulation of methods arguably allowed a more sophisticated read of the phenomenon, in pursuing contradictions and discontinuities. Particularly, this existed between interviews and observations. This will be explored as it arises in relation to concrete issues later. In this respect, I am reminded of Burowoy's (1998, p.16)



assertion that ethnographic work should search for ‘refutations that inspire us to deepen... theory’. He was talking about the tensions between theory and empirical work, but there is no reason this should not also apply in the tensions between research results themselves.

## **Representation and articulation**

Within the bounds of the research, as ever, are questions of representation worth considering, not least because in writing about worldviews and social meanings, the potential for symbolic violence arises. Particularly in this thesis, I was wary of this in relation to applying the idea of politics, and the interpretation of action as political that may not be considered such on site. The project is organised in such a way to allow reflection and moments of reflexivity on these points of tension, while accepting that an analytical explanation may not resonate as an everyday idea. Using a grounded analysis and iterative research processes, as far as possible the sites themselves will be able to speak through the project. In remaining critical, it was important to work in conversation with the participants of the projects – putting them in a position where possible to reflect on the process, rather than simply be researched on (McKemmish et al. 2012). Practically this meant the following techniques. For interview participants, the option of seeing a copy of the interview transcript was offered in order to allow them a chance to reflect on our conversation, although in reality few wished to read the transcript. This led in one case to a discussion of what could be used from the interview, as the participant in question felt it did not accurately represent his relation to the site. I also worked as a volunteer at both sites and was always open about the aims of my research. Employing a largely unstructured interview strategy, allowing interviewees to talk at length and following their narrative where it led was also an important aspect of letting participants’ voices resonate. The idea of community particularly was one that was discussed at length with

participants, allowing them to guide me in its influences and meanings to them. In a further step, I took the results back to respondents –emailing a lay summary to key organisational figures and facilitating a workshop on the results as part of the launch program for the Woodlands Workspace. In this way, I tried to explain the results of my research and the process by which those results were reached. Although this was unlikely to lead to refutations of key findings, due to the kind of power imbalances participatory methods are intended to try to overcome (see e.g. McKemmish et al. 2012), it did lead to interesting conversations about what research does and how it works. In particular, conversations with the Woodlands manager, Oliver, after the research, have been worked into the text where he latterly questioned the position from which he had answered an interview question. This iterativity added then a layer of reflexivity for participants, allowing research to do more than simply work on people's lives and leave.

Approaching the research iteratively had its benefits, but there remains a critical question of how articulate respondents are being asked to be on topics of sociological complexity. Community and politics, as well as urban development and exclusion, are all issues fraught with definitional issues, and the stakes for groups can be high. Community in particular was distinctively difficult to work with in this context. Methodological openness about a lack of fixity for these concepts allowed for participants reflexivity about meanings and difficulties, and for multiple meanings to emerge. But there is still the issue Payne and Grew (2005) highlight in reference to class: how do we analytically deal with inconsistency and lack of clear articulation when talking about concepts that sociologists themselves struggle to define? Payne and Grew are reacting to an article from Savage et al (2001) that claims to find 'class ambivalence' but argue that the finding is based in 'an unrealistic expectation that respondents possess a sophisticated and consistent model of

class of the kind possessed by the researchers themselves' (Payne & Grew 2005, p.908). As far as is possible, a reflexive, mixed methodology can help in this. It teases out inconsistencies (between action and meaning, or over time, or in different role positions) as well as the struggles to define and work with a concept that is constantly evoked, explicitly and implicitly. I take from Payne and Grew (2005) however a sensitivity to the expectations sometimes placed on participants to be articulate, and therefore rely not only on interviews and conversations on site, but also the doings of participants that often reveal as much about what communality comes to mean in an urban context.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis seeks by these methodological means to explore being communal in the context of the two case study sites above. It asks what it means, and what consequences community as an idea brings into the urban as lived. I will argue that communal growing projects provide a means of shifting tendencies towards social exclusion and the commoditisation of land, although in complex and multifaceted ways. This will be related back to the ambivalent politics of urban growing. Going beyond the question of whether gardens are political or not, this is an exploration of the ways a growing project can express political and anti-political tendencies. In doing so, I hope to illuminate further sociological understandings of community as a value and a practice, and to understand the consequences of actions seeking to create and galvanise communities. Given the context of the valorisation of community in political and common discourse, it is important to ask precisely what community means and what it does.

## Chapter 3:

# Community as idea and communal practices

Within the case studies of this research, community is a frame that shapes action and enables connecting practices. It is both a value held by participants, as well as a disputed social form, and thus in what follows I want to separate analytically the practices of being communal from community as an idea. I present an argument about orientation, by which I mean how people's communal behaviour is directed to and by social ideals. In this sense, community acts like a frame, in Goffman's (1975) broad sense, as the 'consensual answer to the question "what is it that's going on here?"' (Mitchell 2016, p.331 quoting Goffman 1975). I offer an analysis of the practice of communal growing that illuminates not only the practices that bring people together – such as gardening, or shared social values – but also the boundary making that is implicit within the attempt to build community.

Boundary making is a well-discussed scholarly focus, although it is particularly present in class, ethnicity and identity scholarship within sociology. Important contributions from Bourdieu and social movement scholarship have shaped the idea of a boundary as a contested social and symbolic form (Lamont & Molnar 2002). Community scholarship has explored this idea too, seeing it as an aspect of symbolic distinction such as in the work of Cohen (1985) or at a national level in the work of Benedict Anderson (2006). Indeed, Gould (1995) wrote of Paris in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: 'meaningful group boundaries are predicated on the presence (and perception) of common patterns of durable ties' (Gould 1995, p.19). However, boundary

making tends to focus on solidified groupings, and the practices explored here demonstrate something more nebulous. Whilst there is a demonstrable tendency towards the creation of a group (formation), this lacks the solidity that would create easy grounds for the distinction of boundary making. This brings into question the durability of contemporary communal ties. What I will demonstrate is that being communal creates insiders and outsiders, through practices of (relatively porous) boundary making and symbolic distinction. These processes are weak and implicit due to a commitment to social equality that disrupts the clarity and firmness of those boundaries. The disruption of boundary making re-centres the question of what community could mean as a noun discussed in the introduction, and indeed its usefulness as a category of analysis (c.f. Brubaker 2013).

This chapter discusses these ideas in the context of the two case studies and argues that instead of using community as an analytical idea to understand these projects, a greater clarity can be found discussing the weak process of group formation and the overarching meanings that community as an idea lends to the social practices of being communal. This position recalls the distinction Brubaker (2013) made between categories of practice and categories of analysis, and I would argue that community belongs largely in the former, as a fuzzy descriptor or emotionally resonant call-to-arms. I argue that community's opacity relates to its conceptual 'inoperability' (i.e. referring to an unstable and largely impossible social form)(Nancy 1991). Yet community-as-value has an enabling function. Demonstrating this necessitates a discussion of the emotional and practical forms of behaviour that are oriented to the notion of community. Drawing on interviews and participant observation, I will argue that the feeling of belonging subjectively associated with experiencing community derives from the way community as a frame facilitates practices of emotional connection (for example, sharing).

Walkerdine (2010) calls this affective sense of belonging 'communal beingness', capturing the basis in practice that belonging has. Before exploring how community works as an orienting value, I first explore the role of gardening within these shared practices of connection, particularly highlighting how gardening as a communal activity takes on new meanings and contexts: as a means of reconnecting with other people, with the land and in the case of the North Kelvin Meadow, as a form of protest activity. Gardening has a function beyond this, as will be discussed below. Alongside community, gardening orients participants to each other. It gives them a shared mutual aim and focus. I argue this shared orientation to growing and communality is important to organisational cohesion, in that it provides a sense of collective focus. This collective focus will then be discussed as it manifests in practices of communality found across the projects in caring and limited intimacy.

However the idea of cohesion anticipates an important problem that runs through both case studies that I turn to towards the end of the chapter. Since the North Kelvin Meadow and Woodlands Community Garden both commit themselves to the idea of openness, coherence and stability within the practices of being communal run into contradictory territory. Thus, there are two counter-tensions to be explored: social inclusion and boundary processes of social closure. Within this, the tendency to closure, to create 'community within a community', demonstrates the exclusionary possibility within communal behaviour. The question that arises here is whether this is normatively problematic. Assertions that community is a retreat from difference and diversity play on this exclusionary potential (Tonkiss 2005; Belton 2013). What I argue here is that group formation inherently is a process of closure but that closure process and socially exclusionary behaviour need not be one and the same. Further, as I explore towards the end of the chapter, community as the object-aim of a process of communing is

impossible and interrupted by processes pushing away from this closure (Nancy 1991; Delanty 2003). In this, an awareness of the possibility of exclusion within group formation can mitigate against unjust, or normative exclusion. What remains is the need to explore processes of communing, including the interruptions and destabilisations that occur within practices oriented to the idea of community.

## **Gardening as an organising process**

In the context of urban growing in Glasgow, gardening provides a structuring basis around which being communal is organised. At Woodlands, gardening structures space and time, creating a specific rhythm of being communal. When Woodlands Community Garden is open during Wednesday afternoons and Sunday afternoons between 1pm and 4pm, there are usually people pottering about between raised beds, particularly if it is not raining. The site consists mostly of raised beds, landscaped up to street level from the foundations of the tenement that sat there in the 1970s. A house fire destroyed the tenement building and now Glaswegians grow vegetables and fruit between the two tenements that sit either side. An individual or family owns each raised bed, and there are around forty raised beds in total. Fruit trees and bushes are communally owned and tended in the space, along with three communal beds and a tyre wall with herbs cascading down one side. The compost bays slumber under pieces of carpet, warm and full of worms until they are ready to be used. A shipping container of tools, in 2015 still painted with a mural saying 'Woodlands' on the side, sits towards the back of the site, close to the building known as the hub. The hub is a timber-built building with a small solar panel for light and no running water. It provides a social centre for the garden where the tea urn sits and, when brought along by gardeners, biscuits and fruit to share.

Within the space of the garden, the hub is a focal point for chatting, although the raised decking area outside is utilised if it is dry and warm enough. It was around the aptly named hub that many conversations in the field took place, often beginning from how pleasant the garden was and how nice it was to get to know people in the local area. In setting out fixed times and a fixed place in which to gather, a pattern emerges to encounters at the Woodlands Community Garden. Every Wednesday and Sunday afternoon, the garden is open for advice and company. This is especially important for those outside formal work patterns. During one session, I talked to Ethel and Mona about their attachments to the garden. Ethel lives right next to the garden and talked about how she loves the garden because it is a good way of getting out of the house and seeing people. She would say it stops her going mad on her own with nothing to do, since she is retired now. Mona agreed. Mona is unemployed at the moment, for health reasons. Being part of the garden gives her somewhere to be, and something to do at a specific time. It means, she jokes, she can keep away from watching terrible TV all the time. Particularly, she highlights how it gives her something practical and social to do. Although the space is a garden, much of what Ethel and Mona value is being social. The garden is the site of this sociability, but gardening itself is not always the main reason many attend. The garden as a place, and gardening as an activity, provides a medium through which being communal is filtered.

While gardening organises activity at the Woodlands Community Garden, there is a different dynamic at the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood. There, gardening has not functioned in the same way as a structuring activity, although cultivating has been an important aspect of resistance to housing development at the meadow. Since 2008, when local people found out Glasgow City Council were for the second time trying to sell off the land at the meadow for housing, participants have been organising to resist turning this



green space into a building site. The site itself was once playing fields and it bears the marks of this. The surface was blaes, a colliery by-product that gives a hard red or brown gritty surface. The blaes surface is now covered in a layer of soil and grass, with hundreds of trees growing all around it. In half whisky barrels and raised beds made of scaffolding planks, locals grow vegetables and flowers; some of which are communal, others rented by individuals and families. It also contains a wooded area that has increasingly become a site for children's play with a wooden tepee, ropes tied between trees and a mud kitchen, with donated kitchen utensils for children to play with. Despite the efforts that went into this transformation, local people have shown little enthusiasm for communal growing, except verbally.

Growing then does not organise action in time and space in the meadow as it does in the community garden. In 2014, when I began looking into field sites, there were communal growing sessions on some Sunday afternoons at the meadow. By early 2015, this had fizzled out. Nonetheless, raised beds were and are in high demand. Discussing this with one of the lead campaigners, Terry, this came back to time as much as anything else.

We used to meet regularly with the, the raised beds... it used to be the last Sunday at 2 o'clock and we'd all meet. I mean, only a few of us would meet and we'd have coffee and cakes and just have a wee chat, but ... [*blows air, pffff*] people are busy. People are busy with their own remits and while they like the space... Lot of people just don't get involved with this stuff.

(Terry interview, July 2015)

As Terry argues, even when structured sessions were offered, few turned up because participants were 'busy with their own remits'. Similarly, very few raised bed growers were ever spotted during the participant observation on

the site. Those I did see often bemoaned a lack of sociality around the growing, yet attempts made to rejuvenate growing communally tended to flop.

A system was designed in 2015 to try and organise being communal through growing. It was designed to help people engage in growing together in two large raised beds intended as community beds. The beds themselves were labelled with 'front', 'middle' and 'back' and numbered. Participants were expected to let the self-appointed coordinator (Terry) know what they had done. There was a diagram in a plastic folder attached to the fence which Terry said he would update to reflect what was going on, and what needed done next. The system Terry designed was primarily so people would not dig up each other's seeds, but it did not attract that much energy, nor function particularly well. While at the meadow in July 2015, I met Janice when she was using the beds. She was at the meadow with her children and they had been planting seeds in their own raised bed. She explained she had seeds left over from her raised beds and she was going to have a go at using the communal bed system, since they were here anyway. However, as Janice explained to me how the system worked, she noted how laborious she found the process. She told me she had to go email Terry with what she had been doing and Janice made this sound like effort, certainly the remembering part. Having the extra space of the communal beds was in this case a place to plant excess seeds, rather than a deliberate attempt to garden collectively. The intention, as Terry explained to me more than once, is to allow for people to grow together without being present at the same time. It was supposed to coordinate action. A few days later, the system was not up to date. But then, it was only ever sporadically updated because although Terry took responsibility for it, no one else did. Partly, it probably failed due to an attempt to unilaterally invent a collective system.

Communal growing did not structure action as much at the meadow as people also struggled to understand the system. Terry discovered this trying to explain it to visitors from the Green Party on a tour of the site. A group from the local branch of the party had come down to the meadow to visit and get a grip on local issues, as well as get to know a local landmark. As part of the tour, we passed by the raised beds and Terry began to explain the system to those present. What he struggled with was translating to whom the beds belonged. Edie, from the Green Party, seemed puzzled when Terry told her that the beds are 'everyone's, of course'. The issue is muddled by proximity to the rented out barrels and beds. But the difficulty in practice, Terry went on to explain, was that local people do not get involved, and there is an over-polite attitude that gets in the way of sharing the produce. No one takes it, he exclaimed! Terry's explanation of the difficulties of growing relies on people's personal attributes but perhaps overlooks the question underneath that. Edie's difficulty in translating a clear sense of ownership out of 'everyone' is likely a good part of the problem. Unlike at the Woodlands garden, that sense of collective ownership is not often, or ever, embodied in a collective growing exercise. Everyone in this case is made up of lots of individuals all separately growing and organising themselves distantly, and practices of connection were virtual and textual only.

Everyday growing at the North Kelvin Meadow is, in contrast to Woodlands, more of an individualised activity; people do not grow collectively, and little of the vegetable sharing that happens spontaneously in the garden occurs around the raised beds on the meadow. There are no gardening sessions to structure action. People were often disappointed with it or thought it needed more attention. In the growing session that petered out, and the unwillingness of some to commit to specific times, there lies perhaps an illustrative failure. Arguably, the gardening project at the meadow did not flourish because it

lacked a mechanism to produce regular interactions between the same or roughly similar groups of people. It did not bound growing in time or space. Those interested were disparate and used the space at different times, with variable levels of commitment to growing. Suggestively, people I spoke with felt no sense of community emerged around growing. This is not to say however that communality is generally thought to be absent at the meadow.

Communality at the meadow derives more generally from the sense of opposition to planning, from dog walking and around children's play clubs. The role of gardening within this was primarily as a protest repertoire. When the site first became neglected in the 1990s, activists (some of whom are still in the area) planted grass seeds after researching the best seed for the blaes surface. They also planted trees, some of which then reproduced, creating the newer wooded areas. Along the Clouston Street edge stand old lime trees that locals carefully prune back to keep the pavement clear. More recently, local volunteers planted a community orchard. Cultivation has been a method of enlivening and caring for the space. When the Children's Wood gained funding to employ two people in 2016, this was clearly articulated. The Children's Wood hired Ivan, previously an event attendee and dog walker, in a community engagement role. This involved running growing sessions and improving the site. One of his first actions was to bring in woodchip for some of the more worn, muddy areas and paths, and to build up the edges of borders and create more visual coherence in terms of where areas were. Asked why this was the case, he responded with reference to the idea that he could – by making simple visually arresting physical changes to the site – demonstrate the value it held:

One of the comments that we had was that the council, well the council apparently has been saying for a long time, and even just up until this year, that no it's a passive community down here and no one's really

using the land and that's totally wrong and we know that for a fact that's not true, so it was a goal of mine to make an impact straight away, as soon as I can, just to show that there were people down here having an impact.

(Ivan interview, July 2016)

As such, Ivan's actions in the space were about 'impact' and demonstrating an active commitment to the land. They were also directed to growing in the communal raised beds and being present around the meadow, engaging users of the meadow in conversation and occasionally succeeding at roping otherwise disengaged teenagers into manual labour (moving woodchip, mostly). His work infused the growing with a sense of purpose, but he admitted it was not easy to persuade people to come down and grow. That most research participants claimed a sense of community in relation to the space despite this suggests that, when they spoke about community and claimed a strong sense of belonging, they were orienting to something that was practiced outside of the gardening. They had something else to orient to.

The emergence of the Children's Wood activities – aimed largely at toddlers, parents and local schools – provided a locus around which to gather, bringing onto the land a number of children and parents from the local area and beyond. Importantly this structured community far more than growing does. Although formally about play and the value of outdoor education, lead organisers in interviews noted that this was about saving the land and its potential, as much as the activities themselves:

We're trying to make it more inviting so people think that it's a safe place. So that was why children, taking a children's angle, it's a safe, if children can go there, anyone can go there... I had a very clear vision, and that was just to increase the value of the space and just get as many

people onto the land as possible so that you could see the benefit of the space, to make it really clear.

(Polly interview, July 2015)

It is the land and its use-value to locals that truly orients communality around the meadow and wood, what Polly above calls the 'benefit of the space'. This use-value is different for different groups of people. There are those who grow in the meadow – the mini allotments are always in high demand – but they are part of a wider and widening constituency of people who value the land for what they can do there. The uses of the meadow extend to just about anything within the realms of the law and the tolerance of those already using the land, from barbeques to making BMX runs. Growing is a less important aspect of this project than having the space to orient to, in terms of creating and sustaining communal practices. For one respondent, this is about her relationship with the meadow itself –as she points out, it is what grounds the people who use the space, and what they have 'in common':

I'm going to sound all terribly hippyish but I do like, the kind of trees, and the river, they're a part of that community and it's not like I'm just talking about people and it just happens to be on this separate space, it's kind of all entwined and that's why, that's the thing that we all have in common is that we are here.

(Joan interview, July 2015)

Thus, being communal in both projects is a relation to the land and to growing, as well as to each other. Pitt (2017) has argued that community gardening does not automatically extend relations of care to more-than-human relations, but at the meadow communality is unimaginable without the physical site itself. While activity at the Woodlands Community Garden is a more strictly time and activity oriented phenomena, growing is part of a wider practice of protest and guerrilla activity at the North Kelvin Meadow.

In accounts of community gardening, attempts to explain what community designates have highlighted contrasting forms and visions. The taxonomical distinction has been made between communities of interest and communities of proximity (Firth et al. 2011). While these are seen as different typologies, what this really offers is a sense in which there are different ways to orient communality based primarily on place or on activity. When Firth et al. (2011) write of distinguishing place-based from interest-based communities as different forms of community created in community gardens, he is arguing that what binds them together is different. In both case studies here this binding exists around the land, but it is not as geographically circumscribed as this might suggest. Growing creates common rules and spaces for sociality and solidarity, linking people through shared interest and to some extent the organisation of time and space. But important within this is the idea of gardening *communally*, which lends an overarching frame for understanding and facilitating action.

## **Cultivating connection: complexity and intention**

Community, it's simple but it's complex.

(Polly interview, July 2015)

By orienting to the idea of community, the projects create the grounds for an understanding of actions there as connected to others, as expressing togetherness. This is to argue that the idea of community is an important facilitator of what is possible within growing projects. This is to argue that community as an idea acts as a framing device. This is implicit in the organisational rhetoric of developing community, since some overarching notion of what is aimed for resides in this formulation. Facilitation is not a straightforward process however. Cooper (2013) in discussing everyday

utopias describes how there is movement between the imagination and the actualisation of utopian concepts, and describes such motion as an oscillation (Cooper 2013, p.37). Such a mobile metaphor emphasises the dynamic relationship between social ideas and social practices. Similarly, I suggest the ways the connection between community-as-idea and communal practices demonstrate this oscillation through the ways it is disrupted and problematised, creating ambiguities in the way being communal is experienced. Indeed, as the above quote from Polly suggests, community is as conceptually amorphous to respondents, as it is to theorists. I argue that this amorphousness partly stems from the elision of the idea of community, which designates an impossible object but drives action, with the practices that manifest being communal.

In the field, it is often expressed that community is hard to explain, but equally, it is expressed as something simple, it is a thing you experience and feel as much as intellectualise. Respondents referred to the magic of community, and one interviewee noted it was 'quite hard to define prior to having experienced it' (Lauren interview, July 2016). In this sense, community is affective but it is arguably an experience to emotional certainty, of feeling confident in one's place in the community. Belonging is thus naturally opposed to rejection. But this is also about feeling sure of the rules of the space, of its orientation to a culture of being welcome. This culture of being welcome is itself inextricably tied up with the framing of the space as communal. It is also deliberately produced.

Campaigners at the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood acknowledge the role that their deliberate activities have in cultivating that sense of community:



I see the way community has built over the past three years and I think you can actively build a community. And I think it becomes a thing when you have all these connections and you feel, hey can you look after my kids today or, hey can you go and water that raised bed, or you know you've got that very loose network of people in your area or involved with a very specific, maybe not meadow but something else, you know over time and you build it because you grow stronger connections.

(Polly interview, July 2015)

In this sense, being communal, working towards an idea of community, is an intentional process. Although community might operate discursively as an organic formation, or already extant thing (embodied in the village, or the island community), there is a tension between this romantic notion and the deliberate tactics for producing communality. For Polly above, it is about creating 'connections' to others, about being able to ask people to do things and act together with confidence. What comes to be important in this is the creation of a shared imaginary around the idea of community itself. This was illustrated in numerous stories shared with me around how children play in the meadow and how people have almost accidentally come to know each other. Stories were relayed to me by mothers like Janice about being down with her kids and running into Polly who was with a forager. They were invited to join in with what was going on, so learned about things they could eat that were just around the meadow. She then pointed to some giant daisies behind me and says it is possible to eat their leaves, that they taste like celery in fact, and she learned this yesterday. She is enthusiastic about the way this works; the way that they meet people in the space and how the meadow is open to those meetings. She contrasts this with if you went to the park. You would be on your own if you went on your own. But it is different if you are here, she told me, and that is what makes it a community – you are always welcome to get involved.

This sense of being able to get involved and the confidence that was expressed by all participants that they'd be welcome, that they could take part, is a core aspect of what community meant in the research context. This demonstrates the sense-making capacity the idea of community has. If something is related back to the idea of community – a community project, or space – through this understanding it can become more legible in its relations to other spaces. But beneath this idea is also the deliberate production of common moments. In Janice's account, this figures through simple acts of welcome notably by Polly – a key figure in conceiving of and creating the Children's Wood and its ethos of welcome. Common moments occurred often where key figures, such as Polly, organised foraging events, toddler groups and other activities open to whoever is around. As it is practiced, community is grounded in deliberately welcoming behaviour, and this gives the project affective resonance between belonging as a facet of community-as-idea and the everyday practices of communal projects. Participants recognise the projects as a place of potential connection.

The potentiality or partiality of communal behaviour in contrast to community as imagined is demonstrable in the way that the community idea was problematised and excused in its absence. In this sense, oftentimes participants talked of the way that the projects were not exactly communities. This was most apparent when the ideational conception of community ran contrary to the experience of communality locally, and particularly in relation to environmental impediments. Ideational community existed in the field similarly to traditional concepts of community as expressed in early sociological explorations of the idea in urban studies (in the works of Simmel, Tönnies and Wirth for example). Urban associations that diverge from the village idyll and more closed ideas of community create questions for

respondents around whether they are or are not part of a community. In this, it is possible to locate a tension in the oscillation between communal practices and community-as-idea. Conversations at the North Kelvin Meadow tended to counter-pose community in the city against an idealised community.

Interviewing Toni, a home-schooling mother of three who coordinated the toddler group for a while, she mentioned how she thought community in the city has fuzzier edges, is less 'pure' as she puts it:

I think community is a hard one, especially in the city... it probably means something different to communities in some kind of pure sense like I don't know, an island community or a village community.

(Toni interview, July 2016)

Associations of community as an idea resonate poorly with some aspects of the city as it is imagined, a place of contact and disunity, unlike the distinct communities Toni cited. The assumption is one of automatic unity, of pure connection, that produces a kind of solidarity not reproducible in the city. In this way, the holism of community-as-idea runs into contradiction with everyday communal practices.

In part, this is scalar. This could produce scepticism among respondents such as Michael, an older member of the committee. Michael's standpoint was that community was a matter of opinion, noting that anything from the family to a country could be considered a community, under the right circumstances, thus concluding: 'Community is kind of an esoteric thing' (Michael interview, July 2016). Indeed, Michael did not see the meadow as a community at all, seeing the question as somewhat beside the strategic point of saving the space. From his perspective, Michael pragmatically avoids the question of whether the meadow could rightly be a community, and sees the ambiguities of the question as besides the point: the point here being resisting housing

development on the site. This problematisation of community in Toni and Michael's accounts demonstrates a broader point. There is a space between the way community works as an idea, and the way that practices of being communal fall short of that impossible ideal. Such reflexive accounts of community are suggestive of the oscillation Cooper (2013) describes, a questioning of the imagined community and its applicability in the context of the meadow.

This worked similarly at Woodlands Community Garden. There was ambivalence in terms of whether participants felt the space could or should be called a community. Opinions in the Woodlands Community Garden tended to go between staunch defence of the space as more than a garden, but a *community*; to those who were less certain about designating the garden a community. For example, Daniel was involved in the early days of the site, but moved away for a few years and has only just returned to Glasgow. On his return, he was unsure as to whether Woodlands was a community to him and his family. This did not mean he questioned that Woodlands was a place where people would get to know you. But crucially he was not sure if that was community, or perhaps for Daniel, not community *yet*. This is of course partly about time – Daniel and his family have only been back in Glasgow, and back in the garden, for a few months. It is early days for him and his family – he has not build up emotional confidence in the garden as a space, although his memories of the place suggest it can be a place to be known. Community-as-idea again is disrupted by the fluidity and temporality of contemporary life. It destabilises the way participants connect the idea of community to the practices they engage in, sometimes disrupting it entirely. Despite then aiming for community, there is a suggestion in this that participants are aware of the shortcomings and difficulties of having a stable community. Daniel's discomfort with calling Woodlands a community then perhaps mirrors Toni's

at the meadow – they both reflect a lack of unity or purity in calling either space a community, which they would expect from ideational notions of villages as the ideal of community. Interruptions in the temporal continuity of Daniel’s participation in communal activities interfered with how easily he felt he could connect such activities to a putative notion of community, to community-as-idea. It suggests too that community-as-idea is imagined as continuous in time and place.

Geographic proximity to the project was important in how the resonance of community-as-idea with communal practices was disrupted, alongside a sense of neighbourhood boundary. It introduced a level of uncertainty around who was and was not part of the project. Notional boundaries between Woodlands and Park (two adjacent neighbourhoods in Glasgow city) held an important barrier for one gardener. Whilst Park and Woodlands bound each other, Park is for the large part wealthy with large houses, well maintained, and a plethora of private gardens, despite bounding the Kelvingrove Park. Contrarily, Woodlands is a neighbourhood notable for its interstitiality and a large Scottish Asian population. Chloe, who lives in Park, noted that she and her family do not feel like they are part of the community, having not spent enough time down at the garden. I run into her a number of times in the garden, sometimes with one or other of her children. She has a rather prominent raised bed, right in the centre of the garden, but although she feels social pressure to maintain it, she was not sure she was a part of the community at Woodlands. She did though say she felt part of a community project, asking me if that made sense. Like Daniel then, the time spent at Woodlands impacted on the sense of community, disrupting Chloe’s comfort with the idea of having spent enough to call herself part of Woodlands’ community. But because they do not live in Woodlands, she felt took them outside of the community.

The idea of being 'outside' the community emphasises a geographical sense of the project's scope. Described by Madden (2014, p.472) as 'inherently political and often conflictual', neighbourhoods are not set or given spaces within the city. Further, clear boundaries are not always possible, due to this contested sense of what the neighbourhood is and where it ends. This questions the possibility in the urban of the purity Toni expressed – and disrupts a clear connection between idealised community as a frame and the practices present. Imagined geographical boundaries create a particular tension for Woodlands in that they are based and named after a distinct area of Glasgow, yet they include in their project many from further afield, blurring the geographic distinction that the nomenclature assigns the project. The distinction between a community in a 'pure' (ideational) sense and a community project in its messiness is an interesting one because it again highlights the gap between practical experience and the ideal. It reaffirms the sense of 'inoperability' that Nancy (1991) discussed, and highlights the discontinuity between how community was respectively imagined and experienced. This contains the kernel of a romanticised *Gemeinschaft* in the way that people respond to questions of community (Tönnies 1955). Yet the activities and attitudes that are referenced in terms of forming community are practices of relying on one another and sharing, of growing together and developing trust. That is, there are practices of being communal that underpin and support the self-definition of a project as a community. These are important in understanding what precisely is enabled by the category of community, and will be explored below through the ideas of being known, non-committal friendships and practices of care.

## **Connecting through community at the meadow**

Being communal was found in three main practices that were identifiable across both case studies. In a sense, they are interconnected by relation to the core idea of community itself as a space of belonging, but they also create the foundation for claims that community exists in these places. Firstly, this involves being known. This entails overcoming the dynamics of other city dwellers as strangers. But it operates at a specific level which might be best designated by the notion of ‘non-committal friendships’, a term I borrow from Samantha, a raised bed gardener at Woodlands. These friendships operate without the close intimacy of kinship or deep knowledge of each other’s problems and feelings, instead focusing on daily lives and challenges. Non-committal friendships are based in the present – rather than rooted in a sense of personhood over time. This echoes Talja Blokland’s (2017) inclusion of fleeting encounters and practices of non-intimacy as part of community as an enacted culture. Nevertheless, being known yet at a distance does not preclude the third important practice here: the practice of care. An automatic connection was made by some participants between community and care, as intertwined by definition. These practices enable and build social connections, curated under community-as-idea.

The most basic practice that is enabled by the idea of community is experienced as simply being known. It is connection, in its foundational sense. Despite participants describing the myriad ways in which community is impeded, the projects both embodied certain ways of valuing communality and association. Being known fulfils an important role in social support and giving a sense of belonging. It creates legibility too in the imagination of the neighbourhood, or at least a small slice of it, as it becomes mapped out in connections as well as streets. The idea of being known and the link to the neighbourhood was often counter posed against the city itself. This was neatly

illustrated when a local TV station interviewed one of the dads involved in the campaign to save the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood:

Interviewer: So as a local resident is, is this kind of like the heart of your community and life in this area?

Bob: Yeah, it really is the absolute heart, especially as being a parent you get to know other families and their kids. Because often it can be [hard], even although it's a very friendly area, it won the best neighbourhood, the West End of Glasgow, last year, best neighbourhood in the UK

(Field recording, July 2015)

As Bob highlighted, even within the 'best neighbourhood' in the city, local people still benefit hugely from knowing people at the meadow. There is a deliberate cultivation of this 'get[ting] to know' that Bob talks about and it is explicitly linked the idea of community, indeed the two mutually enforce each other.

Yet being known, particularly in a neighbourly sense, was often expected by participants to be largely organic, in the metaphorical sense of emerging spontaneously and artlessly from contact with others. Thus, when Dana, a raised bed grower, was interviewed at the North Kelvin Meadow, she was 'hoping it would be like, you know, I'm gardening here, someone else is gardening there, we would start talking' (Dana interview, July 2015). Whilst this is a specific example about gardening, it contains a wider point about association by proximity, being in the same place at the same time, and the assumed naturalness or unprompted nature of such associations. As noted above however growing was not a particularly successful means of connecting at the meadow. Dana's hopes for connection through growing went in this



case unfulfilled, but her notion that becoming known would be a spontaneously occurring process was not unfounded.

A source of such connection, and indeed a highly rhythmic way of becoming known, is to walk a dog on the meadow at the same time daily. For some dog walkers, there is an attraction in coming to the same place everyday because of this social aspect. One dog walker, Joan, noted that she placed value in seeing the 'bunch of people that come here at regular times' (interview, July 2015), as much as in the ability to walk her dog at the meadow or the space itself being bucolic. The dogs too become known to each other and, contemplating a move further afield, Joan expressed worry about her dog missing the other dogs at the meadow. She did admit some level of projection in this, but assured me that becoming known was not just for adults – it is about children, dogs and plants too. Indeed, for those like Natalie who live locally but do not have a dog, coming down to the meadow is a means of getting to know canine friends without having to look after one herself.

Being known however is a specific kind of intimacy – one without a great deal of focused attention or emotional connection. A distant kind of intimacy was often found at the North Kelvin Meadow. Another dog walker, Hannah, comes down most days in the evening. She described the level of intimacy at the meadow as meeting brilliant people, but not intense friendship. Hannah comes to the meadow around 5pm. She sees the same people most days coming down after work. Although it is not a close emotional connection that builds between dog walkers, Hannah explained she likes meeting all the people and their dogs. At the meadow, she told me, you get to meet people's families too – so it is not just this neighbour, but her daughter sometimes, occasionally someone's mum too. The projects studied offered this kind of loose social contact creating modest connection, not intense friendship; a web

of contact, but without for most a deeply emotional contact, however much they might enjoy that connection. Importantly however this is deeply subjective.

Some people feel much closer to the projects than others. Caitlin talked at length about the friendships she built in the meadow and how her and her child, Jim, have found their lives changed by the meadow and its friendships:

And the fact that you can just even while away a few hours with likeminded people, people who want to bring up their child not locked away in doors, not locked away in the classroom, not being fearful of adults you know because there's a lot of, I feel now that you can't really, you know, if there's an older guy talking to your kids, it's like, oh my gosh, what's he doing? You can't – whereas in here, it's different dads play football with the kids. Like Jim really loves Ivan because he builds fires with them and Jim has really made good friends in here and I've made really good friends, like Toni and Ivan, and Margot and just everybody really and it's just, they're all different people with all different jobs and people can just come together and em as I say just the one thing I think with the Children's Wood is freedom. Freedom for Jim and also freedom from em worry for me, freedom from worry for him.

(Caitlin interview, 2016)

What Caitlin captures is how connected she feels to others in the space through a shared sense of wanting to let their child play outdoors. She brings up the way the space has intergenerational contact, so you do not worry if 'an older guy [is] talking to your kids' and families play together. She notes too specific people with whom she is close - particularly Ivan, Toni and their children. Outside of the meadow, she knows various parents through the local schools but their friendships are bolstered and continued through playing at the meadow, having barbeques and intermingling. For Caitlin, the meadow is a space of friendship and freedom, a place where she meets old and new friends

and shares an enjoyment of the outdoors. In this way, the meadow for Caitlin is a space of intense and non-intense friendships. Being communal at the meadow is therefore a contextually specific phenomenon, varying depending on participants' networks and friendships. Despite the subjective variability in the experience of projects, particularly here as expressed in their relation to intimacy, a sense of being known as a non-committal phenomenon nevertheless permeates as a general baseline.

Participants' connection to each other is enabled by their imagination of community. This enables practices of care at both projects. Tronto (1993) sees care as a 'species activity' carried out to make our world liveable, that Crossan et al. (2015) connect to the learning and social connection found in community gardens. In this study, practices of care were demonstrated in an extension of a sense of 'we', and a willingness to invest in getting to know each other. At the North Kelvin Meadow, Lauren exemplifies this:

It's about a connection... I very much feel a part of a local community that is reciprocal and supportive and respectful of difference, I guess.  
(Lauren interview, July 2015)

In being communal, participants can approach each other with needs, and expect them to be 'reciprocal'. Community organises this mutuality and responsibility. Natalie found this support in being able to ask people to do things for her. In her work with the Children's Wood around events, she found that she associated a 'sense of community' with asking for help:

What do I mean about the sense of community? [pause] I think quite often we're having to ask people to do things for us, so even just can you go and boil me some kettles of water. You're, I guess for me on some level it means just being forced out of myself and working more closely with your neighbours.  
(Natalie interview, June 2016)

The sense of giving and receiving support is a key part of both field sites, in that it enables this sense of 'being forced out of myself' that Natalie describes. It ranges from the practical to the emotional, and covers different levels of need.

Supporting each other is in this way part of the ethic at the meadow. It goes beyond simply knowing people to what David called 'collective-ness'. This encompasses experiences that are shared:

It's about the larger scale shared experience, yeah, I don't really know any other way to describe it. I think bringing all the different groups together. Now the disparate groups having a shared focus... I think that it's just the collective, the collective-ness.

(David interview, June 2016)

This 'collective-ness' is a practice of care that participants relate back to the idea of community. It allows connection without direct intimacy; it creates a culture of mutual attention to need, practically considered above in Natalie's need for hot water at events. In this sense, it recalls the idea in recent work by Crossan et al. (2015) that care is central to the functioning of community gardens. This draws on the work of Joan Tronto (2013) in suggesting that a caring activity is one that takes care of one's world, and in this what is important is the connection between people that this caring practice facilitates. It is the paying of attention, instead of the practice of anonymity, it is the creation of a 'we' and an inside.

In creating a sense of commonality, sharing is a central practice. The space of the meadow and wood is shared by many groups of people using it for disparate things: dog walking, entertaining toddlers, growing vegetables,

riding BMXs, having barbeques and other activities. The putative equality of all these activities makes it an inherently shared space – it is everyone’s and nobody’s – and this particular relationship will be explored more in depth when talking about land use. That it is defined as a community space, and thus a shared space, meant that practices of care extended to encompass a wide range of people. This is made particularly clear in the relation to littering. The space is never entirely litter free, but in comparison with the nearby Glasgow Botanical Gardens, the minimal litter takes on a significant sense. Terry, while showing round some members of the Green Party, highlighted this.

Walking around the meadow on a mild June evening, Terry points out to the visitors a lack of rubbish. He says that people do not tend to litter much and people often pick up anything they see on the ground. He says the mind-set of kids on the site is interesting: they pick up on the community aspect of it, and instead of dropping things, they hang on to them. Terry points out that there is this sense that if they littered here they would be pissing off their parents. For them, Terry argues, it would not make sense to litter here. One of the visitors, Edie, compares this idea to ‘like littering in your back garden’ in its lack of sense. Terry also makes the contrast with the nearby Glasgow Botanical Gardens where they have eight or nine people employed to keep the space pristine and litter free. Because of a shared relationship to the land and to the people who use it (implicitly absent in his account at the Botanical Gardens), Terry argues people are inhibited from littering because it would not make sense. Setting aside for now the sense of ownership that is undoubtedly important in this specific iteration of community, this highlights the way community as a frame is used to explain a dearth of littering: the resonance of the idea of communal behaviour, of being part of a collective, is argued to work against practices of misuse, like littering and arson. What is overlooked in Terry’s account – and in the perhaps overly positive account of litter free,

non-intense connection – is that litter picking is a common activity before toddler groups. Someone usually checks the area for bottles left behind, cigarette butts or other miscellaneous rubbish before toddlers use it. This is an important grounding to this otherwise glorious vision of communality: it does not truly apply to all equally. This will be explored more in depth later on, but it is however accurate to say that no one was employed to collect litter at the meadow (during the period of my fieldwork) and that littering was at a minimum for those whose parents are involved in the site.

The symbolism of a space designated communal challenges careless behaviour like littering. In this, care is emphasised: care of the space itself and of those using it, although this does tend to be limited by the sometimes-limited imagination of the community. These practices are grounded in the idea of sharing the space and in caring for it and each other. Sharing is a way of engaging with each other, part of a culture shaped by the expectations around the idea of community. Whilst it remains a fuzzy and questionably descriptive object, community is the guiding notion around which these practices of sharing and caring circulate and it rationalises and explains them to respondents. Nevertheless, practices of care are predicated on the interplay of being known and a level of non-intensive intimacy. It presupposes then a level of group formation that will be discussed below.

In embodying practices of care, attention and non-committal friendship, the experience of community projects is in direct contrast with the lived experience of other parts of the city. Similarly to the dynamics at the meadow, participants at the Woodlands Community Garden exemplified this when they gather twice a week to grow together. Discursively, the community garden or meadow were often placed in contradistinction to formal parks or living conditions, as part of the ‘rest of the city’ where it is hard to get to know

people. The garden offers a space in which this is overturned. An illustration of this comes from relations built between people who see each other daily but would not get to know each other without the connection grafted at the community garden. Sukey and Samantha, when they meet in the garden, talk about Samantha's dog training. They see each other every morning around 7am when Samantha takes her dog to the park and Sukey goes to exercise. Before Samantha joined the garden, their daily rituals brought them to the park at the same time, but they remained strangers. The key difference, Samantha tells me, is the garden. There are lots of other people Samantha sees daily that she doesn't get talking to. Because of the connection with the garden site however, Sukey and Samantha have a reason to talk, a place in common to start from. Communal growing forms an alternative way of relating to each other in the space of the city, curated around the idea of community. This notion that the community garden provides Sukey and Samantha with a reason to talk emphasises the way in which community gardening is facilitating, and the keystone in this is the idea of community itself. Orienting to community helps to foster connection between people who might otherwise continue to be strangers in the city. It organises the garden into a space where connection is possible.

Although orientation to an overarching idea of community unites communal practices, they can present a great deal of variability in experience particularly around intimacy. In the cases studied here there were quite diverse levels of contact and intimacy. This varied depending on what was sought, and how proximate to the projects participants were capable of being. It demonstrates the flexibility within community as a framing device, capable in its discursive fuzziness of encompassing a great deal of social meaning. For Fiona, a raised bed gardener who moved to Glasgow a few years ago alone from America, it is a 'great wee community', where she made so many friends. For those like

Fiona who sought deeper connections, it was often possible to make strong friendships, akin to those found by Caitlin at the meadow. For others, however, part of the value of the garden is the shallowness of being known. Samantha appreciates the everyday chatter of the garden, like her connection with Sukey around a similar morning routine. She finds it soothing precisely because you get to talk to people but they do not know you intimately.

Helen: What do you think you get from the garden?

Samantha: More of it, more of the social aspect than the growing and the learning about gardening. I think what I get from it is some space and some time out and some fresh air and nice chats with people when it's needed. But sometimes I don't realise I need it and I go and it's almost like therapy for me? Not that I have a really tough life compared to some of the people who go but it is like a form of therapy for me.

Helen: What do you think you value most about the social aspect of it?

Samantha: I quite like that a lot of the people I don't even know their surnames and we're not friends on Facebook or they don't really know much about me and it's just like non-committal friendships that I have with people and meeting people when I'm there it's not like, so what university were you at?

(Interview, April 2016)

There is a level within the garden of what Samantha calls 'non-committal friendships' that refers to people you are co-present with regularly, but who aren't 'friends on Facebook' or close friends. That friendly but not intense conversation can, as Samantha suggests, be a balm, when found alongside pleasant growing activities. This light social activity gives a sense of contact without emotional exposure. There is a specific tone that being known then has in the context of a community project. It also highlights that proximity to the project can be emotional as well as physical. Whereas some participants



talked about the geographic bounds of community, Samantha's distance is emotional. This distance is about maintaining a comfortable level of intimacy, embodied in non-committal friendships. Nevertheless, the distant intimacy of the communal growing project is simultaneously maintained alongside practices of care.

For those involved in projects at Woodlands such as building raised beds or other physical furniture, people's health was often taken into consideration. Care was taken to make sure no one hurt themselves during physically taxing tasks. Adam was a regular at the garden during the fieldwork, and was very keen on building garden furniture and other structural tasks. Adam was also in physical recovery from a serious accident. This often meant doing lighter tasks and being checked up on, to make sure he was working within his physical capacity. After one particularly exerting task, Adam had to keep sitting down and it was the garden worker, Jen, who looked out for him. She repeatedly told him to be careful, checking that he was able to do the things he offered to do and that he would let her know if it was too much. The care for each other is key here in understanding how checking in and being careful are important facets of being communal.

An aspect of caring is manifested in directly sharing physical goods. Inherent in this is an extension of ownership, which I will discuss in more depth in later chapters. But in sharing seeds and attention, gardeners affirm a shared orientation to community. Particularly at Woodlands, surplus is shared, and this sharing provides a way of taking part in the communal life of the project. On one day in May, both the raised bed gardener Pete brought leftover seeds for the communal group, and Eloise had brought sunflower seedlings. Eloise left some specifically for fellow gardener Ethel, but also placed some around the garden since, as she told me, she had too many herself. As with intimacy

then, this can be variable – sharing can be specifically between two gardeners, or it can be general, like Pete sharing his seeds with all. Nevertheless, it was common practice to share what one had in surplus. Indeed, some of the gardeners are enthusiastic sharers of produce. In conversation with Ethel, I am told about her courgettes and how she has promised them to various people but she is going to have to check she has not accidentally over stretched herself. Given the largely symbolic quantities of produce grown in the garden, this sharing is a means growers have to invite others to be involved in their ethical labour, to reconnect themselves with ideas of land and community.

A notable node for sharing at Woodlands is the Community Café. Produce from the Woodlands Community Garden is used to support the café that runs weekly. Unlike the direct peer-to-peer sharing exemplified by Ethel, this is at a much broader neighbourhood level. Each Monday thirty to fifty people sit and eat a free vegetarian meal together (although after 2016, this model shifted to pay as you feel, rather than free). Through eating together, boundaries between waged and unwaged, or mentally well and unwell, can be eroded. This can be difficult for some participants to get their heads around early on, but it becomes a practice that allows them to embody the values of the project. Cormac came along to the café to facilitate the attendance of the homeless men he works with. He reflected on how his attitude shifted after coming along a few times. Cormac used to come along but not eat, he told me one evening at the cafe: because he has a wage, he can afford to eat. But he was cajoled into eating and now understands that that is part of the point; that eating together is what makes this a nice place to be, that no one is outside of that, waged or otherwise. He also talks about the way that he gets this real ‘community-feeling’ from the place and this stretches beyond the few hours that people are gathered here. In this way, sharing can be a way of connecting

equally between people, a way of producing that community-feeling Cormac discussed and broadening too a sense of welcome to everyone in attendance. At both sites then communality is reproduced in relation to three things: practices of attention (or being known), non-committal friendship, and practices of care. These are made sense of with reference to the overarching frame of community. It is through an understanding of communal space that people become more than strangers, yet because of the mundanity and intermittency of contact, intimacy need not be intense and a level of privacy can be maintained. Interestingly, this latter does not seem to interfere too far in the extension of practices of care, extended as they are along universal ideological lines. This interplay of communality and inclusion also plays out in tensions around group formation.

## **The problem of inclusivity and openness**

Within the idea of community there is a tension between projects' commitment to inclusivity and the need for stability and coherence. This latter is particularly important in creating the grounds for intimacy and care described above. Both projects explicitly embrace the rhetoric of openness, welcoming everyone into this web of care and its practices. This presents practical issues around the meaning of a truly open community that relate back to the foundations of urban sociology. Simmel introduced the idea that becoming blasé is how we cope with the scale of the urban, and accepting anonymity is a key aspect of that attitude (Simmel 1971). Yet opening up community to everyone, as the open projects rhetorically do, raises the Simmelian issue of how it is possible to sustain attention and intimacy at that size or indeed in the face of the likely turnover of people. Neither project of course operates at the extreme, yet a central value held by both projects is the idea of being 'inclusive' often voiced as this rhetorical sense of being for anyone and everyone. At its heart this is about a sense of social justice and

equality. The incompatibility at the logical extreme of openness and communality is not however a criticism. Rather, it is an explanation of productive tensions that arise around the boundaries of the projects studied here.

The sites embody their openness in physical practices. Neither site has locked gates barring entry to the area although they do have storage areas without public access. This is the case all year and all times of day and night. During gardening sessions at Woodlands, visitors would walk in off the street and Jen, who usually was working the sessions, would show them around or discuss gardening concerns with them. One lady came by from Kilmarnock, outside Glasgow. She used to live locally so knew of the site and on returning to Glasgow for a visit, told Jen and I how she used to pop in for inspiration. On the day of her visit, she was seeking information on what to plant now for her own communal garden back home. Jen showed her various seedlings and talked to her about planting salads. After the lady left, Jen told me she often has people coming in, wanting gardening tips or simply to explore. Being open to visitors and strangers is an ordinary aspect of daily life in the garden, as Jen notes. Woodlands Community Garden as landowner often has to defend this idea. During a training course around community gardening skills, Mark mentions that apples are pulled off the trees by local children before they are ripe. The children use them as projectiles. A participant in the course, Harry, asked if they could just build a fence to keep the garden safe from such intrusions. Mark's reply is that the garden is supposed to be open to everyone. The interesting rejection of safe in favour of being open is a reflection of a will to include, rather than to shut people out.

Thus openness works on two levels. It is inherent in the material practices of not closing off the space, having no large fences or padlocks to keep people

out. It is also vital to the imaginary of the projects and while it is about the ability of anyone to walk in off the street, it deliberately includes *all* people. During the early stages of my research at Woodlands, participants made this very clear to me. Drinking tea in the hub building with Cathy, Eloise and Jen, we got talking about who comes along to the garden. They say it is open, everyone is welcome. Cathy then takes a few minutes to make very broad brush but emphatic statements about how that means *everyone*, including those that might find it harder to fit in to another kind of project. In this sense, Jen says it is a public space, and it is for anyone who wants to use it, whether passer by or regular gardener. The emphasis on everyone and being public space demonstrate a non-specific commitment to inclusion, generically defined. As a result, openness is a second important ideational foundation of the garden.

For the meadow, the physical openness complements their notion as socially open, although there it leaves them open to vandalism and public drinking. Both of these activities occur occasionally. The two case study sites have found this to some extent, but locking the spaces up would run against the core notion of being inclusive and open to all. At the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood, Rachel finds herself often reiterating that, 'No, no, we don't lock it, there's no gate!' (Rachel interview, July 2016). To lock the gate (if it had one) would physically exclude people from using the space and this runs contrary to the aims of the Children's Wood. At the meadow locking up is also not an option because they do not own the site, although they do tend to keep tools and equipment in a locked shed on the site.

Nevertheless, there are activists regularly state the importance of this meadow space being open to everyone:

It's just trying to make the space as accessible to everyone. That's my motivation to try and, you know, it's everybody's space.

(Polly interview, July 2015)

I think it's really up for anyone 99 to 6 months old.

(Terry interview, July 2015)

Again, 'everyone' is welcome; it is for 'anyone'. This egalitarian idea – that openness is about the inclusion of all, not just those who are close to the space – is one however that requires a closer interrogation. It runs into difficulty conceptually when one considers the sustainability of a truly open community – how much sense would a completely open community make? Would it continually expand, or does openness denote departure as well as entry? If the constitution of a community changes, is it a community? Is it the same, or a different community? That openness seems to some extent to contradict the idea of a single, continuous community is also reflected in the contrary practices of closure and boundary making also discovered in the field. In this, there is a sense in which whilst nominally open to everyone, there are practices of closure within the everyday lives of the projects that act as boundaries around who gets to be community.

## **A community within a community**

At both field sites there is a core group that might be considered at the centre of the organised practices. This is to some extent a relationship to the space-time of the projects; it benefits those positioned as carers (mothers, care workers), and those out of work for a time or who work flexible or non-standard hours. Despite their often under-valued position in the wider social milieu, at Woodlands it is easy to see them as forming a core of volunteers and regular gardeners who attend growing sessions. Entry into this group as a

volunteer is straightforward, but to gain a raised bed, participants have highlighted how useful it is to have shown dedication to the project. In one interview, Samantha (a raised bed gardener occasionally given work by the garden) was quite open about the existence of a core group:

I dunno just because we only had a certain amount of spaces on [a course], it kind of felt quite like ooh I'm sort of *getting in there* a bit...

I think they're not like emm rude to new comers at all but yeah I think you need to give something to get something back from them. Definitely.

(Samantha interview, April 2016, italics added)

The allocation of raised beds highlights the importance of this integration, of 'getting in there' in Samantha's terms. Although there is a formal waiting list, the allocation of beds is not a straightforward process. In giving raised beds to people, it is not just about who is on the list. Woodlands value those who have given time to the garden and shown a willingness to come down and get involved. This was explained to me in conversation with a member of staff over an abandoned raised bed. I asked who would get the bed, I was told there is a waiting list and a few people on it have already been contacted. It is a delicate process, she tells me, because you have a list for a reason, but some of these people have not been down to the garden before so it is weird to give them a raised bed. She tells me too, it is better to give them to people who have come down before at least, or better yet, volunteered for a while, because then you know they are likely to actually keep the bed up and use it, rather than leave it abandoned like this one has been. She adds that some people just take up space on the list – they put their name down and then you do not ever hear from them again.

This idea that it would be weird to give a raised bed to someone who had not been along before implies a sense of the outsider, but it is also underpinned by the pragmatic considerations of keeping the garden in use, rather than having beds abandoned. When Samantha gets her raised bed a month or so after the above encounter, she relates this back to the work she has done in the garden, saying it was a combination of 'nagging' and 'consistent volunteering'. It underlines this facet of the garden's culture: having a raised bed is known to be about putting work in, to those initiated.

There is an understanding of this insider dynamic that protects to some extent the longevity of the project by allowing raised beds to those who have shown commitment. This is not of course the only aspect of that 'delicate process' but it is a nod to the need for some stability in the garden in order for any kind of continuity. To some extent this need to prove yourself to enter the inner core reflects something other gardeners have mentioned, particularly the idea that raised bed gardeners are separate and more deeply committed to the garden. Cathy tells me that the raised bedders (as they are often known) are a community within a community. They have a vested interest in the garden in a more direct way, she tells me. For Cathy, the raised bedders *are* the garden. This sense of the raised bedders harks to an inner group that is reliable. They turn up to the garden and its events. It is a common phraseology that it used to designate a particular set of gardeners: those in a rent agreement with the Woodlands Community Development Trust. Notably for Cathy, this is a more concentrated version of the broader community. That this core is bounded and reliable suggests that replicable group formation is at the heart of community-as-imagined.

However, this core does not easily map onto raised bed gardeners directly. Those who are less able to regularly attend growing sessions and do not make



it along to social gatherings are not really part of this group, though they still have a material proximity to the project (assuming they maintain their raised bed). As such, analytically there are two centres to the Woodlands Community Garden – one consisting of those who are there regularly, raised bed or otherwise, and one consisting of raised bed gardeners, a more imagined community (in Anderson's (2006) sense), who together represent those who are committed to the project.

As a result, at the Woodlands Community Garden, there is some closure within their practice of communality, the creation of the group closest to community conceptualised as an impossible stable object. It has a few in-groups, although the relations between people make this boundary fuzzy, not least the overlap between raised bed gardeners and regular users of the garden makes the distinction analytic as much as empirical. What the distinction really emphasises is the peripheral status of some of the raised bed gardeners rather than the separation of the two cores. What closure suggests is a limit: a boundary around who gets to be in that inner group, to maintain it as a more concentrated community within a community. There is a logic of sustainability here – those who have proven themselves committed are more likely to get a raised bed, but it creates a tension against the idea that the community project is open to all. It recalls sociological works that emphasise the boundaries of community (Cohen 1985; Belton 2013; Fraser 2013), but introduces a distinct blurriness around not only the edges but also around whether there is one consistent group at the centre that we might call the 'community within a community'.

At the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood this centralising tendency plays out in a different way. It is more fragmentary and distinct, and this suggestively mirrors the greater ambivalence on site about the existence of

community. There is already a bifurcation when one considers the existence of two separate charities that are acting in the space, not always in exact concordance. While the North Kelvin Meadow group are interested in conservation of the space, growing and tending the meadow, composting and the raised beds; the Children's Wood has been more interested in developing community activities and children's events, although their interest in the raised beds and growing does often overlap with the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign's. This bifurcation however can be overplayed: the North Kelvin Meadow group has been in slow decline in its presence in the space. People have left the campaign (some through simply leaving the area) and the rising momentum of the Children's Wood tended to draw in new activists.

Nonetheless, there are a number of different centres to the Children's Wood, not only the committees and activities there, but also the playgroups. For committee member, David, community means parents of other children around his child's age, and then there are more peripheral aspects:

Helen: For you, who is the community?

David: There's kind of the social aspects, which is mainly with other parents who are mainly kind of [his daughter's] friends age. So that's kind of the core of the community that I know but through that then, I've met other dog walkers, gardeners, all the other groups that kind of use the land. So I am aware of the wider community but I don't necessarily engage with it too much.

(David interview, June 2016)

Dog walkers (part of what David calls the 'wider community' for him) are regularly present in the space but are somewhat separate from the more formalised uses represented by the campaigns. They constitute a secondary core, less organised but highly present in the space. Dog walkers are often

around at similar times and usually daily, giving a kind of structure around which their interactions fall. Early mornings and evenings around 5 to 6pm are times it is common to see many dog walkers, plus a smaller clustering around lunchtime. However, their activities are sometimes separate from those of the official campaigns. Although dog shows sometimes feature at Children's Wood events, there is often a separation between the Children's Wood activities and the dog walkers. After a dog show at an event in summer 2016, the dog walkers move off to just past a copse in the middle of the meadow, sitting themselves on sawn off logs and chatting, still in the space but distinct from the rest of the Children's Wood event. Their physical distinction – sitting away from the gala day activities – demarcates an important sense of difference. This distinction can extend to tensions between the groups. Joan is a member of the Children's Wood committee, often having a craft stall at events, but she also has a dog. She explained that while both groups are present in the space, there is more tolerance than mixing:

Certainly not most of the dog walkers I don't think are involved. I think one of Polly's neighbours' children helps out and she's one of the dog walkers... I wouldn't say there was tension between them, but you do sometimes get children saying to dog walkers, what are you doing here? This is our Children's Wood... And I think there are a couple of people that aren't into kids, so I'm not going to pretend it's a nice harmonious, but in general it works quite well. Different groups tolerate each other.

(Joan interview, June 2015)

This sense that they 'tolerate' each other, that they exist alongside but do not mingle, gives a second centre, alongside the official Children's Wood activities. Since growing has not flourished as a communal activity at the meadow, it does not represent a focal point for the creation of an in-group, although this absence was noticed by participants and often bemoaned.

It is suggestive to compare the projects because although both have arguably two centres to their activities, they align differently. There is one central (if blurry) group at Woodlands made up of people that fall into at least one of two camps that greatly overlap – those who volunteer regularly and those who have a raised bed. At the North Kelvin Meadow, there are two separate activities that align people to at least two different centres, although there is as ever overlap between the groups, friendship and even cohesion. No one wants to see the space destroyed and it brings people into greater alignment as a result. But because the central orienting feature of the meadow is the space itself rather than a specific activity, the communal practices are more fluid, and less coherent than those at the Woodlands Community Garden. This could lead to reflections on whether community exists there or not. However, I propose instead that community's lack of replicable social form relates to the way that it refers to a socially constructed but practically impossible idea, and the ways in which community-as-idea is destabilised by other crosscutting ideologies and practical conditions.

## **Conclusions**

The central tension in the case studies between openness and closure highlights a tension at the centre of their communality. This tension produces complexity around how community is discussed and a great deal of reflexivity amongst participants around what community means in any given context. It also highlights a problem with the concept of community. Both case studies self-define as communities, and try to balance an ideal of being open and inclusive, against some kind of stability and continuity. As constant reflections on the difficulties building community and the barriers to being involved in one attest, stability and coherence are always interrupted. This relates directly

to Nancy's (1991) argument that community is in some sense impossible ('inoperable' in his term).

To see community practices as involving processes of closure or group formation is complicated by the ideological attachment of the projects to openness and inclusion. While group coherence does need a process of closure, it remains important that it is not necessary for being communal to be being closed off. In this, it is possible to agree with Belton (2013) that community practices *can* be a process of retreat from difference. But, as these case studies attest, it need not *automatically* be so. Literatures that deal with more closed cultures as gypsy traveller groups, as Belton is, are often dealing with identity groups in the urban context, and basing an understanding of the phenomenon that gets called community on this context leads to a particularly closed reading of communal practice. Such a reading is disrupted by inclusive ideology in the context of Glaswegian growing projects.

The case studies then highlight key aspects of community-as-practice as it emerges here. As explored above, for community organisations to have cultural continuity and a sense of coherence, they require some level of closure. However, this is interrupted by the central ideologies that the groups orient to, creating tensions and a sense of community's impossibility as a concrete social form. Openness and multiplicity introduce not inconsistency so much as pressures away from that tendency to closure. This does not necessarily nullify claims to be a community so much as suggest the concept of community does not signify much analytically other than a weak tendency to group formation. A thorough exploration of the practices involved is useful in telling us about the ramifications of this. In this research, a certain orientation to openness appears to shape the exclusions that emerge from those practices. In this, there is a careful distinction between practices of closure and social

exclusion. The former are helpful in cultural continuity amongst growers, but the second need not be an automatic extension of group formation. The crucial question here is who gets to be part of the community, and who does not? What relationship practices of closure have to broader social hierarchies and class structures are essential to understanding the ambiguity of the closure in communal growing. This is not then to say communal growing excludes and should not, but to say all practices of group formation creates a category of non-group, so one ought to explore who is inside and who is outside of that group.

Despite these contradictions, as an idea community remains important. It allows the space to be designated in a certain way, to produce certain kinds of behaviours as a counterpoint to say, economic rationality. This allows practices to emerge – such as sharing resources – which contrast with how participants behave elsewhere in the city. While conceptually community may be muddled and designate little, it plays an important practical role in symbolising space for gifts, for caring and for being known, for being communal to thrive. This manifests through the vacillation between community as a guiding idea and the practices in which it is grounded, and which are deliberately pursued in order to produce communality. The outcome of this analysis is not only the need for an analytical separation between community-as-idea and communality-as-practice, but also three major social behaviours that make up the latter across the two projects. Discussed in depth above, these were being known, non-committal friendship and practices of care. They form the baseline for communality and, in doing so, also give a baseline from which to discuss the ways that communal growing projects intersect with dynamics of inclusion, urban development and politics in the chapters to follow.

## Chapter four:

# The making and unmaking of difference

Who gets to be a part of the community is a meaningful question in the context of communal growing, not least because of the local associations of the middle class with growing in the global North. As with many easy criticisms, this belies a more complex social picture and one I want to explore in depth in this chapter. Both case studies express their wish to be places of openness and support this with practices to encourage a broad range of people to engage with their projects. The projects operate within a paradigm of inclusion, which stretches to an awareness of privilege. This translates though into a limited field of action, restricted by funding, bureaucracy and time. This fundamentally shapes their practice of communality. In order to explore what community means in this context, I ask in this chapter: who is encompassed when the idea of inclusion is evoked? This builds on the notion of communal practices producing social boundaries as discussed in chapter two. This chapter aims to take this further and situate this boundedness within concrete practices of inclusiveness, as well as the social construction of vulnerability and broader structural exclusions. This chapter asks which exclusions are challenged and unmade; and which are sustained, or remade in new ways? This encompasses various axes of difference through class, ethnicity and race, disability, culture and gender, although it starts inductively from the practices of inclusion themselves. While my argument here does not draw explicitly on one theoretical position, it necessarily encounters the intersectionality of exclusions, as categories of vulnerability and identity are made and remade. Within the context of the social construction of categories, this is to explore the ways in which difference can be unmade, as well as made, to explore the possibility of what Deutsch (2007) refers to as ‘undoing’ categorisation. Deutsch is talking about gender, but within the context of community there is a commonality carved in group formation that can challenge socially embedded difference and

hierarchy. Thus, as McCall (2005) argues, in intersectional analyses: “The point is not to deny the importance— both material and discursive—of categories but to focus on the process by which they are produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life” (McCall 2005, p.1783).

Inclusion has multiple facets in the context of communal growing projects. It is firstly an ideological commitment, as expressed in the commitment to openness in chapter two, and demonstrated as problematic in situ. Secondly, inclusion confers and reproduces a distinct terrain of difference: one shaped in part by contingent environmental factors such as funding. Thus thirdly, inclusion is a paradoxical practice, remaking difference even as it seeks to overcome it. Fourthly, inclusion is simultaneously made necessary and made problematic through its relationship to austerity politics and particularly the rollback of statutory services that creates a specific milieu in which inclusion is enacted. In this chapter, I explore these facets of inclusion to offer a rich window onto the making and unmaking of difference. As noted previously, community is colloquially as well as conceptually plural. Yet at an organisational level all of the organisations are trying to represent and promote the interests of a group of fairly geographically defined people. In this mission however there are silences – those who are not recognised or represented, who present a disruptive critical mirror to the putative universality of the organisations’ representation. This provides an important insight then into how community is actualised in communal growing projects.

## **Grassroots and questions of representation**

The Woodlands Community Garden, ensconced as it is within the Woodlands Community Development Trust, takes seriously its role in encouraging participation, belonging and inclusion. Talking with one member of staff, it became clear that, to her, this is what community is about: ‘I think it’s a sense of belonging and a sense of confidence of your role within that community that you’re in’ (Holly interview, May 2016). There is a distinct agenda within the Woodlands Community Development Trust that aims not only at involving



residents, but at involving *all* local residents, focusing on those experiencing mental ill health, those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and other underrepresented groups like young people or the elderly. Inclusion practices take a number of forms, including educational programmes run with local schools and partnership work with the Glasgow Old People's Welfare Association (GOPWA), whose offices they share. A mantra often repeated by management and staff is that they put 'community' at the centre of their work. Arguably, the structure of the Woodlands Community Development Trust lends itself to this. The board are local people, and the manager follows their lead:

We are community led, and that is where our priorities remain... it's still quite grassroots-ish in terms of our management board are all local residents, our volunteers are all predominantly local residents.  
(Oliver interview, July 2015)

Oliver, the manager of the Trust, takes pride in the connection the WCDT has to the 'grassroots', which is to say local people from whom it takes its 'priorities'. This connection is established through a board of directors, alongside a volunteer base formed by local people. There is a two-fold movement of ideas here: upward from local residents through meetings with growers and volunteers where possibilities can be mooted; and, similarly, downward from the board. The board supervise the action of the Trust. They supervise Oliver and he requires their permission on budgets, funding applications and new projects, although in practice he has much autonomy in this relationship. When filtered through the machinery of the Trust and its projects, ideas from garden volunteers and from the board (who are also volunteers, although their role is more formalised) are realised in the community café, the garden and the artists' workspaces under development in 2016. Woodlands Community Development Trust takes in this instance a

geographically based notion of what community is, perhaps unsurprisingly given its specific local focus. In so doing, they rely on active participation and it is here that the gap between the Trust and the neighbourhood emerges, through non-participation. Those who live in the Woodlands area and yet do not engage with the Trust's activities become a lacuna in the way that the Trust claim to represent a community, in the singular, unified sense. Nonetheless, as Oliver suggests, they consider themselves 'grassroots-ish', which is to say, that they are closely interwoven into the fabric of life in the neighbourhood.

The Woodlands Community Garden is not simply a group of people working in a local garden. They are also organised in a highly outward looking manner – herbs and salad leaves from the garden go to a community café (also under the umbrella of the Woodlands Community Development Trust), they have worked closely with GOPWA's Fred Patton Centre and local schools to educate people about growing, and they look at many ways to create inclusive settings and learning opportunities. There are also no formal barriers to entry – volunteering is easy and open. This latter is valued by a great many volunteers and raised bed gardeners who speak of the ease of getting involved and their own sense of immediacy of involvement (although this of course has been problematised in chapter three). When speaking of inclusion at the Woodlands Community Garden in 2015, however, an interesting thing would happen. The focus would immediately become one particular gardener who has received attention in local media.

The recurring inclusion narrative is the story of John, whose autism, and speech and learning disabilities, create difficulties for him in communicating with others. After fifteen months volunteering at Woodlands Community Garden, John showed a radical improvement in his speech, his excitement at

gardening and his willingness to share his stories when he got home. John's brother, who is not involved in the garden but visits from time to time, has spoken publicly about how transformative it has been for John to be part of the garden. John's progress resulted from the structure and activities provided twice-weekly at sessions at Woodlands Community Garden, and it garnered the garden accolades for being inclusive. The garden won an award, which led to the press coverage of John's progress. During the first period of research in 2015, when I asked about inclusion, gardeners and staff would all mention John, proud of the garden's inclusive stance.

John himself is enthusiastic about the garden, but reticent. His enthusiasm is demonstrated best by his constancy and his willingness to work. Further, the obvious pride held by gardeners over John's improvement is touching and they want to share the story, often. Indeed John's case is highly visible, making it into the media as well as the minds of those involved in the garden. It makes sense that gardeners' minds focus on John when inclusion is mentioned, and it is a positional good too: it helps the garden gain funding to have a success story like John's to tell. After a while however, I began to find it uncomfortable how quickly the idea of inclusion was linked to John. Consistent singling out of his case as one that exemplifies how open the garden is highlighted his difference from others, confirming in some ways that association of John with the idea of being inclusive, rather than him being just another gardener. In John's case, there is an unmaking and a remaking of his disability. Although not uncontested, the 'social model' of disability suggests that vulnerability is socially constructed (Oliver 2004, Von Benzon 2017), but in the space of the garden vulnerability can be seen to be deconstructed. John is a valued worker and he labours alongside others during the sessions, with small adjustments for his needs such as regular prompts to take toilet breaks. Given the context in which he labours: alongside pregnant women and people in recovery,

amongst others, his needs are catered to along with everyone else's. Nevertheless, because of his specific, visible role as a success story, his vulnerability is remade as a marketing tool and as a badge of honour, repositioning John as different, as *the* story of inclusion. Thus whilst in practice John can be a gardener amongst others, discursively he gets repositioned as vulnerable and different. This highlights a problematic aspect of inclusion as a by-word, particularly as used to promote the garden in the media online and off. It also implicitly emphasises the conceived similarities of the other gardeners, and renders inclusion as something related to disability. For much of the fieldwork, he remained the touchstone – the glowing paradoxical principle of inclusivity. Nevertheless, whilst John was a highly visible case of integrated practice, not all users are integrated into the communality of the garden.

Much of the outreach activity at Woodlands happens outwith normal gardening hours and does not involve integration into the regular gardening. The school programme and work with older adults falls generally outside of gardening sessions. Indeed, Common Knowledge UK (CKUK) – an organisation who work with adults with learning disabilities – for a while were working with a group of men on a Thursday in the garden, separate from regular gardening days. Their funding ran out in late 2015 and was not renewed, so their involvement ceased. Nevertheless, for a period of time a parallel workshop would run weekly at the garden, leaving artworks in their wake. However, their separation from gardening sessions suggests inclusion does not always mean integration. In the case of CKUK, it meant being allowed to use the garden, to get the benefits (often cited) of gardening (see Armstrong 2000) and being outside in nature, but without engaging with local residents. This relates to a parallel horticultural therapy, which is a distinct and specific approach to growing (Sempik et al. 2005; FCFCG 2016). Thus, the wellbeing

uses of the garden are not always synonymous with the communal aspects of the garden, in this case producing separate groupings, and different solidarities in the same space but at different times. This separation of different populations into silos reflects the structure of funding into projects, something to be discussed in depth later. It also highlights a sense that inclusion is about access to growing, rather than about access to communality. Thus, inclusion does not always figure as integration.

Nevertheless, figuring the mental health (or soft-therapeutic) uses of the garden as inclusive has a strong connection to funding, particularly the Scottish Government funding available to Woodlands. That gardening can and should be therapeutic became something of a guiding principle as a result. Since the funding stream sought projects with a mental health element, it influenced the creation of a volunteer training programme in 2015 that featured mindfulness in the garden. As a result, mindfulness continued to be an aspect of the training programme in 2016 and beyond, through repeat access to the same funding stream. Yet mindfulness became a more difficult than expected subject to navigate. Holly, who leads many of the training sessions, noted seriously after one I attended that she had initially thought mindfulness was simply an approach to being present in space, but that some gardeners who attended an external course on mindfulness came back telling her she had been in error. In Holly's case this is in part due to a lack of training: Holly has experience in community development, education work and biodiversity. Yet because of the funding received by WCDT, mindfulness became an aspect of her work.

Creating 'therapeutic' moments within growing emphasises the experience of peacefulness and connection that people can gain from gardening (Armstrong 2000). Yet there is a distinction to be made between such everyday promotion

of wellbeing, and horticultural therapy. Whilst the former is increasingly considered an accidental side-effect of gardening (FCFCG 2016), the latter is a recognised intervention deliberately crafted to improve the lives of participants through engaging in more or less structured projects. Horticultural therapy often targets those with experience of mental ill health, those with disabilities or those who are out of work for long periods of time (although these are not mutually exclusive categories) (see Sempik et al. 2005). The concern is that in targeting the everyday mental health benefits of gardening through references to ‘therapeutic’ aspects of communal growing spaces, it falls on untrained staff to support with people experiencing mental ill health. The way Holly’s role shifted as funding changed is indicative of this issue. It is practically difficult for those untrained in therapeutic approaches to gardening to learn what they should and should not be doing. This is particularly highlighted above in Holly’s account, where she experienced discomfort and lack of knowledge when it came to mindfulness as a practice. It also emphasises the variability of community gardening as a practice and the breadth of projects encompassed by the term (Pudup 2008). Within Glasgow, this is observable in the variability between community gardens that are primarily spaces of shared growing, along a spectrum of increasingly structured volunteering, to those projects that are essentially employability programmes.

However, the increased recognition and promotion of the positive mental health impact of growing raises questions around how mental health support is offered. Indeed, this is a broader concern that relates back to changes in service provision associated with austerity urbanism. The reduction of services in mental health is of particular note, with services often strained (Dooher & Rye 2013). Commentators have noted too how damaging austerity itself is for mental health, creating a circular issue (Mattheys 2015). Such is

the scale of the issue, psychologists organised to oppose austerity and the campaign morphed into Psychologists for Social Change. In a similar vein, some in the broader community gardening scene in Glasgow voiced concerns about taking on mental health care as part of community growing. A garden worker from a community garden in the north of the city worried particularly that it holds the potential to be exclusionary. Eden's concern is that therapeutic growing becomes a system of ticking boxes:

There's a real risk there that it just becomes a place where people go for a short period of time and they take part in some gardening and some horticultural activities and maybe it ticks some boxes in terms of you know it's a therapeutic activity, on paper at least, em but there are places I'm aware of now, that are limiting the amount of time you can spend there, so you can come and take part in our garden but after a year you're out the door because we're getting funding that says that our job is now to get you a job, or to move you along the pathway of employability. There's just all of this rhetoric is coming into play so whilst on paper it may look positive, it may look like people are getting a really great opportunity, something that might be really positive for their sort of mental and physical health, if you shunt someone out of the door, I mean we've got people who come and take part here now, and they come and take part in the drop in activities and yeah starting to become part of the wee community up here that have been shunted out of the door of another project because their year was up, and that was it.

(Eden, community garden worker, interview, June 2015)

As Eden expresses, there is the potential for therapeutic programmes to become limiting – in time primarily, but also in terms of what participants can get out of a garden. The violence of the idea of being 'shunted' out of the door is particularly emotive in this context. This is the broader concern that parallels narratives of co-option in the community gardening literature (e.g. in Rosol 2012). Further, as unqualified and unsupported staff and volunteers are

asked to take on roles that require specialist understandings, it seems pertinent to ask if too much is being asked of communal growing and its participants. In this way, it connects to broader questions raised around the use of non-profits and NGOs to replace ailing welfare systems as funding retracts, for example in post-crisis Greece where homelessness services are often provided by NGOs with private or grant funding, rather than state support (see Arapoglou & Gounis 2015).

Inclusion can be seen in practice to encompass multiple dimensions: beyond a commitment to openness, it also connects to concerns around complicity in governance agendas. This is the spectre of co-option, as discussed in accounts of the neoliberal potential in growing (Pudup 2008; Rosol 2012). This resonates here as Woodlands can be seen as producing an everyday space of care, when the inclusivity practices discussed here meet the caring practices of the projects (as discussed in chapter three). The mundanity of care in this sense has a radical facet in the sense of providing an opportunity for remaking vulnerability, yet it remains closely implicated in the politics of austerity (Power & Hall 2017; Power & Bartlett 2015).

It is notable however that the colloquially therapeutic nature of growing is unavoidable. Regardless of mindfulness' place within the training programme, the calming effects of simply being outdoors and engaging in growing activities are still recognised by those who attend sessions – and it entices in new gardeners. One new attendee, Graham, at the training programme specifically told me that one of his main interests in the garden was as a 'still' place. The garden reminds him of being home while he is in Glasgow for university. While he cannot go home regularly to garden, he can volunteer at the Community Garden and find the same kind of stillness. Graham found the garden relaxing as it settled his mind. This situated soothing is common



among gardeners. In this respect, whilst concerns can be rightly raised about how appropriate it is for community organisations to be engaging in unsupported mental health work, seeing mental health as a potentially exclusionary vector promotes work that seeks to extend that soothing effect. Mental health as an inclusionary concern also foreshadows some of the crosscutting tensions within communal growing around funding and organisational dilemmas discussed below in chapter six.

Commitment to the idea of inclusion is something that can be seen in growers' concern around mental health, but it prompts critical reflection on other axes of constructed difference like ethnic diversity and class. Spending time in the garden often prompted conversations explaining the garden and its culture to me. It was Mark, who sometimes works for Woodlands, who wanted to explain to me the diversity of gardeners found at the site. Mark asked first, if I have noticed, perhaps, how many 'foreign' people get involved in the garden: more so than native Scottish people, or naturalised Glaswegians. Mark reckoned they are just more into nature as a rule and, as Adam comes in at this point, Mark looks to him for back up. Adam agrees and begins talking about a cousin of his who owns a Christmas tree farm in Denmark where he raises chickens and other animals, entirely self-sufficiently. Mark and Adam (two white, Scottish men) talking through foreignness as associated with the garden, raises an interesting point: Eloise is continental European, as is another woman who has been along on this particular day, but everyone else who was there is British. It is curious that Mark's impression of the garden is as such a 'foreign' project. To back up his point, perhaps in response to a sceptical expression on my face, Mark goes on to list a number of nationalities of growers to emphasise this aspect of growing. European is how I would group the nationalities he lists – Icelandic, Danish, French – but he does seem to think they are more involved, more likely to come along and want to

garden. It figures as attitudinal – those deemed ‘foreign’ in this context are seen as more likely to want to be involved. However, this rosy picture is not always borne out in practice and there is a notable whiteness among gardeners.

### **‘Not a race thing, but a class divide’**

Questions around how inclusion figures at the Woodlands Garden are most obvious when considering the ethnic make-up of Woodlands as a neighbourhood against that of the garden. This was echoed in research carried out by Yellow Book, a consultancy company, on behalf of Woodlands Community Garden. They found a mismatch between the ethnic diversity of the area compared to the organisation, something I noted too in the fieldwork. The diversity that exists in the garden is largely European, but the local area has a substantial Asian and Scottish Asian population. In Woodlands, 23% self-describe as Asian or Asian Scottish, with 6% describing themselves as other (ScotStat, n.d.). This is in comparison with the Glaswegian averages of 8% and 3.5% respectively (ibid). Yet there are few Asian or Asian Scottish people engaged with the garden. The proximity of a local mosque (on the same street as the GOPWA building Woodlands Community Development Trust are based in) might seem to lend itself to working in partnership, but there is little connection. Instead, there are hints of local friction. Howard, a volunteer at both case studies in the research, had heard rumours of a disagreement over a gap site Woodlands Community Development Trust have recently taken over for their Workspace project, which he claimed the mosque had wanted for a car park. In describing it however he was not sure if it represented a ‘race thing’ or a ‘class thing’:

Howard: In Woodlands is there not a bit of a, slight race thing. Not a race thing, but a class divide between the garden which is mostly white

people, not only, but then there the – I heard there was a conflict with that space next door? Someone wanted to turn that into, the mosque wanted to, the Imam from the mosque wanted that turned into a car park for the mosque apparently.

Helen: Really?

Howard: Yeah, that's what [a staff member] told me. And the garden wanted to turn it into another garden, so it's like there is some community there and it's contrasting with the white community.

(Howard interview, June 2016)

In moving between class and ethnicity, and suggesting that there is an elision between 'a race thing' and 'a class divide', Howard makes an interesting point. He is trying to establish that there is a serious gap, but is wary of what to call it – moving through the ideas of race, class and coming back to the 'white community'. It is notable that Howard struggles to decide whether class or race is the appropriate frame for this social distinction: an elision between the two suggestive of the intersection of these signifiers. This difficulty in discussing difference recurs through both field sites and there is not an easy language for it. It makes people uncomfortable, as a rule. Nonetheless, as Howard points out, there is a gap between the Woodlands constituency and another putative community based around the mosque (with an assumed cohesion due to religion and ethnicity). What his narrative emphasises above all else are the boundaries of the Woodlands community, and the intersection of class and ethnic difference. This boundary is observable in everyday life on West Princes Street, upon which the Woodlands Community Garden sits.

I noted the gap between life on the street and life in the garden moving along the street itself. Cycling home from the garden, one a summer afternoon, I was prompted to reflect on this as I passed a woman in a headscarf with her daughter, who is also wearing a headscarf on West Princes Street. I pass other

minority groups along the way; more non-white people in cars. But besides a few Asian visitors who dropped into the garden on that day, everyone actually volunteering or along to tend a plot in the garden was white. And yet, the street parallel to West Princes Street holds a row of afro-Caribbean grocery stores and a deli called Lupe Pintos specialising in Mexican food. It is notable that the Community Garden is usually full of white people (even if like Eloise they are European and white). But there is not much engagement with the local Asian people, despite some of the conversations I have had with people about Sukey (who is Asian) and her prowess as a grower, as well as the ways that people from other cultures use food in new and excitingly novel ways (to white gardeners). Raised bed gardener, Samantha, remarked on the absence I noted in an interview, saying she felt there was a difference in levels of involvement between those of different ethnic backgrounds. Having carried out research with a consultant on behalf of the Woodlands Community Garden, Samantha reflected on that discrepancy:

Samantha: But doing the surveys, people of certain ethnicities in this area, they're not interested in the garden.

Helen: Why do you think that is?

Samantha: Em... I don't know. I suppose there's that guy who comes, the guy who grows the artichokes, I don't remember his name

Helen: I know the guy you mean.

Samantha: He's an exception isn't he? But in some of the Asian supermarkets and things, they're not really that interested

(Samantha interview, April 2016)

This does limit the ability of the Woodlands Community Development Trust to say they represent the entire community. From the perspective of the trust, it

raises the question of whether there is much the WCDT can do about that: how can you engage a group of people who are not interested in being engaged? Yet given the versatility of community gardening as a form that in some cases has been suggested to bridge ethnic differences (Langeegger 2013; Crossan et al. 2015; Aptekar 2015), the distance between growing project and the broader neighbourhood constituency seems suggestive of a boundary that excludes those who do not easily fall into the white, educated profile of the average gardener. It echoes, uncomfortably, Schmelzkopf's (1995) assertion that 90% of volunteers in the community growing networks in New York in the 1990s were white, which raised race and class tensions as they tried to encourage gardens in Loisaida. Notably, the organisations Schmelzkopf discusses promoted self-determination amongst neighbourhoods to try to ameliorate social tensions. Similarly, the research mentioned above, by the Yellow Book research consultancy, suggested a need to diversify the board at Woodlands Community Development Trust in order to increase how representative the organisation is, including tapping into different social groups to engage them in the work of the trust. This concern to broaden the board suggests an engagement with the whiteness of Woodlands as a potential problem. One of the recommendations from the Yellow Book report highlights this:

- **greater diversity:** a concerted effort should be made to ensure that the board, staff, volunteers and users of WCDT services match the diversity of the Woodlands community

(Yellow Book report, March 2016, p.44, emphasis in original)

Thus there are distinctive dynamics of difference at Woodlands. Those of Asian or Asian Scottish background are not perhaps deliberately excluded, but they are also not present. The garden is physically open to them but it is also overwhelmingly white, a handful of gardeners aside. In a particularly

ethnically diverse locality, this is an awkward situation for Woodlands – especially as they try to work to challenge some of the issues in the area through, for example, the greening West Princes Street project. This latter project aims to involve local residents in improving the planters and the environment more generally along the street the garden is on. This project however – rooted as it is within a sense of neighbourhood – seems destined to the same partiality unless Woodlands can overcome its cultural whiteness. As noted in the literature, if Woodlands could overcome this partiality, the benefits can indeed be socially transformative (Aptekar 2015; Crossan et al. 2016; Langeegger 2013).

## **Employment, class and capitalism**

The lens of inclusion also opens up the relationship of the garden to formal systems of employment. Firstly, there is a dynamic around what relation the volunteer labour associated with communal growing has to wider systemic devolutions of responsibility to a local level, as a result of reduced state funding for things like local green space up-keep. Analyses by those such as Rosol (2012) and Pudup (2008) offer key critiques of the way the neoliberal agenda can be supported (in muddy ways) by the behaviour of communal growers, through becoming entrepreneurial citizens who fix problems for themselves, or in Pudup's (2008) account through learning appropriate (organic) consumer behaviour. Further, the work that is central to the maintenance of communal green space is voluntary, and therefore unpaid, which raises questions about the value of the work to broader society. Particularly when carried out by those out of work, there are uncomfortable resonances of work-programmes and training people up for employment that fall to community gardens (and indeed discomfort from some community gardeners for the explicit programmes that do precisely this). Yet, the way participants themselves experience the garden and its social relations are as a

phenomenon of value, social contact and often enjoyment. Furthermore, for the Woodlands Community Garden, this analysis does not account for the subjective experiences that the garden offers respite from: specifically the benefits systems, and difficult physical and emotional recoveries.

An interesting example of the garden as a site of respite, although by no means the only one, is the story one participant, Adam, shares with me about his reasons for being along on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons. Gardening is a form of physical rehabilitation for Adam after suffering extensive injuries but it serves a great deal more purpose than physiotherapy. Adam was involved in a serious accident that made the news across the country. Although it was over a year and a half ago from the accident to his telling of it, he is still in physical recovery and regularly sees a physiotherapist. Being involved in the garden for him is a useful form of keeping moving, of light exercise which is good for him, although at one point he does mention having to be careful of his back that is full of metal pins. In the accident, he broke both legs in multiple places and his back, and he has been in a lot of pain. He has been off work since the accident, which unfortunately happened eight weeks into a new job, just after returning to Glasgow. Now, instead of being a skilled professional with a nine to five job, he does some volunteering, some physiotherapy and is still trying to put his life together.

For Adam, as with others, there are a number of reasons to value the Woodlands garden. It does not deliberately try to rehabilitate him or make him useful, but it does give him a sense of purpose and has made him rethink what work should be like. He notes, in a quiet way, how Woodlands is important to him in terms of having things to do and having people around to work with and talk to. In the space of a few hours in the garden, Adam builds things from recycled scrap wood like a flyer holder that he paints with

chalkboard paint. He says that it is a good-sized project and that he likes to have these things to do: things to make with your hands that you can complete fairly easily. Being useful and practically employed is something valuable to Adam, yet the timbre of this is distinct: it is socially oriented. While talking to me about work, Adam notes his relationship with labour has shifted since his life-changing accident and his time at the community garden. He talks about how the garden particularly has changed his attitude to work. Since the accident, he has had to find ways of recreating his life. This said, being in the garden has meant he has found new things that he enjoys doing – ways of being that are not dictated by a nine to five schedule. He tells me he would like to work in a similar project, although he recognises the way this is so dependent on often quite variable and unreliable funding. But there is also the community element that he finds valuable in the site too. He loves being involved in this as a collective endeavour. Thus, Woodlands can be transformative at a subjective level. In terms of remaking Adam's vulnerability and his physical limitations, Woodlands offers a space in which to rethink what limitations he has, and to work within and beyond a sense of being limited. Further, despite engaging Adam in volunteer labour that improves the local area for free, he has also shifted in his relationship to labour itself: he wants to work socially, he wants to be outside more, he recognises the value of the communal way of organising things he has found at the garden. The labour aspect of what is going on is clearly important in terms of how people value themselves and their time, but it is also crucial that Woodlands offers a space to be valued regardless of employment situation. Whether in recovery, unemployed (long or short term) or heavily pregnant, this is a place where people can feel valued and make a difference – regardless of productivity level, or output. For many, this is a vital aspect of the garden. In this, Woodlands is a haven for those outside of ordinary employment conditions.



This is important in terms of understanding who is included within the boundaries of collective growing. This is another catchment that they include (although a less vaunted, media friendly one): those unemployed or on benefits. Woodlands can be sensitive to the needs of those who are reliant on the state for their income. In simple ways, this expresses itself in the tiered prices for a raised bed for those in employment and those without (usually the figure is about half, but it depends on the size of the bed – some cost as little as five pounds for the year for someone unwaged). But it also suggests itself in the sensitivity that the garden has shown towards Mark's employment benefits. When I began the fieldwork in early 2015, Mark's position on the staff was unclear, as he was only just funded for an eight-hour contract. Before that, he was a casual odd job man who would be paid for a set number of hours to cover certain tasks. In May, I had a conversation with the Garden Development Worker about him, and was told that Mark was also going to be paid for some of his work this summer. According to Jennifer though there were concerns over what this might mean for his benefits. The consistency of Woodlands' capacity to seek funding to pay Mark, as well as their individual concern for him as a human being, has given him emotional support and income. This is in contrast to his position socially.

Mark has no job outside of the occasional work he picks up at Woodlands and has not worked formally for years. He was unwell for many years and coming back to trying to get work has been a nightmare for him. He worked for a while for a charity in administration but having been away from work, he told me he found it utterly mind numbing to be behind a desk again 10-4, watching the time go by. He is grateful then for Oliver finding some funding for him to be able to work, even if it is only for 8 hours a week. This also gets the job centre off his back for a few months, since he has an income this way. He sounds bitter as he tells me this, recounting the way getting work has been

tough but that even temporary administrative work has been really difficult because he finds it deeply boring.

He is not the only one who has struggled with the benefits system: Adam too had serious trouble with what they expected from him after his accident. Thankfully for him, he can subsist on the pay out from accident but his trials with ATOS still irk. Adam openly talks of trying to get benefits, but not being able to get past the ATOS interview. He went in on two crutches but was declared fit for work, despite being still in physiotherapy and not, as far as he was concerned, fit for the work he used to do. In denying him benefits, ATOS's refusal put greater strain both on Norman and on his parents, who he then had to turn to for money to simply pay the rent. What he then says is that ATOS do not understand that he is not shirking: he truly is not fit to do the work he was doing, which he is qualified to do, and that he is genuinely still unwell. The garden in relation to these struggles for dignity, employment and time to heal, for both Adam and for Mark, is a place to be slow, to be outside of the world of work, and importantly to be valued without needing to be economically active. This has value for participants who are outside of the normal work pattern, a salve against systems like ATOS interviews and Job Centres that put pressure on people to become economically active before, perhaps, they are ready.

Beyond providing a space for those who are recovering from physical or mental trauma, the Woodlands Community Development Trust is importantly an employer. But the work it creates, it does in a specific way. For the right person, the Woodlands Community Development Trust can find funding, as Mark discovered. A certain amount of creativity in funding applications and fund designation keeps core costs covered (the least glamorous and hardest to fund aspect of the community project). This worked out for Mark in early

2015, when Oliver found money to give him an eight-hour a week contract. By May 2016, this was a sixteen-hour a week contract, split over whenever he can or wants to do the labour, maintaining the physical space of the community garden. The funding they do find lives up to high standards too, as a “Glasgow Living Wage Employer”, meaning that everyone was paid over £8.25 an hour, as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. Minimum wage at this point was £7.20 an hour (GOV.UK n.d.). The Glasgow Living Wage Employer scheme is one which predates the UK Government’s introduction of the so-called living wage, and one that Woodlands Community Development Trust have been proud to support.

A commitment to treating employees well means too that those who have sought to work with Woodlands Community Development Trust are often remunerated at a higher level than expected, as Samantha found out after chasing Oliver for the opportunity to help out:

Samantha: ...And I’ve actually really pushed Oliver, during the summer last year, really pushed Oliver, kept saying do you need anything done, any posters or anything like that and finally he had actually some paid work for me to do.

Helen: Were you pushing him specifically for paid work?

Samantha: No. No, I would even have just liked to have designed a flyer for an event for free. And I was going to do it for free but it turned out that he would pay me for doing it... And by the way I feel very valued by them because I think I said to you before the amount they’re paying me is twice what I was getting for the freelance stuff I was doing, I felt valued.

(Samantha interview, April 2016)

As Samantha and Mark’s cases both demonstrate, Woodlands Community Development Trust maintains a clear boundary between what a volunteer

does and what a member of staff does. This means that, for Samantha, there are certain things Woodlands Community Development Trust feel morally obliged to pay her for, and others that they do not. But it is also about valuing insiders, with an ability to some extent to create jobs without necessarily always opening them to the widest competition. Holly, too, found this as her contract shifted at the end of a funding period. Her contract moved away from biodiversity work and towards community development. When asked why, she said: 'it's less to do with funding and more to do with my personal interests I think, with Oliver trying to keep things that are relevant to me as an individual, as well as the wider project and also trying to honour relationships and networks that we've already established' (Holly interview, May 2016). In a context that is in almost constant flux due to uncertain funding, the Woodlands Community Development Trust responds by keeping people who have committed time and effort to the cause in their employ where possible. Thus, there is a willingness to skirt the edges of strictest protocols, to bend the rules for those that are on the inside of the garden. It also to some extent suggests a closure of sorts, in echoes of those discussed in chapter three.

The potential for implicitly supporting an austerity agenda, where the devolution of responsibility to a local level is part of a neoliberal revanchism, has been noted in the case of community gardening (Rosol 2012; Pudup 2008; McClintock 2014). There may well be a benefit to the capitalist system to have people involved in beautifying an area and improving it, as well as priming them to continue being involved both in society and training them in some senses. But the volunteering carried out at the Woodlands Community Garden also equates to a deeper, more affective process than this; particularly for those outwith standard employment. Involvement in the garden can be a supportive emotional factor for those the benefits system does little to protect. The garden thus offers a place of sanctuary. Further, the decidedly

interventionist approach of the Woodlands Community Development Trust in keeping people on, paying fair wages and being clear on the line between a volunteer and staff; not to mention the softer effect the garden has clearly had on the opinion of those involved and their willingness to return to certain kinds of labour suggests that something perhaps a little more radical and more self-consciously ethical is going on. This is not however to argue that growing is inherently radical, but to concur with McClintock (2014) when he argues that neoliberal tendencies and radical tendencies co-emerge in growing projects.

## **Making connections, representing interests**

At the North Kelvin Meadow, things are organisationally fluid. There are two campaigning organisations and a loose collection of parents, dog walkers, growers and other meadow users who are engaged in the space, some more than others. The North Kelvin Meadow organisation have been around since 2008, with the Children's Wood starting some years later, and the combined activities present a miscellaneous picture of communal activity. The meadow is not usually called a community garden, although people have actively grown on the site since the first trees were planted (without permission) in the 1990s. There is also an orchard planted by local people and much work has gone on upon the land to improve it, such as wild flower planting, laying down woodchip and managing tree pruning. In its nomenclature, both locally used names for the site, the North Kelvin Meadow and the Children's Wood, reference the space as a wilder, less tended space than a garden, even if the space requires more management than this suggests.

The communal aspects of the meadow are crafted by both organisations, as well as the physical. From its inception, the Children's Wood deliberately pursued community as a social good (in Cooper's (2013) terms, attempting to

actualise it). Polly, the main organiser behind the Children's Wood, is explicit about this. When talking about setting up the Wood organisation and the ideas that sit behind trying to get lots of people down to use the space, she referred to research into 'social connections':

So one of the bits of research that really stuck in my mind was the thing that makes people the happiest is other people, so if you look at the happiest people in the world they tend to have really strong social connections, so that's one of the motivations.

(Polly interview, July 2015)

Drawing on her background in psychology, Polly's concern is to cultivate those connections. Further, the focus on children and events has tended to be an angle to gain access to everyone, following the logic of 'everyone knows a child [*laughs*] so that's been kind of our thinking is that through children you can access everybody, you know it links out to grandparents, aunts and uncles' (Polly interview, July 2015).

In contrast, the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign had fewer active attempts to engage the local community – it fell to accidental interactions and a gardening programme that has not fared all that well over the years, petering to a halt in early 2015 and being resuscitated in 2016 by the Children's Wood. Much of the everyday work done by the North Kelvin Meadow campaign is invisible, involving mostly maintenance. The relationship the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign has with the idea of community is less about creation and more about representation, as noted by the lead campaigner:

Community groups change and grow and move around. It's a very fluid format. I think the bottom line is does it work or not, are you representative, and I think we are here.

(Terry interview, July 2015)

This language of representation –not connection or belonging – relates to the context in which the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign emerged. It was a reaction to a planning application on the land and the campaign tends to focus heavily on the land itself and its innate value to people. The North Kelvin Meadow Campaign does not generally work to deliberately promote connection or belonging. They work often with practical things – fixing fences, painting, picking up litter – and encourage people to engage with these activities. However, the language of representation, rather than belonging, as being central to community relates to how the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign is positioned – as a campaigning body rather than a deliberate means to grow communal feeling.

When discussing inclusion at the meadow, following the discourse of the organisations, the question becomes who is represented in this campaign, and how that relates into its successes as a campaign. In this context, class becomes an important but difficult topic to explore. In the debate over how people understand and explain class, Savage et al. (2001) claim that respondents display ambivalence to talking about class. Responding to this, Payne and Grew (2005) point out that discussing class is itself a complex thing in an interview situation:

What we may also be seeing is respondents trying to be helpful to the interviewer (by struggling with the complex phenomenon of class), but being unable to respond cogently. Neither silence nor inarticulateness necessarily mean lack of salience.

(Payne & Grew 2005, p.907)

Payne and Grew's argument is that class talk is itself prone to 'sub-articulation' (2005, p.909). Nevertheless, sifting through the complexity of

class talk and how aspects of social class effects communal growing and organising is important with respect to understanding what the lens of inclusion encompasses and does not. The entrenched position of participants as well-educated and middle class benefits the campaign. Class is also discursively reproduced through dualisms of middle and non-middle class, verbal constructs that appear in discussing privilege with participants. But it is notable that this is uncomfortable terrain for participants. This echoes Sayer (2002) who highlights the discomfort and indeed embarrassment of talking class as a topic associated with guilt and moral judgement. As Savage et al (2001, p.889) put it, class is 'not an innocent descriptive term but is a loaded moral signifier' (c.f. Sayer 2005). Instead, a language of economics, of 'poorer' people was preferred, or socio-economic status. This discomfort with the idea of class has sympathy with the openness that most of participants in the research associated with the space: as if class should not matter, because everyone is welcome. This has sympathy with ideas around what Hall (1958) called 'class confusion', whereby class becomes less salient as a result of the decline of class consciousness and solidarity. Nevertheless, class has implicitly shaped the campaign to save the space as well as more explicitly affecting the way that it is received.

## **The middle class and the other**

A dualism arises in the discourse around the meadow between the middle class and the other. This latter is referred to either by geographical scope, references either to Maryhill or the Wyndford, or by more contentious terms like the 'bams' that Howard refers to, or as Alasdair calls them, the 'polite thugs'. Maryhill and the Wyndford refer to nearby areas of notorious deprivation, area of deep stigma. There were also mentions of estates further north that have been denigrated for their high levels of poverty and associations of criminality. Colloquial references to slang terms like 'bams'



highlight a discursive construction of otherness, emphasising the criminality or illicit behaviour of the other as present in the meadow and wood. This is a form of what Imogen Tyler (2013) has called 'social abjection'. Tyler argues that 'the object is a spatializing politics of disgust' (Tyler 2013, p.41) that creates political others outside of normative political citizenship. The discomfort experienced by participants in relation to social class is troubled by this disgusted narrative. The association of nearby estates with criminality and anti-social behaviour makes the inclusion of those living there difficult. The putative other at the meadow is counter-posed against the middle class locals housed in old tenement blocks, but symbolised by Clouston Street. Clouston Street is the main access point to the meadow on the South Side, farthest from Maryhill. Participants highlighted an uneasy relationship between those of less affluent backgrounds with deviant behaviour in the space. Howard, an interviewee who had lived in the area for much of his young life, reflected on the way that different users of the space relate to the space:

The police used to come here every weekend, or very regularly, and there used to be a lot of mess, a lot of late nights and rowdy bams here. The bams have sort of stopped coming. I feel bad saying bams... But it was basically people from this side of Maryhill come here, and there are people from over there who come here [*gestures to Clouston Street*]. From over there [*Maryhill*] they come and can be rowdy, but from over there [*Clouston Street*] they tend to be a bit more respectful, probably just because they're **from the community** but mainly because it's the community from this side that's using the space, that've got more engagement with it.

(Howard interview, June 2016, emphasis added)

Howard was very aware of the way that people from Maryhill had been slowly pushed out of the meadow by increasing middle class use of it. His language of community distinguishes the middle class residents as being a community in

themselves – distinct from people from Maryhill or further north. This is not only a question of neighbourhood boundary but of class boundary, indeed a sense of the two as one. This echoes work that situates middle class claims to space as positioned against less desirable neighbourhoods as a discursive and performative practice (Benson & Jackson 2013; Watt 2009). In this sense, the juxtaposition between North Kelvinside and Maryhill becomes an articulation of class and neighbourhood boundary as synonymous. It is a contrast built over time, with the shift in the activities and class-significance of the meadow as a space.

Before much of the campaigning activity took off, many locals associated the space with criminal activities. Stories are told of the police in regular attendance at the meadow. This atmosphere of criminality has been blamed on the poor and the marginalised: the homeless, alcoholics and drug addicts, or the poorer youth (the ‘bams’ to which Howard refers). Increased middle class use led to the increased marginalisation of those who used the space for illicit drinking. As Oonagh – a long-time campaigner and local mum – highlights, this involves temporal territorial distinction between the different users of the site.

So a lot of the teenagers, there was a spate of drunken teenage hoodlums for a while, just as this was starting to be used by families, there would be kind of a cross over especially on a sunny Saturday afternoon while the families were still using it and you would see quite a lot of boom box holding teenage guys with huge amounts of really strong beer appearing. That seems to have settled down a bit now. They still come but they quite often sit on the steps of the scout hall until the, you know, the families have wandered off, gone away themselves.

(Oonagh interview, July 2016)

As Oonagh highlights then, there is still use of the site by groups of young drinkers, but there is something territorial inherent in their behaviour, remaining off-site until the coast is clear. This temporal slicing of the meadow into use by families and use by teenage boys is suggestive of the way that middle class use of the site has pushed previous users to the temporal and spatial edges of the site. This also highlights the contingency of middle class claims to the site as they are negotiated and struggled over in the everyday.

Drinking on the meadow is still a common activity – some of the more middle class parents like a glass of prosecco on the meadow of a summer evening, but importantly the class significance of this drinking has shifted. This led to musings as to whether this might then become the one place in Glasgow where drinking in public might become tacitly legal – contrary to the Glasgow byelaw which outlawed public space drinking in 1996 (amended 2008) (Glasgow City Council n.d.). This emerged out of conversations with respondents, such as Howard, who situated this idea of public drinking as tacitly acceptable within the West End.

Toni was saying with everything as it is now, with everyone drinking, it could become a place where police just turn a blind eye and it just becomes such a convention that it stays like that, because it's the West End, it could be the place in Glasgow where public drinking is no longer illegal.

(Howard interview, June 2016)

Howard's reflections on this are mixed and cynical. The 'West End' implication is important as it symbolises the virtuous middle classes and their ability to drink respectably (the presumption is of restraint). This leads to reflections on what could become an institutional double standard to match the discursive one: working class drinking is presented as rowdy and problematic, whereas

middle class drinking is seen as acceptable, even de facto legal. This presentation of middle class respectability, set against the disruptive drinking of working class youth, is particularly jarring against the social justice discourse that is espoused.

The Children's Wood organisation worry about reaching out to aspects of the local population who are not involved, specifically those from Maryhill or the Wyndford estate. There remained a strong attachment to the idea of social inclusion – broadly taken, eliding the difference it seeks to address; flattening barriers rather than foregrounding them. Ivan in particular gains praise for his ability to ignore difference and engage those who some in the Children's Wood find difficult to talk to.

As I say, we sat up there, Ivan's really, really good with people who I wouldn't maybe be that good with. Two drunk guys came and they sat down and aarrggh I'll tell you this, and I was like, oh Jim [her son] uhh, and before you know it we'd sat and had half a conversation and again, I wouldn't have done that at the top of Byres Road. And they were like, oh you have to save this land, it's fantastic man.

(Caitlin interview, June 2016)

Engagements between people of very different social milieu are facilitated in the space by individuals such as Ivan who at the time worked in community development and community gardening across Glasgow, being employed at a number of community gardens in the city. Part of Ivan's ability to engage with people in the meadow is to do with his own sense of being unreadable in the context of the class system. Ivan is not from the UK. His accent places him as other automatically, and his distinctive look makes him easily noticeable and recognisable. He stands out, but not in a readily classifiable way. Reflecting on this, Ivan notes not only his externality but also his wilful ignorance of British class hierarchies.

Ivan: maybe that's part of the reason that I've been able to connect with all different parts of the community here because I'm just oblivious to that class system thing, you know? People I talk to might not be oblivious but then eventually they just have to forget about it mate because I'm not going to take any notice am I?

Helen: It's interesting that you, because maybe you're coming from outside, that you sort of transcend it a bit.

Ivan: Possibly, yeah. Possibly, yep, I mean it's a bit different at home there's a bit of a slot where society can, can shelve me, but here that slot doesn't really exist in the same way. There is a slot, but it's kind of more of a general one... because of that attitude, can do attitude, I'm not going around thinking oh I can't talk to that person because they're from that side of town and then oh, I shouldn't be seen talking to them because they come from there. I guess I do transcend that a bit, I think partly I am actually probably completely ignorant of the rules that you're supposed to do, I'm ignorant of those rules so. Ignorance is bliss! *[laughs]*

(Ivan interview, June 2015)

What Ivan highlighted was his sense of the absurdity of the class system and his ability to stand outside because of his otherness. His personal difference, as well as his very open personality, led him to break down some of the barriers to entry. He did particularly well during his time working for the Children's Wood in engaging teenagers, a feat that impressed many who were involved in the organisation, and those who simply used the space. His ease with those that others find dangerous or difficult, such as the drunk men Caitlin discussed above, made it possible for others to encounter each other across the divide created by difference. It allowed them to find common ground –usually found in valuing the space itself. In this, Ivan's difference and lack of complicity in the class system allowed him to overlook cultural barriers that other see and cannot, or do not know how to, cross. Particularly in the

example from Caitlin, but also in those from Ivan himself, there is a sense of disregard for barriers of fear or a notion of 'the rules'. Ivan succeeded in involving people in conversations and activities that they might not have been in. He brought people together, precisely because he did not recognise the markers of class. In this sense, through Ivan, it was possible at the meadow to unmake differences of social class: but only under condition of contact. Because of the lack of formalised growing sessions, and the limited cross-class appeal of the outdoor toddler group, these moments of contact were limited at the meadow.

Narratives highlighting the discomfort of contact with difference also highlight the continued presence on the land of those who are not middle class or who make the middle class participants uncomfortable. Indeed, Polly emphasised the use of the space by all sectors of society during her presentation to the Scottish Government hearing. In so doing, she positioned the meadow as beyond a sectional good but as a public good. Similarly, in an interview, she drew out a story of difference to highlight how peoples' backgrounds are often hidden:

At the event the other day there's a woman with her foster kids who you know the kids have been in care, they were under court order or something, so we do have some quite complicated situations that you'd never know was happening to someone and they come use the space, so it's just trying to make the space as accessible to everyone. That's my motivation to try and, you know, it's everybody's space.

(Polly interview, July 2015).

Polly's narrative draws out the possibility of different people using the space, and the way that 'complicated situations' particularly might not be immediately obvious to the casual observer. It suggests a flattening of difference at the meadow, a space of openness and egalitarianism.

Nevertheless, that Polly knew and highlighted it reiterates the broader absence of those living in 'complicated situations'. In this context, the problem that arises for the Children's Wood is about representativeness. Despite claims the meadow is 'everybody's space', the Children's Wood committee in particular are highly educated, middle class individuals. If they claim to be the community but only represent sectional interests (particularly classed ones), they risk the symbolic erasure of those unrepresented. They also become open to the criticism that their defense of the site can be dismissed as NIMBY activity. This criticism also applies to the North Kelvin Meadow campaign, although it is also questioned in their limited activity and background work, i.e. in their limited engagement with the space whilst also making claims to represent a putative community.

The movement to protect North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood is based in a largely affluent, professional area. While the housing is dense and parking is difficult, the houses are well maintained and there is little unemployment, at least in the immediate streets surrounding the plot. Some within the movement recognise that there are arguments that stand against what they are trying to do that are perhaps perfectly valid. One respondent, an economically poor, but culturally affluent mother of three, was very self-consciously aware of this. She told me that the council's argument was that this area is already so green. The local area is already so privileged with good jobs, nice houses, and green space all around. They do not need more. Toni admitted that she could understand that argument. To Toni, the meadow is still unique and worth saving, even whilst she is conscious of its particularism. Similarly, one committee member, Joan, noted that her friends, who do not live locally, do not really 'get' the meadow. She reported how they say to her, 'it's all too much, the people are all smug marrieds and you know people with children, that kind of thing' (Joan interview, July 2015). There is an anecdotal

conception of the meadow users as privileged and it is one they regularly reject.

It nevertheless still troubles the Children's Wood committee that attendance at their events does seem to be largely middle class. From the playgroups to the gala days, this tends to be parents and a particular subgroup at that. These are, for the meadow, the 'easiest' people to engage:

The easiest groups were middle class families to get involved, the hardest group was, well there were two harder groups. One was the schools... Another category has been sort of the socio-economically poorer areas around the meadow.

(Phil interview, June 2016)

I think that we have a tendency to be a little bit middle class and whilst we have very strong wishes to work with perhaps the likes of the Wyndford and things, we don't necessarily achieve it.

(David interview, July 2016)

Both Phil and David acknowledged this sense of themselves as middle class, and thus contrary the Wyndford or other 'socio-economically poorer' areas. Both are fathers on the Children's Wood committee. Importantly both were keen to emphasise that the organisation was trying to address this state of things, to include more people from the Maryhill and Wyndford areas. There are limits to how much difference is possible in this context due to funding and relying on volunteer labour. Nevertheless, they attempt outreach, primarily through the schools programme.

One of the main conduits for inclusion in the Children's Wood's agenda is through work with schools. Locally, over 20 schools and nurseries were by 2016 involved with the Children's Wood – either coming to use the space



themselves as part of a Scottish curriculum requirement of outdoor education or joining in sessions organised by the Children's Wood. Through this, the aim is to get children involved and through them reach out to multiple generations of families:

The kids will bring their parents and the parents'll be like 'oh I don't want to be here' but they'll bring the parents along **so you're getting the kids to change the values of the parents**. And that, that's something that we've noticed has been really quite a big thing and actually what we realised quite soon was that it wasn't just nature that was the thing that, a lot of the schools were saying to us, well the parents are saying it's actually the community that they really, that seems to be the thing that they really, really like, so it's not just the nature, it's actually being part of the wider community, so that's from working with 14 schools and nurseries.

(Polly interview, July 2015, emphasis added)

This idea that 'everyone knows a child' and that through the schools programme they were getting children to bring along adults was heard a lot during the research. Indeed, I met people during the research who were introduced to the space through their child, although not many in number. Reaching adults through children is intended as a means of accessing a wide range of parents but it also lays claim to the transformative potential of the meadow as a space. The values of the parents here are also assumed to be in need of change. Those involved in the Children's Wood emphasise the importance of this work with schools, getting schools along to use the land and increasing awareness and opportunities for children to be outside in a 'wild' space:

Our mission really is about being really open to people from all different backgrounds and it is supposed to be very inclusive and reduce inequality in the end. That's where the work with schools comes in because there are a lot of kids whose parents don't take them

to parks or the countryside. The school does that for him and we help the schools bring the children here.

(Margot interview, June 2016)

One of the nurseries specifically targeted by the Children's Wood is the Wyndford Nursery. It represents a specific attempt to address structural inequalities through in this case involving the nursery in the Forest Schools programme. Forest School is a specific programme of outdoor education, teaching about the natural world, in the natural world, as well as useful outdoor skills from tying knots and putting up tarpaulins to making fire. The Wyndford Nursery has an important symbolic role in this context – it is not just that the Children's Wood are working with nurseries, but that they are working with the *Wyndford* Nursery – a nursery in one of the most deprived areas of inner North Glasgow. The Wyndford is in the Scottish parliamentary constituency Glasgow Maryhill that has one of the highest rates of dereliction proximity in Scotland (87% within 500m of a derelict site). This is particularly highlighted in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), which draws together a number of markers of poverty including income, housing and access to public transport, to measure and rank areas in Scotland by relative deprivation. In SIMD terms, the Wyndford estate sits across three data zones with the highest possible decile rating for multiple deprivations. In reaching out to a nursery in the Wyndford, the Children's Wood are reaching out to some of the most deprived children in the local area. This returns to the core idea of openness, within the context of an awareness of the barriers to entry faced by some. While the discourse on openness and inclusion elides difference, specific actions taken by the Children's Wood as an organisation seek to ameliorate those differences.

Despite attempts to reach out and include those from impoverished backgrounds, there is disconnection between those organising the movement

and the wider area. This becomes more obvious when one looks at the closeness of the North Kelvinside location to places like Wyndford, Maryhill, Firhill and Ruchill, where the SIMD indicators highlight stark levels of deprivation. The meadow sits at a juncture between some of the most affluent and least affluent areas of Glasgow, right on the cusp of Maryhill but still an under five minute walk from the Botanical Gardens and the heart of the West End. While the West End has a reputation for being middle class, the geography of Glasgow sharply shifts between affluence and poverty. Researching the meadow I encountered people from across the class spectrum. In illuminating conversations with those who did not identify as middle class, the exclusionary tendency of the organisations at the meadow was revealed.

I met Jack on the meadow one morning as he sat on the edge of a raised bed in the sun. I joined him and we talked about the meadow. He had a long history with the space going back many years and recognised the way the space has shifted in recent years. He had illuminating comments on the perceived class positionality of the meadow campaigns. I asked him about how he feels about the way the space has changed recently and he told me he thinks some of the things the organisations have done are a bit twee – waving in the general direction of the part of the land known as the Children’s Wood. Jack makes this comment in a few different ways, so I ask him directly about it. Is this twee about his perception of class? He laughs and says he is glad I said it, because he did not feel comfortable bringing it up. But he makes clear this is not something he is against, he is happy for ‘them’ to do ‘their thing’ – it is just not *his* thing. What becomes clear talking to Jack is the cultural shift at the meadow, the taming of its more wild (and less child friendly) aspects have a potent exclusionary facet. The counter-positioning of himself against a ‘them’ is particularly illuminating in that it demonstrates Jack’s sense of being

outside of the organisations. What is also notable in Jack's account is his discomfort mentioning class. It was mirrored in the sometime squeamishness around class that I found talking to members of the Children's Wood committee and the North Kelvin Meadow organisation too. In Jack's case, however, it goes beyond the awkwardness of class-talk and Hall's (1958) 'class confusion'. It implicates the researcher– my own position as a middle class person in that context seemed to add to his discomfort. However, of most interest is that sense of externality. Jack did not feel that there was anything wrong with what the Children's Wood were doing, yet he did not feel like it was anything to do with him.

There is tolerance in this approach, an inversely class inflected letting-them-get-on-with-it which came through too in conversation with Tom, who comes to the meadow to read his newspaper when it is not raining. Tom sits on the edge of the Children's Wood, away from the mud kitchen, where the difference in surface level between the meadow and the wood creates a natural step. It is a comfortable spot among the trees in which to read the Sun. A regular fixture in the meadow, Tom has no interest in the campaign, but he likes the space. His response to the latest palaver with the council was remarkably simple, unlike many of the activists in the space, who will discuss at length the latest twists and turns in the campaign. He did enquire as to whether anything new is happening in the meadow protest. I told him about the latest with the campaign – the petition, the reporter – and he raised his eyebrows and shrugged. He then went back to telling me about how he likes the meadow. It is not that he cares less for the meadow than activists but Tom does not see himself in the campaign. When I ask if he ever wanted to be involved, he lists all the reasons he sees for not engaging in the meadow. Tom lives alone now, he is getting on a bit, and he does not think he has ever fancied it. His fondness for the meadow stems from the change of scenery it affords him from his

home, and the fresh air. He tells me: it is nice to get out the house. You get sick of staring at the same wallpaper down in Wyndford. When Tom talks about the Wyndford, it is not a demonstration of inclusivity. It is simply home and one he likes to get out of every so often. Again, what occurs in Tom's account of the meadow is a sense of being external from the campaign: although less obviously class inflected, Tom is simply disengaged. There is room here for a sense of unwillingness to participate, not simply structural exclusion from campaigning and organising.

Others are more forthright about their feelings of class externality. Craig is a local father and activist. Known for being militantly against the organisational aspects of the Children's Wood, as well as disliking the increased use of the space that the actions of that organisation created, Craig is however very aware of the class aggravated nature of this. He highlights the gap between the committee culture and some of the users of the space:

There's different demographics that come down here, there's different folk with like large incomes and there's folk with like wee tiny incomes and everything in between, and eh some folk who have got themselves in position of eh responsibility we'll call it due to their organisational talents, some of them don't really know how to talk to people outwith their own social demographic.

(Craig interview, December 2014)

This echoes Terry's concerns about representing the community, but Craig's more antagonistic position sees nothing in the attempts to include all, instead finding them too distant from those who use the space who are not of 'their own social demographic'. Although the Children's Wood – with their committees, events and protests – are actively reflective about trying to 'include' everyone, there is a sense in which this doesn't always play well to those who sit outside the official organisation and campaign. However, it

should be noted that Craig is well known to the Children's Wood and Meadow campaigners, as something of a thorn in their side. He has disagreed with much of what they have done in terms of bringing people on to the site, because he feels it has lost its ecological character. The complex dynamic of inclusion and building social connection also then plays into competing visions of what the meadow should be, thus complicating an already difficult issue. Part of Craig's vehemence is also about his feeling of being ignored and dismissed by the campaigns who have struggled to find common ground with him. This connects to a cultural difficulty within the organisations at the meadow: a difficulty dealing with difference, and perhaps a naivety regarding the impact the physical changes to the meadow might have on feelings of belonging amongst those who have a long-standing connection to the meadow. It emphasises too the reproduction of class in this context. Despite the potential space of connection and deconstruction inherent in the contact between people of difference class positions that emerge in Ivan's effect on the meadow, this seems to be limited by a lack of continuity in collective moments that are simply that: ephemeral situations of contact, rather than repeating communality.

## **Practicing inclusivity**

In considering inclusion beyond class, there are other axes of difference that the meadow addresses, through which their concern for inclusivity is materialised. This is limited by funding and time, and thus tends towards working alongside other organisations rather than engaging in solo projects of outreach. It also emphasises how inclusion is imagined at the meadow, as manifested in barriers to entry: either physical concerns over safety and access, or through lack of knowledge of their being welcome in the space. Primarily this inclusivity is practiced through the educational work that the Children's Wood engage in, bringing on to the site local children from a variety

of local schools. Working with school groups includes the special needs school a stone's throw from the site. This became part of a strategy devised when Rachel became a member of staff to include a wider range of people:

So that's like another, we're kind of pushing it now with me as a paid member of staff, we're really focusing on some kind of really proper aims that we want to fulfil and take off. It's to get more and different people on the land, not just schools and nurseries. So we've done the old folk's home and then we've done the special needs school, I'm working with 2 special needs schools at the moment and they've just had such a ball... some of them are just so severely physically and mentally special needs. But there's one that constantly smiles now, does he like it? He probably really likes it. And he's just like lying in the sun falling asleep and that's a great compliment. And there's one guy who's just started to come out of his wheelchair and he's just like staggering about and he constantly bullies me, he doesn't say anything but he's like 'aaahhghgh' and sitting down 'aagghrhg' standing up. And he has a go on the hammock, and then I have to have a go, and then he has a go, and he tells me what to do. So I'm roaming about with him since he's the most able.

(Rachel interview, June 2016)

It is a specific challenge for Rachel to work with the special needs schools – she has to adapt activities for them. But as the Children's Wood move towards formalisation, she has increasing time to cater to their different needs as she is paid for her role. Thus, beyond their work reaching out to children of all backgrounds, with a formalised staff member, they can dedicate time and resources to supporting people with a complex array of needs. In this way it echoes the inclusion work at the Woodlands garden as inclusion is imagined as related to obvious disability and physical barriers to access, rather than perhaps the social structural barriers. At the meadow and wood, disability is seen as something that can be overcome, as something that can be remade in the space of the meadow and wood.

Another goal the Children's Wood pursue, as stated by Rachel, is to reach out to older people. A number of activists highlighted this catchment as a group they would like to see using the space more. This again involved an imagination of inclusion as reaching out to those who were concerned about their capacity to access the space physically, through safety concerns. This targeting of older people was approached by the Children's Wood organisation through nearby sheltered housing. It met mixed results, to the mild frustration of those seeking intergenerational contact, particularly for their kids. Oonagh was a good example of this as someone seeking to connect with older people: 'I grew up in a three generational house so I've been trying to adopt grandparents for my children all over Glasgow' (interview, July 2016). She described reaching out to older people as 'hit or miss':

My main thing that I would like to see happening is older people coming out of their house and feeling that they can come. I know there was, I did speak to the sheltered housing complex round the corner and I spoke to one of the ladies that lives there. I offered to go and collect them and walk them over and stuff but they feel that the rough ground that it's too uneven for them to walk on. They're all a bit worried about falling. You know, I was saying, we can give you an arm, but I think their lack of confidence is what's keeping them away rather than us not trying to get them involved.

(Oonagh interview, July 2016)

Oonagh's account highlights the way in which being outdoors is imagined as a universally appealing prospect, and that the hindrance is a fear of falling, therefore it is a physical barrier to inclusion. Or rather, there is an emotional barrier in terms of the confidence to use the space, but it is ultimately predicated on the physical characteristics of the meadow. This returns to the frustration the Woodlands Community Garden experience regarding the



Scottish Asian population: despite trying to be open and inclusive, people do not always respond, they do not always engage. The Children's Wood organisation is consciously trying to engage different groups of people who might struggle to use the land. The idea of the land being 'open' and it being for 'everyone' extends then to helping people to feel that confidence in the space that Oonagh mentioned, especially given its history as a run down, neglected place that seemed less safe, by targeting children and older people, they are reaching out to people who might be put off by that reputation as dangerous. In so doing, the imagination of the barrier to entry as physical to some extent emerged: for those with complex needs, and older people on the site, the barriers are seen as unevenness in the ground, as well as perceptions of safety. Addressing the latter by demonstrating safety and the former by trying to even out paths and offering physical support (that Oonagh offers by way of her arm), these barriers are imagined as overcome as best the organisation can.

Yet it is not just safety and access that are seen as barriers to entry in the site, and this is more ably demonstrated in the outreach work the Children's Wood engage in with the Maryhill Integration Network (MIN). MIN 'aim to build bonds and links within and between communities to encourage cross-cultural understanding and celebrate diversity' (Maryhill Integration Network n.d.). They work with black and minority ethnic people, often with those who struggle to find a place in Glasgow, although they explicitly encourage participation from across Maryhill and northwest Glasgow, seeing integration as a necessarily cross-cultural and intersectional project. Nevertheless, this is about overcoming difference, and the majority of Maryhill Integration Network's work is with black and minority ethnic people. By working with the Maryhill Integration Network to plan a freecycle event, where people could swap items, the Children's Wood committee explicitly framed this as reaching

people who might have a higher level of need. Plans were laid too for the gardening group at the Maryhill Integration Network to grow things on the meadow in order to try and support the Greater Maryhill Foodbank. The Children's Wood role in this was in envisaging partnerships to help people involved with both organisations:

So yeah moving forward we're wanting to include more people in em just I'm having a meeting with Maryhill Integration Network and the Foodbank about feeding the foodbank? So doing a growing project on the meadow, and they're maybe going to join in with maybe the freecycle event that we do twice a year, which is basically people bring things and take things, so it's em an event where you just, anything that's just, so anything that's in ok condition, so it could just be like a little toy car, it doesn't have to be a big thing, but the idea is it's a swap shop? So it's just so that if you have nothing, you can still feel you can contribute, so even if you don't have any money at all, you can still come along and take things.

(Polly interview, July 2015)

The Children's Wood have also reached out to Home Start. Home Start offer help to a whole range of people, but the Children's Wood invited the asylum seeker group down to the meadow during the summer and were met by volunteers ready to show them about. Before they arrive, Caitlin is there cleaning up the mud kitchen and worrying about the imminent arrival of an entire year of primary two children (six and seven year olds) from a local primary school. Her main aim is to introduce the space and make sure the group from Home Start know it is always open. Caitlin says that she wants to show them the mud kitchen and the ropes, and notes that they are having a 'proper' session with Rachel next week, by which she means with someone who runs play sessions rather than herself. In mundane ways such as this, the Children's Wood expend energy working alongside other organisations who try to engage diverse and difficult to access populations – whether BME,

asylum seeker or struggling families (although these are not mutually exclusive categories). In working with organisations who aim to support intercultural cohesion and integration, the Children's Wood seek to include those who might not otherwise use the space through lack of knowledge of it or feelings of not being welcome. In this way, they practice a policy of furthering inclusion, and trying to overcome the various barriers that keep potential users from utilising the space. This goes beyond practices that are situated in physical and safety concerns, to actively welcoming onto the meadow families from a range of backgrounds both through the schools programme and through targeted outreach programmes with Home Start and MIN. This offers a gesture of symbolic inclusion to those who might not feel welcome in the relatively white, middle class milieu of the meadow, and encourages them to utilise the meadow, although it is difficult to ascertain whether and if this works, given the limited observation and involvement in the meadow of those outwith the categories of white and middle-class.

The aim here is not to assess the success or failure of inclusion as a practice, nor to admonish those who are not doing enough. Instead my purpose is to trace through what inclusion looks like, how it is imagined and actualised at the meadow. It is notable that those who are involved particularly in strategizing and planning, in taking decision, are from a limited background. This is despite attempts to reduce barriers to accessing the meadow's space and its benefits for mental health and child development. Partly this might be put down to approach. The Children's Wood in particular try to get people along to the site, assuming that the land itself will work its magic on those who arrive on site. When talking about children's wild play, there is an assumption of universal benefit, but not much consideration of the cultural embeddedness of the idea of wild play. This stems in part from the sense of wild play and the

importance of children being outdoors as core ideas in the Children's Wood as an organisation.

What this highlights in the case of the Children's Wood is not necessarily measurable in terms of who is and is not involved or accessing the space. Instead, it allows us to see how those who are involved see the limited diversity and how it comes to be addressed. They try to reduce barriers to accessing the meadow's space and its benefits for mental health and child development. This also relates to bemoaning the failure of Scottish people to own sufficient waterproofs, and yet at the same time not noting this as an economic barrier. Children's waterproof trousers are not something everyone can afford (although a nearby budget supermarket about once a year stocks cheaper ones). It is further notable that a member of the Children's Wood committee thought that the culture of being 'outdoors' would trickle down, seeing it as a fashion, a cultural turn en masse, that would affect the working class eventually. This echoes a point Lawler (2012) makes in regards to seeing middle class whiteness as associated with progress, counterposed against the backwards notion of the white working class. In the context of the meadow, the middle class is positioned as a cultural vanguard. In this, there is an implicit sense of class separatism that is suggestive of why much of the outreach of the Children's Wood does not work: they are culturally middle class and the activities they are promoting are too.

Although resisting the destruction of a community amenity for further (high end) housing itself runs contrary to the economic logic of value extraction from land, the project as imagined by the Children's Wood in particular has a different kind of value structure. Valuing children's education and particularly outdoor education is a way of reordering the value of the land. Thus, in elevating the use value of the land, they do so from a position of wishing

everyone to adopt their research- (and class-) based notion of what is best for locals and their kids. When discussing where the Children's Wood project came from, it is possible to see this research-based approach in Polly's description of her early work persuading teachers and others to come on the land:

[I] just started making documents saying this is the educational value of the space, this is the value of the space for your child, come to this event, just basically trying to build a community around the space.

(Polly interview, July 2015)

Polly's campaign to persuade people into the space began with compiling research documents and disseminating them, which is a remarkably research based way of 'trying to build a community' based partly in rational debate. The Children's Wood also post lots of research on their website, including studies showing the impact of nature on children referring to 'Attention Restorative Theory' and being 'Nature smart' (Resources, Children's Wood Website, last accessed October 2017). This leads unavoidably back to the high levels of education associated with the meadow campaign.

As a reflexive campaign, the Children's Wood is concerned with including as many different people as possible. They might be bolstered then, by a historical shift noted by Sophie, a local artist and mother, who found herself returning to the meadow in 2016 after a few years away. She attributed this to an increasingly diverse group of people using it. Discussing this, Sophie noted it had become a bit cliquey, with all the same people were involved all the time. But recently, with a spate of good weather in Glasgow, Sophie and her family had been down more often. She told me, it had felt like a festival. There had been lots of people about and it has just had a really nice vibe. She mentions a couple of specific groups of people she has seen about: a group of

disabled kids having a bonfire with their carers; groups of teenagers, hanging out and smoking; mums, not the usual hippie mums, hanging out drinking. Ultimately for Sophie, it was not just middle class mums and kids, and that made it more interesting, and less of a clique. Sophie's return to the meadow suggests two things. Firstly, that boundary construction varies over time, and this is particularly true when the activities are located around young children who inevitably grow up. In so doing, their parents tend to move on, creating natural shifts in group constitution. It also perhaps suggests that attempts to broaden the constituency of the meadow might well be working, although without longitudinal data it is hard to confirm one way or the other.

That there is a certain class positionality associated with the Children's Wood committee, the North Kelvin Meadow campaign, and protest more generally seems clear. The space itself however is utilised by a whole cross section of people from the surrounding areas and, much like that geographical spread, offers a much wider range of people than would be suggested by simply taking the committee as metonym for the aggregated users of the space. This lack of reflection is something that the Children's Wood are interested in ameliorating it would seem, but the way they do so is potentially alienating to those precise individuals they are trying to reach out to.

Because of the campaigning aspect of the meadow, there is a final critical point that arises in relation to agendas of inclusion in relation to the meadow. While defending the space against development in the public hearing, there were often references to how kids from Maryhill, Ruchill or Possil (that is, from poorer areas of Glasgow) would lose access to valuable green space, not just the West End, which has a high rate of green space. Their argument in favour of keeping the space relies in part on the diversity of people who can use the space, on bringing together a wide group of people. Because it is a campaign

angle, because it is a way of keeping the land, this raises an authenticity problem. It is related in a way to the sense of disconnect between the middle-class committee and those who use the space from a 'different social demographic', as Craig put it. Reflecting on this, Toni pondered how sincere the commitment to inclusion was. She recalled to me a conversation with Ivan where they discussed if inclusion was in fact just an angle. Toni's concern is that there is 'all this talk', but does anything actually happen? They seemed, to Toni, really passionate and they do seem to care, but the question that arises for Toni is, is it convenience? Campaign angle or not, the sincerity of the action seems implicit in the practices of openness. It seems simplistic to position inclusive practices as either sincere or tactical, although questioning the sincerity of the organisation's commitment to inclusion comes from Toni's own sense of the project's lack of resemblance to the local population. This lack of resemblance reflects a class imbalance, and arguably a spatial claim by the middle-class on a piece of undervalued land. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

## **The figure of the parent**

Whilst each site has its own relationship with pursuing inclusion, gender is a category of potential exclusion that often goes overlooked. This has roots in the prominence of women at both Woodlands and the Meadow and Wood. It was observed in field notes and noted by respondents that these are spaces populated with women – from the garden, through toddler groups, education committees, the community café at Woodlands and even the Foodbank where Woodlands occasionally demonstrate healthy cooking options and hand out recipe bags. These spaces also offer room for women to take on leadership roles, to guide fights against housing on green space and to co-ordinate caring across neighbourhoods. This raises some questions around how gender is performed across both sites and what ways of being gendered proliferate. To

this end, it is important that the sites are haunted and problematised by the figure of the parent. There are questions in this about caring as a predominantly female activity and suggestive ideas about valuable uses of time. Indeed, the question arises as to whether they are perpetuating the mythology that women are 'naturally, endlessly nurturant' (Caplan 1995: 57). The field sites resonate to some extent with this idea, where motherhood and caring dovetail in a way of 'doing' being female, that some find overly heteronormative. In what follows, this idea of 'doing gender' is indebted to West and Zimmerman (1987), drawing too on work by Butler that suggests gender as 'a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing' (Butler 2004, p.1). This refers not only to the social construction of gender roles, but to the way that this actively relates to the social context in which this occurs. Deutsch (2007) notes that seeing gender as produced in interaction opens up the possibility of resistance. She figures this as *undoing* gender precisely because it puts the focus on the unwinding potential inherent in the constant reproduction of gender. It is in this contextualised sense that there is a need to see the figure of the parent in the projects: as not just a way of (un)doing gender, but also a vector of inclusion. In the context of the urban growing projects, this has ambiguous outcomes.

## **Female labour and the mothers' campaign**

Doing gender on the meadow is heavily oriented towards parenthood, and this encompasses different ways of mothering within the production of communality. This is to say that children often bring people together, and that natal and familial relationships are used as a means of connecting people. This reflects the organisers themselves. The centremost point of the Children's Wood is a mother-of-two, and she has committees of women and men helping her craft children's and community activities, many of them parents too. I



attended a small meeting of the education committee. There were four, including the researcher present. However, none of those mentioned in relation to the educational programme or running sessions were men. The only detail in which a man featured in discussions was in relation to the space programme that one committee member was involved in co-ordinating with his work. Thus, women take a central role in organising at the meadow, and organising is often filtered through their parental roles.

Parenting, and indeed mothering, can be seen as central to the fight to save the meadow. The most recent organisation formed nominally foregrounds children, thereby centring the campaign on families. But it is also importantly about mothers. People's narratives about the space illustrate this, such as Evie's. Evie was attending a community event held by the Children's Wood, when she spoke at length with me about her perceptions of the campaign. One of its most salient facets for her was its gendered face. To Evie, part of what makes the campaign great is because it is such a mothers' campaign. Evie related this back to her experience of community gardening, and her conception of such spaces as feminine. In her experience, spaces of growing are often populated largely with women. For Evie, who was talking as much about her experience in Hastings working with immigrants and refugees as her work more recently in Glasgow, there was something important and valuable about the contributions and knowledge that different women can bring to these spaces – particularly in the use of produce, cooking dishes that were different and using things in novel and interesting ways. The way women could be experts was for her an important part of the value of the space itself. Thus, there is an occasional narrative that the valuing of women's expertise in community gardens and campaigns like the Children's Wood and North Kelvin Meadow is radical, an alternative valuation of gendered labour. This involves a remaking of mothers as campaigners and experts, as active

citizens. Yet how contrary is promoting a highly normalised conception of childbearing as a key female behaviour? Or indeed, having women at the forefront of organising caring, children's activities and feeding hungry people?

Nevertheless, in its valorisation of caring and its flexibility to the needs of participants, both spaces offer a kind of freedom to embrace care. The meadow and the garden are both spaces in which parents are explicitly welcome, with activities put on for children in toddler groups and the outdoor learning club. It is a place where people feel they can stay for long periods of time, where indeed parents and carers spend hours letting children run free and feeling connected, like this is a space they are allowed to take up. This was reflected in people's narratives around the long hours they could spend on the meadow. Yet because of this welcome and the focus particularly on the Children's Wood nominatively and practically on children, this implicitly offers a narrow role for women as mothers and can feel exclusionary to those who are not. Indeed, Joan noted that her friends struggle to see the meadow as she does, since they see it as for 'smug marrieds' and kids, rather than for those outwith family units. Normative parenthood can thus be exclusionary (a situation not unknown in academia, see Jackson 2017).

The Children's Wood make attempts to include non-parents in their committee, trying to reach beyond the obvious constituency of those with children. To this end, Joan is there as representative of both dog walkers and non-parents. Peter too has been sometimes involved in committee meetings. Childless and dog-less, he is interested in environmental and community aspects of the campaign. Some balance is sought in this way, yet Terry's persistent attitude that, if you want something done in the space, you ask a single-mother rather than a professional banker (implied as male), is again telling. Playing on the assumption of a busy but efficient mother, as opposed to

an interested-in-principle but terribly busy banker, reinforces the sense that these are spaces in many ways run by women. The weight of organising communally (and organising communality) then becomes one that is principally bourn by women, and particularly mothers. Nevertheless they are also perhaps those who benefit most from it: from a free space to entertain children, from a sense of connection and from building solidaristic networks from whom support can be forthcoming.

Nevertheless, in moments of representation, this labour can become invisible. In the press, Polly is often quoted alongside Terry, or even well-known Jim. Polly is, of course, the chair of the Children's Wood organisation. However, when it came to a television appearance for STV (a local television channel), two white, middle class men represented the campaigns. Terry makes a joke about the sun reflecting off their balding heads at one point. This situation is partly circumstantial – STV were supposed to come the week before, when Joan was around. On the day they do come, Polly wanted to make an appearance alongside Jim and could not. Yet this is part of a longer trajectory, where often men stand in for the campaign as metonyms for community. At the crux of campaigning, a public hearing was held with a Reporter to the Scottish Government (a civil servant appointed to compile a report on the planning objections). Present for the developers and the council, on one side of the table, were five men. On the other, however, the only woman was Polly herself. The audience, such as they were positioned physically, was made up of supporters for the meadow, primarily an audience of women. The imbalance was not lost on activists. During the proceedings, other members of the campaign felt the council representatives treated Polly unfairly. En route to the meadow for an accompanied site visit, Elaine and Natalie (campaigners and mothers) talked with me about how Polly was treated on the panel, particularly by the main council representative. Natalie expresses a wish that

the council's man would stop 'mansplaining' (following the conversation that followed Rebecca Solnit's (2014) essay, *Men Explain Things To Me*) and presents her frustrations with the way he disregarded 'the community'. This builds upon the sense of the campaign as gendered, and blurs the line between 'the community', here represented in the way that comments from the audience were diminished and undervalued, and the very female turnout, reaffirming that elision of campaign into parenthood.

But the question of representation is not a simple erasure, it was also a question of tactics. Representing the North Kelvin Meadow Campaign – who put in a separate objection – as well as the North Kelvin Community Council, are Terry and Alasdair. As head, and pretty much the only member, of the former organisation, Terry was the obvious choice. But Polly's husband – a professor and supporter of the campaign – was on the panel, whereas all the outspoken women involved in running schools sessions, lobbying MPs and handing out cups of tea were in the audience. Long-term committee member, Michael whose contributions have been more strategic rather than practical, also joined Polly around the table. This reliance on white middle class, middle-aged men of relative status (a professor, an ex-professor, an architect) is provocative and raises questions. Is it just playing the system, presenting a familiar face to the council and developers (who were consistently white men, and mostly over 35)? Does it diminish the 'community' to represent it not as a 'mother's campaign' but as a panel of white professional men? Sidelining the femininity of the meadow in an official set up seems important, not least because it symbolically devalues the contribution of these women who have actively campaigned for the space and engage in the reproduction of community daily. Instead, and presumably as a tactical decision, they put forward a series of men, while on a daily basis, the spaces researched were by and large spaces where women predominate. The spaces may offer an

opportunity to value care and social connection, remaking structures of value. However, they also reproduce a conservative, procreation-centric sense of being female. While this can be read problematically alongside the predominance of caring work, this has implications for how being male figures in the meadow.

The spaces offer the potential for a different kind of space for the development of masculinity, although at best it is nascent. In growing and the more caring aspects of the garden and associated projects, is there room for an expanded way of thinking about masculinity? Michael is one of the older members of the Children's Wood committee and he has many years experience in social work. Reflecting on what has changed in the course of his lifetime, he made suggestive comments about the potential of the space for reimagining masculinity:

With young people growing up, and getting the right balance and not feeling emasculated, and knowing it's good to do things which in yesteryear [*mutters*] you know, pushing prams, dyeing your hair, doing what you want, letting young people develop the way they want to develop. It gives them identity. I think guys have lost their identity or are trying to shrug off their previous identity. Saying, no, no, I don't want to be like this, in a very small way, I think this kind of project can help with this kind of thing.

(Michael interview, July 2016)

What Michael is suggesting is the meadow as a space for doing masculinity differently, or perhaps for even undoing masculinity in Deutsch's (2007) sense: the potential for a shift in ways of being male and what it means to include caring. In this broadened sense of a caring masculinity is a sense of undoing heteronormative assumptions of a division of labour that places the burden of care on women. Perhaps then there is room for more flexible

explorations of masculinity in these spaces, or to even go beyond an understanding of caring as part of a binary gendered characteristic. This involves seeing caring as universally human rather than being something primarily associated with the feminine side of the feminine/masculine binary.

## **On 'garden babies' and defensive masculinity**

A noticeable aspect of the Woodlands Community Garden and their Community Café is the predominance of female volunteers in areas that are traditionally female (i.e. child care, early years education, cooking, and crafting). The gardening itself tends to be more balanced, which in many ways reinforces this pattern. Consider attendance at a craft workshop held by Woodlands Community Garden during a gardening session. In a discussion on who was coming along to a weaving workshop, it became clear that the workshop was going to be predominantly, if not solely, female. One woman who was intending to attend, Mona, says in reference to this gender imbalance that she could not get her boyfriend to come and check out the garden today, let alone come weaving. We fall to discussing the session today, and discover that actually there were not that many men involved in the gardening session that day either. There are about five men to fourteen women, and I suspect our rough count might have missed some more female participants. This is not an unusual set up, and a suggestive link might be made between this female-heavy context and the previous discussion on the garden being a place of haven for those who are outwith normal, valorised labour arrangements. That women should be overrepresented in such a section of the labour force recalls the overrepresentation of women in part-time work (Bates 2015; The Poverty Site n.d.).

Equally, most of the volunteers at the community café during the period I was involved were female. This was made most obvious by the exceptions. Two

women run the Community Café's kitchen, directing the actions of a handful of volunteers (from around five up to sometimes ten or more). Primarily, café activities involve chopping things up and occasionally some supervised stirring, but some volunteers spend a large amount of their time doing washing up. In this context, one male volunteer, Roger, was often highly vocal, in a jocular way, about how strong and masculine he was. The discontinuity of the behaviour with the otherwise supportive (rather than competitive) atmosphere could be disconcerting. Roger's behaviour was emphasised when he was asked to open a jar of olives for me. He happily acquiesced, easily shifting the lid and then joking about his strength again. To contextualise this, Roger is about the same height as me (168cm) and not much larger in build, but he likes to make jokes about his manliness while chopping up vegetables and doing the dishes. In the context of the café, this behaviour is knowing, and is so often Roger's *modus operandi* as he does this caring work. It is suggestive when read alongside Michael's comments regarding the meadow and its potentials to open up new ways of being a man. Roger's behaviour creates instead a tension between loud jocular vocalisations of masculinity whilst carrying out caring work, almost explicitly linking the two, in this jarring, humorous way. This behaviour is particularly notable in contrast with the otherwise female surrounds.

The relation of gender to volunteer labour can be positioned as a problematic in relation to the reproduction of hierarchies of valuation. The café makes use of volunteer labour, relying on the availability of the 'waifs and strays' that are free in the late afternoon on a Monday, as one participant puts it. That women should be heavily represented in these spaces suggests some relation between women, an ethic of care, and flexible working (if any work outside the home is taken). Perhaps it is the legitimacy of volunteering as an alternative to work or housework that attracts women who are employed outside of the usual 9-5.

For one café volunteer, Marion, the validity of volunteering would mean she could use it in the future to avoid taking on the bulk of the housework. Marion jokes about how when her husband, who is in Manchester pursuing a PhD, becomes a lecturer, she wants to go part time and have kids, or just go part time and enjoy herself. She then admitted that she would probably simply spend a lot more time volunteering if she were part time, because otherwise she would feel pressure to do a larger share of the housework were she not working more often. There are a number of, not entirely serious, suggestions in this. Indeed, it recalls Roger's flippancy in the kitchen, the grating but tongue-in-cheek affirmations of manliness. Yet this is a reflection too on what are valid non-economic activities, and their relation to employment. The outward facing 'goodness' of volunteering may account for its validity as a non-work activity, yet it is not – at either the Children's Wood or the Woodlands café – perhaps as equally valid for men as for women. Certainly, this is the comparison Terry makes above at the meadow between the busy banker and the busy single mum: only the latter gets things done, only the latter makes time for volunteering. Perhaps this is women's third shift: not just working at a job and in the home, but also in civic life. This is especially highlighted in Marion's sense that the housework would still be her burden. What seems pertinent in this is that Marion feels the need to justify her time: volunteering is valid in some sense, whereas leisure would not be.

For pregnant women in the community garden, traditional gender roles also mean a certain kind of body-policing. This often figures through the practice of care, through looking out for the mother-to-be. How agile and active Eloise for example remains late into her pregnancy surprises people, to the point of commentary. It is also noted how small she is, how neat the baby bump is. Her body is watched and commented upon as an object of collective fascination. This has elements of care threaded too with elements of watchfulness, of



keeping her in line, of care taken to remind her not to do too much. This continues after birth, through the notion of 'garden babies'. A garden baby is a baby born into the garden, whose mother was pregnant whilst involved in the garden (or near enough, the boundaries are perhaps more flexible than this). Eloise, after having her daughter Therese, brings her by the garden often. Therese is very much a garden baby. She is baby-sat by another in the garden, and whilst very small is passed around the room for cuddles. Other mothers – such as myself – who were involved in the garden while pregnant have their children claimed under this title too. During one visit, when Therese is being passed around, conversations abound about how many mothers come to the garden, and how the garden has a number of these garden babies. Eloise and I have talked before about the number of pregnant women who visit, though we were at the time pregnant ourselves and prone to noticing. The sight of Samantha with Therese provokes a different conversation: the 'who is next' conversation. It has a gossipy tone, light and joking. Mona says that the garden is making her more broody. We laugh and discuss whether Mona or Samantha (the most obvious candidates) will be next to have a baby. A year or so later, Samantha does indeed have a child. Though I expect the conversations at Woodlands had little to do with it, exposure to a greater number of babies does influence her decision. Parent-talk is not necessarily used to police people. Mona is not chastised for not procreating. But the predominance of families and of traditional gendered roles is heteronormative.

In one telling incident, Adam is told he cannot possibly know or understand what is being discussed, when he dares to offer an opinion about the need to stay fit whilst pregnant. He offers this during a conversation about what 'garden babies' are like in the womb, usually producing only small bumps that do not show very much (a slightly wild generalisation). Adam's input into a conversation about pregnancy amongst women who are either pregnant or

have been pregnant is reacted to with humour, but also with a pointed comment. In response, Lizzie asks, rhetorically, what he would know about the subject? In an implicit way, this reinforces gendered imaginations, particularly around who has the right to talk about pregnancy and pregnant bodies. Incidents such as these reinforce the idea that the caring ethic is a gendered issue. It also asks whether masculinities are being reinterpreted in the space, or whether this is too rosy a future to imagine for the projects.

The promise is of a field (sometimes literally) of utopian potential, where caring and feminine labour is valued. But there is also a clear sense in which a heteronormative sense of white, straight parenthood permeates the projects. This can translate into limited appeal to those outwith those traditional institutions. Approaching this through the lens of inclusion, it is possible to see how tensions arise between creating a space for parents and families as an inclusive focus, and a restricted sense of whom the space then becomes for. (Un)doing gender in these case studies was intertwined with care, and motherhood is a central and celebrated role within this context. This also involves the potential (but empirically limited) reinterpretation of masculinity along caring lines. Considering the way gender figures in the projects also raises questions around the representation of the projects, which are not always represented as female dominated.

## **Conclusions**

The partiality of the case studies is illustrative not least because both constantly make attempts to ameliorate it and widen access to the 'good' that they can offer. In the case of the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood, the discussion here revolved around class structures and conceptions of 'middle class-ness', but also involved a discussion of whiteness. Beyond that there are certain groups who are targeted more than others. For the North

Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood, reflecting on these exclusions means attempting to ameliorate their partiality. Largely this means using the schools programme to reach out to those in poorer areas or with special needs. It also means further partnership work with organisations like the Maryhill Integration Network and Home Start, who work often with asylum seekers and immigrants, but also in the case of the latter with Scottish people who need support in their family life. Accusations of being a defensive middle class campaign are accurate too only inasmuch as they reflect the class position of those involved in the committees. Use of the site, and its benefits, are in fact felt by a much larger swathe of the population. Those closer to the organisations may however benefit more strongly from the affective and psychological benefits of communal growing, and in this sense there is a class bias.

The Woodlands Community Garden is partial in a different way. Woodlands Community Garden represents a different demographic dynamic, sitting in a more ethnically diverse area and attracting a different group of core gardeners. This has shaped in important ways the culture of the garden, as well as opening it up as a safe, therapeutic space. At Woodlands, currents around exclusion flow around questions of ethnicity, employment and disabilities. They too claim to be open and egalitarian but, as a formal body sometimes acting to represent the area in consultations and other formal processes, their lack of representation is more challenging. In class terms, Woodlands lack the more obvious class position of those at the meadow. Where they show absences is in the separation of the Woodland Community Garden from the local Muslim population. This limits their ability to represent the locality. Problematically, their inclusion agenda is often discursively related to one man with learning disabilities. This apparent tokenism may in fact be a facet of the wider field of the community garden scene, where

demonstrating prestige, social justice and innovation are key to securing funding and thus the future existence of the garden itself.

The question of gender representation is a complex one, but one that both projects face in similar terms. Some suggestive evidence coming from both projects suggests that while the spaces could be largely egalitarian, in their public facing modes, there was a curious erasure of the prominent role of women during public hearings at the meadow. At Woodlands, the preoccupation with babies and motherhood suggests a similar reproduction of the expectation of mothering that is a particularly narrow template for young females. This becomes explicitly about reproduction. Nonetheless, there is the potential for the development of a gender-crossing ethic of caring, that subverts traditional masculinities, and the wider ethic of sharing and emotional connection has potential in this context. It was, however, primarily a potential during my involvement at both field sites.

This affects what community means in this context, not just in terms of concretising the boundary processes of communal behaviour around certain social axes of class and ethnicity, but also in terms of what possibilities lie in communal growing projects as alternative social spaces. The resonance of community with family and particularly, in both case studies, with white middle class mothers highlights a continued resonance of conservative social figurations in the face of an otherwise progressive ideological commitment to inclusion. This is most problematised in connection with what becomes the difficult other. At Woodlands and at the meadow, there is a certain degree of criminality associated with young men who use the space recreationally. Their behaviour is positioned as contrary to the spaces and it troubles the openness agenda, as discussed in chapter three. What I suggest here is that this is also about the construction of middle class identity against the other: the white

working class (problematic, but figuratively powerful) and the racialised other.

In Imogen Tyler's (2013) work, she offers a thick description of abjection as a way of offering a politics from below, and highlights the 'necessity "to reinvent, from the scene of survival, new idioms of the political, and of belonging itself"' (Tyler, 2013: 13 quoting Berlant, 2011: 262). What I want to suggest is that the troubling of difference broadly across the case studies offers a political opportunity: the possibility of contact, although it clearly occurs in a space of constant negotiation and renegotiation. In this, I would situate the transformative potential of communal urban growing projects, whilst simultaneously recognising it to be latent. In chapter six, I will return to the question of transformation and alterity to discuss the structural and organisational challenges faced by organisations in actualising this transformative potential.

# Chapter five:

## Communal growing's urban intervention

A key question in this thesis is what relationship exists between communal growing projects and processes of local development. The primary focus of this chapter in answering this question is a discussion of the urban interventions created by communal growing projects as they engage with development and the city as lived. What I explore here is the connection between narrations and rhythms of space, and wider urban contexts as a way of explicating the specific place and moment of growing produced as the projects' engage in enlivening their small patch of Glasgow. I argue that projects create an alternative kind of space and time within the city to create locally specific forms of urban life.

The form of urban life propagated in communal urban growing projects is often autonomous, moving beyond the pressures of everyday life and carving out a space of solidarity in the city. Autonomy is a helpful idea here in going beyond the idea of the projects as alternative to instead stake in positive terms what is sought (Wilson, 2013). Drawing on the work of Chatterton (2005) and Chatterton and Pickerill (2010), autonomy is a useful heuristic for making sense of the different kinds of alterity produced in interstitial urban spaces, defined broadly as 'a desire for freedom, self-organization and mutual aid' (Chatterton, 2005, p. 545). It also helps frame what is at stake. This is about who makes the city, although it is focused on two very specific places within Glasgow. Communal growing's urbanity, in reinventing a small part of

the time and space of the city, claims a right to the city – to its determination and to its future development (Lefebvre, 1996; pursued in relation to community gardens by Schmelzkopf, 2002). In this, it is the ‘right to urban life’ as imagined by Lefebvre (1996: 158), where urban life is situated as encounter, creation and the primacy of use value. As Harvey (2003) argues, the right to the city is ‘not merely a right of access to what the property speculators and state planners define, but an active right to make the city different, to shape it more in accord with our heart’s desire, and to re-make ourselves thereby in a different image’ (Harvey 2003, p.3). Communal growing in a mundane way does precisely this: reshaping the urban fabric and its rhythms to reflect a slower, more connected way of being. In this, slowness is indicative of reclaiming the right to urban time, the right to set one’s own pace in the city. In carrying forward such interventions, the projects engage with questions of legitimacy and authority. Thus, in the first half of the chapter, I will explore the ways in which the right to the city is staked and how attempts are made to establish legitimacy and authority as actors in the urban milieu. Within the delimited space of the projects however a rather different relation to the city emerges: the possibility of autonomy and of escape, rather than confrontation. As Olin Wright notes: ‘One of the oldest responses to the onslaught of capitalism has been to escape’ (Wright 2015). In this chapter, I explore the various political implications of this simultaneous contestation and removal. I want to explicate the engagement of communal growing projects with the production of the city and what Chatterton and Pickerill call ‘the dirty, real work of activism that expresses a pragmatic ‘get on with it’, an antagonistic ‘no’, and a hopeful ‘yes’ (Chatterton & Pickerill 2010, p.476). Whilst neither case study always positions itself as activist, this spirit of ‘get on with it’ and trying to sculpt a new way of living the city resonates clearly with both the Woodlands Community Garden and the North Kelvin Meadow.

## **Land use, land value, land use-value**

Communal growing as a practice interferes in the way that land is valued, reinterpreting it and often revaluing it. Through tidying up derelict spaces and making oft-ignored interstitial plots beautiful, communal growing can rejuvenate neighbourhoods, and reinterpret notions of dereliction and devaluation (Drake & Lawson 2014). Physically intervening in the city is a way of establishing the fact that someone cares; that some holds dear this patch of earth (or concrete). In so doing, communal growing creates a specific form of urban life that recalibrates valuation towards the social and the environmental, away from the commodification of urban land. Despite taking urban land out of market circulation for a time, communal gardens potentially increase the economic value of the land upon which it sits, and ultimately if the land tenure is temporary, can lead to a more attractive proposition for development as usual, since the value of the land increased. Glasgow City Council tout this as a potential benefit for land owners taking part in the Stalled Spaces programme, which funds a number of community gardens in Glasgow (Glasgow City Council n.d.). Community gardens have also been shown to raise surrounding house prices, leading scholars to argue that communal growing can be a route to gentrification (Voicu & Been 2008; Wolch et al. 2014).

Whilst this spectre of gentrification haunts communal growing, reinterpreting the city is a central aspect of what collective gardens do. Through their physical intervention, the meadow and garden come to be reframed and understood differently within the broader cityscape. The valuing of community gardens elevates the land's use value over its exchange value, emphasising certain uses of the land (growing, communal uses, shared parks) over commodification (Schmelzkopf 2002; Drake & Lawson 2014). Within this is often a narrative of transformation. The exploration of how this functions,



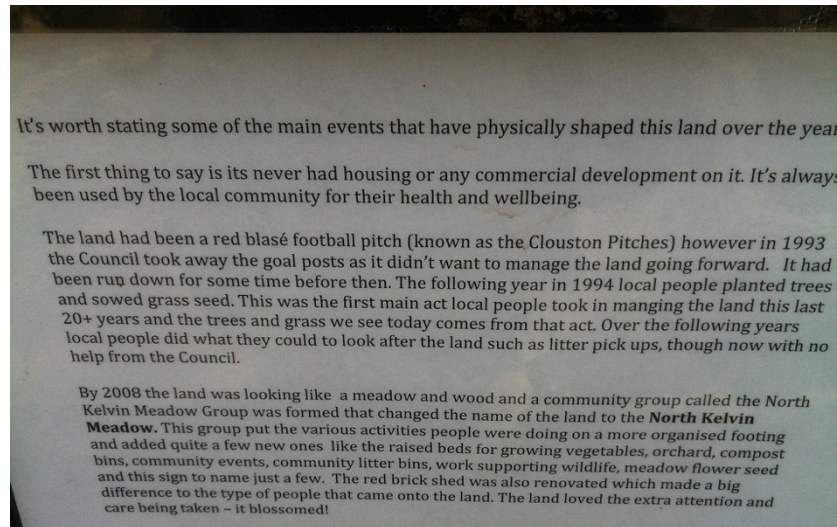
below, demonstrates however a complicated picture of pluralistic valuation. This is to consider processes of valuing the use of land as culturally situated within dynamics of social distinction and class, building on the previous chapter's exploration of the boundedness of communality in the context of urban growing. Whilst important critiques of the destruction of community gardens have drawn attention to the commodification of urban land as a core aspect of how the use values of the space are devalued (particularly Schmelzkopf 2002), in the two case studies explored here there is a complex dynamic of privilege and urban land use. There is an important question to be asked here: who is using and valuing the space, and in which ways? This will be illustrated through the actual practices of narrating and reinterpreting the spaces. At both field sites explored in this research, the way land is reused and reinterpreted is focused on a narrative from dereliction and disrepair, towards a valuing of the land and its place in the ecology of the area. Exploring these narratives is a good way of looking at the tensions inherent in this reframing for, although both sites rely on a non-economic valuing of the land, their wider relation to the local area is important in understanding how reframing these sites occurs. While we can see this as relating to the land in its physical sense – particularly the immediate use of the land – this is also about positioning a historical narrative.

Two immediate concurrencies between the narratives of the projects are notable. Firstly, that both sites have had periods of limited use, where they have been considered derelict. This is a key part of the way community gardens and other interstitial projects emerge – from dereliction, or vacancy, in the gaps of what has been before (Drake & Lawson 2014; Loukaitou - Sideris 1996; Andres & Grésillon 2013). The notion that community gardens turn vacant land into thriving green havens bears similarity to dominant narratives around urban development more generally. In critical terms,

dereliction can be an alibi for creative destruction and neoliberal regeneration. Weber (2002) explores this at length regarding the use of 'blight' metaphors as a means of denigrating neighbourhoods. She argues that this produces conditions for a large rent gap. After the demolition of the extant buildings, the spaces they held become narratively positioned as diseased and in need of remediation, as a biological necessity (Weber 2002). The growing projects studied here reproduced a level of stigmatisation in their own narratives about the sites: noting rubble, criminality and waste as associated with sites prior to interventions by the projects. That there are echoes of the dereliction story arc recalls Polletta's (1998) contention around protest movements. She argued the narratives espoused by social movements often selectively recall hegemonic representations of those movements. A form of selective recall can be noted here. Nonetheless, both projects reframe the value of the land in a specifically communal way. This collectivism is central to the way the projects position themselves ideologically. It is imperative to explore what the repetition of dominant narratives does in these cases, to ask what is carried over in this narration.

## **Narrating the North Kelvin Meadow and the Children's Wood**

In terms of positioning themselves narratively, the meadow and wood campaigns (in the plural) have drawn a long historical arc from the point at which they can first date the site. On the website of the North Kelvin Meadow campaign, they show a 'timeline', which begins: '**pre-1939** – Records show there were never any buildings on this land' (North Kelvin Meadow, n.d.). It is important for the way the campaigns have portrayed this land that it was never 'built' on before, although the surface of the pitches was artificial and it



**Figure 9: A notice from the meadow narrating the history. Here the writer is precise: no housing or commercial development ever on the site. May 2016. Photograph by the author.**

at one time had two changing room buildings on the site. Only one of those now remains, crumbling on the Clouston Street side of the meadow. The lack of historical building on the land is written on laminated posters on the site itself, as well as on the website. Figure 9 shows such a poster, which clearly situates the history of the site, which they say: 'never had any housing or commercial development on it' (see below). Figure 9 was taken of a poster hanging on a fence on the perimeter of the meadow, there for any visitor to see.

In person, too, this was repeated regularly:

It'd always been used as historically by kids because the land was sort of connected with the school originally and obviously you know hasn't been built on, **you probably know a lot of the history** you know, playing fields and so forth.

(Polly interview, July 2015, emphasis added)

I've thought about [Glasgow City Council's] arrogance in just deciding that they were going to set all this for building. And we've, the old

committee established beyond doubt that **this land is for leisure use only**, and they've just ignored it.

(Alasdair interview, December 2014, emphasis added)

In making claims to 'history' and the idea that this is 'established', Polly and Alasdair, as well as the posters around the site, make knowledge claims about the site and position it as a local community good: as playing fields, as for 'leisure use'. In invoking history they are also making claims to precedent, to shift what could be seen as an argument for a change of use, to an argument for continuity of use. Yet, one campaigner who worked to try and develop the space as a sports complex for the community from the late 1990s (the effort eventually collapsed in 2007), was keen to show me plans drawn up by the Compendium Trust who were active from the mid 1990s until around 2007. Their plans, below in figure 10, involved developing the space as a sports facility, including an array of pitches.

They had funding from a variety of sources (including Sports Scotland, as noted in figure 10) and Sean, who was active in the Compendium Trust, finds the emphasis on the land as 'never developed' misleading and irritating:

They're talking as if this site has never been developed, never been put forward for any kind of community scheme whatsoever... But that's not true.

(Sean interview, July 2016)

Sean's issue here is the elision of an entire phase of the space's history into a more convenient narrative arc: the space as undeveloped, as wild remainder in the city. Yet Sean and others campaigned for a period of nearly ten years to develop the space into a sports facility, within the arc of a different narrative – that of the retention of the space for sports within the city. That this narrative

is overlooked is partly to do with a discontinuity of the movements, but is also explicable through the lack of narrative continuity that a sports development has with the ecologically focused narrative that the meadow advocates espouse.

Sean's irritation emphasises the contestation over what the idea of *developing the meadow* means. It also highlights the specific and partial narrative of the campaigns. The most formalised narrative of the space lies in the coalescence of both the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood's discourse around the

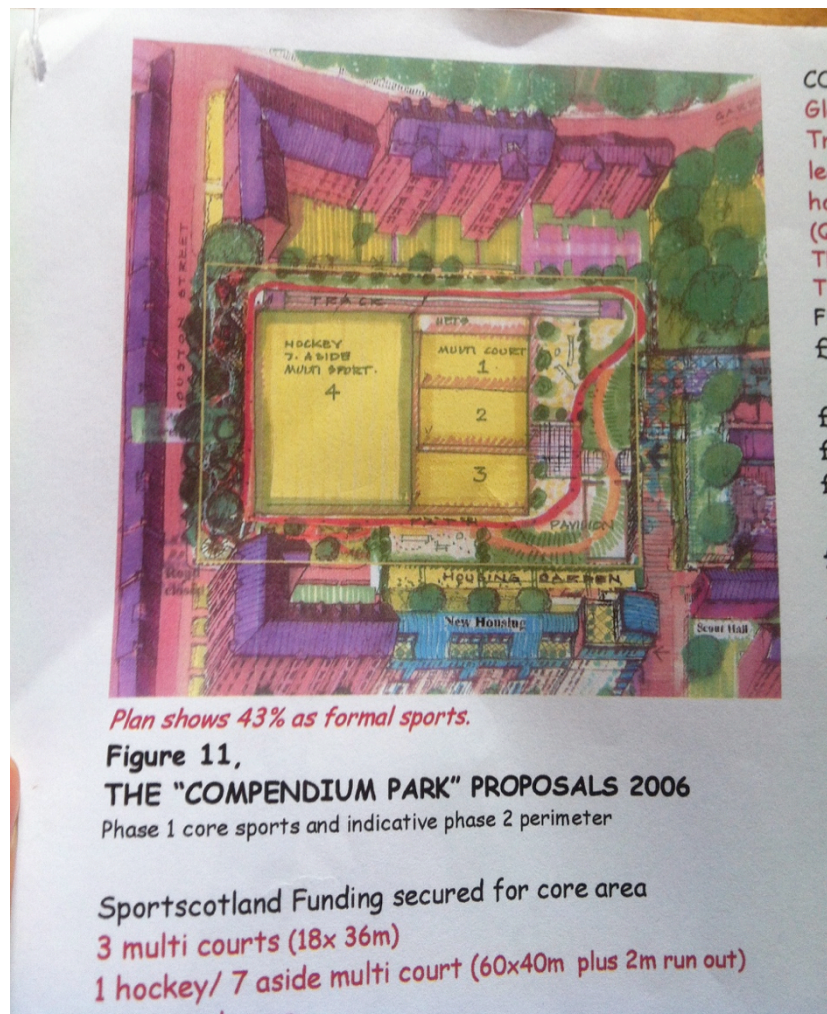


Figure 10: A Compendium Trust plan in a publication from 2006 showing planned sports facilities on the meadow. Photograph by author.

history and development of the space. The idea of the meadow as pristine and never built on is important as a way of framing the meadow into a mythologised place of pre-existing commons, a place which has been used solely for the common good. Although they do not speak of it in terms of commons, it is implicit in the way they discuss it as part of the war effort. Campaigners publicise how the meadow hosted barrage balloons to protect the nearby regional BBC buildings, as well as foreign soldiers during both wars. Sometimes empty bullet cartridges are still found on site, according to participants and local history enthusiasts. Further, seeing it in this common way underpins much of their argument to 'keep' it in community use (note: they do not say, turn it over to, even though from the council's perspective it was never primarily in community use). As Sean notes above, this is only a partial narrative – it ignores the effort that ran from the late 1990s until it failed to pass noise tests in 2007 (with the Compendium Trust ceasing in 2008) to turn it into a formalised sports facility. This tends to be overlooked in favour of a narrative of being reclaimed by nature, and of being always undeveloped, although after some discussion, the Compendium Trust bid latterly was included on the Children's Wood timeline.

Nevertheless, the campaigns tend to frame the development applications as being a shift in use – towards its commodification. This draws on a negative notion of development as commodifying space, and narrowly sees it in such terms. Contrarily, campaigners proffer a range of use values, dissociating their own interventions in space from the idea of 'development'. Campaigners will often explicitly talk about how much money the council will get from the land, which they see as being the overarching concern behind the approval of the planning application by New City Vision, the development company. This particularly applies to the campaigns between 2008 and 2016.

The council, by unexpected contrast, do not represent the land the same way. Firstly, by referring to the site as 'the site of the former Clouston Street pitches', they emphasise its place as defunct, as out of date, and as having had no official purpose since its iteration as academic sports space. During the public hearing to assess the development's planning application, the council's representative consistently emphasised the importance in planning terms of the 'last established use'. In this, they mean as sports pitches. The council also emphasised the lack of permission the people who use the site have to be there, mentioning the injunction they took out against two campaigners for trespass. It is notable that they did not ever enforce that injunction, but it remains there, hanging as a threat over activists. Contrary to the narrative of precedent that the campaigns emphasise, for the council the previous use was by schools (not the community) and this means that, since the schools closed in the 1990s, it is without sanctioned function. This is the point at which the question of legibility appears.

The contest here can be considered at a symbolic level as a question of legibility: of how the materiality of the urban is made sense of. There are different ways of understanding this process. Although Lynch's (1960) work helpfully illuminates the idea that urban legibility is 'the ease with which its parts can be recognised and can be organised into a coherent pattern' (p. 2-3), such a notion of legibility begs the question: legible to whom? Contrarily, de Certeau (1984) sees legibility, as reflected in the map and the myth, as destroying ways of being and erasing 'the act itself of passing by' (1984, p.97). For de Certeau, underneath legibility is always the city in its messiness, as lived and traversed, often subverting legible ways of understanding the city. While de Certeau's work attunes the reader to the power dynamics inherent in legibility, it is the work of James Scott (1998) that is helpful here in illuminating the contests over land specification and meaning at the meadow.

In *Seeing like a State*, Scott suggests that the centralised state project is one of simplification and increasing the legibility of social structures in order to make them coherent to the outsider, particularly the centralised state outsider. Indeed, Scott sees 'legibility as a central problem in statecraft' (Scott 1998, p.3). This leads to a number of simplifications and unifications of measurement, indeed ways of organising centralised state functions like land use in such a way as to make them easy to administer. But for Scott practices of making the local legible intervene in the practices that they seek to describe and order, and in this way shape local customs.

The notion of simplification is particularly applicable here because this is precisely the action of planning and zoning systems: it is, inter alia, a system of simplification. As Scott notes, 'state simplifications... are always far more static and schematic than the actual phenomena they presume to typify' (Scott 1998, p.47). This sense of simplification is easily translated into the context of the meadow. It makes sense of the gap in understanding between locals and the council regarding what the use of the site is. The council use the shorthand of 'last established use' as a planning term to understand what the purpose and use of the land was and is. This 'last established use' is a simplification from the complicated melange of everyday uses to the ordained and sanctified land use. Local understandings of the space as communal, as used everyday, are lost in this simplification. What is at stake here however is more than just a discontinuity between bureaucratic definitions and actual practices. It is that planning logics often take precedence over and substantially change local variation. In the case of the meadow, it took a Reporter to the Scottish Government to acknowledge the local uses of the space in order for them to be counted in the planning system. The danger of getting lost in bureaucratic translation is existential: the meadow would have been destroyed if planning permission had been given for housing.



The discontinuity between the council vision of the meadow and the local vision produces amongst meadow advocates the narrative that the council are 'out of touch' with what goes on there. This emerged most obviously in conversations on the meadow in summer. Particularly as the plants flower and vegetables grow, it is easy to see the beauty and the uses of the space. Janice, a mother of two who often brings her children down, stopped to talk with me about how she valued the space. She said it seems a shame to her, since anyone who comes down to the space loves it. We note the beauty of the space, but she adds that that is part of what the planners don't see, and don't get. They are, to Janice, removed from the whole thing. But that distance might mean the end of the meadow for everyone here, which she emphasises as tragedy.

As Janice notes the council's planners are 'removed' from the meadow, but the reverse is also true. The meadow itself is at a remove from the council, but this has far greater ramifications for the meadow than for the council. The lack of fit of the meadow's activities within a bureaucratic understanding of the space is problematic in terms of the meadow's claims as legitimate users and determiners of the space. The activities carried out at the meadow and wood are unsanctioned and, whilst implicitly supported by the council via the schools, they are nonetheless illegible to the broader state machinery. In this sense, we can see how the idea of dereliction works as an extension of a bureaucratically defined notion of function (c.f. Weber 2002). Dereliction implies the illegibility of the space to the means and ends of whoever is categorising the space. The alternative narratives of the campaigns to save the meadow try to deliberately disrupt this, to rescue the space from this illegibility by renewing its value as social and trying to demonstrate it to the council. It is in this respect also a claim to have valid knowledge of the city, to

challenge bureaucratic knowledge's hegemony and establish the value of what Scott (1998, p.318) calls 'situated knowledge'.

In this, the meadow campaigns are campaigning for recognition – for their own legitimacy. In this sense, they often are trying to become bureaucratically legible, thus becoming charities and establishing connections with people such as the Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS) and volunteering organisations, as well as schools, which gives them leverage as providers of educational opportunities, valid sources of conservation volunteering and contributors to Glasgow more broadly. In this, they are also staking a claim around what a community can do. Rejecting housing development is one thing, but going beyond to orchestrate toddler groups, orchards, campaigns and psychological research projects is to stake a certain claim as to the rightful role of communities in the urban. In this they go far beyond the 'tyranny' of participation through consultation (Cooke & Kothari 2001), instead demonstrating the capacity that a communal enterprise such as the Children's Wood has.

Through their campaigns, the meadow organisations make a claim to their right to determine the city. Contrary to the council's narrative around 'last established use', the campaigns have created an alternative narrative about what the land is and what the land could be. Instead of developing it for housing, they argue – as Schmelzkopf (2002) argued the community gardens under threat in New York in the 1990s did – that the *use* of the land is the important facet and that it is 'incommensurable' with the economic benefits that the council gain either through the initial cost of the site, or through council tax gains. This is explicitly a clash of visions of whom the city is for, or what indeed the logic behind its development is. It recalls Scott's (1998) sense of (il)legibility: the issue for campaigners is the opacity of their claims, and

their non-economic valuation of the space. They attempt to overcome this through not only campaigning and lobbying but through taking on recognised forms of organisation (the non-profit). In this sense, the meadow are engaged in a specific struggle: trying to rewrite and reframe its history as being one of shared use, to recode the space as communal, and themselves as legitimate actors. In doing so they run into the issue Scott's (1998) legibility ultimately presents: the bureaucratically limited definitions of prior and legitimate use and process.

### **Contested neighbourhoods, diverging narratives**

Woodlands' work is also expanding the role of community, but the contrast between the projects' immediate geographical context lends an embedded difference to their narratives. It is important to highlight in comparing the cases the difference in hyper-local conditions that has important impacts on how the projects engage with development as an idea and process. Woodlands is a less valorised neighbourhood, further from the valorised west end. North Kelvin Meadow sits in what is often termed 'North Kelvinside', although some activists see this as primarily as marketing device to raise house prices by avoiding the negative implications of the area being in 'Maryhill'. As Madden (2017, p.2) notes: 'Place names can be used to signify who and what belongs and who and what does not'. However, this is not without struggle, and place names imposed by marketing are not always locally accepted (although, as Madden (2017) also notes, official representation tends to reproduce the nominative schemes of dominant groups). One of my participants colourfully illustrated this:

I've met a woman who lives up there actually, in one of those last tenements before you get to Tesco and that's kind of the old bit of the West End where it borders into Maryhill but it's kind of been turned into North Kelvinside but she was quite working class, she'd grown up

quite working class in Maryhill. She was like don't fucking say I'm from North Kelvinside, fuck off North Kelvinside, I'm from fucking Maryhill. Fuck all these people trying to pretend this is the posh West End now.  
(Howard interview, June 2016).

This expletive ridden account resonates with the class contestation at the meadow, although it echoes it on a much larger scale. The whole area of North Kelvinside is itself contested, a frontier in the encroachment of the west end's affluence into historically poor north Glasgow. There is an authenticity claim in this too – in that the lady in the story has a historical claim to a truer neighbourhood, and with newcomers trying to 'pretend' the area is 'posh'. This marketing move is testament to the recent changes in the area in terms of increased house prices, the arrival of award winning local cafes and little boutique shops. This positions the meadow in an economically viable area for housing development – something activists suggest is behind the council's staunch position of pushing ahead with development in the face of sustained local opposition.

By contrast, the Woodlands area is more interstitial. On one side, the M8 creates a hard boundary separating Woodlands from the centre of Glasgow city. On the other, the road it sits on runs down from the M8 towards the River Kelvin and Kelvingrove Park. Woodlands as an area sits between infrastructure and affluence, and is marked by a high level of turnover – both of shops and of residents. This was particularly highlighted by research carried out by consultancy firm Yellow Book for the Woodlands Community Development Trust. In this context of turnover and interstitiality, the spatial practices of Woodlands and their related narratives aim instead of contesting development, to encourage it. This said, they do so from a specific position: as 'community-led', rather than governmental or developer-led. This contradistinction is important in terms of how the behaviour of the trust is

positioned as socially rather than economically focused. As the manager, Oliver has noted:

We are community led, and that is where our priorities remain so... [while] we've got paid staff, it's still quite grassroots-ish in terms of our management board are all local residents, our volunteers are all predominantly local residents so it has a different feel from maybe different projects where you might have a larger organisation, and this is a satellite project that they run but they're not a local organisation.

(Oliver interview, July 2015)

Woodlands thus stake a claim to authenticity: to being 'grassroots-ish', and therefore to promoting local voices and their rights to determine the city. Woodlands anchor their legitimacy as actors in the city in representing the local area, claiming to work on their behalf. When looking specifically to increase the valorisation of the space, they work to reduce what might be seen



**Figure 11: A planter (number 3), West Princes Street, November 2016.  
Photograph by author.**

as the environmental degradation of the space through small interventions such as the community garden and the work they have done with schools and residents to put up signs asking people not to fly tip (see figure 12), cleaning up rubbish from back lanes and asking residents to take on the maintenance of the 'ugly' concrete planters (see figure 11). The signs around fences and planters were placed there by Woodlands to number the planters and try to affect local behavioural change. In engaging in signposting and labelling planters and fences, Woodlands stake a claim to the local area. They seek to address locally important issues like fly tipping and the awkward, and poorly kept, physical structures along West Princes Street. Being based in the area, and then claiming to be for it, casts a particular light on these improvement techniques as being not done to Woodlands so much as done with (or by) Woodlands.



**Figure 12: A Woodlands garden sign saying 'Don't dump here'**

Woodlands' form of urban life is rooted in not only a different micro-locale but also in a different relationship to the land itself. The Woodlands Community Development Trust (WCDT) own their site because of their practice in the 1980s of renovating and rebuilding housing in the area. They were gifted a number of gap sites by the council that they built on, all except the site that is currently the Community Garden. This phase in the WCDT's history ended in the late 1980s, as the trust was mothballed. It was dormant until 2008. It is difficult to make out a clear sense of how exactly the trust was revived, but the narrative as told by participants and staff at the garden suggests an engagement between the trust and a group of local activists wanting to create a garden on the site. This group, known as Garden Revolutions Of the West End (GROW), have left little trace besides their role in founding the community garden, although they claim on their dormant website to be guerrilla gardeners based in Glasgow's west end. At the behest of GROW, the WCDT renovated the gap site that had sat empty for over 30 years since a house fire necessitated the controlled demolition of the tenement building. Beyond this site, WCDT have also secured a lease on a gap site just along from the garden on which they have in 2017 built a temporary structure intended as community space, with artists studios to follow in 2018 (pending secure funding). It expands on previous work by the development trust promoting the arts and ecological issues at the same time, such as the Wild Words nature writing workshops. Being a development trust means, to Woodlands, investing in the future of a neighbourhood, working to improve and promote the area for those who live there, implicitly counter-posed against development for profit or external gain.

In the embryonic idea of 'guerrilla gardening' is a radical notion that did not necessarily translate into a radical organisational reality. Instead the garden has emerged as a professionalised practice which, while it relies heavily on

DIY and volunteer labour, is centralised in charity status, a board of directors and a manager who runs the full gamut of WCDT's projects. However, the projects of the WCDT remain focused on local interventions and derive their impetus from local research and ideas from board members, whom the WCDT say are largely local residents. Thus the narrative of WCDT, particularly with regards to the garden, is about providing for the local area – allowing Woodlands to become a better, nicer place through environmental interventions. It claims to be *for* the community. In this, there is the potential to see a locally empowered version of what development might mean. In the critical literature, development can figure as a problematic process, producing gentrification or fixing problem places (e.g. in Paton, Mooney, & McKee, 2012). Against this, the community development trust envisions a different way of doing development: oriented specifically around the idea of community itself. In this, an autonomous vision of the city is posited, and indeed a right to develop the city, to transmogrify the process of how the city is produced towards the values of community, inclusion and localism.

As the above suggests, the garden and the meadow both produce a specific kind of narrative which positions each project as part of a temporal trajectory. This describes an arc of improvement, echoing dominant narratives of urban development as fixing problem places (Paton et al. 2012; Polletta 1998). Beyond the symbolic violence of categorising past places as needing fixed, this narration also calls into question the relation of the projects to local urban dynamics. There is a tendency for such improvements to be Trojan horses for gentrification. Loughran (2014) has written of the effects of the development of the High Line park in New York on local spaces, increasing rents, supporting the continued suppression of the homeless population and curating middle-class businesses around access points to the elevated park. Similar work around community gardens by Voicu and Been (2008), also in New York,



suggests that communal growing has an effect on surrounding house prices. This research was not positioned to address what affects the communal growing practices were having on processes of rent increase and associated displacement. Nonetheless, there are localised dynamics of change that reflect some critical urban scholars' concerns regarding development. At the meadow, cleaning up and sign posting on the land has coded it as for a certain section of the middle class and thus less welcoming to those who are not part of that group. This is made most visible in the discomfort of working class meadow users at the 'twee' aesthetic and their disconnection from the campaigning organisations. The Woodlands Community Garden too is clearly having effects on the surrounding urban spaces, through deliberate actions shaping the physical environment and engaging locals in greening and tidying up. These interventions are in themselves urban developments, at a local level. There is no question then that the garden and the meadow are engaged in improvements that might fundamentally shift the character of the neighbourhoods. While I cannot assess what the future of such projects will be in terms of potential displacements, addressing the sense of ownership and authentic local interventions can lend an important perspective when making assessments of the projects as urban interventions.

## **The class dynamics of local autonomy**

There is an important agentic aspect to what occurs in communal growing projects and this is of importance when assessing the relationship these projects have to urban development. What is central in this is that the meadow and garden as local interventions *by locals*. This engages with a debate around urban participation – precisely, what should urban participation look like and what are its potentials? On-going debates in this field engage with critical questions of urban participation: precisely around how meaningful it can be, or indeed how it might move us towards

emancipation (e.g. in Cooke & Kothari 2001; Parfitt 2004; Baiocchi 2001; Christens & Speer 2006). Whilst Cooke and Kothari (2001) critique participatory development frameworks in international development for flattening out difference within the groups they work (usually terming them communities), accounts such as Parfitt's (2004) review and Baiocchi's (2001) work on participatory budgeting emphasise the capacity of participatory frameworks to work towards emancipation, even utopia. Particularly, the questions that resonate here from this literature are: whose voice carries in participatory processes; whose dissent comes to have weight?

In the context of the meadow and garden, there are two tendencies that are important here. The first tendency is towards seeing the projects as being didactic, as teaching others to grow, campaign and appreciate being outdoors in nature. As discussed in chapter four, this has an evangelistic tone that aligns closely with the class position of campaigners, with questionable associations of progress with middle class cultural practices. The second tendency, which builds on this sense of the projects as classed, is to rely on social networks to get things done.

At the meadow, activists hold specific, useful positions within networks of community activism and systems of bureaucratic representation that help them achieve strategic aims. For example, close ties with the North Kelvin Community Council mean that the Children's Wood and the North Kelvin Meadow campaign learned of upcoming development plans that they used against the council during the public hearing on planning permission for the meadow site. In the original plan for the development of the North Kelvin Meadow, renovation of close-by football pitches was offered as compensation as a 'like-for-like' compensation. The notion of like-for-like is a planning language campaigners have adopted derived from council policy that suggests

that the loss of an amenity should be replaced by a similar provision. As the Reporter to the Scottish Government notes:

4.25 Policy ENV 1 of City Plan 2 requires that where exception is made for development on open space within categories which include public parks and gardens, communal private gardens, amenity space, playspace for children and teenagers, sports areas and allotments, the development should either be directly related to the current use(s) of the open space or better serve local community needs by the provision, in the local area, of an area of equivalent, or higher quality open space, **to directly replace the type of open space that would be lost.**

(Cunliffe, 2016, emphasis in original)

Ability to take on the ENV1 policy and use it against developers during the planning process helped persuade the Scottish Government's reporter to reject planning permission for the proposed development. Speaking on behalf of the meadow at the hearing, Terry noted that the original plan offered renovation of the pitches up the road on Queen Margaret Drive. Current plans list that site, Terry continued, as a potential (if not preferred) place to build a primary school, due to the shifting demographic of the area. They then built the argument that there was no 'like-for-like' compensation for the loss of the meadow on two grounds: firstly that the intended renovation site was potentially going to be built on; and secondly that a sports pitch offered no real similarity to the meadow (undermining the idea that like-for-like was really being offered). The personal connection of the North Kelvin Meadow campaign to the North Kelvin Community Council allowed the campaign to know of this mooted development of the Queen Margaret Drive pitches and use it against the council in their public hearing. In this, they levered arguments at the council based on their own plans and their own policy. Social networks and high levels of education helped the middle class actors at the meadow resist housing development. Thus the class structure of the meadow

explored in chapter four had ramifications beyond boundary work. It also gave participants resources on which they could draw in challenging the council over the development of the meadow.

At Woodlands, their relationship to urban development is less aligned with dissent, and more so with participation in improvement, through consultation or indeed action. This still however raises questions regarding whose voice carries in these contexts. At Woodlands Community Garden, they are often called upon to take part in conferences on the future of food banks, or on cycling infrastructure, as they are known as a vocal group of local residents. They also apply pressure for change, through actions such as cleaning up local streets or voicing dissent over food poverty strategy. The question that is raised then, and it particularly affects how we might understand their relation to city development, is one of who benefits from the improvement?

Writing about Glasgow' regeneration not too far from Woodlands and North Kelvinside, Kirsteen Paton's work on Partick (and beyond) is notable in bringing working class perspectives into gentrification research (Paton 2011; Paton 2009; Paton 2014). Paton (2009) reports that her respondents say they need regeneration. One participant referred to as Fi says this very literally: 'What Partick needs is regenerated' (2009, p. 17). This resonated at Woodlands. I went out on a community consultation exercise with Cathy from the WCDT with a wheelbarrow all covered in bunting and we spoke to residents about their concerns about the local area. Most of them mentioned fly-tipping and the physically poor state of the buildings. Woodlands are a conduit for these concerns – and are considering a more active role in taking them forward. Certainly, they spend much time, energy and resources organising litter picks and buying materials like litter-pickers and branded high visibility jackets. Particularly, given their quite grounded methodology in

asking what locals want (public meetings, wheel barrow consultations, a survey), there may well be a sense that they can be a representative voice for local residents. But the spectre behind much of this notion of improvement and representation is this: the WCDT only represents part of the locality.

When the question of whose voice carries in urban development and dissent is asked then, the case studies in this thesis offer a problematic answer.

Participation is partial, and relies on the capacities and networks of an array of middle class actors. The projects have worked within, and are sometimes welcomed into, bureaucratic processes and can challenge the discourses there.

I want to explore in depth how projects face political dilemmas in relation to representation and funding in the next chapter. Here however, I want to reiterate the class resources that participants can draw on at the meadow and the garden projects. Their capacity to engage successfully appears to be quite tightly tied to social networks and education; in short, to class. They utilise their resources within governance structures to try and achieve their aims – even as, in the case of the meadow, they often take a position against the council. Since they have valuable resources within such systems, they do not try to disrupt the planning or agricultural systems themselves. The case studies here thus appear to be deeply embedded in the cultural and social milieu of their participants, as well as local specificities. In considering what this means politically, I recall John Urry, who argued: “Things have to start somewhere... So the question is, does it spread? Does it move?” (Urry interview in Bialski & Otto 2015, p.224). Urry’s argument is that movements need vanguards, and that it might matter less if these vanguards come from positions of privilege. Reflecting on the projects in this research, this remains a somewhat empirical question. Activists at both sites encourage other projects to grow (in literal and metaphorical senses). The meadow have a section on their website which suggests resources for ‘Setting up –

Campaigning' will be coming soon, although at time of writing it has said this for at least a year. In more informal terms, they do offer advice to those seeking to develop similar spaces that ask for it. Despite these tentative efforts, participants at both sites have relied on quite class specific networks and capacities in order to achieve their aims. It seems in this context questionable how transferrable this specific version of resistance is.

## **Common ownership, open ground**

Whilst an understanding of the spaces as class-skewed is crucial, it is complicated somewhat by the shared ethic of common ownership at both projects. Running contrary to a simple understanding of communal growing as a middle-class past time and land claim, communal ownership holds class interest in tension with universal access and equality. At the core of this notion is inclusion; that all are welcome, that all are equally responsible for and welcome to the land. It builds in tandem with the ideology of inclusion discussed in chapters three and four, and helps to explain the attitudes to the physical thresholds of the site. This is reflected particularly in unwillingness at either of the projects to close off entry to anyone. Ownership, however, goes further – not only are all welcome, but all have equal right to the space. This is the inclusive ideology at its most radical, but also at its most contestable. Again, the critical question resonates as to whether all are truly common owners. Nonetheless, as a radical political proposition, the cases offer a potential alternative vision to private property – ownership imagined in common. Yet this differs between the projects. At the North Kelvin Meadow, common ownership is a meditation on openness and welcoming in all. It reflects a lack of centralisation too. With two charities working in the space, and a sometimes-uneasy coalition of dog walkers, teenagers, parents, and casual users regularly engaging in the space, access and ownership are part of the common cause, part of what brought everyone together under the

umbrella of the campaign to save the space. At the meadow, ownership is an idealised projection. A subsidiary body of the city council, City Properties, owns the land. Since users of the meadow have no legal tenure, the idea of ownership here is imagined, although it is no less consequential. Common ownership is a much less salient idea at Woodlands Community Garden. The gardeners are imagined as common, as communal, but the land of the garden is owned by the WCDT. This means that in effect gardeners are renters, rather than owners. Reflecting the structure of the garden organisation, they are not without voice, but the garden (particularly in contrast with the meadow) is subject to hierarchical relationships.

When the Children's Wood emerged in 2010 from a secondary impulse to use the space for children's events, they continued and expanded the organisation of what key campaigner Polly calls 'guerrilla events'. Using the space without formal permission, this has garnered what might be considered tacit consent over the years. It recalls an argument proposed by Adams and Hardman (2014) which suggests that although guerrilla gardening draws on radical histories (with guerrilla literally meaning little war), its transgressive aspects can be overlaid and it can be congruent with local authority plans and aesthetics. Utilising this language seems to offer rather the veneer and thrill of radical action within a programme of otherwise acceptable and respectable practices. The Children's Wood and the North Kelvin Meadow have seen no eviction of activities or materials, the complicity of community police, and the use of the space by corporate volunteers through the Conservation Volunteers scheme. Nevertheless, the sense that this space became 'owned' by the community – recognised as theirs, or at least for their use – rather than by the council's subsidiary company (City Properties) – defined everyday relations with the space.

As an older resident who has been involved in the project from the 1990s, Alisdair speaks effusively of this, and although he can be a little unreliable as a narrator (and forgets people's names), he evokes the core ideas of this clearly:

Aye its communal, everyone's entitled to use it, which is the kind of thing I've been encouraging for quite a long time now, and I think it has actually caught on. I think people have got the idea that it's theirs... and that is one of the things that the corporation is desperately afraid of that the peop- we, I use the term we loosely, that we now feel as if we own it and if we do we have a right in law to say this is ours... you know, we've been on this land, we've taken it over, we've improved it, have you had a proper look round it. Have you had a good look round out there? I mean, there's an orchard out there...

They have actually taken what I reckon was my idea to begin with of a communal ownership and they've, they've absorbed it, they've actually, they seem to me to have taken this idea on board, that eh they have a right to be on it.

(Alasdair interview, December 2014)

Here, Alisdair takes questionable responsibility for the ethic of communal ownership of the land, but he also emphasises the anarchic idea at the heart of this imagined ownership of being 'entitled to use' the land and to change it because 'it's theirs'. The implications when translated into action are equally anarchic: the freedom of all to construct what they wish within the space. As explored in previous chapters, the construction of 'all' is imagined broadly but practically vexed. Nevertheless, this approach to ownership opens up possibilities for a kind of autonomous practice, embodied in creative approaches to the land itself whether in conservation, planting orchards or indeed in creating BMX runs. BMX runs appear on the site from time to time as young adults decide they want them (see figure 14). During 2016, heaps of earth were piled up along the usually fairly flat ground of one of the paths on



the meadow. Howard, only a bit older than those building the runs, facilitated their activities:

I hang out here a lot as well and again I've got access to the shed, so I've given, I gave the guys down here on their bikes a spade, they were like oh can we get a spade out of that shed.

(Howard interview, July 2016)

As Howard narrates, those involved feel a sense of entitlement to build the runs and are willing to ask those with access to tools for help to bring their ideas to fruition. Three heaps of earth may seem like little as interventions go, but it is indicative of a broader theme at the meadow: the feeling of liberation created by a culture of common ownership. This sense of freedom led to all kinds of interventions, like in figure 13, when a sign appeared in 2016 offering directions to fictional places, seemingly inspired by the imaginative capacity the meadow offers.

Nevertheless, this imaginative capacity has its practical limits, not only in terms of how inclusion figures within the meadow, but also in terms of running into state barriers to autonomy. Even after a decade of local objection, the council have not surrendered the site to the campaigns. In 2009, Glasgow City Council indicted local campaigners Terry and another of his then committee for putting up bat boxes. They were taken to court for trespass, but the judge threw out the indictment; calling out the council for their actions, saying neither had done anything wrong. However, as Terry has regularly pointed out, you cannot take a community to court. So although he no longer has anything to do with bat boxes and is careful about the wording of emails asking people to, for example, trim the lime trees so it's possible to walk along Clouston Street without stooping, he still encourages others to do as they please in the site.



**Figure 13: A sign that appeared in July 2016 signposting fictional places on the meadow. Photograph by author.**



**Figure 14: BMX runs through the trees on the meadow, June 2016. Photograph by author.**

Where the common ownership ethic runs into contradiction is in the construction of raised beds that belong, ostensibly, to one individual or family. There are a number of these scattered about the meadow, some in advanced states of disrepair, although Terry spent the summer of 2016 fixing the worst of the rot. Ownership of the beds, known sometimes as ‘allotments’ but rarely big enough to qualify for this name, is through subscription. A small annual donation is made to the North Kelvin Meadow campaign of £5 to £10 pounds in return for a raised bed. It is intended, according to Terry, to provoke consideration of whether the bed is still needed. What it creates is an ownership dilemma – to whom do the beds belong? As the few raised bed owners who were encountered during this research noted, one could not take a fully proprietorial attitude to the beds: food goes missing. Further, many are poorly tended, and they are often used as ad hoc seats, due to a lack of other appropriate structures in the meadow. Nonetheless, the meadow should not be seen as an entirely common space: the beds are technically rented to families; and the wood is often seen as the home of children’s play. Whilst ownership is imagined in common, in practice ownership is negotiated between users and often transgressed. Joan noted the tension this can provoke, with children telling dog walkers or adults there without offspring that they are not welcome as the wood is ‘theirs’. However, the already questionable tenure of the organisations on the land would make it difficult to strictly enforce private ownership, and thus there tends to be equality of use – including of other peoples’ produce – despite signage and loose agreements between growers and the North Kelvin Meadow. In this way, the imagination of ownership in common can come awkwardly to fruition, although more because of a lack of collective growing activities than because of a shared orientation to the rules of the space. The terrain of common ownership then is not flat but full of emotional and economic claims on the landscape of the

meadow, although a broad ethic of joint and open ownership has facilitated a broad range of creative practices in the space.

In the context of Woodlands Community Garden, there is a different dynamic when it comes to expressing ownership and it relates to the spatial practices of parcelling up land (or raised beds more specifically) and renting them out. Although the communality of growing is a central ethos, activity itself is quite individualised. There is a balance then between a communal ethos (a sense of community, of doing things together) and the pseudo-allotments that people actually grow in. Woodlands Community Garden is home to over 30 raised beds, each of which allocated to one individual or family. Although growing sessions bring people together, there is a sense in which the responsibility and joys of growing in that space are for that individual alone. Indeed, taking down a structure built by one gardener who had been neglecting his bed and had not paid for the year, became a strange point, something uncomfortable. The transgression of the private growing space of one gardener made obvious the background logic of the space: that the raised beds constitute private space. Interfering in the raised bed of a now-absent grower was uncomfortable precisely as it broached the property arrangement between grower and Woodlands as an organisation. It also in that moment emphasised the power of land ownership, and the reversion of power to the organisation to take back that which is deemed neglected.

This transgression of previously private property occurred early in the growing season, in April. One of the large structures that dominated the eye line in the garden was being removed. There were a number of guarded conversations between Mark and Jen about this. Enquiring after this, I learned that the construction that was being removed was on the bed of a gardener who had not been responding to emails about the construction, or his bed. Jen

was deeply reluctant to remove the structure but said that if he did not respond, she would have to just offer his bed to someone else. I don't want to, she said, but if he doesn't talk to me, there's not much else I can do. The structure came down because he is blocking someone else from renting the bed and growing vegetables in it. Notably, the identity of the gardener who was being uncooperative was kept hidden from those who did not already know him, to protect him in a sense, as they considered the possibility of a return to mental ill-health. Yet the gardener in question had used communal resources to create the structure, and it was frowned upon by other gardeners.

As Lucas and Mark dismantled the structure with wire cutters and pliers, they saved as much as they could. Jen says that the plastic was actually the garden's and Mark was surprised. He blusters, 'I thought he'd bought it himself! It's the good stuff, the stuff that lets air in and all that'. In response, Jen says the plastic was 'ours', adding, that he did not ask if he could use it either. Mark's eyebrows rise and he puffs out air as he continues to demolish the plastic and wood plant cover over the raised bed. This incident plays on the tension between the communal and the individual – the sense that private beds and communal sensibilities are balanced against each other. The negative judgement of a gardener for unauthorised use of good quality, expensive materials, but still a concern for his wellbeing and a discomfort over removing his work from his bed, demonstrates the balance struck between these two ideas. Whilst this can be seen in economic terms – of rent and private property versus communal ownership – there is also implicit in this a respect for the integrity of another grower's labour. In this the individual thus is not subsumed by the collective good but respected and held in balance against Woodlands as a communal enterprise. This is a careful tightrope balance

between property relations and respect of individual labour. Out of it emerges this uneasy and anonymised intervention in the raised bed of a grower.

The balance between individual and collective ownership is a tension that threads through the project. Individualised growing works against a sense of shared ownership, for although the space is ideationally and physically open all the time, it is emotionally and culturally quite closed. For example, gardeners bring items of their own down to grow in and find it upsetting if they go missing. By way of example, take Eloise, a raised bed gardener, who got upset during the fieldwork when she discovered someone had made use of one of *her* pots. She had planned to use it for marigolds, to have some colour in the autumn. She goes about trying to find out who this was, in order perhaps to correct them, but to no avail. She does say that she thinks the person who has taken them should have known the pots were hers – they were next to her bed after all, even if they were empty. Eloise was forced to admit that her pots were in a communal space and therefore admitted understanding how someone else appropriated them. Nonetheless, this narrative highlights the tension between that which is communal and that which is not, which is so often a question not only of material relations but of emotional connection. The idea of communal ownership here is predicated on the relationship of the WCDT and growers themselves; an agreement that the land owned by the former can be used by the latter. As a practical arrangement, there is a culture of sharing, but it starts from the grower as an individual. Communal ownership here is again imagined, yet in fact the growers are there as renters. This becomes obvious when transgressed – when the property of growers goes missing, or is used differently than intended. The language of inclusion and communality, the way sharing is central to the garden, overlays awkwardly at times the rental arrangements at the garden.

In a similar vein, larger events provoke tensions around ownership. Cathy, a raised bed gardener, notes that during community events, there is a need to work to accept people sitting on the side of your bed, a need to try not to feel 'territorial'. For Cathy, this is something she has to deliberately relax into – allowing others to sit on the edge of a raised bed and not be upset about it. This directly expresses to the relation to property here: the beds are purchased year on year by gardeners, for a low sum (subsidised if the raised bed gardener is without work). Raised bedders pay for them, enter into a property relation with them, and in this sense feel far less open about sharing even their edges. The obvious contrast to make is with the allotment beds in the meadow, where people have to accept others sitting on the sides of their beds, and sometimes eating their fruit.

What remains however, despite this restricted sense of communal ownership, is still an orientation to openness and an idea of freedom. Without the full sense of the commons, there is still a remarkable sense of enabling: that is, the sense that one can do things in the community garden which one could not in another public space. Thus, talking about the ethos of the garden in the hub building one day with a few of the gardeners, Cathy pointed out how the lack of hierarchical relations opens up possibilities. She noted that this was partly about how there aren't really committees saying how you can and can't go about things. She suggested that there are no power structures that stop you from simply going out and growing. Eloise agrees – she illustrates the point with her own sense of bumbling about and getting on with things, and that the relationship with Jen (the garden worker) is important. Jen is not there to shout at you and tell you what you cannot do, but she will guide and if there is some plan for a piece of wood she will stop you from using it, but not in a controlling way. In this way, the freedom of the garden, much like the ownership in common, is cultural, but predicated on a set of rules: rules about

what is shared and what is not. In this way, it echoes the practices of upholding norms in utopian spaces discussed by Cooper (2013), wherein public nudity or bathhouses as sexual spaces are maintained through strict adherence to rules of conduct. Practically, curating collectivity and common ownership exists through delineating what is and is not collectively held, and transgressions of this are uncomfortable. Particularly, the use of the garden by groups of youths tends to transgress organisational conduct rules around littering and acceptable behaviour. Further, the distribution of collective goods (wood, plastic coverings) is mediated through the organisation of the garden where, regardless of the sense of Jen as a hands-off guide rather than a dictator, the garden development worker (and ultimately WCDDT) is the arbiter of what is and is not common property. Thus, despite its utopian imaginings, there remains a power asymmetry built around land ownership.

Ownership at Woodlands is present in a different way to the meadow. The relationship to property, and the associated rules of propriety, are closer to classic individual ownership at Woodlands, although it is always in tension with the communal ethic. The struggle to balance these comes across as an emotional tension – of loss, of trying to share. At the meadow, the loss of sovereignty over property, whether food grown or emotional ownership over a play site, is eroded daily, and although this produces inter-group tensions, it also produces a relaxed sense of property-rights and blind sharing. It is this attitude, this openness to sharing the space, and often produce, with anyone that some newer participants take a while to get used to, but which allows the culture of DIY and creativity to flourish. It is worth highlighting how the space of the garden is counter-posed *against* the rest of the city, how this ethic is known to run contrary to the standard rules of property in the city. Woodlands Community Garden and the North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood are often put in direct contrast with the broader urban environment



(usually favourably) and part of that stems from the capacity of the spaces to provide the freedom to do, to produce and to be. Arguably, this derives from communal ownership as imagined, although this is obviously more complicated in the community garden where personal rent relationships create territorial claims and emotional ties to specific raised beds. Communal ownership is thus mediated through property relationships and organisational structure at both sites, with the centralisation of both ownership and organisational capacity at Woodlands tending against a more anarchic, liberated practice.

## **Considering commoning**

Given the sense – at both sites – of a ‘for everyone, belongs to no one’ attitude, it is possible to see each as an ‘actually existing commons’, as Eizenberg (2012) has done regarding community gardens in New York. Eizenberg sees the commons as an always imperfect, sometimes contradictory way of organising. There is a strong sense in which both sites could be considered in this light: they clearly have a strong sense of common ownership, but interestingly neither utilised the idea of a commons. Further, communality had to be explained and learned, as a cultural facet of the projects. At the same time, it was limited – as the discussion of rules and limits above notes, and as the exploration of inclusion in chapter four demonstrated. Rather than repeat that discussion and its connection to social division, I want to suggest here that the incipient commoning at the meadow and the community garden offer the possibility of urban communality in all its messiness. I suggest commoning rather than commons here because in its processual form, it is possible to see the on-going imperfect aspect of making urban commons, and further the work and deliberate designation of spaces as being held in common that goes into producing spaces for communality. As Bresnihan and Byrne suggest:

Peter Linebaugh has suggested the term “commoning” to refer to the fluid, continuous and relational ways in which the living commons, past and present, are produced. Commons understood as a verb indicates the limitations of understanding the commons as a noun, as a static, physical resource, such as a bounded plot of urban space.

(Bresnihan & Byrne 2015, p.86)

Further, what the idea of commoning gives us here is a sense of resonance, not only with common land and relations of joint responsibility, but also with the sense of precarity and possibility which are conjoined in the notion of the commons (Ostrom, 1990). In particular, the projects instantiate a way of considering joint ownership and collaboration within the urban environment. It connects with Cooper’s (2013) notion of everyday utopias, particularly in the sense that it has limits and messiness in the actualisation of ideas, but presents the potential in the cracks of capitalist society (Holloway 2010; Loukaitou - Sideris 1996). But what precisely is created in the cracks? This can be imagined as spaces where being autonomous is possible, articulated through alternative rhythms to the capitalist productivity drive and through practices of autonomous production, away from the imperatives of need and productivity for economic gain. In this there are two aspects of autonomous spatial production within the form of urban life produced in communal growing. The first is a DIY ethos, akin perhaps to the DIY urbanism imagined by Iveson (2013), and it illuminates the possibilities at a subjective level of commoning. The second is the construction of rhythms for the production of communal behaviour. This opens up a situated discussion of how the politics of communal growing could be situated. Both DIY aesthetics and the rhythmicity of growing demonstrate the construction of autonomy in the form of urban life produced in communal growing.

## Anarchism and do-it-yourself

One of the things the idea of the commons instantiates in both of the communal growing projects studied here is a certain attitude towards autonomous production. Pervasive attitudes at both sites talk about *getting things done*. There are few practical barriers to trying things out, exploring a kind of experimental way of growing and building (although as previously discussed, there are a myriad of cultural boundaries at the sites).

Aesthetically, this means that, across both sites, there is a specific style, which is reproduced in other gardens and allotments. It is based on simplicity: ease of assembly and upkeep, based around materials that are not hard to come by or are cheap, with a preference for wood over plastic (for environmental grounds, mostly) and a general cheerful air. Some of the Glasgow gardens that have been designed by the arts organisation, NVA, who set up a number as part of their Sow And Grow Everywhere project, are sleeker, modular builds that have a uniformity to their look. Woodlands and the meadow err on the handmade end of the scale, with things sometimes crumbling a little, a little muddy and homespun. This often means accepting a lower standard of precision around edges or finishes, and a sense of the spaces as constantly shifting. Over my time at both sites, the project's aesthetics shifted in mundane ways as structures went up and down, tree houses came and went, and things were painted or weathered. Aesthetic decisions are partly driven by funding: building and maintenance are often done as cheaply as possible due to limited funds. This aesthetic also has ramifications beyond the visual: the point here is that in adopting a homespun aesthetic, the spaces require less skill, continuity or professionalism in their upkeep and this enables a broader range of people to engage in their production.

At Woodlands this translated into the creation of a peculiar chair by one volunteer out of wood around the garden. It reclined at an odd angle and at

the time other growers laughed at the possibility of local youths who come and smoke weed in the garden getting stuck in the chair. A volunteer whose role was to make something out of wooden pallets to demonstrate to local kids what was possible in terms of recycling wood created the chair but this do-it-yourself (DIY) attitude was common among gardeners, where using bottles to make slug repellents and sieving garden-made compost are common activities. Indeed, Fiona led a group session weaving a hanging out of raffia and shells to replace a previous decorative raffia hanging that had become frayed and sun-bleached. Thus, changing the physical environment of the garden is an everyday activity, productive of and facilitated by the rough and ready aesthetic. This also involved taking responsibility for the physical space of the garden, as Fiona's actions to improve the site suggest.

At the meadow, a similar outcome is a natural extension of having little or no funding and no support from the council. Those who use the land pick up litter, the dog waste taken off-site by an older man usually to be collected by the council and people build some impressive structures. Tree houses are probably the most impressive of these feats (see figure 15). During a tour of the space with the Green Party local branch, Terry was asked if one of the land's tree houses was professionally built. The man who asks is surprised to discover the answer is no. Terry expands on his theme saying, none of this has been done professionally, nor planned, nor even particularly deliberate. People come on the land and create things, like this, Terry continues. For him, it is one of the boons of letting the land be fallow and having no funding. In that situation, he argues, you see people's skills come to the fore. Walking past the meadow this is obvious in the fence mended with fallen sticks from the meadow, photographed in figure 16. This and the tree house in figure 15 both also emphasise the use of natural materials, often found on the meadow itself or nearby.



**Figure 15: A tree house on the meadow in May 2015.  
Photograph by author.**



**Figure 16: A fence mended with fallen branches, Kelbourne Street, June  
2015. Photograph by author.**

Allowing the spaces to be produced by everyone at once, a kind of democratised production of place, means accepting a rugged, mixed aesthetic, as perhaps demonstrated by the fence mended with sticks and branches in figure 8. Although the tree houses and DIY structures at both sites are usually robust enough, they are not always sleek or particularly professional looking and they may also not last very long. It was rare for a treehouse to last more than a few months in its original condition. But that is almost beside the point: the meadow and the garden are both spaces where production itself is valued. They are spaces for experimenting with growing without the pressure of needing to feed anyone, without judgement for poor results or low yield.

In light of considering the spaces as commons, this might take on a slightly tragic sense – a lack of care. Certainly, discussions of the commons are often forced to deal with Hardin's (1968) tragedy at some point. The discursive constructions of 'good enough' might seem to lead in this direction. When discussing DIY projects around the garden, Mark talks about decorating and building as something that need only be 'good enough', because it is for the community garden rather than in his own, or anyone's own, house. It might lead to the conclusion that because it is common, because it is no-ones and everyone's, there is no incentive to do the job well. When we are decorating the office at Woodlands, this becomes important in terms of the approach and Mark makes the comparison between doing the office and what you would do if you were in your own home. Things like multiple coats on the wall, carefully catching the ceiling and getting it all perfect, filling in the holes in the walls and the panelling are all discussed in this way. Decisions are usually taken to minimise effort and time. It is part of a rationale that underpins the whole endeavour, this idea that because it is the office, we were not aiming for perfect, just 'good enough'.

Yet to see this as a tragic aspect of the commons overlooks the importance of seeing people's time as more valuable than having a perfectly painted wall. Woodlands (and indeed the meadow too) are usually relying on one member of staff and an army of volunteers, whose time is valued above the aesthetic appearance of the final outcome. Thus, especially when painting the office, less care was taken with the outcome in favour of giving lots of breaks, cups of tea, lunches and making sure that everyone got home at a reasonable time. Thanks too, in abundance, were offered for helping to paint the office. Thus, 'good enough' actually illuminates a different weight of values in this case: valuing labour time over aesthetics.

A notion of 'good enough' also illuminates a liberating aspect of the form of urban life embedded in disruptive, everyday practice. By setting aesthetic expectations low, communal growing broadens access and imagination: it continues to open up the possibility of autonomy. It is also an adjustment to the conditions of communal growing – relying on volunteer labour and limited funding. This lends itself to allowing people to develop skills, rather than come with them fully formed. But it is also made more complex on site in the tension between what is said ('good enough', 'rough and ready') and the amount of labour, emotional and physical, that goes into building and decorating these spaces. In this sense, it recalls the pervasive sense of care and sharing which permeates the practices curated under the heading of community, as explored in chapter three. What this morphs into here is not simply caring for the space, but committing to improving it and doing what needs done. Mark demonstrates an exemplary version of this ethic. He is well known for going above and beyond what is required, despite often talking down the standards to which he works as merely 'good enough'. Thus, he was central to completing the hub, paying attention to little details like creating lampshades out of jam jars to protect the bulbs. Jen describes him as a

member of staff who is 'good value for money', although he tends to play down the amount of extra time he does for the pay he is given. Interviewed, he called this a bit of a 'mix up':

Helen: I was reading my field notes though, and I came across a bit where Fiona said you'd been doing 55 hours on a 20-hour contract. Is that something that happens regularly?

Mark: I think that's maybe a slight mix up. What it was, they once asked me if I would help fix up the hub, paint it and decorate and finish it. There was a lot of stuff that wasn't finished off, and they could only pay me for 20 hours. I ended up doing 55 hours, so really I did 35 hours of volunteering and got paid for 20 hours, because that's all the budget they had

(Mark interview, July 2016)

Mark regularly commits time and energy beyond the hours or expectations of the trust. He cares about the space deeply and he says that becoming a member of staff here, after spending a few years volunteering 'totally changed [his] life'. Although, mostly the above reflects Mark's commitment to the garden, it also belies a relationship than many others who are deeply involved in the garden also have: one which is emotional, committed and tends to be underplayed. Again, this is intertwined with caring, sharing and knowing as core practices of communality explored earlier in this thesis. Thus, the care and attention that goes into creating these structures – largely by volunteers, or by people who are not paid to be there nor are professionals – is huge. This produces a great pride in what is possible under these circumstances, not only in those who work to facilitate the spaces like Mark above, but also in participants themselves.

Nina volunteers at the garden when she has time, although she has multiple jobs and long commuting times. Talking to Nina about volunteering at the



garden, she said she liked how it was possible to make a difference really quickly, about how it was possible to see real and swift change. By way of example, she told me she had put stones around a bed that grew around a tree – as a way of improving the space around the tree and creating a boundary. It took her two sessions over two weeks to finish, but it was the sort of project that makes a difference quite quickly. For her, it demonstrated how small actions are part of a much bigger beautiful space and that it is nice to know that you can contribute. Thus, a distinctive aspect of both sites' urban life is in the creation of spaces where unproductive production can take place, where creativity is valued and a level of imperfection tolerated, even encouraged. This reconnects with the inclusion ethic in terms of moving beyond nominal inclusivity – it increasingly brings in those with few skills (such as this researcher, who had to learn on the job as it were). The lack of expectations of high standards, and an understanding that it need only be 'good enough', is itself a liberating practice, connecting common ownership to an inclusive ethic, allowing the emergence of learning and conviviality without much in the way of competition or judgement.

Thus, the DIY aesthetic is more than simply a visual intervention in the city, although it undoubtedly is that too. The aesthetic is also a marker of an attitude to production: that anyone can and should produce, whether vegetables, BMX runs, or indeed tree houses. Drawing on the notion of commoning, this is about the autonomy of all within the common spaces to have an impact on that space, to indeed be architects of it. In this, it relates back to the self-direction inherent in staking a claim to the right to the city, as formulated by Harvey (2003, p. 3) as the right to 'shape [the city] more in accord with our heart's desire'. Yet it is worth connecting this rugged aesthetic to conceptions of the 'urban idyll' proposed by Hoskins and Tallon (2004), which as Harris (2012) writes 'draws on idealised imaginaries of rural life

seemingly removed from the complexities of contemporary Britain' (p. 237). Hoskins and Tallon (2004) highlight that the urban idyll is a form of renewal specifically for and by the middle classes: 'a favoured kind of urban citizenry... in a landscape informed by a bohemian aesthetic while other residents are rhetorically and materially recast as outsiders'. (Hoskins & Tallon, 2004, p. 36). Thus, the democratising aspects of DIY spaces in Glasgow are also part of a socially situated aesthetic, recalling the meadow user in chapter four who felt distant from recent aesthetic development on the meadow on account of them appear to him as 'twee'. It is necessary then to see the autonomy possible in communal growing in balance against the politics of difference that also play out in the space. In this light, autonomy can come to be seen as a socially situated and classed attempt to move outside of rather than against the logics of capital as they (unevenly) pervade the city. This remains political, but it has rather a different valence as an urban intervention than the contestation often associated with alternative urbanisms.

## **Rhythmic disruption as communal escape**

In its rhythmic disruption, like in its DIY ethos, communal growing offers an autonomous, escapist way to live the city. It does this by way of creating or indeed curating a different way of inhabiting space in time. In this, I suggest there is a different rhythm to communal growing which is important in facilitating the form of urban life described above and indeed often constitutes it. Through curating a different experience of time and space, the possibility of communality emerges. Thus, in an iterative, self-fulfilling relationship, rhythmic disruption and communal behaviours co-emerge, brought together under community-as-idea. Within this rhythmic experience, there is a valorisation of slowness and of truly seeing others through this temporality. Across both projects, the creation of specific temporalities is important – but different. There are differences between the sites, particularly around how

determined the rhythms of the spaces are; but there are also many similarities in the rhythmic escape of communal growing, especially around reconnection with others and the natural world.

This reconnection is posited on the premise of a prior disconnect which is usually situated within the wider city itself. This can be framed theoretically within the notion of the city as a place of speed itself, as it exists arguably in much urban theory (Crang 2001; Prior 2009; Wajcman & Dodd 2016). The sense of reconnection available in urban growing is also prescient in the context of the acceleration hypothesis. Rosa's argument is that modernity can be seen as a long process of acceleration: 'an increase in the speed and ease with which space can be traversed or bracketed' (Rosa 2005, p.447). However, Rosa (2003, p. 5) notes that acceleration also implies a 'flipside' in that it produces a great deal of slowness and indeed stasis, from the traffic jam to the End of History. Thus, whilst speed might be ideologically linked to urbanisation and modernity, it is not uniformly nor universally experienced as such (c.f. Sharma 2016). Further, as Southerton (2009) argues, time-pressure as a psychosocial experience does not map exactly on to the amount of free time available to contemporary people (see also Sullivan & Gershunsky 2018). Instead, it relates to a cultural acceleration – to the experience Erickson and Mazmanian describe as 'circumscribed time' (2016), a sense of time pressure and a culture of busyness. In reaction to circumscribed time, communal growing offers a place to escape, embodying slowness and offering a space outwith the need for productivity (thus going beyond slow as a pathway to productivity (c.f. concerns raised by Bastian 2014)). Thus, escape can mean alleviating the time-space pressures of the capitalist city in its current form. This is not to disavow the polyrhythmia of the city, but to recognise the psychosocial pressures and cultural dominance of 'circumscribed time'.

Building from that recognition, I want to outline rhythmic disturbance of communal growing which support slowness and connection. I will do so through the frame of rhythms. As Lefebvre noted, 'Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is **rhythm**' (Lefebvre 2004: 15). I would argue that the idea of slowness as it emerged in the field is a reference to the rhythmic qualities of the space. I use the idea of rhythm to capture the way that spaces are experienced in relation to socially constructed patterns of temporal behaviour. Rhythm offers 'a localised time, or if one wishes, a temporalized place' (Lefebvre 1996, p.230). This aligns with calls to consider time and space as co-emergent from critical geographers such as Doreen Massey (1994) and others. That the projects both deliberately produced an alternative rhythm to the wider city, connects to the idea of producing autonomous space within the urban: establishing a right to produce the kind of city they long for, in this case, a slow city (c.f. Harvey 2003).

An orientation to escape figures in both projects as a rejection of the time-space pressures of the contemporary city. At the garden this most often came up in respect to the escape from work, explored at length in the previous chapter. There, it was emphasised how the garden offered refuge for those outside of the working system, but it also bears mention that it offers time away – for some, from the desk, for others, from the loneliness of part-time, freelance work. Particularly here, these spaces offer escape from the emotional violence of the fringes of employment. One gardener at Woodlands, Samantha, exemplifies this: joining the garden as a way of finding connection with others, after going freelance made her miss the everyday sociality of colleagues. At Woodlands, Samantha met others in a similar position: mothers and carers, retirees, unemployed people with sundry backstories, and those working irregular hours. This was particularly true of Wednesday sessions,

which practically exclude those working standard jobs, but in so doing opens up a world of connection for those outwith traditional working structures. In this, communal growing can open up solidarities beyond work.

Similar ideas resonated at the meadow, where Toni offered the importance of being in a place where indeed one is 'not being a consumer'. This is the emphasised leisure time of the meadow. It is used as a place for socialising, play and quiet pursuits like reading books and newspapers. For Natalie, it presents an important injection of non-productive socialising into her morning routine. She and her daughter cut across the meadow and, as her daughter gets older, she finds the encouragement onto the site can get rid of a certain funk associated with the morning drudge. It acts as 'a depressurizing chamber' allowing for the evaporation of the pressures of getting to school or work and the creation of a (brief) period of quiet, social time into an otherwise hurried day. Both sites in this respect give time in a sense outside of the capitalist system – where veg is grown rather than bought, where people talk to their neighbours, where children play freely for hours and parents breathe in the trees and wildness. This comes across in much of the literature in communal growing, which tends to emphasise the potential for urban social sustainability, cohesion and the like (Ferris et al. 2001; Crossan et al. 2015; Tan & Neo 2009) although the more radical aspects of this, its externality to capitalist impulses, is less often directly engaged with (a good exception is George MacKay 2011).

Urban growing is not total escape, both projects recognise this. Ivan pointed out how difficult it can be to get new people involved because of their work and family time commitments, saying that while locals might like to get involved, we often 'don't have time for stuff that interests us'. In this critique and accounts of the projects as spaces apart from capitalist production and

consumption, the meadow and garden are offered as an oasis from capitalist time. Amongst those (few) who do espouse these accounts, the colonisation of everyday life by the capitalist productivist model of time is notably presented as restricting their ability to engage with that which we might otherwise wish to. Slowness, escape, is something that is carved out from the city. It is however notable that this radical anti-capitalist critique is uncommon, rather than central to understanding the spaces. Instead, a milder notion of the projects as depressurising, therapeutic or simply peaceful was far more common.

The limits of escapism as an urban practice also emerge through the relation of growing projects to seasonality – particularly in the experience of downtime in the year. This becomes most noticeable during winter. Winter is a dormant season for growers, a period really of ‘overwintering’: of mulching tender plants for a season, of simply surviving. It can be used as a time for improving soil quality through green compost or leaving seaweed on a raised bed. In Glasgow, winter can be a little unforgiving in terms of the weather. Getting outdoor learners into appropriate rain gear and warm clothes is the bane of the meadow organisers’ lives. When they manage it however they light fires to keep warm and toast their lunches. They put down tarpaulins and the dense birch trees stop some of the rain reaching toddlers in the woods. The casual use of the meadow declines however, as the weather becomes less clement for dawdling. It takes on a more austere look too, with the leaves gone from the deciduous trees and the grass slow in its growth.

But the limited amount of growing that can occur outside during a Scottish winter (salads and kale, or winter greens, are much of what is produced during this time) mean that spring is a particularly important time of year. April becomes a renewal in the traditional symbolic sense, the beginning of

the year far more than January. Many begin regularly visiting the Woodlands Community Garden again in April. As Cathy put it on sunny day in spring 2016, 'The sun is bringing everyone out, they're just sprouting!' This seasonality brings an annual pattern of decay and rebirth to the lives of communal growers, each spring marked by a reconnection to the garden and an efflorescence of activity at the meadow. But it also marks the partiality in temporal terms of any form of urban life that might be situated in communal growing. As primarily outdoor occurrences, social growing is limited in its capacity to offer a year-round escape from the capitalist city.

This annual repetition also brings with it ebbs in the flow of people, and the rebirth of the garden tending often to bring in new volunteers. This was particularly notable when as a researcher I returned to the garden in late March in 2016 and the volunteers who began coming along were mostly new. There was still significant overlap, particularly amongst the more perennial raised bedders, but volunteers shifted during the second season of the research. Those still rooted in the garden in spring carry forward the ideals and culture of the garden, but its fluidity, its change year on year, is in part a reflection of this period of dormancy, during which people's commitment wanes and attention is dropped. This also tends to be when Woodlands allocate new beds and invite in new gardeners, early in the calendar year in preparation for the growing season. In this way, the temporality of the garden is determined by some extent to its connection to the seasons itself – a reflection of the yearly shifts so often flattened out by capitalist expectations of uniform time. As communal and organised projects, the meadow and the garden both were often engaged with seasonality and indeed the celebration of seasonal change, encapsulated by harvest festivals, Halloween carnivals and mid-Summer events.

Engagement with annual planetary rhythms offered to participants a notable discontinuity with capitalist time. Communal growing's way of living the urban does not simply sit inside a flatter temporality without problematizing it. The rhythm of food growing collides with the rhythms of food shopping, making obvious the flatness of consumer temporalities. In growing, one must work with the seasons and with the weather. Gardeners with less experience need to learn to think differently about time's relationship to food. This means learning to think seasonally, as Tracy pointed out to me during my time at Woodlands. Discussing her raised bed one day in the hub, Tracy talked me through how planning her raised bed involved a long-term kind of thinking. She told me she was harvesting a lot. There seemed at that time to be a lot of broccoli ready for eating. The question then arose as to what to plant up next. She made a comparison between the different ways of thinking about time that exist for her, drawing a distinction between the time of supermarket food buying and the time of seasonal growing. In an age of going to the supermarket to buy what you are having for tea, she told me, it is a bit harder to think in terms of growing seasons, since you have to start planting now what you are going to want later in the year. It is a slower, longer-term skill. This sense of thinking in a longer time frame, rather than the foreshortened time of supermarket consumption challenges raised bedders, although it ought to be foregrounded that no one relies solely on their raised bed for all sustenance. Even the larger beds are not big enough feed a gardener, nor are they required to. Instead, gardening creates a contrast between the fast time of supermarket consumption – what do I want to eat today – and the slow time of growing – what might I like to eat in autumn. Having this contrast highlights the difference between them, creating for some – like Tracy – an awareness of the dislocated pace of supermarket shopping. We can see this latter as a kind of arrhythmia, which Lefebvre introduces as a moment when the general polyrhythmia of the social (its multiplicity of different rhythms)



becomes 'discordant, there is suffering, a pathological state (of which arrhythmia is generally, at the same time, symptom, cause and effect)' (Lefebvre 2004, p.25). In this, we can see arrhythmia as an embodied form of cognitive dissonance. The rhythms of communal growing, aligned as they are with seasons and growing, can highlight the artificial speed of the supermarket and calls into question its ease and simplicity.

Thus, the projects have a specific rhythm that can reconnect participants with the shifts of the calendar and the seasons. For experienced garden workers, like Ivan who worked for a period at the meadow, this is part of the impetus behind the community development aspects of gardening. Ivan and his partner Toni are both interested in permaculture methods, which explicitly connect nature and social connection within a holistic worldview. Given that background, his opinions on the meadow as a place of connection are perhaps unsurprising, although clearly articulated:

We're very disconnected from nature, we're disconnected from each other, we're disconnected from ourselves and the class system thing also ties in there somewhere I'm sure. But you know we're disconnected from all stuff so people can come down here and they can start to connect a little bit again with the land, and with the trees and with the birds, and if they can also come down here and start to connect again with other humans within the area then that's a good thing as well. So I do really see [the meadow] as a connector.

(Ivan interview, June 2015)

Ivan's clear sense of the meadow as a conduit for reconnecting with the land and with people comes partly from his own radicalism. But it also relates to the patterns of connection observable in both projects. As discussed in chapter three, there is a sense that seeing the same people again and again, the rhythmic, repetitions of people in space creates for some a sense of continuity

and community, indeed their foundation. Chapter three introduced the idea that something that grounds communality is a solid foundation of repetitions in time and space, becoming part of the urban rhythm. This repeated knowing and interaction builds a foundation from which communality can grow, relationships can be built, patterns of care can emerge (c.f. also Studdert & Walkerdine 2016b). To pursue this notion, I want to argue that in the rhythms of the projects also lay the baseline for a specific form of urban life, like a repeated musical structure over which to improvise. The different sites have different rhythms and it is in their difference that the usefulness of rhythm as a concept becomes apparent.

To turn firstly to the meadow, the temporalities possible there produce a way of being that is focused on the now, on the present tense. This is emphasised by the presentist attitudes that are represented by people like the Conservation Volunteers who work with the Children's Wood. Talking to them, it was notable that they emphasised what they were doing as something that would benefit people in that moment – 'something they can use now'. This was in contrast to the historicised position of the campaign organisation that, trying to build historicity, tend to emphasise the position of the pitches as historically leisure space and never before build upon. Nonetheless, the lack of longer term security foregrounds a present tense in the space, underpinning its use for some. Caitlin's closeness to the meadow campaign fostered in her a sense of urgency. In recent years, she says, it has become so apparent that using the space is important. She tells me she likes to come and use it because she knows it might not always be there. The threat to the land, because it may well disappear if development goes ahead, creates a certain ephemerality and urgency to using the meadow. During the period of this research, this present tense usage brings into focus the space, and its inhabitants to each other.

Secondly, slowness resides in the pace of life at the meadow. In this slowness, there is an implicit criticism of the rush of the contemporary city akin to the slow movement, which takes a politicised approach to slowness. Honoré notes that being 'slow' is akin to different: 'ways of being, or philosophies of life ...It is about making real and meaningful connections – with people, culture, work, food, everything.' (2004, pp.4–5) In this vein, people – especially with children – can spend hours on end there. Interviewees on the meadow spoke of this, detailing lengths of time with children spent on the meadow with varying degrees of amazement. Lorna noted in her interview that her kids 'can be entertained for a long time', and was there after school had finished pottering about with her sons, for the second day in a row. Others were more specific, with Diana noting she and her son spend an average of 8-10 hours on the meadow at a time. Diana home educates her son and finds in the meadow an unmatched resource for doing so. Equally, Caitlin says, 'it didn't matter if we spent 6 hours here' she'd still have an upset son when they have to leave. This is perhaps more notable in Caitlin's case because her son is in the state school system, so it is rare for her to have that period of time to spend with her child at all. Instead of having to move on (like in the parallel situations often described involving play parks instead of the meadow), the meadow is a space where stasis is possible, for often incredibly long periods of time. Thus the curation of periods of unproductive time within the city is a relief for many, whether of a long duration, or as a brief release from everyday pressures.

This recalls the notion of growing as therapeutic, in the association of slowness and peace with mental healthiness. Armstrong (2000) summarises research suggesting the dietary benefits of community gardening and increased levels of exercise, and her own research suggests gardening has a positive impact on the mental health of participants. The slowness discovered in communal growing projects may bolster this impact; participants in both

projects talked of the improvement in their own mental health from their involvement in growing. This is suggestive too in references Hartmut Rosa makes to the extant German literature on the psychological pressures of acceleration in the work of Baier and others (Rosa 2003; Rosa 2005). This alternative temporality is like a form of therapy, and it is valued by participants – from the garden worker at Woodlands Community Garden to Natalie and her daughter above. The meadow is socially prescribed by GPs – a new trend in healthcare where alternative social environments are offered as treatment although a recent review suggests there is little concrete evidence for it (Wilson & Booth 2015). The garden is a space where those with learning disabilities and mental health conditions can find stillness and improve social skills (like John and Fred in chapter three). Some having ‘existential crises’ find their way to the garden, seeking a different kind of place to be. As Mark noted in his interview, after noting how ‘valued’ he felt in this garden, he said:

I think the garden’s really good for that – if you’re suffering mentally or physically, it’s a good place to come and be, really good.

(Mark interview, July 2016)

As a place to thrive and recover, the image of the escape emerges as a pertinent metaphor for the potentials of communal growing. It is of course suggestive, rather than clear, what the relation of slowness, plants, trees, other people and mental healthiness is precisely. That it so often comes up in combination however is suggestive of a powerful interaction of people, places and time. It recalls Lefebvre’s (1996) notion of ‘eurhythmia’: of harmonic rhythms of health. In this, it also highlights the sense of the disturbed or arrhythmic quality of life against which the slowness of the meadow and garden are contradistinguished. The evasion of rhythmic dislocation in such spaces is escape as respite.

The rhythmic qualities of the projects discussed here are not uniform. They are the result of different rhythmic markers – different determinants of experience. This limits and shapes the urban escapism of the different spaces and through this their transformative potential. The Woodlands Community Garden presents an alternative space that is structured in its escapology and focused on active gardening. Its form of escape is curated towards evasion from capitalist work, from consumption and the extenuated, anonymised food chain. But it also presents as an opportunity for leisure – indeed, besides being a site for growing, participants come down to read, to enjoy their lunch outdoors, to escape for a little while into the garden, although this primarily in the warmer summer months. The garden has visitors who come not to garden but simply to be in the space – and the use of the space by youths at night, to gather, to smoke and drink, is no exception to this. Yet its organisation to a purposive end (growing vegetables and other plants) gives it a more structured time and a reduced sense of the time-freedom associated with the North Kelvin Meadow. Particularly having two set time periods during which the hub and the storage container are open, when there are definitely people about, structures these possibilities and limits escapism in its more communal aspects.

Although the meadow has events, regular toddler groups and schools sessions, there is a sense in which the wider space is more generic. In not being a garden, the use of the space for dog walking, reading, picnicking and so on, is far more possible, and in this the construction of the space is important. The wildness of the meadow in contrast with the formalised raised beds; tree houses rather than potting benches. The physical space itself is important in shaping this experience of temporality. The space is under-determined and remains liminal: in being between specified urban functions, opens up its possibility. However, there are limits to how well this functions as a *communal*

exercise – as noted with participants across both projects who could not or did not connect with repeated instances of connection, a sense of community is often bounded by and created through a rhythmic propulsion, connecting sequences of events across time and producing a historicised social bond. In this sense, under-determination can lead to a loss of the cultural aspects of communal organisation upon which much of the transformative capacity of projects of this ilk is based. In this respect, although freedom might be found as a less determined project, it is questionable how collectively oriented this might be able to be, without anchoring in rhythm.

However, there is something paradoxical in figuring collectivity as an escape: particularly as communality has been associated with closure and unfreedom (Belton 2013). The difference between the rhythms of the two case studies has a suggestive implication. The meadow has a greater degree of escape in the sense of freedom from structure, yet in so doing it has less of a collective character. This leads to a lesser degree of the possibility of connection with other people, although the natural rhythms of seasonality are still appreciable in abundance. In the Woodlands garden, a greater regimentation around timings and repetitions produces a greater sense of communality to their escape, although it requires commitment. Thus although communal escape offers salvation from the atomizing aspects of capitalism, there appears to be a need to anchor this in delimitation and rhythmic inflexibility. This recalls Esposito's (2010) articulation of community as derived from the *munis*: from collective obligation. Communality in this respect becomes something requiring work together, which restricts an abstract (negative) freedom from but facilitates the possibility of connection.

Communal escape is also socially situated and again the class politics of urban growing in these case studies figures in escapism. Sharma (2016) situates the

temporal as 'lived time', and she argues it 'operates as a form of social power and a type of social difference' (Sharma 2016, p.132). She writes about how the ability to control the temporal is skewed towards those with certain positions in social hierarchies. This resonates here. Escapism is crafted by those who, as noted above, can use their class resources to affect urban development, and in so doing craft that time and space to their taste. Escapism is then potentially a rhythm of privilege, although it should be noted that the temporal aspects of the meadow and garden are open to those outwith the organisational structures. In this, a much broader constituency use the meadow than are involved in campaigning to save it, although this can be disconnected from main organising activities. Thus it is more accurate to say that creating these rhythms relies on social resources, and experiencing them as *communal* may too.

## **The politics of alterity and autonomy**

In the context of urban growing, alterity has been understood in a number of ways, from radical to co-opted, which raises the important question of how we should or could understand the politics inherent in the 'other' of urban growing in its autonomy and escapism. Whether urban growing is political comes down to a debate around the potential of interstitial projects and their politics, about whether indeed a politics can be situated in what Iveson (2013) calls 'DIY urbanism'. Iveson himself is wary of this conclusion, arguing that "“appropriating” urban space for unintended uses does not in itself give birth to a new kind of city.” (2013: 942). This critique works at a holistic urban level, yet a politics can be located in the everyday, in the lived experience of the city. Beveridge and Koch (2017) argue this is an important aspect of what they term *everyday urban politics*; a politics at the level of everyday transformation in the lived experience of cities. Yet Beveridge and Koch are wary to note that not every mundane urban transgression is automatically political – so the

question of what alterity can come to mean remains open. One way of opening up this question lies in borrowing from Holloway (2002) the idea of ‘against-in-and-beyond’, which is to say that resistance can be understood as multiple and polyvalent. In this context, escapism captures that sense of being ‘beyond’ that Holloway interjects, that Chatterton and Pickerill (2010, p.476) situate in autonomous geographies that ‘simultaneously interweave “anti-”, “post-” and “despite-” capitalisms.’

Due to its explicitly resistant character, the North Kelvin Meadow and Children’s Wood are somewhat antagonistic organisations, pushing back against capitalist development oriented towards economic gain. It resists development and of Glasgow City Council’s definition of it, and their educational practice<sup>1</sup>. By contrast, Woodlands resists little explicitly, but does create alternative kinds of food provision for those in need and reinterprets people’s labour value. In mundane, subjective ways, Woodlands can be figured as resistant. But this does not preclude either project working alongside development as usual, or supporting council cuts and so forth. The arguments around the co-optation of community gardens are suggestive of this. Woodlands creates useful labour for those who are otherwise without labour, it trains them in useful skills. It also provides therapeutic spaces for those burnt out by capitalist wage-labour. The North Kelvin Meadow and Children’s Wood could be framed along the same lines – providing children’s play, inviting youths into ‘useful’ and socially productive activity (growing vegetables, moving woodchip around to protect tree roots). Meadow activists cleaned up a derelict site that the council had neglected and in invigorating and beautifying it, created a space that allows them to continue their stressful

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<sup>1</sup> The Children’s Wood in particular have given support to a campaign within Scotland called Upstart, which argues children should not start school until they are 7 years old, akin to the Scandinavian system.



jobs and schooling by spending time in it. Is it the therapeutic other to the capitalist city? That we can frame the projects each way, and that in doing so each seems partial and an exaggeration, tells us firstly that these ideal types may not necessarily be that useful on their own, and secondly that what appears to be most important in deciding which is more applicable is a relation to politics and to 'otherness'. This is where the argument about interstitiality returns because the perennial questions around whether and how small projects in the cracks of capitalism (Holloway 2010) might make a difference seems to return to a power relation, a question of how those interstitial moments of resistance come to have a broader effect (if at all). This is in part an empirical question and it is to this question I turn in the next chapter, exploring the interconnection of projects with broader dynamics of power in Glasgow.

But rather than remain agnostic on the political question, there seems some benefit in considering the everyday as the terrain of politics, as its eventual aim. In this approach, it is not always necessary to ask this broader contextual political question. Instead, taking seriously the everyday as the point of political contest, a different question arises: what transformation of everyday occurs in these practices? What is demonstrated above is an escape in the everyday, a contravention that is less an opposition to capitalist urbanity, and more the creation of a haven and a retreat. In this, it sits *beyond* capitalist relations (as well as within and against them). Thus, escapist urbanity is a way of figuring this aspect of communal organising which turns away from the political system and outward contestation. This is not to figure communal growing projects as apolitical, but to situate the political aspect of such projects alongside their co-opted and evasive aspects. It is to pursue McClintock's (2014) notion of going beyond a bifurcated vision of neoliberal

or radical growing, and embracing the projects' 'creative uncertainty against-in-and-beyond a closed, pre-determined world' (Holloway, 2002, p. 88).

In this chapter, I have been concerned with the construction of the communal urbanity of the projects of this research. Firstly, this consists in building mythology, in narrating the projects in time and space. This has its silences, and although it brings use value to the fore, care should be taken in easy celebrations of this reconstitution of land use over land value. Although the projects reject commodification, they also represent the class bias of this process in the West End of Glasgow, which raises all sorts of questions about the relationship projects have to urban development and indeed what it means to engage in local development. This chapter has also taken time to consider the rhythmic aspects of this alterity – and it is here that the starkest demonstration of the urban transformation made possible by communality. It is in the slowness and the empowerment of the projects that optimism around community gardening and urban interventions at the local, interstitial level can be located. Yet the politics of the projects have been considered in this chapter as largely intrinsic and agentic to the case studies. It is to the practical questions of how the politics of these projects might be inhibited or encouraged in the broader context of the political opportunity structure that I turn to in the next chapter.

# Chapter Six:

## The political imagination of communal growing

This chapter explores how the politics of land use is interpreted at the case study sites. The previous chapter identified one way of seeing both projects as creating alternative time and space within the city, something that in terms of staking a claim to the city can be seen as political. This analytical sense of the projects as political was disrupted by the ambiguous relationship the sites had with the idea of politics. In short, there were a wide variety of views on whether or not the projects were political, including strong scepticism towards the idea of politics itself. I want to spend this chapter unpacking why this might be and what the implications of this are. Again, Brubaker (2013) becomes useful here in figuring the difference between useful analytical categories and what he calls categories of practice, which is to say local language in everyday life. But simply suggesting that politics is an analytical category rather than a practical one would be insufficient for two reasons. Firstly, politics is not always disavowed, there is instead a wide variation in political understandings of the sites. Secondly, given that a political understanding sometimes does emerge, stating the distinction between academic and lay concepts doesn't explain why analytically political acts (taking ownership of urban land, autonomous practices) are only sometimes understood in this way. I want to explore the politicising and depoliticising pressures the projects are susceptible to, asking: what impedes or encourages political interpretations of communal growing? This is to explore what is at stake in situating urban communal growing as political.

What has come to the fore in lieu of a political understanding of urban communal growing projects is an elevation of what one participant called ‘common justice’, understood as a moral proposition rather than a political one. This framing is part of what is to be explored here, why are ‘community’ and ‘growing’ understood in moral languages, rather than political ones? This chapter argues that important organisational features and field level pressures temper organisers and volunteers’ understanding of the projects and complicates the way the growing projects are framed. To do so, I draw on organisational level analyses and social movement studies, alongside subjective political imaginations. In this, I am often in conversation with Nettle’s (2014) *Community Gardening as Social Action*, which situates growing as a form of direct action and extends social movement scholarship around what constitutes social action. Exploring community gardens in Australia, she argues that there is a need to study political direct action beyond protest, connecting community gardens to prefiguration and utopian currents. While her work situates community gardening’s radical aspects, I am interested in expanding on how some of that radicalism becomes filtered out. This is to ask what factors work against the political interpretation of community growing in situ.

This entails a discussion of the broader field of communal growing action. I want to expand debates around the co-option or radicalism of communal growing as a practice, deepening the discussion of the political engagement of communal growing projects with actual bureaucracies, parties, or governments and the like. Here, I trace the way that funding dynamics and relationships to party processes shape the official facets of the projects, recognising the more tactical aspects of community organising. This is to trace the actual engagements of growing projects with governance machinery and recognise the moments of resistance and cooperation inherent in this. This

has an intellectual debt to social movement theory's work on how the political environment shapes the ways in which movement organisations develop and interact with the system.

Social movement scholarship has developed a range of useful concepts that help understand the implications of not only the wider political environment, but the negotiation of internal and external pressures within the movement that affect mobilisation. In this chapter, although wary of making a simple association of social movements with community projects (see also Nettle 2014), there is some benefit to be had in borrowing concerns and ideas from the social movement corpus (Doherty et al. 2003). It might in the first instance help to move on the conversation around the politics of communal growing in that the tension between those who see communal growing as a co-opted phenomenon and those who wish to highlight the radical movement possible (McClintock 2014). A greater sensitivity to organisational tensions and challenges found in social movement scholarship might help unpack the tensions inherent in community organising (Nettle 2014).

In terms of developing those tensions, there are strands of social movement theories that are helpful in understanding the dilemmas facing organisations aiming for social change. Goal displacement is one way of figuring the problems associated with working alongside institutions of government or indeed other mainstream actors. In social movement work, this is present in concerns around the ability of patrons and funding to shift the goals of movement organisations, and particularly to shift them away from radical methods of pushing for change (Jenkins & Eckert 1986). This is a concern about losing autonomy and radicalism in return for stability and support. It draws on an intellectual legacy of scepticism regarding the outcomes of organisations becoming formalised and professionalised that draws on

Michels' (1962) iron law of oligarchy. Piven and Cloward (1977) were particularly sceptical about the possibilities of an organisation remaining politically active. Given the formalisation of both field sites in charitable organisations, this raises the question of what effects this has on their politics.

What the social movement frame offers analytically is a concern with the strategic needs of the organisation and the rationale behind taking actions towards professionalisation and oligarchy. This is exemplified in debates over the uptake of non-profit status in social movements. Charitable status has been discussed as a resource that organisations can ill afford not to take (McCarthy et al. 1991) and indeed a status that gives a great deal of benefit in 'insurgent' planning (de Souza 2006). It nevertheless comes at a cost, as articulated in goal displacement debates and questions about whether it is possible to professionalise and remain actively political. Such understandings of organisational challenges to radicalism have resonance with concerns around implicit support of neoliberalism through funders' agendas (e.g. in Ghose and Pettygrove 2014). These debates hold as a central concern organisational direction and take into account the external constellation of opportunities and resources. Drawing on such insights and debates, it is possible to see the fine-grained difficulties in funding, representational opportunities and field-level pressures inherent in communal growing in Glasgow.

Exploring the dynamic relationship of communal growing organisations and field-level pressures is one way of approaching the puzzle of depoliticisation, but there is another level at which this is important. This is the subjective imagination of the projects as political, or as is more often the case moral. In this, the waters become murky as there is little coherent or singular narrative regarding whether the projects are political or not. This is not to expect

communal growing to exhibit a clear and singular political ideology but to engage with the breadth of political interpretation at the subjective level as another means of exploring the depoliticised framing of the projects. I explain this through discussing personal political narratives within the historical juncture the projects work. This takes account not only of the longer trajectory of anti-Conservative feeling within Scottish politics, but also recent referenda and their impact on Glasgow's political scene.

As such, this chapter covers the explicit engagement with the idea of politics – not only in terms of actual contact with bureaucratic machinery but also as politics is imagined. This is a crucial step in understanding how the projects can be engaging in the politics of land use and staking in essence a right to the city, and yet at the same time explaining their actions in terms that deliberately distance their actions from an abstraction of 'politics'. This latter abstraction comes to be primarily associated with the state and therein a petty and divisive thing, with associations of corruption, and therefore unhelpful as an association of communal action. This also begins to move forward the debate in scholarly circles over whether we should see communal growing as political or not, by squarely contextualising the action of those involved within the tensions of the field.

## **Funding and neutrality**

Walking down West Princes Street in early 2015, the many concrete planters were half tended, with large gaps and litter between bedding plants and scraggy perennials. Nineteen planters line the street that runs from M8 exit ramps to the Kelvin River walkway, through an area of transition. It has become a pleasant cycle, despite the multitude of parked cars, as barriers stop the use of the street as a through road. But it is an area that struggles with fly tipping – the unauthorised dumping of unwanted items on pavements and

verges. As a result, the tenements overlook the sorry sight of soggy mattresses and old TVs. The Woodlands Community Development Trust (WCDT) wants to change this. During my fieldwork in 2016, they stepped up collective efforts to clean up the area, leveraging volunteer labour to pick up fallen litter and fly tipped items to collate them for council collection. They collected litter not only from the main thoroughfare but also from back lanes that run off West Princes Street behind the tenement houses.

This is part of Woodlands' vision of an improved neighbourhood. It goes far beyond the mere continuation of the community garden. They have plans and funds for developments to enliven the Woodlands area through artists' studios (called the Woodlands Workspace project), outreach to schools and older people, and helping make West Princes Street greener and cleaner. In order to build the studios (to include community arts space), they had to negotiate a lease of a piece of vacant land one tenement block away from the garden, find funding for the capital costs, pay members of staff and continue to run the garden, community café, and other side projects. To sustain this vision, the WCDT attracts large amounts of grant funding. However, such funding comes with caveats and this curtails active political position taking. Funding can thus be a depoliticising force in communal growing.

Two external aspects have been influential in how political or otherwise the projects studied here became. These are the relationships with funding and with the local authority. Funding matters because of its capacity to restrain action and direct it towards funders' preferred aims, rather than the aims of the organisation. It can also produce path dependencies, with one funding application affecting others down the line. This diversion can warp organisations, as Woodlands are well aware. This echoes goal displacement theories and concerns about the warping capacity of cooperating with



institutions (Jenkins & Eckert 1986; Miraftab 2009; Kim 2017). Further, a consideration of the relationship with the local authority is pertinent, because of its capacity again to be a source of what Kim, in apocalyptic terms, calls 'doom under the name of collaboration' (Kim 2017, p.3823). Yet collaboration becomes important in Glasgow's case as the council are responsible for planning and land regulations, are indirect land owners (usually through a arms-length body), and are a potential source of hindrance as much as support, through access to land, leases and funds.

What I am suggesting here is that the localised opportunity structure has had an indelible impact on the way that Woodlands have organised themselves. The formalisation of the garden, their relationship to funding and their neutrality have all been shaped by this web of opportunities and costs. This is a position indebted to Kitschelt's (1986) notion of a political opportunity structure. Kitschelt (1986) wrote that: 'Political opportunity structures are comprised of specific configurations of resources, institutional arrangements and historical precedents for social mobilisation, which facilitate the development of protest movements in some instances and constrain them in others' (Kitschelt 1986, p.58). Protest movements engaged in contestation may well require a different array of resources, institutions and precedents to community movements, but what Woodland's trajectory suggests is that the availability of funding and the interplay of intentions of different actors in this field affects what becomes possible for them as a communal growing project. Work by Sangmin Kim (2017) draws on social movement scholarship to suggest there are three interacting elements that affect community movement emergence in South Korea: "(1) structural changes in socio-political conditions and urban settings that have created a favourable political climate; (2) innovative strategies and alliances in partnership with civil society groups that have supported locally based grassroots practices since the emergence of

the NSM [New Social Movements] in the late 1990; and (3) the community movement groups' own internal capacity" (Kim 2017, p.3822). There are parallels between these three elements and the success and trajectory of Woodlands. Here I want to focus on how the confluence of land ownership, financial resources and governmental responsibilities creates a specific structure within which the organisations work that shapes how they work.

In Glasgow, the concatenation of local authority as planner, landowner and funder limits and shapes what occurs in communal growing. Thus, licit access to land is mediated through relations with Glasgow City Council. Through the subsidiary body of City Properties, Glasgow City Council own land across the city and much of it (as with much of the land across Glasgow) is officially derelict. Indeed, the site upon which Woodlands want to build artist studios is a piece of land that previously held a tenement that sat empty for years. In the context of derelict Glasgow, the council's approach to this becomes important. The council introduced a programme to use derelict land across Glasgow through a programme called Stalled Spaces. Stalled Spaces aims to bring derelict land around the city back into use through temporary projects, exhibiting a political will to utilise the vast swathes of underused land around the city. Indeed, with the Stalled Spaces program in play, Glasgow has seen a proliferation of community gardens. Nevertheless, this is complicated by the emphasis on temporary interventions and the long-term aims of the programme. Whilst Stalled Spaces is aiming to, amongst other things, 'engage and involve local people in making a difference in their neighbourhood' (Stalled Spaces, accessed Jan 9<sup>th</sup> 2017), this is not its only focus. On a web page aimed at landowners, Stalled Spaces are offered as 'opportunities... that could improve the land without jeopardising any future development plans' and 'can improve the quality of an area as well as the site's attractiveness for future development' (Stalled Spaces, accessed Jan 20<sup>th</sup> 2017). Thus, the council

themselves state an interest in development as usual, aided by temporary uses. The ambiguities of meanwhile uses have been highlighted previously, particularly in relation to their role in gentrification and the tensions around the end of any tenancy (c.f. Andres & Grésillon 2013; Németh & Langhorst 2014). Temporariness puts an explicit end-point on projects and indeed limits their future possibilities. From the viewpoint of organisations then there is a conflict of interests: it might be in their longer-term interests to seek more permanent sources of funding, but the availability of the support in the here and now might be more pressing. Growing then can become complicit in area improvement through the need for funding. This is not a clear cut case however of goal displacement so much as bringing in other agendas – for local regeneration and dealing with the dereliction problem. Ultimately though if projects succeed in improving local areas, they may find the council's emphasis on temporary use a thorn in their side. Illustratively, Woodlands have been negotiating for a lease with the council on a so-called Stalled Space, indeed with Stalled Spaces funding, and it is notable the restrictions in place on what can be built on the site. Only temporary structures are allowed. This limits the vision, height and solidity with which artist studios can be built. Explicitly, this is a temporally limited use of the site.

Furthermore, funders shape the organisations they fund by requiring a formalised structure and legally mandated organisation to exist before funds can be administered. Glasgow City Council have a number of pots of money which community gardens can and do apply for, such as the Stalled Spaces programme (who part fund the Woodlands Workspace project), although other major funds come from the NHS, the devolved Scottish Parliament or charitable funders. What is interesting at both sites is that while there is an awareness of the potential for goal displacement, it remains that incorporation has both symbolic importance and was also necessary in order

to legitimately access funds. Furthermore, because of the stipulations of legislation on community ownership set out in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act (2015), if the Children's Wood were interested in trying to buy or leverage this piece of important legislation in order to have the land transferred to them, they would have to incorporate in a specific way. This highlights something de Souza's (2006) work on insurgent planning highlights: that there are huge gains to be had through cooperating with state structures. At present, the meadow activists are in many ways squatting on the land and have been threatened with eviction. Land ownership or rental would be strategically preferable because of the greater longevity and security offered over remaining without legal tenure on the land. This reflects questions raised in chapter five around the legibility of the campaign and the need to reflect structures the state can understand (Scott 1998).

Funding also shapes the direction taken by organisations through specific requirements and funding calls. WCDT has an excellent track record for attracting funding. In 2015, when I interviewed the manager of the Trust, Oliver, they had over the five-year period of their existence used forty-four different funders, some of them multiple times. Oliver's job is almost exclusively fundraising and finance, and he has a tactical approach to finding it, taking very few meetings and turning down lots of requests for conference and networking opportunities. The Trust relies largely on grant funding and reported an income of around £150,000 in 2015 and nearly £260,000 in 2016<sup>2</sup> (WCDT 2016). This reliance on grant funding shapes and restrains the actions of growing projects. Funding is allocated according to its fit with the aims of the funders and this can change year on year. A good example is the mental

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<sup>2</sup> This increase between 2015 and 2016 marks the capital funds needed to begin work on the Workspace programme that involves building a community hub building and artists studios.

wellbeing agenda that has affected the garden's direction. In 2015 there was an interest from the Scottish Government in funding projects geared towards having a therapeutic affect, improving mental health. In order to attract this funding, WCDT designed a training programme that included mindfulness and the development of ideas to improve the therapeutic nature of the garden.

Funding programmes can have a lasting effect on the direction projects take, creating path dependencies as reputations and records develop of the work done previously by organisations. Mindfulness was still a major aspect of the training a year later. An interview with Holly, a member of staff, illustrated the competing priorities involved in funding applications. Partly, the garden itself simply needs funding. In this case, seeking funding was also about developing what Holly called a 'therapeutic space'. Although the wild area with its strawberries, overhanging trees, and small pond is often thought of as peaceful, this was going beyond this passive peacefulness to actively developing this aspect of the space, or attempting to, through soliciting suggestions and running training. The aim was, through this, to make the space inclusive for more people. But there was also a path dependency: the member of staff noted that last year's funding wanted projects to include a mental health aspect, so now mental health was a 'thing' for Woodlands (c.f. Cumbers et al. 2017). The vehicle for this became mindfulness, particularly through the training programme. Thus, something that began in 2015 as criteria for the Scottish Government funding has become something that Woodlands now pursue.

This is understood in a balanced way at WCDT, as a strategic means of getting things done, narrating this bending with the funders as a necessary means of survival, of finding a way of squaring instrumental and substantive goals. There is a balance in the narration between something they were seeking – to

make the space inclusive – and something the funders were seeking – projects that look at mental health. Mindfulness was a means of fulfilling the funding while working towards an internally motivated goal.

Helen: So for example in [the training course], there's a mental health aspect, would that have existed in the work regardless?

Oliver: It probably would do, I mean I would love to get somebody to pay us to have a full time gardeners who could just do the garden, just do what they want. So but that's not really going to happen... We did a survey at our AGM last year and again people like were telling us the garden was peaceful and we were wanting to make some improvements to the garden and also [want] to have more things happen when the staff aren't there. So that's an example of how I could match what we wanted to do [to funding], tweak it slightly

(Oliver interview, July 2015)

Ideally, Oliver noted, they would employ someone just to maintain the garden and work with volunteers but that kind of funding is not available in the current austerity funding times. Instead, they must seek alignments and 'tweak' what they are intending to do to fit into the funding rubric. In this case, although mindfulness might not have automatically featured in garden training, it was not a major disjuncture from the WCDT aims. Nonetheless, it has had a lasting impact on the direction the training programme has taken.

In the case of the WCDT, there is clearly an attempt to find funders whose aims align as closely as possible with those of the trust. Indeed, this was a major teaching Oliver offered to those at the training seminar he held for those interested in grant funding: that funders who do not match your aims are not worth pursuing. Thus, the tactics of the community development trust reflect an understanding of the difficulties of working alongside states and other funders. This reflects similar work done on community organisations

that emphasise the importance to groups of remaining critical and autonomous, at the expense of funding opportunities. This bears comparison with Miraftab's (2009) work on South African Anti-Eviction campaigns who refuse to work with NGOs precisely because of the element of control exerted through funding. The similarity lies in aiming for independence and a reflexivity about how funding shapes what occurs at an organisational level. Further, it suggests, as Osterman (2006) does, that goal displacement can be mitigated by cultural factors such as a strong orientation to values. At Woodlands, a strong sense of the value of independence leads to a will to find funding that suits the aims of the organisation, although this has been a learning process for the trust that included years of giving eco-driving lessons before a balance was struck between funder aims and garden aims.

One way in which the funding landscape restricts action is by having precise demands regarding the destination of the funds they allow. Some funders are less exacting in this, but others – and the Climate Challenge Fund run by the Scottish Government especially was criticised for this – require regular updating on progress, measurements of impact and monitoring visits. This means money gained from grant sources can be restricted in that they must be tracked and spent on only those things associated with the project. WCDT needs to cover core costs, such as insurance, administration costs and staff wages, therefore they have developed an approach with great flexibility – particularly utilising smaller funds:

We've got just as an example we've got [a local charity for inclusion] paying us 1,000 pounds to run some garden workshops which Mark will do. Probably about 2 or 3 hundred of that I'll keep back towards core costs so that's how we [manage] I suppose. But also we haven't got anyone with a fully funded job beyond March 2016.

(Oliver interview, June 2015)

This highlights not only what the manager calls 'being creative' with funds, but also the general precarity of the employees and the projects more widely. Because of the temporariness of funding and the precarious position of projects, the challenge is to find ways of combining this creativity with a dovetailing between funder aims and project aims. The danger in this is changing the nature of the project to suit funders' aims, rather than those of the project itself. This is often translated in the community garden literature into ideas of co-option into neoliberal governance, but the idea of institutional channelling – the directing of organisations towards less challenging action – is a perhaps more apt way of viewing this. This is part of a dynamic of challenge and response between those in power and those who would see the city arranged differently. Nevertheless, restrictions in charity funding also help produce this precarity, and that indeed can be linked back to austerity governance (Coote 2011; Williams, Goodwin, and Cloke 2014). In this, the opportunity structure is not sheltered from broader neoliberal tides, but instead is the local particularity through which governance is experienced. Indeed, this echoes neoliberalisation scholarship, where it is acknowledged that 'actually existing programs of neoliberalisation are always contextually embedded and politically mediated, for all their generic features, family resemblances, and structural interconnections' (Peck et al. 2009, p.52).

Subtler ways of shaping communal growing exist too, through the tendency of funding to ask for applications to delineate clearly set goals, end-points and measurable outputs for each funding application. This is what Holly describes as making everything a 'project'. Whilst packaging up activities neatly is part of the funding process, it reduces a sense of continuity and can be itself problematic:



Holly: Funding is usually project kind of orientated so things get badged up as projects. Then Oliver goes for funding and if we're successful, we roll with it. That's kind of the pattern it takes really at the moment.

Helen: If you didn't have to wrap it up in projects, do you think it would look different, what the WCDT do?

Holly: It could do yeah. So let's say for example that someone really rich donates us millions of pounds and we don't have to worry about money.

Helen: Wouldn't that be lovely

Holly: Yeah it'd be amazing. It certainly would take, it'd take the pressure off doing things in set time scales... I think it would give a bit of breathing space to really get to the root of what people are interested in and what they need and how to go around solving that, without having the pressure of having to get something finished in a year.

(Holly interview, May 2016)

What Holly notes is that the timelines of grant funding are relatively short, meaning that in her position, trying to develop relationships with schools and locals, it is difficult to 'get to the root' of what is needed and there is a distinct pressure wrapped up in this. The intensity of the funding cycle and its short-term imagination (projects rarely last longer than a year) attracts organisational attention to funding applications, taking up a large part of the WCDT's managers time and administrative energy.

At the Woodlands Community Garden, this has particular ramifications regarding the capacity of the project to be a source of a dissenting political voice. Despite taking oppositional positions regarding food poverty or cycling infrastructure, there is pressure on the WCDT to remain neutral in some

sense. This is evident in the criteria from funders themselves. Guidance notes from previous funders of the WCDT, the Robertson Trust, suggest they do not fund 'activities which incorporate the promotion of political or religious beliefs' (Robertson Trust n.d.). Equally the Climate Challenge Fund (a Scottish Government fund) state that 'political or religious activities' are 'ineligible' for funding (Keep Scotland Beautiful n.d.). In funding criteria at least, political activity is compartmentalised from community action.

This is less widely debated at the WCDT than it might otherwise be due to the professionalisation of the organisation. Most decisions are taken on behalf of the whole community by the board of directors or by Oliver himself, then latterly rubber-stamped. This means that questions around funding are not part of the everyday talk of the garden or café, except when it gets short and worries circulate that the projects might stop. One interesting lack of debate occurred as the Big Lottery funding ceased in 2015 and the café was due to run out of funds. Despite a number of conversations around whether there might be more funding, or if it was going to be possible to keep going without, most of the stress and conversation was to be found amongst staff members who were likely to lose jobs and who struggled to maintain business like usual under those conditions. Irina, one of the café workers, noted that it was harder to maintain any kind of progressive thematic programme when you didn't know whether half the programme would even happen. Yet the direction of events, or where funding came from, was not usually debated. This was notable especially when funding came through from a mainstream bank. Arguably, this suggests that professionalisation at the WCDT abstracts funding questions from volunteers and participants, bracketing them off as practical concerns and closing off questions of funding source or other ways of working.

Yet organisationally, the WCDT have continued to work in focused ways on local problems. The WCDT's decision in 2016 to place greater emphasis on local clean-ups and the fate of West Princes Street could be seen as analytically a more political – in this sense a more active and critical – stance on local administration. The efflorescence of signs saying 'Don't Dump Here' and 'Don't Waste Woodlands', and advertising 'Community Clean-ups', are an unmistakable visual reminder as one walks West Princes Street that WCDT claim some responsibility as a local body (see figure 17). Litter-picks are an activity that Woodlands have engaged in before but in 2016 the focus on cleaning up around the local area increased after some research commissioned by the Trust suggested that it was a major concern for residents and businesses alike.



**Figure 17: Don't waste Woodlands poster hanging from Woodlands Community Garden fence, June 2016. Photograph by the author.**

Because of the organisational need to remain neutral, this has not been actively described as engaging with a politics of local administration or as questioning the capacity of the council to provide a decent service. This introduces some level of ambiguity as to the framing of the activity, and participants tend to introduce the way they benefit from this activity. While participants see it as the council's failings that result in their having to take over, they acknowledge the clean streets are a pleasant result they themselves enjoy.

An ambiguity continues to exist in this area – one which Woodlands as an organisation are indirectly engaging in – around who owns what, who has the responsibility to clean up, particularly around the persistent issue of fly tipping. They engage implicitly rather than explicitly in land politics, staking a cautious, limited right to the city. A good example of what I mean by this is exemplified in the ways Woodlands act in the area around the community garden and their offices, taking action on fly tipping and the state of the concrete planters. The usual set up along the tenements on West Princes Street and its tributaries is for each house to have a 'back green' where the domestic bins and any recycling facilities are located. These are accessed by a 'back lane', along which the bin lorries drive to empty the bins. In Woodlands, these are often full of litter. At one Community Clean-up in May 2016, I spent a few hours digging dirt and moving abandoned objects down a back lane for collection by the council with other volunteers. Arranged by the WCDT via the garden, this was part of a larger Sunday activity including a raised bedders' meeting and a social gathering. Sandwiched between the two, high visibility vest wearing volunteers from the Woodlands Community Garden swarmed out among the nearby lanes, around four to a lane, and moved rubbish out to the street. The council later came along to collect it. This proactive approach

by Woodlands was not painted as political, but invited residents to engage in a quiet subversion. Instead of waiting or petition for the council to take action, they did so themselves: clearing bags and bags of abandoned food packaging, defunct electronics and miscellaneous detritus from the streets and lanes.

While clearing litter from an alley with volunteers, Daniel and Thomas, I asked their thoughts on why we were engaged in this clean up. The failure of the council was a common trope, and so was blaming the transitory renters in the area (some of whom are students). But while the council were blamed for the mess to some extent, there was some ambiguity over whether the garden (and the Trust more broadly) was a good vehicle for cleaning the area up. Daniel, who has a raised bed at the Woodlands garden, questioned the long term sustainability of the clean ups, although he felt the Trust were doing the right thing by stepping in and trying to change things. Thomas, a local resident who is not a part of the garden except through his sister, felt the council probably should be cleaning up the area. He has previously however tried to speak to the council about other waste related issues and feels they are a little useless when it comes to dealing with residents. Nonetheless, he was quick to note that, as a local resident, he directly benefitted from the clean up, suggesting that really they were doing it for themselves.

What these accounts and others like them do is demonstrate the ambiguity of clean-ups and implicit claims to urban ownership. On one hand, Thomas and Daniel both critique local administration and the organisation of litter collection. This is implicit in the actions taken. What is interesting is that there is little explicit condemnation, nor clear alternative set out besides the monthly 'community clean-ups' themselves. Woodlands thus quietly deals with the politics of everyday issues around engaging with the council to co-ordinate clean ups and negotiate use of land. They behave independently to

some extent, taking local control of the street mess, but it is not actively framed as political. This leaves a lot of room not only for the WCDT to deny this as political action, but also for participants to see this as non-political – as civic, or moral, or simply cleaning up as private citizens who would rather not live near fly-tipped sofas. In taking on this role without staking the political terms of intervention is the kind of action that leads to narrative of complicity with the roll back of state governance.

But the wariness towards politics is important in organisational terms. It introduces space for the WCDT to claim neutral political ground. Illustrative of this was in a meeting with Oliver a year after the fieldwork formally ended. He was surprised at the depoliticised sense of the Woodlands Community Garden. He told me how he thought it was political and we discussed how this differed from his interview. His response was that in the interview, he'd had his managerial hat on; whereas sitting with me discussing the research, he felt he could respond as an individual. What this is illustrative of, again, is the way that the organisational form taken by the WCDT constrains not only the concrete actions of the WCG but how they publicly represent it. In this, they do not take strong positions on land ownership or use, because they have to remain amenable to funders and the local council (which is often a funder too). This is theoretically interesting in light of social movement studies which tend to emphasise the importance of access to resources that becoming a non-profit entails for movements: a benefit too great to turn away from (Cress 1997; McCarthy et al. 1991). In this case, this depoliticised framing is a result of that organisational form and its associated pressures, constraining directly the possibility of a grassroots organisation staking a clearly political position in land use and local administrative politics.

## **Oppositional organising at the meadow**

The meadow in turn provides an illustrative alternative of loud opposition, rather than quiet co-operative subversion. This reflects their emergence from contestation itself – from rejecting development and forging an autonomous alternative. It also reflects their different institutional formation and relation to funding, which is to say their general position in the community gardening field in Glasgow. Their position in conflict with the council, and as squatters on the land, has a significant impact in terms of how political they are required to be and indeed are liberated to be. The North Kelvin Meadow and Children's Wood's engagement in direct contestation over the use of a piece of land in Glasgow has entailed a great deal of lobbying, campaigns, protesting and taking part in drawn out bureaucratic processes of dissent through the planning system. That is, it has entailed a great deal of direct political action. In order to do this, they have mobilised support from local people and from those further afield. Indeed, in February 2016, the Children's Wood mounted a photograph campaign with submissions from around the world, from places as far afield as Arizona, Singapore and Belfast. Their political position, in contradistinction from the community garden, puts them outside of a number of the neutralising facets of Woodlands' relationship with the council and funders. However, they become depoliticised in other ways. Particularly notable perhaps is the need to position themselves as respectable community actors who want control of the space, thus they have to resemble something legible to the council and Scottish Government (again, this reflects earlier discussions in chapter three around Scott's (1988) notion of legibility).

Unlike the WCDT, the lack of official permission to be onsite, their challenge to the council as planners and landlords, and the fact the council themselves are a funding body (in essence their oppositionality) puts them outside of many pots of funding. This is a difficulty when it comes to resources, but a boon

when it comes to avoiding the negative impact of funding's specificities. Being outside of those dynamics gives the meadow organisations the space to challenge power, and, as Toni puts it, get on with 'doing things':

I know with having been involved with community gardens, with Ivan having been involved in a lot, and I've been involved in a few a while ago, it's a bit different because they're very funding reliant and they have to then do things in order to appease the funders which might not have gone in line with the original principles. I think because this place wouldn't be eligible for any of that funding anyway, it's only private funders that would ever fund this place because of it being disputed land, then yeah we're just outside of that bracket. But maybe down the line that will change, but with the Scottish Climate Challenge things<sup>3</sup> and stuff like that, you've got quite strict criteria which almost stops it from being able to be quite radical in some ways, or just more direct. Just like directly doing things.

(Toni interview, July 2016)

For those who are beholden to funders, 'doing things' can be harder because of the need to adhere to 'strict criteria'. Toni's point holds to some extent for the Woodlands Community Garden, as discussed seen above, where funding shapes the activities on the ground.

Whilst this position – largely outside of funding dynamics – functions to liberate the meadow, there remains too the immediacy of the threat to the meadow that politicises collective endeavours there. The threat to the meadow has been imminent since 2008 when the plans were drawn up to develop the meadow. Campaigners argue this put them on the back foot as far

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<sup>3</sup> The Climate Challenge Fund is a Scottish Government funding stream offering 'grants and support for community-led organisations to tackle climate change by running projects that reduce local carbon emissions' (Keep Scotland Beautiful n.d.). It is renowned among community garden workers for being restrictive in its funding and exacting in its monitoring.



as organising goes, but it has also meant that there was a real, tangible possibility of the site being bulldozed to make way for flats. As Buechler (2004) argues, in early models of social movement mobilisation, threat was highlighted as a key producer of solidarity. Further, Van Dyke and Soule (2002) argue that threat can be the basis of mobilisation for what they call reactive movements, those who mobilise in reaction to other social movements or perceived gains of some interest group. In Van Dyke and Soule's (2002) terms, the meadow is reactive. The threat to the space of the meadow itself was a large factor in what came to the fore in conversations, shaping them in certain ways, and determining the whole process as one of tension. It echoes Martinez's (2009) work that explores the mobilisation of New York community gardens after they faced the threat of mass closure. At the meadow, as in New York's Lower East Side, collective mobilisation was a means of pushing back against the potential loss of a growing site.

A pervasive sense of threat shaped conversations I had in the field, not only narrowing the scope of conversations to what might be lost (at the exclusion sometimes of what might perhaps be imagined) but it also led to a tendency to want to downplay difference for political reasons and to see a binaristic us-them between the council and the campaigners. I was often faced with evasion or participants who would avoid tensions between the Children's Wood campaign and the North Kelvin Meadow. With a certain pleasing similitude, this emerged from both campaigns. They almost all wanted to maintain a show of singular focus, of co-operation and common cause. To a large degree the sense of shared threat did lend itself to solidarity between often-divergent campaigns. But the organisations did also have disagreements. Often this was over what the focus should be on, whether conservation, children's play or dog walking should take precedence in the space. This is illustrated in many minor incidents such as when wildflower seeds were planted on the meadow

and the fenced off. Putting up barriers around the seeds to give them a chance to grow upset dog walkers and those who felt that people had no place putting up physical structures to stop people using a part of the meadow. Such barriers would then be transgressed. Stories such as these would be told with eye rolling or gritted teeth, as emblematic of the kind of daily struggles that led Ivan to announce that community meant ‘really annoying [*laughs*]’ (Ivan interview, June 2015). These tensions are part and parcel of negotiating shared space, but it was notable that organisers often wanted to play them down. This chimes with social movement research that suggests that increased threat levels are likely to increase co-operation between movements (Morris and Staggenborg 2004). Similarly, threat here increased a general sense of cohesion within the coalition of the North Kelvin Meadow campaign with the Children’s Wood.

Threat also had a way of quickly turning people from bystanders into participants in protest, if only for a short while. It was notable how quickly people would become involved in the meadow. At a protest held on the land in January 2016, many people I spoke to who had come along only recently, or who were intermittent users. These individuals felt strongly enough, despite that minimal contact with the land and the campaigns, to attend a Tuesday morning protest in the pouring rain. It is notable that some of the support for the meadow is ephemeral, yet the immediacy of the threat and the foundation of the communal growing and other guerrilla practices there as a form of protest, necessarily politicises the context. In doing so, this politicises participants. Within this, the deliberate campaigns of the Children’s Wood and the North Kelvin Meadow are important in shaping this understanding of the land dispute.

As a way of publicising and explaining the campaign, many struggles between the council and the meadow were publicly declared. The website was a key tool for this – publicising dates and what was expected at any given time. Selected highlights from reporters’ reports appeared on both the North Kelvin Meadow website and the Children’s Wood website, for example, celebrating successes, but along the way various other engagements were publicised there. The Children’s Wood Facebook and Twitter accounts were used to engage people in the process of contestation – particularly encouraging them to write objection letters and keeping them up to date with what was happening. In amongst tweets sharing details of toddler groups, art competitions and involvement in events talking about community land use, the Children’s Wood twitter kept people up to date with how the campaign was progressing (Figure 18):

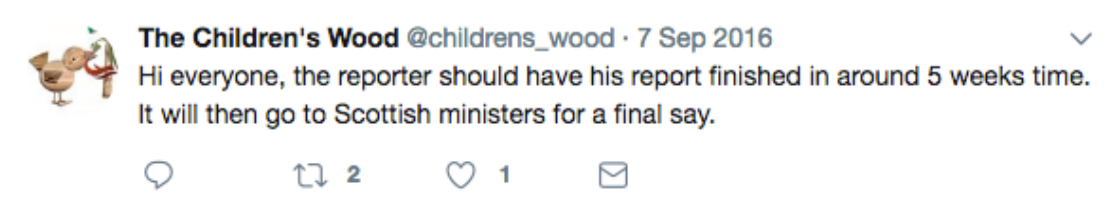


Figure 18: Children's Wood tweet, screenshot September 2016

In this tweet from September 2016, following the public hearing, the Children’s Wood organisation sought to let supporters know what kind of a timeline they should expect. Throughout the process of objecting to development on the meadow, social media, traditional media, posters and websites were used to keep supporters informed of what was happening. The pace of the planning process is slow, so incremental updates were a useful way of keeping campaigners and activists up to date. Keeping a social profile also meant that antagonisms between the council and the campaigns were publicised. By publicly engaging with a struggle against the council, and using

social and traditional media to leverage mass support for their cause, the Children's Wood made plain their difference with the council and its impact on them. This had the effect of highlighting the antagonism between the council and the Children's Wood campaigners.

By contrast, while at Woodlands they were often engaged in difficult conversations with the council, these were held behind closed doors as private negotiations. This highlights the contrast in positions held by the different organisations, and how it interacts with their approach to engaging with the council. Woodlands Community Garden's struggles with the local authority are less politicised, less publicised and more bureaucratic – relating to leases and litter pick ups, rather than existential questions. Woodlands were in drawn-out negotiations with the council over the lease of a second site on West Princes Street for a time, and their dealings with the council have been less than amorous. At one garden event, a member of the staff who had been involved in dealing with the council joked that 'everyone who hates the council is welcome'. But in general, the council was an oblique force at the garden at best. Members of staff often had access to the difficulties of working with Glasgow City Council. Samantha, during a stint working in the office, noted that the council officials who stopped by while she was there were rude and stiff. She was shocked by their tone, but others more used to this felt their behaviour was normal. This might be taken as a one-off behavioural judgement on Samantha's account, but it fits well with how difficult more generally reported relationships with the council tend to be. Locals who have tried to get the council to act on fly-tipping find them unhelpful, and Oliver has more than once voiced exasperation with their multiple overstretched departments who merely punt you between themselves, pushing the case on to another department rather than being able to help.

The position of Woodlands in the field, as a formalised and funded player, is highlighted in their approach to contest with the council. Getting a lease for the workspace project was a particularly difficult period for the WCDT, yet those difficulties were private. It was in the middle of those negotiations that Oliver expressed his general dismay at the council. His account of the process highlighted long delays on behalf of the council and inappropriate leases that the WCDT's solicitors suggested they reject outright. The cost of this process on both sides and the drawn out process by which an agreement was reached took its toll on Oliver and the staff at Woodlands. However, besides being occasionally notified of a delay with the Workspace project beginning, participants in Woodlands' other projects –whether the garden or the café – only came across details of this if they pressed Oliver for them. Otherwise, this was kept away from public knowledge as a negotiation between the landlord (the council) and the WCDT. Because of the position of the Trust as working alongside and within systems of land tenure, there is much to be gained from quiet subversion rather than outright contest. Indeed, it re-emphasises the benefits of established players in the field working alongside rather than against local authorities (de Souza 2006; Miraftab 2009).

The position of Woodlands within the community gardening field can seem stable, but it is prone to existential threat. This precarity however, despite its existential character, does not politicise in the same way as the threat to the meadow, or indeed the threat to the community gardens of New York in the 1990s (Martinez 2009; Schmelzkopf 2002). Unlike at the meadow, these are not flashpoints of mobilisation. While the WCDT does have existential moments of crisis, they are usually around losing funding, rather than an external force trying to erase the space through development. Indeed, given the precarity and short-term timelines of funding, it is perhaps surprising these crisis moments do not come around more often. In 2015 one such

moment involved the end of funding for the community café, which was threatened with discontinuing but was saved by a small grant from a bank fund and a small amount raised from donations. This more nebulous kind of threat has no obvious opponent and did not seem to lend itself to mobilisation in the same way, although Woodlands did try their hand at crowd funding (with limited success). They also spend less time talking about politics. Although questions of food justice and food waste are often discussed in relation to the community café, for example, politics appears in the garden as a curiosity rather than a necessity – as a visit from a local MP or MSP to talk about the café or have his (invariably his) picture taken with local kids; a local councillor on the board. This lends a very different political environment at a local level.

The lack of publicly struggling with the council at Woodlands meant interpretations of the project were not focused on the uselessness of the council, or their distance from reality. Instead participants tend to reflect on what is gained locally, and their personal feelings and reasons. The difference between the projects partly derives from the publicness of contestation – and also its existential implications. The meadow organisations cannot afford to keep quiet about their difficulties with the council because they needed mass support to help them succeed in rejecting the developers' plans. The garden's internal position as a potential leaseholder with the council, not to mention its position as a funded organisation, restricts the benefits of publicising its difficulties with the council. The different pathways taken by the organisation relate in many ways to their position within their institutional context: their relationship with the local authority and to funders.

## Organisational responses to co-option

The WCDT and meadow organisations are reflexive about their relationship with the council and their funders. By reflexive, in this context, I mean that not only are they aware of the dangers of taking on a funders' aims, and its potential to disrupt their own aims, but that they actively take steps to try to optimise their relationships with funders. In this, they are engaged in critical assessment of their own position, in the WCDT's case through a history of having been pushed away from their aims to some extent in the past. Seeing the WCDT as a reflexive agent brings in the organisation's agency in relation to the field, in order to recognise their role in trying to change it. In this, WCDT introduce an idea about independence and the ability to be critical: they argue that they have not been co-opted. In this, they show an understanding of the potential for co-option, as shown too by Miraftab's (2009) respondents in anti-eviction campaigns in Cape Town (see also Osterman 2006). They argue that they are independent and able to mount sincere and vocal criticism, rather than be cowed by the institutional bargains made by accepting funding. Oliver, manager of WCDT, posits this as the potential to work locally.

Oliver: The remit of the trust is really working in the locality and I think that has real advantages.

Helen: What do you think that helps? What kind of advantages do you see?

Oliver: I think it gives us more independence.

...

Helen: I just wondered what you were independent from?

Oliver: It's something I've noticed if we go to, we're not part of like, we're not part of a council, we're not part of the NHS, um we're not part

of what you might call the vol- well we'll call the third sector, voluntary sector, I've kind of noticed if I go to networking meetings of development trust associations, we are one of a body of development trust associations, the DTAs are a lot more **outspoken**, a lot more independent than uhhhh a council, NHS, a lot of the bigger voluntary sector organisations.

(Oliver interview, July 2015, emphasis added)

As Oliver notes, that the WCDT does not have allegiance to a political party nor an established governmental body allows them room for manoeuvre. He attributes this to the specific status and resources of a development trust. The WCDT is a member of the Development Trust Association Scotland (DTAS) who have been instrumental as a lobbying body, pushing for development trusts to be recognised as representative of communities in their local areas, something the Oliver highlighted as important during a funding workshop he ran in September 2016. This urge to be noticed is a play for legitimacy, a quest for status within the system: to be recognised as representative of the community by political decision-makers and therefore targeted for inclusion in consultation exercises. This again bears resemblance to quests for legibility in chapter five. Recognition gives the Trust a legitimate place in the bureaucratic landscape and a say in local matters. They become in this sense the community to be consulted. This has relevance to the rising importance of participation, described Cooke and Kothari (2001) as a 'tyranny' due to its pervasive appearance in local governance strategies as a form of tokenism. In this context however there is a voice, however limited or partial, in being the recognised 'community' to be consulted. But it is precisely the limitations of this position, precisely the way working within the system can curtail the ability to be critical, that lead to analyses suggesting the co-optation of communal growing projects or alternative urbanisms, a process de Souza (2006, p.334) discusses as 'adjustment of agendas or dynamics' to the system. Unsurprisingly, this is not how the WCDT see things; preferring the limited



power of minor bureaucracy to the ambivalent and at times nebulous gains of contestation and antagonism.

In this context, however, WCDT still argue they are independent. Independence here is about being separate from political parties and governmental interference, about the ability to be critical. This is exemplified best by the engagement with alternative food-insecurity support. Besides the community garden, WCDT are also known for their community café, which provides a free vegetarian meal every Monday. All are welcome to attend and, having grown this model from a handful of attendees to regularly feeding over thirty attendees a week by 2016, the Trust are often invited to talk at conferences and events. At such events they are critical of food banks' methods of support. Reflecting on this, Oliver proudly described how the Trust provided a number of speakers at a recent conference on food insecurity:

We went to the, there was a Beyond Foodbanks conference in February which was looking at alternative ways of tackling food poverty and the first four people that spoke in February were me, were all WCG café volunteers or me.

(Oliver interview, July 2015)

This signifies, for Oliver, the real critical voice that the Trust is able to have. It demonstrates their role in the wider conversation about food provision and scarcity. This is how the WCDT demonstrate their putative independence from funders to themselves and to others.

Naturally, this sits in tension with the influence that funding and political structure has upon the Trust and the Woodlands Community Garden, especially in terms of agenda setting. What emerges in this tension is a critical

reflection on the co-optation versus radicalism debate that lends sympathy to accounts that try to synthesise these (see McClintock 2014; Williams et al. 2014). What is interesting in the case of the Trust is that it notes the issues associated with funding, are reflexive about those issues, and try explicitly to manipulate that situation to suit their desired aims. Further, they have wrested a position as a recognised political community – and thus being consulted on projects such as cycling infrastructure – which gives them a limited amount of power within the system, at least to voice the criticism they claim as theirs. Within this messy picture, it remains that this is municipal level struggle, and the influence that a community organisation can have is primarily through voice and through disruptive practice. The ambiguity and flexibility of the position of the Trust regarding funders leave it free to negotiate, and to be creative in the gaps left to them. This is contrary perhaps to the interstitial urbanisms discussed in the scholarly literature which emphasise, as Tonkiss (2013) has done, that these projects are anti-utopian because of their willingness to work within the gaps. Instead, Woodlands explicitly use their marginal position to pose criticisms and pride themselves on their independence within this. In this, they have made a difference to community food provision, the green space around the garden, worked with schools to educate young people and made a small but significant difference to levels of litter around West Princes Street.

Implicated in this is the organisational form of the WCDT which positions the trust as a professionalised figure within the field as much as it constrains them. This relates to scholarly arguments around the effect of social movements adopting non-profit status. While some see this as a resource that offers too much to be turned down (McCarthy et al. 1991), others have argued that non-profit status can be a hindrance to movement aims but that the path taken to non-profit status is of great importance to understanding whether

that charitable status is effective for the movement or not (Cress 1997). What is at stake here is the question of whether becoming bureaucratised and professionalised is a key resource or not: something Woodlands claim. But since the garden began as a collaboration between a development trust and guerrilla gardeners, rather than as a community movement, they have always worked within a non-profit framework. Whilst a non-profit status might be a necessity for accessing funding, it was not a condition adopted by the WCDT in order to do so: it was the organisational structure of the group prior to taking up communal growing. Indeed the involvement of the trust was predicated on their position as landowner. The impetus that began with Garden Revolutions of the West End (GROW) was subsumed into the trust when it became a community garden. In this way, a similar narrative emerges around reduced radicalism (from guerrilla gardening to development trust), although it is not a straightforward pathway of professionalising in order to access positional goods.

Thus, organisational dynamics are important in terms of how the field of communal growing works, and they are part of a larger question of the limited range of non-corporate entities and their organisation. Nevertheless, the depoliticising pressure within the field of communal growing is broader than funding or organisational pressures, and this is well illustrated by turning back to the North Kelvin Meadow. Although not formally tied to landlord relations or some of the starker vagaries of funding, they remain subject to the pressures of the broader systemic structure of growing and charitable work in Glasgow. Thus I argue these communal growing projects adopt neutrality as a strategy to navigate the field.

## **The influence of partnership work**

Working alongside other organisations shapes the meadow in specific ways, driving the adoption of neutrality as well as shaping the physical environment of the meadow. Partnership work allows the meadow to get more done than it would otherwise manage, particularly through utilising the resources involved in corporate social responsibility schemes. It also creates more physical structures like tepees on the site such as those found sitting in the wooded area of the North Kelvin Meadow. Amongst the beech trees lies a children's play area. In amongst the sawed up tree trunk stepping stones, the leaves and woodchip on the ground and the ropes haphazardly strung between trees, there are two items of note – one is a tepee built of broken up and rebuilt crates, the other is a mud kitchen built of donated wood and full of donated utensils. Both are well loved by children in the meadow (often referred to as 'their' meadow) but these pieces of play furniture have a specific genesis that illuminates some of the relations between the meadow and its neutrality. Both are a result of corporate volunteering through an organisation called The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). A group from BT built the mud kitchen, as a plaque on the side declares, although it is customarily smeared in mud. Their insistence on having that plaque has become something of a running joke among activists, but it nonetheless illustrates the reliance of the Children's Wood on corporate responsibility programmes. Similarly, the tepee was built in May 2015 by volunteers from the Royal Bank of Scotland, scrambled together on a relatively sunny day by a small group from the bank. Beyond affecting the physical landscape of the meadow, partnership work also shapes the organisational possibilities at the meadow.

While the TCV volunteers worked in the woods, I got talking to Frank, a young man from the organisation who was there to supervise the work. We talked about the work TCV do with the Children's Wood and whether they were

concerned at all by the threat to the space. Frank told me that their rationale for working with the Children's Wood was one of immediate gain for the community – perhaps ironically they weren't interested in longevity or politics. To most TCV volunteers, Frank says, this is a neutral 'giving back' exercise and they appreciate the contact with those they see themselves as benefitting. Again, this engages in bracketing community as a neutral, non-political thing. But Frank talked too about the fact that this benefit could be short-lived, someone might come along and set fire to this tepee tonight. In this, he was keen to emphasise that if they were interested in longevity, they would not do much of the volunteering labour they do. There is pragmatism in this approach but also a nod to the short-lived nature of some corporate social responsibility volunteering. Again, the timelines of the imagination of community impact are remarkably foreshortened, in echoes of the short-termism of Stalled Spaces and other meanwhile uses (Kamvasinou 2015; Németh & Langhorst 2014; Kamvasinou 2017).

This idea of immediacy ties back to discussions of temporality in chapter five, particularly in terms of the immediacy of the lived experience of the site. But it has an important role here of distancing TCV from the political decisions that, at the time I spoke to him, were still to be made regarding the future of the site. Interestingly, Frank related that they do occasionally get a group who are concerned about whether volunteering entails endorsing the campaign. The TCV's position as deliberately neutral allows for the activity to be seen as purely for 'community benefit' as a form of charity instead of politics. Whilst TCV undoubtedly think the Children's Wood is a pleasant place and environmentally promising, they repeat that their position here is as non-political actors, not involved in supporting a campaign but in giving 'the community' something immediately of use to them, regardless of how long it might last.

This position taken by TCV is suggestive of the depoliticisation in the not-for-profit sector. It is made obvious through a refusal to take sides, in order perhaps to support a broader constitution of people. This runs against a history of the connection between resistance and charity work, with non-profits often historically involved for example in struggles for political rights (Flanigan 2006). This notion that the community then takes precedence over any council politics does something that I want to return to later: it places the idea of community, and resources or 'good' for the community, above the concerns of politics, in a slightly separate sphere defined by a language of morality. Rhetorically, this removes the political dimension to reimagining the land and promotes community as a site of positive moral valuation. In this, it demonstrates too the flexibility of community as a signifier – here as the placid, neutralised beneficiary of corporate help. Community in this context is pacifying and depoliticising. It pays for the Children's Wood to work within this neutrality because of what they gain from this relationship. As Polly noted in her interview, their constituency of volunteers are often not up for construction work:

For example, like so many of our volunteers are parents, I mean there're a lot without, there are dog walkers and things who are on the committee and things like that, but the majority have children and don't want to do manual stuff or just you know less keen to do that kind of stuff, so we tend to look for jobs like they're coming on Tuesday, Zurich are coming on Wednesday to finish the painting job on Kelbourne Street because Santander did it before but they only got half-way they couldn't finish it, so Santander are coming at the end of the month to do something. So they will pay for resources and they will do the work and we can join in if we want

(Polly interview, June 2015)

The tepee construction and building of mud kitchens is something the Children's Wood can get from TCV that their own volunteers cannot provide, as Polly points out they're 'less keen'. Furthermore, they will also pay for the necessary resources. In working with TCV, neutrality is projected onto the Children's Wood's mundane activities by partner organisations, a partitioning of the volunteering from the political face of the organisation that is done as a practicality, as a way of getting things done.

Perhaps a more nuanced version of this nexus of neutrality and partnership work lies in the relationship between the Children's Wood and schools. As council run and funded bodies, schools are put in a difficult position by the conflict of the Children's Wood and the council. However, some schools were put off initially in being involved with the project, not because the site itself was deficient or because outdoor learning was not a priority, but because they felt the project was doomed by this conflict:

The school round the corner they were like... you won't get the land. No way. And even up to like 6 months ago, she was still saying that, the head teacher. So it just shows you, despite people's pessimism, you know, there's so much pessimism around

(Polly interview, June 2016)

Besides the pessimism, the Children's Wood note that they put schools in a difficult position. The schools' relationship with the council was discussed at one meeting of the Children's Wood committee I attended as something that they needed to be careful about. This was the recognition that in order to have the schools use the land and for children to gain the greatest benefit from it, the Children's Wood needed to at least at first make this primarily about children's education. It is interesting however to see how this was then balanced against the strategic need of the campaign to demonstrate the value

of the land as a political move. One way of negotiating this tension was, in campaign material, listing the number of schools who utilise the space, rather than the specific schools. Thus, the Children's Wood could demonstrate the scale of their impact on local education (and emphasise how they provided this for free) whilst not foregrounding the supportive stance of specific local schools. In this sense, they balanced their instrumental need for support and school buy-in against their strategic aims in saving the space.

Concerns around the awkward position schools are put in by the meadow did not stop the involvement of some teachers in campaigning and supporting the Children's Wood. One local head teacher, Ryan, attended both days of the public hearing in September 2016 in support of the meadow campaign. His reasoning for prioritising the hearing, he said to me, was that as head teacher one of the privileges of his job was getting to decide what was in the best interest of the school. He told me the educational gain of the Children's Wood and the meadow for his school was so great as to outweigh his absence from the school for a day and a half. At the hearing, he made this clear too – arguing for the social and educational benefits of the site. Ryan's firm conviction regarding the importance of the site was typical of those deeply invested in the site, but his capacity to decide to attend and present such a vocal opposition to development was unusual. Most of the other teachers in support – loudly vocal or privately voiced – did not prioritise attending the hearing (or could not be absent from their institutions), and some were according to the Children's Wood's own admission wary of the potential for a conflict over their support of the project. Neutrality in this context is a product of the tensions brought out in partnership work, bringing in the competing needs for continued funding, for getting things done, and the difficulties of charitable and organisational objectives as they conflict with arguments for change. I



argue this offers an organisational explanation for the depoliticisation of some aspects of what has otherwise been a political campaign.

## **The importance of non-alignment**

Within the approach of the campaigns to the defence of the meadow and wood, there is strategic partisan neutrality when it comes to political parties. Again, this is about navigating the political landscape within which they work. At the meadow, this returns to the idea that the meadow and wood, children's education, green space and open space in the urban environment are above the pettiness of party politics and are social goods or indeed rights. It is also about a willingness to work within rather than against systems. In short, for campaigners this is about strategy. Michael put it with clarity, when asked if the campaign was political:

It is quasi-political, yes. Ok. But don't let that interfere with a strategic thing. There's no point coming out and starting to make threats and impaling people. That's not going to work.

(Michael interview, July 2016)

The idea that it is important to be 'strategic' in order to get things to 'work' was key to the way that both the North Kelvin Meadow campaign and latterly the Children's Wood have operated. This has practical applications. Claiming neutrality in partisan terms allows them to move fluidly between politicians of different hues without conflicting memberships or loyalties. That said, both the Woodlands Community Garden and the Meadow and Wood campaigns have a natural affiliation with the Green Party. The co-convenor of the Scottish Green Party, Patrick Harvie, has shown support for both case study sites at various points over the years. Indeed, he attended the meadow to put up bat boxes in protest at the indictment of two members of the meadow campaign

in 2009. This affiliation stretches as far as the local Green Party chapter visiting the meadow (poor turnout notwithstanding) in July 2015, and Terry showing them about. As he did so, he emphasised the ways they could use the party apparatus to help put pressure on the council to save the meadow.

However, the obvious political overlap between the green spaces studied here and the Green Party's ideology was strategically of lesser importance to saving the meadow than the Labour-SNP tension between Glasgow City Council (which has been Labour dominated since 1980 (Daily Record 2017)) and the SNP dominated devolved Scottish Parliament. The SNP have offered what activists have called 'cagey' backing for the North Kelvin Meadow, offering noncommittal support for their case. Many however saw the Scottish Government's SNP dominance as an opportunity, as the SNP's putative wish to point-score against the Labour dominated council was considered a factor in their favour. This does not necessarily demonstrate how Scottish regional politics works, but it does offer a viewpoint on how they are understood – as competitive, party-dominated, and led by partisan (rather than social) concern. This is I argue a key facet of what I discuss as the subjective disaffiliation with politics, that I will discuss in greater depth below.

This understanding of politics as sullied lends itself to the demarcation of the meadow as above municipal politics. Terry, the backbone of the North Kelvin Meadow campaign, has put it similarly, discussing how he wants to sit down with the council at the end of the day, so you don't go about saying bad things about them, although he usually caveated this with an 'at least not to their faces'. This reiterates a tendency to narrate the struggle as a strategic campaign fought rationally with one sole objective – to save the space. A member of the committee, Phil, discussed in an interview how he felt that the

space was not aligned with any political school, and somehow more ‘pure hearted’:

It’s not really aligned with any political ideology I think. There probably is, are ideologies that are more associated with the people in the Children’s Wood but yeah it isn’t really associated with conservatism or liberalism or even anarchism, but there are people who view it in that way, maybe. But yeah in general it really is more **pure hearted** than that. It’s just about wanting the space to work as it does and I think that’s **independent** really of political ideology

(Phil interview, July 2016, emphasis added)

Again this idea recurs that the Children’s Wood campaign sits on a more moral plane than politics more generally and that ideologically there is little alignment of the campaign with any one set of ideals. It is possible to argue to the contrary that there is a great sympathy between projects and the Green party, but that is not the point here. There is a deliberate concern here to position the meadow as a broader concern, superseding ideological concerns.

Whilst disavowing a connection to ideology, there is nonetheless tactical struggle and strategy within the organisational side of the Children’s Wood, and to a lesser extent the North Kelvin Meadow campaign. The latter concern themselves with their discourse not alienating those in power, and trying to make strong arguments in favour of saving the space ecologically. The Children’s Wood go beyond this. At committee meetings in early 2015, there was the sense that the campaign should reach out to more politicians, leverage public opinion and the media as far as possible, to apply pressure on the council to concede the land. To this end, their partisan neutrality helped them claim ground as a wide social good, rather than an ideological outgrowth of one specific party or movement. The ramification of this is an elevation of community as non-political, framed often as a social good in and of itself. In

determining the direction to take when countering the development, the Children's Wood had support from the Development Trust Association Scotland (or DTAS) who advised them that they should absolutely consider the decision as a political one – and that in recognising this, they might want to go up a political level and lobby the Scottish Government, which they eventually did do. Nevertheless, the campaigns saw their involvement in lobbying, utilising politicians and trying to apply media pressure as extraordinary activities. Politics is a means of saving the land, whereas they do not usually see their everyday activities on the meadow as intrinsically political. Their neutrality is implicated in this – in a manner of speaking, their neutrality was a tool, it became a way of engaging in strategic action (for change). It is also a means of not identifying with the imagination of a divisive, competitive, party-dominated local politics. It is in this latter sense of politics as divisive that the moral framing of these projects come to have salience: as a non-conflictual way of framing activities.

### **(A)political imaginations**

The conceptualisation of the projects as political or not becomes an important point of tension in both projects, as it encompasses such a breadth of interpretation. This is to say that irreconcilable attitudes exist between participants' views of the projects as completely political, as totally apolitical or somewhere fuzzy in between. I discuss this as the political imagination of the sites, in order to capture the interrelation of participants' understanding of the sites and their broader concept of what politics means. That communal growing can be both deeply political for some and apolitical for others was indeed partly a question of different conceptions of politics itself. Some were drawing on a broader, feminist-inflected sense of everyday life as political, while others purely identified politics with governance structures of the state (local council, Scottish government, UK government) and the political party

structure. The difference in interpretation was spread across both sites and also related to personal trajectories, project involvement and experiences of protest and politics. This recalls Nettle's argument that: 'As in many social movements, community gardeners' collectivity is plural, ambivalent and often contradictory (Melucci 1996) and does not necessarily coalesce around a clearly articulated political philosophy or model of change' (Nettle 2014, p.170). The empirical variation in the political interpretation of communal growing confirmed this plurality, but it also coalesced around a similar point: the importance of the spaces themselves and their transformative potential.

In exploring this variation, there are two things of note. Firstly, this ought to lend a caution to totalising statements about the political or otherwise nature of communal growing as a practice: these function at an analytical level only, and a great degree of subjective variation exists in terms of how the projects are imagined. This chimes with Nettle's (2014) cautions around not seeing all community gardening as social action, much of it occurs with no political or autonomous intention, and not expecting political gardening to exhibit a clear, coherent, and unitary ideology. Secondly, the case studies' ability to contain the variability of interpretation, not just of their political nature but also of community itself, can be seen as a strength characteristic of some urban communal activities, lending itself to a greater inclusion and therefore greater capacities for exposure to difference and discussion. Again, Nettle's (2014) work demonstrates similar propensities to avoid dogmatic adherence to principles and attempt to embrace different viewpoints within growing practices. Although this must always be tempered with the awareness of the bounded limitation of community as a vessel for social change, we can see this as being potentially beneficial for democratic polities through 'everyday exposure to difference' (Atkinson & Flint 2004, p.876).

The broad variation in political imaginings was personal, in that it often unsurprisingly reflected the person's world-view and experiences. The breadth then of perspectives in many ways reflected the breadth of participants in the projects, although in general there was a consensus on the social justice orientation of the projects themselves. This soft-ideological orientation is common to communal projects in Glasgow, and probably Scotland and beyond. A general left-inclination seems to be common to many growing projects (c.f. Nettle 2014). In Glasgow, this has suggestive links to notions of the city as a 'friendly' and welcoming place. The city was voted friendliest city in the world in 2014 (Rough Guides 2014), something Glaswegians often take pride in, but general left politics also link Glasgow's broader partisan history. Glasgow socialism and Red Clydeside are historical precedents in industrial politics, but with industry largely now gone from Glasgow there are more recent touchstones for local partisan leanings. Particularly the Thatcher years and Tory rule in Britain instigated a widespread rejection of the Conservative party in Scotland, with Scotland's political consensus moving to the centre-left (McCrone 2001; Soule et al. 2012). Within the imagination of Scottish political identity, there is also an extrapolation from the autonomy of Scottish civil society over the years to an 'inclusive, civic Scottish nationalism' (Soule et al. 2012, p.5) based in residence and culture, rather than birth right or tribe. This lends itself to an openness to the other, within an understanding of Scottishness that is not ethnic in its basis but rather residential (Leith 2012). This is the context in which campaigns such as Refuweegie resonate. Refuweegie is a neologism composed of refugee and 'weegie', the latter of which is shorthand for a Glaswegian. Refuweegie is also an organisation that sends welcome packs to new refugees arriving in Glasgow, including warm clothes and a 'letter fae a local'<sup>4</sup>. Yet orientations to social justice, particularly among organisers, are so often

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<sup>4</sup> 'Fae' is Scots for 'from', thus refugees get a letter from a Glaswegian resident.

consensus enough as to be seen as self-evident rather than explicitly political. A vague sense of social justice as an orientation – reflected the openness ethic discussed previously – grounded the projects, yet there was a breadth of understanding regarding the political nature of communal growing as a practice.

Illustrative of this interpretive variation are the considerations of the political nature of the activities at the gardening sites offered by participants. This was embedded in the personal narrative of the participants themselves and in this they offered a wide array of different reasons and values embedded in their involvement in the projects. For some, this was about prior political engagements and the seeking of opportunities to express their politics; for others, it was more nebulous, a question of connection and moral engagement. For most, it was along this blurry boundary between politics and ethics that involvement in the meadow, the garden or both lay.

Some participants viewed involvement in communal growing as political activity. Ivan has lived with his family in transition towns, and worked in community gardens across Glasgow. He and his family live a fairly alternative lifestyle, engaging with alternative health, trying to grow much of their own food and home schooling their children. When I asked him about its politics and whether the activity itself was political, he tells me that he gardens for himself, but that he can see how gardening in this communal place can be political. In echoes of Hodgkinson's (2005) argument that digging is anarchy, he tells me that all growing is anarchic, is political, in contemporary society. He illustrates this by describing interactions with those who ask: why bother putting the effort into growing potatoes on the meadow when you can buy them for 20p a kilo in a supermarket? But he tells me, he came across some figures recently that suggested 90% of the chemicals put into the ground are

absorbed by potatoes, and potatoes have large amounts of pesticides used in their production. He tells me, mate (he calls everyone mate) you're literally poisoning yourself eating those potatoes. You couldn't pay me to eat one of those potatoes. And then he blames capitalism. That for him is why it is political – because growing potatoes is going against that system of poisoning people via potatoes. Ivan is not alone in seeing using the land like this as political – a similar idea that growing goes against the food system and globalised food systems as potentially dangerous and immoral was occasionally found at the Woodlands Community Garden too. This was most prevalent in conversations about and at the Woodlands Community Café, which directly engages in food provision within the city and offers an alternative to food bank provision, its practitioners argue. But it was not a common, or widely propagated, notion – many rejected the notion that gardening was innately political.

One such participant was Mark, a raised bed gardener at Woodlands, a long-time volunteer and latterly also a staff member. Mark's history of unemployment through ill health, and poor mental health as a result, meant that his connection with the Woodlands Community Garden was one of salvation. His life has been vastly improved by the social connection and meaningful interactions found there. When talking with him about his particular trajectory from volunteer to employee, I asked him about the wider role that the Trust was taking – organising clean ups, trying to 'green' West Princes Street where the garden is sited. His response was one of closing down:

Helen: Is there anything political about WCDT taking a more hands on approach?



Mark: Oh no, I don't think so. I like to stay away from politics, I don't bother with that stuff. I don't think it's worth it. But that's my personal opinion.

(Mark interview, July 2016)

His response was typical of those who want to avoid politics altogether, but it is notably different to that of Ivan. Although they are involved at different projects (mostly, Ivan has had some contact with the Woodlands project through his partner Toni), this is less a contrast of projects and more of political imagination. Mark completely disavows politics, as it is not something he thinks is 'worth it'. This dismissal of politics in its entirety starkly contrasts with Ivan's profession of the innate politics of growing and anarchy within the system of globalised food production and chemical poisoning (by food production giants, with Monsanto getting particular attention as the embodiment of this social ill). They offer opposite ends of the political imagination of the spaces, and if we see the projects as part of the semi-continuous food growing community project scene that overlays Glasgow's informal green spaces, this offers an array of interpretation. If a continuous, or singular, statement about the absence or presence of politics in communal growing was sought, this would clearly be problematic.

Rather than suggest that this means political interpretation is purely 'subjective' (in the colloquial sense of individual), I want to pursue what is it that connects the interpretation of Ivan to that of Mark. They are engaged in very similar activities, but one's point blank refusal of politics seems to problematise the notion of the other that digging is *innately* political. This may be down to participants' orientation to politics prior to joining the projects. Indeed Oliver, the WCDT manager, thinks his own politics influence the ways in which the garden is political:

I think it's political with a small p... but again that might be, again it's maybe hard to separate out if I left and they got someone else, then it might turn into a different beast so... it kind of is driven partly by the people and personalities that are involved so I'm not saying that's how it will always be.

(Oliver interview, July 2015)

In this excerpt from our interview, Oliver explicitly says that the garden could be a 'different beast' with someone else doing his job as manager. Similarly, Mark has always avoided politics as 'not for him'; whereas Ivan has sought alternative ways of living such as Transition Towns and is largely anti-capitalist. These are the results of different life experiences and predilections. But what is interesting here – more so than the affirmation of difference of subjective interpretation – is that this suggests an innate flexibility to communal growing as a practice. That is becomes a little like community-as-idea itself in its mutability to individual meaning and practice. Communal growing can be Mark's salve from unemployment, a chance for others to engage in greenness and a site for engaging in conversations on agro-capitalism. It is not a totally free-floating signifier. There are some things that would not fit. Communal growing obviously needs some orientation to growing and a collective aspect. Further, the ideological commitment to social justice seems fairly entrenched. Particularly in the context of these case studies, a more closed approach to community boundaries is difficult to imagine given the ideological norms of Glaswegian growing projects.

Both sites thus share an orientation to inclusivity that provides an important ideological commonality to their activities. Both sites reflect this in their work to be open and inclusive, as discussed in chapters three and four. At the meadow, social justice becomes a way of positioning the space as moral, despite its political aspects. The meadow becomes framed as a moral value in

itself. This has value for participants in that it moves away from an idea of divisive politics, towards a more conciliatory, communal ideal. Arguably, this returns us to the ideological work of community as an idea too, in that it reinforces these ideas about collectivity over division. The political and the economic become entwined in this, in that they are both dismissed as ways of valuing the space. In this context, it is interesting to raise the idea that Yolanda noted at the café. Yolanda is an explicitly left-wing economist, by profession, and we had been discussing redistribution of wealth in society. I asked if there was a connection between the community café (where we were at the time) and the garden in working to expose people to difference and to political ways of thinking about redistribution. What she said to me was that, while it was definitely important for creating space for those conversations, ‘you can’t start from politics’. The implication in this however is that you can reach that point, and that the potential to become political is inherent in the projects. Similarly, Ivan has suggested that consciousness-raising is inherent in community gardening. He is not alone in this – other community growers met during the process of the research project said similar things about the need to begin with the question of ‘why grow?’ This had something of a class inflection, in that Ivan noted this was a more difficult conversation in places without cultural preferences for organic, or indeed with people who had never gardened before. In this, the notion that communal growing can be an awareness raising exercise emerges, echoing Nettle’s (2014:191) argument that community gardens represent a ‘politics of example’. This notion of demonstrating another way of living the city is again analytical, but connects the disruptive pathways of communal growing to a social change dynamic – through demonstration and didacticism. What is suppressed to some extent through pressure towards depoliticisation is the potential to connect the example of communal growing to an explicit agenda for social change or a systematic critique.

## **Subjective politicisation**

The proselytising force of these spaces is also suggested in the narratives of converts at the meadow, of those who become activists through their involvement in the space. Because of the threat to the space, discussed above, participation in the mundane activities can lead to a greater degree of political activity, despite the formal distinctions in sub-committees and everyday management. At a Children's Wood committee meeting held in a pub close to the meadow, tactics were discussed. Particularly, lobbying came up as an important way of gaining political support for the campaign. Initially this was focused on the council planning committee but latterly widened to include local MSPs in the Scottish Government who were petitioned to 'call in' the decision (that is, to utilise their powers of oversight over planning decisions to scrutinise the decision), with a focus latterly on Angela Constance as the SNP MSP who was then Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, and therefore the person whose decision this might ultimately become.

However, at the meeting I attended, for two of the committee there the idea of lobbying was uncomfortable. Both Joan and Margot said they were uncomfortable with the idea, and felt that challenging politicians at their surgeries and having to defend the campaign on the spot was daunting. The fear of exposure for not knowing enough was prominent in these accounts. Polly, as meeting chair and Children's Wood keystone, allayed those fears with reassurances that they wouldn't be alone, that more experienced campaigners would be with them to support them.

What was notable in this was the anxiety and unease that the idea of lobbying drew from Joan and Margot. This emotional insecurity stemmed, it seemed, from inexperience and the way that the campaign has opened up new

experiences such as this for participants. That the meadow put them in a position to engage in this political process is suggestive of the politicising impact of the meadow. Joan has been politically involved online, but spoke in an interview about how the campaign moved her beyond online activism to making a difference in her local area. For her, it was a natural extension of her ideological beliefs, yet it was the first time she had lobbied anyone. Margot, on the other hand, explicitly talked about not being involved in politics before.

Nevertheless, Margot had been involved in the meadow since her husband took part in the first litter picks in 2008. She was not physically active at that point due to being heavily pregnant, but latterly has taken on a central role in the administration of the Children's Wood. Reflecting on how she got involved, she laughed and noted that she had thought green issues were important, but she had 'never been an activist' before:

Helen: Have you ever been involved in any more activism, or anything similar?

Margot: No, I've never been political til this project. No, I never have been [*laughs*] I've just always been, I've always supported Green issues but I've never been involved in any, it's probably just my family background. It wasn't what we did. I've been to a couple of demonstrations but I've never been an activist.

Helen: So what's different about the Children's Wood that's made you an activist?

Margot: Well, obviously, because it's right there and obviously because I can see it every day that probably has lots to do with it. But it has a lot to do with my son as well. I think when you have a family you sort of start to appreciate things that are really important, how important it is to have wild spaces and this country really lacks them?

(Margot interview, July 2017)

She thus put her activism down to proximity and to motherhood, but she has also been socially close to the meadow for many years now. A similar sense of prior social ties facilitating activism has been found in social movement work, such as Hensby's (2017b) work on student protests in 2010-11. The meadow became central to Margot as an issue and she has lobbied councillors for the meadow and is part of the committee. Given the Children's Wood's focus on kids as a means to reach people, it is interesting that Margot also relates her activism to a perspectival shift associated with becoming a mother. In a sense, this becomes about the common good via an understanding of what is best for her child. This was repeated by a few other activists too – that having children was an important wake-up call to political issues, particularly environmental ones, as it extended the temporal imagination far into the future, creating questions of what world will be bequeathed to offspring. This rationale, echoing the discussion in chapter four of the meadow as a 'mother's campaign', reconnects the politicising aspects of the campaign with its everyday users, which is to say, families. In the face of organisational pressures towards neutrality, this politicising capacity presents a counterpoint. Yet in order to politicise, the meadow has to overcome negative associations with politics itself. This relates back to experiences of politics and the political machinery that those involved in projects have. Part of the disavowal of politics as an association of communal growing for Mark is a sense that politics is itself not 'worth it'. In a sense this is the idea that politics itself is sullied.

## **Causes of depoliticisation**

The political imagination of the sites is complicated by a moral ambivalence towards politics itself, shaped by the recent political history of Scotland. There are those, such as Ivan, who see growing and social connection as potentially

emancipatory and political acts. However, there are those at the meadow who deliberately separate out the murky political and strategic campaigns from the everyday mundanities of playgroups and allotmenting. Despite Polly's framing of much of the activity on the meadow as 'guerrilla events', in recognition of the unsanctioned character of the social gatherings that take place there, there is a tendency among participants to depoliticise the space, to see activity there as *above* politics. In this they propose a kind of mundane ethics – a social right to wild space and to children's play especially.

In interviewing Alisdair, a long-time activist with anarchist leanings, his disavowal of the political nature of the activities on the North Kelvin Meadow emerged. Alisdair was a Yes-voter who was wearing a badge saying '45', displaying his dissatisfaction with the Scottish vote to remain part of the UK<sup>5</sup>. He has nothing but distain for the 'corpie' as he calls it – Glasgow City Council (a similar function was fulfilled by the Glasgow Corporation until 1975 (Glasgow Life n.d.)). He nevertheless disavows any connection between the meadow and politics. He frames it rather differently. A journalist before he retired, Alisdair noted: 'You know. If I was writing a new story it'd probably start: fat Tory bastards fuck up the community yet again.' (Interview, December 2014). But he went on that the meadow was not a political thing in the same way:

I don't really see the taking over [the meadow] as a political act. It's – it's more like a, it's more like a common justice thing. You know, we use the land, for leisure, to educate our children.

(Alisdair interview, December 2014)

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<sup>5</sup> Which was split 55% to remain in the UK to 45% voting for Scottish independence.

The vehemence of Alisdair notwithstanding, framing the issue as ‘common justice’ rather than ‘a political act’ importantly separates out the morality of the space from Alisdair’s far-left politics. His anti-Tory and anti-council positions are separated from the meadow, in a sense purifying the space from the murk of politics. In this sense, disillusionment with certain aspects of the political system (e.g. austerity; Conservative government) is associated with sanctifying the space.

It is perhaps little wonder that within the Glaswegian context there is a deep ambiguity towards politics as an idea, since politics for many is primarily associated with Westminster, Holyrood and political parties. Although for some politics means the promise of something better (Ivan’s anarchic growing), for others it signifies the council’s petty manoeuvring, the rise of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and deep divisions within Scotland and the UK more widely, not to mention the forthcoming divorce from Europe. When Alisdair proposes the meadow is about ‘common justice’ rather than politics, he signifies a wish to distance it from a sense of pettiness and division. This is importantly connected (albeit in a fragmented way) to the enduring sense of political cynicism at the case study sites regarding the local authority. Glasgow City Council evoked responses from disdain through to apathy at both the meadow and the garden. The council are deeply unpopular and participants often found them to be frustrating to work with. Within this is a strong sense of the council as self-serving, functioning only to perpetuate their own desires. This was reflected at the meadow at the planning protests in a deep fatalism.

In January 2016, the planning committee sat to decide on permission for the development of the site, and also to consider a community concept plan put in by the Children’s Wood. As part of their decision making process, the councillors of the planning committee visited the site in high visibility vests.



Knowing in advance of this arrangement, the campaigns organised a protest of sorts on the site, gathering a demonstration of local support during the tail end of a winter storm known as Storm Jonas. In the pouring rain and fairly dismal conditions, hundreds of people – including at least one class of nursery children – turned up to support the meadow. Despite this support, the prevailing attitude among key campaigners and members of the Children's Wood committee that I spoke with was that there was little that today's protest could do to change minds, that it was in fact a 'done deal'. This fatalistic attitude regarding the council's deliberations ran through those like Michael, who has been involved in trade union negotiations, to mothers who had come along to the meadow for the first time. This scepticism regarding the council's actions led to interpretations of the site visit as 'window dressing'. It was compounded by the lack of engagement of the protesters by the councillors, despite megaphone heckling from Bob to 'engage with us, engage with the community'. It later surfaced that due to the 'quasi-judicial' nature of the planning process, there are rules about site visits that include not talking with people outside of the official party. Not having this explicated, many of those gathered found the councillors' non-engagement rude but expected. It reflected expectations regarding the council as distant and unwilling to engage outwith their narrow interest.

Despite this, as they leave, the protesters applaud the councillors, encouraged by Bob with a megaphone, to thank them for coming to see the site. Despite a deep-seated pessimism regarding the actions of the local council, this reflected a certain attitudinal approach of the Children's Wood, and to some extent the North Kelvin Meadow, that not only refused to be adversarial with the council but also refused negativity and fatalism. The counterfoil, in the specific case of the Children's Wood, has been attitudinal. Polly, the originator of much the Children's Wood have done since 2012, put it clearly in an interview:

I think it's just the general Scottish culture, I think that's what you're up against, it's just a can't do attitude. And I think here has been a can do attitude and I think that's what's made it so successful, it's just that thing of, we can do this and we will do this [*laughs*] and you know that's been one of the biggest barriers in the community is that can't do attitude. It's just like come on, no we can, let's just do that and move it over here and you know and it, it is something that I think has been quite bad in the general scheme of things because you always hear, oh you'll never succeed and oh they'll never win and often they don't, and it's often attitude. That's where I started to get involved, I was like, no we can. Everyone you talk to is so no, we don't, we can't, and it's just like well if you say that, and that's what the council is saying all the time, no one's going to help, no one's going to volunteer, who's going to bother getting involved? Och it's just going to get build on anyway, why bother, it's a done deal. So that was the biggest thing we worked on in the first couple of years was trying to get away from the done deal aspect that the council were spouting out because they would just say, oh it's a signed contract, it's basically done and so just trying to educate people and say, no we can.

(Polly interview, July 2017)

Polly argues that the prevailing negativity of the Scottish mentality (as evidenced she argues in psychological studies) blocks action. The idea instead was to produce a 'can do' attitude, to shift away from this constant sense of disempowerment. In a report from 2016, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health suggested that a hangover from a democratic deficit in the 1980s was not only creating a sense of the inability to change things, as Polly is, but that it was also having negative health affects in contemporary Glasgow's early male mortality rate (Walsh et al. 2016). Deliberately refusing a sense of 'can't do' is something the meadow campaigners attribute their success to. That is of course difficult to verify and should not be read outside of the campaign's capacity to leverage resources from media savvy, press contacts, educational levels, architectural skill, research knowledge and time to pursue their goals.

Nevertheless, within this, it is possible to see the Children's Wood's efforts to reframe debate in Scotland around land use in terms of possibility, rather than the inevitable pettiness of politics. They do so in a partisan neutral way in order to distance their efforts precisely from this perceived pettiness and in doing so create a discursively complicated field of interpretation. This is promising in that they can maintain a sense of coherence through threat. What happens in the future as the threat dies back is a curious question, and one worth pursuing in other research. Maintaining a politically neutral face has however worked well for them in the campaign due to the capacity it holds to mobilise those who would otherwise be put off by a politicised framing, allowing them to leverage support from schools and other charitable organisations.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter examined the tension between the analytically political understanding of the projects as interventions in the urban fabric, and the variability in terms of how projects are understood. Explaining this discord required traversing structural and organisational factors as well as subjective trajectories. The main distinctions between the case studies are around funding and position in the field, both of which shape the activities of communal growing projects. Whilst funding can be channelling, however, it can be navigated in sensitive ways to avoid some of the worst vagaries of goal displacement. Position in the field, particularly in relation to the local authority, had an important impact on how political the actions of the organisations could be. Yet neutrality was a common outcome, because for the meadow the potential cost associated with being political – the alienation of other organisational actors – was high. Equally, the Woodlands garden had much to lose in publically opposing the council. Neutrality emerged as a strategy to navigate the field of communal growing, suppressing to some

extent a political understanding of the projects. Nevertheless, within this remains the undercurrent of politics in the challenges and tactics of communal organisations, and the whispers of political framing that do still quietly echo amongst the politicised participants.

Naturally, resonant with ideas that social movements are not singular entities (Melucci 1996), there is no expectation that coherent social commentary come out of communal growing. However there is a broad spectrum of interpretations of growing from radical through to avowedly not. A framing as moral has greater resonance than politics, avoiding as it does some of the murkier associations of years of divisive campaigns around sovereignty. In so doing however this framing elevates communal action above politics into a moral sphere, which obscures to some extent the claim making and contestation inherent in what both projects are doing. The meadow in particular is a vehicle for political action and does engage people who previously had not lobbied or campaigned before. This transformation through social connection, carved through dog walking and childcare, might be suggestively linked to ideas around 'fulfilling social obligations and expectations' which Hensby (2014: 94) suggests can be as important as the political cause that participants are mobilising around. But it also connects to the notion that growing is a pedagogic activity, through the 'politics of example and creation' (Nettle 2014, p.112). Thus, even amongst its depoliticising tendencies, the prefigurative aspects of communal growing still emerge and can lead to a greater degree of political framing.

Threat is also a potent route to politicisation. Without a concrete threat however the opportunities gained through working alongside the local authority and funding bodies influence the adoption of conciliatory neutrality as an approach. This is particularly evident at the Woodlands garden. Similar

logics work at the meadow however where formalisation of structure play into the legibility and legitimacy that may become necessary to purchase the land in the future, but which also reassures schools and voluntary sector partners in cooperation.

Thus, while we can situate an analytical politics in the spatial practices of these projects, the emergence of an explicit rhetoric of politics in this case is something determined by community movement dynamics. This suggests the usefulness of adopting ideas from social movement and planning literatures to help understand communal growing as a practice (Nettle 2014). At an organisational level, this relates to the opportunities and costs present: not least, the difficulties of illegibility, legitimacy and funding. But it also depends on the cultural context and subjective understandings of what it means to be political. For those with political backgrounds the leap to politics is brief, but for those who disavow it, it is far less obviously political action. The Scottish cultural context does not help in the latter case, where a general scepticism towards municipal capacity (in Glasgow) and the recent history of divisive political campaigns makes politics a delicate and uncomfortable balance at the best of times. This is to recognise the power of a moral framing as rising above this: as going beyond politics. In many ways, this connects to discussions in chapter three about what community comes to mean in the communal growing project.

Because of ideas of politics as divisive, I would argue that a political framing of the projects sits uncomfortably with the idea of community as a coming together. All the daily practices of communality are generally practices of bridging and welcoming, rather than of taking stark and unforgiving positions. Furthermore, the sullied reputation of Glasgow City Council plays into this, by bringing in notions of politics as self-serving, rather than oriented towards

what Alasdair calls 'common justice'. Thus, communality is in many ways more important in terms of framing the projects than staking ground as alternative projects, however much an analytical politics might be situated there.

# Chapter 7

## Discussion

This thesis has explored the meanings and consequences of community as it is evoked and practiced in urban growing projects in Glasgow. It has been concerned to relate this to local development and the trajectory of Glasgow as a city. This meant taking seriously the urban and political aspects of communal growing including its intervention in the built environment. I have examined urban growing as a mundane, lived phenomenon, full of tensions such as between the exclusion inherent in the boundary drawing of community itself, and the affiliation with an ideology of inclusion. Community was thus treated as an empirical phenomenon bound up in practices and ideals, and intertwined with urban life more broadly. In this closing chapter, I want to situate this discussion more broadly, connecting it to academic debates and posing open questions that remain. This is structured loosely by the order of the empirical chapters, although it also aims to connect the arguments of the chapters as the themes of communality, class, place and politics are ultimately intertwined.

I began this work in part with a theoretical concern that sociology's historical focus on the form of community (whether as neighbourhood or as network) overlooks questions about cultural continuity in communal behaviour (Walkerdine & Studdert 2012). Over the process of the thesis, I developed a healthy scepticism of community's usefulness as an analytical concept. I have built on arguments around the need to disaggregate community into its constituent parts, whether common beliefs, ritual occasions or indeed 'dense and demanding social ties' (Brint 2001: 3). Brint (2001) argues disaggregation enables an understanding of the universal aspects of communal behaviour, or

what he calls '*Gemeinschaft*-like' behaviour, without the need for all to appear simultaneously. Disaggregated accounts enable a flexible approach to communal endeavours in society, without the need for a unified or holistic notion of community to be invoked. This opens up the possibility of seeing contemporary communal behaviour as a continuation of rather than a break with historical models of community, as represented in the village or island community, as well as focusing attention on the ways in which communality is sustained and changes over time.

Nevertheless, I remain convinced of the emotional and political power of aggregated community as a practical concept (Mulligan 2014; Belton 2013; Walkerdine & Studdert 2012; Brint 2001). To this end I have argued here that it can be helpful to separate analytically the powerful normative ideal of community from practices oriented towards communality. This recognises the lack of analytical community-in-form without rejecting the important heuristic function of community-as-idea. I propose that communal behaviour sits in relation to a community concept that is collectively held, an idealisation of community that is always being incompletely 'actualised' (in the terms of Cooper, 2013). This moves us out of the cul-de-sac of whether community has any stable meaning or form in contemporary society and towards a better understanding of what is meant in communal contexts when community is evoked.

This theoretical proposition builds too on critical perspectives that recognise the political problems raised in community taken as a singular unified social form (Pattison 2007) but also argues that this should not obscure the positive consequences of orienting social activity to an idea of community. Such positive consequences include social connection, mutual support and feelings of belonging. In this thesis I have utilised an analytical separation between



community-as-idea and communal practices as a way to explore the problematic relation between the two as ideas of communality are imperfectly actualised. Simultaneously practical, political and emotional, contestations over what community-as-idea comes to mean illuminate the constant remaking of ideational constructs of community, as well as the increasingly high stakes involved as community is inserted into governance strategies as a locus of responsibility (Wallace 2010; Amin 2005). As Amin (2005) suggests, this asks rather a lot of community empowerment, expecting it to overcome social problems and promote economic regeneration.

Nettle (2014) notes the limits of similar thinking in the community gardening literature which situates community gardens as sites of social capital production (in Putnam's (2000) sense), focusing in on the 'community building capacity' of organised projects (Nettle 2014, p. 117). Inherent in this is the idea that community is automatically a good thing, as Raymond Williams (1983, p.76) perhaps overly optimistically noted 'it seems never to be used unfavourably'. Yet community in this study has been shown to be not just the locus of socially valuable connections, caring and support; but also a site of boundary making, of contestation and indeed of exclusion. The romanticisation of community and its elevation as a moral idea (as discussed towards the end of chapter six) promotes however a rosier picture. This is no doubt politically appealing territory for community organisations, but in order to have a serious conversation about the role of communal organisations and projects in urban politics, it is necessary to recognise this cosy image as only part of what is going on in communal organisations. This is not to dismiss as inherently problematic communal projects of all kinds, but to recognise their limitations.

As a way around the problematic aspects of this partiality, Ash Amin (2005) draws on Iris Marion Young to argue that a way to reimagine communality without homogeneity is to embrace 'differentiated solidarity', which is an approach that 'recognizes difference and seeks to build solidarities through negotiations of difference' (Amin 2005, p.627). This is to accept a level of closure in communal groupings, rather than demand endless (and puerile) inclusion at the loss of a coherent grouping. This latter is the problem posed by openness, and the question of what it means for a communal organisations to be completely open. A differentiated solidarity would require openness to dissensus, to bridging differences. Nevertheless, it would accept communal practices as they are, rather than sanitising them as a social good whilst simultaneously expecting community organisations to correct for years of structural inequality and disinvestment, as the current approach to community cohesion and empowerment seems to wish to do.

## **Staying with communal complexity**

Seeing communal practices as fully rounded phenomenon might open up the possibility of embracing the oft-stated notion in academia that community is a complex or multiplicitous phenomenon. In the community gardening literature this has led to the tendency to acknowledge the conceptual difficulty inherent in community but then to focus on other issues (with the notable exceptions of Firth et al. 2011; Kurtz 2001). Community gardens and urban agriculture do intersect with a number of different, inter-disciplinary questions, but the broad literature fails to engage with what community as a Goffmanian frame is doing in this context. In this thesis, I addressed this question as a way of unpicking the work community as an idea is doing in communal growing. I argue the idea of community in this context facilitates actions such as caring and non-committal intimacy, and gives meaning to and fulfils (if imperfectly) this central idealisation. Further, it is through reference

to the idea of community that growing becomes imagined as a space outside of the pressures of the market and the city, providing the foundation for the alterneity situated in growing. Thus community's associations of traditional, automatic connection (such as in Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft*, and Durkheim's mechanical solidarity) allow for not only practices of social connection but also for a non-commodified vision of urban life, even if only temporarily.

Yet the idea of community is fairly fluid, described by Wallace (2014: 14) as 'notably promiscuous'. Whilst this has been critiqued for its easy insertion into Big Society narratives (Wallace 2010), there are important ways in which the multiplicity of community is also functional, as I argue in chapter three. The capacity of communal growing projects to support a range of emotional, practical and political commitment is deeply intertwined with the flexibility of community as a signifier. In the field, community could mean intimacy but also surface-level social contact (c.f. Blokland 2017). This broadened the horizon of what was possible, as well as the catchment in terms of who could and did come to belong. The flexibility of community as an idea allows a breadth of interpretation that because of its fuzziness creates the possibility for broad engagement, without everyone needing to acquiesce to a singular or coherent idea of community. This flexibility is an important facilitator of urban growing, not simply background complexity. Within this empirical flexibility, there is also a practical stability in terms of what is produced at the projects. Chapter three explored what repetitions were evident in the meanings and practices evoked. Community in practice was a varied but roughly reproducible ethos: where caring predominated (an idea replicated in Crossan et al. 2015); where being known was possible, but as a form of distant intimacy; and where casual, DIY aesthetics predominated.

Adopting the practical conception of community proposed here is beneficial in that it captures the symbolic power of community as idea and the everyday practices that are oriented towards this idea. A focus on practices allows for an excavation of the micro-social building blocks of communality, but only focusing on these processes can be limiting. Approaches such as that of Walkerdine (2010; 2016) and Studdert (2016) closely focus on the micro-social aspects of being communal, evoking the ways in which communality is enmeshed in everyday life. What is gained in this approach is the ability to focus on this cultural product and its impacts. However, in the micro-social approach the very way that community as an idea is the symbolic force behind the practices is lost. This thesis has argued that as a cultural frame, community brings a notion of connection and conviviality that facilitates the occurrence of, and brings meaning to, the vaunted benefits of community gardening. In this way, I have situated communality in the vacillation between idea and practice, drawing on Cooper's (2013) exploration of the social life of values.

Nonetheless, community as an idea, without a sense of how it interplays with wider ideological and contextual factors, is an overly abstracted notion. The case studies explored here demonstrate this best through the tension around openness and social boundaries, as explored in depth in chapter three. In the cases of the North Kelvin Meadow and the Woodlands Community Garden, community-as-idea is interacting with a number of other ideas upon which the practice is founded: not only the radical history of growing through Victory Gardens and counter-cultural practices, but contemporary norms of inclusivity, encompassed here in the notion of being open. The interaction of inclusion with community-as-idea demonstrates the ways in which the boundedness of communal practices are negotiated. As chapter three argues, the production of a culture of communality, whilst it raises questions of

internal contradiction in the figure of an 'open' community, was facilitative in these cases of a very broad, inclusive and constantly shifting way of thinking about being communal.

In contrast to this, one might pose the way community figures in the work of Brian Belton (2013), with its strong boundaries and its 'primitive, carnivorous side' (Belton 2013, p.292). Belton's work is focused on the Gypsy identity and he emphasises the way in which in that context community can be a closed practice. This is suggestive of the important role that the experience of social marginalisation has in terms of producing strong boundary policing around who is seen as being part of the Gypsy identity and community. Notably, the culture of ideas around Belton's and my own fieldwork produced two very different practices of communality. Growing is not seen as a particularly strong identifier, nor is it a cleavage along which social goods are distributed or an historical source of discrimination. Inclusivity does however provide a strong ideological context for communal growing projects. In the context of social movements, Williams (2004) discusses the need for organisations to speak in a culturally resonant manner in order to be understood. I have argued that this contrast between Belton's illustration of the gypsy community and those found in Glasgow communal growing projects highlights a similar need for resonance when it comes to articulating community ideals. The different meanings of community-as-idea in these contexts are produced through the need for communal practices to resonate with other pertinent cultural frames. This is not only a difference in terms of the orientation of the projects themselves – a growing project and an ethnic group have obvious discontinuities – but also points to the different resonances that community ideas have in these contexts. This suggests that the way that communal practices emerge in any given context is deeply related to that precise context and the cultural milieu. Thus, threat and

solidarity, and closure and openness, are deeply embedded within broader historical and cultural specificities that lend meaning and resonance to certain framings of community-as-idea with important practical consequences. In these case studies, a promisingly progressive ideational context opens up the practice of communality, although some of the political potential of this remains latent rather than realised.

## **The lens of inclusion**

Part of the explanation for the latency of the radical potential of communal growing lies in the implicit exclusions that emerge from the specific practices of group formation at the two sites. The idea of inclusivity, explored primarily in chapter four, addressed who was targeted for inclusion and how it was practiced. The projects both deal differently with difference, but are also concerned to include a putative ‘everyone’. Inclusion was an idea that interacted with communality to open up the practice of community; but it also created conditions for reinterpreting difference. People with mental health and learning disabilities were explicitly embraced, along with the lay healing properties of growing itself. Further, worklessness and unemployment were not stigmatised, leading to fond references to weekday gardeners as ‘waifs and strays’. At the meadow, this took a different character. Age and disability were targeted as potential barriers to inclusion, leading to efforts to welcome older people and children with complex needs on to the meadow. Through seeking to overcome potential barriers to inclusion, certain kinds of potential exclusion are eroded: particularly those that can be overcome by making adjustments to access.

Nevertheless, both Woodlands and the meadow organisations had limitations in their practice of inclusion. This did not stem from the deliberate exclusion of certain local populations, but instead from a more culturally ingrained

sense of class, ethnicity and family-centricity. Whilst Woodlands targets mental health explicitly, and the workless and temporally undervalued are included implicitly, they still have a blind spot when it comes to the local Scottish Asian population. The fact the new headquarters sit next to an Islamic Centre is indicative of this side-by-side rather than integrated living. In this geographic convergence there is little overlap, little bridging the divide. The meadow equally has a blind spot, but it is more salient in class terms. The claim of the North Kelvin Meadow campaign and the Children's Wood has always been to represent a community, and yet they often extend the geographical boundaries of that to the nearby Wyndford Estate and further into Maryhill. It is a point of pride for the campaign that they are not just middle class NIMBYs. Nonetheless, the cultural and economic position of those involved in organisations working to save the meadow is often one of privilege, particularly in educational terms and the relationship with working class neighbours can be patronising and tacitly exclusionary. This is echoed in the aesthetic decisions that mark the space as increasingly 'twee', and in this increasingly oriented towards the middle class consumption of space.

A similar limitation in the practice of inclusion was present in the way gender was present in the projects. The prevalence of women in organising and the sense of the Children's Wood as a 'mothers' campaign' can seem progressive in gender terms. However this is problematised by the associations of caring roles with female bodies. The spaces are family-friendly and provide support and connection for mothers (and to some extent fathers), and yet the very prevalence of parenting as a mode of doing gender is a heteronormative and suggestively exclusionary one. While some suggestive potential for reimagining masculinity emerged, the retrenchment of typical female roles sat in tension with the opportunities and support that the spaces provide for women and particularly mothers. Thus, the lens of inclusion provides a

germane way of exploring who gets to be community, and who is targeted as excluded. It also demonstrates the limits of the openness rhetoric and raises questions that resonated through later chapters about how the politics of radical spaces of limited social diversity should be understood.

The case study projects are aware of these limits and work to try to ameliorate this. Therefore this is not to critique them for partiality in a normative sense. It would betray their self-awareness as groups to deny their ideological commitment to inclusion, although one might find their actions limited in addressing their blind spots. Certainly, easier questions around physical access and adjustments for those with complex needs around toileting are being addressed, yet broader cultural exclusions – whether along ethnicity, class or gender lines – are not. This has a funding aspect, in that there is funding for mental health projects and partnership work that obviously broadens access to growing. Yet this sidesteps the cultural question. Gardening is not inherently a white or middle-class phenomenon. Indeed, Langeegger's (2013) study of Latino/a gardens found them to be sites that encourage cross-cultural diversity amongst different populations in New York. Talking to growers in North Glasgow, there are opportunities to bridge social differences, particularly across class lines. But in the context of the West End of Glasgow, growing does not at the moment seem to lend itself to this. Eizenberg (2012) argues that, because community gardens mirror their neighbourhoods, they can produce ethnic (and I would add class) enclaves. What has occurred in these two cases is that the communal growing projects echo social hierarchies within their localities, rather than mirroring them precisely.

As noted by the consultancy work that Woodlands commissioned, increasing the representation on the board of those not included currently might go some



way to opening up dialogue between Woodlands and the Scottish Asian locals, although this does assume that they constitute one cohesive excluded group. Further continuing working alongside established organisations is indeed a means of bridging difference, but if this continues as an external activity – separate visits for asylum seekers at the meadow, for example – then it is unlikely to translate easily into everyday use. Social exclusion at both sites stems from an implicit, cultural boundary. The dominance of the projects by those of particular class, ethnicity, and family situation limits the ease with which people outwith these identities feel comfortable. This needn't be insurmountable. Nettle (2014) notes a garden participant who uses his lack of conformity to a vegan, activist ideal (through swearing and smoking) to begin to break down and bridge differences. Embracing rather than condemning working class uses of the meadow space would be one opportunity to begin to bridge some of those differences, but also accepting that perhaps tolerance, or being alongside, is enough. Community-as-idea might work against this: it is often evoked as an idea of a unified social whole. Yet perhaps it could bend to encompass communal practices of urban tolerance, rather than close-knit cohesion. This might offer Amin's (2005) notion of 'differentiated solidarity', essentially of mutual respect and living alongside, as an ethic of urban communality.

Nevertheless, a lack of diversity does raise questions for those involved that try to produce inclusive projects. Rather than see exclusion automatically as failure, this might best be seen as an opportunity to reflect on whom they claim to represent, particularly in bureaucratic processes. In marginal areas, on the edges of affluence, the question of whose voice is heard in which neighbourhood is important. Finding ways to bridge difference through representation, tolerance or some other route is important if the projects want to uphold their value of inclusivity.

## **Cultivating slowness and narrating space**

Exploring the distinctive rhythms of the projects in chapter five offered a means to consider the intervention of communal growing in the fabric of Glasgow, particularly in its relation to urban development as normal. The rhythmic character of the projects within the wider rush of the city was an important facilitator of slowness, and through slowness connection. In fact, the temporal and spatial ordering inherent in the projects was facilitative of communality itself. The projects create time and space for the expression of the idea of community, through cultures of reduced barriers between strangers, practices of caring for one another and sharing between those present. It is conviviality itself that is produced. An understanding of this temporal and spatial basis for being communal has implications for how we view the temporariness of alternative or DIY urbanism. Particularly, the shallowness of a temporary space for communing becomes notable. It has been argued that temporary urbanism might be valued for its everydayness, as a site for 'users over time' (Tonkiss 2013, p.320), and that under that rubric, temporariness itself needn't be overtly problematic. Yet without continuity in time or reliability in this sense, this research suggests that building any kind of communal beingness (in the affective sense Walkerdine 2010 uses the term) will be hard to sustain in the absence of the places in which it is embedded. As one participant noted, the trees are as much a part of the community as the people. The materiality of the space is an important facet of the imagination of community. What is produced is communal behaviour adhered to a specific space and time. This is reminiscent of course of an archetypal description of community, yet it must be carefully crafted, and framed with reference to community-as-idea in order to persist. It has to be grounded in rhythms and practices that are deliberately produced.

The production of time and space in the projects needs to be understood as a historicised process, embodied in the narration of the spaces. I explored this in detail, noting how selective histories are part of the narratives of both the meadow and the garden. The organisations position themselves as (always) working on behalf of community, and embed their values as part of a historical trajectory. This is a way of grounding their land use as historically valid, with precedent, and wanted by local people. A sense of local legitimacy is a way of establishing a valid land use, contra development for economic ends. In this, they run into the challenge of trying to become legible to the council, funders and indeed other non-profits. Communal growing to some extent establishes a specific variation of use over exchange value, although communal growing in its beautification aspect is likely to increase local land prices, research suggests (Voicu & Been 2008). Further, given the selective uses which are valued and their embeddedness in middle class culture, this contest ought to be understood in its class context.

What emerged in this analysis was that commoning presented a resonant language for the ways in which communal ownership is imagined within this land use programme. Although it is not a language utilised by participants, this research argues the projects involve the collective production of a common place and culture. This invokes the idea of commoning, described by Bresnihan and Byrne (drawing on the work of Peter Linebaugh) as: 'the fluid, continuous and relational ways in which the living commons, past and present, are produced' (2015, p.46). The projects discussed here are made into 'living commons' through a number of practices that centre a collective ownership and responsibility for the sites. The sense of 'belonging to everyone' that resonates across the sites (but particularly the more anarchic meadow) opens up an ethical disposition towards inclusivity and universal access. In this way, it echoes the idea De Angelis notes when he connects his

interest in the commons with ‘a desire for the *conditions* necessary to promote social justice, sustainability, and happy lives for all’ (An Architektur, 2010, n.p., emphasis in original). Commoning, and particularly the production of the spaces in common, is also important in terms of the material aesthetic that emerges in tree houses, cobbled together raised beds and hand made decoration. This has a supportive circularity in that the homespun aesthetic of the spaces is itself liberating to an extent to the inclusion of those without strong DIY skills, although it iterates a particularly middle class aesthetic that is itself a vector of exclusion (Hoskins & Tallon 2004; Harris 2012; Colomb 2007). Nonetheless, commoning – the making common of the land and social practices of the meadow and garden – addresses the collective impulse at these sites and particularly the way it is enacted in practical terms. Although it is not a category of practice in Brubaker’s (2013) sense, it is analytically helpful here in understand what communal practices enact. This is the complementary point to that made by de Angelis. He argues ‘the commons are necessarily created and sustained by communities’ (An Architektur 2010 n.p.); here I am suggesting that, following this through, the commons is a good language to discuss that which is created by communities, where it is located in a shared, cultivated space.

The relation of the commoned site to the rest of the city was an emergent question in the thesis: what does it mean to create an oasis into which people enter for sanctuary? The mental health aspect of gardening and green spaces is well established, to the point where the meadow has been socially prescribed, a process by which GPs refer patients to social activities and community resources as a means to health that avoids medication (Williams 2013; Wilson & Booth 2015). Participants such as John at the Woodlands Community Garden who come to growing with complex needs and find a place to connect with others, when such connection is difficult, attests too to the

powerful concoction of green space, other people and a communal, caring ethic. Nevertheless, what relation this has to the wider city is of importance as a precursor to discussing the politics of commoning and urban alterity. In this research, I have suggested that it is helpful to conceive of the meadow and garden as curating an escapist urbanity. The metaphor of the oasis is helpful here, not least in the sense that the rest of the city is seen as a desert of connection, too fast and too harried a place to connect with others or be in control of the pace of life. But in being escapist, disconnection becomes important: it does not antagonise, but offers a separate, slow alternative. Situating this in the theoretical landscape of everyday urban politics (Beveridge and Koch, 2017) is helpful as a way of understanding the radicalism of transforming the everyday. In this, the lack of challenge to the state or structures of governance becomes secondary to the plane of the everyday. The transformation of daily life itself is itself a political step. This sense of 'beyond' does not exist without a relation to 'against' and 'in' power structures, to borrow terms from Holloway (2002), but it is a question of emphasis. The inward rather than outward focus of urban escapism has sympathy with the wider depoliticisation of urban communal growing as a phenomenon discussed in chapter six, as it orients the projects away from the classic political centre of the state and party apparatus.

## **A moral rather than political framing**

In their mundane setting – in connection with the natural world and each other – there was often little political intent and instead the spaces were reified, valued as above politics. An analytical understanding of the case studies as political spaces is necessary, although what emerged from this thesis were the limits of this politics, or perhaps its dormancy in middle class projects. The projects contest space and remake neighbourhoods; they instigate new ways of living in cities; they slow down time and space, making

room for discussion that has been argued to be the eroding baseline for democracy (Atkinson & Flint, 2004; Sennett 1977). However, this does not ring true with on the ground understandings of what politics means. The reification of spaces as non-political, as being spaces for the common good, led to a moral rather than political frame to make sense of activity. This was excavated in chapter six as the various politicising and depoliticising pressures on the projects. The projects as organisations run into existential pressures around funding and the need to be seen as neutral. I argue this provokes a depoliticisation in terms of how the projects are framed, although it is also a question of the standing that politics as an idea has to participants. A depoliticised framing of the projects limits their radical potential, in that it arguably encourages a non-conflictual understanding of the way that cities emerge. This resonates with post-political understandings of urban governance (e.g. Swyngedouw 2009). The production of consensus is argued to have 'eliminated a genuine political space of disagreement' (Swyngedouw 2009, p.609). Yet whilst the production of consensus has important impacts on the space available to do politics in (and what is allowed to be political), this formulation relies on an elevated sense of politics as rupture that does not focus on what Beveridge and Koch (2017, p.32) refer to as 'the contingencies of actually existing urban politics'. Actually existing urban politics is the field in which communal growing projects emerge and the scale at which their politics should be judged. In this thesis, this involved exploring the politicising and depoliticising pressures upon communal growing projects.

One particularly forceful means by which the Children's Wood moved in a political direction was due to the existential threat to the space. This is suggestive of the possibilities of communal growing as a political vehicle rather than its automatically political valence. Indeed, as I suggest in chapter six, it demonstrates the flexibility of communal growing as a phenomenon,

that it can encapsulate political and distinctly apolitical interpretations at once. This finding might be explored further, in research asking questions about what motivates political interpretations, and how people are encouraged to think politically or otherwise in growing spaces.

The politics of communal growing is further intertwined with its organisational emergence and how the opportunity structure of Glasgow shaped the meadow and the garden. A helpful array of explanatory tools to explore this was found in social movement studies, particularly in the ideas of goal displacement, institutional channelling and the idea of an opportunity structure itself. Funding is a particularly difficult influence on both sites because it is at once a limiting and an enabling factor. Funders – as local authorities, charities, and government sources – all set limits on funds and have aims and agendas of their own. This means that, in contrasting the heavily funded Woodlands Community Garden with the much sparser North Kelvin Meadow, one can see the channelling of organisational energy into funder pleasing at the former which shapes their political framing and organisational actions. But to posit organisations as lacking any agency in this would be mistaken: the funding field is broad and a range of tactics is employed by organisations to align their own ambitions with those of funders. Further, the reflexive awareness of the pull of funding broadens the possibility of resisting the more pernicious aspects of goal displacement and moderation of organisations found in the social movements literature (de Souza 2006; Miraftab 2009).

Neutrality – that is, taking a position as a neutral player in partisan terms – can be helpfully framed as a strategic manoeuvre. Because of the depoliticised field of charity funding and local authority work, both case studies aimed for neutrality as a tactical means of getting things done. This was influenced by

partnering with charitable institutions who could be suspicious of appearing to support a political cause. At an organisational level then, and in response to the generally partisan-neutral terms of funding organisations and partnerships with schools and so forth, an organisational position of neutrality was a means of achieving aims, whether that is saving a meadow, building connections between local people or growing vegetables.

Yet this organisational level neutrality did not always sit easily with the politics of individuals. But it is notable that politics figured as an individual rather than collective phenomenon. Even subjective shifts to political action stimulated by involvement in the meadow were seen as a primarily individual matter – the organisation was by and large framed as a moral rather than political issue. Discussing this with the manager of the Woodlands Community Development Trust, he pointed out that his strongly held politics were held in check by his position. He felt able in conversation with me to situate Woodlands as a political phenomenon, but not in his official capacity. The individual is allowed to politicise the garden. Organisationally however the need to remain neutral is an existential matter: funding and access are often predicated upon not shaking things up.

I suggest this expands the co-option versus challenge debate, by foregrounding the interaction between community movements and the broader field. In situating communal growing projects in relation to the local authority and pressures to professionalise to survive, this is to note what is at stake here too: the existence of the projects at all. Taking an organisational approach to communal growing opens up how communal growing interacts with wider pressures in the urban environment – particularly around funding but also in terms of access to necessary bureaucratic functions like leases. This recalls Walker and McCarthy (2010) in that it makes clear the dilemmas



involved in continuity. In this sense, the pressures of conformity with governance agendas and radical intentions live side by side, as McClintock (2014) argues they do in urban agriculture. This also has the effect of suppressing collective politics in favour of an individualised politics, where the matter is largely left as a personal preference rather than framed as an organisational facet of projects. This is important in that it is likely to restrict the potential political mobilisation or transformation possible at either site. In this, chapter six extends the work of Claire Nettle (2014) whose analysis of communal growing as direct action opens up the radicalism of growing, although restricting such potential to the politicised end of the spectrum. What I have argued here is that there are multiple pressures that restrict that radicalism, narrowing the bandwidth of political growing.

That a moral rather than political framing becomes predominant in this context is a way around this tamed radicalism. Situating growing as moral rather than political means that common justice, or the common good, can be centred in such a way that it elides the tricky funding elements of political framings and yet continues to promote inclusivity and communality as social goods. A political interpretation is suppressed in these conditions, but the actions oriented towards what in other contexts would be considered political ends continue in another guise (that is, shaping the urban, reclaiming and decommodifying land, working towards inclusion). Further, whilst a moral framing might limit the broader mobilisations possible, it opens up the projects to a broader range of people. In this it connects back to questions of inclusion through emphasising similarities. Nettle (2014) discusses how expectations of an overtly politicised activist identity can be destabilised in order to broaden the reach of communal projects. In this way, she writes 'Community, then, works here to destabilise movement identity, bringing gardeners face to face with multiplicity and differences. Community functions

not as a place of refuge in sameness, but as a place where identity is challenged and reconstructed' (Nettle 2014, p.125). Similarly, moral framings of the case study projects tie into the way that community-as-idea works as an overarching idea: it is not explicitly a political idea, although it can have transformative effects. Thus, the moral framing opens up a broader imagination of that 'everyone' for whom these projects exist, whilst putting the phenomenon in unassailable moral territory: putting community above politics, or perhaps beyond.

## **Class and the limits of utopian practice**

The structure of opportunities in which a communal growing project emerges shapes how it is framed and what it does. It also affects what community comes to mean. In this thesis, situated in a specific milieu in which community becomes responsible for taking on welfare functions (Amin 2005), and is slid easily into political discourse (Wallace 2010), community-as-idea can be imagined as a site of contestation. Practices of care, solidarity and support lay valid claim to being an actualisation of community-as-idea; and yet the positive symbolism of community-as-idea is evoked as a means to co-opt local caring and reduce local authority funding for care services. This is the difficult context in which communal growing negotiates existential questions of funding and organisational form, while crafting connection. This is no mean feat. Yet in the morally situated idea of community that frames growing projects is a deeper problem about what is and is not contestable.

Whether a project is political or not is in many ways a vexed question, and a red herring, because the sense in which it is political relies principally on whose definition of political one uses and whether analytical or practical concepts are being utilised. Nonetheless, the tension of the politicised and depoliticised aspects of the projects illustrates a struggle over what

community is allowed to be. This is to say that what is at stake in these cases is not just the sites themselves, but questions of who gets to determine the city and what the proper place of communality is. Community-as-idea is imagined largely apolitically and the pressure in these case studies is for communal practices to conform to a moral rather than political framing. The context of increased urban participation – particularly consultation, but also the increasing involvement of non-governmental actors in the production and maintenance of the city (Cooke & Kothari 2001; Tonkiss 2013; Arapoglou & Gounis 2015) – lends a greater importance to the idea of community than might otherwise exist. This extension of governance has provoked a great deal of debate as to its democratic or neoliberal character in community gardens (Pudup 2008; Crossan et al. 2016; Ghose & Pettygrove 2014; Rosol 2012; McClintock 2014), but it also shifts the way that community projects emerge, as suggested by the depoliticising pressures on communal growing projects here.

The formal aspect of community becomes in this sense a struggle for recognition and, in pushing the boundaries of participation, a struggle for the role of communal organisations in urban life. Indeed, the North Kelvin Meadow's starting point in 2008 was the rejection of the veneer of participation established in choosing a design for the proposed development on the meadow. This spurred the creation of their own campaign and latterly, from the Children's Wood, their own explicit vision for the urban meadow. Yet their class positionality becomes problematic when they make moves to establish their legitimacy as 'the' community, in its singular, neighbourhood sense. Legitimacy in this sense was fought for through deliberate policies of depoliticisation, and tactics that positioned organisations as capable and organised, and which took recognisable form as charities. This is the sense in which groups stake a claim to the political right to represent their

constituency – in both the cases here, in geographical terms. But it can also be read as a kind of class politics, in which the dominance of both projects by middle class white people becomes a continuation of a trend readily noted: the dominance in public life of the middle classes (Ray et al. 2003).

The projects come to stand metonymically for an imagined community as some kind of unified and singular unit. In this context these differences are likely to disappear and the community project becomes the Community – that is, the ultimate partiality of the community as practiced (its myth of representation) is lost in its representative function. This reduces the sense in which either project might be considered deeply progressive or alternative, since it mirrors the status quo. The dominant positions in the social hierarchy held by growers discomfits ideas of radical growing, as it presents in these particular case studies. This is also where the notion of community-led regeneration leads to – the key question of who gets to be the community (before of course any consideration of how sincere their participation gets to be). If one takes Ranciere's (1999) position as primarily a critique of the notion that everything is (or can be) political, and therefore very little is truly political; this in-group position jostling becomes about as non-political as could be. On the level of class, this is not the production of alternatives, as Barry (2001) would have us assess politics. In response to those who position communal growing and urban agriculture as radical politics (Certomà & Tornaghi 2015; Hodgkinson 2005), this research questions how radical a largely middle class escapist phenomenon can be considered. Rather than seeing this however as part of a narrative of co-option and neoliberal encroachment, this is more akin to the way that play figures as evading power (Thrift 1997b; Jones 2013). This is Ranciere's (1999) challenge to those who would position all struggles as political – do they engage with the foundation of equality upon which democratic society rests? And if they do not, should we

conceive of what they do as truly radical? In these terms, it is clear that growing projects cannot be conceived within the parameters of the political as rupture, yet they clearly engage in some kind of political manoeuvre. I have drawn on Olin Wright (2015), Holloway (2010) and Beveridge and Koch (2017) to argue that communal growing's evasion is a kind of politics in itself: a reinterpretation of everyday life, where the everyday is situated as a political terrain in and of itself. However, as Olin Wright (2015) notes, escapism is not necessarily building a progressive future, so much as avoiding the worst vicissitudes of capitalist society. In this, communal growing projects can be situated not as Nettle's (2014) prefigurative politics of example but as a protective, evasive space in the city.

When viewed from the perspective of social dominance, particularly in class terms, communal growing in these specific cases has tended to reproduce much of the same, rather than present a real alternative. This questions some of the suggestions that communal growing projects are places of inclusivity. This might be further fruitfully explored in research that took as its basis projects across different socio-economic areas within the city in an attempt to explicitly explore the impact of different contexts on communal growing projects. Rather than the border struggles raised here, there might be a different interpretation of those projects, such as the Concrete Garden in Glasgow, that are based solely in areas of multiple deprivation. Further, in working class Glasgow, land values are not what they are in the West End and the quantity of derelict land increases, leaving a greater number of opportunities to grow even if they are not taken. The question arises as to why a larger number of gardens are not situated here given these conditions, and future studies might build on this class disparity in explaining this. Such research could draw on ideas of non-participation in social movement work, particularly Hensby's (2017a) work on student occupations, in order to reflect

back on questions of boundary-making and exclusion in urban growing. This would broaden academic understandings of the exclusions and boundary work inherent in communal growing, as well as open up questions of how transferable communal growing projects are. To follow Urry (2015), this would be to ask, 'does it move?' But also, to ask, how does it change as it appears in different places.

I have been concerned through this thesis to ask what transformative potential is possible within communal urban growing, what challenges are mounted to systemic inequalities and what alternatives posed. I argue that the contribution of growing is contextual and rhythmic. The volumes of food produced in communal growing projects tend to be symbolic, however their potential capacity to provide spaces in which to encounter difference is greater than their actual disruption of food systems (Aptekar 2015). Nettle (2014) argues this places them firmly in the politics of example, or demonstrating the possibility of another way of living the city. Contrarily, while I have argued there is an analytical politics to staking ground in the city, it is in these cases made more complicated by the intertwining of boundary-making and exclusionary practices with inclusionary dynamics. This diverges from political interpretations of gardening as radical in that it does not assume alterity as a sufficient condition for political interpretation, nor does it argue that because communal growing works within bureaucratic systems as much as against them, that they are co-opted beyond their intentions. Instead, it suggests something far more incremental and everyday: that these growing projects produce space for conversation and debate in a circumscribed austerity setting that lends a specific shape to their emergence. Given the increasingly stark ideological divides that appear to dominate western political debate, this stakes a normative way of living in the city – it acts to

bring people together, through the idea of community itself and performances of collectiveness.

Communal growing can be disruptive and in some ways alternative, but in the milieu of different possibilities within the city, it is not automatically political, as it often lacks a distinct framing and intention. As such, the opportunities and pressures into which communal growing projects emerge are important for understanding what possibilities can be located there. What this research has thus explored is community as an everyday contest and escape: a practice that fills peoples lives with meaning and an idea towards which they orient their action. It is discontinuous, but functionally so. Nevertheless, within projects oriented towards this fluid and contested construct some small hope can still be situated: in the everyday production of alternative ways of being in the city; in the politics of example; and in the attempts at ever-broadening its inclusive reach.

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